



# Killer Woman Blues: Why Americans Can't Think Straight About Gender and Power

*Benjamin DeMott*

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The new "killer woman," says Benjamin DeMott in this lively and provocative book, believes that empowerment lies in tough, aggressive, "male" behavior. This gender denial, he contends, is reshaping American society and betraying the original vision of feminism, which embodied the ideal of a more compassionate and nurturing society for both women and men. Today, many women believe they must "become men" to succeed -- and men are perceived as often ruthless and brutally competitive. Differences molded by nature and history are obscured, as is the healthy flexibility that would free both sexes from rigid gender positions. The other side of this coin is an increasingly hard-nosed ethos in corporate America and in our public policy.

We can no longer think straight about gender and power, DeMott argues, because we are inundated daily by a flood of cultural material -- popular and literary fiction, movies, sitcoms, commercials, cartoons, the whole media mix -- embodying the killer woman and her values. It leads us to believe that the sexes have nothing to teach each other except ever harsher modes of selfishness and cruelty, both at work and at home. DeMott makes his case persuasively with a wealth of fascinating and highly entertaining material. Present, among others, are Nicole Kidman, Walt Whitman, Courtney Love, Teddy Roosevelt, and Rudy Giuliani, along with *The New Yorker*, *Salon*, *Ally McBeal*, *Sex and the City*, and much more.

Concluding with a passionate plea for a return to feminism's large-spirited vision of human variousness, **KILLER WOMAN BLUES** clarifies several of our nation's most troubling social problems and will surely be heatedly discussed.

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