

on pro-ana/mia websites. Schott traces the ways in which “thinspiration” consists of “images, slogans, and videos aimed at inspiring the pursuit of extreme thinness” (1029). Schott argues that “...black women’s decision to join thinspiration is not an attempt to become Caucasian, but an act of survival in a social climate that valorizes a Eurocentric thin feminine beauty ideal” (1030). Schott raises a crucial point. The cultural logics of eating disorders and how they represent a desire for control, regulation, and responsibility over oneself are rooted in white, Eurocentric standards of femininity that privilege a thin ideal. Furthermore, Sabrina Strings demonstrates the racist origins of fatphobia and argues that ideals of slenderness and/or thinness are rooted in racism. Therefore, in addition to the importance of an intersectional approach towards fat studies and feminist studies, it is crucial to consider *how* Eurocentric expectations, rooted in whiteness, cis-heteronormativity, and able-bodiedness deeply control cultural assumptions and expectations of eating disorders and femininity, which perpetuate systemic oppression and injustice. Conceptions of eating disorders are *already* controlled through such assumptions, even before a diagnosis of an eating disorder appears. Schott (2017) and Strings (2019) show how notions of thinness, “thinspiration”, and fatness are rooted in a cultural consciousness that is oppressive and systemically unjust, yet remain part of the diagnostic work that goes into anorexia and binge eating disorder, as well as normative expectations of femininity.

The Diagnostic Underpinnings of Binge Eating and Anorexia

Fatness is often constructed within health and political discourse to be a huge problem—the “obesity epidemic” (Boero; Lyons; Rothblum and Solovay; Wann). For instance, the World Health Organization (WHO) states that obesity is on the rise, and has now reached “epidemic proportions” (WHO, n.p.). Now, much of how obesity is discussed, although it makes a huge appearance in medical discourse, is perhaps considered less often in the language of eating disorders. Let us, then, consider “binge eating disorder.” Importantly, any mention of fatness or “obesity” does not exist in the DSM-V classification of binge eating disorder. However, binge eating disorder still has a relationship to fatness, femininity, control, and notions of “disorder”.

Binge eating disorder is a fairly recent addition into the DSM. It was not included in the DSM-IV (the version just prior to its fifth iteration) (Berkman et al.; Cowden n.p.). Binge eating disorder is classified and diagnosed as, “[e]ating, in a discrete period of time (for example, within any two-hour period), an amount of food that is

definitely larger than most people would eat in a similar period of time under similar circumstance” (Berkman et al.). Additionally, I want to highlight two other elements of binge eating disorder that are of particular salience to this analysis: “A sense of lack of control over eating during the episode (for example, a feeling that one cannot stop eating or control what or how much one is eating)”, and “[f]eeling disgusted with oneself, depressed, or very guilty afterwards” (Berkman et al.).

Eating disorders in general have been discussed in relation to control, or the lack of it (e.g., Tiggeman and Raven; De Welles). Also, the idea of feeling disgusted with oneself or guilty are key elements of these diagnostic

PENN KEMP

When Friends Introduced Me

To my future
husband, I looked into sea-green eyes
and an ice floe melted inside.

A thin wire of nerve shivered in
recognition. Was I ready to
relax age-old tension and dissolve?

Would I accept this gentleman’s offering
of which he was apparently unaware?

I knew his gargantuan belly
would soon become my own by
fifty pounds. A trade-off
I took on, fair play for
decades of martial fare.

He took this poor poet out to dinner
and I devoured every morsel.

Penn Kemp has participated in Canadian cultural life for fifty years, writing, editing, and publishing poetry and plays. Her first book of poetry, on labour, Bearing Down, was published by Coach House in 1972. She has published more than thirty books of poetry, prose, and drama; seven plays; and ten CDs. The League of Canadian Poets acclaimed Penn as 2015 Spoken Word Artist. She is the League’s fortieth Life Member. She was London, Ontario’s inaugural Poet Laureate. At Western University, Penn was writer-in-residence, 2009–2010. In 2020, she was presented with the inaugural Joe Rosenblatt (Muttsy) Award for Innovative Creators.