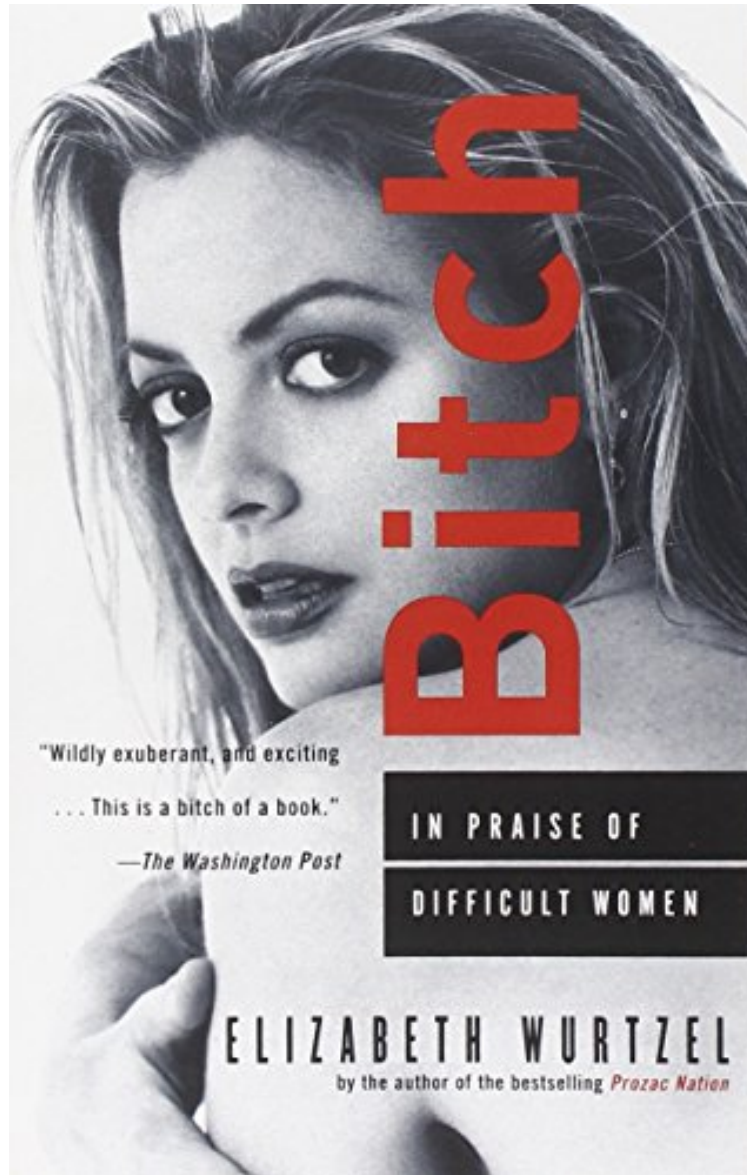


Bitch: In Praise of Difficult Women

Elizabeth Wurtzel

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#360071 in Books Elizabeth Wurtzel 1999-05-18 1999-05-18Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.01 x .96 x 5.14l, .71 #File Name: 0385484011448 pagesBitch In Praise of Difficult Women | File size: 35.Mb

Elizabeth Wurtzel : Bitch: In Praise of Difficult Women before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Bitch: In Praise of Difficult Women:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. An average BitchBy Victoria TimpanyI am a HUGE Elizabeth Wurtzel fan..but Bitch disappointed me.. It's poorly written and how can you not know that Elizabeth I signed Mary Queen of Scotts death warrant! Or at least get it fact checked.Read MORE, NOW, AGAIN...now theres a book.0 of 0

people found the following review helpful. The Blonde in the Bleachers By Constance Plumley Brassy essays from the Courtney Love of letters. 2 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Willing to bare her breasts for her beliefs By A Customer When I first saw the cover of this book, I thought it sad that in today's world even as intelligent a woman as Elizabeth Wurtzel has to take off her shirt to sell her book. After reading the book, though, I have to admire Ms. Wurtzel for believing so strongly in her message that she will pose topless on the cover of her own book. The only way for a woman to express her personal power in today's world is through her sexuality, Ms. Wurtzel is saying, and to express her power she bares her breasts.

From the author of the bestselling *Prozac Nation* comes one of the most entertaining feminist manifestos ever written. In five brilliant extended essays, she links the lives of women as demanding and disparate as Amy Fisher, Hillary Clinton, Margaux Hemingway, and Nicole Brown Simpson. Wurtzel gives voice to those women whose lives have been misunderstood, who have been dismissed for their beauty, their madness, their youth. *Bitch* is a brilliant tract on the history of manipulative female behavior. By looking at women who derive their power from their sexuality, Wurtzel offers a trenchant cultural critique of contemporary gender relations. Beginning with Delilah, the first woman to supposedly bring a great man down (latter-day Delilahs include Yoko Ono, Pam Smart, Bess Myerson), Wurtzel finds many biblical counterparts to the men and women in today's headlines. She finds in the story of Amy Fisher the tragic plight of all Lolitas, our thirst for their brief and intense flame. She connects Hemingway's tragic suicide to those of Sylvia Plath, Edie Sedgwick, and Marilyn Monroe, women whose beauty was an end, ultimately, in itself. Wurtzel, writing about the wife/mistress dichotomy, explains how some women are anointed as wife material, while others are relegated to the role of mistress. She takes to task the double standard imposed on women, the cultural insistence on goodness and society's complete obsession with badness: what's a girl to do? Let's face it, if women were any real threat to male power, "Jennifer Flowers would be sitting behind the desk of the Oval Office," writes Wurtzel, "and Bill Clinton would be a lounge singer in the Excelsior Hotel in Little Rock." *Bitch* tells a tale both celebratory and cautionary as Wurtzel catalogs some of the most infamous women in history, defending their outsize desires, describing their exquisite loneliness, championing their take-no-prisoners approach to life and to love. Whether writing about Courtney Love, Sally Hemings, Bathsheba, Kimba Wood, Sharon Stone, Princess Di--or waxing eloquent on the hideous success of *The Rules*, the evil that is *The Bridges of Madison County*, the twisted logic of *You'll Never Make Love in This Town Again*--Wurtzel is back with a bitchography that cuts to the core. In prose both blistering and brilliant, *Bitch* is a treatise on the nature of desperate sexual manipulation and a triumph of pussy power.

.com Elizabeth Wurtzel, an ex-rock critic for *The New Yorker*, won controversial fame with her bestselling 1994 memoir *Prozac Nation: Young and Depressed in America*, which described how Prozac saved the precocious Harvard grad from suicide. Her second book, *Bitch* is a celebration of the defiant, rock roll spirit of self-destructive women through the ages: Delilah, Amy Fisher, Princess Di, and hundreds more (including the awesomely reckless Wurtzel). There is no comprehensible central line of argument, perhaps because the author did her exhaustive research and writing on a speedy Kerouac-esque drug binge that, by her own admission, sent her to rehab upon the book's conclusion. But Wurtzel has the remains of a fine mind: her insights are often sharp, sometimes bitchy, and always shameless as she zooms in a very few pages from *The Oresteia* to O.J. to her first crush on a fictional character (Heathcliff) to Jim Thompson's *The Killer Inside Me*, Richard Pryor, Chrissie Hynde, *Leaving Las Vegas*, *Gone with the Wind*, Sylvia Plath's "Daddy," *Schindler's List*, *Oliver!*, *Carousel*, and Andrea Dworkin. Most pop culture pundits incline to grandiose blather, but Wurtzel is punchy, and her quotes are more often apt than pretentious. *Bitch* is like a Mr. Toad's Wild Ride in a library, with frequent rampages through the film and music archives. Like rock music, Wurtzel's prose style lives for the moment. She glories in breaking rules to bits, is never giddier than when she's saying something shocking, and apparently has no moral code except self-expression--with the attitude volume knob cranked up to 11. --Tim Appelo From *Library Journal* There is little praise for women in Wurtzel's hyperbolic rant about "bad girls" and their relationship to Western society. Indeed, hip turns of phrase frequently replace logic in this often smug and overwritten screed. In her defense, Wurtzel (*Prozac Nation*, LJ 8/94) has taken on a huge project, and every now and again she introduces a startling insight about how women manipulate situations to control their lives. Her look at the biblical tale of Samson and Delilah is particularly instructive in elucidating the history of our reaction to the alluringly repulsive femme fatale. Likewise, her presentation of both mythic and real women who flaunt their "pussy power" makes for provocative reading. Nonetheless, nearly a quarter of the book focuses on Nicole Brown Simpson (who few would call a "difficult woman") and is shockingly mean-spirited. While she lambastes the Simpson jury as "just plain stupid," we never learn how she knows what the jury did not: that O.J. killed Nicole. Since she was not in the courtroom, her cavalier dismissal of the verdict rankles and casts doubt on her other arguments. Worse, she seems to believe that violence is endemic to being "crazy in love," and her writing romanticizes the black eye and slapped cheek as proof of passionate involvement. In addition, Wurtzel completely ignores lesbians?an odd omission since the expression of Sapphic love represents a blatant rejection of "good girl" norms?and dismisses the happily single, writing that "it would be easier to eliminate racism or end poverty or cure illiteracy or dethrone Fidel Castro

than it would to make girls stop wanting to be brides." Recommended only as catalyst for debate.-?Eleanor J. Bader, New School for Social Research, New YorkCopyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.From Kirkus sThe epithet bitch has no male equivalent, and Wurtzel explains this inequity in a series of overgrown essays that swings from insightful to banal. At its best, Wurtzel's discursive style is akin to soapbox oratory. Studying women throughout history, from Delilah to Zelda Fitzgerald, who have gained influence by using their sexuality to manipulate men and events, Wurtzel points out that this path has often been the only option for women seeking to be both powerful and sexy. But a woman who uses sex appeal to gain power is also likely to be dismissed, vilified, or, at the very least, labeled dangerous or difficult. But while there's some thoughtful analysis, a lot of entertaining information, and a good deal of clever writing, the book digresses too often from its central notion to persuade any but the already converted that the world can't handle difficult women. Indeed, it appears that what has proven most difficult for bitches has been handling their own power. Wurtzel identifies with their difficult choices and suffering and helps us empathize, yet her attitude toward the women she chooses to study often seems ambivalent. Expositions on desire, anger, sex, and madness figure throughout this serpentine analysis. Mostly her message gets bogged down in a tangle of bitching. As in her previous work, Prozac Nation (1994), Wurtzel generalizes from her own experience. To rephrase a Muriel Rukeyser poem she cites, the world would not split open if one woman told the truth about her life. ``It would more likely derogate such `truth' by reducing it to no more than a silly girl's excessive emotionalism," Wurtzel writes, taking a preemptive strike at her detractors. At its worst, the book becomes an extended defense of Wurtzel's own recalcitrant ``bad" behavior. Wurtzel's talent for provocative prose and sexy subjects perfectly lends itself to a screed on female power that is refreshing and irritating by turns. (Author tour) -- Copyright 1998, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.