



Evil Sisters: The Threat of Female Sexuality and the Cult of Manhood

By Bram Dijkstra

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An incisive study of the role of woman as seductress and the evolution of distorted ideas of race, gender, and sex examines the devastating impact of this portrayal of women and the links among misogyny, racism, and the rise of nationalist politics, as embodied by Hitler. 10,000 first printing.

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Evil Sisters: The Threat of Female Sexuality and the Cult of Manhood By Bram Dijkstra Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1014512 in Books
- Published on: 1996-09-24
- Released on: 1996-09-24
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.75" h x 6.75" w x 1.50" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 480 pages



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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

In **Evil Sisters** Bram Dijkstra, a professor of comparative literature at the University of California, San Diego, has taken on the task of detailing the various threats female sexuality is said to have posed throughout this century. Some of these so-called threats seemed alarming; for example, many leading intellectuals from early in the century believed that women were in pursuit of semen to fulfill their reproductive need. Others blamed war as a female creation. He shows how the link of women to vampires was particularly damaging. An interesting historical look at imagery that crops up in today's society.

From Publishers Weekly

Beginning with "vamp" Theda Bara's 1915 silent-film debut in *A Fool There Was*, Dijkstra (*Idols of Perversity*), writing with passionate feminist scholarship, decodes images of women as predators, destroyers and vultures who deplete civilized males of their creative energies. He unmasks predatory females in Hemingway, H.L. Mencken, Elinor Glyn's bestselling 1907 potboiler *Three Weeks*, and unravels the sexist assumptions of sociologist Emile Durkheim, sexologist Havelock Ellis and philosopher of love Remy de Gourmont. Shuttling between high and popular culture, Dijkstra argues that antifeminine, racist and imperialist attitudes merge in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Fitzgerald's *The Beautiful and the Damned*, in Kipling, Edgar Rice Burroughs, H. Rider Haggard, in Jung's psychology of unchanging archetypes, in the social Darwinist teachings of Herbert Spencer and William Graham Sumner. Finally, he traces a trajectory of fantasies involving men attaining supermale status from Nietzsche to Ezra Pound and Hitler. His conviction that sexist imagery, codified around 1900, still dominates the popular imagination informs this brilliant, often startling study. Dijkstra is professor of American and comparative literature at UC-San Diego. Illustrated.

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From Library Journal

Dijkstra (*Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siecle Culture*, Oxford Univ., 1986) provides another scholarly work that reveals the historical basis for gender and race imagery and conflict in modern culture, especially in film and television. Here he explores the medical, psychological, anthropological, and sociological theories prominent in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that promoted distorted ideas of sex, gender, and race (still reflected and reinforced in popular culture today). The author focuses on the early biological theories that led to the image of sexual women as vampires or as "biological terrorists out to deplete the creative energies of every civilized male." Dijkstra also explores how views of the deadly nature of female sexuality significantly influenced racist thinking and Hitler's politics of genocide. This compelling, thought-provoking work is recommended especially for academic libraries and gender studies collections. —Jeris Cassel, Rutgers Univ. Libs., New Brunswick, N.J.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

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