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British Literature

2 October 2017

Photoshop: The damage it causes to body image

The human body is something that people have sought to change since the beginning of time. Makeup and other beauty products have been used to change the way one looks, corsets to make one's waist look thinner, more hourglass shaped, and heels to boost one's height as well as make one's calves look more muscular. This is still a practice today but with the evolution of technology and the use of photography, there is a new craze to change the way others see someone, photoshop. Photoshop is used most commonly to make an already skinny model even thinner. It is also commonly used to change what agencies consider "undesirable traits" such as; fat around the stomach, blemishes on the face that they could not cover with makeup and in some instances, skin tone. The everyday woman cannot even begin to compare herself to these altered images of the human form but yet, women do it every day. Many women turn to extreme exercise routines and in some cases extreme diets. These diets turn into a habit and sometimes they turn into extreme eating disorders. These eating disorders take their tolls on the women and women they affect. The body starts breaking down due to the lack of nutrition causing weakness fatigue and in some cases death. If the person these disorders affect do not get the help they may die and, if the grim reaper does not take their lives many take their own. The reason for this epidemic of eating disorders is photoshop. Retouched images in the media create an unrealistic standard beauty that is impossible to achieve. Those who want the "perfect body" gain eating

disorders and depression usually follows suit. At the extreme, these issues lead to death and suicide.

Caroline Knapp said it best when she said “What is this drive to be thinner, prettier, better dressed, other? Who exactly is this other and what does she look like beyond the jacket she's wearing or the food she's not eating? What might we be doing, thinking, feeling about if we didn't think about body image, ever?” causing many to think. Body image has been a hot-button issue for a rather long time in today's society. Many a girl or boy find flaws in their bodies due to the standards the media put on them. Women must be skinny with thin waists, large hips, Large butt and a rather large chest, a look that cannot be achieved without some form of surgery or rather odd genetics. On the other side, men must be muscular, tall, and they must have a chiseled jaw. For many, this is just not something they can achieve without surgery.

A major epidemic facing many women and men is the media idealizing those with pale complexions. This epidemic is seen a lot in many Asian countries where being pale is revered. In Asian countries a pale complexion makes it seem as though you are of high status. They believe that is one has a tan it means you have to work outside doing manual labor. Women will go as far as bleaching their skin in order to achieve the photoshopped pale skin that the latest K-pop idol has. Some of these skin lightening products contain chemicals that no one should put on their skin. In China, there was a product that had to be recalled due to heavy metals.”Chinese authorities made a discovery of their own about SK-II products: the high-end skin whitening cream and powders contained the toxic heavy metals chromium and neodymium.”(Kite, Lindsay.) These are two heavy metals that can have very scary side effects. While we do ingest Chromium in small quantities high amounts in the body can have some scary side effects as well.

“ very high doses of this mineral can reduce how effective insulin is at controlling blood sugar and cause stomach irritation, itching, and flushing. There have also been rare reports of fast, irregular heart rhythms and liver problems from too much chromium. Kidney damage has also been reported” (University of Maryland Medical Center). That is just one of the heavy metals. Neodymium can cause issues with the lungs and liver.”This can cause lung embolisms, especially during long-term exposure. Neodymium can be a threat to the liver when it accumulates in the human body.” (Lenntech). Those are the serious side effect to happen just for the lighter skin. Being white is the new pretty and that is what is causing these women to put deadly chemicals on their skin. I think Lindsay Kite said it best when she said. “Essentially, women are viewing a distorted reality and holding themselves to the unattainable standard set by the non-reality of popular media—and most often, those standards are based on oppressive, power-laden ideals of whiteness” This is causing women to try to become the “perfect woman” meaning, the perfect white women. This is not okay. It is causing people to change their bodies and affecting them in major ways.

When surgery does not give women the perfect figure they turn to eating disorders to become slimmer. They starve themselves, make themselves sick or a mixture of the two. The most common eating disorders are Anorexia and Bulimia but there is one that people do not truly know of. It's called OSFED or EDNOS. OSFED stands for Other Specified Feeding or Eating Disorder. EDNOS stands for Eating Disorder Not Otherwise Specified. It is harder to diagnose than the other two because it does not fall under any specific category. People who fall under OSFED often form eating disorders that don't match up with the average eating disorder. The Center for Eating Disorders once said “ the Other Specified Feeding and Eating Disorder

diagnosis is applied when an individual's symptoms cause significant distress but do not fit neatly within the strict criteria for anorexia, bulimia, ARFID or binge eating disorder. " Most people just look for the signs of bulimia and anorexia but that is not what one should look for forty to sixty percent of eating disorders being treated in treatment centers are OSFED and not the other two. Five examples of this eating disorder are; Atypical anorexia nervosa (when an eating disorder fits all of the criteria for anorexia nervosa but the individual is still within the normal weight range), Bulimia nervosa of low frequency and/or limited duration, Binge eating disorder of low frequency and/or limited duration, Purging disorder, Night Eating Syndrome.

There is also BED (Binge Eating Disorder). This disorder affects two point five percent of women in America and two percent of American men. BED is classified as bingeing on food without making oneself sick, unlike bulimia. This disorder is often caused by past bullying and the need to look a certain way. Unlike some eating disorders, this one can cause weight gain. That weight gain can cause issues such as; High blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, type two diabetes, obstructive sleep apnea, edema, kidney disease, gallbladder disease, arthritis, infertility, various forms of cancer, irritable bowel syndrome, fibromyalgia, and insomnia. These are all very life threatening issues that are caused by body image issues.

Last but certainly not least there is Anorexia Nervosa. The Center for Eating Disorders describes a sufferer of this disorder as " Individuals with anorexia struggle with an intense preoccupation with their weight and shape. Overall, there is an indication that weight loss is of primary importance and it begins to take precedence over other important life roles and responsibilities." Those suffering from this disorder will do whatever they can to lose as much weight as humanly possible. It is common for sufferers to have a warped sense of their own

bodies often seeing themselves as fat even when they are nothing but skin and bones. Anorexia Nervosa sufferers will starve themselves to achieve the “right body”. While starving themselves they lack key nutrients that the body needs to survive. This leads to a number of health problems such as; Abnormally slow heart rate, low blood pressure, Damage to the heart, risk of heart failure, death, osteopenia, osteoporosis, loss of muscle, weakness, severe dehydration, kidney failure, fainting, fatigue, lethargy, dry skin, brittle hair, brittle nails, hair loss, anemia, increased infection, heart palpitations, severe constipation, arrested sexual maturity and failure to grow in patients that have yet to go through puberty, drop in internal temperature, a growth of a downy layer of hair called “lanugo”, amenorrhea, infertility, increased rates of miscarriage and fetal complications and an increased risk of suicide. All of that is typically caused by just one thing; a photoshopped image of a model in some magazine. Those same models are often turned into thinspiration.

What is thinspiration? Thinspiration is most typically known as images that sufferers of eating disorders look at to keep themselves thin. This can be a problem because there is usually someone thinner than the person and it eventually becomes a competition.

All of these things could have been avoided if modeling companies would use realistic bodies instead of photoshopped barbies that lead young girls to have eating disorders. Without photoshop the world would be a much better place for everyone to live in. Without photoshop the girl on the cover of the fashion magazine would look like anyone you see on the street. Retouched images in the media cause body image issues and eating disorders. At the extreme, these issues lead to death and suicide.

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