

liberation is not wearing a bra to the gym

By Maggie Deagon

sometimes, i don't swallow my food
i chew it up and halfway through
spit it out. other times, i put it in my mouth
knowing i won't keep it down.

it's not a disorder
it's a habit
but it's disordered.

my friend commented on a store's mannequins,
snarling, "like anyone is really that skinny,"
but all i could mention was their pointed nipples
poking triangles into their shirts.

i cannot disparage bodies
because for others
i see no need for change.

when i was eight, my classmate compared me to a whale,
asking if my blubber acted as an insulator.
a while later, his friend taunted the size of my lunches,
so i threatened to eat her up.

my vision is distorted
by history, my pain
authors lies in my mirrors.

i have apologized to men for the shape of my breasts,
deflated by weight loss and scarred from growth.
i see pouches and pooches where others see muscle, bones,
and the memory of a chubby face--permanent.

my body is imperfect
but in womanhood
it is extraordinary.

for hips, we are blessed; in curves, we find strength,
and legs and lips and eyes that are marked
by our struggle against the images that stalk us
in magazines and on tv and inside our heads.

i am imperfect
but i am fighting
and trying.

i reach an arm around my side, to caress myself,
beneath my shirt, my surfaces are varied,
scars like braille tell the stories of my suffering
but blood seldom reaches my fingertips.

my throat is itchy,
my stomach too full,
but i will overcome.

Maggie Deagon is a junior at the University of Southern California. She is pursuing a double major in Spanish and Social Sciences with an Emphasis in Psychology and a minor in Korean Studies. She currently works as a creative editor for the Social Justice Review, a national undergraduate journal that seeks to highlight creative and academic voices on current social issues. She is an assistant to administration and publicity at Kaya Press, an independent publisher of Asian diasporic literature. Her passion is empowering others, especially young women in underserved communities, and she accomplishes this through Women and Youth Supporting Each Other (WYSE), which creates mentoring relationships between USC women and middle school girls to facilitate conversations about identity and sexuality.