

# The Fat Lady Emerges and Takes Aim

by Elana Dykewomon

Everyone thinks the fat lady is good for three things: a belly laugh, a maternalism that encourages a soft sinking in, and a furtive, guilty indulgence in all foods forbidden.

After a certain point, where human fleshiness exceeds the boundaries of a culture's self-image production, the bigger she is the better. Instant-access global images make you jaded; you want the fat lady to be truly huge, completely compliant. On her flanks handbills of projection are plastered, her haunches present themselves as canvases for nasty-minded abstract expressionists, her wide loose upper arms are perfect for tattooing mottoes both innocent (mom) and self-deprecating (skull and crossbones), her breasts offer unlimited graffiti opportunities as they pitch and roll fast on the darkened subway tracks of imagination and her stomach is the envy of muralists worldwide who long to incorporate stretch marks into maps of Europe and Africa's extinct great mammals.

Altogether she is the billboard warning: civilization stops at my mouth - I am the original scofflaw and there's nothing you can do about it. While everyone waits patiently for red to turn green, I check the traffic out and waddle where I please. Etiquette means

nothing to me, my elbows go where they want, and all I need is a fork and spoon - most of the time my fingers will do. I am long past being ladylike by your dictionary though you still use the word, hoping to invoke some sense of constraint. In my eyes you can read how little I think of most enterprise, your rockets and your borders. I am anarchy as body.

What thrill, what terror she evokes! Most shun her with a shiver - anyone can see she is not the appropriate candidate for middle management, fundraising, the Pulitzer Prize. The few who squeeze through the turnstile of ambition - there was a fat woman once who ran the Boston symphony - girdle their loins, marshal their vast psychic powers to impress upon you that you do not see what you see; you see instead an intelligent, directed competency and we all know competency is sharp, a machete, masculine. It's possible, we agree, that the fat lady, having given up ladyness, may have buried her femininity and thus may be allowed, on rare occasions, to achieve.

But rarely. She is, more likely, the monster in the basement, so gaping she might eat her own children as she eats herself into an expanding creation. Wait—that's not the chuckle, bosom, easy indulgence you thought you'd find. As she walks, the earth moves and it's no longer

possible to deflect her barrel and billow from consciousness. Not lady, not girl, she pitches and heaves. The fall of the Roman Empire came, they say, when its citizens got fat.

Now you can hear her laugh. She shakes off your fingerpaintings, your pamphlets and moralities; she emerges grinning and impressive as any butterfly, the fat dyke.

It is I who make men and women writhe in their constrictions. Control is greed, not appetite. From each according to her ability, to each according to her need. I have driven through your small towns and know that the houses are built on the bones of those your armies and neglect forcibly displaced. All that time there was enough room for everyone, even me, if you had known how to come in peace. I am no one's cushion, will not apologize for getting the joke. I am all toughness and generosity. I am body as anarchy: collapse, renewal, relief. ✨

**I am anarchy as body**



Laurie Avocado, by D. Chen-Fields