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## **Anorexia and the City: Special Significance of the Urban Environment in Eating Disorder Memoirs**

**ABSTRACT:** The article examines a book of memoirs belonging to a larger group of textual representations of individual struggle with anorexia in order to shed light on the city as a crucial character in the account of the disease. *Kid Rex: The Inspiring True Account of a Life Salvaged from Anorexia, Despair and Dark Days in New York City* (2008) by Laura Moisin is one of many recent publications touching upon the subject of eating disorders penned by and depicting the life of young upper middle class big city women. First notable books of this kind appeared around 1980, while since the beginning of this century we have been observing a steady increase in this respect, resulting in the proliferation of these personal narratives in popular culture. In accordance with the research suggesting that the incidence of eating disorders is higher in urban areas, publications of this kind all seem to refer to such environments; however, the aforementioned book could be considered special here as it portrays the deep-reaching relations between witnessing the events of September 11 attacks and the development of the disease. Even though it remains unclear which elements of cityscapes are responsible for the higher incidence of the anorexia, the acute experiences offered by NYC around the time of the attack highlight the probable causes. Employing the interdisciplinary perspectives offered by psychogeography, food studies and sociology of medicine, the article analyses how the influence of the city on female victims of anorexia is presented in the memoir to show that urban spaces may function both as a symptom of and as a factor contributing to the disease.

**KEYWORDS:** anorexia, eating disorders, city

The aim of this article is to discuss the impact of the city on female victims of *anorexia nervosa*. My claim is that urban spaces in contemporary anorexic memoirs function both as a symptom of and as a factor contributing to the disorder. This psycho-geographical connection, being a relatively unexamined aspect of this still baffling disorder, can yield insight into its perceptively metropolitan character.

“New diseases are rare, and a disease that selectively befalls the young, rich, and beautiful is practically unheard of. But such a disease is affecting the daughters of well-to-do, educated, and successful families.”<sup>1</sup> Those are the two first sentences from the preface to Hilde Bruch’s *The Golden Cage*, a now classic publication on *anorexia nervosa* from 1978. The book, being a non-professional, abridged version of the earlier bulky volume devoted to the study of various disturbances in eating patterns, *Eating Disorders* (1973), brought the topic of the disease to public attention, commencing the discussion on its potentially epidemic proportions that swept through the mainstream American media in the 1980s.<sup>2</sup> The distinguished physician, apart from studying anorexia, reached also to the other end of the spectrum and did pioneering research on the causes of obesity, which led her to develop the first comprehensive, psychodynamic theory encompassing its various contributing factors rather than following the earlier reductive approaches focusing on either endogenous or exogenous origins.<sup>3</sup> When exploring the aetiology of food refusal, she was driven by similar concerns for an exhaustive explanation which would account for the complexities of the condition instead of leaving out

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1 Hilde Bruch, *The Golden Cage: The Enigma of Anorexia Nervosa*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), xix. In the foreword to this edition of the book, Catherine Steiner-Adair follows the pattern by beginning her assessment of the impact of Bruch’s work twenty-five years after first publication with the mention of “an upper-middle class suburb” crowded with anorexic girls. Catherine Steiner-Adair, foreword to *The Golden Cage*, vii.

2 Joan Jacobs Brumberg, *Fasting Girls: The Emergence of Anorexia Nervosa as a Modern Disease* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1988), 1–11.

3 Sander L. Gilman, “Desire and Obesity: Dickens, Endocrinology, Pulmonary Medicine, and Psychoanalysis,” in *Psychoanalysis and Narrative Medicine*, ed. Peter L. Rudnytsky and Rita Charon (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 52–53.

complicating evidence about there being many types of the disorder. She rebuked scholars tending to cling to one narrow understanding of anorexia, such as a purely biological approach viewing it in terms of endocrinologic disturbances, or a limiting psychoanalytical stance holding only the fear of oral impregnation responsible for a variety of symptoms.<sup>4</sup> Bruch succeeded in differentiating subtypes of anorexia; what is more, she formulated the fundamental claim concerning refusal to eat being not the primary issue but one of the steps characteristic for later stages of the disorder's progression.<sup>5</sup> This multidimensional perspective is now reflected in numerous treatment options offered to anorexia patients (often simultaneously),<sup>6</sup> while the open-ended and loose diagnostic criteria<sup>7</sup> echo the lack of definite answers as to the cause of eating disorders. Despite all her insight, in her opening words, Bruch did not, however, make reference to where these prosperous and wealthy families tend to reside.

Interestingly enough, the physician conducted clinical research in the academic centres of New York, Baltimore, and, most significantly, Houston, where she became Professor of Psychiatry at Baylor Medical School; the detailed case stories that she offered in her books came from girls residing in these urban environments. However, what brought her attention to the issue of food-based conditions was the sight of overweight children on the American streets; she reported on the numbers of corpulent individuals which came as a surprise to this German Jew who fled Europe in 1934.<sup>8</sup> The last item on this list, the capital of Texas, was dubbed the Fattest City in America

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4 Bruch, *Eating Disorders: Obesity, Anorexia Nervosa, and the Person Within* (LaVergne, TN: Basic Books, 2010), 216–25.

5 *Ibid.*, 251.

6 Steiner-Adair, foreword, x. Also, Brumberg, 23.

7 In fact, the latest edition of *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5), published by APA as the main diagnostic tool, contains a further liberalization of the criteria for anorexia, from which the requirement of amenorrhea is deleted due to the fact that it does not apply to male patients or these females who do experience menstrual activity for other reasons. American Psychiatric Association, "Highlights of Changes from DSM-IV-TR to DSM-5," 12 (PDF file). APA, "Feeding and Eating Disorders," 1 (PDF file), accessed December 15, 2014, <http://www.dsm5.org/>.

8 Bruch, *The Importance of Overweight*, quoted in "Desire and Obesity," 53.

in 2005;<sup>9</sup> the state also usually dominates the statistics of obese youngsters and adults.<sup>10</sup> Some ascribe this infamous result to the design of Houston's infrastructure, which does not encourage, not to say allow, physical activity. This could constitute evidence in the discussion of the impact urban citizenship has on eating habits, without necessarily determining what direction the influence takes: towards excessive weight or issues with maintaining proper body mass.

Ten years later, Joan Jacobs Brumberg referred to the opening quotation in her *Fasting Girls* and confirmed its validity with demographical data: "ninety to 95 percent of anorexics are young and female, and they are disproportionately white and from middle-class and upper-class families."<sup>11</sup> While investigating the reason for the increase in the incidence of anorexia, which appeared in the post-war years of affluence, she mentions a geographical aspect as well; it is the US, Western Europe, and places undergoing westernization that demonstrate a prevalence for it.<sup>12</sup> This remains in accordance with the results of a study performed by a group of Harvard Medical School scholars in the 1990s in Fiji. In order to investigate the claim concerning industrialised societies as witnessing eating disorders more frequently than the developing ones, the researchers approached ethnic Fijian female teenagers before and after a prolonged exposure to TV viewing.<sup>13</sup> Such an opportunity became possible as a satellite signal was introduced to the island only in 1995, carrying a cultural shift with it. Quite predictably, the study revealed a significant rise in behaviours indicating anorexia in this previously relatively disorder-free society and implied a negative impact of media images on eating habits.<sup>14</sup>

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9 Nate Millado, "The Fittest and Fattest Cities in America," accessed December 15, 2014, <http://www.mensfitness.com/weight-loss/burn-fat-fast/the-fittest-and-fattest-cities-in-america>.

10 Cdc.gov, accessed December 16, 2014, <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/obesity/obesity-youth.htm> and <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/prevalence-maps.html>.

11 Brumberg, *Fasting Girls*, 12.

12 *Ibid.*, 13.

13 Anne E. Becker et al., "Eating Behaviours and Attitudes Following Prolonged Exposure to Television among Ethnic Fijian Adolescent Girls," *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 180 (2002): 509.

14 Becker et al., "Eating Behaviours and Attitudes," 511–13.

Media can, however, also contribute to spreading awareness of eating disorders: this was the case in the 1980s and early 1990s, when celebrity cases (Karen Carpenter, whose death in 1983 is said to have triggered off others to speak more openly about their struggle, Tracey Gold, Princess Diana, Jane Fonda, Christy Henrich) made the news, and anorexia together with other disturbances in eating behaviours were featured in several films and TV productions, of which just a couple of the most recognisable instances might be mentioned here: *The Best Little Girl in the World* from 1981, *Kate's Secret* from 1986, *For the Love of Nancy* from 1994 (which featured the recovering victim of anorexia—Gold as the eponymous Lucy). What started to appear were also written descriptions of the struggle with eating disorders, usually in two forms: fiction designed for the adolescent reader and autobiographical accounts,<sup>15</sup> such as: *Thinner* (1984), *Catherine: The Story of a Young Girl Who Died of Anorexia* (1986), *Goodbye, Paper Doll* (1988), *Two Girls, Fat and Thin* (1991), *Life-Size* (1992), to name a few. Both presentations shared many similarities, with only the level of explicitness of depicting the suffering and the treatment differentiating them (the accounts based on genuine battles with the disorder were quite predictably the ones to disguise the realities of the disease to a lesser extent). According to Brumberg, who gives a two-paragraph summary of the plot, such stories proceed along a certain convention: she mentions the protagonist being a pretty and smart female high schooler coming from a successful family who, prompted by unhealthy images of models, becomes obsessed with thinness and establishes singular eating habits, which leads to the deterioration of her health as well as to the loss of interpersonal attachments as food takes the central stage in her life.<sup>16</sup> The synopsis, which in a faithful manner encapsulates also the film plots, pays special attention to various elements of the usual formula, for instance mother-daughter relations—they are often viewed as crucial to understanding the disorder and almost always feature prominently in stories of anorexia. Additionally, Brumberg draws attention to the way the anorexic patient's rapport with those who mean to treat her condition tends to be represented, under-

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15 Brumberg, *Fasting Girls*, 16.

16 *Ibid.*, 16–18.

lining the didactic air in which the narratives were steeped in order to induce the reaction of those seeking professional help.<sup>17</sup> What about the question of localisation in the standard depiction?

Even though other aspects, such as wealth, social standing, profession, appearance (Brumberg includes even the exact height of the patient-protagonist), age, etc. are detailed in the brief summary, there is no openly stated geographical connection, which is the main point of interest in this article. Nevertheless, two place names are thrown in at random in different parts of the synopsis: Radcliffe and Central Park West. These are used as examples representative of a more generally regarded type of environment, which does not become explicitly defined in the book. Radcliffe, where the anorexics are claimed to aspire, refers here to the liberal arts college, now part of Harvard, while Central Park West, the average dwelling place of those afflicted with anorexia according to the plot summary, is the star-studded avenue in New York City with exorbitant housing prices. It is therefore hinted that the postal code may be one of the key factors of aetiology in anorexia. But there is no overt statement of the existence of this link; in this way, the implicit suggestion resembles the comments made by Bruch, where the urban spaces were also alluded to but not presented straightforwardly. At this point, the omission appears to be everything but an incidental and insignificant mention,<sup>18</sup> and precisely for this reason the geographical factor needs to be examined more closely.

The aforementioned genres of anorexic narratives have undergone considerable development in the last decades. When we look at more recent publications concerning anorexia, a change can be noticed. First of all, the two previously mentioned forms seem to be merging into one fictionalised memoir genre, in which the boundary between factual events from the life of an anorexia victim and narrative tropes originat-

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17 Brumberg, *Fasting Girls*, 16.

18 Brumberg returns to the issue of location later, claiming that anorexia is not a universal disorder as its incidence is limited to “developed” countries of the West and [...] Japan.” She ascribes this to an interaction between the hypothalamus and the environment (27), which is a different way of understanding space that I propose in this article. In addition, it must be clearly stated that eating disturbances do reach well beyond the white and wealthy, which is acknowledged also by Bordo, 109.

ing from the formulaic, frequently told stories becomes to a large extent blurred, leaving the reader with a fused, multifaceted novel straddling the worlds of fact and popular imagination. Apart from that, three other genres have surfaced, bearing witness to the growing prosperity in this section of the publishing industry. These are as follows: family accounts—publications written usually by or together with mothers of anorexics, who decide to share their life experiences as cautionary tales and methods of dealing with trauma that burdens not only the patient herself but her closest relatives as well (for instance *The Anorexia Diaries: A Mother and Daughter's Triumph over Teenage Eating Disorders* from 2003 or *Anorexia: A Stranger in the Family* from 2007); popular self-help books aimed at the general public and written in a user-friendly language in order to explain eating disorders and suggest treatment options (exemplified by *When Dieting Becomes Dangerous: A Guide to Understanding and Treating Anorexia and Bulimia* from 2003 and even *Eating Disorders for Dummies* from 2008); and autobiographical male accounts, whose focus seems to be, to a large extent, fighting to give voice to men with eating disorders and to recognise them as patients, and which are still relatively rare but definitely show an upward trend in the frequency of publication (here the examples could be *Boys Get Anorexia Too: Coping with Male Eating Disorders in the Family* from 2006 and *Skinny Boy: A Young Man's Battle and Triumph over Anorexia* from 2007). My concern here is the first type, the novelised anorexic memoir, as it has the longest history, is the most widespread genre, and generally could be, thanks to these features, treated as a classic of its kind. It is not at all a challenge to find ten publications of this kind from the first decade of the twenty-first century—quite the opposite, a reader fond of such stories may choose from a range of books amounting to nigh 200 hundred volumes.<sup>19</sup> With gripping titles alluding either to the feelings predominant for anorexia, such as *Wasted, Empty, Hungry*, and *Insatiable*, or to the deep personal attachment to the symptoms, which is common for anorexics: *My Rory* and *Kid Rex* (not to mention the

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19 Goodreads.com offers a staggering number of 186 books categorised as dealing with the issue of anorexia, accessed December 17, 2014, <https://www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/anorexia>.



lengthy and more than informative subtitles that usually follow), the books offer first-person narratives showing briefly life before the advent of the disorder, its gradual development (usually the longest part), a breakthrough in the form of realizing the necessity of treatment, the treatment itself, with a recovery on the last pages (the recovery is never full, and the author makes it obvious that she will always have to deal with unusual eating habits). The other features remain as quoted from Brumberg's analysis performed more than two decades earlier.

My focus here is on one of such books, *Kid Rex: The Inspiring True Account of a Life Salvaged from Despair, Anorexia, and Dark Days in New York City* by Laura Moisin, published in 2008. With a title like this there is not much left to say; it clearly belongs to the genre and shares all its characteristic traits. However, in this particular case I want to focus on the representation of the city, which in this particular case is New York. The eponymous Kid Rex, a nickname the main protagonist gives herself in order to feel like a superhero, grew up in Newton, Massachusetts, which is not exactly a village either, but in Laura's mind it becomes associated with homeliness and tranquil walks in the park, even though it is the small, private school there where the early symptoms of what later transforms into a full-blown disorder manifest. Later on, the contrast is intensified by juxtaposing autumnal fruits and vegetables from a local farmer's market with the despair of the post-9/11 metropolis. What is more, the protagonist expresses the opinion that: "most Eastern European families, including some in my own extended family, hold the firm belief that anorexia is not a real illness."<sup>20</sup> This disparaging comment aligns itself closely with the standpoint that eating disorders are nothing but a whimsical, insignificant fashion, the result of women's innate capriciousness and too much time wasted on perusing glossy magazines,<sup>21</sup> a stance that is probably linked to the fact that the symptoms of anorexia (and, by the same token, its diagnosis) are simultaneously difficult to pinpoint and so relentlessly

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20 Laura Moisin, *Kid Rex: The Inspiring True Account of a Life Salvaged from Anorexia, Despair and Dark Days in New York City* (Toronto: EWC Press, 2008), 69.

21 This standpoint is analysed in more detail by Susan Bordo in her *Twilight Zones: Hidden Life of Cultural Images*.

corporeal.<sup>22</sup> Aside from that, Laura's remark testifies to the visibility of a line separating two worlds, and also world views: this of Eastern Europe, where the disorder and the pain it causes supposedly do not exist, and the other one, constituted most likely by Western Europe and the US, where further denial of its existence is virtually impossible due to a fair number of occurrences—and published accounts together with film presentations.

Despite her Romanian origin, Laura is a modern American citizen who wholeheartedly embraces the Western style of living and feels comfortable among the high-rises; so does her disorder. In the book, anorexia is perceived as an inhabitant of the city or as a facility available there and only there. Moreover, Laura regards New York as a place of liberation: in opposition to her hometown and its constraints, the city provides her with “a broad mental view of the world,”<sup>23</sup> albeit in a small apartment; it is a greenhouse environment for the disorder to thrive in. Originally, she moves there to attend college (a plan she later abandons, not able to overcome the difficulties of education when struggling with the disease), and, at this stage, the city is associated almost purely with independence and an exhilarating sense of freedom, also the freedom to be ill. After her sophomore year of college, Laura decides to remain in New York for the summer, realising that back home with parents she would not be able to continue her erratic eating behaviours and strict exercise schedule. She opts for a prolonged stay in the city instead of re-establishing the strained relation with her family because otherwise she would “risk losing [her] anorexia.”<sup>24</sup> It is at this point that her dad “got angry and once again blamed ‘the City,’ which to him had become

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22 Neuroses and other ‘vague’ diseases were given similar treatment during the Victorian period, which is discussed by Athena Vrettos in *Somatic Fictions: Imagining Illness in Victorian Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995); see especially chapter “From Neurosis to Narrative,” 48–80. What is interesting, Vrettos discusses the conditions also in terms of contagion and mimicking—neuromimesis (83–90), while Brumberg follows Bruch and remarks on the ‘me too’ victims of anorexia (14). In *Kid Rex*, it is not only Laura but also two of her best friends and at least one roommate who develop bizarre eating patterns.

23 Moisin, *Kid Rex*, 7.

24 *Ibid.*, 22.

a character in the increasingly sad story of [her] life.”<sup>25</sup> What the city offers Laura is a convenient space where the disorder can gather momentum, which becomes openly recognised by herself and by her family, with whom she is beginning to lose contact, instead building a strong emotional engagement with her surroundings and her disorder, a new found friend (as she calls it, infatuation with anorexia<sup>26</sup>).

The development of Laura’s anorexia and its subsequent stages are made equivalent with her places of accommodation at the time: there is an uncanny correspondence between the state of her successive apartments and the evolution of her symptoms. First, she lives in Chinatown, but her life as a freshman is mentioned only briefly, as this is still the time when she “used to buy the sweetest Fuji apples,”<sup>27</sup> which stands for the prelapsarian idyll, the lost period of innocence before her preoccupation with food refusal begins. Her second year in Chinatown brings a change: in lieu of studying, she increasingly prefers intense partying, which comes easily to her thanks to a high, a boost of energy and confidence, allowed for by the early stages of not eating and the erratic lifestyle she leads in the disorganised, bohemian apartment where “there was never any food in the fridge.”<sup>28</sup> The second flat in Chinatown, where she lived alone and cultivated her odd exercise patterns, was dubbed “the anorexia headquarters.”<sup>29</sup> Living there, she grew increasingly isolated, partly due to an arrangement which made it possible: a mini-fridge in her small bedroom eliminated the processes of “dealing with food or even seeing it”<sup>30</sup> from her daily routine. Next came a flat in Soho shared with her sister. As Laura’s symptoms develop, the apartment becomes infested with mice, rats, and various types of bugs. These plagues make Laura feel threatened that her “living space would no longer be livable,”<sup>31</sup> which makes the issue of purifying the environment essential. Consequently, she calls in for an exterminator, whose help in cleaning the apartment

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25 Ibid.

26 Ibid., 15.

27 Ibid., 8.

28 Ibid., 14.

29 Ibid., 22.

30 Ibid., 23.

31 Ibid., 43.

is perceived as more important than the therapy sessions she starts to attend at this stage. The pest problem is in this way paralleled with the growing obsession with food refusal, while the man capable of getting rid of rats is considered a better therapist since he can identify and eliminate the danger—an act which her doctors cannot perform. In this way, the succession of flats in Laura's life not only reflects her degrading mental state but also suggests that the character of each of the living spaces—chaotic, confined, and contaminated—contributes to the development of her anorexia.

Apart from these functions, the city and urban surroundings in the book serve the role of a lens that enables to categorise people. This aspect is particularly underlined when Laura is shown to evaluate the validity of medical advice provided by physicians and therapists according to the location and interior design of their office. Her preferences may be based on colours and textures, type of building, or proximity of other locations to which she has attached positive sentiments. On this basis, she, for instance, decides to follow Dr Klab's recommendations and go to a treatment centre; after considering the neighbourhood and carefully scrutinising the decorations in her office, she proclaims: "with all these minute factors in mind, I decided to take her seriously."<sup>32</sup> Additionally, the fact that the vermin-ridden flat that the exterminator claims should be torn down and the modern apartment with numerous facilities discussed later in the book are the same flat shows that Laura's response to physical places is susceptible to considerable changes. What the reader knows for sure is, however, the fact that the Soho apartment has a great location—with a view of WTC.

Laura witnesses the events of September 11 directly from her window; this is when she stops eating whatsoever. Not surprisingly, the attack is presented in terms of a life-changing moment and a turning point in her disorder, powerful enough to make her lapse into depression and regress deeper into anorexic symptoms on each anniversary. In the protagonist's own words: "in the land of 9/11, my anorexia was able to flourish."<sup>33</sup> This is made possible because of the quite poignantly

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32 Ibid., 66.

33 Ibid., 120.

described realities of living next to Ground Zero in the days following the collapse of the towers, where barricades on the streets, air full of toxic dust, and malfunctioning bathrooms all fill her with unspeakable terror, while her perception of the city changes. It used to be unblemished and fresh, almost innocent; now “nothing was pure anymore. Things were evil and malicious.”<sup>34</sup> At this point, a contradiction makes itself noticeable: if the violence acted upon New York is equalled with the disorder, would then Laura’s healthy body and mind be associated with the undestroyed city? The explanation is temptingly simple, but it seems that Laura’s urban environment lost its purity much earlier, when she started developing the symptoms; consequently, the attack only functions as a broader metaphor of her succumbing into the disorder, before which everything was sweeter, even the apples.

In summary, psycho-geographical location may be treated as one of the factors causing the disorder, and it may also be seen in terms of reflecting the anorexic symptoms. The unique blend of ingredients offered by the city—a superficial sense of liberation mixed with powerful feelings of confinement, decay coexisting with modern facilities, and being more frequently exposed to other anorexics—is partly responsible for the prevalence of eating disturbances in urban surroundings. Nonetheless, this view has necessary limitations: *anorexia nervosa* is a multidimensional disorder, and any attempt at examining it while focusing on only one of its aspects and ignoring others is bound to be defective in the broader perspective. However, the discussion on the behavioural impact of urban space and examining the ways the body and mind react to functioning among cityscapes can further its understanding.

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34 Ibid., 115.

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opisujących zaburzenia odżywiania**

STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł poddaje analizie rolę przestrzeni miejskiej w powstawaniu i rozwoju zaburzeń odżywiania na przykładzie autobiograficznej książki anorektyczki Laury Moisin pod tytułem *Kid Rex: The Inspiring True Account of a Life Salvaged from Anorexia, Despair and Dark Days in New York City* (2008). Publikacja ta jest przedstawiona w kontekście jej przynależności do dużej i stale rosnącej grupy narracji opisujących zmagania młodych kobiet pochodzących z klasy średniej z objawami anoreksji i bulimii. Artykuł uzupełnia zarys typowej formuły takiej opowieści przedstawiony przez Joan Jacobs Brumberg na podstawie przełomowych badań Hilde Bruch przez wskazanie wyspecjalizowania się nowych podtypów takich narracji oraz, co najważniejsze, przez zwrócenie uwagi na wcześniej zazwyczaj pomijany aspekt specyfiki przestrzeni miejskiej. Zostaje on wskazany jako kolejny czynnik, po płci, wieku, przynależności do klasy społecznej i innych, który odgrywa rolę w wielowymiarowych zaburzeniach jakimi są anoreksja czy bulimia. Dodatkowym argumentem są tutaj wyniki eksperymentu, który pozwolił na uchwycenie bliskich związków zaburzeń odżywiania z procesem okcydentalizacji, co ma szczególne znaczenie w przypadku silnie zurbanizowanych obszarów oraz relacji i doświadczeń, jakie przez to wymuszają. Dokładne przeanalizowanie wspomnień Moisin, wyjątkowych ze względu na obecność w nich tragicznych wydarzeń 11 września 2001 roku, pozwala na zidentyfikowanie roli wielkiego miasta zarówno jako czynnika sprawczego anoreksji, jak i metafory przebiegu choroby. Wielkie miasto pokazywane jest więc jednocześnie jako sprawca choroby, ale też narracyjne lustro, w którym odbijają się jej kolejne etapy.



Nina Augustynowicz

**Die Magersucht in einer Großstadt:  
besondere Bedeutung des Stadtraumes  
in den Erinnerungen an Essstörungen**

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

In dem Artikel wird die Rolle des Stadtraumes bei Entstehung und Entwicklung der Essstörungen anhand des autobiografischen Buchs von der Magersüchtigen Laura Moisin *Kid Rex: The Inspiring Account of a Life Salvaged from Anorexia, Despair and Dark Days in New York City* (2008) erforscht. Diese Publikation wird hier in Bezug auf zahlreiche und immer zunehmende Gruppe der über den Kampf der jungen Frauen aus der Mittelschicht gegen die Magensucht- und Bulimiesymptome handelnden Bücher betrachtet. Die Verfasserin vervollständigt den Abriss von solcher Erzählungsform, die von Joan Brumberg in Anlehnung an Hilde Bruch bahnbrechende Forschungen dargestellt wurde, indem sie auf neuentwickelte Untertypen solcher Geschichten und vor allem auf den früher meistens übergangenen Aspekt des spezifischen Stadtraumes hinweist. Nach dem Geschlecht, dem Alter, der Zugehörigkeit zur sozialen Schicht, u.a. ist dieser Raum ein schwerwiegender Faktor, der bei solchen komplexen Störungen wie Magersucht oder Bulimie wichtige Rolle spielt. Dafür sprechen auch die Ergebnisse eines Experimentes, das ermöglichte, einen engen Zusammenhang zwischen den Essstörungen und der Verwestlichung zu entdecken, was besonders auf stark verstäderten Gebieten von großer Bedeutung ist. Genaue Analyse der Erinnerungen von Moisin unter Berücksichtigung der tragischen Ereignisse vom 11. September (Terroranschläge auf das WTC) erlaubt, die Rolle einer Großstadt sowohl als eine einwirkende Kraft bei der Magensucht, als auch eine Metapher für den Krankheitsverlauf zu erkennen. Der große Stadt erscheint also gleichzeitig als Verursacher der Krankheit und ein narrativer Spiegel, in dem sich die aufeinanderfolgenden Krankheitsstadien spiegeln.