

# bitch

tree hugging, money-grubbing, tofu eating, backstabbing & girl scouting  
Plus: Katha Pollitt!

*feminist response to pop culture*



Reefer Madness • BMV1000



Snaking Bitch • BMV1000



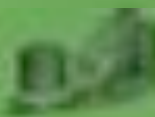
Money Eye • BMV1000



Tree Hugger • BMV1000



Green Dollar • BMV1000

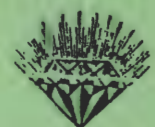


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# “Newspaper” has zero “journalistic ethics”

I've always considered the Murdoch-owned *New York Post* a “newspaper,” not a newspaper. And this past June, that impression was underscored by the tabloid’s fun-with-quotation-marks treatment of a story about the sexual assault of a teenager. The unfortunate headline? “TV-Repair Fiend ‘Rapes’ Teen.”

Given the quotation marks, I expected to read a story trivializing the alleged assault of a woman by an acquaintance or by a well-respected pillar of the community, or possibly a piece bashing statutory-rape laws as punishing innocent adult men for their affairs with so-called Lolitas. Had the rape in question fallen into either of those categories, the headline would still have been wildly inappropriate. But the alleged

assault described as “rape” was one in which, as the paper reported, a stranger entered a teenager’s home ostensibly to fix her television, raped her, and shortly thereafter was arrested and “charged with first-degree rape and criminal sexual act.”

Pretty cut-and-dried. And this wasn’t the first time the *Post* has played fast and loose with quotation marks, either—another recent headline blared “Gay ‘Bias’ Victim Clings to Life.” We get it, *NYP*—you’re right-wing, and you think that accusations of rape and discrimination are a load of liberal hogwash. But there’s a difference between journalism and “journalism,” and you’ve defined it perfectly. —J.L.P.

## Youth and CONSEQUENCES

I admit it: I live in fear of opening a fresh issue of *Glamour* and finding myself on the “Dos and Don’ts” page with that dreaded black bar across my eyes. They haven’t snapped my photo—yet—even though I’m planning to willfully violate one of the magazine’s tenets: When I turn 30, I have no intention of giving up MySpace.

In the August 2006 issue, 79 percent of *Glamour* readers declared those who have reached the big 3-0 too aged for the site. There’s no specific reason given, but who needs one? **To fashion mags, age is just a number—one that should appear to be as low as possible.** “Look and feel sexy at 20, 30, 40” screams *Glamour*’s September 2006 cover, as if sexiness, like milk, spoils after a certain date. Worse than this formulaic breakdown is that the magazine offers no advice for being sexy beyond one’s 40s. Either *Glamour* believes most women have mastered it by then or—more likely—they’ve accepted the tired trope that women past their 50th birthday can’t be sexy.

Those older women—sexy or not—might turn to *Harper’s Bazaar* for style advice. While the magazine routinely offers fashion tips for women “70+,” its guidance is still stuck on

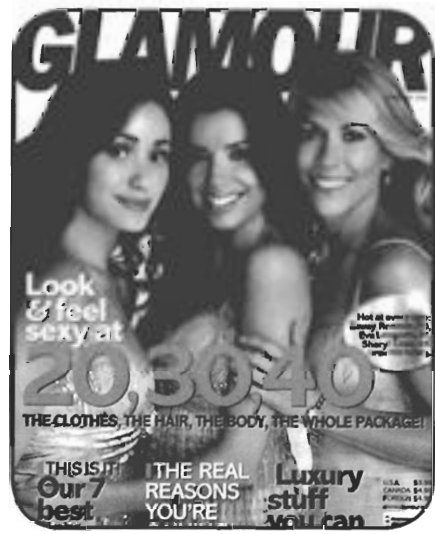
the stereotypical dichotomy of a young woman’s sex appeal and a senior citizen’s lack thereof. Predictably, their suggestions for older women are depressingly prim: Naming

Barbara Walters as a style icon, the magazine recommends “subtle prints, cashmere, and gray pearls.” Whether that indicates classic or dowdy, the message is clear: Women so old should make no attempt at style or sex appeal.

Still, young women don’t have it any better in “Terrific Style by Age, by Size, by Shape, by Color, by Michael Kors” in August’s *InStyle*. The curiously orange designer relies—much like fashion itself—not upon the reality of women’s lives, but on arbitrary assessments of what our lives are like at any given age. “When you’re in your 20s, your girlishness is front and center,” he says, urg-

ing us (and Kirsten Dunst) to dress accordingly, and thereby equating younger women with children.

But the age-related nadir is *Cosmopolitan*’s September 2006 roundup “Everything You Need to Know About Your 30s,” which reads like a parody of pamphlets passed out in a junior-high health class: “Are you supposed to know what you want? Will parts of your body begin to sag? Will



you have to act, like, mature?” There are a few snippets of sound advice, but one sidebar undermines them completely by announcing that women in their 30s comprise five of the first ten women in *People's* 100 Most Beautiful issue and five of eight *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit-issue cover models. It's not exactly earth-shattering (or helpful) to learn that you can still be attractive beyond age 30...if you were beautiful before you crossed that dreaded threshold.

Ideally, women's magazines would offer style advice based not on chronology, but on events. A woman may need a professional wardrobe at 20 or 60. She may desire stylish maternity clothes at 25 or 45. Few 20-year-olds would dress

in head-to-toe tweed and even fewer 70-year-olds would purchase a halter top, but it's probably not *Bazaar's* ultimatums that keep them from doing so. It's our lives and budgets that dictate our style choices—which makes *Vogue's* depiction of thirtysomething Heather Mnuchin wearing a ball gown and holding her toddler aloft—in her kitchen, yet!—so laughably off-base. (Then again, *Vogue* also considers “pregnant” a body type, so we can only expect so much.)

Fashion magazines' overweening emphasis on how we *should* look and act has always been a battle real women can't win. Buying into baseless ideas of appropriateness is a bad idea at any age. —Wendy Felton

## ill repute

Maybe not every celebrity who cries “eating disorder!” is doing so just to make headlines, but as people cheer *American Idol* contestant Katharine McPhee for confessing to her illness, I can't help but wonder if, at least in some cases, the extra publicity is a welcome bonus.

Tabloid coverage of celebrities like McPhee, Mary-Kate Olsen, Nicole Richie, and, less recently, Princess Diana has long glamorized anorexia and bulimia, creating an envied club of beautiful, starving young women. But even at their most skeletal, the image of eating disorders projected by celebrities does not parallel the reality of the illness. A severe bulimic wouldn't have the physi-

cal stamina or mental clarity to perform on *American Idol*, yet McPhee recently graced the cover of *People*, looking radiant and self-assured, with the headline “My Battle with Bulimia.”

**Her message, according to the article, is “Don't try this at home,” but the implication is “I survived and am still beautiful and talented!”**



cal drop in estrogen levels. We don't hear about the menopausal symptoms at age 25, or the extreme moodiness and irritability that isolate women with eat-

ing disorders from their friends and family. Such unpleasantness are air-brushed out of magazine photographs, leading us to assume that a woman can throw up regularly, touch up her makeup, and still look and feel great.

Despite what celebrity magazines suggest, a person won't completely recover from an eating disorder by graduating from a 30-day treatment program any more than an obese person will permanently lose weight with the fad diet outlined on the next page. Like people with drug or alcohol addictions, folks with eating disorders may look healthy again, but the temptation to relapse is always present. Our society would like to believe that eating disorders among young women aren't as dangerous or as widespread as they really are, and that delusion is supported every time a successful, healthy-looking woman is cast as the face of the problem. —Sarah Tanksley