

Fat
By Caroline Rothstein

I am not fat.

It took me twenty-two years to purge words onto a page the same way I purged my body into stomach ulcers, popped eye blood vessels and missing tooth enamel, twenty-two years to tell the tale of my bulimic, anorexic, and disordered eating hell, and I've walked barefoot through tiled deserts of bathrooms to find a mirage of my distorted body image staring up at me from the tainted water in the toilet.

I used to daydream about freedom;
I used to daydream about appreciating the abundance of food around me;
I used to daydream about eating dinner without wanting to kill myself;
and that like the society I wish to heal and explain I too someday would change.

So, I've unchained the melody of my dirge sung soul,
and patched layers of karmic candle wax to mend the stomach holes.

I am free –
free from sneaking out of Algebra & Trigonometry to vomit elegantly into a toilet paper-filled toilet during a passing period so that no one could hear me;
free from credit cards that pay for wasted food crumpled into white garbage bags in the gutter across the street from my driveway;
free from dry skin and shedding hair, bleeding skin and death scares because food gave me power to inject order into a world of chaos,
food gave me the love and security I was afraid to find in my sexuality,
food could remedy the abandonment I felt from my father's excessive traveling to make the excessive amounts of money I would vomit in the toilet.

But this is not a poem about struggling through thousands of breakfasts, lunches, and dinners when thousands struggle without breakfast, lunch, and dinner.
This is not a poem about millions of tears as my fear incrusting fingers and body lay mangled, shaking, twitching on the bathroom floor with fear and insecurity when millions of children are held captive shaking with fear and no security.
This is not a poem about the guilt of a privileged disorder because I was often told I was selfish for an uncontrollable force coaxing me to stick my fingers down my throat.

This is a poem about context –
about how I can't formulate linguistic ink blots to tangibly articulate the deadly pain that lived inside of me,
about playing Russian roulette with my esophagus as my gun barrel fingers triggered tragedy down my throat,
about self-deprecating stares in the mirror of a red-faced terrorist hijacking my digestive system from within,

about how my eyes have learned to make love
to the lower left corner of my torso,
and how the sun sets in the crevices of cellulite
in my thunder thighs.

This is a poem about the regurgitated traumas that I cannot digest,
and at best, this is a poem about how
I am not fat.

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