Starving To Be Seen: An Examination of Anorexia In Graphic Narratives

For an anorexic, the body seen in the mind’s eye does not match what the eye sees reflected in the mirror, leading to self-harm as a means of reconciling the image with the perceived ideal. The body is also looked upon and judged by others, an additional source of pressure for the anorexic attempting to embody their ideal. Within this context, the graphic narrative form provides a particularly effective means for examining how women who identify as anorexic, as both looking and looked at subjects, are represented. Using Graphic Women: Live Narrative and Contemporary Comics by Hilary L. Chute and various works of feminist theory as critical lenses, this paper will seek to examine representations of female characters who identify as anorexic in young adult graphic narratives. The five comics that the paper will examine are Lucille by Ludovic Debeurme (English translation, 2011), Tyranny by Lesley Fairfield (2009), Ink In Water by Lacy J. Davis (2017), Lighter Than My Shadow by Katie Green (2017) and The House That Groaned by Karrie Fransman (2012). Comics that critically depict representations of the anorexic body have not received enough attention from comics scholars or young adult literature scholars. These works need more scrutiny because they represent an under-represented and misunderstood community of readers.