

Symposium
Dis-Ordered Eating

Friday

27 April 2018

ICI Berlin

Organized by Clio Nicastro and Nadine Hartmann

Call for Papers

Much has been made of the influence of media and fashion on the proliferation of eating disorders (ED): The glamorization of skinny and ephebic bodies is blamed for the quasi-epidemic spread of anorexia among young women, and hence the core of ED is often understood to be profoundly mimetic. Yet this link between ED and issues of representation extends even to its most clinical definitions and their inherent difficulties. While ED do affect bodies and gestures, their symptomatology remains elusive. ED thus often appear as disorders constructed around socially conditioned invisibilities.

The one-day symposium will examine the discursive and aesthetic challenges that arise with respect to both the definition and representation of eating disorders, taking into account cinematic, literary, and artistic depictions of anorexia, bulimia, binge eating, and other forms of food consumption deemed 'disordered', keeping in mind that these diagnoses always raise the question of what constitutes 'normal', 'ordered eating', socially accepted habits and 'aberrant' ones – such as diets and obsessive 'healthy' or 'clean' eating.

Since ED can be structured by imitation and concealment rather than a clear manifestation of symptoms, they seem to resist the clinical gaze also in their temporal aspects. Foucault has described modern symptomatology as emerging in conjunction with ideas about a defining course or progression of identifiable diseases (a typical *Krankheitsverlauf*).

Yet ED temporalities are difficult to classify in accordance with the medical language of chronic vs. acute, episodic, sporadic, but also compulsion, addiction,

or relapse. As a result, for example, the 2013 edition of the Diagnostic Manual, DSM-5, lowered the frequency threshold for ED symptoms required for a diagnosis.

The symposium, thus, will focus on the errant temporalities bundled into ED and fraying quotidian rhythms. Social time is structured around 'ordinary' mealtimes and collectively prepared festive occasions, both of which collide with the obsessional temporality characteristic of ED. Disordered eating obeys different rhythms, a time radically stretched or violently compressed. In all this, but even after a supposed 'recovery' from an ED, disordered eating remains paradoxically linked to the most elementary, by definition 'chronic' condition of an organism dependent on food intake. Can narrative time articulate these temporal complexities; can it absorb the intensely repetitive structures of ED or the questionable notions of recovery and relapse?

The still very much uneven gender distribution of ED attests to the perniciously patriarchal structures of social life, yet ED also exhibit the overdetermined nature of consumption in capitalist societies. For many decades, ED have been a focal point of feminist attention and activism. But can the resilience, endurance, and refusal encountered in ED become modes of political resistance?

We are looking forward to submissions from divergent fields, including cultural studies, philosophy, film, media, and literary studies, psychoanalysis, gender studies, and the history of medicine. The symposium will be held in English, presentations are limited to 20 minutes. Please email an abstract of no more than 300 words and a short bio-bibliographical profile (100 words maximum) to Disordered.Eating@ici-berlin.org by 20 March 2018.

A full programme will be published on the ICI Berlin website (www.ici-berlin.org) in due course. As with all events at the ICI Berlin, there is no registration fee. We can provide assistance in securing discounted accommodation for the symposium period.

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