

My Body

Is Not

The Project

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This is a personal reflection about my experiences navigating beauty and womanhood.
Fair warning, it contains descriptions of binge eating and life with anorexia.

In case you need to hear it, you are allowed to take up space in the world.
You don't have to be confined. There is a life outside of restriction.

Her and I

The people I meet, the people I know, the people I love, their bodies suit them. Their faces match their voices, mannerisms and personality. The way a nose sticks out, eyes squinting while smiling, legs displaying a whole network of brilliant blue veins. Fat and skin forming a boundary between us. To me, their bodies are physical manifestations of their souls. To me, they look correct, like there could be no other option. Though flawed in their own uniquely universal human ways, to me they are perfect. Familiarity has rendered them all breathtakingly beautiful.

I wish I could afford myself the same grace.

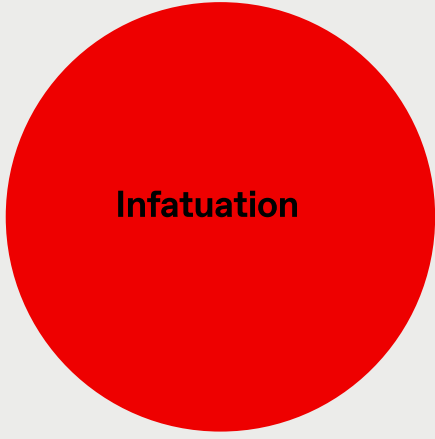
The body I was born in does not feel correct. Since sentience, it has felt less like a manifestation of my core being, and more like a set of disparate parts masquerading as a joint endeavour. Starting with the inciting incident of insecurity—my thighs, and moving through a bastardized body scan of self-disgust – my large feet, thick ankles, tiny calves that only accentuated the huge thighs without the mythologized gap I so desired, stomach – belly button pulled taught horizontally, the roll of fat that unbeknownst to me allowed me admission into womanhood, the 'chicken wings' between my chest and arms, or moving further to the flabby arms themselves, the large, sausage-fingered hands, my breasts (or lack thereof), unusually broad shoulders, soft, undefined jawline, square-shaped face with the small lips and chubby cheeks, the large forehead, often speckled with acne, and the unruly curly hair making me appear chronically electrocuted. My interface to experience was never without fault, meaning my experience itself felt fundamentally flawed in some indescribable way.

As a girl, I couldn't help but notice how petite, how feminine, my peers were with their small bodies, straight hair and pretty faces, and how much they embodied my aspirations. They were delicate, a word my large frame and strong limbs could never achieve. I was not a correct woman by default and beauty was something "out there," ephemeral and distant, that I could never quite reach. I never lived up to an ideal femininity, so eventually, disheartened and wishing to avoid further embarrassment, I rejected it.

As long as I'd been alive, my mother didn't wear makeup, so this was the obvious first site of rebellion. Then I declared that I would never pluck my eyebrows or dye my hair – the moral implications of these were equivalent to severe acts of betrayal. When I had to wear makeup once a year at dance recitals, I made it abundantly clear that I had no intention of ever wearing it again, because it was proof of brainless conformity. Outwardly I projected my beliefs that to conform to the standard of beauty was to be controlled by what others think and expect. Inwardly, I believed that even if I did conform to every norm of feminine grooming and presentation, I would not be a correct woman. It's not that makeup wasn't secretly, in a darkest, guiltiest part of myself, fun. Never mind that I put on mascara and eyeliner and blush late at night after everyone else was asleep, or when I was home alone, prancing around imagining myself as a real, grown-up woman. A beautiful one. No, makeup was another proof of my incompetence at womanhood, and it's not as embarrassing if you aren't trying, so try I did not. In fact, any aesthetic focus was innately shameful. I asked myself 'How dare you think you're worth looking at? Worth investing energy into?' or worse yet, 'Why do you think it matters to be beautiful?' Trying to mediate my appearance would be evidence of my trying and failing to achieve a goal shameful in itself.

Of course, the issue with such extreme notions of moral judgment and aesthetic conformity is it's just as limiting as the standards they fight against. One set of rules told me to be thin and delicate, to wear makeup and dresses and high heels, the other to resist any kind of feminine presentation and just embrace being boyish in shape, size and demeanour. In adolescence I felt genuinely confined by my past declarations as I began the treasonous acts of plucking my eyebrows and wearing makeup – but don't worry, not too much or too often, god forbid. Normalcy felt, and still feels, like a big deal to me. Small things like wearing eyeshadow or mascara to school seemed unimaginably embarrassing. I don't want to let on to others that I care, and what worse way to conceal your values than investing in such a purposeless pursuit as beauty? But to me, it wasn't purposeless. When I put on my first pair of high heels, after apologizing to my mother who never wore heels and saw no value in them, I felt genuinely powerful. I felt grown up. I felt, for maybe a brief moment, beautiful. In my childhood I enjoyed dressing up in colourful clothes, necklaces, hats and bracelets, marching around the house in a cacophony of clashing patterns and textures. Is it possible that there was an innate component? That it wasn't all programmed into me by a culture I didn't agree with? Did I have to throw it all away?

My relationship with femininity and womanhood only grew more complex as I grew into adulthood. The second day I wore eyeshadow to high school, I came home and never went back because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The isolation I experienced during those two years stripped me of my sense of self as a being, let alone my sense of value in my physical appearance. Shifting to digital means of communication only accentuated my insecurities by forcing me to look at myself all day during Zoom courses, and telegenic friend hangouts. My people-watching became scrolling through Instagram Explorer, comparing myself to every female body in sight. The prediction algorithm did its magic and soon all I saw was ads for beauty products, clothes, and an endless stream of bodies so beautiful they felt like an act of violence against my own. In a period of identity diffusion, my physical confidence hit its lowest point when I hard pivoted from an aimlessness-fuelled borderline binge eating disorder to a genuine case of anorexia nervosa. My life was out of control and I wanted so desperately to exert mastery over something. Considering my lifelong obsession with beauty, my body was the obvious battlefield. **My body became my project.**



I am not sure how I became so infatuated with beauty, but since childhood, I have been obsessed with it. My parents tell a story of me at age two, making a wildflower arrangement and already displaying a finely tuned sensitivity to beauty when deciding what kind of flowers I preferred, and which were unacceptable. As I grew up, I realized I was devastated by things nobody else seemed to notice – a Winter sunset, a passionate lovesong, an oil painting, a flock of migrating geese flying overhead, a ladybug landing on my pinky finger, a fresh dusting of snow sparkling on the mountain view we are blessed with in Greater Vancouver, and especially, beautiful women. Naturally, I was a prolific artist, translating my worship of beauty into paintings and drawings of almost exclusively beautiful girls. I knew what traits made my brain light up – what I was supposed to be – and if I couldn't have them myself I could at least add them to the world in another way to make up for my deficiencies. Even today, I am a visual designer by trade in an endless pursuit to make the mundane beautiful, living for the high of solving that puzzle. Making chaos into order, making things beautiful, they're really the same thing.

Entanglement

A fiercely competitive younger sibling, I spent my childhood comparing myself to my peers and being repeatedly disappointed by coming up short against them. I remember the frequent activity of comparing hand size and realizing my hands were larger than all of the girls and most of the boys as well. I was bigger, hairier and felt less feminine than all of my friends, who had an innate 'womanliness' to them that I craved. At the same time, I was not short, but not tall, not skinny but not overly fat; I felt painfully mediocre. I wanted so badly to be beautiful, but beauty was an elusive goal. My impossible definition included the simultaneous big ass and thigh gap, flat defined stomach, round face with defined jaw, big eyes and lips and a smaller forehead for the love of god. Beauty also was equated with femininity, and femininity meant taking up less space in the world. Being delicate, something I was decidedly not.

Luckily the figures that upheld the standard I desperately wanted to embody also sold the path to reach it, so I became invested in an online world of fitness *for her* - motivated exclusively by aesthetic results instead of sustainable health or agility. These uncertified trainers sold me an unrequited dream of thinness and tone with ineffective bodyweight exercises and excessive cardio, keeping me and their millions of viewers coming back for more when the promised bodily changes never came to fruition. The amount of 'before' photos I took in my childhood bedroom mirror, standing sideways to highlight my belly and butt fat is not insignificant, but I would have to wait years yet for the 'after' disordered eating eventually gave me. It was infuriating. I saw beautiful women everywhere online, interpreting their bodies as proof my aspirations were possible, sustainable, healthy and right, and it felt simultaneously like drugs in my brain and a punch in the gut. Every beautiful woman I saw was proof of my own failure. My lack of discipline, effort and worth. Just existing in my body was an admission of defeat and proof of my unworthiness as a woman. An overachiever in academic, extracurricular, and artistic pursuits, my body was my one failure that seemed to undermine every other success.

And then there was a pandemic and my comfortably structured schedule of school and extracurriculars dissolved into an ongoing surrealist nightmare with no beginning or end. The minutes and hours and days bled into each other with nothing to differentiate them. It was a fracturing of reality to my adolescent self in which what remained of my childhood naivety was brutally extinguished. I didn't realize how lucky I was to leave the house each day and engage in life until I was thrown into the alternative reality in which the world was off-limits. Despite my lifelong identity as an introverted homebody, the social isolation I experienced during the two years of restrictions was physically painful at times. I don't believe in determinism, and yet knowing that this was always going to happen and I, we, had just been blissfully unaware was a betrayal. My genuine worries about school projects and upcoming yearbook deadlines were ridiculed by the severity of the situation as I realized that my life was entirely meaningless and I was entirely powerless. I could never trust the world again.

But there was one constant in my pandemic days and that was meals. What I had once thought little about was now the anchor of my days. Wake up, eat, wait until hungry again, eat, feel aimless and it's time to start preparing dinner and finally go to bed - the most tolerable part of my day where I could binge-watch television and YouTube without guilt or witnesses. Sleep was a fleeting respite at a time when I genuinely desired to leave my body due to the constant anxiety-fueled physical malaise. The other time I got a break from this was when I was eating.

The distraction food gave me became an addiction and soon I was orienting my days around when I would get to eat and feel okay again. This led to me eating more, which led to more body shame, prompting a cycle of resolutions to be better tomorrow, and failures when tomorrow came and I still felt aimless and in distress so ate to cover it up. I had lost my large-scale sense of control already, that was the cause of the distress, but my micro-scale sense of self-control also slipped away as I became controlled by food. I felt extremely ashamed of myself and the amount I ate because I couldn't stop, and was physically uncomfortable after eating, which I considered my punishment for my grotesque behaviour. I did not deserve to feel good.

At the same time, I was ignorant and isolated. I realize now that in that period I very rarely saw girls my age in real life, as I was sequestered in my bedroom to complete high school and start university online. My benchmark for normalcy and reality was constructed online in the unregulated cesspool of YouTube fitness content, and worse, Instagram Explorer. I did not know that women needed a minimum fat percentage to menstruate. I did not know that most women do not have the anatomy to have a thigh gap or defined stomach at a healthy weight. I recently read in a book about female evolution (Eve by Cat Bohannon) that claimed the reason it's difficult for women to lose weight from their thighs and stomach is because these areas store rare fats, collected over a lifetime for use forming baby corneas and brain tissue during pregnancy. Why wasn't I taught this as a girl, instead of that tummy and thigh fat are demonized problem areas to combat extra hard due to their persistent nature? The truth that I was marketed promised infinite potential for thinness with no consequence to bodily health, and all I needed was to be disciplined enough. Just restrict yourself. Just control your portions. Just don't take too much. Just be a woman.

One day I asked myself what would happen if I cut what I usually ate in half. I told myself I would still eat whenever I was hungry to keep my experiment under the guise of healthy intuitive eating, but that in one sitting I would not eat more than just barely the threshold of full. I didn't notice a change until my mother pointed out that I looked good, and asked if I had lost weight. I recall insisting I had not, because my every effort thus far had ended in failure and I had resolved it was an impossible act for my body. But the scale said otherwise; I had lost 10 pounds. The excitement I felt on that day was unmatched, I had finally done it and I could continue to do it. Success fuels future success, even if that 'success' is actually forced food restriction. Over the next two months, I lost over 20 more pounds. I was the thinnest I had ever been with a resolve to remain that way. I had successfully denied hunger, one of the most basic needs of survival, and food had no mastery over me anymore. I no longer felt the need to push myself to extremes in exercise to work off overeating. I didn't need the fitness influencers anymore, I had become them. I finally had achieved the body they were selling me. Nobody could tell me I lacked discipline or willpower. Nobody could tell me I was taking more than I deserved. I was finally in control. I was free.

Obsession

To anyone on the outside, eating disorders don't make sense because why would anyone diminish their amount of aliveness on purpose, but from the inside they are extremely effective. If your goal is to be skinny, an eating disorder definitely gets you there. For the first time in my life, I felt delicate. I didn't take up much space, I didn't need much, and I had a blissfully small impact on the world. Yes, I felt weak and tired, but those were desirable qualities proving my femininity. My body was a statement. I was now the 'fuck you' to other women that I had always been on the receiving end of. There was a euphoric satisfaction in knowing I could try on anything in the store and look good when previously I was too big to make anything appear flattering. As the pandemic restrictions relaxed, I went out into the world as the new version of myself that I had always wanted to be.

Control

But I still didn't feel beautiful really. My body was a constant project requiring hypervigilance around food and exercise and I was chronically checking myself on any reflective surface to make sure I hadn't gotten bigger, but that reassurance wasn't enough. Previously, I had seen myself as too big to be beautiful, and now I was certainly thinner but fell into some third category of person aside from ugly or beautiful. I was proud of my body for the effort it required to maintain, and for the lack of excess I embodied, but I didn't feel attractive. I still looked incorrect. I had expected beauty to feel like a glowing warmth from within and a pride in every part of oneself but I felt like a cold bag of bones most days. No matter how much I tried to delude myself, and how I progressed as I inched towards eating enough, I knew on some level that this was unsustainable. I could not get attached to this body, so she was always a surprise when I saw her in the mirror before a shower or caught a glimpse while changing. An unanticipated consequence of extreme weight loss is being cold all the time, so although I finally had the body I had always deemed worthy of showing off, it was typically covered in layers of clothes and still shivering, even in the Summer. Entering the dating game, I was caught in the duality of knowing I would only be attractive to men because I was starving myself, or I was unattractive because I was not restricting enough. My body was a statement and screamed for attention so I covered it with baggy, androgynous clothes. Otherwise, I would get another demeaning intervention from my mother about how I was too skinny and she was worried about me.

She had reason to be though, as I was fading away. I got to attend university in person in my second year and barely had enough energy to walk across campus between courses. What little cognitive real estate remained in my starving brain was taken up by tracking what I had last eaten, when and what I would eat next, and how much I would have to restrict the next day to make up for it. Forget about socializing, I was just keeping it together until the next meal, barely hanging on as I drove home in a daze anticipating the inadequate portion of food I'd allow myself. Looking back it was a kind of drug-like mind-altering addiction because, at the worst times, it felt like there was a filter between the world and me making everything a bit blurry and incomprehensible. I was no longer connected to reality as my passionate energy for music, art, ceramics, singing, dancing, and life in general faded and I became more and more serious, quiet and rigid. I was a blank, personalityless slate and my body was all I had. But that was the cost of beauty.

Release

My life up to this point has been a series of epiphanies, and although the aforementioned account of events sounds horrific to me now, at the moment, I was used to it, so they didn't push me to change. After three years of anorexia in varying severities, these are what finally did.

You cannot be proactive sedated.

After my third year of university, I started an internship and realized that work was not at all like university. In school, you are given an assignment description and a clear set of criteria to hit in order to succeed. Once you finish this, you are given another one. At work, yes I was assigned projects but they did not come with a description or grade matrix and they were not as discrete as what I was used to. Work required proactivity to figure out what a project's goal and success metrics should actually be. It also required taking initiative to get involved in or make projects when opportunities presented themselves. I had just read in *The Beauty Myth*, a book from the 80s about the oppression of female beauty standards, that ideals of thinness keep women sedated and passive when my mentor at work said success at work requires proactivity and that nobody wants passive employees. I realized that you cannot be proactive while sedated. I was spending some of my workdays in constant, low-level hunger, hanging on until lunch or the end of the day when I could eat again, and this prevented me from being fully focused on doing well at my job. It also impeded my ability to make new social connections, as I was a slave to my routine eating habits so couldn't last after work without eating, and was too uptight to eat out at a restaurant. Not worrying about food or being hungry meant I could be more present in everything else I did, and I wanted to do a lot. I was once an assertive person with projects and passions and a social life and I wanted to return to being someone capable of more than passivity.

I don't have to be a victim.

I also realized that I didn't have to be a victim, thanks to a close friend I met at work. Because I had spent the past three years in a depressive, and then disordered state, it was easy to forget that at one point I had been a vibrant, funny, happy person. My identity had become tied to having a struggle. I didn't know how to let myself be happy or well, but this person did and it was completely alien to me. Instead of waiting to try things or wishing life was different, they just took action. I realized I didn't have to wait anymore, which was profound because I had spent my entire adult life waiting to feel happy, healthy, worthy, loved, and beautiful. I realized I didn't have to want anymore, I could just do, and was given back the reins to create my own reality with my mentality. Reframing my life this way was a shockingly easy path to empowerment. I didn't have to wish for anything, it was already mine, and if I failed in the pursuit of a goal it would provide me an opportunity to learn. My life was no longer a tightrope I was terrified of misstepping on, but a field of flowers I could waltz through knowing any direction was the right one. That being said, this is a hard aspect of recovery to navigate, because the people around you become familiar with the identity you project, and I've come to realize it takes longer to process events as a witness than the active agent. Being close to others limits your ability to drastically change because they perpetuate older versions of you, like how my mom still analyzes everything I eat, my exercise, and my body, but I can't blame her. I traumatized her too.

Breathing in I am my body, breathing out I am the universe.

For Christmas, I got one of my friends who frequently claims to 'live online' a book on body mindfulness meditation (Peace of Mind by Thich Nhat Hanh) because I'm an ass. Before wrapping it, I cracked it open to ensure it wasn't totally useless and ended up finishing it in one sitting. The sense of calm that radiated off the pages was palpable. The author, a Buddhist monk, reminds the reader that becoming aware of your body, something usually forgotten in the bustle of daily life, creates joy from the inside. With this ideology, the body is not framed as a project, inadequate unless it fits into a specific norm or standard, but as unquestionably correct. Without connecting to the body through the breath, we cannot be fully immersed or appreciative of the present moment, and I realized that by demonizing my body I was impairing myself the ability to be alive. The author also claims that without returning to our bodies to understand how we are truly feeling, we will always be running, trying to fill some void with distractions, as I had with food through overeating and then restriction. Nhat told me I could stop running and so I did. There was nowhere to go but the present, I had already arrived, and I realized my body was not a project to maintain but my interface to the joy of life. To keep the practice, Nhat encourages readers to make their own mindful breathing mantra, and mine is 'breathing in I am my body, breathing out I am the universe,' to remind me that yes, I am my physical body, but I am also connected to everything else in existence and not limited or confined by the vessel I happen to exist in. I came to understand that the body is just the start of the journey of presence to the wider world of consciousness and connection to the universe.

It's irrelevant.

With my internship came a three-hour round-trip commute downtown every day, during which I started listening to audiobooks. Despite my lifelong anti-drug campaign, I listened to Micheal Pollan's How to Change Your Mind, a book about psychedelics, because it was the only book of his available to borrow immediately, and I was never the same. Pollan described how psychedelics allow adults to experience perception as they did in childhood before learning to categorize and dismiss stimuli without really looking at them. This saves brain power but also makes for a life devoid of awe. He explained that humans perceive the world on a scale of entropy to order, usually trying to turn entropy into order so it is easier to understand. Too much entropy meant lacking logical thought and perception, resulting in schizophrenia, but too much order and rigidity led to addiction and eating disorders. In a painfully relatable passage, he claimed that this excessive rigidity comes from engaging in unhealthy self-focus as an attempt to feel in control. I realized that I was using my body to prove a point - that I was in control - but it was a selfish and immature pursuit. Pollan described a terminally ill interviewee in a psychedelic therapy program's recollection of a trip on psilocybin in which they realized that most of life was meaninglessly overproduced and inauthentic. They instead learned to zoom out of the granularity of life to see what was actually meaningful - social connections and nature. With this mindset, the day-to-day worries (a fear of death from terminal illness in this case) they were experiencing became irrelevant. I still remember the feeling of peace that came over me as I sat in the cold waiting for my brother to pick me up from the skytrain station listening to this passage. A major theme of the book is to use psychedelics to access new types of consciousness, to then re-experience without drugs, and the fact that I could zoom out at will and watch the pursuit of beauty become irrelevant was euphoric. It didn't have to matter so much. It didn't have to matter at all.

I will never be able to have a functional relationship like this.

During my internship, I also experienced my first dating and first breakup. This was an eye-opening experience because it made me realize how lopsided I was in personal development. Although I spent a lot of time reading self-help and psychology books to understand my own psyche and mental health issues, I had no idea how to be somebody's significant other. I felt inadequate and was extremely passive because I did not know what I wanted or was too scared to express it. It was a source of anxiety and ambivalence because I was not in full control, and I did not feel self-assured enough to fully commit to the relationship. I also never felt attractive or sexy because I had the body of a prepubescent girl and was too underweight to menstruate or feel any kind of sexual desire. The changes to my routine and more frequent restaurant eating were stressful and kept me from actually enjoying the moment. I was not coming in at 100% and ultimately it was too much for me. In the aftermath of reflection, I was shocked that the one thing I had yearned for since early adolescence, I could not handle in my current state. I was trying so hard to be beautiful that I had essentially become a doll without a will or opinion. I do want to find a partner and fall in love, and I realized I would never be able to be functional and maintain a relationship like this.

It was time to grow up.

Part of growing up is looking outwards and seeing the world outside of yourself, or in my case, my body. It suddenly felt like an exercise in immaturity to be so preoccupied with something as meaningless and transient as beauty. It was hurting my performance and productivity in the passions I craved to engage in, as it often felt like too much effort or energy to start anything at all. It was diminishing the amount and quality of presence that I brought to the world. It was impairing my social connection during a golden opportunity to be social with the other interns at my work after years of isolation. Most importantly, it was hurting the people close to me. My actions directly impacted the well-being of people I loved, and I finally realized it was selfish to continue hurting myself like it was not impacting them. Like the flip of a switch, I gave myself permission to enjoy food again and eat until I was full. The fear of gaining weight felt irrelevant. It's not that I didn't care what I looked like, as much as I've tried I can't quite let that one go – more that I knew I would accept what I saw when I knew she was healthy and living a life that consisted of more than food hypervigilance.

Foregiveness

Once I gained weight I was surprised to find I recognized myself in the mirror again, because I hadn't been aware of not recognizing myself prior. I was also shocked that I almost immediately felt capable of socializing without the inescapable physical tenseness that had confined me previously. There was a prey-like awkwardness about me that seems to have disappeared as my energy to engage others and self-esteem has returned. The office I once called inhumanely cold, in which I spent the Summer bundled in a winter coat, was suddenly a fine temperature, if a bit warm. Being underweight meant being constantly cold, which felt like incapacitating spears into the core of my being. Suddenly I could walk home from the train station in negative temperatures completely unphased. And I had energy. I could run up the stairs, I could lift heavier in my workouts, even something as simple as carrying my heavy backpack to work didn't even register anymore. I was invigorated with passion for all the projects I wanted to accomplish where before they felt like a distant dream requiring too much effort. I was fully awake for the first time in my adult life.

I realize now that I just wanted control, and by chance circumstance, food became the medium through which I attained it. But I didn't really. What started as a desire for control became another addiction that left me even more powerless. When I reflect on what makes life fulfilling, it is not having a thin body, in fact, that was the root of a lot of other issues that were actively undermining my wellbeing. I want to be able to handle entropy, whether that is making social plans on the fly or not always abiding by my normal routines. I want to have brain space and energy for the pursuits I am passionate about – my music, my art and design, reading, learning, teaching, my work and schooling and whatever other projects I find myself fascinated by. I want to feel worthy and unashamed of taking up space in the world and asking for what I need. I want to be able to show up fully as a daughter, sister, friend and, one day, life partner, without the rigidity and selfishness of body obsession. I want to contribute a positive quality of presence to the universe. And I know now that I don't have to just want it because everything I want can be mine. It is a revelation to realize you do not have to be helpless, yet that control is a dangerous game, best applied to mindset, because who am I to meddle with the entropy of existence? The most empowering realization is that you create your reality and if you don't like it, you can take action to change it. You don't have to look elsewhere or run, because everything is already within you.

The most shocking difference, however, is that I feel, at long last, beautiful. My body is not a cause of shame or a symbol of restriction but a celebration. The parts of me I had once hated, my large thighs and butt, my soft arms, the rolls on my stomach, I now admire as I dance in the mirror before showering. I look unmistakably woman-shaped, but more importantly, I feel the warm glow from the inside I always craved as a result of allowing myself to experience the pleasures of embodied life. To believe beauty is confined to aesthetics is to chase a false god and deprive yourself of its true richness: a radiant self-assurance. My body is not a punishment but my deepest gratitude. No, I don't look like the model in a magazine or the fitness influencer, but that's not what I want anymore. The pursuit of beauty using unnatural and unhealthy means feels entirely irrelevant. I am awake, I am embodied, I am passionate, I am a woman and I am breathtakingly, blindingly, unquestionably beautiful in a way that extends far past aesthetics. When I'm dead my body will rot in the ground, wasted and forgotten, but the music I made, the thoughts I shared and the lives I touched will live on as the true currency of immortality.

My body is not the project. The project is. My life is.

This is an attempt to understand and reconcile the last 3 years of my life spent in varying severities of anorexia. And then the years before that too. Really a lifetime of shame and insecurity and complex feelings about what it means to be a woman, and ultimately, to be beautiful.