

venir of herself on the place she has quitted, the imprint of her buttocks. Look at her hips as she walks. They are unbearably lascivious. They are like two otters playing seewaw."

— From *The Arabian Nights*, 10th century A.D.

Anorexia nervosa and bulimia



to that stress," Andrews says.

But she is worried about women at Saint Mary's who suffer from eating disorders but won't join the group. "I know they're out there. I see them," she says. "But they won't come to meetings."

Kelly Pearce, a social work student at Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario, has the same problem with a self-help group she facilitates. Pearce says many women won't attend meetings because denial is a symptom of the disease. "Most bulimics and anor-

exics say there isn't a problem except that they're too fat," says Pearce.

"Most men like women who look like women. You can get a handful of toothpicks at any restaurant, free of charge."

— Mae West

The Sudbury group was organized in January 1985 by two social work students at Laurentian when they identified eating disorders as a major problem in their community. With the help of the Canadian Mental Association, the group began holding weekly meetings and trying to inform women about the problem. Pearce decided to act as the group's resource person this year because she was concerned about women at Laurentian.

"You just need to look anywhere on campus to see women jogging frantically or doing aerobic workouts," says Pearce.

Pearce says the group isn't intended to replace professional

help. Instead she hopes to provide anorexics and bulimics with a safe environment where they can express themselves to people who understand. She says she wants to help end the myths in society that harm women.

Along with self-induced vomit-

ing, Pearce says bulimics engage in the dangerous practice of dieting combined with aerobic workouts. Aerobics, made popular by Jane Fonda and the 20 Minute Workout show, burn off a great deal of calories in a short period of time. Many women do aerobic exercise strictly in order to lose weight and care little about fitness.

While it may be acceptable to do aerobic workouts for twenty minutes at a time, bulimics may exercise for up to three hours a day. But they do not eat as many calories as they burn off through the regimen of frenzied bouts of aerobics. Fonda, author of the Jane Fonda Workout book, and subsequently spinoffs, was herself a bulimic.

It is now fashionable to be thin, but if it were fashionable to be fat, women would force-feed themselves like geese, just as girls in primitive societies used to stuff themselves because the fattest girl was the most beautiful. If the eighteen-inch waist should ever become fashionable again, women would suffer the tortures of tight lacing, convinced that though one dislocated one's kidneys, crushed one's liver, and turned green, beauty was worth it all.

— Una Stannard

Once seen as "fringe" diseases associated with rich, female adolescents, the twin eating disorders are now at the center of attention in the medical community. Three medical conferences, all held in Ottawa last summer, dealt with the increase in cases of bulimia and anorexia nervosa. The Canadian Medical Association along with the Canadian Dietetic Association and the Canadian Pediatric Society, heard testimony from doctors about the growing number of cases, the possible causes and the methods of treatment.

Doctors in B.C. are gaining awareness of eating disorders as the B.C. Medical Association's nutrition committee has formed a sub-committee just to deal with eating disorders.

And at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, B.C., psychology student Sylvie Boulet and film student Michael Doherty produced a video about bulimia to educate university students. The video, **Bulimia — Out of Control Eating**, presents a detailed account of a case of bulimia and includes interviews with professionals. Boulet also plans to start a discussion group at S.F.U.

But unless awareness about eating disorders increases soon, Doherty and Boulet may be showing their video to elementary school students as well as university students.

According to Dr. Suji Lena, a pediatrician at the Eastern Ontario Children's Hospital in Ottawa, the average age of anorexic patients is decreasing. For the first time doctors are seeing children as young as 12 with anorexia nervosa. When Lena worked at the Children's Hospital in Toronto last year, her clinic saw 12 cases of anorexic children in six months. The year before, there had only been two or three cases.

She says the symptoms usually begin at the onset of puberty. As children grow mature at an earlier age, symptoms of anorexia are also appearing at an earlier age. Lena says children see positive images of skinny people everywhere. Young girls also watch their mothers complain about gaining weight and as a result see their own weight gain as a negative experience.

When female children begin to have breasts develop and wider hips, they begin to panic, says Lena. They want to stay child-like and so they stop eating.

"The younger age group isn't as sophisticated," says Lena. "They don't make themselves vomit or anything like that. They just skip meals or stop eating altogether."

The increasing numbers of women and even young female children obsessed with weight is a warning sign of the way North American society works. While fashion magazines and pornography displays images of thin women in standard shapes and sizes, real women are risking their lives to live up to the stereotype. To stop that trend men must begin to question the vision of beauty that the media is trying to display. Women must begin to love their bodies whatever its size.

Feminist cartoonist Nicole Hollander makes the point well. Her main character Sylvia is asked what a world without men would be like. She replies: "No crime. Lots of fat, happy women."