

On a Role Model for Dee
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Note: I've gotten some feedback that leads me to suspect that my attempt at irony in this thought fell flat. I want to make it clear up front that I think Miley Cyrus would be a bad role model for my daughter Dee, and that I would not encourage Dee to read *Vanity Fair* magazine.

My daughter Dee is fourteen now, a freshman in high school. Like every parent, I think about who in Dee's world she can look up to and emulate. It was reassuring this past week to find just such a person: the singer Miley Cyrus.

I was in my local Barnes & Noble book store checking out the used books and passed the magazine rack and noticed that Miley Cyrus was on the cover of the current *Vanity Fair* magazine; this was the March, 2019 issue. *Vanity Fair* is devoted to fashion, popular culture, and current events, and it has slick paper and is handsomely put together—the cover photo of Miley had a top-of-the-line fashion photographer look to it.

I remember Miley from ten years ago or so on the cable show *Hanna Montana*; she played teenager Hanna. Miley was around Dee's age back then, 13, 14, so she must be in her mid-twenties now. I had cable when *Hanna Montana* was on and saw a couple of episodes, and I remember Miley as having a very engaging presence, she stood out. I'm not surprised that she has gone on to a successful entertainment career as an adult, and to a position of major prominence in the popular culture--*Saturday Night Live* appearances, a huge social media following, and so on. Miley Cyrus is somebody really big in American life at the present time—a *Vanity Fair* cover alone is a good indication of that.

I follow show biz news and knew back in the *Hanna Montana* days that Miley is the daughter of singer Billy Ray Cyrus, who had a huge breakout hit in the early '90s with a song called "Achy

Breaky Heart.” Miley stirred up some controversy by posing topless, or apparently topless, for *Vanity Fair* when she was just fifteen. A lot of people thought it bordered on child pornography, and she apologized to her fans for doing that. And I remember reading somewhere that she adorned herself with 36 tattoos. But all that was years ago, and I know I need to keep an open mind about Miley as she is now. She was big in the news recently when her house in Malibu out in California burned down, and when she married the Australian actor Liam Hemsworth.

I thought it might be good if I get the *Vanity Fair* issue with Miley on the cover for Dee, so I took it off the shelf, and they have tables in Barnes & Noble and I sat at one of them and read the cover story on Miley to check it out.

It took me some time to find the article. The first pages of the magazine were devoted to double-page ads for Tiffany, Gucci, Dior, Prada, Bvlgari Roma, Lancôme Absolute Cream, Saint Laurent, Miu Miu, Omega, Michael Kors, Botega Veneta, Emporio Armani, Max Mara, Salvatore Ferragamo, Coach, and Versace, but then there is was, the table of contents page, “Miley Everlasting,” the title of the article, page 82. There was a picture of Miley next to the article listing and beneath it the credits for Miley’s cover photo: “Miley Cyrus wears a gown by Gucci; necklaces by Cartier. Hair Products by Rodin by Recine. Makeup by MAC. Nail enamel by Chanel. Hair by Bob Recine. Makeup by James Kaliardos. Manicure by Gina Edwards. Tailor, Tina Manners.”

With all the ads for super-pricey, haute bourgeoisie products, and Miley’s Gucci gown and Cartier necklaces and all, it did flash through my mind that Miley might be a shill for materialism and consumerism, but reading the cover article, I was reassured that that wasn’t the case. Clearly, Miley Cyrus is a thoughtful, down-to-earth young woman with her head in the right place, someone who, in both word and deed, represents the way forward in life for Dee and other teens.

From the article, Miley’s words:

“Sometimes I’ll even think: Why the fuck did I do that?”

“But, like: You know my truth. I also wrote a lot of this next record before my fucking entire house burned down and my whole fucking life changed.”

“Liam showed up and it was like, “What the fuck?”

“I got the journal that was next to me and just started writing out what I was feeling. Some of the feelings did not add up with the others. Some of them were super-angry; some of them were relieved in a way, which feels really fucking weird.”

“We’re redefining, to be fucking frank, what it looks like for someone that’s a queer person like myself to be in a hetero relationship.”

“Like, who gives a fuck if he’s a guy, if I’m a girl, or if he was a woman— who gives a fuck?”

“The key for me staying healthy and happy is by being the pilot and not the backseat driver. Thinking for myself. Sometimes that gets chalked up to an “I don’t give a fuck” attitude, but that’s not my narrative, I do give a fuck.”

“Both of my parents are big stoners. I remember one time producers on *Hanna Montana* screaming at me ‘cause they thought I was smoking pot in the dressing room. And I was like, ‘I’m not fucking smoking pot in the dressing room. Go knock on my fucking dad’s door.’”

“You know, I said I would move away if he [Trump] became president. We all said a bunch of shit we didn’t mean. Because we really thought: Maybe people will

listen. Maybe people will understand how detrimental this will be to the country if this happens. Obviously, they didn't. But for me to move away, what the fuck is that going to change?"

"My dad was already in the [entertainment] industry. I grew up in a fucking tour bus."

"I think, especially in this time, pop culture and politics are the same fucking thing. We've made a fucking celebrity our fucking president. People listen to what celebrities have to say more than activists half the time. So, by having that platform, what the fuck are you going to say?"

"There's this book that I was obsessed with called *The Untethered Soul*. And it tells you to get in a place by yourself and just be aware of how quick your mind fucking goes. You know how sometimes you're like: "Why am I even thinking about this?" I have that tendency to just let my brain drive me, to let my wild fucking thoughts drive me. But I really want to be the pilot of my decisions."

"I really want to be the pilot of my decisions." Yes! that's what I want for Dee. That sealed the deal for me. I bought that issue of *Vanity Fair* for Dee at the Barnes & Noble checkout counter and gave it to her with my strongest recommendation that she read carefully what Miley has to say, and to check out Miley on social media. I went on Amazon and ordered a couple of Miley's albums sent to Dee.

I assume the Miley cover story reflects *Vanity Fair's* elevated taste and enlightened editorial outlook, and I want Dee to be exposed to it each and every month. There was a card in the *Vanity Fair* issue I read that said I could get Dee a subscription to *Vanity*

Fair that would save up to 84% off the cover price. An 84% saving—that's really something. The card said that two years at \$24 was the best deal, and that it came with a free tote bag, so I went with the two-year subscription. I don't know how long it will take before Dee starts getting *Vanity Fair*, but it can't come soon enough for me.