

On the human body.

Izzi Boustead

“I’m not doing anything/My body’s made of crushed little stars/And I’m not doing anything¹”

When I’m in a plane I feel so flimsy and unstable, so high in the air, so unsafe, so anxious. I know, of course, that it is the safest form of transportation and all— but still. I adore the solid ground. Except sometimes, lying in bed late at night, I remember that the earth is not even stable— there are cracks deep in the ground that can smash against each other, displacing the very soil I walk on. We spin, around ourselves, around the sun, at a speed I can’t fathom. The sun itself is moving.

Stars explode all the time.

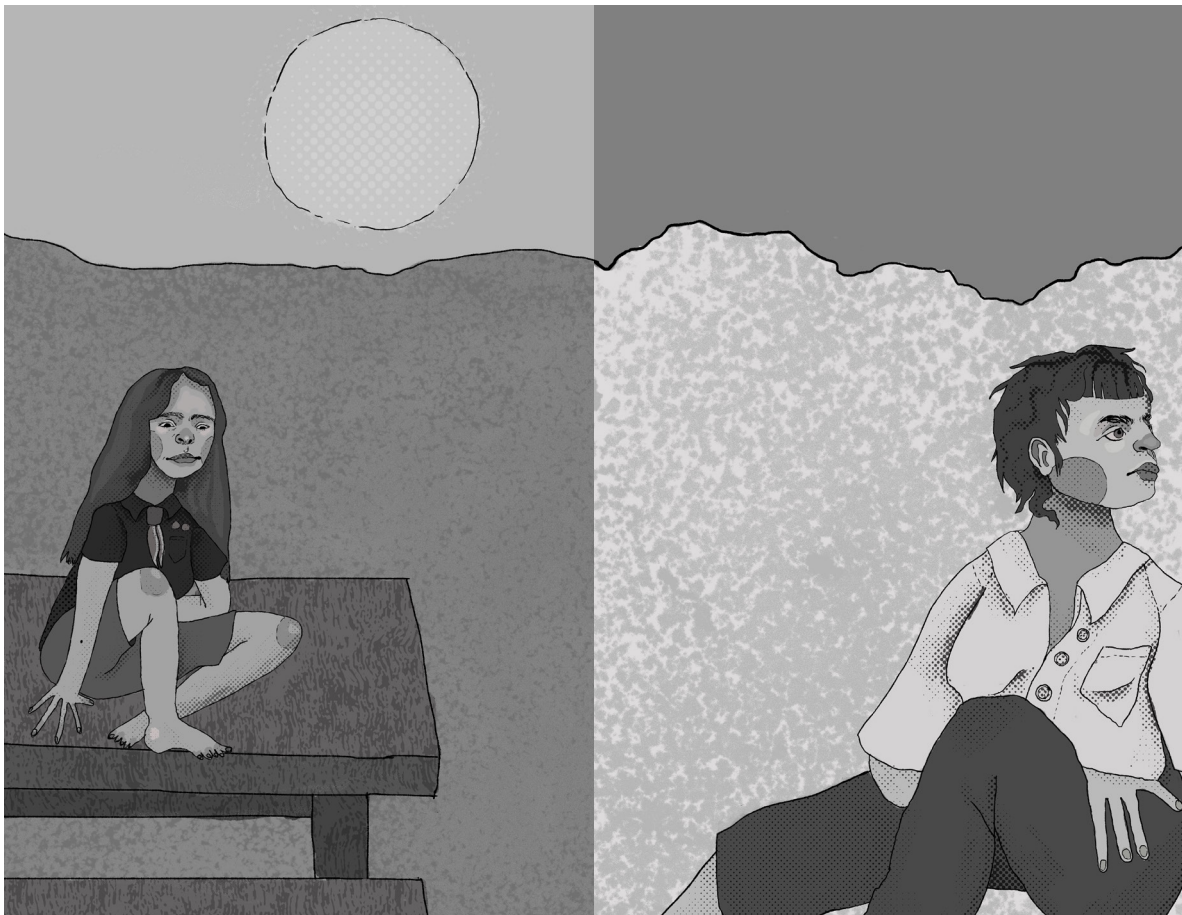
The rocks we walk on are not stable and

we do not own our own bodies.

We are born tiny, helpless, thoughtless.

Little slimy red bundles, immediately wrapped in helpfully color coded blankets
scrunched up little faces avert their eyes from the sun
as she glares down on us, egging us on towards the future.

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¹ Mitski, My Body’s Made of Crushed Little Stars [Song]. (2016, June 16). Retrieved December 2, 2020, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jOclQK8uocI>

² Boustead, I. M. (n.d.). fault line [Artwork]. Retrieved December 02, 2020.

Michel Foucault wrote about the political invasion of the body— the regulation of movement. In the military, in schools, in factories. The requirement to be still, to be efficient, to be uniform. The production of “docile bodies.” Children sitting in fluorescently lit classrooms in neat rows, sitting tall, feet on the floor, silent, to be disciplined when they disobey to make noise, to lean back in their chairs, to be energetic. These docile bodies can now produce capital in factories, in office buildings, in minimum wage paying fast food establishments. Foucault, however, did not write of the political invasion which is specific to femininity—the requirement to be small and hairless and childlike³.

Somewhere along the line I picked up some rules which were important to follow in order to avoid ridicule:

LAW I

Suck in your belly, Mum tells me. I’m eight years old and daydreaming in the grocery store. You look fat! Don’t wrap your cardigan around your shoulders like that! You look like a hooker!

LAW II

I lie in the dirt, reading amongst the earthworms and bugs and flowers, sprawled out, taking up my rightful space in the world. Sit like a lady! My cheeks redden, I squish my legs together, I shrink into my chest, ashamed.

LAW III

You will have kids. How many kids do you want to have? What will your husband be like? I know you’re nine years old but it’s never too early to plan! What do you want your kitchen to be like when you’re a housewife?

LAW IV

your goal in life is to be liked and to be liked you have to be
hairless be small be beautiful
don’t look like you’re wearing makeup but dont look like an ugly slob
be skinny have smooth skin maybe get plastic surgery i think you might be past help,
your body isn’t good enough to get married, and your worth is tied to marriage
be tiny, helpless, thoughtless
You do not own your own body.

I was never very good at the whole unspoken rule kind of thing anyway.

3 Bartky, S. L. (1997). Foucault, Femininity and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power. *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*, 129-154. Retrieved December 2, 2020, from https://mycourses.aalto.fi/pluginfile.php/198021/mod_page/content/8/Bartky129_HIAR11034.pdf