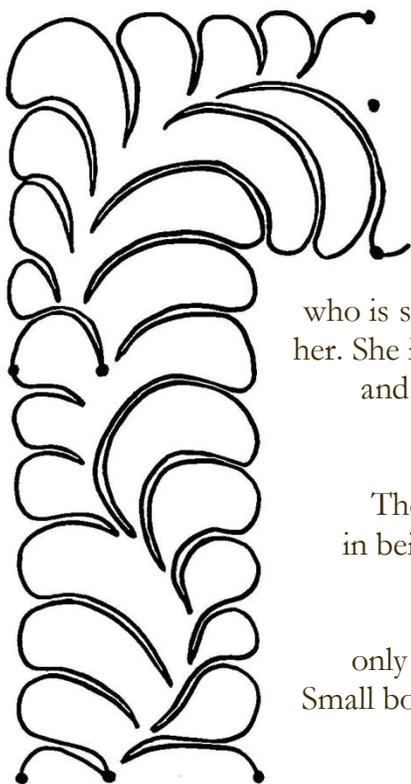




*Conversations with  
a Thin Girl:  
Considering this  
Large  
[Female]  
Body*

*Kimberly Bruss*





## *Dear Thin Girl,*

I have seen pictures of a slight, blue-eyed girl who is supposed to be me, but I do not know her. She is not familiar. I envy her skinny arms and legs and her hope. She is small which makes her beautiful.

There is something intrinsically beautiful in being small and young. Faces and smiles don't matter. Size matters.

There is no threat in a small body, only warm growth and chance. Possibility. Small bodies curl up in chairs, pull their knees beneath their chins and rest.

There is no rest in the large body. No peace or balance.

There is always something moving. Hunger is a misconception. There is no hunger for food in the large body. Hunger for love is an ugly cliché. The large body is hungry for experience, acceptance. Full of passion. Regret.

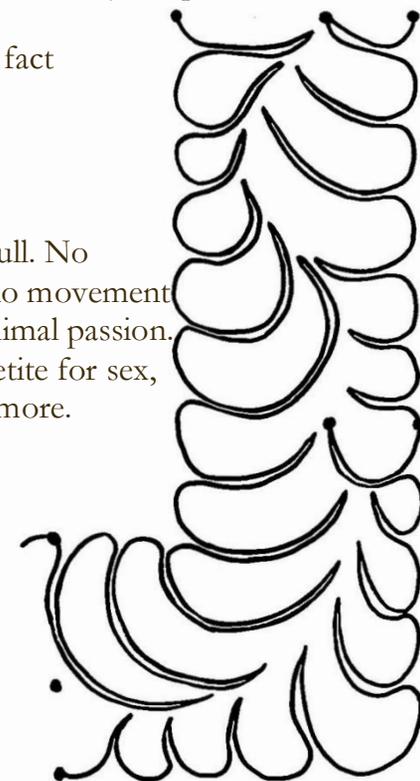
Penance. Envy. Guilt. The seven deadly sins clawing from the inside.

Female isn't good enough. It is clinical, cold. Check one: Male, Female. Like I am voting. I am voting. Majority rules—I am a female. But am I a woman?

There are pictures of women splattered across my field of vision. They look at me and do not recognize a woman. I envy their long limbs and flat stomachs. They are thin, which makes them beautiful.

There is something intrinsically beautiful in being a woman. Long hair and legs, breasts, eyes, lips, breathe, sigh, release. A man's desire— isn't that what defines the woman? The fact that she can make a grown man whine and curl his toes with her tongue.? Women are powerful.

There is no power in me. No push or pull. No persuasion. There is nothing working, no movement toward a man, no gravitational force, animal passion. The woman should always have an appetite for sex, never food. Absolutely. Couldn't agree more. Twenty four hours a day, seven days a week



There is always a battle raging within the large, female [woman][[female]][[[woman]]] body.  
Am I large or am I female? It's a one-way street, sirens blaring, brakes melting, nothing seeing,  
gone gone gone.

There's no room for you at the inn, on the bus, on the one-way street.  
Choose one. I can't choose. Can there be both? I can't choose. There has to be both. I can't choose.

That is the cutest shirt I have ever...

Do you think it will...

Their sizes are really small here.

Next time.

There is no next time to the large body. Every time nothing fits. Grunting, shimmying, pour me in the top, squeeze me out the bottom. Into that XL—the taunting hourglass shape of the X.

Small girl shows her mother her stomach.

Thinks the lumps are muscles. Thinks she looks strong like a man. Mother frowns at her and says,  
“We'll have to work on that.”

Small girl looks down at her round tummy, frowns, whispers,  
“I have to work on you.”

The young girl has a concept of the large body. She is not deaf nor dumb nor blind. She is aware of the thin girls, the ones with blond ringlets and pretty faces. The ones who are frail, who like the boys and whom the boys like. The thin girl is not inherently cruel. There is kindness in her, an inner softness and girth that is eventually dulled

Let me borrow that shirt.

No, you're boobs are bigger than mine. You'll stretch it out, No I won't. Just let me borrow it.

Fine. You're lucky we're the same size.

There is an intimacy between women, a bond shared over their likeness. The curve of their hips, their short stature and small feet. Down to their genes—the taunting, hourglass shape of the X.

Mother and daughter grow up together. Mother loses job, daughter loses virginity, laughs shared over frosted martini glasses. Mother sees slim daughter in prom dress on the arm of young hunk. Mouths, “I love you” from behind an oversized camera. Daughter whispers in hunk's ear,  
“I love you.”

The woman knows what she looks like. Narrow shoulders. Long eyelashes. Small hands. She is aware of other women. Men watch women. Women watch men watching women. Women know what men want. I know what men want—a small body, something to hold, overpower, protect, to lean into on damp nights.

and made to hate the large girl.  
Girl against girl. A division, separation, isolation. We have turned us on ourselves. We. Us. It would be much easier to blame Them.

Young girl laying awake at night feeling her stomach bulge in the wrong places pushing it down, in, up away. Pressing in hard for the hip bones.

Wondering if  
Slicing it all off, smoothing her stomach and the lines on

her mother's forehead, would really hurt that bad.

Takes a twilight trip to the kitchen to feel the cool weight of a knife against her abdomen.

Slips the knife in the drawer and runs back to bed on tiptoes, crying. It will hurt that bad, decides the young girl. She will eat sugared cereal in the morning and won't return to the knife drawer for many nights.

Not for many nights.

The woman's body is a gift, wrapped tight. The woman must care for her body. I am a slim woman teacher. I see my student, young, chubby girl and I think to myself,

*God, that girl's mother must not care about her child at all.*

I do not care for the young, chubby girl because her mother does not care for her. I do not care for pudgy. That young, chubby girl with her short hair looks more like a boy. *God, that girl's mother must not care about her child at all.* I am a slim mother who gave birth to a small, pink baby. My baby grew into a chubby little girl and her round shape was unexpected. She is not what I had in mind. Make it right for mama, baby. Make it right.

It is late in the morning and my alarm clock is bruised, has suffered quite a beating. I wake up and disrobe, peel off the nightclothes. They drop to the ground and baste in sleep as I stretch, heavy arms over my head, long yawn, There is work to be done.

I wrap a cold towel around my body. Tight. Tighter. Make it overlap. Tuck it in between the breasts. Grab shampoo, large body. This large

Cleanliness has become a cultish measure in Western society. It has gone beyond Louis Pasteur and his soapy elbows. We are beyond clean. Scented soap, scented lotion, body splash, eau de toilette, eau de parfum wrapped up in scented tissue paper perfect for the holidays again soon. Germaphobes, each and every one of us. *Don't worry—*

*you can't catch*

themselves, a multitude

Disrobe like a car through a carwash. Me, I'm a tarnished penny, a rotten tooth. No matter how long I stay under the stream, forgotten, neglected,

Thin girl—

I rub raw the skin of my inner thighs.

Do you think it helps, thin girl?

Back to the breasts and stomach zip up, make up. Feel

around my body. Tight. Tighter. Make it overlap. Tuck it in between the toothpaste, soap. Soap. Remember the soap. There is no sneaking in the body squeezes into the towel, and maneuvers itself into a stall.

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*what I've got.* Pigs and elephants roll around in dust and dirt to clean

to clot the sweat on their rough hides so they can breathe. Filth can cover of sins.

again and listen to the squeak and sheen of the thin body in the next stall, a carwash. Me, I'm a tarnished penny, a rotten tooth. No matter how long the thin girl sees a large body—a place where things are lost, unseen, live and grow.

Do you assume I don't know my own body? My own cracks and crevices?

That my larger body is merely a host to parasites, Stereotypes, living mites?

Do you see me as disabled? Unaware?

Do you see me as a threat, thin girl.  
Will I contaminate you, thin girl.

towel [tight], the hall, the room, where I make my bed, [tight] against a fabric wall. Drop the towel. Air. Dress up, the push of the thin girl as I pull on my jeans.

I dare you thin girl—wince as you sniff my neck when we pass.

*Don't worry—you can't catch what I've got.*





I wasn't kissing her

I was just whispering

in her mouth



Diet ads call for a violent assault  
on the body. bulges must be "attacked,"  
and "destroyed," fat "burned"  
and guts "busted" and "eliminated"  
The ultimate goal is the complete  
eradication of the body:  
"Have a nice shape with NO TUMMY."



Fat women are

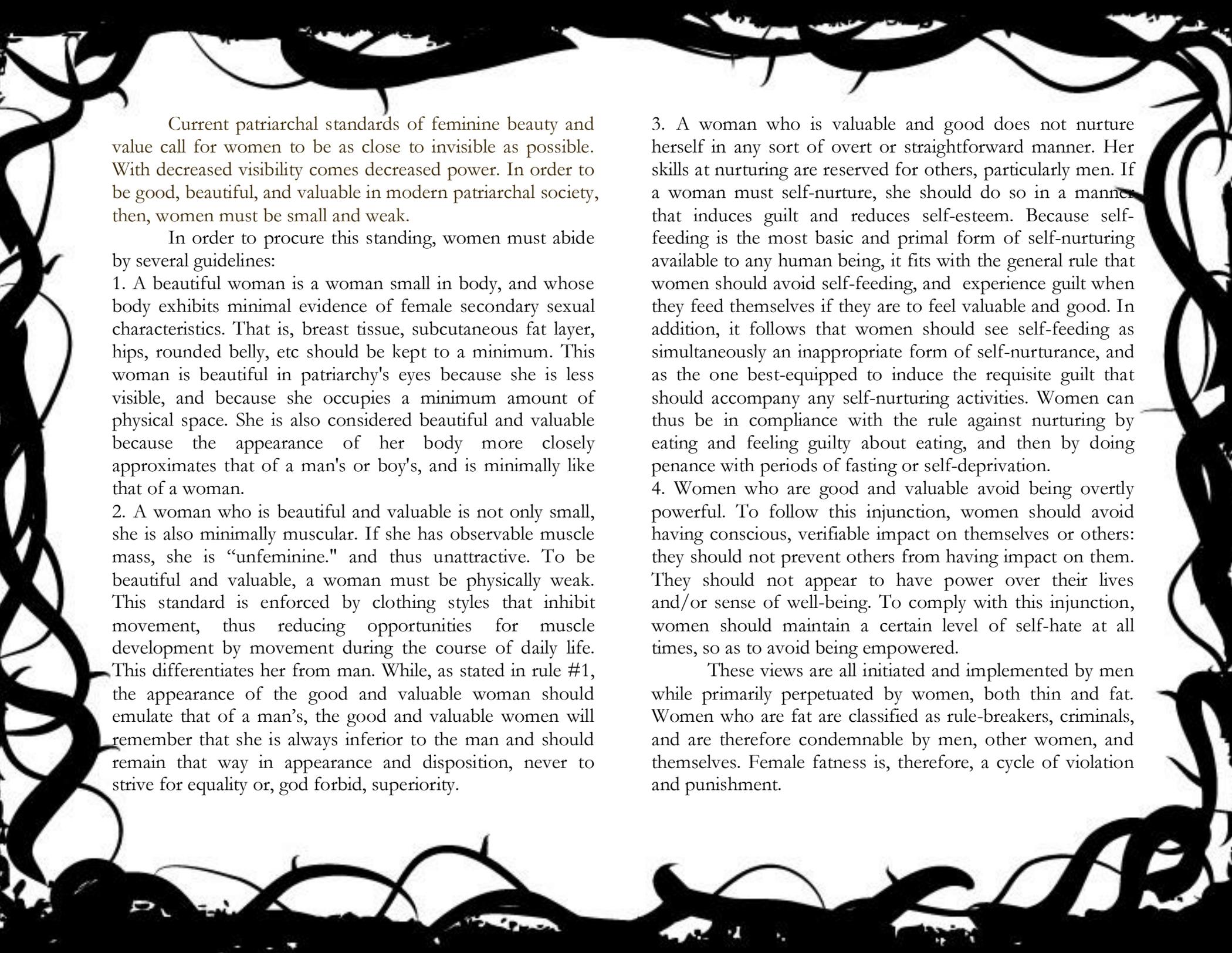
U G L Y  
B A D  
N O T V A L U A B L E

because they break so many of these rules. A fat woman is V I S I B L E and takes up space. She stands out. A fat woman occupies personal territory in ways that V I O L A T E the rules for the sexual politics of B O D Y movement. A fat woman has strong muscles from moving her W E I G H T around the world. She clearly has F E D herself, violating a major portion of the rules, although most fat women attempt to stay in compliance with the rules by feeling B A D and G U I L T Y about this self-nurturing process.

Thus, in order to be

B E A U T I F U L  
G O O D V A L U A B L E

women must F E A R fat and H A T E it within themselves.



Current patriarchal standards of feminine beauty and value call for women to be as close to invisible as possible. With decreased visibility comes decreased power. In order to be good, beautiful, and valuable in modern patriarchal society, then, women must be small and weak.

In order to procure this standing, women must abide by several guidelines:

1. A beautiful woman is a woman small in body, and whose body exhibits minimal evidence of female secondary sexual characteristics. That is, breast tissue, subcutaneous fat layer, hips, rounded belly, etc should be kept to a minimum. This woman is beautiful in patriarchy's eyes because she is less visible, and because she occupies a minimum amount of physical space. She is also considered beautiful and valuable because the appearance of her body more closely approximates that of a man's or boy's, and is minimally like that of a woman.

2. A woman who is beautiful and valuable is not only small, she is also minimally muscular. If she has observable muscle mass, she is "unfeminine." and thus unattractive. To be beautiful and valuable, a woman must be physically weak. This standard is enforced by clothing styles that inhibit movement, thus reducing opportunities for muscle development by movement during the course of daily life. This differentiates her from man. While, as stated in rule #1, the appearance of the good and valuable woman should emulate that of a man's, the good and valuable women will remember that she is always inferior to the man and should remain that way in appearance and disposition, never to strive for equality or, god forbid, superiority.

3. A woman who is valuable and good does not nurture herself in any sort of overt or straightforward manner. Her skills at nurturing are reserved for others, particularly men. If a woman must self-nurture, she should do so in a manner that induces guilt and reduces self-esteem. Because self-feeding is the most basic and primal form of self-nurturing available to any human being, it fits with the general rule that women should avoid self-feeding, and experience guilt when they feed themselves if they are to feel valuable and good. In addition, it follows that women should see self-feeding as simultaneously an inappropriate form of self-nurturance, and as the one best-equipped to induce the requisite guilt that should accompany any self-nurturing activities. Women can thus be in compliance with the rule against nurturing by eating and feeling guilty about eating, and then by doing penance with periods of fasting or self-deprivation.

4. Women who are good and valuable avoid being overtly powerful. To follow this injunction, women should avoid having conscious, verifiable impact on themselves or others: they should not prevent others from having impact on them. They should not appear to have power over their lives and/or sense of well-being. To comply with this injunction, women should maintain a certain level of self-hate at all times, so as to avoid being empowered.

These views are all initiated and implemented by men while primarily perpetuated by women, both thin and fat. Women who are fat are classified as rule-breakers, criminals, and are therefore condemnable by men, other women, and themselves. Female fatness is, therefore, a cycle of violation and punishment.

The larger body is a manifestation  
of uncontained desire, unrestrained hunger,  
uncontrollable impulse.

Images of bodily eruption  
frequently function symbolically  
in this way in contemporary horror movies.

The larger body can therefore be  
constructed as an alien,  
unconscious, appetitive force,  
thwarting and befouling the project of the soul;  
a manifestation of sinful excess and chaos.



The statistics don't matter.  
Childhood obesity.  
Early-onset diabetes.  
High blood pressure.

Saturated FAT.  
Low FAT.  
NO FAT.

FAT free  
no foam,  
decaf skinny  
vanilla latte.

Make it a tall.  
Walking down the street  
with a Venti looks FAT. I don't want to look  
FAT. Feel FAT. Eat FAT. Seem FAT. Be FAT.

So, yeah—make it FAT FREE.



Little  
Red  
Riding  
Hood

**Jack Sprat could eat no fat,  
His wife could eat no lean.  
And so betwixt the two of them  
They licked the platter clean.**

## Mythology of the Large, Female Body

Certain areas go unseen when reading the large, female body. There are physical spaces that are not fully explored: belly fat and folds, the soft and fleshy patch beneath the breasts, multiple chins. There is simply too much body to explore.

To understand the large female body, then, one must take time to investigate. Time is money. The large female body, therefore, is not a body of economy and is transgressive in a society where conservation is king and indulgence is condemned.

Small bodies are explicit—nothing is hidden. Everything is exposed and nothing is hidden in piles of excess. The small body is seen everywhere: magazine advertisements, television shows, pornography, art, and athletics. We idolize the thin person and make it a priority to know everything about being thin. The thin body has grown stale and harbors no shock or surprise. Sure, there are small disparities between individual bodies, but there is no longer a mystery in the thin person.

The large body is a secret. There are unknowns and mysteries in the folds and dark places. There are



not billboards and advertisements featuring the large, female body. The large body is unseen and unheard; it remains a mystery and is steeped in whispers.

The large female body is mythological and shrouded in the kind of mystery that inspires both awe and fear. The large, female body is something unexplored. Thin girls with fake tits pose in front of cameras. The large female body is uncharted territory, something that is not sewn into the eyelids. There are still questions to be asked about the large body.

The media perpetuates the thin girl. The large, female body requires permission to be seen. It is not that the large, female body is more rare or that large female bodies are reluctant to be seen. It is that they are not shown. Society is only familiar with the myth of the large, female body—not the truth.



*Do you fear me, thin girl, because I have dared to be something you are not, something you know nothing about? The misconception is that I need protection, sex, strength, assertion, love. The reality is that I have left more places than you will ever go.*



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