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The Other Side of Weight Loss:
A Lacanian Autoethnography of Weight-anxiety

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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New Zealand.

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Abstract

This thesis critically re-thinks the organisation of the weight loss industry using a psychoanalytic framework derived from the work of Jacques Lacan, including his discourse theory. Further, I develop critical methodology by focusing on my own experiences and culture. I do this by gathering and analysing autoethnographic data. The main findings of this thesis occur in three broad topic areas. First I re-conceptualise the unconscious processes of the weight-loss subject and subsequently re-focus on the weight loss industry's unconscious target: anxiety. Second I re-think the gender of the weight-anxious subject, moving past biology and hegemony to think psychoanalytically about those subjects who identify as weight-anxious. Third I tackle the ethics of the wider weight loss industry, critically analysing its capitalistic focus and suggesting instead an ethics based on the desire of the weight-anxious subject. Finally I attempt to look at my thesis in reflection, by concluding in line with Lacan's four discourses, finishing as the psychoanalyst might by placing the thesis on the couch.

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The Massey University Human Ethics Committee has given approval for this project, their letter is attached as appendix A.

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