

"This is my body...this is where I live."*



sense of self as a bodily-based, distinctive individual who matters. Ninety-five per cent of the eating disordered are women. Significant numbers of them (66% in one recent study by Roots and Fallen, 1986) are known to have been physically victimised, incest, sexual abuse, rape, battering, severe childhood punishment. On this very real basis, they experience themselves as ineffectual in relationships, unable to express their pain directly without risk of retribution, depicting in their flesh and in their eating patterns, what they cannot voice.

No one knows the percentage of women in the Western population who are anorexic or bulimic to some degree, but 90% of us, regardless of our shape, height or weight, overestimate our body size by 25%.

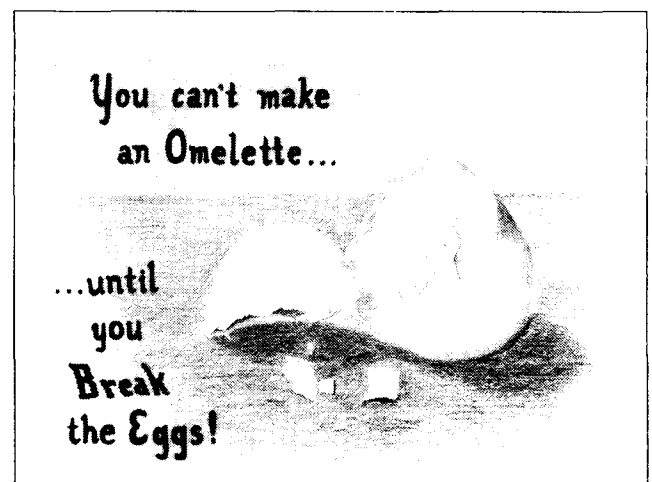
You may recognise yourself in this woman's face. And like the multiple personalities whose voices, modes of thought and written expression [see Margo Rivera's article, "Multiple Personality: An Outcome of Child Abuse," in this issue, p. 18] keep dislocated but intact their singular internal experiences, those eating disordered who stop their self deprivation and self harm, do—painfully—regain their joy and integrity.

—Eimear O'Neill

The artist is bound, unbirthed, ill cared for, and in terrifying isolation...shelled off from the touch, and the agony, of her day-to-day living in relationships with others. There is a crack in the brittle layer, in that control around the knowing held in her body. She is about to start recovering what is within the shell.

This self-representation [at left] was done at the beginning of Maria's twelve weeks in daily treatment for her anorexia, an intense painful process of taking in as much as she can of the available nourishment (food, information, daily patterns of relationship) on the unit at the Toronto General Hospital. She has been starving herself in relationships for a long time, not taking in what was there, her own internal responses and those of others. She has her reasons for that. Good reasons. When you don't feel the quality of your relationships, you avoid recognising what you are missing, the unavailability of what you want...and may need to survive as yourself.

Eating disorders are disruptions in one's core



This drawing is Maria's final gift to the unit at Toronto General Hospital.

*The words in the title are from Marcia Hutchinson's *Transforming Body Image* (New York: The Crossing Press, 1985), an excellent resource book for personal, individual or group work.