



Bitch: In Praise of Difficult Women

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No one better understands the desire to be bad than Elizabeth Wurtzel. *Bitch* is a brilliant tract on the history of manipulative female behavior. By looking at woman 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 woman in today's headlines. 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 these women whose lives have been misunderstood, who have been dismissed for their beauty, their madness, their youth. 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, "Gennifer 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 live and love. Whether writing about Courtney Love, Sally Hemmings, 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.

Bitch: In Praise of Difficult Women Details

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Carolyn Gee says

pedantic and pretentious.

Beth says

Despite this book's many shortcomings, I loved it. Wurtzel is a complete narcissist, and she wrote this book while addicted to Ritalin, and it shows in the book's wild, rambling nature. But, despite the disorganization, I enjoyed her tribute to difficult women who refused to be selfless and submissive, many of whom I really admire (Madonna and Anne Sexton in particular). Granted, many of her subjects weren't exactly good role models, but you have to agree that society punishes women with these qualities far more severely than men with the same traits...in my humble opinion. Wurtzel is such a talented writer with a gift for provocation. She shares many of the same qualities of the women she writes about (a refusal to apologize for her aggressive sex life, and extreme emotional volatility). Writers who review her work always seem to bring this up. It seems somewhat unfair to me that personal comments about her life are always made, but I guess she doesn't make any attempts to separate her personal life from her work, so there you go. Anyway, I have loved all her books, and I hope to see more in the future.

Loren says

It doesn't matter if this book was written on a wild coke bender three months past deadline. It's soulful, urgent, insightful and practically jumps off the page and chokes you to death with hyperbole that, being somewhat hyperbolic myself, I find endearing rather than annoying. The Hillary Clinton and Amy Fisher chapters stand out in my mind as particularly powerful and insightful. This book is less "in praise" of difficult women than an inquiry into why it is so very difficult to live your life the way you want when you're a woman, period. It runs the reader ragged in a good way, making you feel like you've just spent a week listening to an extremely intelligent but probably crazy friend of yours tell you all about life and how she sees it.

Anita Smith says

I finished reading Bitch last night, and it was a total letdown. Which is such a shame because it had such great potential and started out so strong. I thought it was going to be a book about how women throughout history have been mislabeled as "bitches"- women like Joan of Arc, Marie Antoinette, Martha Stewart, the like- and how they were quickly branded as "bitches" when they were just trying to live their lives and do their thing- like men do, only women are identified as being "assertive" and "bitchy" when they do it. I thought it would be liberating and empowering and make me want to burn my bra and swear off men forever.

Instead, it was just this big, rambling mess that hardly talked about women at all! It was more like a 400-page rant of everything that the author hated about society. It was like reading Courtney Love's journal. She gave away plots and endings to so many books and movies, which pissed me off, and there were typos, which really pissed me off! And she spent a significant amount of time on the Amy Fisher and Nicole Simpson cases, which was odd. The author made, like, ten great points throughout the book, but the rest of it was just so chaotic and confusing, that by the end I was just skimming it so I could finish it (plus I was sick of all the book and movie spoilers, so when I saw the name of a book or movie up ahead, I knew to go ahead and jump to the next page.

I finished it last night and went on goodreads to see what other people thought of this book, and it got extremely mixed reviews. But something I read in a lot of the reviews is that the author confesses in a later rant manifesto that she wrote a lot of Bitch when she was strung out on drugs, namely coke, and the sad thing is, then it made more sense. The book definitely is a ranting and confusing muse and once I heard she was coked out for most of it, I was like, ohhhhh, okay, I get it now. But it still was not a very good book.

I gave it one star for the few good points she managed to make amidst the chaos.

Dana Jerman says

I love this book. The arguments are all over pop culture, but enough is noted about waves of feminism that this text is very accessible, and could be incorporated in a classroom quite easily.

Chris says

So okay, I need to tell you right now and upfront, I couldn't finish this and am giving it a one star rating based on one section of the book that lasts a page.

When I first started reading this book, I found Wurtzel's narrative voice to be a little confusing. She was all over the place, but then you get use to it. I have to say, that Wurtzel's look at the how Amy Fisher thing was very good. Not that I spend any time thinking about Amy Fisher, but Wurzel does really bring a good new light to it. Her reading of Sexton and Plath is pretty good.

So, you say, what's the problem and aren't you being awfully judgemental considering that you liked what you read before you got to the infamous place?

No, I'm not. So Wurtzel takes a look at Hillary Clinton, and considering that this book was written when Clinton was still the President, she can't take in Clinton's post White House Career. Every so, I think Wurzel's theory about why people didn't like Mrs Sec of State was interesting, and was wondering how Wurzel would change it if she could.

And then Wurtzel pulled out the Tudors. She mentioned Elizabeth I and Mary, Queen of Scots of examples of women in power because they had the power. Then she mentioned how neither one got beheaded.

Now this is NOT a small mistake. An accidently slip of date, it really isn't. And to be frank, I never really

would think of Mary Queen of Scots as some type of pre-feminist movement role model. Okay, she had a more violent in-fighting to deal with than Elizabeth, but she did some awfully stupid things -think her marriages and her fleeing to Elizabeth. Why not mention Catherine de Medici? Then it occurred to me that perhaps Wurtzel meant Mary Tudor (aka Bloody Mary). But even that doesn't work considering how Mary viewed herself in marriage and she wasn't a success.

And that's when the how book feel apart. I think I could get by a difference in a opinion of the characters of the two Marys, but to say that Mary Queen of Scots kept her head is a HUGE mistake. And this book was published long enough ago that the error could have been fixed. Take for instance the small error in *The Fall of Anne Boleyn: A Countdown*, an error that the author acknowledges and corrected. Yes, I guess it is easier to do that with ebooks, but how many years ago was Wurtzel's book written?

Lani says

Good sweet Jesus this book is... strange. I have read this at least once before and really enjoyed it. Since then I have read more by Wurtzel - specifically *More, Now, Again*, which basically outlines her breakdown while writing this book.

Reading this for the second (possibly third) time was suddenly eye-opening. The writing is frequently rambling, the references are repetitive, and the arguments are totally incoherent. I'm not entirely sure what ties the book together other than Wurtzel's own exuberance. It's an 400 page womens studies paper, and not even a particularly good one.

That being said, the book is engrossing, and some bits are better than others. However, after reading other similar contemporary femenist manifestos, this one isn't particularly strong. I'm actually a little disappointed that this didn't strike me as so exciting this time through, since I had really thought it was enlightening before.

I think the point at which I lost all confidence in the book was when I found a bit that talks about women in power and cites 2 queens of the British Isles - Elizabeth I and Mary, Queen of Scots. She points out that they were both well-respected monarchs (and still are), and that neither were beheaded. Except, well, Mary was pretty notoriously beheaded at the orders of Elizabeth herself. *SIGH* I'm actually embarassed that I didn't catch this glaring mistake the first time through!

There is an interesting chapter about Hilary Clinton, which is particularly amusing and timely, and many of the references that I didn't grasp were due to my ignorance of the Bible and old classic movies. Perhaps some chapters would have been more enjoyable with that background.

Despite all the flaws of the book, there are aspects of it that are entertaining, but it just doesn't have much to say.

Bridget says

By contrast to *Prozac Nation*, this book is a coke binge of great ideas about feminism and class and big ideas that was apparently ummm written on a coke binges. I thought it was fascinating and it is de facto

responsible for my addiction to (the now defunct... le sigh) crimelibrary.com.

Hava says

I wanted to like "Bitch". I really did. The biggest problem with Wurtzel's book is that it gives up on its premise halfway through. It promises to dig in and give a hard cold look at why women get labeled "bitches", and she never follows through with it. She starts off strong with an analysis of the Delilah/Sampson biblical story, but in the next chapter she devotes nearly 75 pages to Amy Fisher, who while certainly a victim, isn't anyone's idea of a bitch. She's a 13 year old girl who got swindled and criminally taken advantage of, but it's a leap of the imagination to try and equate her with Elizabeth Taylor, Gloria Steinem, or other examples of "difficult" women that Wurtzel attempts to equate her with. While it is evident that Wurtzel is a good, capable writer, she still has a tendency to diverge from the point she's trying to beat into our heads. She seems like she's going to have a breakthrough but then she rambles off on her own tangent- again and again and again. It's really messy, and you wonder why Wurtzel's editors didn't have a crack at her. She sent herself off to drug rehab immediately after this book was published, so that explains the messy, pseudo-stream of consciousness babbles. Ultimately, this book is more about Wurtzel's own worldview than it is a book about difficult women. She inserts so much of her own personal dramas, complaints and rants about her personal life into the book, it becomes irritating and self-indulgent.

I hesitate to call her a feminist because she has such a bleak and negative view of feminism. In her view, feminism didn't do any real good for anybody. The chapter she devotes to Sylvia Plath and Ann Sexton, while greatly written, is disturbing in its glamorization of suicide. Wurtzel clearly identifies with them- and in the chapter before she ends with this feel-good bon mot: "And when the time is right, if it comes to that, you can drive that car into a garage, turn on the engine, feel the air fill with carbon monoxide, feel the onset of asphyxia, feel your breathing slow, feel your body stop feeling, feel the only real freedom you will ever know". Basically the equivalent of sticking your head in an oven is the only way you'll be free. Not to mention the passage where she ticks off a list strong women-- which includes Leni Reifenthal. Really Liz? "Bitch" exhausts the reader- and did she really need to devote nearly 100 pages to Nicole Brown Simpson? Her examination of the mindset of abused and battered women, and how they are complicit in their own abuse is fascinating and great reading...but it belongs to another book. It would make an eye-opening thesis of its own, but it's out of place in a book like this. I kept wanting to yell "okay, okay, I GET IT". I wish Liz had cut out the fat, or that her editors cared enough to do it for her. A mixed bag.

Meika says

I think it's easy to dismiss this book as some coke-head nonsense. Crazy bitch ranting about stuff that pisses her off. But as a non-coke-addicted peer in age group and relative socioeconomic status, I have to say she hits the mark. If you take the trouble to follow her, it's relevant.

I read the reviews here before picking this up, so I was prepared for the stream of consciousness blogish ranting that comprised the primary style of this book. She didn't always get her facts straight and made assumptions that she didn't state up front... yeah yeah yeah. If you take this for what it is, which is a well-educated 30-something lipstick feminist going off half-cocked about what this generation of feminists is up against, it's good shit. You have to open this book with the backstory that Elizabeth Wurtzel has a degree from Harvard, squanders it being a Manhattan socialite, and wrote this book while high on coke and ritalin. It has more in common with Henry Miller than any sort of well-structured treatise on women's rights.

Anyway, I like stream of consciousness, Henry Miller, and bitchy rants about the state of modern feminism so I really liked this book.

QS says

I'll just go right ahead and join the army of reviewers who really wanted to like this book. I mean, you get called a bitch enough times in your life, you're bound to want to read a book praising bitches, right? Right.

It's a pity this book didn't provide what the cover advertised.

Wurtzel isn't praising "difficult women" so much as she's romanticizing mental illness, depression, and abusive relationships. I could survive the first two, kind of. I didn't LIKE it, but at least part of me felt that it was better to try to glorify mental illness than vilify it. I rolled my eyes, noted to myself that (for this and other reasons) this was going to be a three star book, and carried on reading. But in that last actual chapter, the one supposedly about Nicole Brown, I damn near threw the book in anger. I'm not normally violent toward books, I swear; unfortunately, when a woman who call herself a feminist starts victim-blaming abuse victims and pretty much says it's okay if a man hits his girlfriend because, y'know, *that's how men express their anger*, then I am just done. Absolutely done. Sadly, at this point I'd obviously already read most of this rambling near-incoherent monstrosity, so I grit my teeth and finished the damn book while quietly seething about everything in it that bothered me from the beginning. Because, frankly, if this tripe is supposed to be some great "feminist manifesto", I can see why some women are ashamed to be seen as a feminist.

Besides all this BS, there were a few other things that bothered me:

- 1) Wurtzel's hypocrisy and inconsistency. I'm sure there were some I didn't catch because of the rambling diatribe, but the one that stood out to me the most? In one section she talks about how the institution of marriage is terrible for women and blahblahblah if you're reading a feminist book I hope you've heard this argument. But in her epilogue she would not stop talking about how she's thirty years old and hasn't gotten married and had kids yet, and it's so terrible because she wants to do so just like everyone else! Listen, either marriage is bad for women and we should stop doing it, in which case STOP WHINING, or, you know what? Just stop whining. I cared for a brief moment, but it just went on and on and on and yeah, no, I'm done.
- 2) The constant never-ending pop culture name dropping. Uh, lady, not everyone who reads your book is a pop culture junkie. More specifically, not everyone is going to have been alive/a teenager or older in the nineties to know the pop culture of the nineties. Heck, I was born in 1987. I listened to Nirvana in the 90's because I had older brothers who did. And, until I read this book, I was literally under the impression that Courtney Love became a musician after Kurt Cobain died and nobody knew she existed until he did. Not even shitting you. I've never even heard any of Courtney Love's songs. I've probably never heard any of the Riot Grrrl bands she was going on about, except, like, the ones that made it big. And don't get me started on the movie stars. I knew, like, Glen Close, and Hedy Lamar, and the characters in *Gone with the Wind*. Pop culture is only current in the time that it's from. And good lord were the constant names tiring.
- 3) Sort of related: the constant religious references. I'll sort of got over it because, whatever, it's her book. But at the same time, I felt like in a book called that's advertised without the mention of religion anywhere, constantly referring back to religion was just too much for me. I don't remember what she was referring to, but I recall her saying something about closeness to god being why some people were less, uh, violent,

maybe? Terrible? Something kind of ridiculous. It was the biggest eyeroll ever for me. I don't know. Just maybe keep your religion out of my feminism, guys? Like, it's cool if you do it individually, but don't pretend it has anything to do with me.

4) I don't know if this part is because it's been so long since the book was published, or if Wurtzel just didn't know her stuff, but every so often there would be some incorrect fact mentioned that frustrated me. Like the actress with the lobotomy, Frances something? (I always forget her last name. Always.) Never actually got a lobotomy. It was made up for the movie. And a lot of Freud's theories have been debunked for ages, but I don't know if "ages" means "actually a long time" or "a long time for someone under thirty", so I can't say if those theories fell out of favor before the book was published. Still, incorrect facts make me unhappy.

So why did I give this two stars? Because every so often, Wurtzel would manage to come up with a point that I felt was well made and either agreed with or could understand her point of view. Biggest one? Her rant on Hilary Clinton. I'm a big fan of Hil, not gonna lie. BUT, after reading the author's view on why the then-First Lady maybe wasn't the best feminist role model, I can see why Wurtzel disliked her so much. But I did point at the book and laugh when she sarcastically mentioned people "hoping" for Hilary to one day be Secretary of State.

Ira Therebel says

I am actually someone who does call myself a feminist. Not one of the people who refuse to do so because they "believe in equality", think that men are the real victims of society or because they don't like what some radical said in the 70's. But I disliked the book even though I hoped to like it. Giving it a bigger rating would be rating it for what I hoped it would be, not what it really was.

To start the book is not about any research, it is all opinion. And those are outdated. Not because of the examples given but because of the author's attitude. I cringed when she blamed Mary Jo Buttafuoco who got shot in the face for staying with her husband while saying that Amy Fisher at least tried to do something against her situation. Shooting a wife of your lover in the face is hardly doing something, maybe if she shot the guy I could see it, maybe. It is interesting that she has trouble to understand the situation even though when reading what I googled on it was so obvious any normal feminist would see. Also now over 10 years after the book was published one can't say that she is the loser in the situation since she not just survived but also divorced him at the end, while Amy Fisher after getting out of jail met him several time for publicity and obviously was not over him. I also didn't like the rant on how it is not a big deal to molest teenage boys because for men it is different. Such an outdated idea considering what it does to human development.

The author obviously doesn't like sex very much. She keeps on talking how it is all for men and women who are promiscuous or in sex industry made a wrong choice and can't really enjoy it. This is what holds women back, the fact that people still keep on seeing us as unable to be truly sexual for ourselves and "feminists" like the author are not helping. Don't tell me to be ashamed of my body and hide it, lady, I know what I like and don't need your old school opinion on it.

Well the worst thing about the book is that it doesn't have a point, nor does it stick to what is supposed to be the topic. The introduction was interesting. But then it was all off. Most women she describes in it are not someone who are those strong women who don't take shit and live for themselves instead of fitting in and would fit into the classification of "bitch". The only ones who would fit would be Delilah, who isn't even real but a Biblical figure, and Courtney Love, who didn't get too much space in this book. Other than that those are abused women who stay with their battering husband, underage girls who are with older men and suicidal

celebrities. Even Hilary Clinton at that time is seen as a woman who gave up her career for her cheating husband. How are they strong, difficult bitches? And there is no praise for them in the book either as the cover promises, it is more bringing the ones who make their choices down and criticize them. The whole book seems more like a gossip column covering two big court cases of the 90's and celebrity world instead being really interesting.

The book had potential and has some interesting paragraphs in it, such as the epilogue look at the women who decided to stay single and how society views them (desperate and unhappy) but it doesn't bring what it promise and the few interesting parts didn't stop me from disliking it.

Diann Blakely says

Perhaps the less-than-rapturous reception of BITCH had to do with its timing: the proliferation of memoirs was already appearing on various literary pundits' "Ten Worst Things About the Nineties" lists. Some argued that the form's renewed popularity proved how pandemic contemporary America's "culture of narcissism," to use Christopher Lasch's phrase, had become. Others point accusingly at a population of readers—and writers—who've grown too dimwitted or lazy to bother with fictional constructs like character development, plot, and complex points of view. But I think there's something different at work: our quest for authenticity. And as Wurtzel makes clear by her title and cover photograph, except for a few highlights in her coiffeur, no artificial ingredients are allowed here.

The form and structure are one with their subject: the push-pull created by cultural misogyny. Even Wurtzel--obviously--wants to appear in a public embrace of her own beauty and sexuality, but she's aware that the photograph is a "cover" in the most literal sense. She's highly unlikely to end up like Nicole Brown Simpson or Margaux Hemingway, two of her subjects, the former too-long complicit in her abuse at the hands of her famous husband, and the latter's fall into madness, various forms of what Louise Kaplan called "female perversions," and finally the decision to end her own life.

BITCH's construction and the aforementioned melding were wildly misunderstood; in fact, fresh fusillades--anti-memoir, anti-Wurtzel, and, most to the point if unrecognized, anti-female--were fired off immediately from reviewers who slammed the book as "self-indulgent," as many had PROZAC NATION. But this renewed criticism seemed odd, since BITCH deliberately and obviously expands the concerns of Wurtzel's earlier chronicle of her own depression to include the intellectual and social forces that shape the female self. Others misunderstood the book as a cultural study and thus found the subjective experience annoying. Yet one of the major links between the author's capacious, intricately connected meditations on "difficult women" is provided by Wurtzel's own life; and the book's shape conforms precisely to post-feminist theory, which argues that the rising action / climax / falling action / denouement is patterned not on universal truth but on male sexual response.

Yet memoir is often less than compelling when its author plods on that already worn-down road of tradition narrative or dramatic structure. (How, pray, does Shakespeare avoid it?--subplots and characters so paradoxical in their humanity that they travel switchbacks or undergo, in the case of other characters, sea changes.) Forcing BITCH's copious material, which ranges from biblical hermeneutics to grunge, into any other pattern would have been, at best, a case of date-rape. In fact, it's interesting to note that a significant majority of the aforementioned criticized memoirs have not only been written by women but stray beyond the predictable literary parameters. And BITCH brings with it a number of other problems endemic to the author and her stylistic treasons: the probably-unsettling-to-some erudition (she's a girl!, after all); the

blazing scorch of her intelligence; and the disavowal of any flattering shadows to fall across any of the darkness some would prefer to remain gently draped across our cultural misogyny.

Wurtzel's training for the task includes not only 12 years of orthodox Jewish schooling but also a prize-winning early career in music journalism, which began during her undergrad days at Harvard. Nevertheless, BITCH would be a substantially lesser accomplishment if Wurtzel's intellect weren't complemented by an enviable gift for metaphor. Tropes—"The Blonde in the Bleachers" and "There She [the Crazy Woman] Goes Again," to name two—become archetypal sources from which spring each chapter's complexly associative patterns of thought. Their characters include Delilah, Courtney Love, Anne Sexton, Amy Fisher, Lot's daughters, Liddy and Hillary, Sylvia Plath, Ingrid Bergman, Joyce Chopra, and Stevie Nicks, to cite a handful. The author joins them neither because of narcissistic lapses, nor simply because she feels equally vulnerable to the cultural forces that damaged, and in some cases destroyed, these women. Nor does she hold herself any less accountable for using whatever power she retains to combat these forces and to give meaningful shape to her own life.

(originally published, although in a slightly different form, in the NASHVILLE SCENE)

Lily Kauffman says

Killed a cockroach with it and then threw it away.

Tiffany says

I'll admit, when I first found this book, I thought it was going to be something different. I was excited to read about women misbehaving badly, the movers and the shakers who have made the world what it is today. Instead, I got a tome of size nine (or smaller) font, that read to me like one woman's gripe about everything that could possibly be wrong with the world. And to me... it felt like one gigantic contradiction. I was never really certain whether or not Ms. Wurtzel was batting for the men or the women when it came to "feminism". Was she in favour of women with mental illness shoving it in society's face by killing themselves, or seeking the help they desperately needed (but often refused to get...)?

I can honestly say that, despite the tiny font and the paragraph upon paragraph of ideas that I just felt conflicted from one idea to the next, I wanted MORE from this book. I wanted to hear about women who were empowered, not beleaguered by their lives. I wanted a celebration of women who behaved badly and got away with it, not the sad stories about the ones who didn't make it... I wanted the women whose death wasn't their notoriety, whose LIFE is what made them special... I feel like I didn't get any of that.

Wurtzel made me feel that wanting to get married and have children is a bad thing. That I should instead stay single and fuck around and feel empowered that way. I have never looked at marriage as enslaving myself to a man (and I've watched my parents be happily married for nearly forty years without thinking that my mom is remotely a slave to my father), but instead as a partnership with someone I love and respect. Because, ultimately, the delirious love fades, and what has to be left is a commitment to one another. Is it respectful for wives to stay with their husbands despite the fact that one or both has cheated? Or is it more empowering for the woman to walk away from the marriage, to tell her husband that she will not be cheated on? Or, if she is the cheater, to give him the dignity that he deserves to tell him that she's not interested in him anymore? This book read to me like a woman who had been slighted one too many times by a guy. Likely because she

shoved her feminism in his face like dirty laundry. She's likely the type who gets mad at a man holding the door for her, because she can hold her own damn door (when I tend to find it just polite to hold the door for anyone, regardless of their gender). Everyone gets hurt, everyone finds themselves in a relationship that knocks them off of their feet and makes them feel ruined for a bit. But is it the MAN who did it to you, or the situation? I don't begrudge how I act in any relationship. Although I have been hurt before, I still remain myself and I know that if it were not for the commitment I have, and the love I feel for this other person, I could walk and be on my own any time. I can still get married and be a woman.

The only thing that I did agree with Wurtzel is her suggestion that some women invite abuse upon themselves. Of course, that does not mean that in any circumstance abuse is okay, but "hit me once, shame on you, hit me twice, shame on me." I strongly believe that bad things happen every day that are entirely beyond our control, but some people simply invite them upon themselves. They let themselves be degraded and abused by people, because they don't think it's a "big deal." That it's simply the way their relationship is and no one else would understand. And so, when something truly horrific happens, it's hard to feel entirely sorry for them, because they just... should have known better. They should have stayed away. If your life is starting to feel like shit, and you're starting to act like shit, then get rid of the shitty people in your life! You don't HAVE to be abused. It's never love when someone really, really hurts you. And when you're unable to recognize that, or you even invite that in, well... I hope someone gets the message through to you before it's too late.

I'm sorry, Ms. Wurtzel, but this is just not what I was looking for. I'm sure there is an audience out there who wants to have every sad tale of women's defeat dropped on them, but I was certainly hoping for celebration. It is only at the very end of this book that Wurtzel even sheds the tiniest bit of positivity. She indicates that women who choose to forgive and rise above whatever horrible thing that has happened to them are true heroes. I believe this strongly. I have never been victimized or abused, so I don't know what it feels like to be truly beaten down. But to those women who are able to rise above it, to continue to forgive and love to not give the bastards the satisfaction of knowing that they brought you down... good for you. You are all an inspiration to little girls everywhere. Keep encouraging the world to rise above the ashes and rebuild.

Ps. Ms. Wurtzel... do you really think responding a question such as, "Why aren't you married?" with "Why aren't you thin?" is truly encouraging empowerment? If you're so empowered and proud of how amazing you are, then why wouldn't you rise above a statement that rubs you the wrong way and be proud of yourself? Uttering a retort that a junior high "popular" girl would come up with is just... sad.
