



Adam's Curse: A Future without Men

By Bryan Sykes

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The inside story of the Y chromosome's fatal flaw, as told by one of the world's leading geneticists.

Male reproductive fragility has been the subject of much highly publicized recent research. Is it possible, asked the *New York Times*, that men face extinction? Bryan Sykes examines the validity of these shocking reports, focusing on the defining characteristic of men: the Y chromosome in their DNA. Guiding his readers through chapters like "The Blood of Vikings" and "Ribbons of Life," Sykes masterfully blends natural history with scientific fact, elucidating the biology of sexual reproduction, modern genetics, and evolutionary biology. He reveals that, while the Y chromosome makes man's existence possible, it also carries within it the seeds of his destruction. Timely and fascinating, this major work covers a wealth of controversial topics, including whether there is a genetic cause for male greed, aggression, and promiscuity; the possible existence of a male homosexual gene; and what, if anything, can be done to save men from a slow, but certain, extinction.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Bryan Sykes follows up *The Seven Daughters of Eve* with the equally challenging and well-written *Adam's Curse*. This time, instead of following humanity's heritage back to the first women, Sykes looks forward to a possible future without men. The seeds of the book's topics were sown when Sykes met a pre-eminent pharmaceutical company chairman who shared his surname. Using the Y chromosome, which is passed nearly unchanged from father to son, the author found that he shared a distant ancestor with the other Sykes. Along the way, he discovered that the Y chromosome was worth examining more closely. The first third of *Adam's Curse* is devoted to a clear and comprehensive lesson about genetics, the second narrates several fascinating stories of tracing ancestry via the Y chromosome, and the last chapters explore the history of male humanity and its future. Some readers will eagerly skim until they reach Chapter 21, where Sykes gets to the heart of the matter--why and how the Y chromosome has created a world where men overwhelmingly own the wealth and power, commit the crimes, and fight the wars. He uses the structural puniness of the Y chromosome to demonstrate that men are as unnecessary biologically as they are dominant socially. Sykes' provocative and quite personal book is likely to be unpopular among science readers who prefer their biology divorced from sociology, but his points taken in context will be difficult to refute. --*Therese Littleton*

From Publishers Weekly

Well-known Oxford geneticist Sykes (*The Seven Daughters of Eve*), in this lively and thought-provoking book, gives a genetic twist to the battle between the sexes. All human existence, he says, stems from the battle between the X and Y chromosomes to further their own reproduction at the expense of the other. The Y chromosome is passed on only by fathers, while mitochondrial DNA is passed on only by mothers. Sykes shows that many members of several Scottish clans (most notably the Macdonalds) can be traced via their Y chromosomes back to a common ancestor. Researchers have also been able to trace the extent of Viking settlement and intermarriage in the British Isles and northern Europe through Y chromosome distribution. Sykes's argument for a genetic role in homosexuality will undoubtedly be controversial. Using Dean Hamer's pedigrees, he claims that evidence points less to a "gay gene" than to mitochondrial DNA playing the leading role in a Machiavellian plot to further its own reproduction. Sykes concludes by noting that, as evidenced by declining sperm counts and high percentages of abnormal sperm, among other variables, the Y chromosome is a genetic mess and is deteriorating so quickly that men could become extinct. Those who find that a happy thought will want to snap up this book, as well as readers interested in learning what our chromosomes tell us about where we came from and where we may be headed. 6 illus.

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Sykes, a geneticist at Oxford who studies DNA to help explain human history, explored mDNA and the origins of women in *The Seven Daughters of Eve*. Here, he turns to their stronger or weaker half, depending on who's talking. He draws from different scientific fields to map out the battle between the sexes at its tiniest level. Some parts are riveting, other parts are too speculative: is homosexuality really a subversive matriarchal tactic? Overall, Sykes fascinates with asides that resemble those of the best science writers, but leaves too many vague ideas about genetic determinism floating around. Still, it's a compelling read, the "dark side of the maternal tale" told in his previous book (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*).

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Users Review

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Monica Ceja:

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