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iAnorexic: A Body Politics of Pro-Anorexia and Cyborgs

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Abstract

The pro-anorexia movement online is a topic of much contention in medical, psychological and public arenas. While psychology has located the source of Anorexia Nervosa within the individual, taking up a historically, socially and culturally contextual perspective enables an understanding of pro-anorexia through the genealogical examination of anorexia, women’s embodiment, social movements and technologies. What emerges is the production of a pro-anorexic cyborg, lived both metaphorically and literally by modern Western women experiencing anorexia. Examining the textual content of online pro-anorexia communities allows for a discursive analysis of the complex pro-anorexic voice. What this voice constructs is female embodiment characterised by multiplicity, contradiction, information, connection, blurred boundaries, disrupted dualisms, non-innocence, simulated consciousness and political resistance lived through a troubled, biologically restricted female body. Through the use of cyborg metaphor, this thesis argues that pro-anorexia online is fervent resistance to patriarchal femininity in a way that produces tolerable female embodiment.
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I would also like to thank my family for suffering through my anxieties. I have it on good authority that none of you really has any idea what this thesis is actually about, so happy reading.

I also wish to acknowledge the voices of the women included in this research. It was challenging for me to immerse myself in your online world; however, the challenges you face as you negotiate lived experience are important issues in need of illumination. Thank you for the intensity with which you fight for your representation.
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