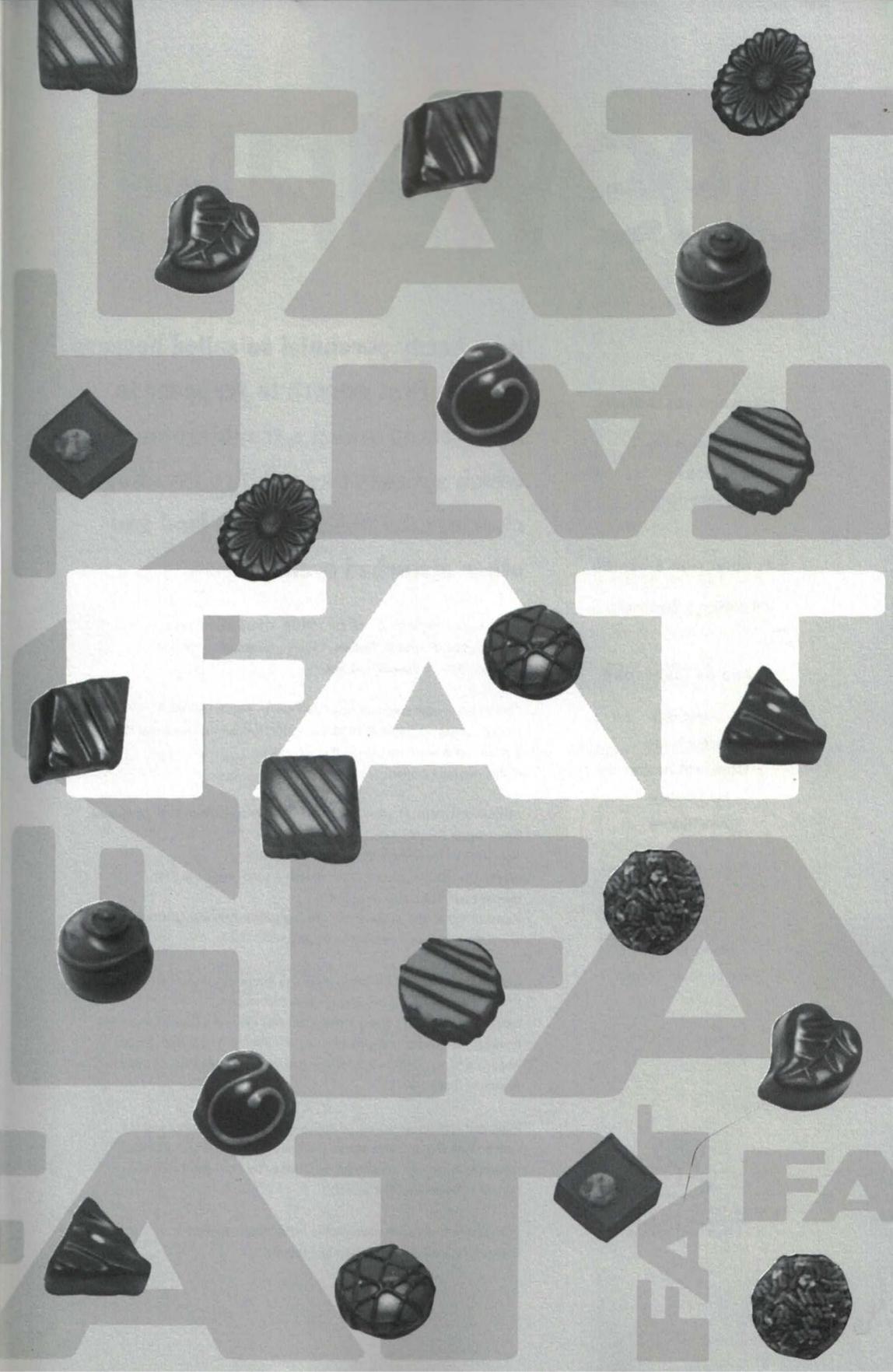




FIREWEED

1999 **FAT** ISSUE 67 \$7



FIREWEED

FIREWEED COLLECTIVE

Caroline Sin
Shauna Lancit
Jessica Ticktin

ART DIRECTION & DESIGN

Zab Design & Typography

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Louise Bak
Sandra Morris
Carmela Murdocca
Erika Savage
Alka Sharma

FRONT COVER

Photo by Alexis Vaughn

***n* : a hardy perennial so called because it is the first growth to reappear in fire-scarred areas; a troublesome weed which spreads like wildfire invading clearings, bombsites, waste land and other disturbed areas.**

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(416) 504-1339 fireweed@web.net

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THE CANADA COUNCIL
FOR THE ARTS
SINCE 1957

LE CONSEIL DES ARTS
DU CANADA
DEPUIS 1957

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Fireweed at the Millennium



The twenty-first century is upon us. As it advances, we find ourselves looking back on *Fireweed's* twenty-one year herstory with gratitude, reverence, awe even, at *Fireweed's* remarkable achievements. We marvel at the agonizing, exhilarating hours spent reading, debating, re-reading, challenging, disagreeing, negotiating, redefining, agreeing, fighting, and then fighting some more simply for the right to tell our stories, to be heard. And then we say to ourselves: what a breathtaking gift from all of us, to all of us; from one generation of girls and women to the next.

OK, so we're nostalgic; sentimental even. We have a right to be. Over the past twenty-one years, *Fireweed* has created a space for women to raise their voices, raise the roof, defy convention, push boundaries, reject imposed definitions and define themselves. It has met challenges, overcome obstacles and been an unpaid labour of love for an army of women. And it has done all of these things while wrestling with the challenges of creating and recreating collectives, struggling in inhospitable climates and managing with limited and then more limited resources.

Despite these sometimes difficult circumstances, *Fireweed* continues to surprise, provoke and fight for its right to exist on its own terms. This issue is no exception. When thinking about what a "heavy girls" issue produced twenty years after the path-breaking work of the fat liberationists might look like, we imagined a number of possibilities. We said to ourselves, "we'll probably see stories that trace the path from diet fatigue, to diet rejection, to body-image acceptance. Or stories that say body-image concerns are passé, for those in the know: fat is now where its at." Instead, the collection includes voices both celebratory and angry. In doing so, it confirms that the issues associated with fat are more important than ever. This makes us sad, but also defines the need for these stories. It tells us, as the stories do, that

even when women have learned to love and accept their bodies, they continue to face corporate and cultural opposition. But we'll leave it to the guest collective, and the women who have contributed to this issue, to tell you more about that.

What we would like to tell you is this: *Fireweed* is still struggling to create a space for your voices, and needs your support. This issue, we wish to thank and acknowledge Nancy Ruth and Nancy's Very Own Foundation for their generous financial support. In addition, we wish to thank C. M. Donald for her invaluable, thoughtful advice; Denise Benson and Divinity, who donated part of the proceeds from their fabulous party "Savour" to the issue; and Vicky Drummond at the Nellie Langford Rowell Library, for producing a bibliography of other fat resources and fat reads. Last but certainly not least, we wish to thank the guest collective and the women who contributed to this issue, for adding to our understanding of fat today.

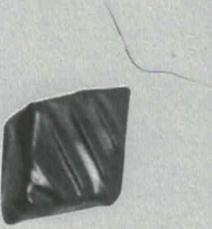
Looking toward the twenty-first century, *Fireweed* has much to celebrate and much to anticipate, including future ground-breaking issues on themes such as women at the millennium, women's paths to economic self-sufficiency, women in prison and transgender issues. We are more determined than ever to ensure that *Fireweed* remains a forum for our collective voices. To ensure that *Fireweed* is still burning well into the next millennium, we ask for your continued, dedicated support.

The Fireweed Board (Collective)

Louise Bak
Sandra Morris
Carmela Murdocca
Alka Sharma
Larissa Silver
Caroline Sin



Big Fat Editorial



"Do we really have to explain what fat means?" Well, we suppose we do. When the process of creating this issue began, we were pretty sure we knew what fat meant. We had decided that all fat girls were ready to reclaim the word fat and march big and strong on the street singing the praises of large and luscious; come out of the closet and celebrate ample bodies and ample appetites. So not true! From the get-go our call for submissions (titled "Piggies on Parade") was met with debate and confusion from the community of women (many self-defined fat-activists included) who had come across it. You would think that a group of aware babes like ourselves would have realized that generalizations are just not cool, and tried to provide a forum for all women to speak on fat, however they chose to address it. We soon discovered that the variety of approaches and attitudes out there was just what was needed.

Some of the names that we initially threw around for this collection of works were, "The Substantial Fireweed Issue," "fat-friendly," "Big Girl," and "Fat Grrrrl." Finally we decided to take the direct approach and call it FAT. You know it when you see it, and you know it when you feel it. It is time to reclaim the word, take it back and put it in the capable hands of women who know how it goes. With chaffing thighs these women can take on the contention that surrounds the reclamation of fat.

We thought that this issue would be full of fuhk-you fat folks. Non-apologetic, hard-core bodacious babes ready to take on the name calling, come out about the sneak-eating and discuss the damaging dieting that haunts all of our pasts. What we got was not what we anticipated, and that's a good thing. These pages show the diversity of the heavy slice of the female population that is "fat". The eight of us that started this project shared the common opinion that it was fabulous to be a fat girl. On really great days our body image is stupendous and

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PHOTO Alexis Vaughn



Fat Collective — Allyson Mitchell, Abi Slone, Bytch Femme, Leanne Cusitar, T.J. Bryan

we love no one more than ourselves. We live a life of spreading the word on the beautiful world of big. We have a bevy of fat girl fans that follow our wide loads, and so we assumed that everyone's experience was relatively similar. What we forgot about in the sugar-hazed frenzy that brought us together, was the bad days. When nothing fits, including the chairs, and the most comfortable place to be is in bed.

At the end of it all what we compiled here is the best of the good days and the bad. This issue is not about hating fat, but about living life large and luscious.

Love from the editorial circle at large

Leanne *Fat Stuff* Cusitar

sherece *dumplin* taffe

Mariko *baby fat* Tamaki

Allyson *Chunky La Gorge* Mitchell

Abi *Sugar* Slone

Kerry *Heavy Girl* Daniels-Zraidi

T.J. *precious* Bryan



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Pizzazz

Marsha took the flat, fragrant box from the delivery man and handed him the money. She pretended not to notice as he quickly eyed her up and down, then barely suppressed a suggestive grin. A full-figured woman whose weight accentuated her sensuality, Marsha knew the look well. She stared back at him and smiled.

"Isn't that enough?" she asked, motioning to the payment in his hand.

"Oh. Oh, yes. Thank you," he replied. Then, lowering his eyes, he turned and headed down the hall toward the elevator.

In her kitchen, Marsha set the box on the table and slowly opened the lid. White steam curled toward the ceiling. A delicious aroma filled the room. Pungent tomato, a hint of garlic and oregano, the perfume of freshly-baked dough and a mouth-watering scent of melted cheese.

Marsha reached into the box and carefully loosened the first wedge. The cheese hung in delicate threads as she lifted the slice to her mouth and took a lingering bite. She chewed slowly, savoring the flavor, and let her mind wander.

"You know, if I were to live my life as a food, I would want to be a pizza," she thought. Taking another bite, she imagined what that life would be like.

She'd start out in the hands of a strong baker. Kneaded and massaged this way and that, she'd be covered in oil and then left to rest in a warm place where she'd expand and grow to twice her size.

"Twice my size. Imagine that," she said aloud and laughed.

When she was large enough, she'd be kneaded again. Then the fun would begin. She'd be thrown in the air where she'd spin and twirl in a culinary dance as breathtaking as a ballet. Once she was as wide and thin as a dancer's skirt, she'd float down to the floured counter where a giant wooden spatula would lift her up and slide her onto a cool, silver pan.



"What bliss," she thought as she leisurely took another slice from the box.

Now, for the next step: what to wear. Red, of course — a bright, tomato red specked with herb and onion. But her accessories would change for each occasion. One night, she might wear a golden cheese with rich, burgundy circles of pepperoni. On another night, she might choose bold, green bouquets of broccoli with, here and there, a few glistening olives. During the daytime, she might just wear red, that's it.

"It would all depend on where I was going," she mused.

And she would be going places, because pizza is a vagabond food. No sitting around a restaurant kitchen waiting to be asked for. Oh, no. Every night she'd be lifted out of the oven and placed in a fresh, new box — grey upholstery, white exterior with blue detailing — to be carried off to parts unknown.

She might be whisked away to the glitzy condo across town or to the penthouse suite of that big hotel where the entertainers always stay. That would call for imported cheese and capers. Maybe she'd have a chance to study on trips to the university dorm, where she'd wear everything to please the hungry students.

All would not be glamour and higher learning, however. She'd be sure to visit families whose hard-working parents or single moms, too tired to cook, depended on her. Decked out in mushrooms and sausage, she'd sit beside a fresh salad in their homey kitchens and feel good about the smiles on their kids' faces. Sometimes, in easy-to-digest garb, she might even sneak into hospitals or nursing homes to cheer up patients who were tired of institutional food. The possibilities were endless.

Mainly, though, she would want to spend time in the homes of other women like herself. Women who love to eat an exciting, dynamic food. Women who are proud, not ashamed, of their ample figures. Smiling at the thought, Marsha popped a last bit of crust in her mouth and chewed it lovingly.

"Yes, pizza is the food to be. And I could do it with pizzazz," she said aloud, flourishing one hand overhead. Then, rolling her eyes and laughing at her own pun, she closed the lid on the empty box and began fondly wiping up stray crumbs.

Molly Charbonneau, writer, is descended from a Quebecois who wandered south around 1850 to work in upstate New York. Her fiction and non-fiction have appeared in *Newsday*, *Nat'l Highlog*, *The Communicator*, *New Horizons*, *The Unionist*, *United Labor Action* and other publications. She lives in New York City with millions of other pizza lovers.



Lisa Ayuso

I Spy With My Little Eye Something That is True

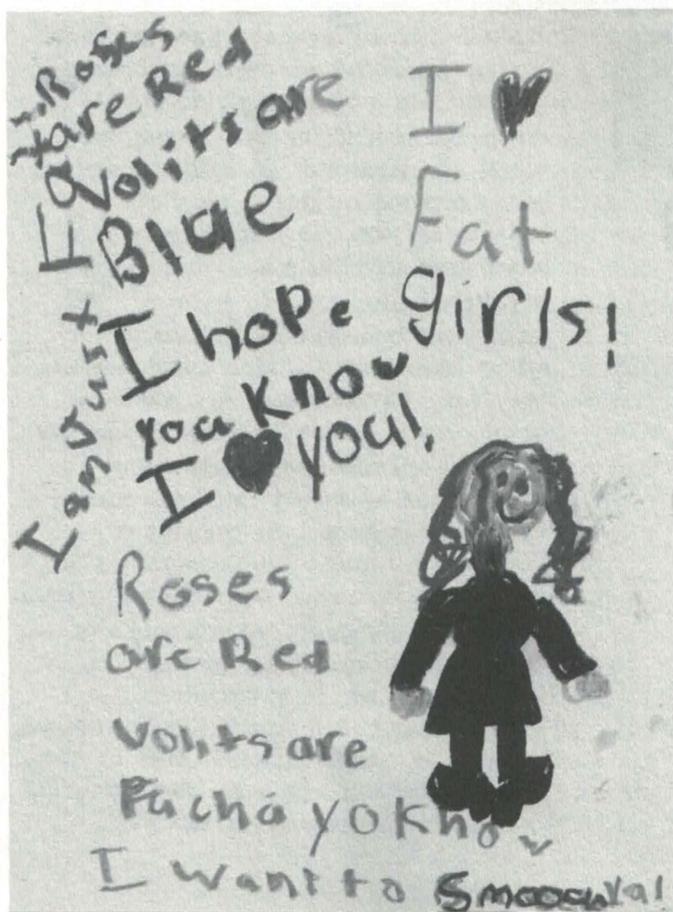


I spy with my little eye something that is true
The body is bulging brave.
Like the dreaming of breakfast when all smells come true,
The dreams of a child are cakes with icing off chubby fingers.
Birthday parties, bike rides and pig-tails come in size six to fourteen.
Sugar and spice and everything nice is more about want than have.
The word cook and dinner and bread rolls with butter are presents
wrapped in bacon.
Tastes that linger forever are in commercials with fried chicken and
gravy drenched in French fries.
It's a hunger for substance and solidity.
There's good food on Fridays and the not so great leftovers of Tuesdays.
Cupboards full of ju-jubes and cookies and nuts; dinner and lunch and
breakfast.
Stealing food leaves room on plates for others to celebrate.
(3:30 p.m. between September and June with the exception of PA days
and Christmas holidays is when not to get caught)
Hearts that grow ... keep growing.
Mouth so full of flavour and quiet, words are secondary.
A child of dreams has secrets. I won't tell but they do.
Size retains the evidence.
I, 1 the truth
I, 2 the truth.
I, 3 the truth.
I, 4 the truth.
I, 5 the truth.
I, 6 the truth.
I, 7 the truth.
I, ate the truth.

Lisa Ayuso aka Muffin luvs
tuna melts, amooches, amaretto sours
and joan jett. When she is not licking
every morsel off her dinner plate, she
is teaching young secretaries around
the world "the tricks of the trade" with
her ever so sassy side-kick, Stacey
Rock. Still on tour, these dynamic
ladies may likely be in your town
soon. Keep on it!

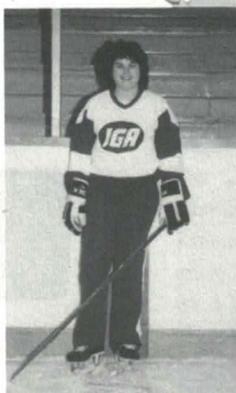
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Fat Teen Diary



Sharmylae Taffe-Fletcher is a 9-year-old self-proclaimed fat girl. She is a fan of "The Baby Sitter's Club" and the Chronicles of Narnia. Some day she would like to be a nurse, a doctor, a computer graphics designer, a pilot, and a writer (not necessarily in that order).

Fat Teen Diary



Monday January 12, 1980.

Luke and Laura are getting married (from Gen. Hosp.) on Friday. I found this out today because I had a ~~stomach~~ stomach ache this morning so mom let me stay home from school. So I watched T.V. all day. I've been coughing all day so my throat will be red when I go to the doctor's before mom goes to work. I'm going to fake it all week so I can see the whole wedding @ thing. Just me and Bubba on the couch all week... heaven. I feel really FAT and greasy but mom and me are starting Diet Workshop on Thursday so it will be better then and this time I'll really lose it so I'll feel good this summer in shorts. M+D say I get a whole new wardrobe if I lose 50 lbs. Mom says the whole house is going on a diet on Thurs. Even Bubba. From now on it's only dry-feline-lose-weight food for her. Mike Douglas is on gotta go.

Things I ate bad today: 2 rows of saltines, one bag of stake ruffles I found in the pantry that was left over from Grey Cup & 2 bran muffins w/ extra butter

Tuesday January 13, 1980

Laura is beautiful. When I looked at her I want to cry sometimes. I get really sad. Bubba and I have been hanging out all day again. I did a new exercise routine of running into the basement any ways. Up and down the stairs. Dr. Stewart told mom I have a cold and should rest until I feel better. I don't have a cold but I do feel crummy and tired. Bubba sniffed and just meowed when mom gave her the new food this morning ha ha.

Things I ate today: one bag of oreida home fries - 2 weight watchers beef pizzas, 2 bagels w/ sliced cheese on 1/2 + brown sugar/ cinnamon on the other - 6 slices of cheese

Exercise: ran up and down the stairs 50 times

Wednesday, January 14, 1980

The wedding is getting closer. I hope nothing ~~bad~~ bad happens to mess it up. Dad brought me a new puzzle today. A five hundred piecer of a huge mungous sundae with yummy fudge and caramel sauce and everything you can imagine on it. I did it 5 times today. It's really cool.



Fat Teen Diary

He said it is my present for starting diet workshop tomorrow. I'm scared of getting weighed in. I gave Bubba special slide rides this afternoon down the stairs by putting her in a sleeping bag and pulling her down the stairs. I don't think she minded it because she is pretty ~~is~~ bored too and it gives her something to think about besides her styro-chow (that's what Chris calls it). I don't think she cares that she is fat. Just her belly hangs down and mom says that's because she got fixed and she's lazy now because she didn't have kittens. Does that happen to humans if they don't have kids? Bubba was mad about the slide ride ... her ears were back. So I gave her a bowl of milk (very bad). Mom says milk has too much fat even when it was Skim. So I put butter in it cause she likes it that way. and I don't think she's mad anymore because she sat on my comforter all through "Little House on the Prairie" tonight.

Bad things late: English muffins with cheese - 1/2 bag chocolate chips with peanut butter - 2 Kaiser buns w/ butter - Kraft dinner

Thursday January 15, 1980

O.K. I was really bad today. Late soooooo much I can't even ~~list~~ list it. And the meanest thing is I didn't give anything to Bubba and now I can't because mom is home and she knows I ate today because when she came in from work she said what's that smell and said it smelled like deep frying in the kitchen and then she looked under the couch when she couldn't find any side plates and found 4 that I left there ... ~~I~~ I'm so stupid I should have put them in the dishwasher. She called me young lady and asked me why if I'm sick I can eat bad things. So tonight when we went to the Diet Workshop meeting at the town hall she told ~~me~~ Marg. that I was bingeing. At my weigh in I was 198 pounds and for a 13 year old my height. Marg said I should weigh between 70-100 lbs so I'm way over normal. She said I should stick to the 500 caloric ~~plan~~ blitz-it-off plan for 2 weeks then I'll be able to get going faster and I'll have faster results. Then we had a



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good meeting about weighing stuff before you eat it ~~how~~ and how important it is to do it this time and starting Monday I'm going to go to school. Bubba can get lost with her hair all over my clothes too. I'm really sick of it and I'm going to be really neat from now on.

One lady lost 8 lbs. this week so if I do that good I can get my target weight in almost 10 weeks. By April I'll be on the maintenance program (1800 big old cal. aday). Mom says I should feel good and she is going to lose her 20 lbs. to get her target weight by April too.

Friday January 16, 1980

Mom tried to make me go to school this morning but I cried and said my stomach hurt until she was going to be late for work. Today's the day. Today's the day. Today's the wedding wedding wedding day. I'm not going to watch Donahue this morning....

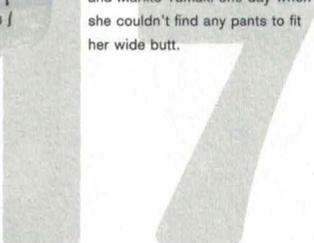
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I'm doing sit ups all morning and have a bath. I had my slice of Hollywood thin bread toast with Weight Watcher spread, herb tea, and 1/2 grapefruit w/ brown sugar sucaryl and mom left me 2oz. cottage cheese, 1/2 tino pineapple, and 3 melba toast rounds for lunch so I didn't have to think about food all day. I've been playing a game with Bubba so I don't think about it and I made ~~se~~ food traps out of mom's skinny belts by making lasooes and putting her food in it so when she steps in it she'll be trapped but she doesn't go for it. Gotta go ... count down to the wedding.

Later: what a rip off... the wedding was so boring and it was all crumby + hazy so you could hardly see anything .. it sucked... I'm going to have another bath instead of watching Mike Douglas because I feel so bummed... I'm not going to let Bubba into the bathroom cuz it bugs me when she stares at me naked ... maybe me and Bubba are destined to always be fat. I was looking at Chris's Seventeen magazine and the girls are so beautiful so I'm not going to cheat at all and I'm going to try to get on the field hockey team at school this spring.



Allyson Mitchell is a chunky filmmaker, teacher and craft patrol member. She helped co-found *Pretty Porky & Pissed Off* with Ruby Rubinsky and Mariko Tamaki one day when she couldn't find any pants to fit her wide butt.



DevraVengeful Piggy



How Much Do You Eat?

*The literature gives no evidence
of any relationship between
[calorie] intake and body weight.*

—J S Garrow, *Energy Balance
and Obesity in Man*
(American Elsevier Publishing
Co., 1974), page 4

No matter what I do or accomplish, at heart I am a fat lazy pig and don't deserve to live.

Nowadays, I can go a couple of days without being reminded of this, but it always comes back—this obsessive message gets shoved down our throats like a probing insistent finger. Thin = healthy at any cost, vigilant, self-disciplined, morally superior; fat = lazy, trash, morally corrupt, capitalistic, greedy, desperate, disgusting, diseased, "American." And on and on.

It seems that despite my best intentions, I spend half my time defending myself against attacks on fat, which are almost always the same tired "health" arguments that have little to do with, say, the health and well-being of fat people. The fact that so few people can say the words "fat" and "healthy" in the same sentence without choking is what drives the point home — to them, we're better off dead. Which is why so many people would rather be dead than end up fat.

Imagine how much easier it would be if fat-hating bigots would just call themselves bigots. Then, instead of wasting time arguing with "reasonable" people, I could just flip them off and spend my time on the offense: vandalizing diet centers in the hopes that maybe one less woman's going to try and off herself the slow painful way.

I refuse to waste another day justifying myself to people who would rather see me dead than look at me. This is what I tell myself, but there are more of them than I can count. Still, to my shame, I find myself

hesitating before putting my big ass on a bike, eating alone in public, or letting the skin of my fat arms jiggle and flap. It's unnerving to admit to myself and others that sometimes nothing will help me snap out of it but envisioning a squadron of fat dyke vigilantes, or hairy cheerleaders eating ice cream. Sometimes another fat woman getting kicked down makes me so violently angry that I don't have the luxury of depression or self-loathing.

This is what struck a nerve about this special issue: Piggies on Parade. How can I have forgotten, all I am is a fat lazy pig. It's true, seeing as I don't starve myself for the benefit of bigots. But I sure as hell don't parade for them either. They can go fuck themselves with a case of cleaning-solution-tainted-Slim-Fast as far as I'm concerned. I am way beyond the point of taking a fat joke or being served up as some "normal" person's entertainment.



How Much Do You Eat?

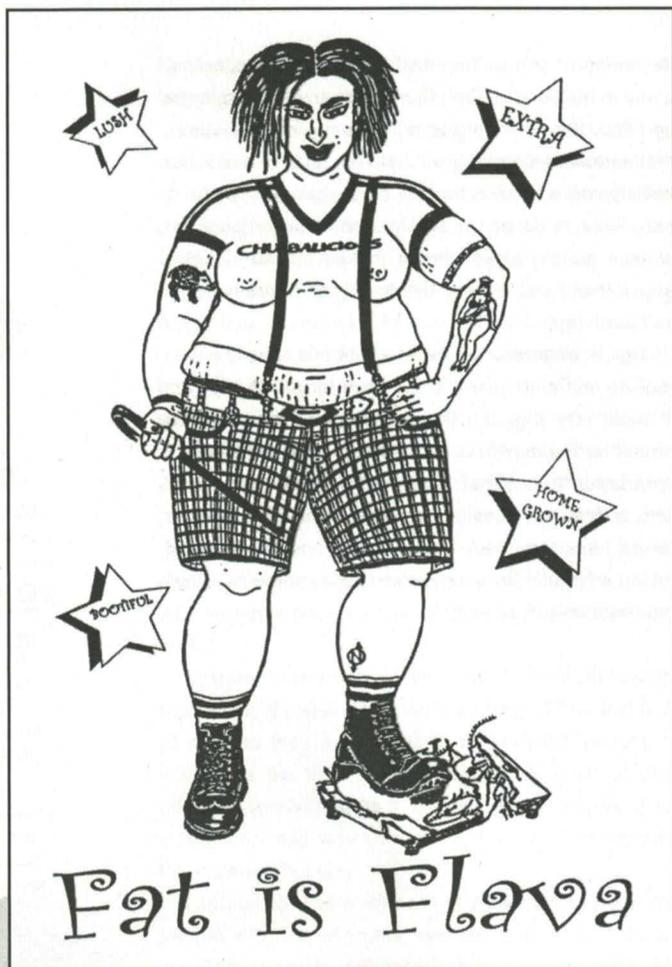
When food intake of obese individuals were accurately assessed and compared with people of normal [sic] weights, the intakes were identical. There are thin people who eat excessively ... and there are fat people who eat too much. Likewise there are thin people and fat people who have small appetites.

— A M Bryans,

"Childhood obesity—prelude to adult obesity," *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, November 1967, page 487.

Chubblicious

Fat is Flava



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Queen Size Revolt

QUEENSIZE

SCOTFUL

Fat is Flava

Inventor, traveller, and incredibly sexy babe, *Chubbacious* is currently working to invent the first backpack/sewingmachine in order to morph her "seamstress bitch" and "road dog" personalities.

Queen Size Revolt

Queen Size Revolt

We play sports, we go to the prom, we are all ages and we want clothes that are made to look good on OUR bodies.

We don't have the time or money to seek out fatty specialty stores that may or may not have clothes which fit us.

Every fat girl knows the humiliation of looking for clothes in stores that do not, and will not carry our sizes. When you can't find anything that fits you feel alone and ugly.



Fuck that shit.

Women come in all different sizes. One person's chubby is another person's chunky is another person's skinny is another person's huge. Weight is relative.

We're talking fat pride which means,

"of course you look fat in those pants, and you should be glad."

Queen Size Revolt

Pretty Porky & Pissed Off



We're tired of bursting at the seams. Binding waists, bursting buttons and slim pickin's are getting us down.

Queen Size Revolt

What is all the squealing about? Think about it...the average north american woman is size 14 and UP. Most stores don't carry these sizes. Us plumped-up ladies are fed up with clothes that don't fit and feel bad.



Being fat doesn't have to mean feeling gross.

Look for us in the future doing more anti-consumerist, happy fatty exhibits, cabarets, performances, and maybe even spaghetti-eating contests

You can't miss us.

Pretty Porky and Pissed Off is a force of large and in-charge women dedicated to expanding public awareness and acceptance about fat issues. These tubbies with 'tude are taking over street corners to chat about fat and crab about the fear of flab. Everyone is invited to the picnic.

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Angry Naked Fat Woman

The following rant was written for a mature audience in July 1999 and is dedicated to the fat girls I know and love.



Whose Best Interest?

Young women who lost weight on 1000-calorie diets experienced a decrease in basal metabolism rate and in energy intake required to maintain their reduced weights. Follow-up studies indicate that a lower calorie intake must be maintained indefinitely in order to maintain the reduced weight.

—US Department of Health,
Education, and Welfare,
Obesity and Health,
public service report #1485,
1966, page 60.

Did you ever have one of those days when you look like crap and you feel like crap and then someone gives you like a minute dosage of attitude and you think, "Well it should just be legal for me to kill that person?"

Okay, well that's what this rant is about.

To all the little-buttred, skinny people in the audience, I apologize in advance.

All I can say is that you should all just be grateful that I'm here today and beyond that you should be thankful that I didn't come here nude. Because let me tell you, as of late I am getting closer and closer to angry nakedness. The next time you see me I'll just be a pissed-off vagina. This past Wednesday at the Pussy Palace (Toronto's Women's Bathhouse), when I looked around at all the naked bodies what I saw was not an erotic display, but a practical option in a world where finding anything above a size 12 is like finding a virgin at a University.

I spent 6 hours yesterday scouring Toronto for a decent outfit that would fit over my thighs and I came to 3 conclusions.

1 This city sucks—it's hot, it contains no changing rooms bigger than my cat's litter box, and it's hot.

2 I hate all sales people and blame them for the part they play in pushing a line of clothing that only fits a small fraction of the population (even if they aren't the ones who make the clothes I blame them anyway).

3 All well-dressed fat people should be fucking worshipped and hailed as the Gods they are.

Should I not choose to walk around for the rest of my days angry and nude, I'm going to opt instead to wear a t-shirt that says — "I'm a well-dressed fat person and I deserve your respect for my efforts."

And for those of you fed up with us fat chicks and our bitching about our big fat asses and the problems they cause us, let me assure you no one is more tired of listening to me bitch about my big fat ass than me.

The only person who is possibly more wary of my big fat ass than me might be the retailer who tried to help me find an outfit amongst the racks at a store that shall remain nameless. Okay, it was The Gap. This poor man whose skinny ass I chewed into tiny bits after an hour of searching for something that would squeeze over my thighs. I swear, this guy with all his efforts never had a chance of becoming anything more than a pot hole in the road of my rage.

"You know," he said, as we neared the finale of my fitting routine, "maybe you should try a plus-size store."

I gathered my things, my courage, and my dignity, and pushed my way out of the tiny pen that had served as my dressing room.

"What's your name?" I asked.

"Ben." He said.

"Ben." I said, "Here's the situation, Ben. I have to give this performance tomorrow at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre. And you know Ben, I was going to do my speech about my VISA card, but you know what I'm going to do it on now Ben? I'm going to do a piece about snot-nosed GAP boys with little asses who work at Boutiques that sell clothes for anorexic 'picks who make up all of 7% of the population."

"Don't you think that's just a little bitter?" Ben smirked.



Whose Best Interest?

It is possible that a patient whose weight has fluctuated up and down a number of times has been subjected to more atherogenic stress than a patient with stable though excessive [sic] weight. ... If an animal has once been obese and then has been repeatedly reduced, it will have a shorter life expectancy than the obese animal which has never been reduced.

— US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, *Obesity and Health*, public service report #1485, 1966, page 60.

NOTE atherogenic stress leads to heart attacks and strokes

"Do I look bitter to you Ben," I asked, edging my sweaty body further and further into his personal space, "or do I look dangerously agitated?"

I left a sticker on the door that said:

SOME DAY, WHEN THE REVOLUTION COMES,
YOU AND YOUR COHORTS WILL BE THE FIRST
UP AGAINST THE WALL.

You think it's a joke but I'm serious.

In the end, no thanks to Ben, I did find myself an outfit that day (a little polka-dotted number that makes me look immature but well dressed), but memories of that particular exchange (and others like it) remain.

I have a plan.

I'll take my naked body to the streets in protest.

I'll pummel the public with what it insists on denying and avoiding: tons of mountainous, sexy flesh. I'll bare my bare boobs and squish my sweaty bum at strangers. I'll squeak against every surface available and leave strange marks to embarrass the public. I'll gather an army of fat angry naked soldiers and we'll take to the streets. We'll go to the Gap and touch all their clothes and use up all their perfume samples till they agree to stock size 16 to 30 as standard practice.

We'll bring Toronto the Timid to its knees with the vengeance of our vaginas.

Look out Ben, the revolution is coming.

Mark my words.



Whose Best Interest?

*Those who lose and maintain
a normal [sic] weight must
accept some degree of hunger
and unsatisfied appetite
as a way of life.*

—W L Asher,

"Appetite suppressants as
an aid in obesity control,"
in Louis Lasagna, ed.,
*Obesity: Causes,
Consequences, and Treatment*
(Medcom Press, 1974) page 73.

When she is not watching TV dramas, buying shoes, and dying her hair (black), *Mariko Tamaki* does her best to make a living as a writer, performer, and part-time secretary. Her current project, a combination of these passions, involves donning the persona of the infamous Tracey Rock, co-founder of the WWF (Women Working for Very Little Money in Very Tight Suits). Mariko's favorite colours are cupcake pink and mint green.

Health complications from the weight loss process include cardiac arrhythmia's, hypokalemia, hyperucemia, gallbladder damage, death.

Psychological damage from repeated "failure" at weight loss includes depression and diminishment of self-esteem.

Initiation of binge-eating and eating disorders often follow dieting regimens.

— From the *Michigan Health Council Task Force to Establish Weight Loss Guidelines, 1989.*



The highest **death** rates for women are among those who are **underweight** rather than amongst those who are **overweight or obese.**

— *Journal of the American Medical Association, 1984.*



Messages created, promulgated, and **perpetuated** by the media and consented to by consumers of the **media** are messages which perpetuate the **myth** that everyone can be thin, that **thinness** is the only body type that is beautiful and desirable, that with thinness comes confidence, success, and **happiness**, and that one can not and should not be happy with oneself until, or unless, one's own body matches the thin ideal. This pervasive dissatisfaction with body and self is directly supported by a "beauty" and **diet industry** whose profits in North America reach \$45 billion annually, and whose financial viability is **dependent** on our **dissatisfaction** with ourselves as we are.

— From *The National Eating Disorder Information Centre (NEDIC)*
Website, www.nedic.on.ca

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The argument here is that oppression of large women is not merely based on their larger-than-average size, nor on the apparent unhealthiness of fat, but on the fact that their size affirms the physical existence of the female and the symbolic strength of women.



— Review of *Shadow on a Tightrape*, Edited by Lisa Schoenfelder and Barb Wieser, Aunt Lute Book Company: Iowa City, 1983.

Junior weight-watching

Celebrate the happy fat child. In most cases her parents simply failed to realize early enough what is the major cause of low self at any age - fat phobia - esteem



Loving Myself Phatly

I am fat and beautiful.

I said this during a performance at the Desh Pardesh Festival and 350 people gave me a standing ovation. I had mentally prepared myself for the last seven years to get to the place where I could say "I am fat" out loud and in public, follow it with "and beautiful" and then truly mean it.

That night I felt like the most beautiful woman in the world. I felt truly brilliant and felt the light shining within me. I haven't always felt like this. It has been a long journey for this young girl who looked in the mirror and always hated what she saw.

Being fat is the shameful secret that I thought I had been keeping to myself my whole life. If anyone even said the word fat, I would look the other way hoping that if I couldn't see them, then they couldn't see me: FAT ME. Or even worse, I didn't want to have to see them looking at me with the pity or revulsion that I had seen so often before.

If I just didn't mention the word fat, then maybe the fat would be made invisible. It never worked. I always felt robbed of any dignity that I had and was taken right back to the schoolyard being called fatso.

I was born 10 pounds and 11 ounces. From where my memories begin, I remember relatives telling my mother, "Don't worry bai, this is just baby fat, she'll grow out of it." After the age of four, it wasn't cute anymore and my mother didn't feel she could sit around and watch this happen to her daughter. She had to make sure that her daughter wasn't doomed to being fat forever, especially in this thin-obsessed society.

By the age of seven, my family was telling me what I could eat. The chips and cookies were hidden in secret cupboards and I was under surveillance. Inventory was taken of what was missing. I would search every cupboard and eventually find the "goods." Then I would gorge, making sure there was no trace of food or my feelings when I was done.



* *Phat* is street slang used to mean something is really amazing, cool, out of this world!

Yet, as much as food was supposed to be bad, it was also one of the only ways my mother knew how to overtly show me love. It was a constant push and pull. If I was sad, she would cook for me, but if I ate, she would tell me "not too much." If we were celebrating, she would cook, but if I partook, she would remind me of the diet.

My little kid head is still stuck in this tug of war, and eating is always preceeded by a mental battle. I grew up in a family of big people, and at family gatherings I would be ridiculed and prodded so that they could save me from their own depressing fate. I hated those gatherings, where elders would take my happiness into their incapable hands and offer abundant, offensive advice: "You know beti, you're too fat, but I have this diet and you can lose 30 pounds in 10 days!!"

I usually tried to sink in the sofa, while stuffing a samosa in my mouth. In those moments, I would envision my mouth as a machine gun, launching the samosas into the faces of the people who made my body into their spectator sport. I know now, that if I had the words then, I wouldn't have needed the samosas.

I also remember being told that I had a "pretty face." This was the indirect way to say that the rest of me was unacceptable. One day I was at a mosque and I saw my mother and my two older sisters standing outside of the prayer hall. They were talking to a woman and as I approached I heard her saying to my mom, "Your daughters are just beautiful!" I came to stand next to them and my mother introduced me as her youngest. As the woman looked at me, looking as though she had just tasted sour milk, she grudgingly said, "Oh well, at least she has a pretty face."

The ridicule wasn't always passive-aggressive. In kindergarten I was called "fatso," "tub of lard," "beluga whale," "Dumbo the elephant," "brown cow"...the list is endless.

By the time I was 12, I felt like a hideous, ugly, unworthy, piece of shit and I have spent the rest of my life trying to make up for my inadequacy. With friends and family, I had always tried to be interesting, entertaining, a good listener, not to take up too much space emotionally, not to make too many demands. With strangers, I always tried to disarm them by being charming and amusing.

I have put my body through torture to try and be "beautiful." There isn't a diet that I haven't tried: the eat cabbage soup all day and shit your guts out diet, the no food diet, the nothing but protein and pills and a needle once a week from this doctor who prescribed this diet-diet, the 1,200 calorie diet, the 1,000 calorie diet, the 500 calorie diet, the you can't trust yourself so we have packaged the food for you diet. When I was nine and still just a chubby kid, I was put in the hospital for a week just to be on a diet.



Bingeing and purging was also a regular part of my life. Sitting in front of the fridge, momentarily forgetting the pain, stuffing my body full, full, full. I wasn't able to remain numb for long and as the waves of shame would wash over my body, I would run to the washroom and be-friend the ever-ready cold white plastic toilet. Sticking my fingers down my throat, ripping at my insides, I was able to bring back all the food I was guilty of eating. That I didn't deserve to eat. That would make me even fatter, even more repulsive.

I realize that no woman in the western world is immune from self-destructive body images and the fear of fat. I know many thin women and most of them are pre-occupied with either staying thin (which includes excessive dieting and weight control) or think they are fat, which is the worst possible lot in life. A recent study done on girls in grades three and four found that these girls would rather lose a parent than get fat.

This is not just a fear that straight women possess. Many of my lesbian friends struggle with the same fears, and the queer community is right up there in perpetuating the thin image of beauty. Truthfully FAT is not attractive to most people — even progressive people.

I wonder when this fear gets imprinted into our innocent child brains. Does it happen in Canadian schoolyards when Tom Skinny and Dick Stupid are calling you Fat Ugly Paki? Or does all the credit go to the emaciated tall white goddesses with hairless pink armpits, plastered everywhere — in your face.

This particular ideal robbed me of any sense of self-love, right down to my armpits. I hated how my armpits were a shade different from the rest of my body. How come they weren't pink and smooth and flawless? How come, from them, all the scents of my mother's cooking (garlic and onions) would emanate, reminding me that I was foreign and not one bit like the girls at school.

Obviously, as a woman of colour I have other beauty ideals to contend with. I grew up with Hindi film goddesses with their big busts, shapely hips, but always thin waists. The only character that I looked like was Toon Toon, the fat woman who provided comic relief. She was always eating and chasing after the heroes who would have absolutely nothing to do with her.

I wanted to have nothing to do with her; every night I would go to bed praying that I would wake up skinny. I had these feelings even after I had become a feminist, was a teaching assistant in women's studies classes, worked at women's centers, facilitated self-esteem workshops, started law school. I had also come out as a lesbian and had intellectually rejected many societal norms.



Finally, I decided I couldn't live this hypocrisy anymore. I went to the library and found every single self-help book, from "Co-Dependent No More" to the "Dance Of Anger" to "Living Sanely In a Large Body".

Let me tell you, I ran with the wolves, and any other book that took me in deep. I read books on fat oppression and fat phobia which informed me that current "healthy" weight standards were constructed by money-making insurance companies. I read about ideals of beauty in other places like Polynesia, Tonga, many countries in Africa and South America, where big women were idealized.

I learned that dieting actually was another capitalist myth, that 99 percent of diets fail and that yo-yo dieting causes a high rate of heart disease. I learned about set point theory: We are all born with a set weight point (like a set eye colour); that there is very little you can do to permanently decrease that point; and with every failed diet your set point just increases.

I stopped dieting. I plastered my walls and mirrors with affirmations. Everyday I wrote in my journal: "I, Zahra, am perfect, whole and complete just as I am. I, Zahra, am beautiful. I, Zahra am worthy, deserving, and lovable just as I am. I give and receive love with my body. I love my body."

You get the point. All of these head things were important, but it wasn't enough. I had to start living through my body as opposed to being locked up in my head. So, I began to feel myself up!

I would light up my room with candles, get naked and rub every inch of my body with lotion. I would play music and dance in my room to feel every joint moving. I started practicing Reiki so I would feel the healing energy of my own hands all over my body. I started wearing clothes that I felt sexy in, as opposed to sticking with the "cottons."

I also went all the way to Hawaii to see big, beautiful, brown women being revered. One day I saw a picture of a Hawaiian woman with her girl-child. The woman was honey-brown, round, soft and curvaceous. She was a "big" woman in all senses of the word: big body, big presence. You could tell from the picture that she had given her daughter lots of big love.

Her daughter was this sweet, beautiful, round figure. She was laughing and playing with her kitten, who she was holding in her soft and fleshy arms. Instantaneously, I began to cry for the love that my girl-child body never felt.

Another incredible thing that happened was falling in love with someone who completely lusted after me. It was incredible to experience someone who enjoyed and desired my body. Someone who looked at it with so much longing and affection.

She kissed my belly 1,000 times, and another 1,000 times, and finally I am beginning to feel that my belly is desirable. I am able to be completely naked, vulnerable and raw with her and still her desire for me grows. This helped me see my body through a different, more accepting lens.

This process has taught me some deep lessons. I have learned compassion for my mother. My sweet mother tried to find diet after diet that would work for her daughter. Her daughter, whom she could never see crying. Her daughter, who she thought she was protecting from this vicious world. Her loving me so much, but not realizing that that would have been enough to make me strong, to keep me protected. Not realizing that those diets were the forces that were going to destroy my self-esteem for a very long time to come.

My mother a fat woman, daughter of another fat woman, thought if I was skinny—different from her—that I would be happy. Just like she thought if I wasn't an activist, I'd be happier. Just like she thought if I was straight, I'd be happier.

She meant my life would be easier, meaning that I wouldn't have to bear the brunt of discrimination, meaning that I wouldn't have to struggle as much as she did. She knew, as a single mother, that rejecting the norm would mean isolation. She wanted me to be happy and she knew the force of societies repulsion towards fat women. She wouldn't wish that on her worst enemy, let alone her child.

I have learned that I want to stop looking at other women through the same perverted lens that has made me feel like a freak. My lover is half my size and to the public we make an extremely odd couple. I close my eyes, we hold each other close and together our bodies are perfect. Then, when I open my eyes, all I can see is social conditioning and I am shocked at what we look like together. I am shocked at what we each find so beautiful and alluring. This makes me sad.

When I have my eyes closed, I can imagine such beautiful things and there are no boundaries, limits, rules or regulations about how far my ideas and actions can travel. When I close my eyes, my body is perfect, every-Body is perfect, but when I open them again I am shocked.

I have decided to reframe all of the fat people that I have grown up with: my aunts, grandmother and mother, Lata Mangeshkar, Abida Parveen, Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Toon Toon and even the Buddah.

These people are not incredible creative spirits in spite of their weight "problems," but their spirit is part and parcel with their fat. In my room, I keep a statue of the Buddah with his jolly face and huge open round belly. I do this to remind myself that my belly is my vessel to enlightenment.



I have learned that being fat, as much as I have felt the pain and the shame of it, has also been one of the greatest gifts that I have been given. I feel like I am wise and intuitive because of this fat, and that maybe I have even been able to more freely explore my sexuality because of my fat.

Maybe it took a lack of acceptance in the "mainstream conventional world" to open me up to all of the other possibilities. To open me up to great-free-unrestrained thinking. To open me up to a life fully examined and fully lived.

I feel like I have something not many people do. All I've ever wanted my whole life was to be loved and accepted, and now I am loving myself Phatly! I encourage people to go there, to go to that place where you can accept everyone, no matter how they smell, no matter what their class, regardless of their dress size and I promise you your own blissful liberation.

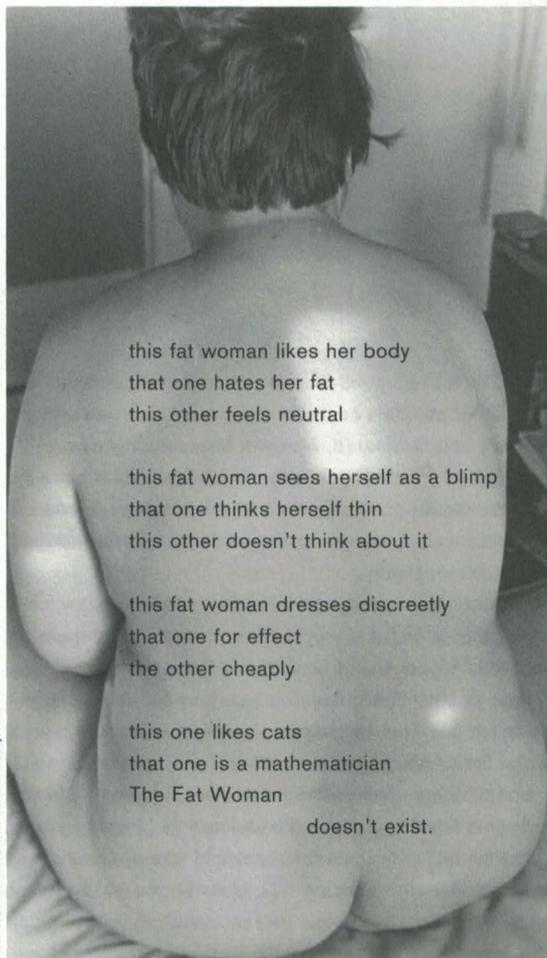
I am not saying that everything is perfect now. I am still trying to prove that I am worthy of love and attention, but every day I do this just a little less. Some days, I still wake up and I can't stand to look in the mirror. On those days, I try to be kind to myself, knowing that tomorrow or next week, I will feel better. It's all part of the process.

On July 25, 1998, I was standing in front of an audience of 350 people, all yelling, "Fat, fat, fat!" and it felt truly wonderful.



Zahra Dhanani is a woman with a lot of passion, courage, and personality. She is a co-host and dj of CKLN's Masala Mix. Zahra is a long-time activist in issues of social justice, particularly women's issues, anti-racism, fat-phobia, and queer rights. As a lawyer she has had experience working at Community Legal Clinics, and she articulated at the Ontario Human Rights Commission. Currently she is a columnist for *Xtra!* Magazine.

The Fat Woman



this fat woman likes her body
that one hates her fat
this other feels neutral

this fat woman sees herself as a blimp
that one thinks herself thin
this other doesn't think about it

this fat woman dresses discreetly
that one for effect
the other cheaply

this one likes cats
that one is a mathematician
The Fat Woman
doesn't exist.



C.M. Donald

I was born in 1950, in Derbyshire, England. I owe my education to a girl's school and a women's college. I owe my thanks to all those lesbians, feminists and fat liberationists who had, by the time I came to write these poems in the early '80s, laid the groundwork for me to do so. They showed me that fat was not my problem, but a problem needlessly created for me by the society I lived in, a problem for which activism is the cure. Fat women of the world unite – you have nothing to lose!

PHOTO © Anne Wilson and Patricia Mary Crowder

from C.M. Donald, *The Fat Woman Measures Up*,
P.E.I.: Ragweed /Gynergy, 1986.

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The Perfect Fit?

- 1 I wake gasping for air. Already struggling to keep it together. To hold myself together. Fighting to understand an image so distorted, so convoluted, I can't recognize, can't adequately describe what's here...

My body...

On good days I'm a G.S.G, a Good Sized Gyal (thanks B-rat Bwoy). A Middle-of-tha-way Hoochee out to raise some hell. Proudly sportin' every single inch of me. All stretch marks and dimples with jiggling bits and tits. Lovin' it. Hoping to develop /envelope some more substantiality eventually.

Other times I walk hunched and harried. My body... its shape ... its image ... so fucked. So fucked. Mind filled to capacity. Cerebrum stuffed. Psyche straining. Other people's confusion seamlessly merges with my own. Other people's shit, projected, injected, becomes my own.

The contradictions of my existence defy singularity. Evoke plurality. My particular vision — split — marks me as both and neither. A dreaded in-between. Obnoxiously resistant to linear definition. Rebelliously refusing knee-jerk categorization.

A chronic outsider, never quite content to exist 'inside' for very long, I usually find that the price of occupancy in the hallowed halls of acceptability is a little higher than I can afford. From the outer limits, my chosen vantage point, I can observe a ka-zillion parallel worlds in the makin'. Or develop a host of counter-theories, re-birthing myself again and again in the process.

Primordial bone-padded. Oppressive hardness cushioned. Worldly margins bulge. Seams stretch, expanding unwillingly as I take my place. A mutably ambiguous buffer in the flesh. Lost and found, somewhere between warped self-derision and my true size. Lands of corpulent continuums yet to be mapped will soon be recovered...



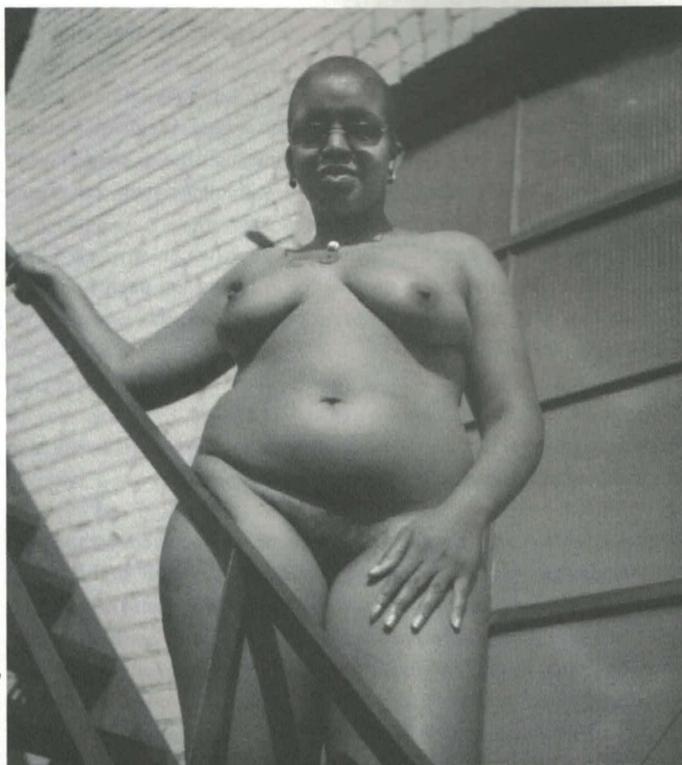


PHOTO Alexis Vaughn

T.J. Bryan

Illusion-Obsessed Femme Tip # 9

Draw attention away from your fat at all costs. Instead, clothing can feature more attractive body parts, such as cleavage, long legs or a smooth expanse of back.

- 2 Emaciated, yellow-haired barbies may multiply like flies. Expecting privilege and deference as their due. Excluding and ridiculing those who refuse to make Jenny Craig their goddess and Tae Bo a new religion. My rosy-coloured vision comes into focus. Finds heavy chick cliques developing. Representing the unthinkable — cults of normalcy reinscribed? A persistent waking nightmare — the possibility of replication? A new girl's club detected. My membership form again rejected? New worlds of unbelonging for me to endure?

I sit in the midst of the editors for *The Fattest Fireweed Ever*. A very representative bunch, the wimmin around me could be friends, acquaintances, strangers, future confidantes, possible allies or enemies? They/we talk about our lives. Chew tha fat 'bout being fat. Clothes/fat,



dieting / fat, food / fat, sex & sexuality / fat, family / fat, aesthetics / fat, health / fat.

Here, surrounded by bigger breasts, hips, buttocks, stomachs and thighs, I find myself strangely saddled with a set of feelings I hadn't counted on. Discomfort. Anxiety. Alienation. The urge to purge myself from the space. Do I 'belong' here? Can I, with conscience, call myself that... FAT? Do I really want to? Or need to?

Paranoia sets in. Are their eyes evaluating/weighing me? Could they be checking this bod in an attempt to locate the flesh I claim to possess? I bite back unasked-for explanations. New worlds of unbelonging?

Illusion-Obsessed Femme Tip # 11:

Burn your control-top panty hose and panty girdles. Corsets can function as beauty enhancers and sex toys too.

- 3 A total stranger on the street who saw me as I walked with a truly rubenesque beauty, felt the need to share. To me: You ain't fat! You just big! 'Scuse me, but I like my wimmins wit' some size. And chile, you don't have it. What are you? A size 14? 16? 18? Now this one over here (he points to my friend), she's got a body. Now her I like!

I kept my cool and smiled. But inside I wanted to cuss him out. To lay some lyrical licks upside his head. For passing me over? NOT! Did I ask for his opinion? Did I ask him to impose another fucking body issue kink for me to work out?

So often I'm asked to travel the road of denial. Encouraged to forget.

Forget what I've seen. Forget what I've felt. Forget what I've heard. Maybe pigs can fly and I can live on kiwi and crackers. Maybe all I need to do is click my heels together three times, wish real hard and I'll finally pass. Why come out fat when I can come out dazed and confused? A collaborator. Why identify when I can reify the importance of being thin? When I can nullify ... myself?

Illusion-Obsessed Femme Tip #20

Outrageous accessories are a fat femme's best friend. Brightly coloured chiffon scarves, feather boas, large earrings and higher-than-high-heeled shoes can run interference for even the most obvious inadequacies.

- 4 Perception has the power to alter reality. I traverse many worlds daily and the denizens of these places all read and receive a differently-sized version of me. I can't really pay them much mind. Can't base my



concept of fat or anything for that matter on what they think. How can I, when everyone has a specifically sized tape measure and their own agenda?

MY reality says that the physical presence or absence of engorged cellulite cells under my skin is a changeable quantity. That it has very little to do with how/if I see myself or with how/if the world envisions my loveliness. I need to approach this fat thang from a critical place. It's all about context, baybee.

Questions I'm having problems answering

What is fat?

How fat is fat?

Who is fat?

How do you know when you're fat?

If you've been (seen as) fat all your life and you lose weight, are you still fat if you think you're fat?

If most of the known world still sees the new you as fat, are you fat?

Can you be seen as fat in some neighbourhoods but considered deathly thin in others?

If your mirrored reflection registers you as fat, are you fat?

Or are you just scrawny and screwed in the head?

Illusion-Obsessed Femme Tip # 26:

Bright colours, yes. Huge floral prints, NO!



- 5 I melt and re-collect fatty particles daily. Losing or gaining depending on the amount of food I can afford to buy, change of season, emotional well being, and the availability of sex.

But...still...causal facts and stereotypical fictions aside...fat for this Black chick is about more than pounds and inches.

Living with the effects of doubled, tripled, quadrupled vision, I have no choice but to cling consciously to my own weighty past turned present...

A Pseudo-Essentialist, Mythic Ripple

I remember not always being (defined as) fat. I was born in Barbados. A dark child among many. All legs and inquisitive eyes, I played and ran, exploring my island world. I was totally unencumbered by any thoughts about size...(or so I remember). I left my home and my family at eight and traveled to the mainland (north america). Now, I don't know for sure when IT happened. But somewhere out over the Caribbean sea or maybe over the Atlantic, I underwent a seachange.

1 My understanding of s/m makes it necessary to differentiate between consensual/pleasurable domination and forced domination.

Pockets of blubber oozed out from under. Obscuring the child I had been. By the time I rolled into canadian public school I must have been HUGE! I mean ...all the other kids were seeing IT...telling me about my big bum and belly. I was now and forever more (constructed as) fat.

Illusion-Obsessed Femme Tip # 37

Sure you can buy off the rack. Squeezing yourself into sized large poly/jersey/wool stretchy knits is okay. So what if your outfit slips out of place everytime you move? So what if the stitching gives way after 3 or 4 wearings? It fits. YOU fit.

- 6 I construct myself eyes wide open. ObstinateIy opposed to colonization and (forced) domination on all possible levels.¹ Bucking white, western systems of thought maintained by fucked-up, food-starved perpetrators and race-linked, size-fueled notions of aryan superiority and beauty.

My marbled tissue is pregnant with the history of millions dead. Crammed with the DNA of big-boned, death ship survivors bred for size, strength and round-tha-clock servitude.

Griots and oral historians regurgitated the vestiges of an older, ebonically rounded language. I consumed the memory and stored it cellularly. Remembering stories communicated in tongues not to be appropriated or renamed. Cushioning them, protecting them, safely beneath my skin...

Rewind a few hundred years. Saartjie's in a cage.² Saartjie's in a rage. A Queen-sized Hottentot spirited away.

² In the early 1800s, Saartjie, a Black woman from the region known today as South Africa, was captured, dubbed The Hottentot Venus and put on display in London and Paris.

Her european captors, self-proclaimed 'scientists', explained their cruelty by saying they wanted to study the extraordinary size of her buttocks (named Steatopygia) and her vaginal lips. At her death, not too many years later, the body parts in question were cut off and preserved in formaldehyde. My own hazy (white) art history class memories indicate that they can still be found in a museum somewhere in France.

Saartjie's got a

BIG BUTT!...

a

big BUTT!...

a

big

BUTT!

a

Big BUTT

A BIG BUTT!

And her big, fat 'nani?

A curiosity for all to behold.

Never again hers to name or hold,
Cherishing its folds like gold.
Scientifically hexed and vexed.
Colonized and complex.
Forevermore deviantly sexed.
Steatopygian posterior
and pendulously hanging cunt
sanitized, excised and stored.
On display
to this very day.

Fast forward...real time. Deja vu?

I know an eleven-turning-twelve year-old (hi lye!) who has fought the effects of the world's fat psychosis for most of her life. As she's entered puberty, her body blooming, she has been the target of comments from friends, relatives and even perfect strangers. So much of it has been about her behind. I do a lot of *Big Butts Are Beautiful* pep talks with her, hoping to stave off some of the crap. We have a running joke now, where she tells me that my butt is actually lacking. She feels bad for me that I don't have a nice big one.

Illusion-Obsessed Femme Tip # 73

Pinch it. Pull it. Tuck it. Confine it. If you can't get rid of it, at least make it behave!



- 7 I often hear a certain rationale coming from wimmin with bodies who hail from different (read: not Black/African Descent) cultures. It goes a little somethin' like this: Oh dear me. I am so unappreciated by my fat-hating culture/community of origin. The men/wimmin I'm attracted to don't appreciate my fullness. That's why I prefer to go out with Black/African men/women. Their culture(s) adore fat wimmin. They will adore me.

Right about now, my Noble Savage (N.S.) triggers are coming fast and furious. Supposedly the last planetary receptacle of primitive spirituality, æsthetics and culture not tainted by the effects of white western civilization. Artistic and intellectual property, a legacy, pillaged by the likes of Freud, Jung, Picasso and Gaugin. N.S. now also serves as a mirror, a tool. Reflecting not him/herself but the beauty, insecurities and body issues of Western/non-Black/non-African heavy wimmin, instead.

I am frustrated by the unspoken power inherent in the assumption of one hegemonic fatty girl voice. A voice, which still sounds suspiciously white (identified), western, north american. I am bored by the absence of full-bodied context. And not at all surprised by the absence of multiple points of reference. I mean...these wimmin are fat, but who else are they in the world?

Illusion-Obsessed Femme Tip #139

Girls, avoid belts, flared skirts and pants that fit the waist too snugly. They tend to make your middle look more "chunky" than we really want or need.

- 8 This Good Sized Gyal nevah leaves her home without denying her true dimensions, her true rotundity. A mistress of fabricated strategem and fashionably designed disguise, I'm well versed in the shapings, dartings and tailorings necessary to hide in plain sight.

The daily Mirror-mirror scene:

Me nek-ked, in profile. Perpetually unhappy and unsatisfied.

Inhale...

Pull that stomach in!

(What would it be like?) I use a hand to hide the 'excess' and think surgery.

Exhale...

Tuck that big batty under!

UNDER!

(What would it be like?)

If I just lost those last pesky twenty, thirty, forty pounds,

What would life be like as a menses-deficient bone rack?

The Illusion-Obsessed Femme has left the building.

- 9 I'm fat, but I ain't no fuckin' saint. Middle-of-the-way membership has its perks. An intimate inmate on the outskirts of massivity and magacentricity simultaneously, I fearfully envision same-life Karmic repercussions, punishment incurred by my own actions and words. The first to dismiss political propriety when pissed, I'm dangerously aware. Knowing better. Knowing all too well where and how it hurts.

My radar can spot thin girl imperfections from miles away. Butts with corners. Hipbones that could juk out yuh eyeballs. Tooth pick arms. Xylophone ribs. Thighs separated by inhospitable gaps wider than the Grand Canyon. I've noted and commented on it all.

Janus³ at the cross roads of either/or, I wield a DOUBLE edged steak knife. Indiscriminately cutting both ways, jagged.

Fat cow, funny belly, attack of the killer tomato, california raisin body.

Stubbornly unrepentant to the last, I sense the beginnings of a pained smile tugging at the corners of my mouth as I type.

³ Janus: The two-faced Roman God of the New Year. Etymological root of the word January.



Survival. If I don't work some of this stuff out, this Middle-of-the-Way Gyal will self-destruct ... self-destruct ... self-des... tr... uc... t...

10 *What I understand so far*

Fat.

My belly will never slide flat out and uninterrupted from navel to cunt.

Fat.

My rear end will never be mistaken for my front.

Fat.

An unfixed twilight-zoned, ever-shifting state of mind.

Fat.

Not a pure commonality or shared bodily reality.

Fat.

Fucked.

Duplicitous.

No single definition/size will ever fit.

No calipered and calculated measurements or easy way out explanations for the taking.

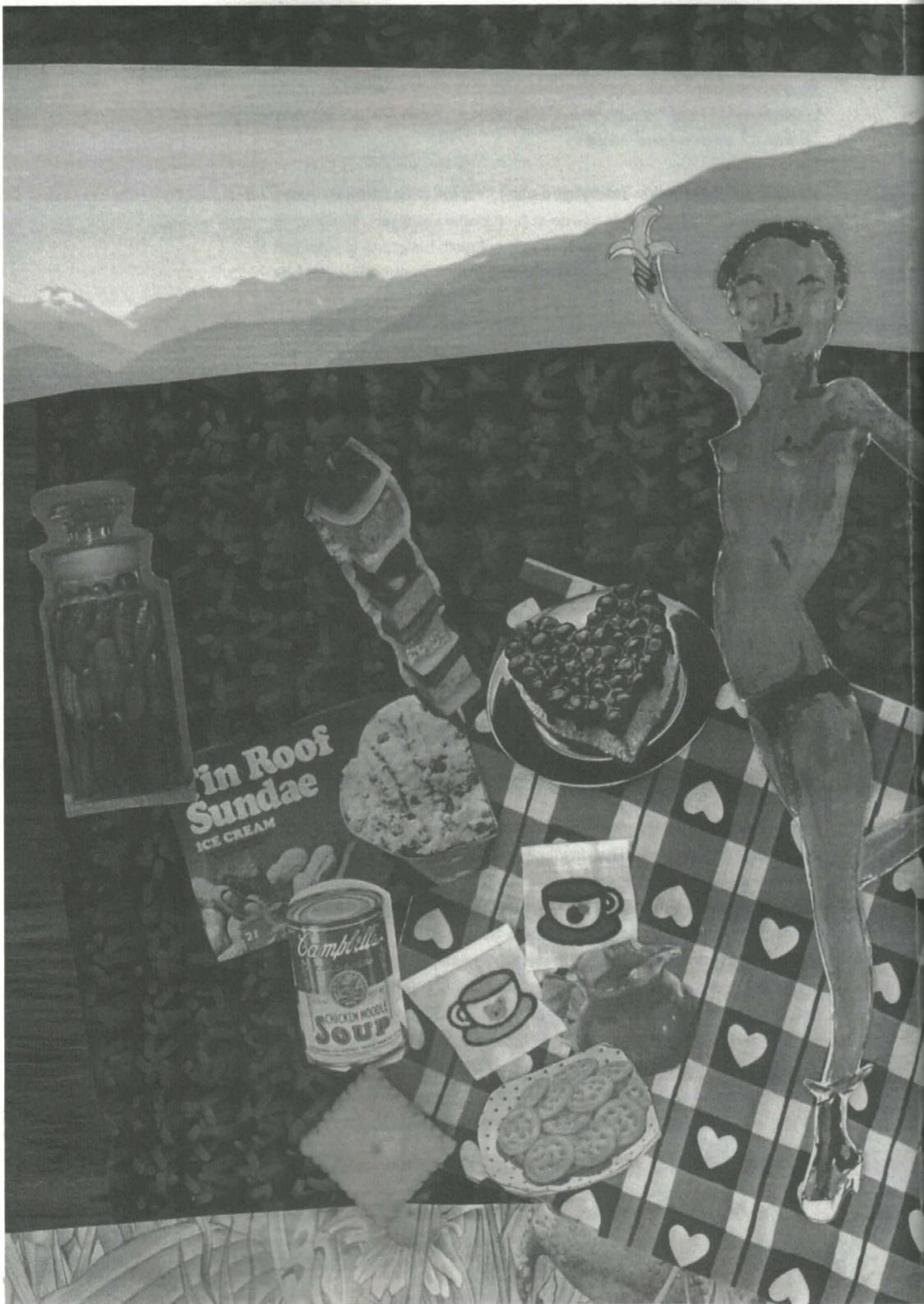
Fat.

My Blackness demands more than just a one-dimensional, sacred cow reaction to a pallid and starved-out norm.

Fat.

I come OUT, plumply. Fleshing out and occupying a borderland not to be confined. Self definition constantly shifting to encompass more aspects of myself than most can handle. Lips and belly and butt and thighs are **THA BOMB!** The dawn of a big, bomb azz pussy⁴ gyal or mahogany Venusian, take your pick. My rolls are thick. Exposing no bones to impale or bruise. Cruise me. Explore my deep historical crevices, my moist places, secret faces. Savour my musky realizations and penetrate my w(hole). Love/hating the unstable impermanence of my flesh I grow, recede and spread again. Understanding it—my own shit, the best way I can. Proud of what I've got. To hell with what I'm not!

⁴ Teefed from a Foxy Brown song of the same name. Some may object to the way she displays her body or to the cuss words she uses. As for me, I would prefer that she does what she does in whatever way she pleases rather than see her handed over to the little white men who did Saartjie's yearly pap. SNAP!

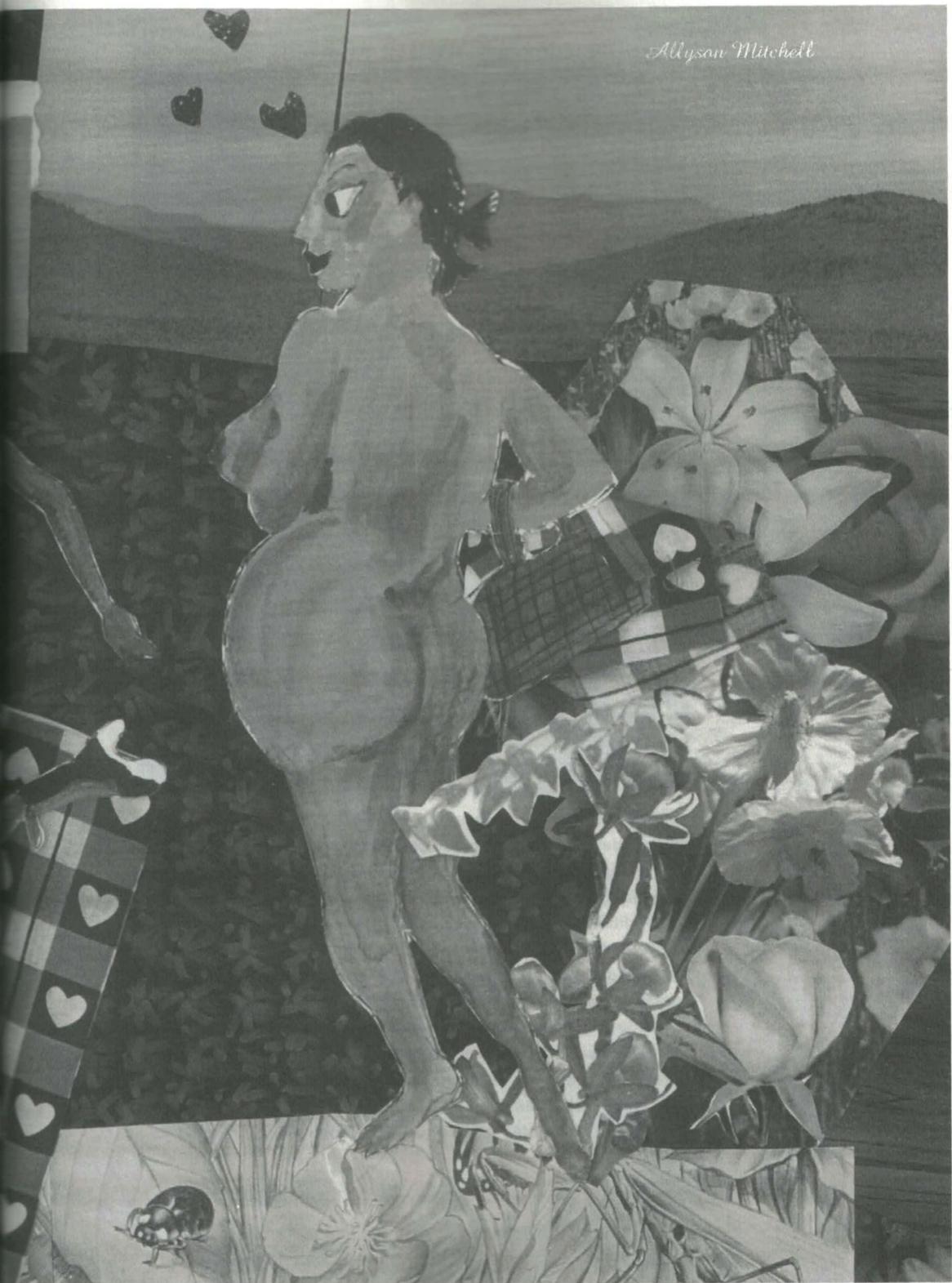


in Roof Sundae
ICE CREAM

Campbell's
CHICKEN NOODLE SOUP



Allyson Mitchell



Roller Dome



When I saw her skates, I knew there was going to be some competition for her attention. One couldn't help but stare at her feet; the skates split in two by pink and blue, with translucent red wheels, topped off by a dollop of pom-pom cream. White socks dotted with posing rubenesque ponies, taut on her calves, each the size of one of my thighs. I trembled next to the lockers smelling of sour feet. Her skirt, a tight poly-knit tempest of colours, blues and reds fighting for the contour of her hips which kept shifting when she laughed as boys and girls alike tried their charms on her; a gold-toothed grin from a smooth-haired fellow; a braless pre-teen arching her back, small nipples hard, talking in breathy phrases with a peppermint mouth. They were dying — so was I — but at least I was safe in the covert. Her powdery green angora sweater smacked of Lucky Charms, and only two pearly buttons were holding those 40DD broncos in their stalls. "She could break me," I thought. I would experience death in the luxury of her flesh. A short boy with a switch blade was making her blush and a freckled girl with braces stared at this dreamboat's ponytails glistening with scented pommade — her bangs pulled over by a monkey-faced barrette. What did I have to offer? What were they giving her that I couldn't? The DJ dropped a new song, and with a shake of the pom-poms she peeled away from her hormonal entourage, gliding onto the floor, alone — ALONE. All my fears of having to duke it out in the parking lot with one of her suitors before my mom picked me up vanished. I knew I had to act fast. I ran-clumped-skated to the concession stand and started firing off orders to the bored striped teen behind the counter "A double order of buffalo wings, jumbo nachos, a large suicide and two moon pies, please." The tray was awkward and made me move move slower than I wanted to. She was still on the rink, but the song was almost over. "MOVE MOVE MOVE," my mind screamed, my sweaty fingers greased

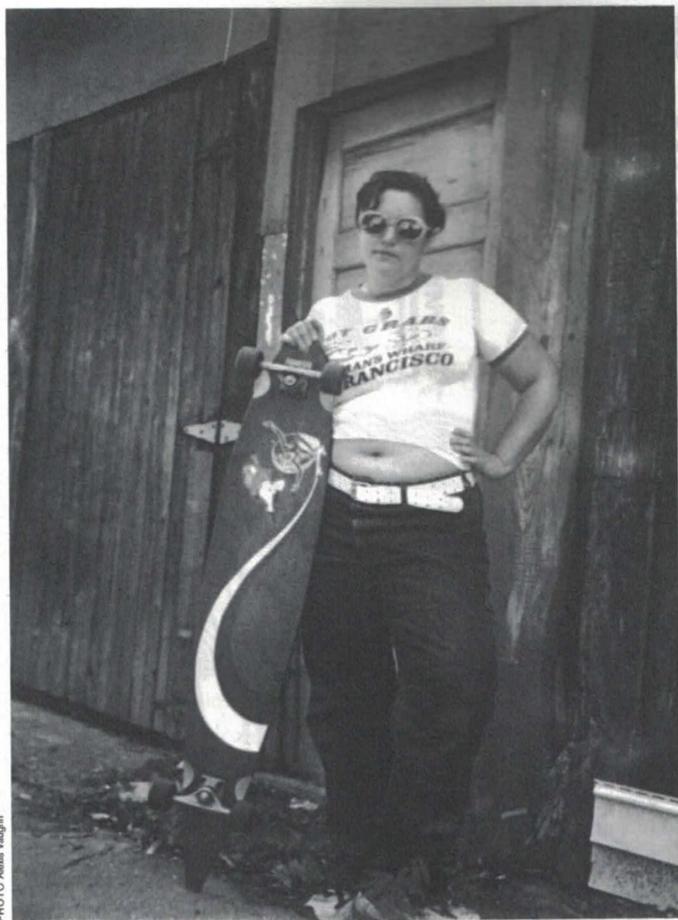


PHOTO Alexis Vaughan

Gut Gang — Allyson Mitchell

up, the tray tilting, my t-shirt wrinkled with panic. Her vision visited me in slo-motion. That ass leading the way in a backwards skate, her arm stretched out behind her, a plastic kitten ring on her pudgy finger. I finally made it to a corner of the cinder block wall and waited for her to pass. We locked eyes at 50 yards, at 45 yards I help up a dripping wing, at 40 yards an orangey nacho, at 30 yards she pulled lip gloss out of her bra and proceeded to shine up her mouth for the remaining distance between us. She groaned and whined to a stop. Never dropping her eyes, she took a long pull of the suicide soda and took the wing from my fingers. "Muh...mmm...my names Stick," I said. "Fluff," she whispered above the music. "Angel Fluff." She gleaned the bone of meat. She pressed her lips to my ear, "It's time for your victory lap."



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Hammam

Her fantasies of what transpired in the hammam (public steam baths) had reached almost mythic heights. While in Istanbul years ago, her Turkish partner had forbade her from entering these mystical places, recounting stories of women having been molested or not coming out alive. Others had suggested that they were only for those unable to bathe regularly in their homes, denoting some silly classist limitation. So as a compromise, female relatives bathed her in the women's quarters of the home where she was staying, giving her some idea of what she would be in store for when she would one day find herself deep inside the steamy walls of the hammam. Her fascination remained constant in spite of these warnings. She found websites dealing with these ancient bath houses, films, art and other references that kept her interest alive. Granted, many of the references appealed to gay male fantasies and denied access to her aesthetic, but she was vigilant in honouring a hunch that there was a powerful feminist sub-text to these spaces.

She loved travelling to places where she could unleash her Ali-Baba fantasies and felt most at home in places where the desert was not far away and camels were commonplace. As a toney heavy girl in these Eastern locales, there was rarely any negative emphasis placed on her size. In fact, as the cliché goes, it was quite to the contrary. She was a super-star in these gigs and gobbled up the attention like someone on a survival mission, knowing she would need these reservoirs of self-esteem on her return to urban Western Skinnyville. Although there were limitations to being seen as the embodiment of sensuality simply because she was full and round, it was a welcome change to the goofy attitudes she was accustomed to. She revelled in her role as the plump Western seductress and this unleashed incredible dormant body awareness and confidence.



Her current venue in North Africa was a much more liberating one than some of her other escapades and she knew she would find herself in the hammam any day now. First, she checked out the hammam in a hotel where she was staying. She knew it would be less than authentic, but a dress rehearsal of sorts, a chance to understand the protocol in a place where Westerners were not expected to know the score. As she had predicted, it was pleasant but lacked the sense of community she had anticipated. After all it was only her and a Finnish woman bumbling their way through the exotic ritual; hardly the scenarios depicted by Ingres or Delacroix in their grand paintings of hammams centuries ago. So next, she befriended a local woman who for a fee would take her to an authentic hammam in a local village. This time, she hit the jackpot. She and her companion approached a small building with a tiny naïve drawing of a woman wearing a turban and a picture of soap and a towel. Women were coming and going with their plastic buckets and carpet bags full of henna and homemade soaps. They walked in and were met by the staff—several serious mature women in various degrees of undress. These women were part of Morocco's large underclass—scarred, toothless and weathered. They had been widowed or abandoned, now needing to work in the hammam to support themselves and their families. These women had hard lives and resented anything resembling objectification. Needless to say, she was met with great suspicion—Western women never came here her friend told her, and the women were uncomfortable with her presence, but accommodating.

She was directed to a small room where she was undressed and then shuffled to another room where thirty or more women were either relaxing or bathing themselves or each other. It was one of three rooms that became progressively hotter. She was warned that she would only be able to tolerate the first room, and was assigned a small place in the back corner. Within minutes, a huge and powerful Berber woman with a tattooed face descended on her with a prickly sponge and began scrubbing her to the point of



How Fat Do You Think You Are?

75% described themselves as too fat, though 45% of these were underweight according to height/weight charts.

Survey by Susan Wooley of 33,000 women reported in *Ms* magazine May 1986

serious exfoliation. Other women looked on in amusement as she grimaced and tried to hide the fact that initially it felt like she was being Moulinexed. After a while, the healing power of the entire process kicked in and "Hedonism 101" was in full force. She knew her presence disrupted the authenticity of this space, but tried her best to factor it in as she soaked it all up. While giant pails of very hot water were being thrown on her to wash away the dead skin, she was experiencing almost exactly what she had dreamt of—women of all ages, sizes, colours and shapes hanging out together, chatting, combing each other's hair, washing each other, displaying their bodies and getting into some pretty serious debates. Things weren't utopian here though, and conversations often seemed like downright arguments. Gossip (l-hadra) was a sport if not an art in Morocco and the hammam was the official arena of this pastime. There was also the act of bride selection, whereby women would check out prospective partners for their sons or brothers. Makes sense in a place where such inspections could rarely happen between partners before marriage. This was clearly the most interesting woman-only space she had seen in years. Rivalled only perhaps by the tiny hairdressing shop her mother visited weekly in the '60s and '70s for a wash and set, nestled in a tacky suburban strip mall. The body consciousness was what was missing in this remote woman zone—her mother's cohort were gossiping all right, but doing it in full polyester ensembles.

As her mind shifted back to the hammam, she couldn't help but correlate the ease with which women were naked with each other in this space and the acceptance she enjoyed in this new culture at large. Spending time with women of all physical stripes had to impact on a society's understanding of the female form. If a young girl sees 80-year-old women's bodies unclothed on a regular basis—ones that have just had surgery and yet others that have given birth to twelve children—her expectations and connection to her own body would have to be less punishing than they were in the West. Were regular trips to the hammam, that



How Fat Do You Think You Are?

*They say we're unhealthy
while they get wealthy -
weightwatchers is owned
by Heinz -
well, I tell you,
this is one roly-poly lady
who's been reading between
the lines.*

—Judy Small, song "Roly Poly People," originally on record *Ladies & Gems* © Crafty Maid Music 1984; reissued on CD the best of the 80s, Crafty Maid Records, P O Box 304, Fairfield, Victoria 3078, Australia
©Judy Small
Larrikin Music Publishing

had their roots in necessity and were now enjoying a renaissance in Morocco, responsible for what seemed to be an extremely tolerant understanding of what being a woman was all about?

They had now been moved to the final stage of the bath experience and reclined in a waiting room of sorts with mint tea and biscuits. Many other women were resting here and seemed to be putting off their return to the real world, where women's agency was less evident. Visually, it was straight out of an Arabesque painting — maybe the Orientalists weren't so far off in their depiction of Eastern life? Women lounged on banquettes draped in colourful tapestries and sipped tea in a regal manner. For the hammam was clearly a place where women reigned supreme. She came away from this 2½ hour session, clean as a whistle and convinced that Western uptightness had fed into our body hatred and alienated women from each other. This was the impact the hammam had on her and she hoped to hang onto the feelings achieved inside these scorching walls forever.

Now that she had actually been to a real hammam she was pumped. Any time she wanted to get clean and get away from the realities of androcentrism she knew where to go. She'd been living on a farm with her lover and his family in the south of the country. His mother, Zahra, was a big fan of the hammam and the two of them frequented it together. Hanging out naked with her partner's mother took a bit of getting used to, but it helped them connect in ways that may have taken years in the West. She had never seen Zahra's hair, let alone her body before, as she always dressed modestly in traditional Berber clothing. She was surprised to discover an incredible mane of long and silky black hair under her ornate headscarf. She was also able to see what forty years of hard labour on a farm had done to this woman's body — very different from the soft forms she observed among women of genteel existences who also visited the hammam. Off in one corner of the baths, two deaf women, one scrawny, the other full-bodied, hennaed each other's hair, signing their way through what seemed to be a lively discussion about each other's families. Another woman who showed the ravages of fire on her body, with severe scarring from burns confidently moved around the room, freely chatting with her friends offering to wash their backs. A beautiful heavy girl showed up with a month-old baby boy and plopped him in a bucket of warm water, his head bobbing around while others admired him and she gloated over her latest arrival. As soon as this boy would reach two or three his father would take him to the men's side of the hammam and he would be cared for there.



Zahra always washed her coveted Western daughter-in-law and took great pride in introducing her to friends and strangers alike. She had officially graduated from Western enigma to honoured guest. These days as she entered the doors of the neighbourhood hammam she was met with respect and kindness. She also knew the drill, which made her less comical as she rolled around on the floor soaking in the pleasures of this place and her body — it was her little safe and comfortable playground. Picking up the occasional word in Berber confirmed her suspicions that she was the subject of gossip here. She didn't let it bother her though, remembering that if others never discussed you in Morocco you were as good as dead. Some days she and her lover would mimic the hammam at the farmhouse, spending hours scrubbing and polishing each other's skin. Although these were wonderful and often naughty times, they were different and had little to do with the amazing connection she felt in the special spaces reserved for women, their bodies and their interaction. Now back in urban Western Skinnyville, she yearned for anything that resembled her wonderful times in the hammam. The "Y", nah. Women leered at her here, often judging her ample form and bragging about how long they'd spent on the treadmill, while she paddled around for a while in the pool. A full body massage, nah. Paying someone to rub your back felt good, but didn't come close to the feeling of women volunteering to do this and being able to reciprocate. She gave up trying to replicate the entire hammam phenomenon, as there was nothing that could capture this unique "spa-meets-old-world-salon" culture. She knew it would be a while before she'd get back to those hot and steamy interiors, feeling content to have experienced them at all. What she did do though was to permanently keep these transformative visits in her heavy girl consciousness, as a "body-positive woman thing," whenever she felt too big or round or in need of a really good scrub.



Kerry Daniels-Zraidi is a
freelance writer and founder/editor of
Heavy Girl Press in Toronto.

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Fat Girl Walking

You know I am sick of food... really I just want to stop talking about eating and eating disorders — take them right out of the discussion. I would lay odds that if women weren't quaking in their boots at the idea of getting fat, then anorexia and bulimia would become statistically insignificant. Since bulimia didn't even exist as a disorder until dieting became a significant statistic I'd say the odds are in my favour.



Eating has obscured the true issue for too long. What links fat women to anorexic or bulimic women is not disordered eating or bad body image — bad body image is a given for any woman born into a culture which devalues women's bodies in all aspects except "attractiveness" — but rather is the absolute horror of fat. Hating fat and fat people is the last safe prejudice. I know I'm not the first to say it, but it can never be said enough. When a thin woman looks at a fat woman she sees her worst nightmare, a ruined woman. I realize "ruined" is an arcane concept which some probably feel has no place in a culture where women enjoy historically unprecedented economic and sexual independence, but bear with me. Many have pointed out that while sexuality was the conflicted impulse for women of the 19th century, eating is the conflicted impulse of the 20th century. That old Victorian dividing line, forbidden desire, is alive and well and living in our refrigerators — still separating righteous maidens from fallen women.

It's not a perfect corollary: our century has yet to produce a fictional romantic heroine dying because of her repressed desire for cheese cake, à la *Wuthering Heights*, but real life has provided some startling similarities. In the last century, unmarried women who had sex or got pregnant or ran away from abusive husbands were considered to be "ruined." Some, having no other options, slipped into prostitution. Many more were simply sequestered in the righteous indignation of their families, if they escaped being sent to a mental institution.

That is how fat women live today, isolated by hundreds of little reminders that you literally don't "fit" in. Seats in airplanes and theatres are too small, as are subway turnstiles, hospital gowns and hair salon robes. Clothes shopping means trips to special stores. While fat women aren't packed off to mental institutions, they are considered walking pathologies. If you're fat you must be emotionally dysfunctional in some way — either you want love or are afraid of love; are oversexed or afraid of sex; crave attention or are trying to hide. The best one I ever heard was "You're borderline psychotic, so you got fat to keep your feet firmly planted on the ground." Add to this a healthy dose of social alienation. The difficulty fat women have being accepted as friends and/or sexual partners is well documented. Fat is a shameful condition which can only be atoned for by trying to lose weight. God help the fat woman who speaks out about the futility of dieting and fat oppression — she is a lost cause. All of this is not lost on thin women and most tragically of all, young women.

Last year I attended a party in celebration of No-Diet Day. The comment that stayed with me most came from a thin acquaintance to whom I had offered a piece of cake. She looked around the room and conspiratorially intoned "There's a certain lawlessness here." I tried to figure out what was different at this party. There was food and drink. People were talking and enjoying themselves. There was one major difference. There were a whole lot of fat women eating. "That's it" I thought, "unrepentant fat girls are the real bad girls. Sexual lawlessness is so mainstream that we are selling it to teeny boppers. Think of how radical Girl Power would have been if the Spice Girls had all been fifty pounds heavier, ate grilled cheese sandwiches and french fries and still wore skimpy outfits — stomachs and cottage cheese thighs akimbo. Maybe that is what we need to break down the isolation of fat women. It's time to take fat out of the closet.

If you want to be a rebel, accept your body. If you want to be a radical rebel, eat what you feel like eating, wear what you feel like wearing and talk about what it's like to be a fat woman in this culture. Ask for armless chairs in restaurants, or ask a "normal-size" clothing store why they don't stock larger sizes. If you feel guilty for eating that french fry, remember smokers aren't turned down for group health insurance; I hope that makes you angry enough to tell the next well-meaning friend, lover, colleague, physician or family member who makes comments about your weight because they're concerned about your health to get a life. If a potential lover tells you that they have a problem with your body size, tell them you are having second thoughts about dating a bigot. I say if you are going to be a bad girl you may as well make yourself heard.



Amy Walton is a Toronto writer and researcher and is active in the size acceptance movement.

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If you wanna
be a rebel
accept your
body.



Just Call Me Big Daddy!

For a good part of my life I've wrestled with phatso. This hateful word sent me into the phat world. My body has been starved, dieted, fasted, girdled, exercised, tormented, hated, and even shipped to the depths of a New York state fat camp hell.

This sharp word rang through my mind from the schoolyard in which it came. I can still hear them screaming: *phatso, phatso, look at her!* Yes, I am phat. I am as phat as they come, but I am powerful. I'd drape their skinny asses up and hurl them through the air in true phatso style: PHAT POWER.

When I first started school, I was shipped to senior kindergarten due to my size. Now that's PHAT POWER! Everyone said that I was just too large for junior kindergarten; they said I would become socially inept, just too self-conscious. This was the beginning of my indoctrination into PHAT POWER. I was going to skip a grade based on my BIG-BONED PHAT SELF.

My childhood dresses were bought from a slightly used maternity shop. To this day I can still remember the dresses and the humiliation bestowed on me. If you were to broach this subject matter with my mother of seventy, she'd shake her head, her eyes would become glossy and she'd launch into endless tales of woe and hardship endured. It was public humiliation. We shared the trauma. Reality flash: mom wore a size 14 max back then, never mind that my bra size left her behind in grade 5. I'd wail and cry about how there was nothing that would make me look "normal," much less "Barbie-like." She, moms, would stand shaking on the other side of the dressing room door, desperate and without resource.

As I progressed through grade school, I'd take my body and force it against convention, tackle the largest, toughest boy to the ground, smiling sweetly as my soul sang Phat Power. I attended a Catholic



school where the schoolyard was divided into girl and boy play areas. For some reason, unbeknownst, back then, to me, I always ended up on the boys' side. Playing with the boys, with my dress swinging and lady's tights stuck to my thick thighs, I'd wrestle them to the ground at even the slightest provocation. I Ruled. I was famous for my endless battles and angry outbursts. I know now what was happening—I had PHAT POWER.

Mind you, the boys adored me, but not in the same way as they adored the small-boned skinny girls. It was the fear they adored. They submitted to me daily. Feeding their masochistic needs, I was enticed with endless taunting, teasing, and down-right meanness. This would always result in a schoolyard battle. It was me, bringing them to their knees. Begging for mercy, that's what they adored. Inflicting just the right amount of pain to satisfy their boy bodies: PHAT POWER.

And I enjoyed it.

When my body pumps, it pumps large. I was nurtured on PHAT POWER. My energy is intense and thrives on voluptuous body parts. Everything I do, conscious or not, is phat. When I drool, it's large, when I look for a woman, she's got to be large. Big, fat energy, that's what attracts me.

Now having been raised in Phat culture, weighing in at 200-plus gives me the understanding and appreciation of the lush femme: the femme who walks with amazing grace swinging from her hips, the femme who embodies the energy of queens, empresses, and big mamas. Only they, who push against the XX large plus larger barriers understand the unspoken skill of intimidation—PHAT POWER. They rule with beauty and charisma, and command a large, succulent sexual energy.

Being a lover of pain and pleasure intermingled has made me lust after the woman who doesn't seem as if she'd be crushed under my weightiness, my body that is. The woman who doesn't feel threatened by talk of karmic revelations of emperor, king and larger-than-life bulldaggers knows PHAT POWER.

I'm no boy-dyke. The body is all wrong, but I did



Fat Facts

*85% of North America
women think they're too fat;
at any time, 40% are on diets;
by age 10,
80% of girls have dieted**

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just slide into Daddy energy; it fit right. This is me: big, and strong, powerful. Daddies can be huge and obese. Finally, I'm accepted, even though my young voice still tries to haunt me with starvation, diets, and the girdling of my soul.

One day I'll be a bear. And bears want to be phat. I'd love to be a bear now, but unfortunately all I can wear is the bear paw belt buckle. You never know, I might still make it there, but, I'm just slightly underweight.

Loving and satisfying XX plus women is a joy and pleasure. The taste of a vulva that has been ripened and flavoured through phat life is the taste of glory and supreme delight. It is the mingling of intense charismatic energies, energies born out of wrestling with fat, enduring an emotional fast of acceptance. Loving phat power is self-love. The fast is over. Let the feast begin.

JUST CALL ME BIG DADDY!



Fat Facts

*The increase in population body weight over the last 20 or 30 years coincides with increase of pressure to diet - what is the connection?**

Carol Latchford thrives on the love of her family, friends and the written word. A Torontonian, Carol enjoys Getaways on her motorcycle, the company of luscious women, and being called Daddy.

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More Bounce to the Ounce



Fat Facts

*The majority of "experts" in the "obesity field" continue to promote dieting, although in over 95% of cases dieters regain the weight; further, the ill-effects on health of weight fluctuation may cause more premature deaths than smoking.**

I've been a fatso since birth. Just a minute, I'd've had to have been a fatso *before* birth, since it took the Detroit-Windsor Tug-O'-War teams to urge me from darkness into the bright lights. My mother used to tell me that the presiding doctor told her I was in a double sack of water, and should have been twins, and that had Mother fallen from a tall building while I was still prenatal, she'd've gone splat on the pavement and I'd've popped out like a cork and bounced on down the street.

Oh, I should warn you right up front that, as well as having a surfeit of adipose tissue, I'm cursed with being the product of two Irish immigrants; so it's quite likely that not a word of my intro is true — other than the fact that I was born... on a Sunday in October; yep, "bonny and blithe and good and GAY." Born on Canada's Thanksgiving Day to become the biggest turkey perched on the family tree. Born in '35 during The Great Depression, I have managed to leave most everyone hugely depressed ever since.

But back to the adipose tissue. Seems I thrived on mother's milk and for months and months did little more than eat and sleep. Family folklore has it that the summer of '36 was an exceptionally tropical and lengthy one and the doctor told Mother she was not to *attempt* to wean me until the autumn temperatures returned. So for a year I guzzled and gurgled, peed and tooted, and returned to the Land of Nod. My

parents had been married for over seven years by the time my birth was reality, but many refused to believe in my existence even then, since, as the Irish say, "there was nary the sight nor sound" of me. Yet another jewel in the family's tall tale collection concerns one of my 6'5" red-haired father's work colleagues, who announced on the job one day that I did not exist and, even if by some fluke I did, my mother would have been pregnant a helluva lot sooner if he'd been able to spend some time alone with her. At which point in the comradely chit-chat, my father lifted the fellow over his head and threw him across a roomful of long tables with much crashing and banging.

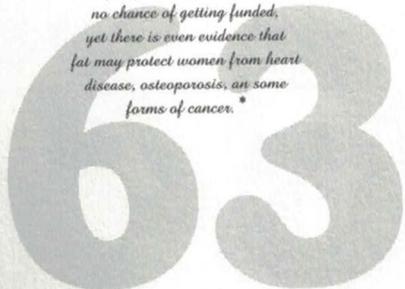
I will now force all the brawling cats back into the bag. Am I going to share all the family shenanigans and branigans with the world? Fat chance! Right, fat is the topic. Nearly forgot. It's the curse of the Irish to get drunk on words and stagger about endlessly on automatic pilot, letting their mouth steer them smack into a brick wall. Another archival family story describes my father's reaction to me one evening as he hefted my six months of lumpage onto his knees. To my mother he's alleged to have said, "Well, Annie, I think we got ourselves a bargain baby. Look at her. She's so damn plump, she comes with her own necklace, bracelets and anklets!" Out of that paternal/maternal exchange came my first nickname "Bangles." Only one photo of me in my infancy has survived. Maybe they had trouble getting all of me into the viewer on their Brownie Hawkeye camera or whatever picture-taker they'd perhaps borrowed back in '35-'6. At any rate, there I sit on a canvas lawn chair filling it quite successfully. Lucky I wasn't nicknamed Buddha!

I don't recall—as I was growing up (and out)—ever being teased by playmates about my being a fatty. They focussed on my first name "Anna" which gave them plenty of scope for inventiveness. The longest mocking chant was



Fat Facts

*Data on the supposed connection between obesity and morbidity used by insurance companies are based on 1950s studies of white men: Glenn Gaesser, in his book Big Fat Lies: The Truth About Your Weight and Your Health (NY: Fawcett Columbine, 1996), points out the actual connection is between morbidity and diet/physical activity patterns, not morbidity and weight. A fit fat woman is likely less at risk of health problems than an unfit thin one. Research projects designed to query the connection stand no chance of getting funded, yet there is even evidence that fat may protect women from heart disease, osteoporosis, and some forms of cancer.**



Anna Banana plays the piano

Her father plays the drum

Her mother plays the broomstick

On Anna Banana's bum

I don't know whether or not my system secreted extra Dopamine but somehow I didn't let the teasing get to me—usually. There was one girl, Carol Cook, my age, who lived just three houses from mine and never ever gave up on this rhyme. As soon as I stepped out the door in the morning, there she'd be happily shrieking the lines all the way to school—and all the way home again. I've no clear idea how long I endured her persecution—other than that it was for months and months—until the schoolday morning when I placed an exquisite drop-kick directly on her big wide open mouth and took out two of her top front teeth, leaving behind considerable peripheral damage as well. I met my first policeman one-on-one that day, when I was maybe seven, at most eight. I would not apologize. I remember my refusal quite clearly.

Somehow I grew up with a strong confident sense of self—at least outwardly. I've never been near a shrink, therapist or resolution counsellor. A few sessions might reveal a tiny whimpering wounded child deep within me but, if so, I've not heard a peep from her. It's a wonder too, since the hurtful scenes I faced because I was a "big healthy girl!" were right in my family home. My mother, a mere 5'2" in height, with a tendency toward buxomness, had a very nasty tongue in her when it came to other women's sizes. "Did you ever see the like of it? Why, her backside's broader than a barn door." Another favourite was "God save us, she has a belly on her like a poisoned pup!" As my brother approached his teens, he developed a mouth too, but his usual label for me was "Tubbo," which I could handle easily. Off and on he has continued to call me that. Of course, I called him "Piss Pot" for a decade or more since he wet the bed until he was sixteen. Our father had long since died (when I was fourteen and my brother nine) so then I was outnumbered only two to one. I could deal with that—even when my brother would pretend to read the label



Fat Facts

*Diet pills have been approved and marketed that are known to cause pulmonary hypertension which can lead to fatal heart and lung problems. Amphetamines were also prescribed and they raise blood pressure and increase the risk of strokes, heart attacks, cardiac arrhythmia, and sudden death. Studies showed that the drugs did not do much to promote weight loss. Studies of fat people blamed these problems on obesity. **

on my blouse and say, "Hmm, whatta coincidence. This was made by Omar the Tentmaker too."

Really, I just barrelled on through each day letting potentially harmful, hurtful remarks slide off my broad shoulders. I had many difficulties to face; being a "large charge" was just one of them. Since my father had died in 1950, I faced high school as the product of a single parent home, a very humble home. We couldn't have been much poorer without ending up on the street. All my clothes for years were hand-me-downs, which my mother turned inside out and relined or restitched or whatever—to the best of her exceptional patience and ability. However, she couldn't snap her fingers and make my cousin Eileen's old blue winter coat a foot and a half longer. I loathed that coat. I'd leave for high school before another kid was on the street. After school, I'd hang around reading in the library until almost all students had headed home. I wanted as few as possible to see me in that coat with a half yard of skirt hanging below the coat's bottom edge. I was 5'8" tall in short order and runty Eileen's castoffs were never going to be long enough.

As well, I was freckled, had a big nose and wore glasses. In fact, I got glasses and my first diaper about the same time. And even in Grade 9 I was heading off to school with *braids*. They were now pinned on top of my head, no longer bobbing about on my shoulders. Nonetheless, I must still have looked like Heidi on a very bad hair day. In fact, I must have looked and acted like a total nerd as I trotted off to Parkdale C. I. in southwest Toronto with my giant leather briefcase (bought at the CNE by my favourite uncle) and inside it all my textbooks with covers handstitched by my mother (using oilcloth scraps from Harry Finkle's hardware store), each frontispiece inscribed with my name and address in copperplate script done by my father (a year and a bit before he died). This family support gave me inner strength as did my own fierce determination to succeed.

And I did succeed. Five years later in June '54 I



* From CBC Ideas series,
The Fat Wars, broadcast
December 1997;
transcripts available from
CBC, P O Box 500 Station A,
Toronto M5W 1E6

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had my "Senior Matriculation" and a batch of prizes and bursaries that made University studies seem possible. Had I enjoyed the five years? Not at the time. Somewhat, in retrospect. Certainly the yearbook images of high school experience weren't mine: football games, cheerleading, membership in all sorts of clubs, sports rallies, election campaigns and all sorts of boy-girl antics. I did have friends—and two from those times are still friends today (a millennium later). They were slim or athletically muscled souls. It's always been my fate as a fatty to have positively skinny friends. You know the kind; they're ironing board slim and when they turn sideways they become invisible... sigh... Anna Banana the lumpy, badly-dressed, freckle-faced and begoggled bookwormish loner could have been eaten alive by these high school peers, but she wasn't.



Again, I don't recall any nasty cracks directed at me. Maybe the fifties were a kinder time. I was my own harshest critic. I knew I was different from many of the others, or seemed to be. I hated swimming days at school. Some girls could wear the official "tank suit", an unflattering navy one-piece and still look like a Miss America candidate. I wore a polka dot disaster from some church rag bag and resembled a damp laundry sack tied in the middle. What "middle"? All my life a waist has been totally wasted on me. The godawful blue romper suit for gym days was another perpetual eternal mortal embarrassment. It was torture enough to prance around the gym in this sadistic outfit but in Spring, we girls were paraded outside to the school's front lawn to precision march and twirl, throw and catch bloody dumbbells in front of passers-by, who would lean on the metal fence and stare. "Saved by the bell" had very special significance for me during those five interminable years.

But I don't want to leave the impression that I spent all my years from birth through my teens head-down, walking backwards away from social encounters or on-stage challenges. A bunch of us girls formed a kind of sorority *Semper Amicae* (always friends) and did many good works while still enjoying a fine time. Ironically, in spite of our show-offy *Amicae* (Latin feminine ending), we always included a gaggle of gawky guys. Ironically too, since I despised pool periods, I was always a clown on Swim Show nights. I used my considerable poundage (around 165-70 pounds, as I recall) to milk every laugh I could from the parents and staff seated around the pool. I would sidle out on the diving board, seemingly counting heads, oblivious to my whereabouts, inch along counting merrily and then, of course, no more diving board space and I'd disappear in a backward flop into the water, arms and legs akimbo.

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There wasn't much opportunity for me to laugh and clown during my four years (1954-'8) in Honours English at Victoria College, University of Toronto. During my first year I was a live-in light housekeeper and babysitter for a Rosedale family, where I earned room and board and \$5.00 a week. I was perpetually penniless during those years, and coached women's basketball at a West Toronto high school one evening a week to make a very few dollars. I also taught a Saturday morning art class for kids at a West End Recreation Centre, for the same reason. What with scrambling for money, attending classes (by no means all of them!) and meeting my assignment and seminar deadlines, I was one busy kid.

Every summer I ran a playground for the Toronto Department of Parks and Recreation. I usually went from my last exam to a summer prep clinic and then to the playground the next day. It was a head-down whirlwind. In spite of being a lard ass and a bookworm, I could certainly move at lightning speed. As well, although I was by no means athletically inclined, I could certainly spot the talent in others and because of my lack of inhibition and my gift of the gab, I could encourage others to go for broke and give their best. Whether the sport was basketball, volleyball, punch ball or track and field, my team was one to be respected. Even the playground box of sewn and knitted articles turned in to the Red Cross late each August was a triumph. All items were *supposed* to be made by the playground children; however, I had all my kids' Italian and Polish mamas knitting and crocheting too. My own Irish mama had the job of washing and ironing all the goodies and wrapping them in tissue paper.

Now that I stop to give my life (so far!) some considerable thought, I realize I've more or less lived according to a few simple, unstated principles: always try to leave a place better than I find it; always give at least 100%; be upfront in my dealings; stand my ground on my convictions when challenged and refuse to take crap from anyone.

Is this attitude the reason I had rarely heard any remarks such as "fatso" or "four-eyes" or "teacher's pet" during my nonstop eighteen years in educational/penal institutions? In September '59, after a purgatorial year at the Ontario College of Education, I was finally in the classroom as a fully-certificated, professional, salary-earning high school teacher of English and remained so for the next thirty-three years, retiring — still full of piss and vinegar — in June '92. I had an excellent time in the classroom all those years, with usually twenty-five to thirty-five pairs of teenage eyes watching me. During all those years the pounds continued to accumulate. Yes, I taught *on my feet*, hiked up and down the endless tiled corridors, up and down the tiled



staircases, lugging at least one huge satchel in each hand, plus a coffee thermos, a purse and who knows what else. The pounds should have fallen off with a bang, right? But I *sat* to prepare the thirty-three years of lessons and I *sat* and *sat* and *sat* to mark the miles, the *tonnes* of teen scribbles submitted on deadline dates, after exams, at the end of in-class sessions, even voluntarily handed to me in the hall, yes, shoved under the women's washroom door. What was my antidote to all the incoherent, ungrammatical, misspelled jibber-jabber I'd had to pour over? Why, to *sit* and read *good* writing. I've been a lifelong bibliophile, remember? So, I led a sedentary life (except for my summer obsession with gardening) and the love handles sprouted baby love handles.

Still the teenagers accepted me. I never married. "Big Mama" Hillen was an old maid. Still they accepted me. During my last twenty-two years of teaching I wore a dress only once. (I made the mistake of wearing a Marilyn Brooks dress to a Parents' Night and the viewing line extended the corridor length. My colleagues—even on the other floors—were leaving their classrooms and parents to fly down to my room for a peek at "Banana" in a dress. I never repeated that mistake!) So, there I was in slacks and an overblouse for over two decades (yes, I changed the slacks and shirt...) and the teenyboppers still accepted me.

I wrapped myself in the Canadian flag and danced around the front of the classroom while the anthem played over the P.A. I taught with two sticks of coloured chalk in my ears (If the students weren't going to listen to me why should I listen to me? I knew what I was going to say...usually.) I taught with my feet in two separate waste baskets ('cuz everything a teacher says is rubbish, isn't it?) Once in a while when I was running short of cigarette money, I'd say "If you don't want to hear more about John Steinbeck or imagery or the rules of the semicolon, THROW MONEY!" And the crazy, desperate, incarcerated, hormonally-persecuted darlings would toss pennies, nickels, dimes, even quarters all over my desk, the floor, the chalk ledge. Sometimes I'd spend my *bribe money* on a T-bone steak and a 26er of gin on my way home and take the evening off. Yippee!

I accepted me. I liked me. Yes, I had a big belly, a big bum and moderately-sized boobs, but I also had a big brain, a big heart and moderately-sized talents. "So, I am a bargain at any price," I thought. The students seemed to think so too. Because I felt free to act the fool at times, to make a complete ass of myself, I freed them from at least some of their insecurities. My classroom became "a safe house" where they could try things, maybe for the first time, and discover some of their weaknesses and many of their strengths.



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I wanted them to associate learning with enjoyment. I wanted them to associate using language with fun. One day I suggested to a class that they take a short statement such as "I hate it" or "I love it" or "It's fun" or somesuch, use it as a refrain and build a poem (OK, some limping doggerel) around it. "Well, like, whadya mean 'xactly?" was the typical response to my instructions. So, I composed a spontaneous sample line by line on the blackboard. Here it is:

Eating is a dangerous act
 But I love it
And so fattening, that's a fact
 But I love it
It makes me bobble
It makes me bulge
My hips tell everyone
How I indulge
 But I love it
It makes me waddle
It makes me jiggle
Those coming behind
Start to giggle
 But EATING — how I love it!

I've never lost any sleep over the fact that I'm a jelly-belly and a lard-ass. Never lost my appetite either... "Fat" is a 25% smaller word than "thin" but we all know it carries much more weight — always negative weight. Without ever really thinking at length about it, I must have decided that carrying the physical weight was quite enough, thank you. I wasn't going to carry the psychological weight as well. So, I marched confidently on into life's next challenge. Since I was so open and at ease, any potential cattiness or malice seemed to dissipate as I approached. I used to tell my students that I was so polite that when I gave up my seat on a crowded bus *three* little old ladies would sit down. I put a sign up that read, "God, if you can't make me skinny, please, make all my friends fat".

I figure God has a mighty strange sense of humour since He made me queer too — but that's another story for another issue. However, during a comic routine I did recently at a gay club I got in a good one about being fat. The emcee was an androgynous lesbian in a shirt, tie, black leather vest, leather slacks and hip-high leather boots with spurs. The full catastrophe. And, lordy, lordy, she was skinnier than an altar candle. So, at the mike, I admired her leathers, said how I coveted



Anna A. Hillen is a retired highschool English teacher who specialized in subversive behaviour. She has written reviews and opinion pieces for "Street Talk" a column in the *Fergus-Elora News Express*. In moments of madness she has done stand up comedy and written poetry and prose.

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them, how I'd visited Steve's Sheepskins in my hometown and asked him to make me a vest and slacks just like the emcee's. I told how Steve then got intimate with his tape measure for a while, did some intricate calculations for another while and finally announced that as soon as he read about a herd of 150 cattle coming up for auction he'd give me a call and we'd go out and bid on them. That crack brought the house down ...

Not that being fat is all laughs. Early in my teaching career, I team-taught in a high school amphitheatre, where a lecturer's faults and strong points were both magnified. I tried to look as trim and efficient as possible. I climbed into a ribbed and wired bra each day and into a whale-boned girdle. Well, my thunder-thighs had no place to move. They were fused together. Of course, the friction was fierce and talcum was used aplenty. I could endure the pain as I walked like a geisha with bound feet; it was the sparks flying off my kneecaps that gave me away. And when I reached home and stripped off my snazzy dress and the iron maiden undergarments, my body flesh looked as if it had been run over repeatedly by twin tractors.

Oh, speaking of undergarments and such, I have to mention an experience my partner had. (She, surprise surprise, is another Gina Lolapalooza like me but with hooters like scooters. I mean, get your watermelons here!) A long while ago, elastic-strapped bras were new on the market so, in all innocence, she bought a couple and proudly poured herself into one for the next day's classes. She was testing one class and began to scurry down the aisles distributing the question sheet. Well, the pace set off her boobs encased in their elasticized hammock and they began to b-b-bobbing, left, right and centre. In under a minute, they'd knocked four students out cold, rendered my partner off-balance and sent her face forward on the floor. The classroom resembled a roller derby site. Aha! My partner just thanked me for this paragraph. She's been wanting to get all this off her chest for a mighty long time!

When I have to use my partner's experience for copy I know I'm running out of material. But I want to restate the thesis of this essay one more time. If you're a big mama, don't try to be a shrinking violet because you won't succeed. Don't try to be a wallflower either—for the same reason. You're big—so move through life like a block-long herbaceous border or cedar hedge. Let 'em see you coming. Platitudinous folk like to say fat people have to be "jolly" with other people because they're too fat to run from trouble. Who's running away? I say forge ahead as if you were Birnham Wood approaching High Dunsinane Hill. And take no prisoners!



I Like Shy

I am at the Pussy Palace, in the main space, music pulsing around me, soaking up the vibe of happy-sex around me. Everyone I know is here, all the women I've ever slept with, have wanted to sleep with, am currently sleeping with, and intend to sleep with. Both my current lovers, one who I am deeply in love with already, and the other with whom I am more than half-way in love with, are here. They are both voyeurs, and I am an exhibitionist. We have really *good* relationships.

I spot the woman I want across the room. I move toward her, swaying on my heels, my body moving luxuriantly in the skin-tight burgundy leather merry widow I'm wearing, hair long and unbound down my back. My eyes never leave my quarry, a beautiful little butch I've had my eye on now for over a year. She is small and slightly punkish looking, with button-fly leather pants that lace up the sides, a torn white undershirt and a look on her face that wants to be bold, but which doesn't fool me for a second. I've been watching her long enough to know that she is really very shy.

I *like* shy.

She is almost always alone. This fascinates me. I want to enter into her aloneness, to violate it as only I can. I luxuriate in the control I am feeling, in the knowledge of what I will do, in how she has no idea what is about to happen.

I know she wants me. I've seen her watching me, when I am with my lovers, when I am alone. Trying to work up the nerve to approach me but not knowing how. Peeking at me from under her tangle of hair, like the little girl that she is under her tough exterior. Wanting me so badly, but afraid of what she might get.

I see her now, leaning against the wall in a corner by the bar, holding her beer bottle against her crotch like she's wearing a strap-on.

I like that too.





PHOTO Alexis Vaughn

Bytch Femme taking a whack at Fat Stuff

She glances over, sees me walking toward her, and pretends she is casually looking over my shoulder at the people standing behind me. Instead of glancing away, I gaze at her steadily, with intent. Her eyes flicker back to mine, then down, as she realises I am approaching her, am possibly even going to talk to her. At the same time, almost as if against her conscious will, her body turns toward mine, as though responding to the pheromones I am sending her, that tell her I am going to fuck her as she has never been fucked before, that I will dominate her with pleasure.

She glances up again, a shy hope in her eyes, body still turning toward mine, and I smile, now only feet away from her, and as her hand rises toward me, to touch my hair, I step close to her and take her in my arms. She gasps as I wrap one arm around her arm and shoulder, while the hand hidden from the rest of the room slides to her stomach, my mouth descending on hers.

She doesn't even try to fight, giving it up with a small sigh, opening her mouth before my lips have even touched hers. My tongue slip-tangles with hers, sweet taste of lipstick and beer, soft slide of her shirt under my hand as it travels from her belly round to her back, to her ass, my large hand grabbing the leather as I pull her closer, more



into me, my other hand tangling in her hair, pulling her head back so I can taste her more deeply.

Yes...she whispers, her hand moving to my breast, tracing the nipple through the burgundy leather as I knead her ass, rubbing her cunt against me, my fishnet-clad leg sliding between her thighs, leather squeaking cool against my flesh. She settles onto me, heat of her crotch on the top of my thigh, wetness soaking my skin, and rubs, biting my neck as she does.

I am impatient to feel her wetness, to taste her. It has been a year since I first saw her. I have waited long enough.

I move my leg from between her thighs, ignoring her soft cry of loss, and, still hidden from the rest of the room, move my right hand from her ass to cup her breast, pinching her nipple hard through her undershirt, then down to her fly, ripping the buttons open in a single motion. Before she can gasp her protest, I have slid my hand inside and the sensations are such she no longer remembers that she doesn't want this, that others are watching, becoming aroused by her arousal, including my voyeuristic other lovers. They have been where she is now, felt how she feels.

She is arching now, my fingers slippery with her juices, as I tease her clit, one finger playing with the mouth of her cunt, another with her ass. My cunt is dripping, soaking the crotch of my leather g-string, as I settle my mouth over hers again. I slide one finger in her ass and another in her cunt in one easy motion, her cry drowned in my mouth, tangled in my teeth, as I bite her bottom lip, hard. She bites back, hips bucking to take me fully within, hand moving to my forearm, trying to shove more of me into her. I begin thrusting, hard, she whimpering as I bite her neck, sucking on the flesh. I fuck her ferociously, juices slippery down my hand, leather pants sagging on her hips now, as she forgets she doesn't want to attract anyone's attention.

Others in the room besides my lovers are beginning to notice what is happening. They watch, some covertly, some with open approval, some with gazes of determined indifference to this display of animalistic lust, and all with dripping pussies.

She is whimpering now, moaning "Harder, more," louder and louder as I give her more of what she wants. I have two fingers in her ass and two in her pussy now, thumb riding her clit hard. I have given up any pretence of hiding our actions, my mouth sucking and biting at her nipples openly, trying to take her whole breast in my mouth, leaving crimson lipstick trails like bloodstains on her undershirt, fabric soaked with saliva and sweat.



She is crying with pleasure, my clit riding the leather edge of my g-string as I fuck her, and explodes into orgasm, the hot gush of her come covering my hand and soaking the leather of her pants as she ejaculates, screaming into the sudden silence in the room as one song ends and another slowly begins.

We both freeze, my hand cupping her hard, drawing out the intensity and the pleasure, as both of our bodies begin to relax. As her head comes down, and her eyes focus on mine, I pull my hand from her pants to taste her juices and,

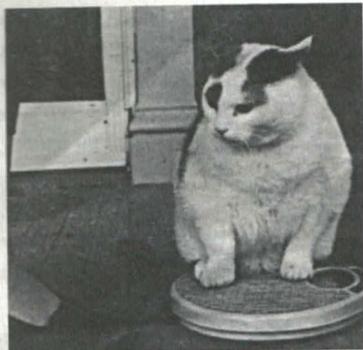
smiling,
ask her her name.



Leanne Cusitar is a Scorpio Firehorse femme top who likes lipstick, army boots and fucking with people's assumptions. A founding member of the Toronto Women's Bath House Committee, she also enjoys engaging in erotic performance and having hot, wet dreams about filmmaking. Her goals? To figure out life, polyamory and relationships, or get a good night's sleep.

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Chatterbox



BUBBA'S JUST BIG BONED

The first time I met the world's fattest cat was two weeks ago, when I locked myself out of my apartment.

"Not bad," I muttered, after searching hopelessly through the sack I call a purse for the key I knew I wasn't going to find. "Not bad for a total spaz."

The key was INSIDE my apartment. On the kitchen table. I knew this, even as I stood OUTSIDE my apartment. Keyless and clueless.

My only possible recourse, I figured, was to seek out my landlords, Tom and Daphne Mitchell, and borrow their key.

I was assuming, of course, they had a key.

The Mitchells live in that nice little blue century home on Lilla Street, you know the one, and when I arrived in their driveway the house was dark and deserted looking.

As it turned out, there was no one home. No one, that is, except for Bubba, the fattest cat known to man.

This cat, this mammoth miracle of motion, was hunkered down on the Mitchell's front porch like a hippo in a mud puddle. This baby wasn't moving anywhere. For anyone.

Just picture a bowling ball with a pin head. That's Bubba.

And although I did eventually get into my apartment that night, I've never been able to shake the image of Bubba.

I love cats, especially fat furry cats, the fatter the better. So when I saw Bubba, it was love at first sight.

Actually, Bubba isn't her real name. Ten years ago, the Mitchells named their pudgy little kitten Daisy, but when Daisy grew into a grotesque parody of cathood, she was abruptly nicknamed Bubba.

"She was slim until she was a month-and-a-half old," sez Tom Mitchell.



But Bubba did have one more svelte period in her life.

After Tom ran over Bubba's head with the family car.

Any other cat would have been creamed, el-splatto. But not Bubba. Bubba (née Daisy) merely had her jaw broken, which meant she had to have her jaw wired shut for a while. The ultimate torture for a cat who lives for food.

Poor Bubba couldn't eat for weeks, and eventually faded away to a mere shadow of her former large self.

"It was her slim period." sez Daphne.

Once the wires came off, Bubba began to eat in earnest, making up for lost time.

She designed a special weight-on program for herself including a strict diet of Purina Cat Chow in the blue box (nothing else will do), consumed at regular and constant intervals all day long. The Mitchells help by making sure her food dish is heaped up at all hours.

Bubba also sticks to a fat building exercise regimen, which calls for as little movement as possible.

"The only exercise she gets is guarding her food bowl," sez Tom.

Years later, Bubba is a model fat cat. Around Port Perry High School, where the Mitchell's teenaged daughter hangs out, Bubba is a legend, and for some, a sex symbol.

The Mitchells received a love note from one adolescent who vowed to do anything for a cherished weekend alone with Bubba.

From a wee kitten who weighed less than a pound of butter, Bubba has built herself up to an amazing 16 pounds — and although it may not sound like much, let me tell you, it is. Bubba is basically a small cat. What she's got is all blubber, although Tom Mitchell claims "She's just big-boned."

From a mere ounce-ling to a 16 pounder, Bubba is truly the Arnold Schwarzenegger of cats.

Everyone is real proud of Bubba's accomplishment, except her veterinarian.

"The vet says all that fat is hard on her hips," sez Daphne.

But knowing Bubba, the vet's threat will be ignored. Bubba will never diet. She knows who she is and what she is. And that's fat.

Really, she has nothing else to live for. The Mitchells fixed her years ago, so she's not interested in cats of the opposite sex. In fact, she's not interested in other cats period.

"She's jealous," sez Daphne.

"She's selfish," sez Tom.

But mainly, she's fat.

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(from L. to R.), Margaret Ward, Cookie Hunt, Banshee, Helen Weber, Susan Barker, Jeanette Elizabeth, Linda Braziel, Breezy May.

Images of our Flesh is a labor of love by The Fat Avengers. We are a lesbian fat activist group based in Seattle, Washington. We formed in November, 1981, and have been meeting since to work on a variety of projects.

Our two primary objectives are to build a strong national network of lesbian fat activists, and to fully realize our own beauty and power as fat dykes. We intend this calendar to be a step towards both of these goals. We want your feedback! Write and tell us what's happening in your life and your community, & how you feel about our calendar.

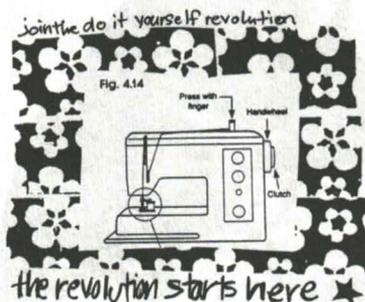
We didn't realize how big a project this would turn out to be. The calendar you have in your hands is still too white, too young, & able-bodied. It still doesn't do justice to our full and glorious diversity. We offer it to you as the opening note in an expanding chorus.

THE FAT AVENGERS

Excerpt from *The Fat Avengers "Images of Our Flesh" Calendar*
Photo by Judith Clarke, 1982

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Manifesto of the House of Big Girly



I'm standing in a subway station in Toronto, and there's a whole gang of guys across the platform staring at me. It's bugging me, and I can't tell what they're staring at. Eventually I clue into the fact that I am standing in front of an enormous Kate Moss, and she's wearing nothing but a pair of Calvin Klein underwear.

I'm fully clothed, yet I'm reminded of that nightmare everyone talks about, where you leave the house naked and it's really weird. I wonder if those guys are comparing my body to Kate Moss', and then I realize it's me: I'm comparing myself to a human coat-hanger. I walk to the end of the platform, but I still don't feel better.

Karl Lagerfeld was on TV again today, saying how much he loved women; "I love their bodies, their curves, the way fabric hangs off them..." As Karl trailed off into raptures over the human clothes-racks that work for him, I gagged theatrically in my living-room. I hate fashion designers. I despise them. If I hear one more interview with Jeannie Becker about how fabulous some fashion designer thinks women are, I think I'll vomit. I'm thinking about buying a plane ticket to Paris and puking all over the house of Chanel.

It's nice to hear men say that they love women for a change. But I know that this love is not unconditional. Isaac Mizrahi adores women... who fit into a size six, which is the average size that he (and most fashion designers) will cut his clothes. Designers at Chanel, Dolce & Gabana and Donna Karan respect beautiful women, if they come with glamour pics and are twenty pounds underweight. "She can't menstruate 'cause she doesn't have enough body fat? Great! Perfect! I love her!"

I have this feeling that if I met Calvin Klein, he wouldn't be so enamoured over me. And it's not just haute-couture designers. A few

weeks ago I was in Le Chateau, against my better judgement, trying to squeeze my thighs into their version of a size twelve pair of pants. The clothes are so sparkly and groovy that I'm drawn to them like a moth to a bug-zapper. But, to carry the metaphor out to its inevitable conclusion, I always get fried whenever I actually fool myself into thinking I could just "try something on." Even if I could afford the clothes, fitting into up-scale mall gear is just not a cheque my ass can cash.

But what's what if a heavy girl like me wants to move beyond the sweat-pants and waffle-top look? What's out there for a fashion-conscious chubby chick? Alice Walker once said that if there weren't books out there that you wanted to read, you should write your own. Start your own fashion house. Most companies that sell sewing patterns make their patterns from size six or eight to eighteen, and some go up to twenty-four. While most clothing stores don't carry sizes larger than twelve, I can make my own clothes that fit me at half the cost (sometimes even less than that).

Once I discovered that sewing is a completely accessible and fun activity, I found myself a used sewing machine for fifty bucks and started my own personal fashion house. My zebra-skin coffee-pants are all the rage, and lots of girls ask me to make them clothes; what's even better, they ask me to teach them some sewing basics. Not only are the clothes I make in my size, but they're clothes that fit just right in the ass, hang just how I like 'em from the waist, and are as long or short as I want in the leg. There are no tags in my pants that declare my waist size, and frankly I don't even use a measuring tape. I'm not restricted to "fat fashion." No "concealing" this or "camouflage" that. In the House of Big Girly, there is nothing that "disguises" anything. If I wanna show off some skin, I can.

My big ass scares Calvin Klein. I picture him as he wakes up in the middle of the night, soaked in sweat, hair in knots, thinking about me and my big sisters, busting out of the seams of his fall line. I picture that jerk with all the piercings, Jean Paul Gaultier, having a fit as we walk down the runway, dragging shreds of his latest "ethnic" fashions behind us. I imagine having dinner with Kate Moss, and I tell her it's ok to eat anything she wants to. She bursts into tears of relief as she gratefully helps herself to an entire black forest cake. After a filling and nourishing meal, Kate Moss asks to model my clothes, and I tell her that I'd love that, but I only cut a size eighteen.



Emily Pantin is a punk rock goddess, zinester, revolutionary radio co-hostess and movie-making mogul girl in Peterborough. She enjoys sewing and other womanly activities.

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a corset for all occasions

following her instructions, i have slept briefly & begun the ritual that will ready me for the journey to my desire & her pleasure. for me there is nothing as sexually stimulating as getting ready for a date with a butch gurrl. the task of dressing to impress a woman who seems to know more about being femme than i do, is a huge undertaking at times. makes me try harder. makes me second guess myself & wonder if i measure up to the other femmes in her life, past & present. i want to be the femme gurrl in her life. i want to be the femme gurrl that makes her forget all of the others. the femme gurrl who reminds her why she loves femmes in the first place.

so as i wait for the tub to fill with hot water & the fragrance of ylang ylang, i set about choosing the attire for this evening's festivities. i want to wear something that conveys sex & innocence & control all at the same time. this is not an easy look to achieve. my particular brand of femme is the 'bad little girl' persona & sometimes it's more of a challenge than i'm up to. tonight i'm feeling mischievous & sexy & oh so slutish! tonight i would entice her into an alley & have my way with her. tonight i want to top while bottoming, bottom while topping. tonight i want it all & more.

as i languish in the bathtub, my mind wanders to the evening ahead. she's taking me to dinner & then to see a play. it's been a while since i've gone out. i've become a homebody of late. there just doesn't seem to be any reason for me to be out there. the dyke scene these days is filled with so much drama & chaotic self-moralizing bullshit. i just haven't been able to find the courage & strength to take on the battle of the moral majority.

towelng off, i'm reminded of our first meeting. i have a habit of stopping at the one coffee house in the city that serves a great cup of tea on my way to work in the mornings. i only go there wednesday & friday



mornings because those days are the days i sleep in. i take a programming class tuesday & thursday nights & need to sleep in so i'm not a bitchy shrew at work all day. i was standing in the lineup, getting more than a little annoyed by the wait, when i noticed her. she had just dressed her coffee & was on her way out the door on my left. i glanced at her & caught her eye as she exited. after i paid for my tea, i left the shop & bumped into her as i hurried out the door. the details of our conversation escape me, but in the end i was late for work & had a date.

i'm looking through the closet & i can't seem to decide what to wear. now this is far from a new state of affairs for me. i can never quite decide what to wear the first time i go out with a new butch gurr. there is so much to consider. is she tall enough for me to wear platforms? is she a leg woman? a breast woman? these questions aid in my decision. so i'm looking through the closet & i settle on a little pleated black skirt & a white oxford shirt. this is an outfit that takes me back to my catholic school days. when i put on the skirt with knee-high socks or stockings & a pair of platform shoes, i feel like a rebellious teenager. this is a look that works for me.

so i've decided what to wear & i set about readying myself for the gurr to show up. i put skunk anansie's stoosh on the cd player & dance & sing my way into the persona of the evening. an hour later i survey the results in the full-length mirror. i stare at myself for a moment. there i am all decked out in black lipstick & essential oil & ribbons in my hair & garters & stockings & boots & polished nails. it's me in all my kick-ass diva bytchfemme glory! & the icing on the cake is my recent value village find — a 1950s white whalebone corset.

when she arrives & i open the door, the look on her face more than makes up for the indecision & the stress of the last few hours. sometimes i feel that i'm a femme gurr in the wrong era. of all of the fashion trends that i have admired, the only one that i truly regret not being there for is the era of the corset. it's not so much the garment itself that excites me, as the much as the idea. thinking about corsets always puts a bit of a smile on my face. it's the sexiness of a sculpted figure. somehow corset wearing evens the playing field.

i remember the first one i bought, i went to a fetish boutique & saw an excellent new black one that i ended up buying almost a year later... so what is the big deal here? it's underwear. well i must say that seeing the sheepish grin & sparkle in her eyes tells me that for me, the corset is back... with a vengeance. so after the amazingly wonderful date, & after making plans to see each other again, & after great sex with my corset on, i'm going shopping. a gurr's got to have a corset for every occasion!

*Bytch Femme: Fattitude in a
corset ... www.bytchfemme.com*



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Allyson Mitchell

Large and In Charge

"My stomach muscles are on permanent vacation."

Large and in Charge



Large and in Charge

~~FATTER~~

If this is your body type, wear these clothes to look ~~slimmer~~.

Bigger and Sexier

Large and in Charge

"Before I **GAINED** weight I was into camouflage big clothes, bushy hair, bright makeup. Now I let the real me shine through."



Large and in Charge



Large and in Charge

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Large and in Charge Large and in Charge Large and in Charge Large and in Charge

SLIM

"When I was I never saw the point of fussing with my appearance. I tried to be funny instead of pretty."

Large and in Charge

The #1,000 Calorie-a-Day

QUEEN SIZE

Large and in Charge

Large and in Charge Large and in Charge Large and in Charge Large and in Charge

Big woman Jama &

Large and in Charge

"My boobs almost caused a riot!"

Large and in Charge

Large and in Charge

a big cake

and size 16. She never weighs herself. She is

Large and in Charge

Large and in Charge Large and in Charge Large and in Charge Large and in Charge

I got a chest!

Large and in Charge Large and in Charge Large and in Charge Large and in Charge

Large and in Charge Large and in Charge Large and in Charge Large and in Charge

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one more fat excerpt...

*How **FAT** do you think you are?*

The Roseto, Pennsylvania study of the early 1960s also deserves special mention. Living in Roseto was a large group of blue-collar Italian immigrant families, mostly fat, who were unimpressed by mainstream America's thin standards of fashion. They ate generously of high-cholesterol ethnic foods and liked their fatness, accepting it as a sign of comfortable "affluence." They were also astoundingly healthy, with a low mortality rate and with none of the diseases generally attributed to fatness. The Rosetans were followed as they left their sheltered ethnic community and became assimilated into mainstream culture. With their size no longer acceptable, with pressure put on them to lose weight, to compete and to stop liking themselves as they were, these people soon became as sick as the "fats" around them. The study was popularly quoted as proof that stress is a killer. Almost ignored was its suggestion that fat is not a killer.

From Vivian Mayer, "Fat Liberation," in Hogue Wyckoff, ed., *Love, Therapy, and Politics* (NY: Grove Press, 1976)

FIREWEED

Fireweed is **seeking** new volunteer **members** for its **editorial collective**. We are looking for **diverse** women with **ideas**, creativity, **time** and energy, as well as a **commitment** to feminism and **feminist** politics. Previous **experience** on a collective, editing and **fundraising** skills are an **asset**.

Please send your resume to:
Fireweed, P.O. Box 279, Station B,
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5T 2W2.

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Radiance: The Magazine for Large Women

Sinister Wisdom - Winter 1985,
Number 28

Compiled by the staff of the Nellie Langford Rowell Women's Studies Library at York University, November 1999

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Calls for Submissions

FIREWEED

Guidelines for

submissions to *Fireweed*

- Always make sure that each submission is carefully labelled with your name, address and telephone number.
- Include a stamped, self-addressed envelope (SASE) for our reply or return of your submission. (If you live outside of Canada, attach an International Reply Coupon with sufficient postage. Do not send American postage!)
- Send material typewritten or computer-generated on 8½" x 11" paper, single-spaced for poetry, double-spaced for prose. Maximum accepted is five poems or 5,000 words of prose.
- Your covering letter should include a brief biographical note, including previous publication credits, if any.
- Visual Artists are encouraged to send whatever material you feel would reproduce well in our format. Send slides or photographs—no originals through the mail please.

Please send your submissions once every six months, or upon reply/return of a prior submission, whichever comes first.

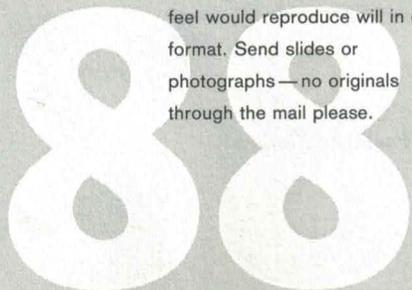
Fireweed, a feminist quarterly of writing, politics, art and culture, is an ongoing forum for the writings of women rooted in diverse cultural, sexual, and regional communities and which challenge literary and aesthetic genres. We publish visual and written material in all forms. We do not publish material that the editorial collective finds racist, classist, sexist or homo/lesbophobic.

Call for Submissions

Women at the Millennium

Women have been at the forefront of social, political and economic change over the last millennium. They have participated in revolutions, fought for their own and others' rights, secured the vote, entered the labour force, entered the political arena, and secured greater control over their bodies and their destinies. Despite these victories, in many countries, women continue to be denied their political rights, subjected to violence and mired in poverty.

To commemorate women's achievements over the last millennium, and record their dreams and aspirations for the next one, *Fireweed* invites you to submit your odes, celebrations, visions, rants, prophesies,



lamentations, visual art, poetry, stories, essays, and photographs on: 1) those that went before: role models/ inspiration/achievements; and 2) goals/visions/dreams/ predictions for the future. Young as well as old women of all backgrounds are encouraged to apply.

Women's Paths to Economic Self-Sufficiency

For women fleeing abusive situations, living in poverty, and marginally housed or homeless, the path to economic self-sufficiency is an arduous one. Fireweed invites women who have made this transition, or are in the process of doing so, to submit the stories, essays, photos and poems that describe your path to economic self-sufficiency and the tools you used to get there.

Transgender Issues

Some of us are fighting the battles associated with being lesbian women or gay men in a heterosexual world. But others are attempting to make the transition from one gender and sex to the other, or to live in the space in-between, where they identify with both genders, or neither. *Fireweed* invites people who are both making transitions from one sex and gender to the other, or attempting to carve out their own, sometimes fluid space on the continuum in between, to submit your stories, poems, photos, visual art and essays. We want to hear from you what challenges you face and what it means to defy categorization in a world that still turns on it.

Women in Prison

What does it mean to be a woman who is, or has been, incarcerated? *Fireweed* invites women to express their experience of being incarcerated through short stories, essays, visual art, photography, and poetry.

Short Stories

Send us your short stories: wonderful, weird, lyrical, transgressive.

Fireweed is having a Poetry Contest

As *Fireweed's* **Poetry is Political** issue attests, women of all persuasions are putting their concerns about life, love, and oppression to verse. To celebrate women's poetic impulse and achievement Fireweed is holding a poetry contest!

To enter, please submit your political rants, lamentations, spoken word/dub, whispered love songs, sisterly calls to arms, and other poetic musings with a stamped, self-addressed envelope and entry fee of \$10.00 per entry (five poems maximum) to *Fireweed*, P.O. Box 279 Station B, Toronto, M5T 2W2. All entrants will receive a one-year subscription to *Fireweed*—a \$22 value! Deadline for entries is May 31, 2000.

The first-prize winner will be announced and published in an upcoming issue of *Fireweed*, and will receive a \$100 cash prize, a two-year subscription to *Fireweed*, four back issues of their choice, invitation to read/rant/recite at an upcoming *Fireweed* function and a special, surprise gift basket!

The second-prize winner will be announced and published in an upcoming issue of *Fireweed*, and will receive a \$50 cash prize, a one-year subscription to *Fireweed*, two back issues of their choice and a special, surprise gift basket.

The third-prize winner will be announced and published in an upcoming issue of *Fireweed* and receive two back issues of their choice and a surprise gift.

Women poets unite | recite | take flight!

Back Issues



25 Class 1 [\$3]

Includes Part One of Dionne Brand's "Black Women and

Work: The Impact of Racially Constructed Gender Roles on the Sexual Division of Labour," fiction by Makeda Silvera, poetry by Joy Parks, Sandy Shreve and Joanne Arnott, Mary Horodyski's historical coverage of the Eaton's Strike, "A Question of Identity" by Cy-Thea Sand, "Why I Can't Write About Class" by Nym Hughes and an extensive bibliography on gender, class and writing.



26 Class 2 [\$3]

Fiction by Helen Potrebenco and in trans-

lation from francophone writer Jeanne D'Arc Jutras, an interview with Lenore Keeshig-Tobias, Part Two of Dionne Brand's "Black Women and

Work," a round-table discussion by the Working Class Caucus of the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre, a review of Sistren's Lionheart Gal by Ramabai Espinet, poems by Afua Cooper and Mary Horodyski's study, "Women and the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919."



28 Lesbiantics 2 [\$3]

Features poetry by Leslea

Newman, Brenda Brooks and Leleti Tamu, Jude Johnston's photo mural and Lynne Fernie's pixel-board project "Lesbians Fly [Air] Canada," essays on "Lesbian Mothering" by Claire Dineen and Jackie Crawford, on being a Sansei lesbian feminist by Mona Oikawa, "S & M is an Adventure" by Donna Barker and Makeda Silvera's "Man Royals and Sodomites" plus prose by Mary Louise Adams, Marusya Bociurkiw, Nalini Singh and Candis Graham.



30 Asian Canadian Women (\$4)

Guest edited by Sharon Fernandez,

Amita Handa, Mona Oikawa, Milagros Paredes and May Yee. Features Himani Bannerji's "The Sound Barrier: Translating Ourselves in Language and Experience" and "Sisters in the Movement" by Mutriba Din and Ravida Din, visual work by Gita Saxena, Millie Chen and Brenda Joy Lem, poetry by Nila Gupta, Jean Yoon and Tamai Kobayashi, "Safer Sex in Santa Cruz" by Mona Oikawa, an oral history from the project "Voices of Chinese Canadian Women" and an interview with filmmaker Manjira Datta.



36 Identifying (\$5)

Margaret Christakos interviews

June Jordan, Queer Radio



questions "The Les/Bi Divide," and Kaushalya Bannerji on "The Politics of Identity: 'Aesthetics' or Opposition." Poetry by Chin K. Yuen, Rachel Rose, Rita Wong and Ruth Mandel, fiction by Victoria Freeman and Gina Frangello, "The Secret kd lang" by Pat Jeffries and photographs "Looking Beyond Identity" by Ellen Flanders.



42 (k)not what you think (\$5)
A breast cancer narrative by

Kathleen Martindale; "The Politics of Desire," featuring Gwendolyn, karen/ miranda augustine, Susan G. Cole, Midi Onodera, Becki Ross, Karen Busby; "Sister Sluts and Slut Condemnation" by Ariel Fielding; fiction by Sarah B. Campbell, Suzy Tanzer, Jennie Litt, Leila Marshy, Carol Camper; poetry by Beth Thomas, Jacqueline Turner.



43 Rice Papers Writings and Artwork by East and Southeast

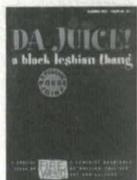
Asian Women (\$5)
Guest edited by the Asian Women Writers Collective. Features an interview with Yuri

Kochiyama, fiction by Milinda Sato, Judy Fong Bates, Ji Bai and Nancy Chong, poetry by Ann Shin, Jean Yoon, Grace Sakae Murao, Mona Oikawa and Tamai Kobayashi, art by Louise Noguchi, Millie Chen, Kyo Maclear and Marilyn Jung, and reviews by Ann Shin and Melinda Aguila.



44/45 Language (\$5)
DOUBLE ISSUE
Lost and found

tongues; imperial stories; "tolerant" language; silences; cross-cultural interpretation; dreams and memory; performative lecturing; voicing difference. Includes Kyo Maclear, Silvana Hernando, Nancy Chater, Frieda Forman, Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, Marusya Bociurkiw, Zaffi Gousopoulos, Mehri Yalfani, Ana C.P. dos Santos, Rozena Maart, Myriam Chancy, Sandra Haar, Claudia Gahlinger, Rachel Kalpana James and Cathy Daley.



49 Da Juice! a black lesbian thang (\$5)

Guest-edited by De Poonani Posse. Featuring "Black

Lesbians and SM: In/On Your Face" by Carol Latchford, "Inconsistent Identities and Persistent Fantasies" by Frances Yip Hoi and "To Centime from a diasporic lesbian sista 300 years or so removed" by Tonia Bryan. Includes contributions by karen/miranda augustine, Camille Bailey, Jacquie Bishop, Deanna Bowen, Rosamund Elwin, Maxine Greaves, Charmaine Lewis, Roberta Munroe, Adella Pierre, Nicole Redman, Christine Springer, Sherece Taffe, Akhaji Zakiya, Centime Zeleke and others.



51/52 Double Issue (\$5)
"We, the women of Ontario, ...

declare our opposition to the policies of the Conservative government...": The Ontario Women's Declaration, with photos from the London Shutdown; Jane Farrow and Christina Zeidler's riotous and raunchy exposé of the drag king phenomenon; art by Lori Clermont on institutional child abuse. Stories by Natasha Singh, Mehri Yalfani, May Yee; poems by Joanne Arnott, Candis Graham, Rachel Zolf. Wendy Morgan reviews The Journal Project and the

controversy of "journaling" in women's studies.



53 (\$5)

New fiction by Nalo Hopkinson and Masani Montague.

Queer stories: Louise Bak's poetic exploration of "the cut sleeve"; Shira Spector's full-length comic story. "The Importance of Being Beautiful" by playwright Moynan King. Poetry by Crystal Hurdle. Art by Sue Goldstein and Shannon Greene. Reviews of Aurat Durbar, To This Cedar Fountain, Daughters of the Red Land.



54 (\$5)

Technologies Digital artist and cyber-feminist Nancy Paterson

charts the emergence of cyber-feminism, plus a Fredrica Mintz ad-spoof—bringing you friendly products for a hostile world. Latin American women and the politics of race, immigration and feminism in Toronto: a personal/critical article by R. Magaly San Martin. Poems and stories by Nadine Boughton, Beth Goobie, Angela Hryniuk, Kerry Langan, Lisa Mesbur, Elana Moscovitch, J. Pitter, Jenny Potts and Rita Sommers-Flanagan. Reviews of Lesbiot:

Israeli Lesbians Talk about Sexuality, Feminism, Judaism and their Lives and Plural Desires: Writing Bisexual Women's Realities.



55 (\$5)

Heather Cameron on the Cross-Canada Women's

March Against Poverty, plus notes from "Rolling Feminist Library" organizer Annthea Whittaker; Ratna Kapur on how censorship rewrote The Bandit Queen in India; Brenda Cossman reviews Whore Carnival by Shannon Bell; Ling Chiu's film/reflection on the Montreal Massacre; new work from ijose chow, Shai Dhali, Neesha Dosanjh, Crystal Carmen and others.



56 Going On Twenty (\$5)

Fireweed celebrates unruly

adolescence and fiery womanhood: Marge Piercy slices fear; Margaret Atwood examines the female body; Lillian Allen frigs stereotypes; Susan Swan flirts with a saint; Makeda Silvera argues with a village; Janice Gould on Easter Sunday; Claire Harris and Lesléa Newman on grief and

memory; Mary di Michele on Lesbos; Erin Mouré, Nicole Brossard, Betsy Warland and Mona Oikawa on love, sex and the whole damn thing; plus, plus, plus.



57

Exploring & Questioning Collectives & Activism (\$5)

Ethel LaValley on the grassroots of coalition building; the ex-workers of The Concordia Women's Centre have their say; Fauzia Rafiq sends us with Saheban on a satirical trip through a collective dystopia; Jacquie Buncel dishes the dirt on seven bosses from hell; Shira Spector's cartoons poke fun at activism and collective organizing. Plus Sapna Patel, Aviva Rubin, T.J. Bryan, Ann Decter and others.



58 (\$5)

Gloria Kim in conversation with Judy Fong Bates; Kristy Green

gives us the unlikely revenge of a bride scorned; Beth Goobie's "Nothing But The Hurt"; We see thangs thru Anagel Saunder's eyes; Rhonda Mack gets Plum Rotten; Patria Rivera journeys back to Cold War, 1957; with artwork by Marie-

Denise Douyon, Madonna Hamel and others; plus Kam Sein Yee, Amuna Baraka, Lea Littlewolfe, Marilyn Elain Carmen and many more!



59/60
Revolution Girl Style
(\$9)
DOUBLE ISSUE

Guest edited by the Revolution Girl Style Collective. The hugely successful, much talked-about special issue all about young women. A springboard/call to action for other girls to do the same. With works by Karen Kawawada, Blood Sisters, Jaime Kirzner-Roberts, Lorraine Hewitt, Rita Fatila, Ivana Shein, Emmy Pantin and many more.



61 (\$7)
Includes poetry by Deborah Schnitzer, Joan

Latchford, Sonia MacPherson, Joelle Hann, Khadija Black, Rachel Zolf, Shauna Richler-Lancit and Carrie L. MacDonald; fiction by Kim Anderson, Beth Stinson, Christy Ann Conlin, Nora Solanoy Lusterio and Beth Brant; artwork by Shannon Greene, Julia Powditch and Reena Katz; and a review by sherece taffe.



62 (\$9)
Includes fiction by April Selley, J. Maureen Hull, Jillian Maloney

and Anne Duke Judd. Poetry by Deborah Stiles, Jennifer Moss, Susan Holbrook, Shae Irving, Karen Forster and Heather Hermant. Art by Parvenah Radmard, Christina Francisco, Sue Goldstein and Shira Spector.



63 Pop Culture
A tribute to all things pop. Includes poetry by Crystal

Hurdle, Malca Litovitz, Zöe Whittal, Adrienne Weiss, Jennifer Inslee and Star Hong Nga Rush, essays by Kerry Daniels, Lisa Bryn Rundle, Cathy Katrib, Lily Slain, Catherine O'Sullivan, Lara Karaian, Andrea Gin and Mariko Tamaki. Featuring visuals by Shelly Niro, Wendy Coburn and more!



64
Poetry by A. Mary Murphy, Molshree and Julie Schroeder;

fiction by Mary Jo Pollack and Rachel Li Wai Suen; art, reviews.



65
The Sex Work Issue
Guest-edited by sex workers — strippers,

prostitutes, call girls, exotic dancers, and sex activists — who have worked, or are working, in the sex industry. Features a roundtable on sex work by women at Stella; poetry by Michelle Lampart, Tenacity Numen and Cathleen Withs; prose and discussion by Lily Fine, Raven DelMonico, Debby Toupin Clarke, Marie Wilson, A.J., Stripper Girl, Tamara Faith Berger, Raven Rowenchilde, and much more.



66
Poetry is Political
Poetry for the people! Women strut their stuff

in this issue, with writing by: Cathy Stonehouse, Christina Springer, Brenda Simmers, Kathleen Hankinson, Bridget Wayland, Crystal Hurdle, Carriane Leung, Elisabeth de Mariaffi, Rachel Sohn and much more!

FIREWEED

upcoming issues

ALSO AVAILABLE

- 7 Women and Performance I [\$3]
- 9 Bread and Roses [\$3]
- 10 Writing [\$3]
- 12 Blood Relations [\$3]
- 14 Fear and Violence [\$3]
- 15 Feminist Aesthetics [\$3]
- 16 Women of Colour [\$10]
- 17 Writing [\$3]
- 18 Atlantic Women [\$3]
- 19 Theory I [\$3]
- 20 Theory 2 [\$3]
- 21 Short Stories [\$3]
- 24 Writing [\$3]
- 27 Writing and Humour [\$3]
- 29 Writing [\$3]
- 31 Weird Writing [\$3]
- 32 Writing [\$3]
- 33 Loosely About the Body [\$3]
- 34 Writing [\$3]
- 39|40 From the Mouth to the Page [\$5]
- 41 Shifting Identities/
Rerwording Rape [\$5]
- 46 Addiction and lesbians [\$5]
- 47 Writing & Art [\$5]
- 48 Canadian Un/Realities/
Cross-Border Desire [\$5]
- 50 Writing [\$5]

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