



Temptress: From the Original Bad Girls to Women on Top

Jane Billinghurst

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According to Jane Billinghurst, men created the idea of the temptress — an irresistible woman bent on bringing them down — to justify the fact that they so often surrender to women, especially in the bedroom. In this fascinating study, she examines this vision in history, mythology, in the Bible, artwork, and film. She traces the evolution of the temptress from an almost demonic presence in folklore to current in-your-face performers like Madonna.

The changing image of the temptress reflects the ebb and flow of men's fears and fantasies, as well as women's self-possession and power. When men feel threatened by women's control, temptresses are seen as dangerous. When there is a lull in the battle of the sexes, these women become objects of fantasies. Billinghurst makes the case that when men begin to accept women as equals, the figure of the temptress will serve to accommodate both male and female desires.



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