

## Seventeen

by Amanda Watson

I am five years old when I am told  
     “young ladies shouldn’t dress the way you do.”  
 I am seven years old when I am told  
     to “act like a real young lady.”  
 I am nine years old when I am told  
     to “cover up my bare skin.”  
 I am eleven years old when I am told  
     to “be careful around men.”  
 I am thirteen years old when I am told  
     “a woman should be seen, not heard.”  
 I am fifteen years old when I am told  
     “catcalling is a compliment.”  
 I am seventeen years old when I am told  
     how “beautiful and gorgeous” I am  
     by the same man six times within two minutes.

I am seventeen years old,  
     and I will dress the way I do.  
 I am a “real young lady;”  
     your definitions and opinions do not define me you mind-warping swine.  
 I will not cover up my bare skin for you,  
     turn your head and look the other way.  
 I will not be taught to be cautious around men,  
     I will teach men right from wrong.  
 I will be seen and I will be heard;  
     I am the sunshine after rain;  
     I will not go unnoticed.  
 I will never consider a filthy group of men yelling after me as a compliment.  
     I am not a dog—do not whistle or scream.  
     I will not be harassed until my breaking point.

Yes I am beautiful, no, I do not care  
     if a perverted seventy-seven year old man thinks so.  
 I am seventeen years old, and I am a wolf howling at midnight.  
     I will not stay silent. I will be the bark for others  
     who have yet to find theirs.