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Madcaps, Screwballs, and Con Women: The Female Trickster in American Culture (Feminist Cultural Studies, the Media, and Political Culture)

Lori Landay

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Women have been tricking men for thousands of years, and female tricksters have been appearing in classic and popular texts at least since the *Thousand and One Nights*. While there are many studies of tricksters, few have focused on the chicanery of women, and none have dealt with the ways in which the female trickster is constructed in America.

Madcaps, Screwballs, and Con Women is the first book to explore the cultural work performed by female tricksters in the "new country" of American mass consumer culture. Beginning with such nineteenth-century novels as *Capitola the Madcap* and moving through twentieth-century novels, films, radio, and television shows, Lori Landay looks at how popular heroines use craft and deceit to circumvent the limitations of femininity. She considers texts of the 1920s such as Elinor Glyn's *It* and Anita Loos's *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*; films of Mae West, as well as other Depression-era and wartime film comedy; the postwar television series *I Love Lucy*; and such contemporary texts as "Roseanne," "Ellen," and "Batman." In addition, Landay explores the connections between these texts and advertisements selling products that encourage female deception and trickery.

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