



The Undead Mother

Christina Wieland

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'A state of mourning is something that the late Twentieth Century has been uniquely unable to achieve. A culture based on the interchangeability of products and people, and a throw-away culture, is not conducive to mourning...Inanimate objects have replaced human ideals. A culture of 'virtual reality' which finds it difficult to distinguish between the living and the inanimate has been created - a culture of the undead. This culture is not grounded on human relationships but in the destruction of them.' In this book, Christina Wieland offers the reader a far-reaching and devastating critique of masculinity, femininity and contemporary culture. Drawing inspiration from the work of Melanie Klein, the author demonstrates how the Western psyche is based upon denial of the power of the mother, and the elevation of the father into the repressive, authoritarian figure. This act of universal matricide has wrought havoc throughout Western culture. As Wieland graphically illustrates, both women and men are denied the opportunity to mourn their separation from their mother, but must contend instead with the guilt that surrounds her murder, and the ever-present terror of her vengeful return - as 'the undead mother'. Re-appraising masculinity and femininity, the author re-visits a wide and fascinating range of myths, fairytales and stories. Her critique casts new light on the writings of Freud, Kellner, Kristeva and Irigaray. Her vivid presentations of clinical material also show how the undead mother makes her presence felt in the consulting room, and the steps which can be taken towards more genuine, reparative mourning.

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