

War II. He began in 1979 to implement his theory of "practical monetarism," announcing monetary targets and carefully controlling the money supply. Volker, like Eccles, acted vigorously to make the Fed a force "framing monetary policy to counteract economic cycles."

Arts & Letters

**VEILED SENTIMENTS:
Honor and Poetry
in a Bedouin Society**
by Lila Abu-Lughod
Univ. of Calif., 1986
317 pp. \$35

"I suspect that few, if any, fathers of anthropologists," Abu-Lughod observes, "accompany them to the field to make their initial contacts." Yet it was her introduction by her Palestinian-American father to the Awlad 'Ali that legitimized her in that Bedouin tribe's eyes. If this American man (whose beautiful Arabic showed him to be of good family) wished his unmarried daughter to live far from her kin, then, the Awlad 'Ali concluded, it must be all right, and they welcomed her into their midst.

For two years, Abu-Lughod was accepted as guest, daughter, and fellow Muslim in the household of a wealthy Bedouin landowner west of Alexandria, Egypt. There, in the short poems that punctuated her hosts' speech, she discovered an undercurrent of desolation and despair only half-acknowledged beneath the busy, prosaic surface of daily life. Admissions of weakness—much disdained in ordinary speech—brought sympathy and respect when expressed in poems.

The fierce Arab code of honor has inspired writers from Charles Doughty to T. E. Lawrence. As they saw them, Arabs were independent, brave in battle, and self-reliant. Where Abu-Lughod saw Arabs—at home—the same code required men to protect the weak and obey parents, older male kin, and tribal leaders.

For the Bedouin woman, honor is modesty. Throughout her childbearing years, she wears a veil before all men outside her family, and within it, before those she must respect. When she marries, she leaves her own family to join her husband's camp. Only if she marries a paternal cousin—the ideal match—can she stay with those who raised her.

Abu-Lughod argues that Bedouins see sex and marriage as dangerous rivals to tribal authority and therefore to society. Wedding poems warn the

groom of this danger: *He reached your arms stretched on the pillow/forgot his father, and then his grandfather. . . .*

The Bedouin woman, considered weak herself, yet dangerous to men, lives her life subject to father, uncle, brother, and son. Resolute in adversity, only her poems speak of the hidden cost: *On my breast I placed/a tombstone, though I was not dead, oh loved one. . . .*

**IDOLS OF PERVERSITY:
Fantasies of Feminine Evil
In Fin-de-Siècle Culture**

by Bram Dijkstra
Oxford, 1986
453 pp. \$37.95



To many in the 19th century, Darwin's theory of evolution brought with it a new divide. The soul—gift of God and special preserve of the north European male—was manifestly superior to that base throwback from the animal kingdom, the body. Evolution gave men "scientific proof" of their superiority to women (fleshbound "breeding machines" graced only with the brains of a child) and to the "lower" races: Jews, Orientals, and, at the bottom, "simious" Negroes.

With this realization, says Dijkstra, a University of California, San Diego, comparative literature professor, came two opposing ideas of the feminine ideal: the pure woman who had escaped her base nature, and the temptress who reveled in it.

Simultaneously virgin, wife, and mother, Good Women—portrayed as untouchable nuns, mothers surrounded by children, or beauties "up to [their] neck[s] in flowers"—peer demurely out of 19th-century canvasses painted by such artists as Charles Alston Collins (1828–1873), Robert Reid (1862–1929), and Abbott Handerson Thayer (1849–1921).

Disdaining coarse flesh, *fin-de-siècle* artists exalted the purifying effects of pain. Consumptives languish palely, their illness paradoxically implying both virtue and hidden vice. Stylish boredom, mysterious vacuity—even madness or the "iconographic representation of a beautiful woman safely dead" proved (in the "sadistic ambiguity" of the age) titillating. Artists such as Otto Friedrich (1862–1937) and Lotte Pritzel (1887–1952), avoiding any hint of sexual threat, denatured their women and gave rise to the modern cult of emaciation. As one critic stated it, "there is nothing so handsome as a skeleton."

Woman as Temptress found her definitive symbol in Oscar Wilde's play, *Salome*. *Fin-de-siècle*