

GENDER AND RELIGION

Holy Anorexia vs Anorexia Nervosa

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this dissertation is to examine anorexia nervosa in terms of gender and its historical background. Although its diagnosis is recent, starvation and fasting as a practice is not. Research shows that the first cases of this disease date back to the Middle Ages embodied in the figures of what are called "Medieval Fasting Saints"

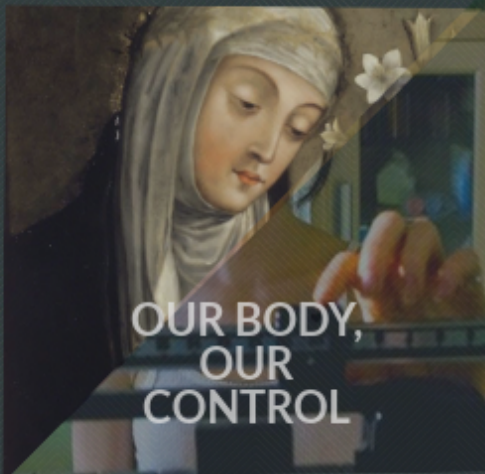
METHODOLOGY

- Qualitative research --> interviews (psychologists, ex-sufferers and relatives) and literature review.
- Construction of ideal types (Catherine of Siena and current perception)
- Quantitative research --> statistical analysis

OBJECTIVES/RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What do they have in common? What is the abstinence from food symbolic of? Can we say it is a feminist issue?
- How can we understand anorexia from a sociological point of view as well as deconstruct the social stereotype?

RESULTS



Catherine of Siena/ To the bone (2017)

1. Holy anorexics and modern anorexics are connected in their pursuit of control as well as manifesting similar personalities
2. Moral imperatives play a role in the development of anorexia
3. Their struggle stems from an emotional issue
4. Anorexia does not only affect western, middle class girls

Socioeconomic Status of sufferers (Neumark-Sztainer)



CONCLUSIONS

Overall, we are talking about a series of women whose biographical lives are affected by the social patriarchy in which they live. It shapes their personality and thoughts, causes emotional distress which is then exteriorized and manifested through the control over their own body. After all, "whether anorexia is holy or nervous depends on the culture in which a young woman strives to gain control of her life" (Bell, 1987: 20)

Further references: Jacob, Joan. 1988. *Fasting Girls: the emergence of Anorexia Nervosa as a modern disease*. London: Harvard University Press.

Pat, Gibbons. 2001. "The Relationship between Eating Disorders and Socio-economic Status: it's not what you think." *University of California pp. 1-5*.