



Fasting Girls: The Emergence of Anorexia Nervosa as a Modern Disease

Joan Jacobs Brumberg

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Anorexia nervosa may affect as many as five to ten percent of adolescent girls in the United States, and on some college campuses, the estimate is as high as twenty percent. Despite its recent "popularity", however, the disease remains puzzling in its causes and stubbornly resistant to a cure. For, as *Fasting Girls* demonstrates, anorexia nervosa existed long before our current preoccupation with lean bodies.

This landmark, award-winning work offers a solution to the mystery of anorexia nervosa, exploring its historical roots from the fasting saints of the Middle Ages and the curious "fasting girls" of the Victorian era to the weight-obsessed celebrities of our own time. By linking broad cultural forces to individual biomedical and psychological factors, *Fasting Girls* shows how a society that believes a woman "can never be too rich or too thin" actually recruits certain adolescents to anorexia -- those who regard a thin body as a state of perfection. Combined with other social stresses, such an attitude puts an increasing number of contemporary young women at risk.

Highly readable and authoritative, *Fasting Girls* takes the reader into the private world of sufferers in the past, and also shows today's health professionals and parents why America's young women are so vulnerable to anorexia, and what treatments have proven effective in combating this frequently misunderstood, often deadly, disorder.

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