

Elizabeth Alexander

**ODE**

I love all the mom bodies at this beach,  
the tummies, the one-piece bathing suits,  
the bosoms that slope, the wide nice bottoms,  
thigh flesh shirred as gentle wind shirrs a pond.

So many sensible haircuts and ponytails!  
These bodies show they have grown babies, then  
nourished them, woken to their cries, fretted  
at their fevers. Biceps have lifted and toted

the babies now printed on their mothers.  
“If you lined up a hundred vaginas,  
I could tell you which ones have borne children,”  
the midwife says. In the secret place or

in sunlight at the beach, our bodies say  
This is who we are, no, This is what  
we have done and continue to do.  
We labor in love. We do it. We mother.