



Author Mona Awad, who lived in Mississauga during her teenage years, recently released her debut novel *13 Ways of Looking at a Fat Girl*.

Real Biography AWAD, Mona 1.

Body image central theme in author's debut novel

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Most of us, at some point in our lives, have looked in the mirror and thought 'Geez, I look terrible today.'

Mona Awad is no different.

The author, who lived in Mississauga for about six years in her teens and attended Father Michael Goetz Secondary School, recently released her debut novel *13 Ways of Looking at a Fat Girl* through Penguin Random House. She said she has experienced her own body image issues in the past and it was a narrative she wanted to explore in her writing.

"Body image is something I've struggled with personally and I frankly don't know a man or woman who hasn't experienced (issues) to some extent," said Awad, who's currently pursuing her PhD in creative writing and English literature at the University of Denver. "Weight is something I've struggled with so I was able to draw from those emotions and experiences."

Awad, who set parts of the book in a fictionalized version of Mississauga known as Misery Saga, feels negative body image can affect a wide spectrum of aspects in a person's life, particularly relationships.

With the book, and its main character Lizzie, Awad explores themes including if one transforms their body, do they actu-

ally change as a person and is how we once looked and felt informing who we are today?

"It's about being uncomfortable in your own skin and I hope readers can connect with that very universal experience," said Awad, who spent about six years working on her novel and submitted it as her Master's thesis at Brown University.

The novel has received positive reviews from outlets including *Time*, *Elle* and *The Washington Post*.

Awad, who's had her writing published in *The Walrus* and the *St. Petersburg Review*, to name a few, spoke about how issues surrounding the way she looks continue to nag at Lizzie throughout the novel. She deals with the stress of the dressing room or how she has a "charged" relationship with her mother, whom she says also has body image issues.

Then there's sex, she said, and how said issues limit her ability to enjoy it.

Locals will certainly recognize the fictionalized aspects of Mississauga in the novel. For example, Awad writes about Lizzie and a friend eating at a fast food joint at the corner of Wolfedale Road and Mavis Road.

As she points out, and as any Mississaugan worth their salt would know, those two roads don't intersect.

"It's a little nod to Mississauga, but this is a (fictional) Mississauga," said Awad.