



# Body Shots: Hollywood and the Culture of Eating Disorders

*Emily Fox-Kales*

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*Combining the analytical tools of cinema studies with insights from clinical practice focused on eating disorders, Body Shots offers a compelling case for widespread media literacy to combat the effects of the “eating disordered culture” represented in Hollywood productions and popular images of celebrity life.*

How do movie star bodies and celebrity culture influence the way *real* girls and women feel about their own size and shape? What effect can popular films have on everyday eating behavior and exercise rituals? *Body Shots* shows how Hollywood films, movie stars, and celebrity media help propagate the values of an “eating disordered culture” that promotes constant self-scrutiny and vigilance, denial of appetite and overcontrol of weight in the compulsive pursuit of an eternally elusive body ideal of slenderness and fitness. In a unique approach that merges the disciplines of film analysis, gender studies, and psychology, clinical psychologist and cinema studies scholar Emily Fox-Kales demonstrates how the body narratives of such Hollywood celebrities as Lindsay Lohan, Gwyneth Paltrow, and Oprah Winfrey and their battles with bulimia, post-maternal weight gain, and yo-yo dieting not only serve as public enactments of the same eating and weight struggles their fans endure, but create a “new normal” which naturalizes and even valorizes the chronic body dissatisfaction and weight obsession that are established risk factors for eating disorders in women and girls. Written for students of cultural and gender studies, parents, media literacy educators, as well as film buffs everywhere, this book aims to provide the movie goer with the critical tools necessary to develop a resistant gaze at Hollywood productions and make healthier choices among the many viewing screens of our super-mediated world.

“*Body Shots* tackles a variety of themes over its seven well-written chapters, including emotional identification with celebrities and their bodies, the ideology of fitness, teen films, makeover beauty culture, filmic treatment of large-sized women and a look at how some independent films are providing alternative body narratives for women. The author deftly weaves together psychological research, the voices of her students and patients, literary and film criticism, psychoanalysis, and political and economic perspectives into a coherent, sophisticated, compelling account.” — *New England Psychologist*


“This book ... brings a unique perspective, in that Fox-Kales weaves abundant examples from contemporary movies with the compelling stories she has heard from her patients ... The author’s vast experiences and knowledge in the treatment of eating disorders and her patients’ attempts to meet cultural expectations are well documented.” — *Journal of Family & Consumer Sciences*

“...an energetic, provocative invitation to witness the problematic effects everyday movies can have on the lives of girls and women ... Fox-Kales’ unexpected, witty turns-of-phrase carry the reader effortlessly through a series of chapters that provide thought-provoking examples of Hollywood’s messages.” — *Psychology of Women Quarterly*

“...the study delivers rich material for a critical history of normalization. It exposes a dominating body uniformity and corporeal political correctness, revealing a culture of lookism and weightism.” — *idrottsforum.org*

“...a thought-provoking, insightful, and well-written critique of Hollywood film and its impact on societal attitudes and beliefs about food, beauty, and weight ... This book may be a worthwhile teaching tool in

undergraduate or graduate courses that explore theories related to sociocultural or media influences.” — *Sex Roles*

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