

Burke, E. (2009). Pro-anorexia and the Internet: A Tangled Web of Representation and (Dis)Embodiment. *Counselling, Psychotherapy, and Health*, 5(1), The Use of Technology in Mental Health Special Issue, 60-81.



Pro-anorexia and the Internet: A Tangled Web of Representation and (Dis)Embodiment

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Abstract

This paper is an introductory discussion of the pro-anorexia movement and some of the questions it raises about representation. It links the emergence of pro-anorexia to a growing area of public debate about anorexia's relationship to the media and advertising industries. It argues that pro-anorexia exemplifies a complex and contradictory set of meanings about the cultural and subjective management of the female body in which notions of individual agency and empowerment are confused with those of social oppression and control. By addressing some of the problems raised by the use of fashion and advertising imagery on the websites ('thinspiration') it suggests that pro-anorexia participates in the same structures of power which feminists for a number of years have identified as sources of women's oppression and unhappiness. By interpreting pro-anorexia as a symptom of overwhelming cultural constraints on women's bodies, it raises a concern about the use of the internet as a technology which encourages 'disembodied' modes of communication. It suggests that if pro-anorexia can be interpreted as a symptomatic expression of cultural constraints we need to take care in considering the ramifications of censorship or enforcing further constraints upon its methods of representation.

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This paper is an introductory discussion of the pro-anorexia movement and some of the questions it raises about representation. I approach anorexia as a historically and culturally bound condition (DiNicola, 1990) and suggest that the promotional stance of the pro-anorexia movement has produced a range of tensions that disturb perceptions of anorexia as an illness and problematise its representation in the public domain. Since their appearance in the late 1990s, pro-anorexia websites have inspired a discourse of outrage and moral panic in the media, not only because they promote a favourable stance toward anorexia but because they challenge ideas about mental illness, aligning it more with the notion of volition than with involuntary suffering and pathology. Through their engagement with a range of discourses on body-management practices and the right-to-representation, the websites actively participate in public debates about the meaning of anorexia. They ask us to rethink the question of *who* controls its representation – clinicians, the media or the sufferers themselves? Despite the movement's active engagement with these ideas however, I argue that its methods of promotion – particularly through the use of the internet, the discourses it adopts and the promotion of images of extreme slenderness – often contradict the rhetoric of rights at the forefront of the movement. Pro-anorexia may be approached as a symptom of a culture that encourages the pursuit of unattainable forms of slenderness amongst young women and a discourse in which the immaterial world of representations is constructed as more

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seductive than the material. I suggest that whilst the pro-anorexia movement's claims to the right-to-representation ought to be respected, we must retain our focus on the bodies behind these claims as the dangerously contested sites of a very problematic femininity.

By way of putting some of the issues concerning representation into a historical perspective, an outline of what pro-anorexia websites are and where they have come from is imperative. 'Pro-anorexia' is an online community of anorectics consisting of a number of chatrooms and personal webpages. These sites serve a range of purposes: they provide support for anorectics who are not ready to seek help for recovery or engage in treatment, they offer information and advice on how to achieve and maintain anorexia often under the headings of 'tips and tricks' (these include advice on things from dieting, diet pills and exercise, to vomiting, ways of disguising symptoms and ways of thinking, or 'triggers' that help maintain anorexia); they also provide access to a range of photographs of slender, sometimes clinically anorexic women and celebrities used to inspire starvation titled 'thinspiration'. As a social movement, pro-anorexia employs a range of inter-textual strategies of narration to express its political concerns – from personalised webpages and blogs, to petitions, photographic galleries and interactive chatroom discussion sites. In these ways, pro-anorexia occupies a complex boundary between commentary and practice, it is both a meta-discourse and a lived anorexia.

In the early stages of the movement, the focus of the web-sites was on providing a space in which the experience of anorexia could be shared and openly discussed amongst sufferers. Some sites such as 'Makaylas Healing Place' are still committed to providing this kind of space. The sites do not directly encourage people to become anorexic, rather

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they are intended as a sanctuary for those already suffering the illness, a place where they can share their thoughts on anorexia away from the pressure of family or friends who may encourage or enforce recovery. Although the cultural meaning of anorexia has been the subject of much debate amongst feminists in recent decades (Bordo, 1993; Malson, 1998; McSween, 1993; Probyn, 1988), pro-anorexia is the first example of these debates extending to and being expressed collectively by sufferers themselves. In contrast to the 'recovery' story familiar to us through women's magazines (Cassimatis, 2000; Shepherd, 1993) or autobiographical accounts of anorexia such as those by Sheila McLeod (1981) or Kim Chernin (1981), pro-anorexia websites are the first example of anorectics discussing the illness in its immediacy without the benefits of hindsight or reflective analysis. Anorexia is discussed on the sites through discourses ranging from gothic or grunge narratives of death or 'wasted-ness' ('Emaciate Me' / 'I'm so Dead'), the quasi-religious narratives of eternal life ('Egyptian Ana's Temple of Life') or the more popular narratives of purity, perfectionism and self-control ('Perfect Illusion' / 'Ana's Angels'). Through such discursive mechanisms, anorexia is often depicted on the websites as a lifestyle that can be attained by adhering to certain codes of representation. The meaning of anorexia thus often exceeds the boundaries of clinical discourse that confine it to definitions of 'illness' and enters a much broader discursive field where it is problematically established as something both desirable and powerful. In this respect the internet not only facilitates group discussions about anorexia but through the immediacy of textual exchange, promotes a complex inter-textual language through which anorexic subjectivity is expressed and mediated.

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As the media's awareness of these sites has grown, pro-anorexia has become the subject of intense public scrutiny and its function increasingly entangled in moral and political debates about the right to representation, free speech, and internet usage. As part of a general backlash against the movement, some internet servers such as Yahoo! have chosen to ban or block the sites, and groups such as S.C.a.R.E.D (Support, Concern and Resources for Eating Disorders) and S.P.A.P. (Stopping Pro-Anorexia Promotion) were developed to persuade servers to shut them down (Pollack, 2003). Essentially, pro-anorexia sites have been seen, as idealised images of slenderness have themselves been seen for a number of years, as a danger to vulnerable young women and a threat to public health. As a result of this scrutiny, some sites now display warnings about their pro-anorexia content and provide forums to discuss issues related to recovery and treatment. Other sites even provide links to recovery sites or further information about anorexia, bulimia and other eating-related disorders.

As public concern about the sites developed, so too did the vehemence with which pro-anorexia asserted its political and personal messages. The content of the sites grew from subjective accounts of anorexia (in the daily chatroom or diary formats), to more political commentaries about the rights of anorectics to represent themselves and their rights to use the internet for doing so. This culminated in the appearance of menu headings such as 'mission statements' and 'background philosophy', which are expressed in militant language such as 'this is not a place for the faint-hearted, weak, hysterical, or those wanting to be rescued...this is a place for the elite' ('Ana's Underground Grotto') or in others verging on the religious language of eternal life – 'this site is for us rexies,

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who are proud of our accomplishments, and the accomplishments that lie ahead, we will never die' ('Rexia World'). This politicised rhetoric often sits uneasily alongside the more painful aspects of anorexia expressed in the autobiographical chatroom narratives, (www.livejournal.com) where feelings of frustration, anger and fear are often directed at the 'goddess' or 'mistress' ANA (or MIA in the case of pro-bulimia sites) and the experience of being anorexic is associated with personal trauma or tragedy.

One of the central difficulties of analysing pro-anorexia discourse is that, like anorexia itself, it is contradictory. Some sites claim anorexia is not an illness but a lifestyle choice ('Bluedragonfly'), whilst others identify it as an illness and derive a sense of pride and identity from it ('Cerulean Butterfly' / 'Starving for Perfection'). Some sites present anorexia as a pro-active method of achieving power and happiness, and others present it as a normalised and realistic attempt at achieving 'society's image of beauty that is forced upon us' (gopetition.com). In general, being 'pro-anorexic' involves seeing anorexia as a form of self-control, not self-destruction and playing an active role in defending its right to be represented in the public domain. The term 'pro-anorexia' is thus about both the right to *be* anorexic and the right to *represent* anorexia and the movement identifies these rights as sources of empowerment. By way of addressing how the notion of empowerment came to be so closely aligned with anorexia and approaching the questions it raises, we need to look at how anorexia itself has emerged as a central issue in public debates about slenderness and pressures on young women in the West. My focus in the following discussion is on how we might relate pro-anorexia to some recent media discourses about anorexia and how it positions itself in relation to them.

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The changing meaning of anorexia has been of interest to feminist scholars for a number of years (Bordo, 1993; Malson, 1998; Probyn, 1988; Spitzack, 1990). Some feminist approaches read anorexia as a metaphor for women's alienation resulting from the patriarchal oppression of women and women's bodies (Orbach, 1986; Wolf, 1990). Others, influenced by postmodern philosophies of the body see it as a problematic negotiation of contradictory discourses about femininity already existing within Western cultures (Bray and Colebrook, 1998; Lester, 1997; Probyn, 1988; Weiss, 1999). Interest in anorexia has not been restricted to critical theory however, and media discourses on anorexia have emerged in recent decades in the form of articles in women's magazines about the dangers of anorexia or the recovery story (Wright, 1998), commentaries on the promotion of waif-like models in the fashion industry in general-interest magazines (Couch, 1999) or the dangers of pro-anorexia websites themselves in the news media (Ashley-Griffiths, 2001).

From being perceived as a predominantly private psychological illness treated within the confines of the clinic or the family, it began to be identified in public debates throughout the 1990s as a condition bound to the culture of consumerism and in particular, to systems of representation that encouraged women to construct their identity by reducing their bodies and managing their appearance. Although these debates had begun earlier during the late 60s and 70s in response to fashion models such as Twiggy, it was not really until after the appearance of the 1980s supermodel, that the promotion of methods for controlling the female body, like dieting and exercise regimes became the targets of serious social comment. Feminist writers such as Susie Orbach (1986), Susan

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Bordo (1993) and Naomi Wolf (1990) began writing about the impact of the media's promotion of the slender ideal and linking it to rising rates of anorexia and bulimia in capitalist cultures. The impact of feminism was also starting to be felt in media discourses as anorexia was increasingly associated with the impact of consumer industries marketed directly at young women and a variety of cultural demands on the female body that were felt to be endemic to the West's approach to the body at large.

It was not until the early 1990s however, that the fashion of the highly controlled and sexualised 'supermodel' body was replaced by a waif-like body, exemplified by British models such as Kate Moss and Jodie Kidd. In what heralded the 'grunge' image, the underweight, pre-pubescent appearance of waif-models represented a kind of nonchalant, risk-taking subjectivity, far removed from the carefully managed gym-pumped body ideals of the 1980s. Although the fashion industry did not directly appropriate the clinical 'anorexic' body, both feminists and the media identified the waif-body as close enough to anorexic proportions as to be offensive and potentially dangerous to young women and girls who may aspire to achieve them.

As these debates about fashion and anorexia developed, a contradiction emerged between feminist demands to reject such extreme ideals of slenderness and media companies who continued to use the thin female body for marketing products and who sought to maintain a 'normative' idea of slenderness to do so. Although media commentaries about the waif often focused on the dangers of the fashion industry for both workers and consumers, they also effectively began marking out the boundaries of an 'acceptable' level of slenderness. In low-culture media publications such as

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Australia's *Who Weekly* or *NW* magazines, anorexia was constructed as a deviant form of slenderness, a problem of excessive conformity that was potentially 'contagious' amongst young women. Words and phrases used to describe the thin appearance of celebrities like 'horrific', 'appalling' and 'too thin' contributed to the growth of an intensely moralistic discourse on the anorexic body as it was deemed unfit for consumption and simply unacceptable to the public eye.

During this period the thin female body had become a site of contention, not only because its association with anorexia challenged the economies, not to mention the ethics of dominant industries such as fashion and dieting but because the social meaning of slenderness was no longer clear. Did 'thin' signify the success or failure of a woman? Did it mean that a woman was an 'individual' in control of her life or a victim of social pressures and not an individual at all? Through its association with narratives of pathology and anorexia, slenderness began to be seen during this period as a façade, an image of Woman that concealed hidden conflicts, both social and individual.

At a time when feminism was encouraging women to reject the pressure to be slim and embrace their bodies without weight loss or cosmetic alteration, this perceived crisis about slenderness and individuality accumulated around the figure of the female celebrity. Actresses like Calista Flockhart and Lara Flynn Boyle (who are now, along with Jodie Kidd and Kate Moss, favoured role-models in pro-anorexia's 'thinspiration' menus) were targeted by the media as suspect victims of anorexia and hounded as such for interviews about their diet, the pressure they experienced from directors, and their own personal histories. Through this intensified media attention, it was no longer possible

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to confine anorexia to the problems of the vulnerable consumer and it became embroiled in a variety of debates about women's freedom within systems of representation, success and individuality, and relations of power between women's bodies, images and the institutions that regulate them (Johnston, 1996; Michell, 2001). The meaning of anorexia within media debates thus moved beyond a strictly clinical register and became associated with the realms of power, gender and identity as it entered the zone of the 'social issue' as distinct from the 'individual illness'.

Pro-anorexia entered this arena of public debate around 1998 and challenged some of the boundaries that had previously governed approaches to both the experience of anorexia and its representation. The websites emerged as a kind of hybrid discourse on anorexia, a public forum that challenged the media's attempts to demonise anorexia and identify anorexic bodies as unacceptable for public consumption. Here was a form of anorexia in the highly public field of the internet in which there was apparently no question about whether or not the subjects were anorexic - they were and they were proud of it! In an attempt to challenge any interpretation of the anorexic as a victim of social pressures or 'unconscious' forces, pro-anorexia websites claimed "contrary to popular misconception, volitional anorectics possess the most iron-cored, indomitable wills of all. Our way is not that of the weak..." ('Ana's Underground Grotto'). Their concept of 'volitional' anorexia also attempted to challenge notions of anorexia as an illness, aligning it more with the concept of choice. As an internet-based movement, pro-anorexia also challenged ideas of anorexia as a solo or individual endeavour, claiming very clearly an allegiance with a larger collective, demanding the rights to social representation and

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participation in the public domain. By aligning itself with a discourse of rights, the movement began to represent an 'active' negotiation of discourses and meanings not just about femininity but also about anorexia itself.

Whether the communal aspect of pro-anorexia arose from the growth in public awareness of anorexia or the ensuing spread of interpretations is debatable but it did lend pro-anorexia a particular political voice that had not been heard before *en masse*. The media backlash against the sites became a target for this political voice, as the following pro-anorexia petition suggests:

'society says that supporting eating disorders is politically incorrect; yet clothing in most stores is sold in sizes 0-12, while the average American woman is a size 14....there is little done to protect the rights of women over the size of 12 for being harassed for her size, or anything done to change society's views of thinness and beauty. Until this changes we want our equal say about how to live with society's image of beauty that is forced upon us, and how we are attempting to attain that...'
(www.gopetition.com/online/855.html)

Clearly this is a statement about living with and negotiating the pressures of slenderness and the right to represent the outcome. The idea of anorexia as a protest (in the form of a 'hunger strike') against prescribed femininity is not a new one (Ellman, 1993; Orbach, 1986) but the methods by which this protest is carried out (i.e., self-starvation) are often seen as much self-effacing as self-affirming. In the case of pro-anorexia, the attempt to protect the right-to-representation is itself often diffused by the

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movement's use of the same structures of meaning that are the target of its protest. By looking more closely at the 'thinspiration' menus which promote slenderness through the consumption of photographs of slender femininity, we may go some way to untangling the complex web of contradictions that pro-anorexia presents as both a protest against and symptom of specific cultural pressures.

A standard feature of pro-anorexia websites is a menu titled 'Thinspiration' or 'Triggers' which presents images of slender models and celebrities, and sometimes photographs of clinically anorexic women as sources of inspiration. Images are selected from magazines and internet sites and used to promote or 'trigger' practices of self-starvation in visitors to pro-anorexia sites. The consumption of imagery is presented as having the power to support, and potentially produce anorexic behaviour and is a central part of the shared experience of being pro-anorexic. Images are shared between anorectics as sites encourage their users to send in their favourite thinspiration pictures, and they serve as a promotional device to attract other users to the sites.

In feminist literatures proving a psychological link between anorexia and the consumption of cultural imagery has been a troubled area of research, partly due to a desire amongst feminists to avoid theorising anorexia as a passive position or condition (Bray, 1996; Bray and Colebrook, 1998; Probyn, 1988; Spitzack, 1990). It is generally accepted however, that cultural images of slenderness and the widescale objectification of women in consumer cultures play a central role in subordinating women and manipulating their desires and behaviours. Carole Spitzack states: '(w)omen are socialized to view the ongoing surveillance of their bodies as a form of empowerment

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that arises from self-love....a greater proximity to feminine imagery within culture points to greater appreciation for oneself' (1990: 35). Whilst theorists have interpreted images of slenderness as a cultural mechanism for controlling the way women see themselves and their bodies, pro-anorexia actually demonstrates how this control is enforced and experienced. The space of the website enables the consumption of images to occur in a very selective way as girls may choose images, cut and paste them to share with those who visit the sites. The heading on one site reads 'everybody's ideal is different. Some of us like the chiselled look, some like the frail look, some just wanna see bones. Whatever your taste, hopefully you will find a picture here to trigger and motivate you' ('Ana's Underground Grotto'). Unlike the broader cultural concern that images of slenderness are available to all women and only those 'vulnerable' to their message may actually try to attain the perfection they promote, pro-anorexia foregrounds the pursuit of slenderness through consuming imagery as an accessible strategy and a definitive motivating force for self-starvation.

Although some sites claim the movement is a protest against the dominance of the slender ideal, 'thinspiration' suggests that this ideal is also the very fuel for anorexia. My concern here is that despite pro-anorexia's message about anorexia itself, the movement turns to the space of the image to articulate its messages and ultimately to encourage the embodied outcome of anorexia. In attempting to claim an identity or a voice for themselves, the image of slenderness is identified as a primary source of power. This contradictory attempt to claim power by adhering to a culturally dominant ideal aligns with Susan Bordo's view of the position of the eating disordered individual. She

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sees “eating disorders as arising out of and reproducing normative feminine practices of our culture, practices which train the female body in docility and obedience to cultural demands while at the same time being *experienced* in terms of power and control” (1993: 27). Elanor Taylor (2002) expresses a similar view but with particular reference to the language used on pro-anorexia sites. She states: ‘The softer sites use the language of ‘girl power’, the more militant sites use the language of Marx. Both display the horrific irony of women rendering themselves weaker in the name of strength.’ Pro-anorexia websites are contradictory spaces of both risk and confinement. They are characterised by an illusory rhetoric of power and regimes of strict rules which, although apparently ‘self-imposed’, conform to our understandings of the impact of social pressures on women to be thin. I suggest that if we can understand pro-anorexia as an example of the kind of ‘internalized forms of oppression that make (women) easier to control’ (Bartky, 1990: 51), we may be able to see it as a symptom of the same cultural climate from which feminists suggest anorexia arises in the first place where slenderness is equated with success and body reduction with control.

Despite pro-anorexia’s rejection of the victim tag and its insistence on seeing anorexia as a pro-active stance, its promotion of ‘thinspirational’ images exemplifies the paradoxical power promised to women through controlling their bodies and conforming to the slender ideal. I suggest that pro-anorexia participates in the same structures of power that produce dominant images of slenderness in the first place and which feminists for a number of years have identified as a source of women’s oppression and unhappiness. ‘Thinspiration’ thus tends to cancel out any legitimate claim to a ‘feminist

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stance' in the movement's demands for the right-to-representation and instead aligns it with discourses that seek to control women through 'promises of body liberation that in fact speak to powerlessness' (Spitzack, 1990: 36). Thinspiration may be approached as a crucial symptom of pro-anorexia that reveals the extent to which young women still identify the space of the object or image, at the expense of the body, as the only space in which they can articulate their subjectivity. As a broader cultural symptom, pro-anorexia exemplifies the extent to which idealising the slender female body continues to produce contradictions in women's sense of power, agency and control.

As an extension of the movement's concern with representations of body reduction, it is worth mentioning briefly here, that the internet itself may be seen as a seductive space in which communications between people are effectively 'disembodied'. The anorexic impulse to 'get rid of' or 'get away from' the body (Lester, 1997) is thus supported by the internet as a medium that promotes communication through the exchange of immaterial representations, as distinct from material bodies. Through its use of the internet, I suggest that pro-anorexia supports a form of communication that promotes the suppression of the body as a means of acquiring power and acceptability and exchanging ideas. In this sense, it actively supports the broader cultural devaluation of the material body and the divisive and potentially damaging binary codes of mind/body that recur in Western philosophical traditions. Jenny Sundén states that 'cyberspace is often described as completely disembodied – as a space unconstrained by the meaning and matter of the corporeal' (2003: 4). Similarly, Mark Lajoie suggests that the internet is a seductive space, because it promises to 'obscure or silence the problems involved in

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material existence, hiding them beneath an almost seamless wall of representations’ (1996: 167-8).

Through its use of imagery and the ‘dis-embodied’ space of the chatroom, pro-anorexia exploits the internet as a space which privileges the representational over the material body, and allows for communication effectively without or beyond bodies. In the play of inter-textual meanings and codes within pro-anorexia discourse, anorexia appears to belong more to the realm of representation than to the world of material bodies. What is perhaps most disturbing about visiting the sites is not that anorexia seems to have been subsumed by promotional narratives promising access to power but a complete absence of the bodies that are so crucially implicated in the discussion. I suggest that the questions this raises about the cultural value of the female body and the appeal of disembodied modes of communication that are *vital* to any discussion of anorexia are significantly more important than discussing whether the sites should be allowed to exist or not. It would also be interesting to find out whether such pro-anorexia groups exist ‘in the flesh’, that is on the ground within the community or whether they are restricted to the internet and the culture of cyber-talk.

In 1986, British therapist and writer Susie Orbach wrote of anorexia that it is ‘an attempted solution to being in a world from which at the most profound level one feels excluded, and into which one feels deeply unentitled to enter’ (1986: 103). Pro-anorexia seems to exemplify this particular paradox between feeling isolated from society and yet desperate to be allowed to take part in the world and be accepted. By way of conclusion, I want to stress that banning or censoring these sites may only intensify the sense of un-

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entitlement and exclusion that anorexia sufferers already painfully experience. Banning pro-anorexia websites seems a little like banning anorexia, the idea of it fuelled by a fear of allowing the disorder to enter a political or public domain.

Pro-anorexia raises crucial questions for us about the moral and political structures through which we control access to public representation and decide on *who* is granted that access. It asks us to consider the ways in which the meanings of mental illnesses such as anorexia are mediated by discourses of medicine or the media, and the extent to which anorexics themselves are granted access to methods of self-representation. On other levels, the fact that pro-anorexia actively encourages the consumption and pursuit of the slender ideal, should alert us to the ongoing prevalence of cultural constraints placed on young women's subjectivity. These constraints are enforced through a range of discourses, particularly those of the media and morality and apply to the management and presentation of the body. As a symptom of these constraints pro-anorexia points to the lack of access in our culture, to modes of female subjectivity that *do not* involve controlling, suppressing or sexualising the body. It also highlights the prevailing pressures on young women to see the successful 'management' or reduction of their bodies as the only way in which they can participate in public discourse and gain acceptability. Pro-anorexia challenges many boundaries that govern social acceptability but despite its many contradictions, it reminds us that young women's bodies are indeed political bodies, and that this becomes ever more crucial in their pathology.

The questions that pro-anorexia raises cannot be answered by discourses that promote further surveillance and censorship of the bodies and activities of young women.

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Rather than seeing pro-anorexia as a threat to the presumed 'safety' of the public domain, I suggest we need to see it as a disorderly discourse, arising directly from contradictions within the discourses it negotiates and the meanings of the bodies it affects. The growth in public discussion about consumer-related anorexia and now pro-anorexia websites forces us to reconsider how we distinguish 'normal' (or acceptable) from 'pathological' (or unacceptable) forms of femininity and who has the right, or the power, to represent them. Overall, pro-anorexia encourages us to rethink the kind of power that anorexia itself can generate in a culture where the female body remains a primary site for the marking out of moral boundaries *and* defining their transgression.

Vincenzo DiNicola (1990) has suggested that self-starvation is a 'historical chameleon' whose meanings and motivations change as our culture changes. At the beginning of this century, pro-anorexia prompts us to consider anorexia's changing relation to the interplay between power and femininity in the public field and the impact of such technologies as the internet on the meaning and experience of anorexia itself. As pro-anorexia represents anorexia as a complex and political form of identity I suggest that we might see the internet as an example of what Mark Seltzer has termed "the pathological public sphere" which is "everywhere crossed by the vague and shifting lines between the singularity or privacy of the subject, on the one side, and collective forms of representation, exhibition and witnessing on the other" (1997: 4). In its own contradictions and demands for representation, pro-anorexia asks us to rethink anorexia as a strategy for negotiating contradictory discourses and confronting the challenges that technologies like the internet present for us in understanding young women's immediate

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experience of their position in society, and the pressures they feel on their bodies and selves.

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REFERENCE NOTE The pro-anorexia websites mentioned in this article are not referenced here using standard APA format. The publication of this article is not meant to promote the use of any pro-anorexia websites nor promote censorship. Interested readers can make use of their standard internet search engines to identify current websites.