

## Case 12: Jezebel Bounty

The Internet magazine *Jezebel* is a feminist presence on the web and has become known for a series called "photoshop of horrors." The series includes unedited versions of the photographs published by top women's magazines. Recently Jezebel offered a \$10,000 bounty for "pre-Photoshop images" from writer/actress Lena Dunham's Vogue photo shoot.<sup>53</sup> In short order someone produced the unedited photographs and Jezebel published them side-by-side with the significantly altered Vogue images.<sup>54</sup>

Jezebel's intention in asking for and publishing unedited photographs is to expose unrealistic images of women and the dramatic distortions required to attain magazine cover beauty even for magazine cover girls. On her television show *Girls*, Dunham has also taken aim at unrealistic body images, but she described Jezebel's bounty as predicated on "faux altruism." Dunham went on to defend the Vogue images, saying "Vogue isn't the place that we go to look at realistic women, Vogue is the place that we go to look at beautiful clothes and fancy places and escapism."<sup>55</sup>

Although there is clearly an element of fantasy in some of the Vogue photographs (one image has a pigeon digitally placed on Dunham's head) some argue that fashion magazine fantasies are harmful. Critics worry that digitally making models appear younger and thinner will lead consumers to internalize unrealistic and unattainable standards of what counts as normal or beautiful.<sup>56</sup> Some who acknowledge these concerns still suggest that there are times when uncovering distortion misses the point that a "different" person is being featured.

In a further twist, Annie Leibowitz, the photographer who shot Dunham for Vogue, has threatened a lawsuit based on the publication of unedited versions of her photographs. This has brought critical attention to the way that Jezebel obtains photographs by paying a "bounty" to people willing to surreptitiously obtain unedited versions.<sup>57</sup> Jezebel has refused to say who provided the unedited photographs, although some speculate that it is most likely a staffer at Vogue.

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<sup>53</sup> Jessica Coen "We're Offering \$10,000 for Unretouched Images of Lena Dunham in Vogue." Jezebel, <http://jezebel.com/were-offering-10-000-for-unretouched-images-of-lena-d-1502000514>

<sup>54</sup> Jessica Coen, "Here Are the Unretouched Images from Lena Dunham's Vogue Shoot" Jezebel <http://jezebel.com/here-are-the-unretouched-images-from-lena-dunhams-vogu-1503336657>

<sup>55</sup> Laura Beck "Lena Dunham Sides With *Vogue* in the *Jezebel* Photoshop Controversy" Cosmopolitan, January 19, 2014, <http://www.cosmopolitan.com/celebrity/news/lena-dunham-jezebel-response-2>

<sup>56</sup> Lexie Kite, "Photoshop Phoniness: Hall of Shame" Beauty Redefined, June 26, 2012 <http://www.beautyredefined.net/photoshop-phoniness-hall-of-shame/>

<sup>57</sup> Jodi Kantor, "Debate on Photo Retouching Flares Online, with Roles Reversed" The New York Times, January 19, 2014, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/20/business/media/debate-on-photo-retouching-flares-online-with-roles-reversed.html?mc=edit\\_th\\_20140120&nl=todaysheadlines&pid=45141875&r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/20/business/media/debate-on-photo-retouching-flares-online-with-roles-reversed.html?mc=edit_th_20140120&nl=todaysheadlines&pid=45141875&r=1)