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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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## **Introduction: Booting Up**

Anorexia nervosa is a startling disorder. It gives us a striking reminder of the body's intimate connection to the mind. We see an anorexic body (almost always a woman's anorexic body) and we understand it as a reflection of a disordered mind. The ways in which anorexia is talked about are changing as our knowledge changes. What seems to remain static is the direct association between anorexic bodies and anorexic minds. One is always influencing the other. Whether a woman is unhappy with her body, or her body is making her unhappy, constructions of anorexia focus on the individual woman's connection to her body and her mind.

This thesis, however, argues for a socially, historically and culturally located context for the emergence of anorexia nervosa as a female disorder. Reviewing the historical traces of anorexia in conjunction with the history of Western social movements and technological advancements, it is possible to understand women's experiences of anorexia, and the emergence of a controversial position such as the online pro-anorexia movement, as historically and socially inscribed embodiment.

The internet is a space teeming with controversial opinions. From heated debates between movie fans to academic articles, anyone with access to the internet can share their opinions. Few internet opinions have been more controversial than those of the pro-anorexic community. There is cyclical outrage at the presence of a 'pro'- 'mental illness' stance being celebrated in an unregulated arena. This outrage is followed by calls for the outlets of pro-anorexic opinion to be shut down and banned from the internet. More often than not, moral outrage wins the battle, with pro-anorexic communities being shut down and social networking websites amending their terms of service so as to banish pro-anorexia from their walls, blogs and forums. Pro-anorexia, however, inevitably pops back up on the internet's radar,

continuing the cycle of outrage, banishment and resurrection that characterises pro-anorexic presence in cyberspace.

Pro-anorexia, as with 'real-life' anorexia, shows remarkable resilience. Anorexia nervosa is a difficult disorder to treat, and now technological advancements have provided a space for what we know as 'pro-anorexia' to share its voice online. Thus far, pro-anorexia has proven as difficult to eradicate from the internet as in real-life clinical settings.

It could be argued that debating pro-anorexic presence on the internet is an unhelpful debate. Pro-anorexic communities exist online, despite continual site closures and intense moral outrage. Whether we believe pro-anorexic presence is right, wrong or indefinable, pro-anorexia is present.

What this thesis argues for is an understanding of pro-anorexia communities as functional for the women who participate in them. In the following chapter, I offer a genealogical examination of anorexia, Western social movements and technology in order to enable an understanding of the emergence of pro-anorexia on the internet. This genealogy traces the history of anorexia nervosa, mapping it alongside developments in social movements and technological advancements in Western society in order to account for the emergence of pro-anorexia as a particularly resistant construction of anorexia: a cyborg.

### **Literature Review: Mapping the Network**

Any discussion of women's experience lends itself to historical reflection. As Western women, we reflect upon times in our history when we fought against injustices. We look back and we see the women who came before us, and we think of the women in the future who will remember our struggles. Historical context is significant for women and their stories. It follows then to trace the emergence of anorexia, a decidedly female affliction, through the history of the Western world and the women who lived, and are living in it.

Foucault's concept of genealogy "allows us to constitute a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of that knowledge in contemporary tactics" (Foucault, Bertani, Fontana, Ewald, & Macey, 2003, p. 8). A genealogy unpacks a subject's history, bringing to the surface the power struggles that made the subject's emergence possible. Combining "reactivated historical contents alongside a set of dismissed, rejected knowledges" (Hook, 2005, p. 5) makes for a compelling and powerful form of critique. Genealogical work disrupts and fragments power-knowledge relationships, allowing alternative positions to emerge. Indeed, "genealogy's law as such is that we should never presume a subject, but opt rather to account for how it has come to be what it is" (Hook, 2005, p. 20). In this chapter, the emergence of pro-anorexia as political resistance is accounted for by examining the power-knowledge relationships that have shaped women's lived experiences across Western history.

### **Anorexia Nervosa**

The first documented incarnation of what we now consider to be disordered eating were the fasting saints, the miraculous girls or holy anorexics of the 16<sup>th</sup>

century. From the 16<sup>th</sup> century, through to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, medieval ‘holy anorexics’ or fasting saints sought moral and spiritual perfection by denouncing their bodily desires, reducing their bodies to sexless, non-reproductive vessels unsuitable for conventional life (Gordon, 2000; Parry-Jones, 1985). These women starved themselves, while generously giving to others and devoting their lives to God (Gordon, 2000). It has been theorised that, as well as proving their piety, fasting saints were rebelling against the traditional weak and vulnerable female role by joining the monastery as a sign of strength and agency (Silverstein & Perlick, 1995). As a result of this rebellious dedication, fasting saints were revered by their friends, families and sympathisers, but were closely monitored by the gaze of the male clergy (Gordon, 2000). Women were not acceptable religious leaders and the clergy were wary of these women’s aspirations of spiritual enlightenment.

As secularisation increased in the Western world through the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, fasting saints no longer justified their fasting in religious terms (van 't Hof, 1994). Without religious justification, starving girls came to the attention of the medical profession and self-starvation became pathologised as a form of hysteria. The miraculous fasting girls had become ‘hysterical women’ by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, hysteria became the default diagnosis for any physical or emotional issue that a woman exhibited (Gordon, 2000; Malson & Nasser, 2007). Whereas previously, the behaviour of fasting saints could be understood in terms of their religious devotion, doctors were unable to find physical or physiological pathology underlying women’s hysteria despite the somatic symptoms, including weight loss (Gordon, 2000). Doctors began gathering psychological evidence for what had been termed ‘hysteria’, however many believed

that hysteria did not exist due to the lack of biological and physiological evidence. Thus, the medical profession believed that most women were ill in some way, as sickness, weakness and emotionality was inherent in femininity, compared to the strength and vitality associated with the masculinity of men (Bartky, 1998; Grosz, 1987; van 't Hof, 1994). Hysteria “was the exaggeration of idealized womanliness” that contained within it a damning critique of ‘normal’ femininity and female bodies (Orbach, 2005, p. 6). Women’s ‘hysterical’ illness came to be defined by the supposed instability and inherent unhealthiness of femininity and women’s bodies.

In France in 1873, psychiatrist Ernest-Charles Lasègue wrote an article describing emaciation from reduced food intake, constipation, menstrual irregularities, mental restlessness, nervousness and physical hyperactivity in eight young women (van 't Hof, 1994). He could not find any physical cause for these symptoms and assumed the illness to be hysterical, naming it ‘anorexie hystérique.’ The following year, in England in 1874, Sir William Gull, a physician, described the same symptoms in two young women . He proposed that the disorder be called ‘anorexia nervosa’, because the disorder could also occur in men (recalling the assumption that only women could be ‘hysterical’). The clinical observations made by these two men have been credited as the first clinical descriptions of what has become known as Anorexia Nervosa.

Nineteenth century conceptualisations of anorexia focused on the significance amenorrhea and emaciation as physical symptoms of illness (Silverstein & Perlick, 1995). The widely held belief was that amenorrhea caused emaciation and that fertility problems were at the heart of this illness for women. Furthermore, anorexia was presented as “a reflection of the failure of individual young upper-class and middle-class women to move without fuss into their pre-ordained marital and

domestic roles” (Hepworth & Griffin, 1995, p. 70). So-called hysterical illnesses such as anorexia were constructed as an indication of a young woman’s inability to cope with the stress of their domestic roles (Orbach, 2005). What emerges is a construction of women’s mental illness as highly emotional and irrational, and connected to their failure to execute traditional femininity.

From the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century through to the 1930s, anorexia did not hold much prominence in the medical or psychological industry. Gordon (2000) suggests that this could be a result of a shift within the medical community to emphasise and prioritise physiological and biological evidence of illness, such as disturbances in the endocrine system. It had been difficult for doctors to find physiological causes for anorexia, so this shift in medical thinking again shunted anorexia under the spotlight of a different field of expertise. Significantly, the dominance of psychoanalysis in the 1940s helped shift thinking about anorexia from biological deficiency to a psychological, mental and emotional issue for women. While psychoanalytic theorisations of anorexia were not without controversy, the renewed focus on the psychological issues of the illness allowed dramatic advances in theoretical and practical understandings of the illness.

In 1973, Hilde Bruch became an influential figure in the theorisation of anorexia nervosa in psychiatry. She connected the ideas about body weight, body shape, the functions of eating and psychological conflict (Gordon, 2000). She also argued that anorexia as an illness must be viewed in the context of the entire family dynamic and the anorexic’s personality. She claimed that anorexia was characterised by distorted body image, misperception of the appearance of the body, a sense of ineffectiveness and an inability to identify and attend to needs states (from hunger to emotional needs). Bruch stated that these deficiencies are rooted in childhood, but as

the child moves into adolescence (and is expected to become more competent and autonomous), psychological conflict arises. Such a shift in theorisation changed the way in which we spoke about anorexia. Positioning women with anorexia as part of a wider family dynamic offered a new position for these women, produced through psy-discourse (Rose, 1996). Thus far, anorexia and its lived effects are emerging as socially, historically and culturally located constructions.

Bruch's work with and for women with anorexia brought the medical profession and public attention back to anorexia. With renewed medical interest, public interest and financial possibilities, the business of anorexia boomed in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s (Gordon, 2000). The mass media glamorised and popularised extreme thinness and, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, "the spectacle of a young woman starving herself, sometimes to death, was enough to command intense practical and theoretical medical interest" (Gordon, 2000, p. 3). To illustrate, in the 1970s and 1980s, the increase in the number of patients and demand for care for these patients led to an increase in care facilities, treatment programs and specialists. In addition, the *International Journal of Eating Disorders* was established in 1982. Anorexia became a moneymaking industry for those who were in positions of power, such as the doctor, the psychologist, the psychiatrist, the author and the entrepreneur. However, in the 1990s, these services and businesses declined and self-help groups became more popular as a care option for anorexics (Gordon, 2000). Gordon does not offer an explanation as to why this happened; however, the 1990s was a decade in which various social changes came into effect, such as a shift to a medical model that promoted personal responsibility for health, and at the same time there was an increased social acceptance of the thin ideal. It is also unclear if the incidence of anorexia at this time did actually increase, or whether this anorexia

boom was a function of increased medical, media and public fascination. There were multiple events and movements occurring simultaneously during this historical period. Anorexia had quickly risen to prominence as a business tool, but was just as quickly dropped from the economic spotlight. Discourses were shifting rapidly, and along with them the positions that women experiencing anorexia, and women in general, were permitted to occupy within the discourses.

In 1980, the American Psychological Association included Anorexia Nervosa in the third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (van 't Hof, 1994). Criteria for the disorder included a weight loss of 25% of original body weight, refusal to maintain normal body weight, intense fear of becoming obese, body image disturbance and no known physical pathology that would account for the weight loss. In 1987, the criteria were revised to include amenorrhea, a concrete and measurable biological symptom that explicitly links female biology with mental disorder. With the intense scrutiny on anorexia nervosa in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the relationship between the healthiness of the physical body to thoughts, feelings and fears had been made explicit, producing the object (women experiencing anorexia) as both feminine and as emotionally disordered. Anorexia nervosa had become constructed as a legitimate mental illness, with quantifiable psychological, behavioural and biological markers.

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR), in order to meet the criteria for anorexia nervosa, a person must refuse to maintain their 'normal' body weight (under 85% of expected body weight based on height); have an intense fear of becoming fat or gaining weight; have a distorted body image; and have amenorrhea (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Contemporary anorexia nervosa is characterised by a refusal to eat, a

preoccupation with food, distorted body image and self image, radical mind/body splitting, isolation, a sense of superiority, suppression of sexuality and secondary sexual characteristics and an identification with masculinity while rejecting femininity (Heywood, 1996). This characterisation of anorexia contains the remnants of many theorisations from its past, including tensions between femininity/masculinity and mind/body dualisms. The history of anorexia is embedded within our current (and, indeed, any) conceptualisation of the disorder.

**Psychological explanations.** Psychological theorisations of anorexia are vast and varied. Each conceptualisation of the disorder draws upon and privileges certain discourses and methodologies. Thus, any given theorisation will construct ‘anorexia nervosa’ in a particular way. Biological and medical approaches, while not strictly psychological, locate faulty biology as the source of anorexia. Psychoanalytic perspectives have constructed anorexia as developmental conflict (Caskey, 1986; Gordon, 2000; Lelwica, 1999; MacSween, 1993), whereas cognitive-behavioural approaches have focused on faulty thoughts and learned behaviours (Bruch, 1978; Lelwica, 1999; MacSween, 1993). Identity theories of anorexia have constructed anorexia as a coping strategy (Bruch, 1978; Gordon, 2000). The family systems approach is interested in family dynamics (Bruch, 1978; Caskey, 1986; Gordon, 2000; Lelwica, 1999; MacSween, 1993). Multifactorial models consider biological, familial, psychological and socio-cultural factors when theorising anorexia. Each of these perspectives offers different constructions of anorexia and proposes different intervention strategies to help those they identify as being ‘anorexic.’

The psychological field is in a constant state of flux, continuously sifting through new and old knowledge. As such, constructions of anorexia nervosa have not remained static. As women over history can attest, what counts as psychological

knowledge changes through the discipline, over time and across cultures. Perhaps the only aspect of psychological research that has remained static is the dominance of the psy-discourse.

Psychological discourse has dictated how anorexia has been constructed and the positions that women with eating disorders can take up. Changes in knowledge (and what counts as knowledge) have changed the meaning of and the approaches to anorexia. What unifies psychological approaches to anorexia is the production of anorexia as psychopathology located within the individual. The individual is considered faulty and abnormal, thus the 'cure' also lies within the individual. This locates women with anorexia as the sources and controllers of the disorder, and their inability to let themselves be 'cured' is constructed as resistance. This construction of anorexia dismisses the complexities of the social power relations that are at play in the emergence of anorexia for the individual and how the disorder is produced as a psychological concept.

**Sociocultural conditions.** Feminist sociocultural theorisations of anorexia have argued that the emergence of anorexia is socially, culturally and historically located as resistance to asymmetrical gender power relationships in the West (Gordon, 2000; Lelwica, 1999; MacSween, 1993).

The social rewards for losing weight and being a thin woman in Western society can make a woman feel noticed, valued and powerful (Bruch, 1978; Gordon, 2000). Similarly, the personal rewards that women experiencing anorexia receive from mastering their bodily desires, demonstrating control and participating in Western femininity also reinforce women's weight loss and dietary restriction, as well as confirming a sense of superiority over other women who cannot master their desires (Bruch, 1978; Gordon, 2000). Furthermore, the early stages of anorexia (the

weight loss) are glamorised, praised and encouraged. It is only in the latter stages (emaciation, social withdrawal) that the same woman is considered sick and her body revolting. The boundary between healthy female bodies and sick female bodies is blurred by this simultaneous glamorisation and pathologisation of women's bodies.

What this illustrates is how women's body shape is intricately tied to their social worth and overarching societal values. Indeed, the "internal violence that becomes anorexia is dependent on three fully functioning bodies: the ghost body (body image, what we perceive our bodies to be); the real body (biological); and the ideal body (the body image we hold in theory as an ideal that we would like our bodies to become)" (Heywood, 1996, p. 9). Moreover, we "privilege our ideal bodies over the real to create the ghost" (Heywood, 1996, p. 9). The body is constructed as something that can be moulded by the mind. Thus, "the anorexic's grotesquely reduced body can also be seen as an implicit critique of the absurdity of the cultural obsession with body shape" (Gordon, 2000, p. 204). Western medical discourse has positioned anorexics as the owners of their anorexia problems (Lock, Epston, Maisel, & de Faria, 2005). However, the biomedical construction of anorexia does not hold medical discourse, societal and technological advances and political movements to account for their roles in shaping the female body and mind. By achieving the thin ideal, anorexics are highlighting and critiquing the ways in which their bodies and their lives are both created by and oppressed by Western culture. By looking at social and cultural movements in Western society, the emergence of anorexia nervosa can be explained as a socially, culturally and historically located construct, with lived effects.

Any theoretical approach to anorexia nervosa constructs the disorder in certain ways (Malson, 1998). Whether theorising anorexia from a medical, psychological or feminist perspective, the way in which the disorder is talked about will shape the positions available to anorexics and will privilege some forms of knowledge and power over others.

### **Social Movements**

**Medicalisation.** The move to Western secularisation and medicalisation is the first social shift that significantly influenced the history of anorexia. The move away from religion and towards secularism changed the way self-starvation was constructed. In the West,

between 1750 and 1840, human behaviour, including fasting became perceived as a representation of personality, personal motives, feelings or problems. As a result, fasting became meaningful without an audience: it became meaningful for an individual, as an expression of individual problems or feelings. (van 't Hof, 1994, p. 81)

Before the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the collectivistic religious culture dictated that people thought of themselves through their communities and through their religion. However, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, social roles shifted and individualism prevailed, leading us to emphasise our inner lives. This shift to individualism is linked to increased secularisation and capitalism. There was growing competition for changing social roles and economic opportunities, therefore social roles became differentiated. People no longer worked for the greater good of their communities, but instead worked for personal social and financial status. In addition, as the sense of community waned, so did religious belief, leading immediate experience and inner

life to become prominent. Our inner selves became the core of our existence and our actions became expressions of this core.

Thus, the shift away from Western religious roots changed the way in which we perceived ourselves and experienced our bodies. By the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the brain was believed to be the source of mental life (van 't Hof, 1994), which changed the nature of social interactions. From the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, people had to rely upon one another socially and economically, creating a social world in which we needed to be able to anticipate other people's actions, reactions, thoughts and feelings, while also enduring increased scrutiny over our own actions. This social shift led to a need for greater impulse control and conscious emotional regulation. Therefore, "because of the suppression of the emotional, behavioural *impulse*, its *psychological* experience gained significance: rather than acted-out behaviour, emotions became internal experiences" (van 't Hof, 1994, p. 82). According to Nettleton and Watson (1998), we could "no longer hang on to, or derive our identity from our traditional place in society – be it class, family, gender, or locality" (p. 6), but instead had to construct our identities based on our social interactions with others.

Moreover, this shift to internal life changed people's physical appearance. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, physical appearance, such as clothing, reflected your social position (van 't Hof, 1994). However, the shift in emphasis from community to inner emotional life saw the meaning of clothing shift from representational of social rank to representational of individuality. That is, your external appearance was viewed as the expression of your inner self. This shift then transferred from clothing to the physical body. Moving through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, women's clothing was being designed to compress the body and give the illusion of thinness (Schwartz, 1986). In

addition, clothing such as voluminous dresses and bloomers gave the illusion of physical lightness of the body. At the same time, women's stomachs were associated with sexual functioning. Thus, women's weight, body shape and reproductive functioning were linked to the stomach and its desires, and clothing was being used to constrict those very stomachs. Prior to this shift to individualism and internal life, "a body characteristic such as thinness had never had any particular meaning, but now signified something about the person inside the body" (van 't Hof, 1994, p. 85). While previously, thinness had indicated a lack of access to food, or poverty, the shift to individualism ensured that an individual's body would now be constructed as a reflection of the inner self.

During the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, medical profession also took advantage of the shift towards secular individualism. At this time, little was known about the heart and heart attacks, except for the observation that many sudden deaths occurred in the obese (Schwartz, 1986). These sudden deaths caused public panic and fat became associated with the fragility of human life and the target of the medical industry.

Furthermore, as social life was now rooted in private experience, medical discourse began to emphasise the individual as the source of illness and health. Prior to 1850, medicine focused on classifying diseases rather than identifying the causes (van 't Hof, 1994). The shift to individualism focused the medical professions attention on finding and fixing illness, rather than simply categorising and treating symptoms.

Thus, secular individualism, mortality panic and medical pressure brought forth a 20<sup>th</sup> century characterised by the fear of fat. According to Schwartz (1986),

Between 1901 and 1941, overweight would be statistically implicated with death, the range of acceptable weight would be narrowed, and the typical weight gains of middle age would be declared unsafe. Obesity, and its desires, became an assassin, a

sharpshooter with an eye for numbers. The pound markings on the scale assumed an earthly power they never had before. (p. 155)

Weight was specifically connected to medical health, as being weighed became a routine aspect of a visit to the doctor. Furthermore, counting calories became popular in the 1910s and was a way to directly measure food intake and energy output, making food and weight easier to monitor. In the early 1900s, the medical profession, through articles in the *British Medical Journal*, supported the theory that thoroughly chewed food ensured that the digestion system would flow cleanly. This dieting suggestion appeared at a point in European history when there was great concern for the congestion of the public sewer system and personal hygiene. These hygiene fears were reflected back upon the body. During this time, both the medical and psychological professions offered their services to the over-weight. That is, the medical profession offered treatments that could assist weight loss, while psychologists devised psychological techniques and support groups to help the over-weight lose weight and stop over-eating.

Interestingly, the first ‘ideal weight’ charts were developed for men in 1942, by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company (McKinley, 1999). This placed pressure on people to maintain their weight so as to be entitled to the best healthcare they could afford. Weight loss and physical maintenance was becoming a booming financial industry. From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, health professionals and the health industry have decided the ‘normal’ ranges for body size, weight and shape and “the rigid demarcation of ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ serves political and ideological functions” (MacSween, 1993, p. 238). Constructing fat as an evil epidemic supported (and continues to support) the medical industry (Gordon, 2000; Malson, 1998). By

the 1970s, health officials were adamant that thinness was preferable to any form of fat on the body (McKinley, 1999).

**The culture of slimming.** These shifts in the medical profession's attitude towards fat also changed societal attitudes towards fat and obesity. In the middle ages, obesity was a marker of affluence and power, as the rich and powerful did not need to work and were able to afford large quantities of the finest food (Gordon, 2000). Conversely, thinness was a sign of poverty. In the 1800s, plentiful supplies of food in America led to the belief that an abundance of food was important (Stearns, 1999). This, in turn, led to the belief that a successful family was one that provided an abundance of food for its children. A successful mother was one who was able to provide large, well-cooked meals for her family. A thin child represented poverty, poor childcare, poor mothering and an unsuccessful family. The over-feeding of children was not a concern at this point in time, because children were required to walk everywhere and help with the daily running of the household. The levels of physical activity required from children compensated for their high caloric intake. Furthermore, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the 'specialness' of children became prominent in the American family values system. Thus, a child's every whim was accommodated and every desire satiated. It should be noted that while, during the 1800s, fat in children was an acceptable marker of exemplary parenting, fat in adults was becoming a signal of gluttony. Here we see constructions of 'good' and 'bad' parenting in the everyday task of feeding a family. If you were overweight, you were over-fed and under-worked: a lazy glutton. If you were underweight, your mother was not doing her job.

Since the 1880s, Western thinness ideals have become narrower and narrower (Schwartz, 1986). It is interesting to note that, in the late 1800s, due to

technological advancements, Americans sought to master efficiency and flow. Transportation, economic strategies, scientific methods and even dance and the arts became more streamlined and efficient. This led to the idea that “the best body would be an aerodynamic body, curved but slender, controlled but light” (Schwartz, 1986, p. 80). While, at the time, such a body was desired for planes and vehicles, the idea was soon transferred onto the human body. Similarly, the preference for the buoyancy and lightness of earlier technology had been replaced with a greater appreciation and demand for balanced technology. Unnecessary weight became a burden that could cause imbalance and inefficiency. According to Schwartz (1986), this shift in kinaesthetic values in American society was critical to the development of the culture of thinness. Thus, while children of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were protected with a fatty layer of ‘specialness’, adults of the time admired the sleek efficiency of new technologies and were reflecting this admiration back on to their own bodies. Chubby ‘eat-all-you-want’ children needed to become sleek, restrained adults.

With this shift to an appreciation for streamlined, efficient technology, the Western life style became more sedentary, as we used faster vehicles to move around and had more machinery to work on our behalf and therefore more time to relax (Gordon, 2000). For example, by the beginning of the 1900s, school hours had increased and, as children were spending more of their time sitting in a classroom, activity levels dropped (Stearns, 1999). These children were still be feed large amounts of food, but performing fewer household chores and doing less physical activity in general.

Furthermore, with changes in social life ranging from the increased use of bicycles for transportation, to the faster speed of photographic cameras, to advances in optometry, women’s clothing was becoming lighter and less voluminous

(Schwartz, 1986). Men's clothing, from the 1860s onwards, was loose enough to hide their bodies; however, women's clothes became tighter and the shape of their bodies more visible. There was less clothing for women to hide their bodies behind and more of their bodies on public display. In addition, in the late 1800s, pre-made factory clothing made body size important. When, in the past, women had tailored their own clothing to fit their own bodies, pre-made clothing now dictated what size their bodies needed to be. New machinery had streamlined the manufacture of garments, leading to the production of mass-produced, generic shapes and clothing sizes that would become the modern fashion industry. Technology was shaping the female body.

Thus, in the late 1800s, fat bodies went out of fashion, and thin bodies became the symbols of social power and moral order (Schwartz, 1986). As previously mentioned, technological advances lead to an appreciation for efficiency. This, in turn, led to an increase in mass-produced items and an abundance of consumables. In societies where food was scarce, obesity was desired and respected, as fatness indicated that one was successful enough to acquire more food than they needed (Gordon, 2000). Conversely, in affluent societies, thinness was becoming a symbol of higher social status and power, while obesity is "déclassé" (Gordon, 2000, p. 144). For those in lower socioeconomic groups, the cheapest food available was usually high in calories and low in nutritional value. However, for those in higher socioeconomic groups, there was more access to not only more nutritionally valuable food, but also to more education about healthy food and lifestyle choices, as well as greater financial capacity to aspire to aesthetic standards. Fatness was constructed as bad, unhealthy, poor and uneducated. This was reinforced during the 1929 Depression, as "there was no room anymore, coming out of the Depression, for a

comfortable cushion of fat at any age” (Schwartz, 1986, p. 159). Given the widespread financial ruin, people simply could not afford the necessities of life, let alone the luxury of plentiful meals. The Depression confirmed to Western society that “the body, like the economy after 1929, could not be trusted to regulate itself” (Schwartz, 1986, p. 200). The affluence, success and social power that fat once represented was now represented by the thin. This began an era of significantly increased dietary and body monitoring.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, dieting was considered an “act of internal regulation, the balance and control of desire” (Schwartz, 1986, p. 96). The point of eating became to satisfy yourself without over-eating. There was a sense that you should not over-consume just because you were able to. Much like the technological advancements of the time, responsibility for balance, control and regulation of food intake to maximise efficiency was placed on individuals.

While the class divides of fat/poor and thin/rich had been sowing the seeds for the morality of body weight since the early 1880s, World War II solidified the idea that body weight in Western culture would be closely linked to individual morality. During World War II, fat became unpatriotic, selfish and immoral as food became rationed (Schwartz, 1986). Individual body weight had personal, social, national and international significance. The body as machine began to appear, where efficiency and balance were vital qualities of soldiers, the economy and mass-production. Lean, efficient strength unburdened by excess was to be masculine, heroic and socially (and politically) valuable.

Post World War II, saw the emergence in the West of an obsession with the dieting necessary to achieve hard, lean, controlled thinness as an expression personal health responsibility (Gordon, 2000; Seid, 1994). Much like for the affluent fat

families of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the social climate of the Second World War constructed body weight as a moral issue in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Fat represented unpatriotic immorality and the weak-willed enemy that had to be obliterated by the lean, efficient, controlled force of the West.

At this time, representations of fatness emerged as individual responsibility for laziness, lack of self-control, lack of cognitive ability and immoral behaviour (Gordon, 2000; McKinley, 1999; Saukko, 1999). Thinness represented attributes of morality, intelligence, self-restraint, strength, beauty, commitment and virtuosity (McKinley, 1999; Reischer & Koo, 2004). Dieting became a moral issue, demonstrating self-control over bodily desires in a time of consumerism and abundance (Stearns, 1999). The physical body came to represent the individual person who lived within it, blurring the boundary between the body and the mind.

As the Western world moved into consumerism, eating became constructed as a physical bodily desire, and the weight of adolescents and children had exceeded a moral limit of tolerance (Schwartz, 1986). Bodyweight was no longer an adult issue; the moral representation of fatness was inscribed onto the bodies of children leading to a moral panic about obesity. If fat represented the enemy of virtuous health, it was imperative that our children were thin, lean and representative of Western superiority.

The culture of thinness also permeated the food industry. From the 1960s onwards, the 'lite' food and 'diet' food industry had burgeoned (Schwartz, 1986). The weight loss industry, with its programmes and methods, drugs and products, became an economic juggernaut. The rewards of thinness and success were a balance of hard work, and the right product (Heywood, 1996).

The fashion industry informed us that thin bodies look better in good clothes, and since those clothes needed to sell, thin bodies were employed to display them (Gordon, 2000). Advances in cosmetic surgery ensured that women could have both thin waists and large breasts. Women's bodies were constructed as commodities and business ventures. Manic consumerism had created a world in which weight management and dieting became "a way of managing surplus. The less confident we are of our ability to manage surplus, the more we turn to dieting, that is, trying to fool ourselves that we can have (and handle) everything by consuming nothing" (Schwartz, 1986, p. 306). If we desire the socially acceptable body, we must use diets and exercises as tools to achieve it (Germov & Williams, 1999). We must, in effect, buy back into the very consumerism that leads us to restrict ourselves in the first place.

It is in these ways that the thin ideal is promoted by industries, institutions and technologies that benefit (in terms of power and economics) from it (Germov & Williams, 1999). The dieting, fitness and cosmetic surgery industries have helped us, and indeed implored us, to shape our bodies as virtuous subjects of a Western political economy that resonates with patriotism.

**Technology and the internet.** Since the late 1800s, the Western love affair with efficiency has led to advances in technology that have significantly changed the ways in which we live our lives. As already mentioned, the late 1800s and early 1900s were characterised by overproduction and under-consumption (Schwartz, 1986). Fat was associated with awkwardness, imbalance, inefficiency and lack of control.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, technological advances in transport, domestic life and the arts led to excesses and over-production, as well as decreasing our physical activity

(Gordon, 2000). Where once we would have walked to the store or grown our own vegetables, we would now drive and buy fast food. Technological advancements in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century led to the valuing of speed, smooth motion, which in turn led us to strip everything down to its essential parts to achieve maximum, efficient functioning (Seid, 1994). We wanted to move around faster but expend less energy. In addition, with new methods of communication, such as, radio, television, magazines, movies and the internet, we have been able to compare and contrast ourselves to one another more than ever before (Gordon, 2000). In the consumer-driven, electronic age of the 1990s, technology and its images became more and more important in our lives. We can see and judge what other people are doing and compare those images to our own lives.

The internet, perhaps more so than any other recent technological advancement is impacting on our lives and social interactions in increasingly complex ways. The first incarnation of the internet appeared in 1969 in the United States and by 1998, over one hundred million people had regular access to the internet (Wertheim, 1999). Since then, the internet has become necessary to processes of globalisation. A wide range of people, young and old, across racial and cultural categories have access to the internet, and, for those who can afford it, the internet widens access to resources (Katz & Rice, 2002). In the Western world, the internet touches so many facets of our lives, changing the way we work, entertain ourselves, communicate and negotiate our social worlds.

Western technology has been moving towards more and more efficient and streamlined designs. From sewage systems to mobile phones, the technology continues to get smaller, lighter and freer from the burden of excess weight. According to Silverstein and Perlick (1995), “modern industrial societies place a

great deal of emphasis on novelty, newness, originality” (p. 27). Thus, for the last century, we have been striving for the next newest, lightest, smallest invention that can perform any function we desire it to. This represents maximum intelligence within minimum physical space. These ideas have resonated with Western attitudes towards the physical body. The body has been constructed in a machine-like manner, able to be streamlined, tuned-up and made compact. Embodiment through the internet moves a step beyond this construction of the body. Essentially, the internet allows for a user to be almost free of the burden of their body (Burke, 2009). Internet users are at maximum efficiency, their minds streamlining information directly into the vast spaceless space of the internet. Using the internet is the closest we can get to existing without the burden of a body, at this point in time.

Technology “has been viewed as a salvific force, a key to a better, brighter, more just world” (Wertheim, 1999, p. 286). It is clear that “one way to demonstrate our power and our control is to keep our own bodies in line. We may not be able to master our destinies, but we can master our bodies” (Kilbourne, 1994, p. 402). This is particularly important for the contemporary internet culture, as “the boundaries between our physical and our technological bodies are shifting more rapidly” (Nettleton & Watson, 1998, p. 6). This is particularly important for modern women and speaks to the larger issues the world is facing, such as climate change and 2012/Y2K ‘doomsday’ mentalities. We have grown more aware of the fragility of our physical world and we are desperately afraid of it and desire nothing more than to control it, maybe even transcend it. It is clear that “people will only adopt a technology if it resonates with a latent desire” (Wertheim, 1999, p. 29). The wide-reaching spread and popularisation of the internet typifies the Western obsession with eliminating the physical world in favour of “some sort of collective mental

arena” (Wertheim, 1999, p. 233). This tension between technology and body is now, more than ever, at the centre of our lives.

**Gynoids: Anything that resembles a woman.** As anorexia is a disorder that manifests itself almost exclusively in women, it is important to look at how these social shifts have contributed to the changing social positions of women and thus the emergence of anorexia nervosa.

In 18<sup>th</sup> and 19 century bourgeois families, young girls were discouraged from pursuing academic or physical advancement, and encouraged to spend their time preparing for marriage and motherhood (van 't Hof, 1994). During this time, women and girls were encouraged to eat more so as to develop and maintain a curvaceous, maternal figure (McKinley, 1999). However, women began gaining more access to education in the 1870s and this led to more women becoming dissatisfied with traditional female roles; parents of daughters worrying that educating them would lead to these women abandoning the traditional family; and men fearing the female competition for their jobs (van 't Hof, 1994). Women’s increased access to education from 1865 onwards radically changed Western society. Interestingly, this is the same time period when both Gull and Lasègue were ‘discovering’ anorexia nervosa.

Furthermore, the rise in hysteria in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century has been attributed to the dramatic social changes taking place for women, as Western society moved into the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Gordon, 2000). By the early 1900s, women gained more independence by working outside the home and becoming more physically active (McKinley, 1999). This newfound female independence provided the conditions for the Women’s Rights movement to emerge and occupy political space.

Significantly, the women's rights movement utilised self-starvation to highlight the violation of women's rights. For example, in the early 1900s, women in English prisons went on hunger strikes to protest against their babies being taken from them by the prison authorities (Schwartz, 1986). The prison authorities used psychological force, such as clamping women's jaws and force-feeding them via feeding tubes. In 1917, the Suffragettes used hunger strikes to highlight their cause (Gordon, 2000; Schwartz, 1986). This was a critical movement for women's rights, where hunger strikes were associated starvation with virtue and heroism, and eating became associated with violence and violation. According to Schwartz (1986), "forced feeding in 1917 was as close to rape as any medical procedure could be" (p. 124). Female strength was becoming associated with will power, resistance and restriction, while consumption became associated with women's oppression and degradation.

In the 1920s, as a result of their protests and resistances, women enjoyed a sexual mini-revolution. The 'flapper girl' of the 1920s was independent and pursued sexual freedoms (Gordon, 2000). The 1920s was a decade in which women began to occupy more social space, and at the same time, through diet, less physical space (Silverstein & Perlick, 1995). The flapper girls were thin, wore short, shapeless dresses, cut their hair short and were considered to look more like men than women, an androgynous form, perhaps. At the same time, women were moving into professional roles that were traditionally occupied by men. While women had worked hard for their social and political platforms to be enlarged, their bodies, as a result, were being restricted and reduced. There is only so much space a woman can be allowed to occupy.

The economic Depression and the subsequent World War saw the demise of the 1920s liberated flapper girl image. Post war, the traditional male and female roles

were once again privileged, bringing with it the traditional feminine body shape and fashions (Silverstein & Perlick, 1995), as well as more contradictory constructions of womanhood and motherhood.

The suburbanisation of post-World War II American society led to the female image as maternal, with large breasts and an hour-glass figure (Gordon, 2000). However, in the 1960s, an androgynous female form was flaunted in the mass media. This form increasingly became slimmer and slimmer (Silverstein & Perlick, 1995). Prior to the rise of the mass media and fashion industries, naked female bodies had only been depicted in paintings (Wooley, 1994). As fashion images increased in prominence and visibility, so did female flesh. Moreover, the increase in availability of pornographic media eroticised and fragmented the female flesh further.

In the 1970s and 1980s, civil rights movements created space for women to resist sexual norms. Sparked by the women's rights movement, the renewed 'sexual revolution' meant that adolescent girls' and women's sexual experiences became more publicly visible and less restricted (Gordon, 2000). At the same time, changes in social media (such as television, music, pornography) led to the proliferation of sexual discourse. In particular, the 1970s fashion industry and its consumerism led to an emphasis on youthful images, leading to a rise in both teen culture and anti-ageing culture. Female images were becoming more and more youthful and sexualised.

In the 1970s through to the 1990s, the female form was consolidated as androgynous when the prevailing female image became the 'waif', characterised by a shapeless, childlike body shape, devoid of recognisable characteristics of female sexual maturity such as wide hips and growing breasts (Gordon, 2000). Women became able to reject (to a certain extent) their traditional roles and traditional femininity (McKinley, 1999). As a result, the bodies that women wanted, perhaps

needed, in order to successfully enter the male world needed to be free of feminine markers. Bodies that were more similar to men's bodies would slot in better to the male working world than bumpy and lumpy female shapes.

Women have had to become both feminine and masculine in order to negotiate this world, and that is a multiple and contradictory experience. In order for women to be successful in contemporary culture, they must be both explicitly feminine, occupying the heterosexual female role, while on the other hand moving seamlessly and quietly through the masculine world. Women must prove themselves to be equal to men academically, spiritually and socially (Gordon, 2000), but they must do this while retaining their femininity. Women, having never been afforded the privilege of masculinity, and still experiencing the oppression of femininity, find this new dualistic masculine/feminine role difficult to negotiate. To illustrate, women's social roles aim to please. Women feed their children and sexually satisfy their men. Girls are socialised to please others, be sensitive to the needs of others and be responsive to the demands of others. At the same time, women must be active, independent, masculine social beings if they want to be taken seriously in the professional world. Thus, "women are, in effect, caught in a double-bind of having to fit in with *both* sets of expectations – to be an independent, self-contained individual as well as being feminine, and thus organizing their activities mainly towards the need of others" (MacSween, 1993, p. 26). Moreover, women must develop an acceptable identity in the "context of a society where only masculine identities have the right to exist" (Hepworth & Griffin, 1995, p. 79). Femininity is characterised by its non-existence, passivity and soft weakness. Masculinity is centred on hard, strong, active existence. Women, by claiming social space, are required to embody these contradictory constructions into a single body: woman.

Women and girls now spend significantly more time in public life (Wooley, 1994), thus, women now occupy not only more intellectual, social and political space, but also more physical space. In particular, puberty is the time when girls become acutely aware of how their gendered social experience and their bodies are intertwined, yet contradictory. Puberty is the time in a girl's life when she must display femininity (Silverstein & Perlick, 1995). A girl's tomboy behaviour is tolerated when she is a young child, but when she reaches puberty, she is expected to become a feminine woman. Puberty, for girls, involves two traumatic transformations. The first transformation is the physical changes that occur in her body, including menstruation and the development of breasts (Gordon, 2000). The second transformation is that her newly changed body becomes objectified. That is, the physical changes of the first transformation become the focus of the second transformation into a sexualised object.

This sudden shift from non-sexual child to heterosexual sex object occurs when adolescent women are developing their identity and their bodies are changing. These issues are amplified by the increased monitoring of female bodies that occurs once they become sexualised. As children, girls are monitored by their appearance (McKinley, 1999). They then internalise that surveillance and learn to monitor their own appearance, size and bodily desires (Bartky, 1998; McKinley, 1999). At puberty, the body becomes a much more significant aspect of human experience due to the social meaning of physical change. These physical changes are constructed as significant markers of femaleness that signal the extent to which a woman has internalised patriarchal surveillance and has taken up her position within the discourse (Bartky, 1998). Those women who do not, for whatever reason, take up

their afforded positions within the discourse will experience the sanctions that the dominant discourse slaps down upon those uncooperative bodies.

As the space that women occupy in Western society changes, patriarchal ideals of femininity and body size are more insistently and violently imposed (Gordon, 2000). Women who deviate from the feminine ideal are socially punished and labelled as deviant (McKinley, 1999). Women must, through dieting, exercise, pharmaceuticals and cosmetic procedures, work at reducing their physical bodies so that they can occupy regulated social space in the masculine world.

However, this is not as simple as merely reducing the body. Underlying this notion of reduction is the control and rejection of desire, particularly feminine desire. To illustrate, “animal-like functions, such as belching, nose-wiping, urinating, sweating, scratching, spitting, masturbating, farting, and even body odor, remain less permissible for women than for men” (Seid, 1994, p. 11). The female body must be monitored so as to perform its necessary functions in a clean, efficient and responsible manner. In addition, through a disciplinary (male) gaze, tools such as dieting, exercise and the use of cosmetics are used against women’s bodies, by women (and men), to normalise their use and the results of their use: thin, beautiful women (Bartky, 1998).

Therefore, women learn to watch their bodies through the eyes of a patriarchal observer, monitoring their appetites and regulating their body’s size, functions, posture, gestures and space (Bartky, 1998; McKinley, 1999). That is, “in contemporary patriarchal culture, a panoptical male connoisseur resides within the consciousness of most women: they stand perpetually before his gaze and under his judgement. Woman lives her body as seen by another, by an anonymous patriarchal Other” (Bartky, 1998, p. 34). Women have internalised the patriarchal gaze that

monitors them so that they can monitor their own bodies and the bodies of other women, stigmatising those who do not conform.

Patriarchal societies fear femininity. From Genesis to Pandora's Box, femininity has been constructed as dangerous and governed by uncontrolled desire. Thus, when women claimed some social and intellectual space, the patriarchal gaze ensured that the female body (and its unholy desires) was pressured into reducing and restricting itself. The desire for female consciousness comes at the expense of the female body's desires.

The emergence of anorexia nervosa, then, should not surprise us. The positions that women have been permitted to occupy have dictated that they reduce their bodies, control their desires and limit their physical existence in order to take up social space. These are the goals are not dissimilar from the goals of the contemporary anorexic.

Anorexia can be seen as an attempt by a woman to comply with and also reject the narrow amount of social and physical space she is afforded (Gordon, 2000). The discourse of identity and role theory refers "to the conflicts experienced by women (especially young white middle-class women) as a consequence of contradictory expectations about being a woman in contemporary patriarchal societies" (Hepworth & Griffin, 1995, p. 78).

Significantly, at times in history when women's roles have been relatively static, the incidence of anorexia has decreased (Gordon, 2000). For example, from the 1930s through to the 1950s, when women's roles were fixed as maternal, anorexia was not a prominent female issue. However, from the late 1800s through to the 1920s, and from the 1960s until the present, when anorexia has been a prominent female disorder, women's roles have been shifting rapidly. As opportunities for

women to take up non-traditional roles increase, subclinical disordered eating also increases, leading to thinner and thinner non-traditional women (Silverstein & Perlick, 1995). The more socially visible that non-traditional women become, the more they influence the other women who are taking up the traditional role. This non-traditional thinness standard leads traditional women to feel negatively about their lives and their bodies, leading to dieting and weight-loss obsessions. Thus, thinness has become associated with non-traditional women and the rejection of femininity. Silverstein and Perlick (1995) explain that “girls who want to be seen as intelligent are particularly devastated when their mothers are not viewed that way” (p. 106). The traditional, maternal roles of women are devalued by the lean, powerful non-traditional woman. If a girl’s mother occupies a powerless and disrespected traditional female role, it seems logical for the girl to resist and reject that traditional role. Anorexia could be seen as an escape from womanhood, the purging of femaleness from the body and the disengagement from femininity in order to fully realise the masculine ideal (Gordon, 2000). Anorexia is a strategy for rejecting the devalued biological, maternal construction of femininity in favour of the lean, clear-cut figure of the non-traditional de-feminised woman.

Thus, shifts in a technologically mediated Western society have altered the way that femininity and female bodies have been constructed. At this point in history, women are expected to simultaneously demonstrate contradictory feminine and masculine roles. In order to control the social power that women may experience when they display masculinity, the patriarchal gaze forces them to monitor the physical space that they occupy. Western women, if they want social power, must restrict themselves in every way and control every desire. Thus, the tenets of

anorexia, and indeed the pro-anorexic position, are not as alien as dominant discourse would have us believe.

### **Pro-Anorexia**

People use the internet for a variety of reasons and in a variety of ways. It has been argued that people participate in online social communities in order to construct, consolidate and express their identities, particularly if those identities are marginalised or unacceptable in the real, physical world (Gailey, 2009; Hardin, 2003; Katz & Rice, 2002; McKenna & Bargh, 2000). If people have a meaningful reason to share their lives online, they will do it (Katz & Rice, 2002). For example, people with disabilities use the internet to share their stories and explore the world in ways that they cannot in their real lives. Furthermore,

the internet allows people who are isolated to interact with others who share their views and thereby to have their views reinforced and developed further. Users can progress in developing their original self-identity or an even re-socialize themselves into a new one. (Katz & Rice, 2002, p. 88)

Participating in online communities can spark activism and action in the real world. The support or encouragement received in an online community can push someone to make changes in their real life. This can be, of course, either positive or negative.

Nevertheless, our online behaviour is being monitored. Bird (2003) states that the internet is the “latest in a long line of ever more efficient panopticons” (p. 122). The internet is used to monitor our lives, ensuring that we are conforming to the norms and punishing deviance. Social networking on the internet is an example of this. Not only do new avenues for social networking open up on a daily basis, but the idea of social networking itself is to promote who you are, what you are doing

and why you are important. Other people now have greater access to who we are and we are constantly under the surveillance of other people whom we need to impress.

However, the internet, is a place where people can express themselves anonymously and present themselves in ways that they want to be seen (McKenna & Bargh, 2000). The specific ways in which people communicate online amplifies identities and demonstrates a key feature of internet communication: the hybridisation of human and machine.

Text-based online communication is blunter, more egalitarian and truncates social cues and is not dependent upon time, location or physical presence (Katz & Rice, 2002). Social communication via the internet is different from real life communication because it is possible to be completely anonymous in cyberspace; physical location and time are irrelevant; and physical appearance and visual cues cannot dictate interaction (McKenna & Bargh, 2000). Because online friends cannot be seen, people feel more comfortable expressing themselves and their marginalised opinions. We can say things to another anonymous internet user that we would not say to someone face to face.

This seems to create an illusion of intimacy in online communities (Katz & Rice, 2002). While people in online communities are sharing deeply personal information, they tend to know one another in one dimension. The topic of a chat room will dictate how the members interact with each other. They have specifically sought each other out based on a commonality. Moreover, users can come and go as they please in an online community, allowing them to disengage from deeply personal relationships in a way that could not easily happen in the real world. In a chat room, we can simply stop responding and ignore further communications from other users. In real life, if we were to suddenly stop showing up to work or started

walking away in the middle of conversations, people would question us and we would find it difficult to ignore them. We can delete emails, but we cannot delete people. The physical proximity of other human bodies can create emotional discomfort and unease in social situations. Communicating via the internet eliminates this discomfort.

In addition, physical appearance cannot be assessed over the internet, unless you are willing to share your physical identity (McKenna & Bargh, 2000). On the internet, we can be judged by the quality of our minds, not the appearance of our bodies. The mind is present while the body is non-existent (Ferreday, 2003). It is true that a body must type in what the mind wants to say, but once the message has been posted online, it becomes part of a non-physical space.

The pro-anorexia movement has been enjoying this non-physical space since the early 2000s (Day & Keys, 2009). This is a movement that has almost exclusively gained momentum through the internet and has caused outrage in the media, the medical profession, academia and the general public.

Pro-anorexia websites are spaces for women (and men) experiencing anorexia to share their goal weights, weight loss techniques, tricks to avoid detection and share their experiences (Mulveen & Hepworth, 2006). The themes of these websites range from gothic in representation to religious or supernatural, often focusing on death, eternal life, purity and perfection (Burke, 2009; Day & Keys, 2009). The content, imagery, symbols and their meanings presented in pro-anorexia websites create a distinct subculture (Gailey, 2009). Most importantly, pro-anorexics state that pro-anorexia websites are the only places where they feel safe to express their identities and can feel respected (Mulveen & Hepworth, 2006; Tierney, 2006).

Pro-anorexia can be viewed as a resistance discourse. Pro-anorexia positions itself in opposition to the medicalised construction of anorexia that labels anorexics as 'sick'. Thus, those who use pro-anorexia websites often proclaim themselves to be 'pro-anorexic.' That is, they openly take up a resistance position and claim it as a title, actively engaging in and rejecting the dominant discourse. Women experiencing anorexia often feel misunderstood and stigmatised by friends, family and the professionals charged with helping them (Rich, 2006). Pro-anorexia is a form of resistance to this dominant view of women with anorexia as sick victims, as it constructs them as agentic, in control, elite and living a chosen lifestyle (Day & Keys, 2009). Pro-anorexics are not sick: they are on a mission.

By constructing anorexia as a lifestyle choice rather than medical pathology, pro-anorexics are subverting the dominant medical discourse that has been used to control their representation in the past. At present, within the dominant medical discourse, pro-anorexia is constructed as a danger to not only young girls, but also to the general public. Pro-anorexic websites are assumed to be dangerous because they support eating disordered behaviours and provide tips, tricks and 'thinspiration' (Martijn, Smeets, Jansen, Hoeymans, & Schoemaker, 2009). A study by Bardone-Cone and Cass (2007) found that when female undergraduate psychology students viewed a pro-anorexic website, the exposure had a negative effect. After a single viewing of a pro-anorexia website, the women in the study experienced low mood, lower social self-esteem and lower physical self-esteem. They also experienced body image distortion and a desire to exercise or diet. This study does not follow up the participants to assess any long-term psychological effects that viewing the pro-anorexic website had; however, the authors explain these findings as the damaging effects of pro-anorexic material on young women. Alternatively, these results could

be interpreted as a sympathetic response to the pro-anorexic cause. When women view an anorexic body, perhaps they are reminded of the oppression that pervades their lives, they feel that anorexic pain and they want to show their support for women who are attempting to claim a different space for themselves. This is not necessarily support for anorexia, but an acknowledgement of the shared experiences of women in Western culture. Nevertheless, there is a wide-reaching assumption that pro-anorexic texts and images will corrupt and are harmful, not just to women with anorexia, but to 'normal' people and the entire fabric of society (Bell, 2009; Day & Keys, 2009). For the public, medical and academic discourses, taking up a 'pro'-anorexia stance breaches the boundary between 'normal' mental illness and extreme mental illness. Any construction of anorexia beyond dominant discourse is firmly marked as dangerous. The continued disgust for pro-anorexia illustrates that the potential harm that pro-anorexic messages may inject to society is much more concerning than the underlying reasons as to why pro-anorexia may exist and how it functions for those who claim the pro-anorexic position.

Most psychological research that has tackled pro-anorexia websites has focused on describing pro-anorexia from both a personal health and a public health perspective. Psychology has concerned itself with exploring what pro-anorexics say and making judgements about how 'dangerous' the participation in such communities might be. Pro-anorexia has been researched as a resistance to the medical gaze, and thus seems to be understood as deviance that can be manipulated in order to bring anorexics back under the surveillance of clinical medicine.

In terms of both academic and public outrage, pro-anorexia has been one of the most infamous topics of discussion. Pro-anorexics themselves have pointed out that online communities promoting fat acceptance, cults, pornography, and even self-

mutilation have not caused the same level of sensationalist outrage that pro-anorexia has (Shade, 2003). Pro-anorexia's brazen breaching of the boundaries of femininity, health and political existence has both horrified and fascinated medicine, academia and the public. This fascination has led us to describe pro-anorexia in great detail, through a clinical lens, and conclude that it is dangerous to the mental and physical health of women in general. Psychologists have infiltrated pro-anorexic communities to perform covert studies on their content. We have positioned pro-anorexia as an enemy hell-bent on corrupting fragile women. In this way, much psychological research has attempted to justify the deletion of pro-anorexic sites, or, at the very least, has prioritised informing the public of the 'dangers' that these sites pose to 'vulnerable girls.'

As in 'real life,' pro-anorexia has been difficult to treat. Deleting or banning pro-anorexic websites has been unsuccessful. Shutting down pro-anorexic websites pushes pro-anorexia further underground (Gailey, 2009). Pro-anorexics have simply created new websites, making them harder to find and their membership more exclusive. There is something undeletable about pro-anorexia. Pro-anorexia regenerates and becomes more adept at subverting the gaze that wills it to behave. Thus, determining if pro-anorexia is 'good' or 'bad' has become a futile quest for psychological research. What needs to be more extensively explored is how pro-anorexia functions.

This construction of pro-anorexia as corrupting and dangerous is less about the actual potential damage a pro-anorexic philosophy and more about tensions within and against the dominant medical discourse (Bell, 2009). Constructing an issue such as pro-anorexia as a social problem is a process through which groups of people (and their bodies) are marginalised and disciplined (van 't Hof, 1994).

Obedience is rewarded (the 'good' anorexic in treatment), but rebellion is punished (the 'dangerous' pro-anorexic) (Bartky, 1998), constructing pro-anorexia as 'bad' and illegitimate position. van 't Hof (1994) states that "social problems are attempts of powerful groups to legitimise the unequal distribution of social power or to prevent particular groups from gaining status and power" (p. 151). Pro-anorexics are simultaneously rejecting and utilising the dominant medical discourse. Pro-anorexics are using medical knowledge of the body, nutrition and drugs to more effectively lose weight in an informed manner. Even the criteria for anorexia in the DSM are used as a guideline for achieving 'true' anorexia (Bell, 2009). So rather than using medical knowledge alongside the medical profession, pro-anorexics are using medical knowledge to create their own knowledge of the disorder and thus alternative constructions of anorexia (Fox, Ward, & O'Rourke, 2005). Pro-anorexia not only subverts the medical gaze, but it brazenly 'misappropriates' medical knowledge.

Thus, the medical community constructs pro-anorexia as dangerous in an attempt to regain control over the representation of the disorder. Pro-anorexia is now double-pathology: these women are sick with anorexia, and even sicker with pro-anorexia (Bell, 2009). The medical discourse produces pro-anorexia as deviant in order to take back and legitimise its control over the disorder (Bell, 2009; Dias, 2003; Fox, et al., 2005), and therefore, the bodies of women. Moreover, "one of the assumptions evident in the hostile critiques of these websites is that young women's "deviant" behavior is going on because they are not under the supervision of "legitimate" authorities" (Dias, 2003, p. 39). The disciplinary power of the medical discourse dictates that women's bodies, when they break free (or at least attempt to

break free) of medical surveillance, become even more dangerous. Pro-anorexia is not just deviance, it is extreme *female* deviance.

What this demonstrates is that resistance discourse is met with counter-resistance discourse. To illustrate, Malson (1998), when speaking of the obese, points out that “to take up a rebellious subject position in a discourse of individualism, to construe oneself as definitely fat rather than as a pathological failure, is dismissed here as illegitimate” (p. 153). The same can be said for pro-anorexia. Indeed, Bell (2009) asserts that the medical discourse dictates that “any voice derived from anorexia is a further expression of this illness” (p. 156). Women who experience anorexia and who seek to empower themselves by creating a discourse that resists the dominant medical perspective are constituted by that dominant discourse as even sicker than ‘normal’ anorexics.

The users of pro-anorexia websites have argued that pro-anorexia websites provide space for women to voice concerns that the medical discourse dismisses or refuses to legitimate. Some of the most common themes expressed by pro-anorexics are: not feeling understood by those around them; feeling out of control; feeling isolated and in pain; using the eating disorder as a form of coping and a security blanket; recognising that they still need that security blanket even though they are aware of the potential dangers of anorexic behaviours; needing support and connection; feeling ambivalent towards both ‘ana’ and recovery; and, resisting dominant interpretations of their experiences of disordered eating (Dias, 2003, p. 38). It seems that pro-anorexia websites are places in which anorexics can share their socially unacceptable experiences and receive support and assistance from non-judgemental and understanding peers that they cannot receive in real life (Day & Keys, 2009; Gailey, 2009; Rich, 2006; Shade, 2003). Interestingly, Rich’s (2006)

study demonstrated that anorexics within a clinic interacted in similar ways to users of pro-anorexia communities on the internet: they shared their tips and tricks, their experiences and their goal weights. Pro-anorexia on the internet, however, is more publically visible than the privacy of the eating disorders treatment ward.

It is important to note that anorexics do not typically receive or are qualified to receive professional help in the early stages of the disorder (Dias, 2003). Instead, women experiencing anorexia usually only receive help once the disorder has become ingrained in their daily lives. By this point, anorexia is significantly harder to treat. Through pro-anorexia websites, women with anorexia are able to access support before they are ready for and can receive treatment. Pro-anorexia is used to stabilise emotionality, reach out for support and gain a sense of control over the disorder (Lyons, Mehl, & Pennebaker, 2006). Pro-anorexic communities promote themselves as places where anorexics can form social bonds that assist them to manage their anorexia in a more controlled way (Rich, 2006). The tips and tricks provided on these websites help anorexics push their bodies to the limit with as much control as possible. Pro-anorexia in this way can be understood as a coping strategy for these women.

On the surface, reading pro-anorexia as supportive for women experiencing anorexia is a construction of pro-anorexia that seems to condone the movement; however, I am interested in how this construction can enable an understanding of the blurring boundaries between good/bad, healthy/sick, right/wrong. Women with anorexia are taking it upon themselves to look for alternative ways to manage their disorder. If anorexia is a

response to social and emotional difficulties, and one that enables individuals to cope, then it makes no sense to 'cure' this coping mechanism. Instead what is advocated by pro-ana is damage

limitation and a survival strategy to reduce the risks associated with extremely low body weight. (Fox, et al., 2005, p. 963)

By acknowledging the use of pro-anorexia websites and forums as forms of anorexic expression, we may be able to learn more about *how* these women are resisting the positions that dominant discourse has available to them.

Pro-anorexia websites serve as the ultimate expression of the techophilic Western culture of slimness. A fasting saint's religious reasons for self-starvation seems no different to the contemporary anorexic's insistence on being thin in the current culture of slimness (Gordon, 2000). The differences between holy and modern anorexia are a function of social climate and technological advances. As this genealogical review of anorexia and Western culture has shown, the differences in the ways anorexia asserts itself are due to the prevailing cultural values of the time period. It seems that the current problem of women's embodiment culminates in the pro-anorexia movement on the technological peak that is the internet.

Social and technological movements in Western culture have constructed the internet is the ideal motherboard for pro-anorexia. Women can freely talk about their lives and their bodies in new and cathartic ways in online spaces. Women can occupy new space, subvert unwelcome gazes and construct more palatable discourse. On the internet, women are revelling in technological advances that position them with more knowledge, more power and more tolerable embodiment.

### **The Cyborg**

Over the course of Western history, the female body and female embodiment have been pushed, pulled and twisted by technologies of power. Discourse has shaped women's bodies by privileging certain constructions over others. It has been demanded of women that they be both large and small, feminine and masculine,

strong and weak. The female body has been, and continues to be, a discursive construction. The way women and their bodies are talked about gives them particular positions within discourse. All too often, these positions are dichotomised: good/bad, right/wrong, sick/healthy. These constructions not only morph the ways in which women can experience their bodies, but they morph the bodies themselves.

Coupled with the Western world's ever-expanding techno-fetish, it is not surprising then that Haraway's (1991) cyborg has emerged as a powerful metaphor for women's embodiment in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This cyborg unabashedly scoffs at binaries and blurs their boundaries. Why are women cyborgs? Because they are the 'other.' Dominant discourses do not experience the tension between multiplicities. Dominant discourses are defined and they are whole. Women, as clearly demonstrated by their history, have always been positioned as the 'other' in discourse. The dominant discourse is singular, but there are many 'others.' Dominant discourse and its 'others' are also bound by complementarity: they continuously reference each other (Grosz, 1995). As such, women have lived experience of being the multiple and contradictory 'other.' The cyborg metaphor emerges as a way for women to make sense of their 'otherness' and the multiple, fragmented and contradictory positions that discourses have allowed for them, and offers a new way to live with discursively constructed bodies that are constantly being dismantled, updated and rebuilt.

Generally, "the term cyborg is short for *cybernetic organism*. A hybrid of body and technology, of flesh and steel..." (Asberg, 2007, p. 24). The relationship between humans and machines has moved beyond complementarity. Technology is no longer simply intertwined with biology, but rather they constitute each other.

Flesh and self-awareness no longer separate (and elevate) humans from machines.

We are all cyborgs.

For Haraway (1991) cyborgs are both machine and animal, representing the abandonment of nature in favour of simulated consciousness. Haraway's cyborg "...is also the awful apocalyptic *telos* of the 'West's' escalating dominations of abstract individualism, an ultimate self untied at last from all dependency, a man in space" (Haraway, 1991, p. 150). The cyborg is a hybrid of biology and technology, representative of contemporary science's influence on the everyday lives of modern human beings, and indeed the blurring of the boundaries between human and machine.

Haraway's cyborg is characterised by blurred boundaries (social, political and physical); multiplicity, hybridity and partiality; non-innocence; the need for connection; lightness, cleanliness and efficiency; the privileging of text; and simulated consciousness (Haraway, 1991).

Haraway's cyborg is intended as a metaphor for female embodiment in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Most significantly, Haraway's cyborg disrupts dualisms by blurring the boundaries between them (Asberg, 2007; Braidotti, 2006; Hawthorne, 1999). That is, the distinctions between dualisms such as human/machine, nature/culture and even male/female, are destabilised by a cyborg. A cyborg is both biological material and mechanical hardware. It is neither wholly human nor wholly machine and therefore cannot be categorised by a dualism such as human/machine. Thus, a cyborg not only blurs the boundaries between what can be called human and what can be called machine, but it challenges the very nature of all dualisms and it does this deliberately. Cyborgs question the authenticity of the dualisms that we commonly reference, such as masculine/feminine or sick/healthy. Cyborgs demonstrate the

blurring of the boundaries between dualisms, so that we are forced to acknowledge our hybridity: we are masculine and feminine, sick and healthy, human and non-human. We are more multiple, more complex, more contradictory than these dualisms allow for. This is what Haraway's cyborg wants us to know.

Hybridity can be thought of as the fluidity, or indeed the breakdown, of the boundaries between cultures (Gonzalez, 2005; Papastergiadis, 2005; Werbner, 2001). Cultural hybridity functions to transform identities (Werbner, 2001), and demonstrates ambivalence towards the demand for stability and the desire for fluidity (Papastergiadis, 2005). These hybrid, in-between spaces allow new ideas and positions to emerge and for the transcendence of cultural constraints (Papastergiadis, 2005; Werbner, 2001). Papastergiadis (2005) claims that hybridity "not only refers to the ambivalent consequences of mixture but also the shift in the mode of consciousness" (p. 57). This shift is towards a more authentic experience of female embodiment that highlights the hybrid nature of female otherness: the simultaneous multiplicity of being an 'other' to the dominant discourse. This is hybridity. Through this blurring of the boundaries between the feminine and the masculine, the sick and the healthy, the human and the machine, new ways of talking, communicating and living can emerge and challenge the dominant culture.

To further illustrate, the cyborg can be thought of as representing both the reproductive and destructive nature of modern science. According to Asberg (2007), "both in their life-prolonging and life-threatening functions, cyborgs have become a symbol of the ambivalences of high modernity" (p. 26). Cyborgs are, on one hand, characterised by modifications, improvements and extensions (for example, prosthetic limbs, in vitro fertilisation or designer vaginas). On the other hand, cyborgs represent technological power, strength and destructive capabilities.

Cyborgs represent life (human/organic/biology) and non-life (machine/inorganic/technology). To use an example from popular culture, James Cameron's 'The Terminator' is a cyborg sent to kill, but later becomes a protector. Similarly, in the television series based upon James Cameron's 'Terminator' mythology, a female cyborg, Cameron, is charged with protecting specific human lives, but killing anyone who threatens those whom she must protect. The most prolific cyborg mythology in popular culture portrays cyborgs as simultaneously protectors and destroyers of human life. This enables an understanding of the ambivalence we feel towards the blurring of those boundaries that previously defined us. Where once we felt wholly human and were clearly defined from machines, we are now blended with our technologies. Perhaps what startles us is that if something as (seemingly) defined as a human can hybridise with something as (seemingly) defined as a machine, then we have to acknowledge that the boundaries that construct our world are more complex, more ambiguous and more blurred than we want to admit.

Cyborgs demonstrate these multiplicities and complexities of modern embodiment. In general, medical texts present embodiment as standardised or universal, as bodies are categorised and generalised (Rothfield, 1995). Science has told us what our experiences of our bodies should be like and we are expected to understand and articulate those experiences. Both 'normal' and 'abnormal' bodies add to our medical knowledge; however, embodiment is still expected to be more or less the same for everyone, according to the medical discourse. Conversely, through *science fiction*, Haraway's (1991) cyborg embodies contradictions, partial and multiple identities, transgressed dichotomies and networked connections (Asberg, 2007; Braidotti, 2006; Caddick, 1995; Klein, 1999). Hawthorne (1999) argues that

Haraway's "cyborg is built upon fear of a body outside the norm, a body out of control" (p. 220). Embodiment, for Haraway's cyborg, is contextual, contradictory and characterised by multiplicity, and these aspects of the cyborg are celebrated. For this reason, Haraway's cyborg lends herself to women of the technologically dominated 21<sup>st</sup> century. Haraway (1991) argues that the partiality, multiplicity and contradictory experience of embodiment enables new and powerful positions. A cyborg offers an alternative embodied experience that celebrates the contradictory positions that have been available to women. Living as a hybrid enables women to simultaneously live those contradictions and multiplicities, their embodied experiences in a constant state of flux. Rather than be broken down by the tensions between previously privileged dualisms, the hybridity of cyborg embodiment enables women to construct their own new meanings and experiences of embodiment. Rather than accepting the (supposedly) distinct categories of woman/man, human/machine, sick/healthy, cyborg women revel in the contradictions and multiplicities of their embodied lives, and it is an unapologetic celebration. This hybrid cyborg allows women the space to celebrate or dismiss 'abnormal' bodies, exercise power over their discursive positions and exchange ideas pertinent to living life as a modern woman-cyborg. Given the contradictions and multiplicities that women with anorexia experience (for example sickness, health, food, sexuality and embodiment), living as a cyborg may enable women to experience a discursive position free from the dualistic tensions that loosen the nuts and bolts of their embodied lives.

Haraway's (1991) cyborg is also characterised by non-innocence. Haraway explains this as the cyborg's disinterest in seeking a unified identity. The cyborg understands that its body is a contested site, so it rejects the dualisms that attempt to

define it as one thing or another. The cyborg understands that it is in fact 'both' and 'neither.' Furthermore, the non-innocence of Haraway's cyborg is demonstrated through the pleasure that the cyborg takes in acknowledging machine embodiment. The cyborg knows that it is mechanical and it embraces this embodiment.

The technological dominance that builds Haraway's cyborg is characterised by the privileging of information and networking. According to Braidotti (2006), "as a hybrid, or body-machine, the cyborg, or the companion species, is a connection-making entity; a figure of interrelationality, receptivity and global communication that deliberately blurs categorical distinctions (human/machine; nature/culture; male/female; oedipal/non-oedipal)" (p. 200). In this vein, Haraway's cyborg is subject to a form of disciplinary power that advocates the proliferation of information and interconnections. It seems that "contemporary power does not work by normalized heterogeneity any more, but rather by networking, communication redesigns and multiple interconnections" (Braidotti, 2006, p. 198). Thus, the cyborg constructs, and is constructed in and through disciplinary power, but it uses this disciplinary power to its advantage. The cyborg lives inside networks, plugging itself into every available technological orifice. A cyborg has multiple and contradictory connected nodes of information at the ready, wired to fire simultaneously, partially or not all. So far from disciplining a docile body, modern disciplinary power has enabled the cyborg to not only emerge, but to proliferate with ease. As Haraway (1991) suggests, the "ubiquity and invisibility of cyborgs is precisely why these sunshine-belt machines are so deadly" (p. 153). The cyborg's mimicry of what Foucault (1977) would call capillary power allows the cyborg to spread through networks in both highly visible and invisible ways. Body has become increasingly thought of in terms of its functions and its mechanical components. Moreover, the

increasing medicalisation of the female body, “based on processes of removal (incision, cutting, removing and reduction) or addition (inlaying, stitching and injection), demonstrate a body pliable to power, a *machinic* structure in which ‘components’ can be altered, adjusted, removed or replaced” (Grosz, 1995, p. 35). The modern body can be modified by modern science, in order to improve it, or fix it as if it is malfunctioning (and even if it is not). For example, Braun and Kitzinger (2001) argue that the cultural obsession with women’s size constructs women’s bodies as a series of glitches that can be repaired, perfected and enhanced. Vaginas can be surgically tightened, breasts can be surgically enlarged, stomachs can be surgically stapled and skin can be buffed/lasered/chemically treated for maximum smoothness and shine. The bodies of 21<sup>st</sup> century Western women are subject a sociocultural and technological context in which possibilities for shaping the human female are ever-expanding (Braun, 2005). We ‘improve’ our bodies in order to suit cultural norms that have been constructed by a heterosexual male gaze. We want, or perhaps now need, our bodies to be as light, clean and efficient as our technologies, so we use our technologies to achieve it. The message to women is this: you must shape your body to fit the culture, because the culture will not change shape in order to fit you. From clothing sizes to weight management to surgical interventions, the Western hetero-normative gaze dictates that women must forge the ideal body by whatever means necessary in order to meet the criteria of ‘woman.’

For ease of alteration, bodies are broken down into text, information and codes: “... once bodies come to be seen as information, as interactions between them and their parts come to be seen as a matter of coding, or as texts, the relative opacity they enjoyed under modernity is circumvented” (Caddick, 1995, p. 154). The body’s parts and functions are categorised. We know what each part does and how it works

with other parts. From that knowledge, we can improve upon those parts and functions and ultimately control them. We do this with the mind too, the psychological field being the prime example. We categorise mental illness and mental health; we aim to understand how mental health/illness functions; we aim to control mental health and mental illness. Furthermore, “real, flesh, ‘lived’ bodies are accorded so little value that it is only through (technological) modification that they appear redeemable” (Klein, 1999, p. 203). This means that the choices we make about alterations to our bodies and minds are given dramatic significance, especially for women. The way we talk about the body motivates us to change it: discursive disciplinary power is transformed into physical and psychological imprints upon the body (Braun & Kitzinger, 2001). This technology of power constructs and reconstructs the subject positions that are offered to women in relation to their bodies (Gavey, 1992), and these positions offer embodied experiences that push and pull women’s bodies and identities. The cyborg acknowledges those contradictions and opens space for women to live those multiple blurred contradictions. Haraway’s cyborg understands how the female body is built and rebuilt in and through discourse and it embraces the scars left by the continual welding, cauterising and stitching of the female body.

The female body has been associated with “pollution and bodily wastes such as menstrual blood, which arouses fear and disgust as fluidity threatens to overcome fixity” (Gear, 2001, p. 322). In addition, “... the female body’s ability to change shape during pregnancy and childbirth, problematizes the notion of the clean, disciplined body that respects borders” (Gear, 2001, p. 322). Women’s bodies are troublesome. They protrude. They leak. They shape-shift. And they do these things both naturally and unnaturally. The psychological discourse also emphasises the

troublesome nature of bodies, as a body is deemed necessary, but not sufficient for lived experience (Morgan, 2005). We need the mechanics of our biological bodies in order to speak, to express what our minds are thinking. Again, the boundary between our bodies and our minds is blurred, yet the biological body is secondary to the mind. There is tension in the significance that we are willing to give the physical body in our lives. Thus, with its reduced and more controlled biology, "... the body/machine organism – the cyborg – offers partial liberation from messy bodies that leak blood, guts and gore" (Klein, 1999, p. 195). While a cyborg may blur the boundaries between dualisms, it seems to favour biological cleanliness. Biology is chaos, debris, mess. Mess is heavy. Mess is inefficient. Mess distracts from more important tasks like connection, irony, simulated consciousness. Cyborgs may be multiple and blurred, but their consciousness is highly organised chaos flowing through tight fibreglass veins.

To abandon the biological body is an idea celebrated by both religion and cyberspace. The notion of an afterlife in which the body-less soul lives eternally is prominent in religious beliefs; however, the internet, arguably, practices it (Klein, 1999; Wertheim, 1999).

Previously, the human craving for disembodiment was (somewhat) satisfied by the belief that after physical death, the mind or soul lived forever, in a space unburdened by physical bodies. The internet is, however, a space that "metaphorically *paralleled* the material world, but it was not contained within physical space" (Wertheim, 1999, p. 229). As such, "one of the great appeals of cyberspace is that it offers a *collective immaterial arena* not after death, but here and now on earth" (Wertheim, 1999, p. 233). Furthermore, the internet promises a kind of immortality. Minds can be downloaded and recreated through interactions with

the internet, without physical bodies (Rothfield, 1995). And thus, “free from the ‘prisons’ of our bodies by the liberating power of the modem, we too are promised that our ‘cyber-souls’ will soar into the infinite space of the digital ether” (Wertheim, 1999, p. 280). There is a sense that we are sending our minds into the internet space and that our selves will forever be stored there in that spaceless space. The internet (almost) provides the mind with a body-less platform for immortality. Cyberspace (almost) allows us to abandon our bodies and experience freedom from messy embodiment.

In the quest to abandon our biology and live forever, we have become cyborgs: simultaneously human and machine. We have plugged ourselves into machines in order to escape the tensions between dualisms that determine how we experience our bodies. Thus, for the pro-anorexic, whose body is a source of significant distress, the cyborg offers control over embodiment to an unprecedented extent. Haraway (1991) suggests that we can “be responsible for machines; *they* do not dominate or threaten us” (p. 180), unlike our bodies and our physical world. By becoming a cyborg, we can construct our own experience of embodiment, rather than have embodied lives that are inscribed with meaning. It is for this reason that pro-anorexia, produced through the internet (and onto bodies) has caused panic in the medical, psychological and public arenas. Pro-anorexia, like the cyborg, takes up a position in resistance to dominant discourse and celebrates it. The ‘celebration’ of anorexia is incomprehensible to those who reside within the dominant discourse.

Moreover, cyborgs undermine nature and privilege mechanical, simulated consciousness. Thus, the female pro-anorexic cyborg, who is creating her own multiple and contradictory experiences of her body and consciousness, is not only claiming conscious space that patriarchal systems do not allow her, she also

threatens the very foundations of patriarchy that claim that women are natural, biological beings. The cyborg, however, offers an alternative embodied experience for women by using the power of networked information and interconnectedness to construct knowledge of their bodies that is more in line with their complex embodied experiences. The pro-anorexic cyborg is no longer powered by the batteries provided for her by her patriarchal manufacturer: she has plugged herself into new network and now she is beta testing.

A genealogy of women's experience of their bodies illuminates the pro-anorexic cyborg's emergence as political resistance. Tracing this descent reveals covered-up, forgotten or dismissed movements in the history of women and the Western world that have allowed the discourses that envelop women, technology and anorexia to proliferate and open space for the construction of the pro-anorexic cyborg. Approaching 'pro-anorexia' as a cyborg (both real and metaphorical) can reveal the politics that are constructing pro-anorexia. This thesis then addresses how the cyborg metaphor is used to mobilise anorexic political action, and how this political action functions to strike fear in the heart of dominant discourse. How can I make sense of the production of pro-anorexia through the metaphor of a cyborg? How do pro-anorexics become cyborgs, not goddesses?

### **Methodology: How to Hitchhike Through the Matrix**

Looking across the discursive history of women, psychology, culture and anorexia, it has become clear that lived experience and embodiment are clearly marked with multiplicity and contradiction. Discourses have shifted over history to position women and their bodies in certain ways characterised by tensions between competing constructions of femininity. Bodies are constructed, or dare I say it, manufactured by the ways in which we speak and the ways in which we are allowed to speak, as women. Along with the boom in technological advancements, specific constructions of anorexia have emerged. In particular, the pro-anorexia movement online is a troublesome construction of anorexia for the discourses that seek to control femininity.

Given the genealogical slant of the literature review, it follows then that my methodological approach to this research is informed by the work of Michel Foucault, and ‘critical’ authors such as Ian Parker and Donna Haraway.

Foucault conceptualised discourse as a form of social practice which helps construct our world (Burman, 1991). Discourse enables and constrains ways of speaking, writing and thinking and these ways impact on lived and embodied experience (Hook, 2001). Discourses simultaneously complement and constitute each other, re-circulating and re-forming. In this way, discourses carry with them historical, cultural and social significance. Dominant discourses ‘chew up’ counter-discourses and incorporate them into their own lining. Discourse itself is a kind of Frankenstein’s cyborg, pieced together by history, culture, societal context and tensions. Discourse is multiple, simultaneous and contradictory.

Foucault was particularly interested in the relationship between knowledge and power. Foucault (1980) claimed that “it is not possible for power to be exercised

without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power” (p. 52), and he conceptualised power as capillary in nature because it reaches into every aspect of our lives. He stated that “the exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power” (Foucault & Gordon, 1980, p. 52). Foucault’s work with discourse narrows focus to the effects of power and knowledge in the creation and maintenance of discourses. The mobilisation of any given discourse will enable dominant and subordinate positions, those in the dominant position reproducing the ways of talking and knowing that affords them power, while the subordinated look for ways to resist or tolerate their position as the ‘other’ (Hook, 2001).

Hook (2001) notes that “the strongest discourses are those that have attempted to ground themselves on the natural, the sincere, the scientific – in short, on the level of the various correlates of the ‘true’ and reasonable” (p. 524). In order to be convincing, discourses, as stitched together as they may be, attempt to present themselves as unified truths. It seems that this practice functions not so much to concretise dominant discourse as to concretise what *does not* constitute the dominant discourse. Using both Parker and Foucault’s conceptualisations of how discourses function, I have drawn attention to how a pro-anorexic position is not acceptable within dominant medical discourse. While we are sometimes unsure of what exactly constitutes the medical discourse, we definitively know that it positions pro-anorexia outside of it, as a deviant and super-sick entity.

According to Parker (2002), discourse can be thought of as a system of meanings that are historically, culturally and socially located and realised through text in many forms. Discourse can legitimate or challenge, endorse or subvert what it describes. Therefore, discourses “construct ways in which people are able to relate to

one another” (Parker, 2002, p. 130). Parker (2005) states that discourse “*is the organization of language into certain kinds of social bond*” (p. 88). These bonds empower some, and exclude others. More specifically, discourses support institutions (Parker, 2002). Discourses are invested with meanings which can dictate power relations and the organisation of social, political and physical space (Parker, 1990, 2002). Moreover, discourses reproduce power relations. They take advantage of, and indeed create, the intimate connection between power and knowledge, and institutions are structured around that power/knowledge relationship. Discourses also have ideological effects, creating and perpetrating social, cultural and political effects (Parker, 1990, 2002). Parker’s work helps us situate discourse in terms of institutional power and ideology and in turn helps us see how discourse is constructed and constructs lived experience.

I have used both Parker’s and Foucault’s ideas to investigate how pro-anorexia has been produced as a resistance discourse. Foucault attests that “power is what says no. And the challenging of power as thus conceived can appear only as transgression” (Foucault & Gordon, 1980, p. 139). In addition, Parker (2005) states that resisting a discourse is an act. Perhaps most significantly, Hook (2001) suggests that working with the combative power of a discourse is a more useful task for a resistance discourse (as opposed to making the discourse more ‘truthful’ or logical). So pro-anorexia, both in the virtual and the physical world, is a form of resistance to the mainstream medical discourse that legitimates its own knowledge and grants itself that combative power. Regardless of how pro-anorexia has been theorised by various disciplines (including psychology), it is inarguably resistant and regenerative.

Drawing attention to discourses can highlight the assumptions that underlie them and can challenge them (Burman, 1991). While the medical discourse has shined the spotlight on pro-anorexia and has challenged assumptions that underlie pro-anorexic discourse, it should be noted that pro-anorexia is highlighting and challenging the assumptions of dominant discourse. If we look at how such resistant discourses do this highlighting and challenging, we may be able to move towards an understanding of anorexia that is more representative of embodied experience. Thus far, the finger pointing and name-calling have only broken our fingers and hurt our feelings.

The emphasis on multiplicity, simultaneousness, contradiction, discursive positioning and social construction that both Ian Parker and Michel Foucault engaged enabled me to connect the history of the construction of anorexia to the emergence of pro-anorexia as resistance. Donna Haraway's work allows me to make sense of the space this resistance opens up for women in a technological world.

Haraway has outlined the cyborg. According to Haraway (1991), the cyborg is characterised by hybridity/multiplicity/partiality/irony; opposition; pleasure in the confusion of boundaries; non-innocence; neediness for connection; lightness/cleanliness/efficiency; and (simulated) consciousness. This metaphoric cyborg will guide my reading of pro-anorexia websites. In this analysis, then, I use Haraway's cyborg to produce an understanding of pro-anorexia as resistance to patriarchal notions of femininity.

At this point, I need to detour into an explanation of my extensive use of metaphor. Metaphor is characterised by multiplicity. Metaphor holds multiple meanings, comparisons and symbolisms. Metaphor is fluid, ever-changing, in a constant state of flux (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003). Metaphor captures both the

figurative and the literal (Bernstein, 2005). Metaphor, like so many of the concepts that I bring to this research, blurs boundaries between taken-for-granted dichotomies and demonstrates the simultaneousness, permeability and non-fixedness of ideas. The use of metaphor explicitly demonstrates that the boundaries between dualisms, and other categories that we have taken for granted, disappear, or, at the *very least*, blur when we examine them. Metaphor allows us to disregard the dualisms that restrict us. I have demonstrated in my review of the literature that psychology, culture, technology, anorexia, theories of discourse and women's embodied lives and their bodies are characterised by simultaneous multiplicities, contradictions, partialities and tensions. The use of metaphor demonstrates and celebrates these concepts and how they are not only connected, but also intertwined. For these reasons, my use of metaphor in this research is not only justified: it is necessary.

Thus, I am using a cyborg metaphor in order to understand the production of pro-anorexia through the internet. As I have argued that anorexia as a disorder has specific physical and social meanings that have been created through discourse, it is important that discourse should be assessed in this research, but assessed in a way that acknowledges its multipleness and constructedness.

## **Method**

According to Parker (1999), the study of discourse is predominantly confined to speech and writing, often generated from transcribed interviews. However, "discourse may be studied wherever there is meaning" (Parker, 1999, p. 3). Parker's perspective, coupled with Haraway's (1991) cyborg's privileging of text and technology necessitates pro-anorexic text online as the source of data for this analysis. In this study, I have analysed four self-identified pro-anorexic online

communities. Guided by Haraway's cyborg, I read the online communities, pulling into view discursive constructions that demonstrated the cyborg at work. I looked for discursive connections between Haraway's cyborg and pro-anorexia talk online and travelled along the information highways between those connections.

The websites selected were self-identified pro-anorexia websites or communities. By selecting self-identified pro-anorexia communities, I was free from making any assumptions about what does and does not constitute 'pro'-anorexia, aside from the act of self-identification. The criteria for inclusion into this study were that the online communities declared themselves to be 'pro-anorexic'; were text-based (written communication as opposed to solely videos or images); and made content publicly available. The website 'Pro-Ana-Nation' was chosen because it has a large amount of publicly available content and claims to be the largest and longest running pro-anorexia website. In addition, two publicly accessible LiveJournal communities featured prominently in the internet search results and thus were also selected to be part of this research. Another prominent search result was the link to a blog entitled '[Insert Awesome Ana Blog Title Here]' and this blog was also included in this research. By choosing results that feature prominently in internet search results it is likely that these sites are frequented and specifically searched for often and are thus legitimate sources of pro-anorexia text.

The available textual content within these communities provided the text for this analysis. I read the entirety of the publicly available content on two self-identified pro-anorexia websites ('Pro-Ana-Nation' and '[Insert Awesome Ana Blog Title Here]'), and a number of recent entries from two self-identified pro-anorexia online communities ('proanorexia' and 'lovealways\_ana.' These two communities were massive, containing more than 600,000 and 700 entries respectively, with each

entry varying in length and number of user comments, hence only a selection of recent entries was chosen for this study). Guided by Haraway's (1991) cyborg, I looked for talk on these websites that demonstrated the cyborg. For example, Haraway's cyborg has a neediness for connection, thus, I looked for how the desire for connection was realised in the texts.

As I read for discourses that built and rebuilt the cyborg, I was interested in how information, networking and interconnectedness and their technologies inscribed bodies with meaning. Through reading and re-reading the texts, the analysis is organised around six 'cyborg' metaphors that serve as heuristic devices for interpreting pro-anorexic resistance to patriarchal femininity.

Alongside the content from the pro-anorexia websites, a number of terms used as techno-metaphors in this analysis are cited from two websites: [cyborganthropology.com](http://cyborganthropology.com) and [techterms.com](http://techterms.com). While these websites would not be considered academic websites, they are a source of technological terminology used within cyborg talk. As I have demonstrated with concepts such as anorexia and cyborgs, new technologies enable new possibilities for discourse. New technologies enable new forms of meaning to emerge.

Specifically, for this research, the internet has enabled its users to create, share and legitimise new ways of talking about cyberspace and cyborgology. Internet users use terms that are not only exclusive to cyberspace, but perhaps only exist because the online platform exists. These terms are legitimate in the online community, and therefore they are legitimate for my research.

The analysis is organised by techno-metaphor that has been informed by techno-speak. The 'Impossible Feast' is a techno-metaphor for the continual consumption of information provided by technological advances. This reflects

cyborg privileging of information, text and networking, as well as the cyborg's desire for multiplicity, hybridity, contradiction, blurred boundaries and resistance.

'Algorithms,' as systems for the control of data, metaphorically reference the cyborg's efficiency by employing strategies for self-preservation, authenticity and fluidity.

'Panic Architecture' is a techno-metaphor that describes the intensity of the participation required to maintain an online environment. The cyborg employs 'Panic Architecture' in order to continually recreate and update its simulated consciousness, its information and its connections.

'Tech Support' connects the technical support provided for technology users and the support provided online for the cyborg so that it may continue to revel in its non-innocence, disruptiveness and its connectedness.

Before technological devices are released onto the market, they are checked by quality control to ensure they function correctly. The cyborg metaphorically engages in a similar process. Cyborgs metaphorically engage in 'Quality Control' in order to privilege information, connections and question authenticity while simulating their consciousness.

'Ubiquitous Computing' refers to the proliferating connections between technological devices. Metaphorically, the cyborg needs these connections in order to share information and thus resist, contradict and disrupt.

The pro-anorexic texts are interpreted through these techno-metaphors so as to enable an understanding of the pro-anorexic cyborg as unapologetically resistant to the patriarchal femininity that shorts her circuits.

### **Analysis: System Diagnostics**

All of the pro-anorexic communities studied were text-based communities. That is, most communication was conducted via typed comments and webpage entries. However, each of the pro-anorexic websites studied were structured quite differently. ‘Pro-Ana-Nation’ is a web domain maintained by a single site administrator. She updates and expands the numerous web pages contained within the website. This site also utilises a private forum for its members, who must be over the age of 18 years. The content of this private forum can only be accessed by ‘Pro-Ana-Nation’ members who have been approved by the site’s administrator. Therefore, the data for analysis in this site is limited to content that is presented as public. The inclusion of this site is important because it is the largest in terms of scope (including medical, clinical, psychological information), membership and its extensive links to other sites. It also has the longest history of presence on the internet, including an ongoing pattern of forced closure (McCabe, 2009).

On the other hand, the two pro-anorexic communities housed within the journal-based social website LiveJournal (‘proanorexia’ and ‘lovealways\_ana’) were structured more like conventional internet forums. A LiveJournal user can post a journal entry (such as a question, anecdote or link) to a pro-anorexic LiveJournal group, and fellow group members can attach comments to the journal posting. Members can even comment on other people’s comments. Every journal posting or comment is connected to the member who wrote it with a link to his or her personal LiveJournal profile.

The pro-anorexic blog, called ‘[Insert Awesome Ana Blog Title Here],’ used in this study is structured like a personal diary for the blogger. She uploads long, regular diary-like entries to her blog and other bloggers comment in response to her

posts. While the structure of this blogging community seems similar to the structure of the LiveJournal communities on the surface, the content differs significantly. The LiveJournal entries are typically much shorter, more direct and feature a large number of users. While there are some regular users of the communities, most users were not regular posters. The blog, however, was written by a single user (like the 'Pro-Ana-Nation' website), and frequented by a core group of the blogger's followers. As such, the content within the blog posts was more personal and more detailed than the LiveJournal posts and the 'Pro-Ana-Nation' webpages.

The differences in these websites were purposefully chosen to access the diversity of the social culture of these groups in online communication. In order to make sense of pro-anorexia as resistance, this analysis is an interpretation of the connections between Haraway's (1991) cyborg and the interactivity of pro-anorexia online. The analysis is organised through the 'cyborg' metaphors that emerged as I travelled the information highway that is the internet. It should be noted that all quotes used in the analysis are written exactly as they appeared in the pro-anorexia websites.

### **The Impossible Feast**

The pro-anorexia community offers its members an Impossible Feast. These websites contain "data that appears endlessly, inviting the user to consume to exhaustion without actually having depleted its resources" (Cyborg Anthropology, 2010). The user of a website can consume as much information as they want or need without depleting stored data. In fact, the more people consume the website's data, the more the resource reproduces, via links, forums and messaging. Thus, the term 'Impossible Feast' suggests that website users can continuously consume

exponentially reproducing information without ever getting full and without ever running out of 'food,' satisfying every informational whim. The Impossible Feast offered by the internet allows us to share and indulge in a wide variety and massive amounts of data that can be used to increase efficiency at any number of tasks, to problem solve and to monitor our environments, in an effort to satiate the desire for knowledge and control.

All four of the pro-anorexia communities examined in this study overwhelmingly prioritised the collection and sharing of information. Informative sub-sections, diary entries and forum topics provide 'banquet halls' for website users to find, share and discuss any and all information relevant to eating disorders, mental illnesses, diagnostic criteria, weight loss strategies (from pills to purging to fasting), food, the body and symptoms; links to other pro-anorexia websites and recovery websites; shared emotional experiences; and requests for help with weight loss, weight loss techniques and hiding symptoms.

The publicly available content on the website Pro-Ana Nation is almost exclusively for educational purposes. 'Pro-Ana-Nation' dedicates 11 webpages to clinical descriptions and the DSM diagnostic criteria of anorexia, bulimia, eating disorder not specified, binge eating disorder and orthorexia, as well as clinical descriptions and criteria for depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorders and personality disorders. The site also dedicates most of its webpages to informing its audience about physical symptoms and symptom management, tips to stay healthy and the identification of 'bad' tips and myths, as well as an extensive section detailing the roles and functions of foods, vitamins, minerals and physical exercises and their impact upon the body. Weight charts, Body Mass Index (BMI) charts and calculators and a metric conversion calculator are also available on the site. All this

publicly available information is complimented by the members-only forum. Thus, there are multiple, interlinked pages of information readily available to anyone who wishes to consume them. These pages also contain citations that link to other websites. For example, on the webpage dedicated to information about Anxiety, the ‘webmistress’ provides a web link to the American Psychological Association’s webpage about anxiety. A pro-anorexic can consume this information about anxiety via Pro-Ana Nation, then can consume more information via the APA website. Here we see the information reproducing itself as it is consumed.

Similarly, within the LiveJournal communities, ‘proanorexia’ and ‘lovealways\_ana,’ users request and share information about food, vitamins and minerals, bodily functions, weight loss strategies, medical knowledge, diagnostic criteria and emotional issues. Requests for help with diets and clarification of weight loss techniques are common:

has anyone done the salt water flush that would like to share their experience? (dead\_2me in ‘proanorexia’)

I’m looking to get a new scale, should I go with digital or not? Which is more accurate? (meltlikeice in ‘proanorexia’)

Members of these pro-anorexic communities are eager to gain as much knowledge as possible about how weight-loss techniques work with their bodies:

Does that mean my body digested it already? I’m not too sure how long it takes, like how long it remains in your stomach for. Can anyone clear that up for me. (anaphylalex in ‘lovealways\_ana’)

Other requests include pleas for help with the clarification of clinical understandings of anorexia:

just wondering what constitutes an eating disorder... (eve1986 in ‘proanorexia’)

my dad wants to take me to the doctor to diagnose me. I want like a heads up on what questions I can expect... (caitlinhoebrien in 'proanorexia')

Clinical interpretations of anorexia were, for the most part, rejected in favour of advice from other community members. That is, information presented within a pro-anorexic frame of reference is more valuable than a doctor's opinion. However, clinical opinion was not totally discredited. Within these communities there was an acknowledgment that a doctor's advice should be sought if someone felt they needed it. Thus, at this Impossible Feast, medical data garnishes personal experience. Some users consume medical information readily, others chew it up and spit it out.

As such, most of the responses to any requests for information were in the form of personal experiences, and at the same time blur the boundaries between information and biological cleanliness, as pro-anorexics sought and shared information about how weight-loss strategies such as the salt water flush or drinking apple cider vinegar influenced the body:

honestly, it was the MOST disgusting thing i've ever tried & wouldn't recommend it... (bella\_star\_life in 'proanorexia')

I didn't lose anything. But it did upset my stomach A LOT.  
(shaletown in 'proanorexia')

Eva, who maintains the blog called '[Insert Awesome Ana Blog Title Here],' also provides information and experiential knowledge to her followers. In blog entries such as "Fasting Side Effects," "Drained," "More Fasting Info," "Quickie" and "Some Quick Juice Fasting Info," Eva shares her experiences of fasting, informing her followers about side effects she experiences and how she manages them, as well as describing how she feels while fasting:

I am going to outline every single fasting side effect/symptom I've ever had to cope with. ("Fasting Side Effects")

Light headedness will be another side effect that's bound to happen. The only thing you can do is to try to stand up slowly and if you feel faint, sit down right away. You don't want to bring attention to yourself by passing out. ("More Fasting Info")

The important thing is to very slowly reintroduce foods to your body, starting with nutrient dense, low calorie foods such as raw fruits and vegetables. Your metabolism will go back up if you give it time. ("Drained")

Information about the alteration to the body is given dramatic significance through technologies of power, where knowledge is transformed into physical and psychological imprints on the body. The body is constructed as requiring modification through information in order for it to be redeemed.

Eva, like her sisters in the 'Pro-Ana-Nation' and LiveJournal communities, acknowledges the importance of gathering and sharing information:

One thing that really really helped me when I first started my 30 day fast was to research fasting. I read and read and read about it. ("Quickie")

It isn't recommended that you take any sort of supplements during a fast. I know that sounds really odd, but that's what ever fasting article I read has said, though I haven't really figured out the reasoning. I'll try get more info on that. ("Some Quick Juice Fasting Info")

In addition, she shares and critiques information about the use of vitamins, exercises and liquids used for fasting, producing modifiable bodies as interactions between information and bodily functions to improve upon them and ultimately control them.

Much like in the LiveJournal communities, Eva's followers, through comments on her blog posts, ask her for personal advice:

Eva! I could really use your help! What are your strategies for long-term fasting? (Jenna, on "Still Struggling")

These pro-anorexic communities are an informational bring-your-own, all-you-can-eat buffet where young women can continuously chew through as much information as they want or need. Information is exchanged and created continuously, with community members devouring data and regurgitating it for the next woman. The vast amount of information provided, coupled with the constant flow of questions and answers, suggests that pro-anorexic communities value the collection and sharing of information, and that this information must be detailed as possible and preferably supported by personal experience. Not only is the information expansive, it is also interconnected. It can be stored and retrieved instantly. The use of links and search engines ensure fast, easy and direct access to even more information. Information sustains a pro-anorexic community. Streams of data keep pro-anorexic communities functioning at an optimal level and informational nodes need to be pinged in order to keep the pro-anorexic machine alive.

Much like at a buffet, this information came in multiple forms and was presented in a variety of ways. Pro-anorexia on the internet is fuelled by data that can be readily consumed and easily reproduced. These communities enjoy an impossible feast of data by constantly consuming it and at the same time producing more. Whether via links, updated blogs or forum comments, information is continuously being created, consumed and recreated. Moreover, this makes pro-anorexic information multiple, partial and contradictory, constructing hybrid knowledges. In addition, the body is produced as a device that can be modified with the correct information and tools. Like Haraway's cyborg, the pro-anorexic cyborg privileges, values and needs knowledge in order to construct this mechanical embodiment. Information is the sustenance that slides down the pro-anorexic cyborg's throat. Information, and the ability to manipulate it, helps the women in these communities

to gain control over their experiences by breaking down their bodies and rebuilding them. This community arms itself with knowledge and skills in a counter-strike against the uncontrollable.

### **Algorithms**

An algorithm is a mathematical set of instructions or rules, and these instructions carry the information necessary for perform a task or procedure (TechTerms.com, 2012). Algorithms aim to be efficient and to maximise output while streamlining input. Algorithms are highly adaptable and can be created and applied for many uses. They control performance and outcomes and they set parameters. Algorithms must be clearly defined, but able to be manipulated to account for new situations and information. An algorithm can be something as commonplace a recipe or as technical as coding in a computer program. The idea of an algorithm is that it provides its user (human or machine) with step-by-step instructions for how to successfully perform a task. If the algorithm's rules are followed, you will achieve your desired outcome. Algorithms control function, determine outcomes and provide predictability.

The women who use pro-anorexic communities employ the properties of algorithms in order to talk about and shape their bodies and emotional lives. There is discussion about the desire for and methods of control over their bodies, food and social lives.

**Greedy algorithms.** A greedy algorithm constructs “a solution piece by piece, always choosing the next piece that offers the most obvious and immediate benefit” (Dasgupta, Papadimitriou, & Vazirani, 2006, p. 139). This type of algorithm uses any available strategy in order to patch together the best possible outcome. The

users of pro-anorexic communities seem to use a similar strategy to gain control over what they perceive to be uncontrollable lives. Overall, across all online communities, pro-anorexics talked about the desire for control in a physical and social world that they perceived to be out of their control:

I have nothing inside of me to overpower the crap that people dish out to me. (starve2thrive in 'proanorexia')

i just need the control that my life otherwise lacks! it's not about looking like nicole Richie, it's about having something that's yours. (coco\_123 in 'proanorexia')

You say you aren't strong enough for eating, but being strong enough to starve is so much harder. If you can do that, you can do anything. (Ell on "I Promise I'm Not Hungry")

Eating disorders are about attempting to control your life and emotions through food/lack of food – and are a huge neon sign saying "look how out of control I really feel" ('Pro-Ana-Nation')

Fasting in particular features prominently in the greedy algorithm. While fasting and greediness may appear dichotomous, where fasting is understood as the available strategy of immediate benefit, fasting is readily engaged to determine predictable outcomes:

Every bite is my choice. (Eva in "Dear, I am Absolutely Stuffed.")

But, at this point, since I feel out of control, I feel it's the only thing that I can do right now to have some sort of sanity. (kmic29 in 'proanorexia')

I feel special & like im stronger than everyone else because I can deny myself food. (notyet\_perfect in 'proanorexia')

Eva explains that she became involved in fasting and pro-anorexia blogging in an attempt to gain control over her emotionally troubled body:

It started more out of a sudden depression than a desire to lose all of my fat. But I'm going to latch on to it and channel the fear and

sadness that caused me to stop eating into the self Control I need.  
(Eva in “My New Year is my New Chance”)

Furthermore, in response to the illness of a family member, Eva turns to the control of her body to manage her emotions, producing a reduced and more controlled biology:

I won't allow myself to use this as an excuse to eat. I will channel my grief into my fast. (Eva in “Another Addition to my Emptiness”)

For the women using these websites, control over explicitly biological acts (such as eating) signifies either success or failure at producing biologically controlled cyborg embodiment:

I have to admit my failures to you, even though I'd rather tell you I had a perfect food free day. I ate a teeny tiny bit (I just typo typed hate instead of ate there) of food this morning. (Eva in “Mayday”)

For these users, the pro-anorexic information provided in the Impossible Feast enables the deployment of strategies to control troubled bodies in order to exercise control in an unstable world. By replacing food with cold, hard data, pro-anorexic cyborgs are using a greedy algorithm that can provide them with the outcome they need: control of the body/machine organism. Digesting food and tasting control over the body has multiple and varied outcomes (from weight gain to alteration of bodily functions), producing a disciplined body:

Nothing matters but thin and I will not lose control of myself again. (Eva in “Gross”)

I feel so much more together now that I'm starving. (Eva in an untitled blog entry)

I can almost taste the amazing feelings of control and power that come from depriving myself so thoroughly. I can't wait to feel the dizziness, weakness, lightness wrap around me. (Eva in “Relief”)

The restriction of biology is deployed through greedy algorithmic strategy that is cobbled together with pro-anorexic information. This produces the body as a malleable site, but in a distinctly biologically controlled way. While women's bodies are known for their biologically shape-shifting ways, the cyborg dismantles and rebuilds bodies, privileging the degradation of biological experience and celebrating clean, efficient and controlled bodies.

Across these websites, the biological nature of the female body is constructed as a something that needs to be controlled in order to ensure the efficiency of social and physical interactions in the 'real' world. Any information is considered useful, as it feeds into greedy algorithmic strategies that help pro-anorexia website users negotiate their emotional and embodied lives in multiple, partial and contradictory ways. The assumption seems to be that controlling everything biological (food, bodily functions and so on) will lead to control over one's entire life. Failing to achieve control over biological functions requires new strategies to improve the accuracy of the algorithm. The more information a greedy algorithm has, the more accurate the algorithm can become. The more accurate the algorithm, the more efficient and controlled the machine can become. Pro-anorexics deploy a greedy algorithm to control their eating, adjusting the algorithm's mathematics to their own personal requirements, and use the algorithm to achieve a predictable sense of physical and emotional control. While the actions of others can be unpredictable, an algorithm that equates dietary control to emotional stability can prepare pro-anorexics for any difficulties that they may face. This gives a cyborg stability (preventing it from overheating in times of crisis) and efficiency (ensuring the smooth, stable running of the internal cogs).

**Transform coding.** Transform coding is a data compression algorithm that minimises data such as audio, image and video files in a computer. This algorithm compresses data for ease of transfer, but degrades the quality of the data in the process (Goyal, 2001). It seems that members of these pro-anorexic communities employ a transform coding algorithm over their bodies and biologies in order to not only control biology, but also minimise its influence or presence. To ease the alteration, bodies as compressed data produces a more controlled biology that circumvents messy bodies that leak. The fluidity of biology threatens the fixity of the cyborg. Control over the female body, food and metabolism, menstruation and hair loss are markers of the fear and disgust the troublesome biological body engenders:

The water fasting is so impressive, so much control! (Jennie on “The Power Of The Scale”)

Pay attention to your body and learn how to control it. (Eva in “Fasting Side Effects”)

I hate purging. I feel so out of control and every time I try to grab control back, I just ruin it. (Eva in “Back Again, Day One Again”)

i want to bleed again. i really really do. (just\_thinkthin in ‘proanorexia’)

Messy biological bodies and their functions are troublesome for pro-anorexic cyborgs. Naturally occurring bodily functions represent the uncontrollable. These functions remind cyborgs of the contraction between their desire to reject wild biological bodies and their undeniable dependence upon them. Normal biological functions are produced as disgusting. Within these communities, there is a rejection of biological function as an unnecessary, disgusting and to-be-hidden or minimised aspect of human life. The act of eating is an intolerable and unclean biological requirement:

I only eat when I absolutely have to. (Violet on “First Week of Juice Starving Down!”)

I did do some chew and spit action, which I hate. For one, because it’s gross. And even more because it takes away from the feeling of control that I need. I was really careful, thoroughly washing out my mouth, but it still feels like cheating even though I didn’t swallow. (Eva in an untitled blog entry)

Food is viewed as an obstacle to both control and emotional safety, further blurring the boundaries between biology, bodies and minds:

Food is a hinderance to your progress. (cryssyn in ‘lovealways\_ana’)

I only feel safe when I cut off any means of nourishment. (Eva in “Relief”)

Every time I say no to even something small, I just feel this jolt of empowerment. (Eva in “Third and Final Day of Water”)

This construction of food as an obstacle produces food as a biological necessity that needs restriction. Biological matter interferes with the lightness and cleanliness of the cyborg body and potentially interrupts the efficient mechanical systems that attend to the cyborg’s emotional experiences. Eva notes that it is easier for her emotionally to starve herself rather than eat:

I don’t know why, it just seems so much easier to starve than it is to eat. (Eva in “Thirty-One”)

In addition, internal biological organs, such as the stomach, were a source of distress for users of these pro-anorexic communities, whether full or empty:

A full belly is the mother of all evil. (cryssyn in ‘lovealways\_ana’)

I hate stomach noises... (xmorethinx in ‘lovealways\_ana’)

Vomiting was also a concern:

Throwing up engenders intense feelings of guilt and shame.  
 Remaining alone ensures that these activities will remain secret.  
 ('Pro-Ana-Nation')

I binged. I was sick, bloated, disgusted. I cried. I felt stupid and all of the other terrible, awful things I new I would feel when I was convincing myself that it was ok to eat this time. (Eva in "SOS!")

The need to minimise and degrade biological experiences such as vomiting is expressed through the pro-anorexic cyborg's distressed discussion of bodily reactions to food. The experience of biological matter entering, exploiting and exiting the body reminds cyborgs of the biological and mechanical boundaries they prefer to blur.

Following the principles of a transform coding algorithm, pro-anorexic communities minimise biological dependence by restricting food intake and degrading the quality of biological functions; however, the cyborg delights in the efficient manner in which the body is cleansed and controlled. Freeing the body of as much biological dependence as possible is the cyborg's way of taking pleasure in the blurring of boundaries between the body as biology and the body as machine.

Furthermore, food and bodily waste are constructed as pollutants to the body. The women in these communities talked about food and bodily functions as material that is not supposed to be inside the body, as if such biological substances will jeopardise the lightness, cleanliness and efficiency of the body's internal machinery:

I've totally polluted my body. (Jena on "Ages Ago")

Thus, any biological substances need to be cleared from the body efficiently:

I really really want to cleanse all those Southern home cooked meals out of me. (Eva in "Ages Ago")

The body is constructed as a vessel that can be routinely cleaned so as to make it cleaner, lighter and more efficient:

When the digestive system gets a break, our bodies have more time to devote to cleaning up. Plus, we aren't adding new toxins, so it's a much deeper clean. (Eva in "More Fasting Info")

Physical signs of the control over the body are often used as guidelines as to whether the transform coding algorithm is working efficiently, again blurring the boundary between biologically healthy bodies and streamlined cyborg bodies:

I just have to see my hair start falling out again, or I don't know what I will do. (Eva in "But She Wouldn't Go Away")

Biological functions are discussed on these sites as disgusting, unnecessary and to-be-hidden aspects of human life that signify out-of-control biological bodies. The pro-anorexics within these communities seek to minimise these biological functions to achieve efficiency. Signs of control over biology, such as weight loss, hair loss and amenorrhea, are considered signals that biology is being controlled as intended and thus its unstable influence minimised. Again, we see that pro-anorexics are following an algorithm that mechanises biology in order to control, minimise and streamline it. Sequences of tasks (such as purging or fasting) lead to desired, predictable, controlled outcomes. Pro-anorexic transform coding enables the minimisation and tighter control of biological experience, and privileges the efficient, clean mechanical functioning of the body unburdened by messy biology.

**Mechanical algorithmic efficiency.** The efficiency of an algorithm is dependent upon how well the algorithm utilises its resources (Pager, 1970). The time, space and resources that the algorithm requires also contribute to how effective the algorithm is. Within the pro-anorexic communities, there is extensive talk about the specifics of emotional functioning and biological functioning inside the body. Pro-anorexic cyborgs are using the biological body's own mechanics to control it.

Pro-anorexic communities are concerned with the way their minds and their bodies are functioning. Within the talk of control, pro-anorexics pay particular attention to the mechanical functioning of the mind and body, and the food, vitamins and minerals that it needs, as well as how weight loss strategies function.

‘Pro-Ana-Nation’ provides descriptions of emotional and psychological issues that may be experienced as a result of starvation, bingeing, purging or the use of pharmaceutical drugs. ‘Pro-Ana-Nation’ informs its users of the likelihood of impaired functioning from participating in eating disordered behaviours. The website also proposes that impaired emotional functioning may be the cause of an eating disorder, suggesting that faulty emotional wiring could be at the root of disordered eating. ‘Pro-Ana-Nation’ also focuses attention on functions that potentially decrease the efficiency of the female body, pinpointing potential glitches in the hardware.

The function of the body, its internal organs and hormonal systems is often discussed at length and in detail. Both medical and experiential knowledge is often shared in an effort to understand the basic biological functioning of the body in order to be prepared for the body’s biological backlash in response to being controlled so tightly:

I think that if we are prepared for what our body will go through, we’re more likely to stick around when things get rough. (Eva in “Fasting Side Effects”)

But it can cause gas, in both directions, luckily it isn’t the gross sort. Odor free and quiet. Just sort of expelling the air. (Eva in “Fasting Side Effects”)

By understanding exactly how minds and bodies function the algorithms that pro-anorexics use will become even more efficient and in turn will create the lived experience of mechanical efficiency:

There also comes a sense of clarity. Somehow it feels as though your mind just works better on a fast. (Eva in “Fasting Side Effects”)

Again, the boundary between the body and the mind is blurred and there is tension in significance of the body to the mind. The body, when effectively restricted, is less of a hindrance to the efficient mechanical functioning of the mind.

The women who use pro-anorexic communities are using their knowledge of bodily function to manipulate their own internal mechanics in order to blur the boundary between sick and healthy, or, in cyborg terms, survival and non-survival:

It’s a personal thing to know what your body can handle, just have to carefully test it out. (Eva in “Extending the Water”)

If your energy is low, like too low to function, switch to juice fasting. (Eva in “Fasting Side Effects”)

I get light headed, dehydrated, and white-tongued, just like I like it. (Eva in “Oh Darling, Don’t Eat That.”)

There is simultaneous rejection and acceptance of the biological body as part of cyborg embodiment. Knowing and understanding the body’s functions allows a cyborg to blur and negotiate this rejection/acceptance of the sick body/healthy body dichotomy. Pro-anorexic cyborgs gather information about the use of natural tools to tune up their own bodily functions:

I’ve heard stuff about cinnamon being good for a metabolism boost, not sure if that’s actually true or scientifically baked. (Eva in “Thirty Three”)

Maybe introduce some extra liquid calories to keep your metabolism going and keep you from fainting. (Kat on “Exhaustion is Killing Me”)

Also when my body, like arms and legs hurt, I need to eat. (rebeekikio on ‘lovealways\_ana’)

Similarly, 'Pro-Ana-Nation' offers its audience information on the physical effects of starvation, bingeing and purging, laxatives and diuretics, malnutrition and dangerous food alternatives such as cotton or paper. By providing this kind of information, pro-anorexia websites ironically produce that set biology against itself. Understanding biological and emotional functioning allows cyborgs to maintain the mechanics of their bodies in order to maximise their internal efficiency and thus embody anorexia resistance in an unsurvivable world.

Eva even suggests that negotiating with the biology of the human body is a natural human mechanism:

Our bodies were meant to survive through famine, so a fast is actually a natural thing. (Eva in "Quickie!")

Again, the pro-anorexic cyborg is contradictorily depending upon and minimising the influence of biology and biological information. This multiple, partial, ironic and contradictory cyborg uses this tension to successfully negotiate the boundary between survival and non-survival, using and resisting the medical discourse of the body to produce a politically charged troubled body:

i do agree that having my body eat my organs from starvation and having been sat in a crummy hospital being pumped full of calories for months on end, that anorexia is a murderer, a chronic killer which nobody should ever have to decent into then endure. (bingeandpurge07 on 'proanorexia')

The pro-anorexic concern with function is deliberate. By gathering as much information about how minds, bodies, vitamins and other biological material works, the more efficient the pro-anorexic algorithm for control can become. By learning about the functions of internal organs, foods, nutrients, metabolism and weight-loss techniques, pro-anorexics are collecting data that enables control over the biological, physical body. Adding more and more instructions to the algorithm makes it more

efficient and more effective, and therefore it enables the control and streamlining of the biological mechanisms of physical bodies and thus negating any nasty surprises that a female body might spring on an unsuspecting cyborg.

### **Panic Architecture**

Pro-anorexia websites require extensive ongoing maintenance. Like other online social networks, pro-anorexia communities are panic architectures. Panic architecture is the structure of a social network or website that requires extensive participation from its users, demanding “compulsive interaction and attention” in order to maintain the network (Cyborg Anthropology, 2010). Websites need users to continually click, refresh, upload and monitor networks so that these networks do not only proliferate, but also continue to reproduce themselves.

The pro-anorexic communities studied produced panic architecture in two ways. Firstly, pro-anorexic communities demonstrate panic architecture in their construction of anorexia and anorexic behaviours. Secondly, pro-anorexic panic architecture is created through the importance placed on maintaining the pro-anorexia communities online.

Participating in pro-anorexic communities online allows users to continually monitor their dieting behaviours. The behaviours become structures in the panic architecture of anorexia. Users serve up and feast upon information to help them organise and maintain anorexic behaviours. This is not necessarily to control anorexic behaviours specifically, but to maintain control over many aspects of life and to reflect upon thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Maintaining a pro-anorexic blog is associated with the strength to maintain fasts, diets and emotional stability, again privileging mind and machine over biology:

you always seem so strong when you're fasting and blogging...  
(Lulu on "Back Again, Day One Again")

I stumbled upon this website not so long ago and the posts on  
here make me a little stronger. (x\_whisper2me\_x on  
'proanorexia')

I haven't had a single bite of food since I started this blog. (Eva  
in "Twenty Seven")

I've tried to fast countless times since I stopped blogging. (Eva in  
"Isn't Hungry Delicious?")

The neediness for connection to pro-anorexic communities for the maintenance of anorexic behaviour produces pro-anorexia as a mechanically interconnected simulated anorexic consciousness that acts upon the bodies of these cyborgs. The extent to which biology is permitted to wield its influence over a cyborg body is mediated by the cyborg's connection to the machines and technologies that produce its consciousness. For the pro-anorexic cyborg, the act of plugging into the pro-anorexic community and the emotional strength to maintain behaviours such as fasting that deny the body biological sustenance are intimately connected. Keeping a blog alive restricts biological dependency, and affirms that machines function cleanly and more efficiently than biology. Just as women's bodies have been continually dismantled, rebuilt and updated, the pro-anorexic cyborg constantly rebuilds itself, reconfiguring discourse and inscribing new meanings onto bodies. The architecture of these websites allows for instantaneous and continuous updates to this task.

Conversely, abandoning pro-anorexic communities was characterised by feelings of fear and weakness, which can be understood as tension between the mechanical mind and the body's reconnection to biology:

I knew I needed livejournal. I KNEW i needed you guys for me  
to do this. I quit for a while.. I haven't been on for 6 months... i

ditched. I got scared, and just ditched. (natashacakes on 'lovealways\_ana')

I just didn't feel like writing. Maybe I thought I was so strong I didn't need to blog anymore. (Eva in "Back Again, Day One Again")

Pro-anorexia is constructed as strength and control when it is plugged into the machines and technologies that allow it to privilege information, texts and connections; however, the disconnection from these technologies is associated with the loss of control and the inability to remain staunchly oppositional to biology and the discourses that support it.

The second way in which pro-anorexia communities employ a panic architecture through the importance placed on updating and maintaining the online community. There is an obligation to keep the websites updated so that the pro-anorexic community is kept alive for the sake of the other members of the community:

I was so upset when you stopped posting out of the blue. (Savory Sweet on "Back Again, Day One Again")

And you **MUST** blog every day. I rely on your blogs... (Savory Sweet on "Oh Darling, Don't Eat That.")

Members of these communities come to rely on each other for their connections to anorexia and the pro-anorexic community in order to maintain anorexic behaviours and the online movement. However, there is responsibility to only maintain specifically 'pro-anorexic' contributions to the community that produce pro-anorexia as highly resistant and oppositional. Failure to maintain the community is constructed as failure to maintain the pro-anorexic machine:

I'm sorry. I feel like I've failed all of you. I promise to get my control back. (Eva in "Flooding")

I have been severely depressed, which is why I have not checked my inbox lately. Keep sending me emails. I really appreciate your comments, and will try to write back. ('Pro-Ana-Nation')

Unplugging from the pro-anorexia community occurs when biology regains control of the cyborg body. Connecting to share failure is permissible, but failing to connect to the community because of re-connection to biology destroys the panic architecture of these websites. This is unacceptable for the cyborg. The panic architecture of pro-anorexia websites creates communities in which active pro-anorexic participation is necessary in order to continually disrupt the mind/body dualism through the privileging of connections, information and machines.

Thus, pro-anorexic communities are maintained by a cycle of continuous updating to anorexic behaviours and the online environment through which these behaviours are maintained. There is a strong connection between continuous online participation and the maintenance of the pro-anorexic machine, both at an individual and a community level. This need for connection manifests itself through the continual building and rebuilding of anorexic bodies through pro-anorexic communities. Pro-anorexic cyborgs need these connections between their bodies and their machines in order to disrupt the boundary between biological lives and simulated anorexic consciousness online. Pro-anorexic communities thrive through these connections that are enabled by the panic architecture of pro-anorexic websites.

### **Tech Support**

Pro-anorexia communities demand participation for the maintenance of the community and the control that the community can offer. However, the kind of participation that is required is supportive and reciprocal. Users of pro anorexia websites are expected to participate honestly, whether offering up their own stories,

information or updates, or responding to other people's stories. It is simply not enough to share your anorexia; you must share in everyone else's anorexia too. Pro-anorexics are interconnected. Pro-anorexics share the machine. Supportive interaction is necessary in this pro-anorexic machine. It is not about challenging each other's opinions or behaviours: it is about unequivocal interconnected support in the quest to design a more tolerable embodied life.

The users of pro-anorexic websites claim that the communities are safe environments for anorexic expression as there is protection from intrusive, nay saying discourse:

...we can listen without judgement and tell without fear of it. (Eva in "Flirtations with Recovery")

Anorexics and bulimics come here for support, to feel safe, not be exposed to hatemails. ('Pro-Ana-Nation')

And I figure if I can't say it here, where can I? This is my little outlet. (xxuncertain on 'proanorexia')

I love love love the support you girls give me, so I definitely want to give back when someone asks for it. (Eva in "Quickie")

Users of pro-anorexic communities celebrate their non-innocence. Pro-anorexics understand that their position is not an innocent one, as it is uninterested in the unification of identity or the reproduction of dualisms, and takes pleasure in mechanical skill as vital for embodiment. Thus, when pro-anorexics share their knowledge and experiences within these communities, they are demanding the mutual celebration of this non-innocent position. Cyborgs dedicate their resistance to oppositional forces that will to subjugate them. Any opposing positions will not be tolerated, even from within the pro-anorexia machine.

As such, pro-anorexia communities are spoken of as support groups that have contributed significantly to the users' lived experiences:

im pro ana till i die. these girls aren't here to make the world anaorexic. they have stopped me from killing myself more times than you can imagine. it is a support group.” (x\_margot\_dk\_x on ‘proanorexia’)

if i wasn't on this site i would never be giving recovery a go.  
(aly\_louise on ‘proanorexia’)

Pro-anorexics use their connectedness to build support networks, utilising email, commenting and links to share in the reciprocity of pro-anorexic support through machines:

I must thank Paix, over at Tighropes and Constellations, who pulled me back into to going hungry. (Eva in “Away Too Long”)

Anyway, your comments are truly wonderful. I'm so thankful to be a member of this community. You keep me strong! (Eva in “French Fry Dreams”)

Thanks to everyone who's been commenting on my blog and encouraging me. It means a lot and it's such a huge help. Holly is definitely right that we are stronger together. (Eva in “Day Five”)

Thanks for posting a link to my blog! It means the world. (Kat on an untitled blog entry)

If you have a support team online, you can get immediate support in times of need. (‘Pro-Ana-Nation’)

This en masse interlinked pro-anorexic support is (arguably) exclusively found online. Only by plugging into technology can pro-anorexics find large numbers of women who also want to share their experiences, advice and support for other modern women experiencing anorexia. Pro-anorexic communities are large scale technical support services, equipped to help users with any technical issues they may be experiencing with their bodies and their emotional lives. Given the non-innocence of the pro-anorexic cyborg's position and its propensity to resist opposing positions, these communities are necessarily supportive and welcoming of fellow cyborgs who

need space to resist the dualisms that have defined them in intolerable ways and instead enjoy the tensions, multicity, partialities and contradictions they have experienced through their embodied lives.

### **Quality Control**

All electronic devices must undergo the process of quality control in order to check that they are functioning correctly. A device that passes the inspection is deemed suitable for use and is made available to the public. The device is legitimated as a functional machine and is authorised for use. Pro-anorexic cyborgs have their own quality control systems to ensure the effective and efficient political functioning the pro-anorexic machine.

Pro-anorexic communities are concerned with the legitimacy of knowledge and experience. Users of pro-anorexic communities work together to assure the quality of the information being shared, not in terms of the universal factuality of the information, but the factuality of the information as applied to troubled embodied lives. Like Haraway's (1991) cyborg, these communities question what legitimate knowledge is and who is capable of producing it. Specifically, the pro-anorexic communities question the legitimacy of medicine's knowledge of anorexia:

Today I read *Dying to be Thin*. There is a lot of crap written by these two doctors that comes across very dry and feels like being talked down to. I skip all that mumbo jumbo for the accounts written by the patients... It's nice that there are a variety of different sorts of people all dealing with it in different ways. But it's amazing that I can relate to all of them and feel for all of them. (Eva in "Day Eight Revival")

In the above example, Eva rejects the clinical description of anorexia and celebrates the first-hand experience. By rejecting the medical opinions as condescending, and praising the patient accounts of anorexia, Eva is reinforcing the oppositional pro-

anorexic perspective that personal experience is more valuable for pro-anorexic cyborgs than the clinical perspective. In another blog entry, Eva advocates actively undermining a doctor's authority and privileging information that strengthens pro-anorexic resistance to dominant discourse:

If you are concerned, make a doctor's appointment and talk about your desire to fast. You can make up some crap about spiritual reasons and the desire to cleanse your body. Whatever. A lot of sources advise doing this no matter how old you are. (Eva in "Hitches in the Plan")

Pro-anorexic cyborgs use the dominant discourse to make sense of the fluctuating meanings of their embodied lives as women, and then toss it aside. This produces a partial, multiple and contradictory pro-anorexia discourse. These cyborgs 'know' the genealogy of women's embodied lives and they use it to pull apart dominant discourse and re-appropriate it as a tool for resistance. Pro-anorexia's assertion of its non-innocence, opposition and right to legitimacy questions the authority of dominant discursive constructions of anorexia and positions pro-anorexia as a politically charged, but valid experience of female embodiment.

While questioning and delegitimising the authority of medical knowledge of anorexia, these pro-anorexic communities assert themselves as legitimate sources of knowledge and in turn, pro-anorexia is produced as a legitimate and politically active form of anorexia:

We're all trying to get through life the best way we feel we can. We all deserve to be treated with respect. (Eva in "Fasting Side Effects")

I often feel like I'm a part of this Awesome Army of Ana Bitches ready to take the world on. Skinny Power! (Eva in "Oh Darling, Don't Eat That.")

In response to Eva's comments above, Savory Sweet comments:

Sounds like we're a gang of vigilante super heroes.

In a separate blog post, Eva says:

In fact, all of us should move in together and become an amazing Ana commune. I'd be so awesome. (Eva in "Thirty Three")

To which Savory Sweet again responds:

God, what fun the media would have with that!

The interactions here between Eva and Savory Sweet demonstrate the pro-anorexic cyborg's political resistance by referencing the pro-anorexia movement's 'super hero' deviance from the dominant discourse. By simultaneously twisting dominant discourse to suit pro-anorexic needs and then dismissing it as illegitimate, pro-anorexics are constructing pro-anorexia as the real hub of pro-anorexic meaning.

However, the quest for pro-anorexic legitimacy does come at an ironic price.

While pro-anorexic discourse opposes and resists dominant discourse about the sickness/healthiness of anorexic bodies, there is simultaneous acknowledgement of the reality of anorexia as a feminine affliction:

I'm afraid, that I've might become immune to recovery, because I know kinda everything about the way they treat eating disordered people. (lilletroldemy on 'proanorexia')

yep, the media does a great job of making anorexia seem like the SUPER HERO ILLNESS, as I have dubbed it. They basically say; 'anorexics are too smart, and too driven, and have too much self-control', yep, that's gonna steer people away from it, nicely played. \*rips out hair\* (lameamy on 'proanorexia')

Here, again, pro-anorexic cyborgs are simultaneously accepting and rejecting dominant discourse, feeding into the multiplicity, partiality and contradictoriness of troubled female embodiment. There is also concern about what 'pro-anorexia' really counts as pro-anorexic knowledge within the pro-anorexia community, indicating

that pro-anorexics themselves are not always legitimate sources of pro-anorexic knowledge:

I hate the whole ‘lets be anorexic so we can be pretty at the prom’ attitude. (fat\_weak on ‘proanorexia’)

Seriously, who would want that? Do these people not read through our posts and see what’s happening to us? (eraseme83 on ‘proanorexia’)

Cos thats what this website is right? The first step to asking for help. We tell eachother everything: our pain, the troubles ana has brought us, why we got sick in the first place, etc. But maybe then this place shouldn’t be called proana.. maybe thats the initial problem. (elegantwaster on ‘proanorexia’)

... while we call ourselves pro-ana(because it’s an easy identifier), what a lot of sites are, are “pro-acceptance”, I find. (ohsocrazy lady on ‘proanorexia’)

But, I must say, that, even though a majority of the girls on Pro Anorexia are not, clinically, “anorexic”, that they do still suffer. (the\_jade\_forest on ‘proanorexia’)

Thus, what constitutes legitimate pro-anorexic talk is in a constant state of flux, much like Haraway’s (1991) cyborg. Pro-anorexic talk has multiple, hybrid meanings pulled from the tensions between their embodied lives and the positions dominant discourse has made available to them. Dominant discourse has not met the needs of women experiencing anorexia, so they have constructed new ways of talking that capture the experience of being a woman enveloped in troubled embodiment. Pro-anorexic quality control works to relieve the tensions between the conflicting discourses that operate through these communities. Any and all knowledge is processed in order to determine its legitimacy and authority within a pro-anorexic community. Knowledge that contributes to the celebration of oppositional non-innocence is legitimated and privileged, fuelling the efficiency and political effectiveness of the cyborg.

## Ubiquitous Computing

Ubiquitous computing refers to the ability of technological devices to communicate with each other (Cyborg Anthropology, 2010). Information is compressed and easily connected in and through modern technological advancements, thus computers are becoming increasingly omnipresent. From barcodes to mobile phones to wireless internet, we are connected to each other and to machines. Pro-anorexic communities exploit the ubiquity of these connections.

Pro-anorexic cyborgs use their connections to online and offline technologies in multiple ways. Technological tools such as the internet and computer software are also used by pro-anorexics to create or enhance ‘thinspiration’ images, as well as purchasing weight-loss tools:

I ordered the Scale online. In person, it’s a different color, still nice. It’s more modern, sleeker looking. Seems to work well.  
(Eva in “The Power of The Scale”)

And to search for even more information:

When I left I googled the eating disorder specialist he told me about. Reading about her detailed treatment plan really freaked me out. (Eva in “Flirtations with Recovery”)

The connections to these technologies, as well as the skills to use them, are vital for the proliferation of the pro-anorexic cyborg discourse that inscribes female bodies with meaning. Without these connections, cyborgs are separated from machines and pulled back into intolerable biological lives.

Other technological devices such as the television provide distracting entertainment for pro-anorexics working through a fast. ‘Pro-Ana-Nation’ and blogger Eva both suggest surfing the internet, watching movies, playing video games and reading books to serve as distractions while dieting or stressed. There is a need to connect to technology in order to minimise the distraction of biology. This

continues to signify the tensions between the nuisance of biological bodies and the privileging of mechanical, technological cyborg embodiment.

Even seemingly innocuous technologies are given added significance in non-innocent pro-anorexic communities, as Eva demonstrates in her affection for a technology that literally grinds up biological material:

Our garbage disposal sure gets a lot of use. (Eva in “Day Eleven Laziness”)

Similarly, all communities within this study made use of tools, such as scales and calculators, in order to calculate various numbers that contribute to the efficiency with which pro-anorexics can monitor, control and restrict their biologies. For example, throughout Eva’s blog and the entries within the LiveJournal communities, there is an emphasis on numbers, such as weight lost and gained, current weights, goal weights, lowest weights, highest weights, height, calories and extensive food statistics. Within these communities, numbers of all kinds are valued as markers of the mechanical control over biology:

I feel like I absolutely need to see the numbers. (Eva in “Thirty Three”)

Furthermore, ‘Pro-Ana-Nation’ provides a Body Mass Index calculator, a calories burned calculator, a kilogram to pounds weight converter and a height-weight chart. ‘Pro-Ana-Nation’ also provides users with animated diagrams demonstrating various exercises to burn fat and shape the body. Widely available technological tools are used within pro-anorexia communities to calculate the body’s boundaries and disrupt them with altered algorithmic equations. These cyborgs use the fixity of numbers to shape and reshape their bodies, blurring the boundaries of their biological bodies with the mechanical devices used to shape and inscribe meaning on them.

Pro-anorexic cyborgs are connected to machines and to each other through new devices and technological advancements, further blurring the boundaries between biology and machine. The proliferation of portable internet capable devices such as mobile phones and laptops, as well as the extension of the wireless internet, means that women can plug into pro-anorexia anytime, anywhere. Cyborgs use these technologies to navigate their pro-anorexic communities and to negotiate their embodied lives. A pro-anorexic can be updating her blog via the wireless internet from her mobile phone while on a bus ride to a supermarket. She can research food products online while inside the supermarket. She can review products online as she uses them, spreading that information to her fellow pro-anorexics at the click of a button. Her fellow pro-anorexic cyborgs can access her reviews instantaneously and continuously, adding their own advice and experiential knowledge. Pro-anorexia is anywhere technology can be found. Pro-anorexic women, like many of us now in the Western world, are hybridised with machines. Pro-anorexia not only needs these machines in order to survive: it has become one with these machines.

Clearly, pro-anorexics are skilled at using technology to shape their bodies and to share their stories, advice and knowledge. As such, the internet is the main technological tool that pro-anorexics use to participate in the community as a movement. Links are provided to a wide variety of other sites, including other blogs, user profiles and pro-anorexia websites; recovery websites; informational websites; food websites; and medical websites. However, pro-anorexics also use the technological capabilities of the internet to enhance the potency of the resistant and politically charged pro-anorexic discourse.

The site administrator for 'Pro-Ana-Nation' reviews requests for membership to the private forum before the accounts are approved and activated, and comments

are subject to approval by the administrator, as she actively monitors and blocks any potential sources of disapproving dominant discourse:

Your messages won't be autopublished. All entries will be approved by me. ('Pro-Ana-Nation')

In addition, the technology of the internet allows for the deletion or blocking of unwanted comments and messages:

That said, anyone know if there is a way to block a specific person from commenting? (Eva in "Fasting Side Effects")

I have deleted all the hatemails and the lecturing notes in my Guestbook... I believe in the freedom of speech, but from now on I will delete messages in my guestbook. ('Pro-Ana-Nation')

In the above examples, pro-anorexics are working with technology to ensure that their connections to the pro-anorexic machine are protected from malicious attacks from dominant discourse. By monitoring and blocking unwelcome talk, the pro-anorexic community can use technology to internally control the construction of pro-anorexic meanings. The cyborg has no tolerance for having its own authority questioned by the authorities it has already dismissed as illegitimate, and will not hesitate to use its technological skill to terminate any traces of pervasive dominant discourse.

It follows then that pro-anorexic communities use the technology to subvert the persecutory gaze of dominant discourse and other internet users who deploy it. For example, when talking about the creation of a pro-anorexic Facebook group, Eva and her followers discuss how to hide the group from the view of the public:

Pro-Ana groups have to be kept secret to avoid getting banned, so if you friend me, I'll invite you to the group. (Eva in "Juiced to the Third")

But yes... most of the world hates anorexia and pro-ana groups will be reported if they aren't kept secret. (Kat on "Five Days Foodless- Two Days Juiced and Facebook!")

The pro-anorexic communities use internet technology to protect the pro-anorexic machine from the political forces that seek to dismantle the movement:

I have been contemplating to password protect the site because of the threat I received, but I decided against it. At least for now. I strongly believe in the freedom of speech, and will not respond to threats by making this an underground website. ('Pro-Ana-Nation')

Rather than tolerate dominant discourse, the pro-anorexia community increases its resistance by controlling its own erasure. Pro-anorexic cyborgs use their connections to each other and to technology to shift their discourse into the depths of cyberspace, into private forums and buried webpages. The cyborg even conceals itself when out in the open, blurring the boundary between its own presence and non-presence:

google knows everything! type your username into google and it comes up with just about everything you post on LJ. its frekin scary!!!!!! theres no privacy on google. (x\_h\_3\_a\_r\_t\_x on 'proanorexia')

In response to this post, many users suggested that all members of the community should 'lock' their posts thus making them private and hiding them from the prying eye of the Google search.

Pro-anorexic cyborgs are protective of their voice, as it is continually being outlawed by the dominant discourse that positions it as extreme deviance. As such, the cyborg voice echoes through the internet, simultaneously ubiquitous and inconstant, dodging the influence of dominant discourse and parodying its attempts to shut the pro-anorexic machine down. The cyborg skilfully tailors its online technologies to mock dominant discourse, poking it the eye if it peeks too closely.

## System Check

These 'cyborg' metaphors enable an understanding of how the pro-anorexia movement is produced as political resistance. This cyborg privileges information and connection in an Impossible Feast, mobilising data and advocating its consumption. Using Algorithms and their principles, pro-anorexic cyborgs control the reduction and restriction of their biological bodies in order to blur the boundary between biology and mechanical components and their functions. These algorithms privilege machines over biology, producing clean and efficient bodies that disrupt the taken-for-granted body/mind dualism and have new meanings inscribed upon them. Privileging simulated consciousness in and through technology enables pro-anorexic communities to build the movement upon Panic Architectures, allowing for the instantaneous updating to anorexic behaviours and the pro-anorexic community at large. This strengthens the connections to fellow pro-anorexics who require Tech Support in order to make sense of their embodied lives. This also enables pro-anorexics to monitor and indeed practice Quality Control over the discourse that the communities produce, legitimising pro-anorexic talk and dismissing opposing discourses. The Ubiquitous Computing of these cyborgs allows them to connect to and navigate technology that further strengthens pro-anorexic discursive resistance.

The pro-anorexic community that moves in and through the internet is characterised by the multiplicity, partiality, simultaneousness and contradictoriness of Haraway's (1991) cyborg. Pro-anorexia takes pleasure in the confusion of boundaries and the disruption of dualisms. Pro-anorexia enjoys its non-innocence and enjoys actively questioning the authority and legitimacy of discourses that oppose it. The blurring of the boundary between biology and machine enables pro-anorexia to construct embodied lives that revel in the multiple, partial and

contradictory positions that dominant discourse offers women to take up. The pro-anorexia cyborg acknowledges the tension between women's bodies and lives, celebrating this tension as space for political resistance that works to redeem the female form. Where patriarchal notions of femininity view the female body as a series of inherent biological glitches, the pro-anorexic cyborg sees redemption for the body through a consanguineous union with machines.

### **Discussion: Post-Apocalypse**

As I am writing this discussion, pro-anorexia communities online continue to resist dominant discursive positions that veto pro-anorexia voices. The presence of any given pro-anorexia website fluctuates, as internet servers respond to calls from clinical and public discourses to shut them down, or site administrators shut the websites down themselves.

Haraway's (1991) cyborg is characterised by its simultaneous presence and non-presence. It is clear that cyborgs "are as hard to see politically as materially" (Haraway, 1991, p. 153). Cyborgs and cyborg discourses are necessarily slippery so as to evade the grasp of dominant discourse. Thus, 'real life' anorexia and online pro-anorexia are similarly subversive when their discourse is illuminated by dominant discourses that position them in intolerable ways. The multipleness of the cyborg is evident in the expansive and varied metaphors that emerged through the analysis in this study. Indeed, as the cyborg subverts dominant discourse, I was unable to use 'traditional' discourse analysis methods to uncover the cyborg. However, the production of anorexia as a cyborg that I have offered can enable an understanding of the resistance anorexia as a disorder (and the pro-anorexia on the internet) has put up against dominant health discourse.

Much like Foucault's (1977) concept of capillary power, the pro-anorexic cyborg exploits the interconnected veins of cyberspace, revelling in the simultaneous everywhere and nowhere-ness of the internet. The pro-anorexic cyborg travels along these connections within networks and systems, thus while domain names disappear, cyborg consciousness rebuilds itself elsewhere, deeper in cyberspace. These cyborgs are harder to find and even harder to disconnect. The pro-anorexic cyborg, after all,

is powerful political resistance; irritated but unfazed by the attempts of dominant discourse to outlaw such viral resistance.

Thus, it is *how* pro-anorexia exists online that needs attention. From my analysis, I have enabled an understanding of the pro-anorexic community as a cyborg akin to Haraway's (1991) metaphoric cyborg. The cyborg is multiple, partial, contradictory simulated consciousness, blurring the boundaries between biology and machine, disrupting the body/mind dualism and inscribing meaning onto female bodies that enables a more tolerable embodied life. The cyborg privileges information, connectedness, lightness, cleanliness, efficiency and function through mechanical components. The cyborg builds and rebuilds itself, curiously revelling in the contradiction between the non-fixity of the cyborg's ever-changing knowledge and the meanings that such knowledge enables, and the fixity of algorithmic mechanical function that provides predictability in unpredictable biological environments. It is in these multiple, partial and contradictory ways that the cyborg is able to powerfully politically resist a dominant discourse. Dominant clinical discourse seeks to unify the pro-anorexic community as the dangerous, deviant 'other'. However, where dominant discourse spreads subjugating dualisms and boundaries out on the discursive table, pro-anorexic cyborgs devour, grind up and savour the taste of the now chewed-up construction of their politically charged embodiment. Cyborgs cannibalise dominant discourse, rendering it just another discursive meal for politically hungry female bodies.

It is no coincidence that pro-anorexic discourse is prone to the one social taboo in Western society that specifically references eating. The genealogy of Western women suggests that women "have been cannibalized by the new technologies and have disappeared from the field of visible social agents" (Braidotti,

2006, p. 199). Instead, pro-anorexic cyborgs are the ones doing the cannibalising. Pro-anorexic communities are devouring oppositional discourses and re-incorporating them into their own discursive machinery. These cyborgs are even chewing on their own discourse, digesting it and regurgitating it for the pro-anorexic machine. Any and all discourse that ventures near the cyborg's mouth will be cannibalised. The pro-anorexic cyborg's transgression of one of the most stigmatised Western taboos enables an understanding of the intensity of the cyborg's resistance to patriarchal notions of femininity that produce troubled female bodies.

In order to survive in this technological world, pro-anorexic cyborgs live embodied lives that embrace the tensions produced through dominant discourse that violently shape and reshape female bodies. This pro-anorexic cyborg is simultaneously a metaphorical and a literal interpretation of resistant female embodiment in a technophilic, patriarchal society. Dominant discourse, rooted in patriarchy, is unwillingly to allow women to occupy their own social space. Rather, women have been offered feminine foxholes in masculine landscapes. What the pro-anorexic cyborg attempts (and perhaps achieves) through its dedication to multiplicity, partiality and blurring of dominant discourses' precious boundaries and dualisms, is the disruption of the dominant discourse from within it. Women's embodied lives are multiple, partial and contradictory, as discourses push and pull us through different constructions of our bodies and our lives. By embracing these tensions the pro-anorexic cyborg no longer fears nor respects dominant discourse, rendering it virtually powerless over cyborg embodiment. By dismantling dominant discourse from the inside, pro-anorexic cyborgs are able to construct new ways of talking about bodies and embodied lives that lend themselves to more tolerable forms of femininity.

The pro-anorexic cyborg's aim is to survive in a society that is uninhabitable to women's bodies. Pro-anorexic cyborgs wish, perhaps, to deploy discourses that shape more agentic women with more effective, less biologically messy bodies. Perhaps the pro-anorexic cyborg's goal is actually to cease the endless violent shaping and re-shaping of the battered and bruised female form. Instead of the messy, unclean female bodies that patriarchal discourse simultaneously constructs and opposes, the cyborg embraces mechanical embodiment. The pro-anorexic cyborg wants female bodies from the production line that come already equipped with all the functions, mechanisms and tools a woman may need. This cyborg wants to discontinue the pained and shattered psyches that women inherit from their gendered history, and replace them with something clean running and unburdened by the heavy weight of female biology. In the pro-anorexic cyborg's quest for the biologically reduced body, the cyborg highlights the unbound unacceptability of biological femaleness in patriarchal discourse. The pro-anorexic cyborg draws attention to the history dominant patriarchal discourse and the meanings that it has inscribed upon the shape of the female body. From the 'holy anorexics' to this pro-anorexic cyborg, anorexic bodies can indeed be viewed as signifiers of the Western obsession with the shape of female bodies. The pro-anorexic cyborg is the most recent, perhaps most evolved, incarnation of this much-maligned critique.

Metaphors for female embodiment have largely been biologically or spiritually referential. Femininity, and in particular deviant femininity, has been constructed in terms of 'monsters' or 'goddesses.' Women are often metaphorically referred to as 'bitches' or 'cows,' firmly placing female metaphoric description in the realm of biology and nature. Dominant discourse employs these metaphors to draw upon the construction of the inherent inferiority of the female biology, so as to

discipline female bodies in ways that continue masculine dominance and feminine subordination. The cyborg as feminine metaphor, however, offers women a non-biological metaphor with which to produce different ways to experience their bodies and their social and political worlds.

The pro-anorexic cyborg wants us to remember this history, but break our bodies and our minds free from it. Pro-anorexic cyborgs seek to destroy intolerable patriarchal notions of femininity while creating new forms of tolerable female embodiment. Braidotti (1996) warns that “anger will push us to punish you by deciding to enact, in our real, everyday life, your own worst fantasies of just how obnoxious women can be” (p. 9). These pro-anorexic cyborgs are enacting Braidotti’s warning through Haraway’s (1991) cyborg. Pro-anorexic cyborgs cannibalise discourses that violently shape women’s bodies and they are licking their lips, hungry for more. The pro-anorexic cyborg is looking for a more palatable discursive meal. So far, our recipes have left an acrid taste in the cyborg’s mouth.

The pro-anorexic communities’ production of cyborg embodiment to resist intolerable patriarchal notions of femininity is clearly powerful metaphor through which women can oppose dominant discourse that disciplines the female body. At first the metaphor feels foreign, as women’s embodiment is not often produced through technological language. However, reading pro-anorexic text enables an understanding of pro-anorexia as a cyborg, unsatisfied by women’s troubled embodiment and intent on blurring the boundaries that seek to confine it to that intolerable experience of women’s lives. The pro-anorexic community is a resistant response to discourses that are not enabling Western women to live tolerable lives. Dominant discourse demands multiplicity and partiality from a woman. Her body is a contested site, pushed and pulled by discourse after discourse, each one

subjugating her in different ways. Thus, for women experiencing anorexia, the cyborg, with its blurred boundaries, multiplicity and political resistance to the violence of dominant patriarchal notions of femininity, is a construction of anorexia and women's embodiment that can offer a tolerable, survivable embodied life. By using technology to live this metaphorical embodiment literally, the pro-anorexic cyborg is drawing particular attention to the violence that the female body experiences through dominant discourse.

What this thesis argues is that pro-anorexia, through the metaphor of a cyborg, is the resistance to patriarchal notions of femininity, and thus, the cyborg metaphor constructs a more tolerable embodied life for women, particularly those women who are experiencing anorexia. The cyborg enables this community to negotiate fragmented femininity and shape female bodies that signify the simultaneous flux and fixity of female embodiment and the psychological distress that accompanies this tension. Thus, making sense of the emergence of pro-anorexia as functionally politically resistant embodiment enables an understanding of how women experiencing anorexia nervosa seek to take up a 'pro'-anorexic position and maintain it. Instead of positioning pro-anorexic communities as purely 'dangerous,' or, conversely, as purely supportive, making sense of pro-anorexic cyborg embodiment opens up space for a discourse of anorexia that relieves some of the tensions among the dichotomies that have a stranglehold over feminine embodiment. The emergence of the pro-anorexic cyborg as fervent political resistance demonstrates that women experiencing anorexia are sounding the alarm in order to alert us to the security breaches against women's bodies and lived experiences. Rather than simply turning off the alarm, we must investigate why it was triggered and attend to these security breaches.

## Technical Specifications

The pro-anorexic cyborg's lower body is thin but sturdy. The pelvic area is free of identifiable genitalia, perhaps hidden away in a camouflaged tin box somewhere in the metal casing that is the cyborg's torso. The torso is small, private compartment housing obligatory internal organs that, as efficient and mechanical as they are, still show a hint of biological matter. The cyborg's biology is fuelled by light and free-flowing vitamins, minerals and liquids, such as water and juice. Solid substances are too messy for the cyborg's mechanical organs to process, as they clog the systems. The cyborg's arms are long and skeletal but flexible like cables. These arms end in USB drive fingers, ready to plug into other machines and other cyborgs. A slender neck supports the cyborg's head. The pro-anorexic cyborg's eyes are large webcams, gathering and processing visual information. Small, powerful satellite ears pick up and relay auditory signals. The cyborg's nose is small, but powerful for sniffing out and assessing biological material. The pro-anorexic cyborg's jaw is double-jointed, to enable both rapid consumption of data and the cannibalistic mastication of chewy discourses. The cyborg's wisdom teeth are USB ports. Wireless bluetooth chew and transmit the data around the cyborg's body, with the bulk of the information sent to the pro-anorexic cyborg's expansive brain. A protective layer of static electricity

generated by the brain itself to prevent overheating (emotional crises) surrounds the brain. The brain itself is always wirelessly connected to the internet. The brain is a complex network of nodes and tiny wires. These wires interconnect with microchips that hold massive amounts of data. This brain is constantly working, connecting information and sending the commands necessary to ensure the efficient and effective functioning of the entire pro-anorexic cyborg.

The pro-anorexic cyborg's temperament is stable, in control itself in social and political situations. Given the width and breadth of the cyborg's knowledge, there are few situations that it is unprepared for. The cyborg is fluent in many discourses, and masters any foreign discourses quickly. Using information, the cyborg can adapt and evolve more efficiently than any female form has ever been able to before.

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