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Self, Surveillance, and Sociality: Aesthetics of the Diaristic Mode in Visual New Media

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English

by

Kimberly Ann Hall

June 2015

Dissertation Committee:
Dr. James Tobias, Chairperson
Dr. Susan Zieger
Dr. Jennifer Doyle

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2015

The Dissertation of Kimberly Ann Hall is approved:

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Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

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There are many images included in this dissertation that are a result of the generosity of others. Thank you to The Photographer's Gallery and Anna Dennamann for the images of the 2013 "This is Your Photo: Mass Observation" exhibit at The Photographer's Gallery included in Chapter 2. I would also like to thank The Keep for permission to include responses from anonymous Mass Observers included in Chapter 2. Also included in Chapter 2 is the excerpt from the June 18, 1938 edition of *Everybody* that The British Library has kindly granted me permission to use. The Humphrey Spender

photograph, “This is Your Photo” that appears in Chapter 2 is thanks to the generosity of The Bolton Library and Museum Services. I would also like to thank Gillian Wearing and Tate Images for permission to include the amazing image of “I’m Desperate” that appears in Chapter 5.

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For my mother, who illuminated the path.

And for my sister, who showed me how to take the first step.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Self, Surveillance, and Sociality: Aesthetics of the Diaristic Mode in Visual New Media

by

Kimberly Ann Hall

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in English
University of California, Riverside, June 2015
Dr. James Tobias, Chairperson

Recognizing the serial, fragmentary, and revelatory nature of the self accounting prevalent in digital media networks, this dissertation explores a particular mode of autobiographical discourse that is often overlooked by scholars: the diary. Often associated with teenage girls and queer subjectivity, the diary has been pushed to the margins of literary history and is often read as documentary evidence of history, rather than an aesthetic mode of autobiography. This same dynamic is true of diaristic discourse in contemporary social media, which is derided as frivolous while it is simultaneously scrutinized as an authentic record of the subject. Responding to the rhetorical demands for authenticity and consumability that structure networked sociality, the examples of self

accounting considered here mobilize diaristic discourse and its affect of veracity, while simultaneously creating a visual spectacle that affords cultural legibility by way of virality. The individual chapters telescope from the present to the past in order to trace changes in the meaning and materiality of the public sphere, and the parallel development of authenticity as an affective register of cultural legibility for autobiographical productions and, by extension, the individuals producing them. The key images of self-reflexive accounting in my analysis include contemporary examples such as the lonelygirl15 vlog, diary films, and the transmedia cue card confession trope as well as resonant historical examples in nineteenth-century photography and fiction, as well as the early twentieth-century social autobiography project Mass Observation. Through close readings of both the aesthetics and materiality of these productions, I argue that the transhistorical reflexive grammar of the diaristic mode in visual new media is characterized by the foregrounding of editing techniques, an interrogation of 'reality' as a genre, and a DIY aesthetic that foregrounds the constructedness of the spectacle rather than the veracity of indexicality. What this dissertation offers, then, is a historically informed analysis of social media practice that attends to the significance of its communicative and aesthetic functions. In the process, it illustrates how contemporary discourses of surveillance emerged, in part, from this mode of self accounting and were thus incorporated into the material structures of networked sociality.

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Introduction: Diary, Precarity, and Surveillance

Disturbed by a recent spate of LGBTQ teen suicides, in 2010 author and activist Dan Savage produced a YouTube video titled "It Gets Better" with his partner Terry Miller. The eight-minute video features the two men speaking to the camera as if speaking directly to at-risk teens. The narrative relates the story of their own difficult youth, their feelings of despair as a result of bullying, and then segues into pictures of their beautiful present replete with a loving partner, children, fabulous vacations, and professional success. This narrative arc provides a familiar discursive response to the conditions of perceived precarity: endure a punishing present, for your future is full of hope. The success of the initial video, which has at this writing been viewed over two million times, led to the development of a larger campaign of the same name. The project quickly became an expression of both national and transnational concerns around social and corporeal well being on the extraordinary scale of media production afforded by that complex assemblage of digital production, distribution, and reception known as "the social web."[1] The It Gets Better website now serves as the archive and exhibitor of over 50,000 videos made by producers both gay or straight–and the project is formulated around this simplistic opposition–whose narratives are in harmony with Savage's original production. "I know or at least can empathize with your current pain," the messages claim, "and my status as star, politician, singer, or successful individual validates my promise that your own future is equally bright." These narrative responses to precarity

[1] Media scholars danah boyd and Nicole Ellison use the term "social web" to characterize "the practices, implications, culture, and meanings…that emerge" around Internet social network sites such as MySpace and Facebook. (2007, 210-230).

privilege a future condition of stability over an immediate state of vulnerability evident in the exhortation to survive the present rather than use it as a site of larger-scale renegotiations of subjectivity.

The futurist inevitability implied in "getting better" irrespective of the challenges of the present in many ways recapitulates the 'promise' of the technological imaginary informing the apparent 'inevitability' of the growth of the social web. Paradoxically, this futurist impulse is grounded in a deeply historical discourse. Sociologist Thomas Streeter characterizes this as the Romanticism of the Internet, a persuasive cultural narrative used to justify both the materiality of the social network and our belief in its inevitable improvement. "The specific forms of the life-shaping digital machinery we have surrounded ourselves with are not the product of some kind of technological necessity," Streeter writes, "the internet's construction is peppered with profoundly cultural forces: the deep weight of the remembered past and the related, collectively organized pressures of human passions made articulate" (2011, 2). Streeter's characterization of the collective Romantic attachment to particular modes of discourse, regardless of their technological forms explains to some degree the success of the It Gets Better campaign. It's now global adoption further indicates that the autobiographical vlog resonates not only with those experiencing perpetual symbolic or physical violence in the social field, but also with multitudes of producers and users who feel that such efforts are both a viable form of ethical engagement with the other, and an authentic mode of self accounting. The campaign has, however, also received its fair share of criticism from those who question the message of delayed promise in favor of more immediate

intervention, a critique that echoes a familiar divide within critical queer theory.[2] Both the positive and negative responses to the campaign's *message* fail to address an even more fundamental question about its *method*; why were formulaic autobiographical video productions circulated through social media so widely and unquestionably adopted as an authentic and effective means of outreach for at-risk youths? Both celebration and skepticism of such efforts fails to produce an adequate critical account of what is at stake in the visual and audiovisual account of the self that survivor discourses themselves mobilize. In other words, the analyses of productions like the It Gets Better campaign should be more broadly reframed to consider how amateur diaristic media productions that follow identifiable formal patterns, as well as the patterns themselves, afford a meaningful and authentic mode of self accounting as well as an ethical site of engagement with an unknown other, in this instance, the digital public.

This dissertation argues that the vernacular, autobiographical purposes for which the camera, in its many historical iterations, has been most widely used afford the expression of an aesthetics of precarity that is signal as early as the developed industrial cultures of the mid-nineteenth century and increasingly characteristic of subjects with access to tools of self expression in the contemporary moment of hyperindustrialization. Philosopher Bernard Stiegler has similarly noted the paired changes in subjectivity and media industrialization, claiming, "the speed of technical development since the

[2] Jasbir Puar has questioned the narrow range of experience represented in the project. She writes in the 16 November 2010 issue of *The Guardian*, "project's like Savage's risk producing such narrow versions of what it means to be gay, and what it means to be bullied, that for those who cannot identify with it but are nevertheless targeted for being different, It Gets Better might actually contribute to Making Things Worse," while the blog Fucknodansavage points out, "We shouldn't be talking, we should be listening. Telling our own stories from our incredibly privileged position overwrites youth experience."

Industrial Revolution…has continued to accelerate, dramatically widening the distance between technical systems and social organizations" (2009, 3). The effect of this division is a sense of disorientation as a result of the industrialization of memory by way of these technical prostheses, which present an unlived, mediatized past as an event rather than an lived experience The result is a precarious claim to memory as a result of the ability of such technologies to subsume individual and cultural memory, engendering an industrialized "exteriorization of knowledge" that fundamentally transforms knowledge of the self into commodifiable and documentable events. (111-112).

This nexus of media, subjectivity, and industrialization that Stiegler explores also marks a core concern in the critical exploration of precarity in contemporary theory. Precarity is theorized as a political life characterized by injurability and aggression by Judith Butler, who reads in the post-9/11 culture a surveillance ethos of the public sphere, defined by shifting claims to visibility, whereby "the regulation of the public sphere of appearance is one way to establish what will count as reality, and what will not" (2004, xx). Like Stiegler, Butler sees a divide between individual experience and its representation in various media, but Butler's discursive focus brings our attention to the effects of such a transition on the development of the social sphere by way of self accounting as a production of legible images that read as both authentic and representative, and thus viable in the new public sphere of the spectacle. The result, Butler argues, is that such images work through a process of disidentification to define what we recognize as human, even as the visual spectacle constitutes a mechanism of dehumanization (2004, 146-148).

Lauren Berlant takes up a similar set of concerns as Butler, but turns away from the merely documentary instances of precarity, and considers its aestheticization in various artistic genres. Berlant suggests that the rise of the "situation" drama, such as the police procedural, provides strategies for coping with "the emerging event," an enduring present that posits a dialectical tension between everyday life and "a state of things in which *something* that will perhaps matter is unfolding" (2011, 4). This extended anticipation creates a sense of disorientation in response to unstable and shifting conditions in which subjects must find clues as to what will matter in the future in order to anchor them in the present. Berlant indicates that these genres foster the development of a hypervigilant subject who "collects material that might help clarify things" in both everyday life and artistic genres (4). Precarity, in essence, creates a public of watchers who use tactics of revelation to secure the modes of meaning in aesthetic expression as a way of solidifying boundaries typically dissolved by the shared experience of precarity.

This state of everyday precarity, in which subjects use the increasingly opaque systems of industrialized media as a tactic of orientation and visibility in the face of the threat of the dehumanizing effects of disappearance also has a direct link to shifts in capitalism, as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri explore. The precarity of everyday life, they argue, is sustained by the increasing reach of a "decentered and deterritorializing apparatus" of capitalism that demands "hybrid identities, flexible hierarchies, and plural exchanges through modulating networks of command" (2000, xii-xiii). Hardt and Negri's work takes up the Marxist critique of the effects of capital on everyday life, but notes an important shift whereby the divide between the site and discourses of labor and the space

and discourse of everyday life has become increasingly blurred. This new mode of materialist critique seeks to explicate how capitalism "produce[s] not only commodities but also subjectivities" by way of the communication industry (32). Revisiting and expanding the Frankfurt School's foundation work on the social effects of the culture industry, Hardt and Negri chart how these industries "integrate the imaginary and the symbolic within the biopolitical fabric, not merely putting them at the service of power but actually integrating them into its very functioning" (32-33).[3] Philosopher Paolo Virno has extended this line of critique in positing that the virtuoso performance of communication in such a system constitutes the new sphere of political action (2004, 54-55). Political science scholar Jodi Dean foresees an even more totalizing system of "communicative capitalism" whereby even reflexivity works to reinscribe creativity and resistance within the economic-ideological form (2010, 4). These materialist analyses of precarity suggest that there is no site of discourse outside of capital because of its successful appropriation of all spheres of communication. As a result, subjectivity itself is constituted by these mediatized systems and works to uphold their dominance, even within reflexive discourses of resistance.

But rather than reading self accounting as a discourse foreclosing reflexivity as a tactic of engagement with these conditions, I articulate a genealogy of aesthetic resonances that suggests a more complex reading of the effects of such discourse. This project explores the expression of precarity as a self-reflexive engagement with the

[3] One of the most significant essays from the Frankfurt School on the topic of the Culture Industry is Horkheimer, Max and Theodor W. Adorno. "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception." *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2002. Print.

material and social conditions of dependence and uncertainty inherent in any act of self accounting that has been stylized through the technical and narrative presentation of the self as a momentary visual spectacle. Affective precarity—here, the self presented in the image of a glance, a glimpse, or a potential disappearance—thus expresses not only the ways in which modern individual subjectivity emerges in its entangled relationship to the constellation of industrialized media, but also how the legibility, in both visual and affective terms, of such subjectivity is also conditioned by the structures of industrialization. In 2013 this dynamic takes the shape of a social media campaign, but in 1860, on the eve of Haussmannization, similar aesthetics are evident in the production of a series of photographs in the Paris Catacombs featuring mannequins and disarticulated skeletons alongside a solitary self-portrait of French photographer Felix Nadar. An aesthetics of precarity characterizes the confessional film diaries of Sadie Benning in the 1990's just as it does the YouTube cue card confession videos produced by thousands of teenagers in 2011-2013. This transhistorical aesthetic grammar is thus an engagement with the affects and technics of ways of seeing and of being seen. Its persistence has less to do with a teleological formalism than an accretive development of technocultural expression emerging in tandem with the industrialization of media as a result of the entanglement between subjectivization and mechanization.

I am thus positing that tracing a network of discursive subject formation requires equal attention to the discourses and processes of the industrialization of "personal media." This line of inquiry takes up historian and social theorist Michel Foucault's work on how social processes such as confession, mentorship, and self-writing create

discursive norms for speaking about the self that are inextricably bound with social, political, and religious structures and are thus always defined by and in the process of defining such structures. His assertion that "the new methods of power whose operation is not ensured by right but by technique, not by law but by normalization, not by punishment but by control, methods that are employed on all levels and in forms that go beyond the state and its apparatus," makes clear that normalizing discourse, and discursive forms of resistance, don't operate from a top-down model, but instead emerge from the ways and forms of speaking about the self on the level of the everyday (1978, 89). His emphasis on the disciplinary discourse of sexuality, and the problematic norms it made possible, call our attention to the ways that normative subjectivity is shored up only by its recourse to the discursive other of nonnormative sexuality, bringing to light the precarious recursivity of such discourses.

While feminist scholars such as Gayle Rubin have productively extended Foucault's focus on discourses of sexuality and the production of subjectivity, cyberfeminists forged a new direction for analysis.[4] Scholars such as Donna Haraway and Katherine Hayles contend that theoretical explorations of subjectivity need to be extended into the present and the future to consider how our increasing integration with technology more accurately addresses what it is that can be considered subjectivity.[5] The

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[4] See, in particular, Rubin's essay "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality" in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*. Ed. Carole S. Vance. Boston: Routledge, 1984: 3-44, Print; and E.L. McCallum's "Technologies of Truth and the Function of Gender in Foucault" in *Feminist Interpretations of Michel Foucault*. Ed. Susan Hekman. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State UP, 1996: 77-98, Print.

[5] Haraway, Donna. "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980's." *Feminism/Postmodernism*. Ed. Linda J. Nicholson. New York: Routledge, 1990. 190-233, and Hayles, Katherine N. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and*

possibility of such cyborgs, as Haraway ironically employs the metaphor, grounds a new subjective epistemology that critiques the ontological primacy of the universalized Western male figure and its technologies of mastery, opening up such spaces for radical feminists, women of color, and other subjects paradoxically made more visible by the technological requirements of late capitalism (1990, 208-210). What both Foucault's analysis of the Christian pastoral tradition and a cyberfeminist prediction of future forms of embodiment share is an understanding of the significance of the distributed nature of the "will to knowledge" as Foucault terms it, calling our attention to the specific structural affordances from which discourses of the self emerge (1994, 11).

As such, this study makes clear that the sociality implied by the term "social media" is not simply a recent phenomenon, but rather the effect of practices of intimately mediated sociality having a much deeper history coinciding with the industrialization and personalization of media, beginning with the photographic camera capable of registering not simply a mechanically produced image but also the visual trace of the self operating the camera. This dynamic offers an insight into why the camera has long served as the intimate technological partner of such self accounts: the camera records and mirrors our own lives back to us and, at the same time, it allows us to glimpse into the personal, intimate lives of others, making it a social object. The dynamic between subjects, and the objects that "represent" them, echoes sociologist Bruno Latour's deconstruction of the concept of "the social" as a complex network of associations between both human and non-human actors, traceable only in their effects (2005, 141-143).

Informatics. Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1999.

From the *carte de visite* to Facebook, images announcing the visible image of the self, if not the image of the subject *per se*, circulate as presumed evidence of, or to presumably warrant, our authentic identity and the social legibility of that identity. Yet the fact that the legibility of personal identity does not warrant of the "truth" of our subjectivity means that such images are precarious indices of the self they announce. We thus are called to see identity traced in such images, even as we are also always wary of what kind of subjectivity such images can signify, necessarily skeptical of their authenticity and authority. It is precisely this dynamic that turns us toward the spectacle, which Guy Debord argues is the visual manifestation of alienation, the stylized presentation of self which also speaks to the relationship between the subject and the modes of production (1977).[6]

Through the production of an aesthetic self whose social legibility is conditioned on the basis of its proneness to disappear – and I speak here of the potential disappearance of the *image* of the subject, not necessarily the subject herself – the marginalized subject makes a momentary spectacle of her story, her life, her self. This production of self visibility and self visuality taps into the constructed, affective value of live events, a paradigm that performance theorist Philip Auslander ascribes equally to mediatized events. Auslander's argument challenges the dominant theory that the cultural value of the live event is always predicated on a shared, and limited, temporal experience that imbues it with ontological value because the affect of the live event mirrors the

[6] In *Society of the Spectacle* Debord notes that an encounter with the spectacle "corresponds to a concrete manufacture of alienation" because it reminds one "that his gestures are no longer his but those of another who represents them to him" (30-32).

subjective process of becoming, as Peggy Phelan asserts.[7] For his part, Walter Benjamin ascribes potential to this tension between liveness and mediatization and claims, "The representation of human beings by means of an apparatus has made possible a highly productive use of the human being's self-alienation" (1935, 32). Benjamin locates a redemptive value in the social experience of the visual spectacle of alienation demanded by the camera because it enacts a temporary triumph over the processes of technological dehumanization increasingly characterizing everyday life. It is thus the ultimate performance, or "test-performance" as Benjamin terms it, making it clear why so many of the autobiographical productions this study considers, are stylized rather than straightforward productions (32). Whether it's Frances Benjamin Johnston's 1880 self-portrait as a "New Woman," which features the photographer dressed as a man—complete with a false mustache—and assertively grabbing the handlebars of a high-wheel bicycle, or Jerome Hill's surrealistically reimagined life story in his 1971 *Film Portrait*, producing the self as a spectacle is a reflexive expression of engagement with the larger conditions of precarity, which define both our socioeconomic alienation, and our bewildering sense of estrangement in the face of the technologies which become increasingly opaque at the same time that they increasingly control all aspects of representation.

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[7] In his 1999 book *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, Auslander challenges Phelan's 1993 claim from her book *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* that "Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representation of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance," suggesting that the ontological value of liveness challenges the totalizing economy of reproduction (146). Auslander instead argues that liveness is a historically constructed concept emerging in tandem with mediatization, and that "electronic and photographic media can be described meaningfully as partaking of the ontology of disappearance ascribed to live performance, and they can also be used to provide an experience of evanescence" (55).

The paradox of this tension is often expressed as critical anxiety. In her most recent book digital media scholar Sherry Turkle claims, "we remake ourselves and our relationships with each other through our new intimacy with machines," suggesting that subjectivity itself, as expressed through different forms of technologized desire, is little more than a function of the apparatus (2011, 3). The discourse from which this kind of scholarship emerges often characterizes digital media as a dramatic break in a historically stable production of subjectivity, one that has a more organic, and thus more valuable relationship to discursive structures and the social sphere. The implicit anxiety is that the development of intimate relationships with technological objects will displace or even supplant human intimacy, suggesting that the closer we become with machines, the more machine-like we ourselves will become. Thirty years earlier, Vilém Flusser had predicted that, "the camera will prove to be the ancestor of all those apparatuses that are in the process of robotizing all aspects of our lives, from one's most public acts to one's innermost thoughts, feelings, and desires" (1983, 71). Like Turkle, Flusser understands the production of subjectivity and mechanization as twinned processes, but goes further in suggesting that this twinning is the result of a long developing historical entanglement between subjectivity and machinery, one in which we have been fully complicit without fully understanding.

The intersection of such discourses, and the anxieties that characterize them, demonstrate that a considered analysis of the ethical implications of the entanglement between subjectivity and photofilmic or video technologies, as is expressed in autobiographical media productions, is necessary and urgent. Scholars from Spinoza to

Foucault have long focused on interpersonal, autobiographical relationships, such as confession and self-writing, as key sites of subjective development.[8] Judith Butler's more recent work defines such acts as self accounting, the parameters of which are conditioned not only by the scene of address, but also by the normative horizons that open up both the self and the other to a very real form of vulnerability stemming from the possibility of subverting and even transforming the normative horizon in that moment (2005, 20-23). Acts thus become a nexus for both self expression and discursive policing because, as literary scholar Jerome Bruner has put it, they represent "a radical effort to redefine the nature and possibilities of the self" (1993, 49). The study of autobiography within literary theory has long explored the effects of such productions on the subjectivity of the author, but more recent work has examined the larger social and cultural significance of autobiography. With the work of feminist scholars such as Leigh Gilmore, and critical race theorists including Laura Alexandra Harris or Lindon Barrett, our understanding of the autobiographical self has experienced a sweeping refocus in the last twenty years away from discussions of authorial intention and authority and toward an analysis of how social and ideological structures shape autobiographical production and reception within changing, unstable configurations of variegated media apparatus.[9] Within these new

[8] In addition to Foucault's work in this area, which is explored at length in Chapter 5, some of the historical work that current scholars in this field are engaging include: Emmanuel Levinas' 1978 *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence*; G.W. F. Hegel's 1807 *The Phenomenology of Spirit*; and Baruch Spinoza's 1677 *Ethics*.

[9] In her 1994 book *Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women's Self Representation*, Leigh Gilmore argues that "the possibilities of women's self-representational writing is linked to the politics of self-representation" (3), while Laura Alexandra Harris argues for "a useful queer black feminist criticism located at the intersections of pop culture, intellectual culture, and cultures of race, class, and sexuality" in considerations of self representation in her 1996 essay "Queer Black Feminism: The Pleasure Principle" (3). For his part, Lindon Barrett reads the courtroom testimony of Lucy Delaney as representing "the

paradigms, self accounting sits at the "interface" of modes of self presentation that allow for "self-imaging, auto-inquiry, and cultural critique" (2002, 7) as Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson argue, as well as at sites to "challenge the ideological foundations of the genre and the ideological foundations of American life" as Barrett asserts (1993, 124). Such interventions signal important shifts in autobiographical theory as a whole, but they remain to be more fully extended into analysis of other modes of autobiographical production, particularly those of digital media networks.

Recognizing the serial, fragmentary, and revelatory nature of the self accounting prevalent in digital media networks, this dissertation explores a particular mode of autobiographical discourse that is often overlooked by scholars: the diary. As literary scholar Kylie Cardell notes, the diary is "a clear and distinctive rhetorical style…[it is] the visible reminder of certain doggedly persisting ideas of the true and authentic self" (2014, 3). The diary has long been thought of as a private, personal document that reveals a true self, but as literary scholar Philippe Lejeune also points out, "The diary, like writing itself, was born of the needs of commerce and administration" (2009, 51). In this way, the diary is understood as a personal site of self accounting, and a mode by which self accounting can be quantified and subjected to disciplinary surveillance and integrated into capitalistic structures. Despite these clear connections to ongoing issues of subjectivity and representation, Cardell makes it clear that "The diary is both critically and popularly established as a marginal mode, a ragged edge to erstwhile 'public'

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enforced fictionality of any subject defined by the impersonality of the law's 'constitutional power'" (116) as particularly applied to African-American subjects in his 1993 essay "Self-Knowledge, Law, and African American Autobiography: Lucy A. Delaney's *From the Darkness Cometh the Light*."

discourse" (4). Often associated with women and queer figures, as Lejeune notes, the diary has been pushed to the margins of literary history and is often read as documentary evidence of history, rather than an aesthetic mode of autobiography. This same dynamic is true of diaristic discourse in contemporary social media, which is both derided as frivolous, and scrutinized as an authentic record of the subject.

This project considers the formal grammar of the diary as a reflexive engagement with the precarity of networked sociality. The connections between studies of autobiography and cultural critique are clear, and the proliferation of mediated autobiographical discourse, particularly in digital media, is also well acknowledged; the problem is that there has been a dearth of humanistic inquiry into the connections between these two spheres, with a resulting dominance of qualitative and quantitative approaches to social media in the social sciences. The benefit to such approaches is that social scientists have long taken everyday media practices as the focus of their analysis, and offer substantial insights into how users characterize their own experience of digital media as a technology of everyday life. Using ethnographic methods, critics such as danah boyd and Alice Marwick expand our understanding of the ways that media technologies are used, and misused, by everyday users in the present. Such work has made a significant contribution to our understanding of the granular effects of media technologies on the expression of everyday subjectivity, and this study extends such work by connecting it to the longer visual and narrative traditions that everyday users are influenced by and work in conversation with.

Humanities scholars, on the other hand, have long been using the study of aesthetics to consider the relationship between images, ethics, and subjectivity. Beginning with Aristotle, the study of perception has been hailed as a structuring principle not just of artistic production, but also of cultural and individual identity, and has consequently been constructed as a significant throughline of humanistic inquiry. As Hegel asserts, "It is in works of [fine] art that nations have deposited the profoundest intuition and ideas of their hearts," suggesting that by understanding how images are produced and presented, we gain insight into how individual subjects see themselves and their relationship to the material, and immaterial, world (1886, 9). This has led many critics, such as Benjamin and Adorno, to suggest that the study of aesthetics offers an invaluable insight into cultural ethics, calling our attention to the very real and very high stakes of image production. While much of this line of critique focuses on the link between high art and social norms, Anne Friedberg makes an important intervention in the field by considering the ways that the structure of viewing, from the picture frame to the computer screen, makes visible the material and discursive effects of perception on the level of the everyday user. Her work provides an important model for considering the connections between vernacular media use and historical aesthetic traditions, in keeping with Benjamin's formulation that "Just as the entire mode of existence of human collectives changes over long historical periods, so too does their mode of perception," a transition that can't be apprehended by ignoring either media histories or vernacular media production (1935, 23).

Applying Benjamin's maxim to mediated self accounting indicates that such productions are neither ahistoric nor separate from lager aesthetic traditions. The stakes are not simply life and death as Savage's or Nadar's disparate productions assert, but about how we make claims to a life that is legible in the face of media industrialization. In his analysis of the legibility of Daniel Jones's autobiographical acts prior to his widely broadcast freeway suicide, James Tobias makes clear that "Autobiography may be the *communicativity* of a self making claims on the act of living," highlighting the ways that the spectacularization of the bodily precarity of such subjects can be used to negate the ways that they register a discursive authority over their own lives, or their own disappearances (2005, 16). This is the urgent contribution that an interdisciplinary critical approach brings to bear on such accounts; it offers a critically and historically informed analysis of vernacular media production at the level of the everyday through an analysis of the material, formal, and aesthetic influences informing those productions and their dissemination and reception, even in, in some instances, their networks of disappearance. What it stages is a much needed intervention in larger discussions of how subjectivity is produced through the structures of industrialized media that have shaped relationships on the level of individual, intimate, and public.

Method

At stake, then, in this project are the connections between the episteme of self accounting by way of the diaristic mode, the progressive personalization and effects of the digitization of the apparatus, and changes in the meanings and materials of liveness

and memory. As a study of self-mediatization, I want to move away from the line of scholarly work that emphasizes the rupture of current media forms and instead employ a genealogical approach that situates current media within a longer historical framework, in part because "emerging media are often experimental and self-reflexive [just as] they are also inevitably and centrally imitative, rooted in the past, in the practices, formats, and deep assumptions of their predecessors" as David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins argue (2003, 7). There is thus no way to understand new media forms without exploring their relationship to older media forms. At the same time, I am not charting a teleological development, but rather telescoping from the present to the past in order to illustrate how the forms of self accounting dominant in digital media emerge from older negotiations of the modes of self accounting available through the apparatus. My approach here is to focus on two elements of the apparatus: material specificity and everyday practice. Following Friedrich Kittler's directive that "Archaeologies of the present must also take into account data storage, transmission, and calculation in technological media" (1992, 369), I articulate a grammar of the diaristic mode in order to pry into the black box to illustrate how technical reflexivity structures the development of the aesthetic of precarity in mediatic self accounting.

This approach alone, however, would privilege only the material manifestation of media, rather than exploring how such materiality is incorporated into everyday life. Neglecting such a crucial interaction would limit any interrogation of the intimacy with the apparatus that worries Turkle and Flusser and that structures my exploration of historical and contemporary public spheres of the precarious, visual self. My first angle

of approach must be combined with a more humanistic approach to media studies. As such I use the analysis of material specificity to situate mediatic self accounting within larger aesthetic and discursive histories, reflecting an understanding that "The histories [of media] must be social and cultural, not [just] the stories of how one technology leads to another" as Lisa Gitelman suggests (2006, 7). I thus examine the specifics of self accounting as media practice, diaristic discourse, and public performance that express the aesthetic of precarity. This interdisciplinary humanistic approach also makes clear my methodological investment in articulating how these productions circulate as cultural texts without turning to an ethnographic exploration of authorial intention. Each chapter therefore situates medium-specific accounts within a larger discursive network, marking an aesthetics of precarity as an agglomeration of both the experimental and the nostalgic, which accesses the shared cultural archive while forging new forms of autobiographical expression for subjects often otherwise denied the social legibility of their self images.

The first chapter, "From *Flâneur* to Lurker: Viewing and Vulnerability in Circulatory Sociality," reads the relationship between perspective, space, and subjectivity as it is explored in Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project* and Bruno Latour's *Paris: Invisible City*. These two critical texts propose a key figure of sociality that makes self accounting a visible, circulatory practice. The figures are, ostensibly, avatars that represent the separation between the self of the text and the authorial self so key to autobiographical theory. For Benjamin, this figure is the *flâneur*, which he reads in the 1861 photography project by French photographer Felix Nadar, which features mannequins in the Paris Catacombs at the epoch of the Hausmannization of the city

alongside a single self-portrait. The series, *Paris Souterrain*, suggests that the spectacle of progress has a dehumanizing, or here, disarticulating effect on the body even as it promises a delayed satisfaction through the encounter with the image. Latour, on the other hand, represents circulatory sociality as a series if partial, fragmented perspectives navigated by the figure of the lurker, who sees without being seen, in contrast to the intense visibility of the *flâneur*. Both texts propose a revision of Foucault's notion of the panopticon through a utilization of the reflexivity and fragmentation of the diaristic mode, and suggest instead that sociality is an experience of fractured, partial, and intimate perspective.

The second chapter, "This is Your Realism: Mass Observation and the Aestheticization of Surveillance Culture," continues this engagement with perspective and surveillance, and reads its twentieth century development in the social surveillance project, Mass Observation. Mass Observation is a British surveillance project launched in 1937 by a team of social scientists seeking to document the "everyday life of ordinary people in Britain" through the work of "observers." Revived in 1981, Mass Observation now relies on citizen volunteers who receive broad diaristic directives several times a year and respond in personal writing and pictures as a way of documenting the experience of everyday life from various vernacular perspectives. While many scholars have explored the connection between the project and the aesthetics of Surrealism and Modernism, I argue that Mass Observation can be understood as engaging nineteenth-century discourses of realism. Following literary scholars such as Nancy Armstrong, who posit a connection between realism, social surveillance, and photographic media, I

consider how the early phase of Mass Observation extended these discourses at its inception. I then look to the contemporary moment and read a recent gallery exhibition of the project to suggest that such discourses continue to inform the public understanding of the project as an aesthetic expression of social surveillance.

In the third chapter, "An Artificial Character: lonelygirl15 and the Ethics of Authenticity in Vlogging," I turn to contemporary diaristic modes of social media expression. The chapter considers the question of the fake diary, particularly the fake girls' diary, through a reading of the 2006 vlog series lonelygirl15, which was revealed as a hoax. Actress Jessica Rose was part of an artistic collective that created the character, a teenage girl named Bree, who posted a series of confessional vlogs on YouTube in 2006 under the screen name lonelygirl15, and quickly became one of the young platform's most visible stars. This chapter explores the gendered discourse of the sting that revealed the true nature of the series, and reads it back through the disciplinary and public function of earlier girls' diaries, such as Anne Frank's, which have similarly sustained attacks on their authenticity. Cultural studies scholar Michael Warner argues, "Women, accustomed to being the spectacle displayed to male desire, often experience the visibility of public space as a kind of intimate vulnerability," and this chapter examines how the bedroom culture of girls' media production—manifested in diaries, video work, and Camgirl websites—indicates a brand of Young Girlhood that can be effectively routed through an alternative identity that maintains the aesthetic of authenticity while revealing its larger implications for the increasingly important role of the amateur media industry (2002, 24).

In the fourth chapter, "An Art of Repetition and Variation": Editing and the Aesthetics of the Diary Film," I turn from the video diary to the diary film, and consider how the technics of editing in three diary films communicate a particular relationship to the individual media archive. I begin with a reading of Jerome Hill's 1972 autobiographical film, *Film Portrait*, which posits the editor as an "alchemist," who "annihilates" the historical time of the archive through imaginative editing techniques that make visible the unstable nature of time. The second film, Jonathan Caouette's 2003 diaristic *Tarnation* positions the editor as archivist, and uses the iMovie digital editing software of a iMac desktop computer to not only paste together personal and media images of his past, but also to animate them and give them new effects and resonances. His film suggests that the process of piecing together an identity legible as such involves appropriating and reimagining personal and media images to represent the poiesis of queer male emergence. And the final film explored, *Life in a Day*, represents not the personal, but the global archive, as it is pieced together from thousands of user-submitted videos that document their life on a single day, July 24, 2010. Built from this massive YouTube archive, director Kevin Macdonald positions his editorial role as curator, suggesting a new logic of editing that is informed by the logics of the database. Focusing, in particular, on the montage technique in each film, I revisit the aesthetic and political potential of this editing technique as posited by early film scholars and filmmakers, and consider its evolving relationship to self accounting in autobiographical media forms.

In the fifth and final chapter, "Selfies and Self Writing: Social Media Technologies of the Self," I revisit Foucault's foundational theories of self writing as a

technology of the self in the Classical and early Christian periods, and consider how a contemporary diaristic social media trope extends that historical framing. This chapter focuses on the cue card confessions, a mode of diaristic self accounting where a producer holds a handwritten cue card, or series of cue cards, that reveal an autobiographical narrative about the producer for a public audience. The trope has two significant modes explored in this chapter: selfies, and social video. In my analysis of the photography, I turn to rhetorical theories of *kairos* and reader cueing, to consider how these photographs support a significant ethical mode of self accounting. In my analysis of the videos, I turn to Foucault's notion of exomologesis, or the penitent body, and read it through theories of autoethnography as a mode of disruption of the authority of the autobiographical narrative as proposed by scholars such as José Esteban Muñoz and Françoise Lionnet.

1. From *Flâneur* to Lurker: Viewing and Vulnerability in Circulatory Sociality

In the introduction to the 1999 English-language version of Walter Benjamin's masterwork, *The Arcades Project*, translators Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin write, "it has become customary to regard the text…as at best a 'torso,' a monumental fragment or ruin, and at worst a mere notebook" (x). The massive text was compiled from a collection of loose-leaf notes in which Benjamin, the German literary scholar living and writing at the time in Paris, aimed to "bring together theory and materials, quotations and interpretations, in a new constellation," as the German translator and editor Rolf Tiedemann notes of the work (931). Benjamin considered this "montage" format a rhetorical expression of his theory of materialist philosophy, and it characterizes much of his published scholarly work. The fragmentary structure is a way of evoking the "philosophic play of distances, transitions, and intersections…perpetually shifting contexts and ironic juxtapositions" of what Benjamin termed the "dialectical image," the central term of his notebook project (xi). The work was unfinished when Benjamin fled Paris in 1940 prior to the German occupation of the city, and he carried it with him in a massive suitcase to Port-Bou, Spain as he attempted to cross the border, as Lisa Fittko reports, referring to it as his masterwork, despite its unruly and unfinished state (950-951). Tiedemann collected and organized the materials from that work—images, quotations, and fragments of notes—into a series of convolutes that structure the massive *Arcades Project*. The convolutes are grouped into umbrella topics such as "Fashion (B)," "The *Flâneur* (M)," or "Photography (Y)," and produce a logic of loose affiliation, rather than tight connection.

Through this distinctive structure, Benjamin creates an individual method of collection and compilation in *The Arcades Project* as a scholarly sort of *flânerie*. Despite the massive scope of the project, however, the text reveals persistent themes that clearly preoccupied Benjamin, calling him to return again and again to the same topic. At the same time, the vernacular "colportage" method, as he calls it, that structures the project also leaves open a space for individual interpretation, for gathering and juxtaposing fragments, and even convolutes, in a fashion that is personal to the reader. In this way the project evokes the diaristic mode not in its autobiographical or revelatory nature, but in its disjointed, open, and repetitive structure. This corresponds with literary scholar Philippe Lejeune's characterization of the diary as "fragmentary," and composed of "units, which are separated from one another…[revealing] their own morphology" (2009, 178). Lejeune points to the diary as both structured and full of gaps, and this unusual architecture suggests as much about the diary writer as the words on the page. The metaphor of architecture and space occurs frequently in Lejeune's theorization of the diary form, and he uses to it demonstrate how the diary is constructed as much as compulsive, while drawing our attention to the significance of the structure of a genre that is often derided as structureless. This emphasis on structure as both presence (architecture) and absence (space) is also significant because it echoes Benjamin's own preoccupation with space, and its ability to bring the individual into nearness with both the social and the historical. As he writes, "in the space between the building fronts—[the collective] experiences, learns, understands, and invents as much as individuals do within the privacy of their own four walls" (423). Architecture, and the spaces it creates, make

of the public sphere an intimate network of experience that need only been seen to be experienced.

And the space most conducive to this mode of perception, Benjamin posits, is the city of Paris. In a similar preoccupation with the relationship between space, perception, and theory, Bruno Latour and Emilie Hermant's collaborative and autobiographical 1998 technotext *Paris: Invisible City*, likewise uses the city space of Paris to map out a theoretical model in juxtaposed fragments. Using the RATP metro map as a guide, Latour and Hermant's "sociological web opera," as Latour terms it, requires users to navigate along various metro stops in any order that they wish. "The aim of this sociological opera," the introduction states, "is to wander through the city, in texts and images, exploring some of the reasons why it cannot be captured at a glance" (1998). Like Benjamin, Latour and Hermant evoke the partial, the present, and the absent in a series of short entries narrated in the first person. Read progressively or out of order, each 'scene' contains photographs, texts, and interactivity, guiding the viewer through a vast institutional structure governed by screens that, in turn, reveal a partial and fragmented perspective of the city. Latour and Hermant give the viewer an intimate glimpse into the spaces that govern everyday life in Paris: the traffic bureau, the Café de Flore, the office of a classroom planner, the screen of a weatherman. The process illustrates an experience of the theoretical oligopticon, an inversion of the centralized, all-seeing panopticon explored by Michel Foucault. The oligopticon defines the partial and fragmented view that, despite its limitations, is deeply known, almost intimate to the seer. Like the diary's revelation of a partial but in-depth perspective of the author, Latour and Hermant

structure *Paris: Invisible City* so that the viewer experiences the appearing and disappearing oligopticon through her own undertaking of their technotext.[10]

Although both texts evoke the autobiographical—sometimes even in the use of first-person narration—they refuse to foreground an image of the author, using instead a representative figure that stands in for the mode of social perception championed in the texts. These figures are, ostensibly, avatars that represent the separation between the self of the text and the authorial self, a dialiectic so key to autobiographical theory. At the same time, these doubles are themselves investigating the relationship between identity, sociality, and city space. By providing an embodied figure of their theory, these two scholars offer another self that stands in for the author in the texts, and allows him to simultaneously critique and validate his own project. For Benjamin, this figure is the *flâneur*, the visible strolling figure who makes a social spectacle of his endless circulation of the cityscape. He offers, I suggest, the nineteenth century French photographer Felix Nadar as his textual double, using his spatial photographs of the city of Paris, and his *Souterrain* series in particular, to model a technologically mediated mode of *flânerie*. Latour is interested in the same intersection of ideas, and indeed directly cites Benjamin in order to critique him. Latour's city has become a series of screens, and his model self is the lurker, a figure who sees through circulation, but remains removed or even invisible to the space and people he surveys. Latour offers several examples of this figure, but I

[10] Hayles introduces and defines the term 'technotext' in her 2002 book *Writing Machines* and expands the scope of her analysis in her survey of electronic literature in her 2008 book *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary*, but she does not address Latour's work or *Paris: Invisible City* in either book. I am using her term here in recognition of its application to the multimodality of Latour's work.

focus here on his reading of American sociologist Howie Becker, of whom Latour is both critical and appreciative.

Positioning the city space of Paris as a metaphor for the networked space of contemporary sociality, I read these doubles as theoretical selves that represent the *flâneur* and lurker as linked modes of participatory yet mediated self accounting. These figures are characterized as both alienated and deeply imbricated in the social fabric of Paris, and thus of networked sociality. As both projects suggest, there is no better setting for an exploration of these dynamics than the city which imagines itself as a kind of living, social being. Informed by its past and striving toward its future, Paris makes visible the spaces and processes by which modernity and technology are bound up in the production of the social. Mobilizing theories of the diary, space, viewing, and sociality I place these works within a broader critical conversation about the tensions between vulnerability and agency that characterize not just social media, but sociality writ large in the age of hyperindustrialization.

Space, Perception, and Sociality

One of the questions prompted by both of these works is, why foreground space in an analysis of historical and contemporary sociality by way of self-writing? One reason for this is that the social is often imagined in spatial terms: as a sphere, a network, and a site. This metaphor is one of the ways we make sense of its complexity, but it also represents the ways in which the ephemerality of the social is made visible: citizens gathering in a square, teenagers grouping at the mall, colleagues gathered around a phone

for a conference call. We understand spaces as affording or prohibiting social formations, and buildings and public spaces are now designed with such concerns in mind: providing accessibility for the differently abled, and making the intended use of spaces clear with textual and visual signs. This metaphorical correspondence between space and sociality serves a central role in our understanding about what the social is and how it operates. As both a trope and a material reality, these terms have been transferred to networked sociality as well, perhaps best emblematized by social media 'sites' like MySpace, a social media platform that allows users to customize their allotted internet real estate in order to drive the viewer 'traffic' that constitutes one element of the structure of networked sociality. But as the term 'traffic' implies, this form of sociality is marked by circulation and temporary spectatorship. Like passengers trapped inside a car, participating only [primarily] through their viewing and their brief appearance as data traffic—in the form of posts, or comments, or "likes"—the rhetorical constructs of social media interaction emphasize the practice of circulatory surveillance of these spaces as a legible form of social interaction.

This concept, however, is far from new. In the nineteenth century an analogous practice was emblematized by the *flâneur*, who Benjamin describes as a "philosophical promenader…the werewolf restlessly roaming a social wilderness," who makes of his roaming a visual spectacle (418). As a defined practice, *flânerie* is the activity of public strolling and active looking, and the figure is typically tied to the historical moment of 19th c. Paris. But the figure of the *flâneur* almost immediately took on a greater cultural meaning, particularly in poetry and literature. While Edgar Allen Poe describes him as a

dark, driven figure: “the type and the genius of deep crime. He refuses to be alone,” in “The Man of the Crowd,” the narrator forwarding this assessment of the titular character is nonetheless completely enraptured by the anonymous figure’s incessant wandering, going so far as to follow him throughout an entire evening (1840, 236). Poet Charles Baudelaire, on the other hand, holds the figure in the highest regard, and describes him as a “solitary mortal endowed with an active imagination, always roaming the great desert of men [with] a nobler aim than that of the pure idler” (1857, 402). That aim, for Baudelaire, was using the experience of intense sociality precipitated by pervasive circulation to create an individual sense of purpose. As Keith Tester phrases it, “The *flâneur* is the man of the public who knows himself to be of the public,” a figure who demonstrates “the activity of the sovereign spectator going about the city in order to find the things that will occupy his gaze and thus complete his otherwise dissatisfied experience” (1994, 6). Through the social engagement of his looking, then, the *flâneur* achieves a sense of subjective fulfillment while simultaneously bringing to cultural relevance the details often overlooked in the course of everyday life.

The lurker, on the other hand, is often described in contemporary parlance as the individual who sees, but is often unseen. While the term often has a negative connotation, as media scholar Sheila C. Murphy notes, lurking is often seen more positively in online spaces, and constitutes a crucial function of social behavior online: “By lurking, the user is both caught up in the discourse of the group and, at the same time, able to remain detached” (2000, 178). Although some of the connotations and specificities have changed, the persistence of the circulating spectator, whose presence registers reflexive

forms of engagement with the terms of the industrialization of sociality from modernity to postmodernity, suggests that this practice and its discursive construction focalize sites of tension between alienation and community in social spaces.

Mapping onto this transition and overlap in the figures of spectatorship are changing perceptions of social spaces themselves. The city of Paris, in particular, stands as an ongoing critical preoccupation for scholars exploring this relationship because it seems to embody a unique spatial relationship to shifting modes of viewing and sociality as scholars from Walter Benjamin to Giuliani Bruno have explored. Paris is a city designed to be looked at, viewed from various perspectives, and admired. From the bottom of its subterranean foundations to the spire of Sacre Couer, great care has been taken to ensure that both citizen and tourist feel themselves part of something magnificent by entering the landscape of the city. Paris has also historically been visualized not only as urban space but as a kind of network. From Benjamin's *flâneur* to the RATP Metro map; from the intricate city plan of connected arrondisements to Latour's technotext, the city materializes a complex network of social spaces that span the historical continuum. Furthermore, the very architecture of the city itself is designed to encourage circulation, making of this process a distinct social practice. Benjamin reads this phenomenon through the nineteenth century by focusing on the rise of the arcades, the pedestrian commercial spaces designed for commerce that resulted in a new kind of interior public space for the bourgeois. Visual culture scholar Giuliani Bruno suggests that this transition emerged in relationship with the media of cinema, whereby "a network of architectural forms produced a new spatiovisuality. Such venues as arcades, railways,

department stores, the pavilions of exhibition halls, glass houses, and winter gardens incarnated the new geography of modernity. They were all sites of transit" (17). What both scholars contend is that the development of city space in relationship to media and sociality in the nineteenth century led to the prevailing logics of sociality as both mediated and networked in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The experience of space as personal and revelatory, as well as culturally and historically specific quite accurately evokes the photographic series that so captivated Benjamin's attention: Nadar's *Souterrain* series.[11] Nadar was deeply engaged with the photography of space throughout his career, and the city of Paris during his lifetime proved a worthy subject because it underwent such massive spatial changes. At the time of Nadar's *Souterrain* photography project the catacombes were not open to the public, but were part of the major reinvention of the city space of Paris under the direction of Georges-Eugéne Haussmann and the prevailing social order of the Second Empire.[12] The newer areas of the city had been built around the older, medieval city plan that included the numerous narrow twisting streets that had provided the perfect sites for building barricades during the various revolutionary movements. Paris was preparing to host the Universal Exposition in 1855 and wanted to present a cohesive, sanitized and accessible image of modernity. In order to achieve this vision, many of the older neighborhoods were slated for destruction during the first phase of the urban renovation, and its citizens were displaced to the outer areas of the city in order to make way for the green spaces

[11] Nadar is mentioned or discussed 26 separate times in *The Arcades Project*.

[12] For reasons of brevity I will refer to the project as such based on the title of his book of the same name documenting the photographic project: Nadar. *Le Paris Souterrain de Felix Nadar: 1861*. Paris: Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques et des Sites, 1982. Print.

and wide avenues that now characterize Paris. Haussmannization, the popular term for the urban planning project, was, in part, an attempt to impose a form of political control over its citizens.[13] As Foucault notes of such twinned aims, "Discipline organizes an analytical space," which "correspond[s] not only to the need to supervise, to break dangerous communications, but also to create a useful space" (1977, 143-144). It was primarily the poorer, more densely populated neighborhoods that saw complete destruction under Haussmannization in order to make way for more public, commercial sites. The older medieval sites of the city contained narrow thoroughfares and winding routes in which it was difficult to see and locate oneself. These spaces resisted the post-revolution order that sought to map the city through a form of locative informatics such as numbered, rather than named addresses for private residences. These older neighborhoods made such logistical organization difficult while simultaneously serving revolutionary movements well. The narrow streets were easily blocked by furniture and debris in order to create barricades from which revolutionaries could fight city and state police. Adopting a visual discourse of disease, blockage, and immorality in response, helped pave the way for a new visual organization of the city that emphasized mobility and circulation, as architecture and technology scholar Antoine Picon has argued (2003).

The change in space wrought by Haussmannization affected not only how Paris saw itself as a city, but also how its citizens understood themselves and their place within that new city. This connection between discourses of modernity, the organization of

[13] For an excellent overview of this process, see David P. Jordan's *Transforming Paris: The Life and Labors of Baron Haussmann*, which draws heavily upon Haussmann's own 1893 mutli-volume autobiography: *Mémoires du Baron Haussmann*.

space, and everyday life has been most fully articulated by French sociologist Henri Lefebvre, who argues that the subjective meaning of space is produced through the way that it is comprehended and experienced socially (1974). Although space is understood on an embodied, sensory level through "perceived space," and on a constructed and idealized level through "conceived space," the most personal and least codified experience of space is "lived space". The everyday experience of lived space is constructed through a synthesis of both perceived and conceived space, but also produced through subjective access to memory and history. The production of lived space relies on the narrative of dailyness in individual experience as well as a social investment in futurity. Lived space "need obey no rules of consistency or cohesiveness…it is characterized by the confused traces of the ongoing conflict between childhood and society out of which it has been produced" (15). Lefebvre points out how lived space is often a site of tension between past and present, as well as individual and social meanings. These "confused traces" intermingle, requiring a constant narration of space in order to find cohesion within these narrative fragments (16). The personal mode of compiling these dispersed and sometimes differing portions of perspective is the individual, repetitive affective labor by which space acquires subjective meaning. As a result, that meaning can easily differ from individual to individual. This tension between the individual and social meanings of space calls to mind the conflict between the Haussmann reimagining of the social space of Paris with the resistance of the lower classes. These inhabitants conceived of that lived space differently and fought its reorganization because their entire experience of the city was disrupted, in terms of the

continuity from their past to their future, through the disciplinary, administrative vision of spatial futurity enabled by political and technical transformation.

Lefebvre provides a useful theoretical system of mapping of the tension between the conceived and lived spaces of nineteenth-century Paris because the everyday effects of the process were unevenly distributed. Haussmannization restructured not only the public common spaces of the city, but also the private lived experience of its inhabitants. The depth of this transition on the level of everyday life is evident in the changes to how the city space was rendered visually, as geographer Antoine Picon demonstrates in his study of the changing nature of Parisian cartography (2003). Picon argues that older portrait views of the city, which emphasized static, unchanging vision of the city gave way in the nineteenth century to a variety of city maps that emphasized circulation and motion based on sociological data. The dominance of individual masterwork maps receded as atlas collections of multiple maps providing a variety of perspectives rose to prominence (138). Within this new framework, flipping through the atlas provided changing views of the city that reflected the different modes of circulation detailed in the individual maps. Picon notes that one atlas, for instance, contained a map that tracked the transmission of cholera in the poorest neighborhoods paired with another map that charted the concentration of prostitutes in the different arrondissements (146). This spatial form of knowledge production was presented as a way to track 'unhealthy' systems of circulation in order to support the political aims of the reconstruction of the city. These maps provided a social moral imperative for the reorganization of the city that aligned with discourses of progress and modernity. While the emerging visual vernacular

of the city still revolved around the rhetoric of circulation and motion, the terms of those concepts was also charged with the discourse of media technologies. As Giuliani Bruno has pointed out, the city developed an architectonics of the technics of movement: the architecture of modernity drew inspiration from and was located around sites of mobility such as the Metro, the train station, the avenues, and the arcades, informed by the grammar of photography and cinema (2002, 27-28). Moving from a vocabulary of organic blockage and resistance to one of technologically enabled flow and mobility, the city began to reinvent itself around these new concepts of circulation.

The city thus emerges as a liminal space between the private and public spheres, and between representation and reality. Paris denotes a kind of proving ground for learning how to exist simultaneously as both a private and public self in spaces where this line is increasingly blurred by the proximity of other bodies. This dissolution has most often been theorized as an affective experience of the shock of modernity, as twentieth-century sociologist Georg Simmel suggests. He characterizes the fragmentation and overlap of these two spheres as a "shock" because of the physiological effects that emerge from a new way of seeing the self when one is in the crowd of the city where "the bodily closeness and the lack of space make intellectual distance really perceivable for the first time" (1903, 334). The experience of urban modernity Simmel describes is characterized by a persistent sense of alienation that is not alleviated, but heightened by the constant presence of others. This affective separation of self is quite different from the model of subjectivity that achieves rationalism through reflexivity, a model introduced by René Descartes in the 17th century and subsequently privileged by the

Enlightenment. In its place emerges the "dense swarming territory" outside the mind that characterizes "our sensate life together" within post-Enlightenment aesthetics, as literary scholar Terry Eagleton has charted (1991, 13). Like Simmel, Eagleton emphasizes the sensory experience of shared social space as directly impacting subjectivity. As a result, literary scholar Susan Buck-Morss argues, "sensory addition to a compensatory reality becomes a means of social control" (1992, 23). She suggests that the shocks Simmel charted become so deeply ingrained that they must be repeated through aesthetic representations in order to feed the sensory addiction that now characterizes subjectivity. This transformation of social space and its attendant effects on subjectivity demanded new modes of social engagement.

It was this phenomenon that preoccupied Benjamin throughout his career, and that was taken up by later materialist scholars such as Guy Debord in his analysis of the political power of the spectacle to mobilize aesthetics in service of ideology (1967). For Benjamin, the landscape of the city became a spectacular site for the *flâneur* because it represented a phantasmagoria, or representative site that was, at its core, a construction. As he so poetically suggests, "The crowd is the veil through which the familiar city beckons to the *flâneur* as phantasmagoria" (104). Here Benjamin foregrounds the direct relationship between space and the technics of perception. For the *flâneur* the city is no longer composed simply of architecture and individuals, it is a shifting representation, a performance of vision. Only by engaging the spectacle of sociality by way of circulation does the familiar city space become partially legible. The *flâneur* lifts the veil of sociality to reveal the structure of the lived experience of the social embedded within the

architecture of the city. What these various theorists chart is the dissolution of those embodied psychic boundaries as a result of aesthetic transition that can be read in the lived space of the city, requiring a self that is always in circulation, acquiring and responding to the sensory shocks provided by the city as a site of circulation.

For Latour the phantasmagoria is still very much a dominant metaphor for the city, but he suggests city space is now further mediated by the screen, rather than just Benjamin's veil. As he notes, "We're so used to these cascading transformations that we no longer notice the pace at which they cross through our existences, speeding along the gaping divide between being and nothingness—and back again" (Plan 15). Latour privileges the ability of the trace to reveal the social, and suggests that lurking, as a social practice is precisely the process of following these traces to their end, despite their potentially limited perspective. So rather than the totalizing sensory experience suggested by earlier critics, Latour charts the internalization of the phantasmagoria, and indicates that our experience of space, like our experience of the self, is not integrated, but fragmented and juxtaposed, much like the information presented on our screens that now miniaturizes and localizes space. He writes, "The initial point of view doesn't count; all that counts is the movement of images. All the images are partial, of course; all the perspectives are equal…the visible is never in an isolated image or in something outside of images, but in the montage of images" (Plan 19). Like Benjamin, Latour emphasizes the necessity of circulation, but in a shift, he suggests that it is the images themselves, as

much as individuals, that now circulate as traffic.[14] Experiencing the social thus becomes a process of editing together these images in a montage of meaning that is both limited and intimate for the individual. For the lurker, the spectacle of the city has become personalized and partial rather than panoramic and totalizing.

The lurker's performance of circulation is popularly constructed in terms of his—and the lurker, like the *flâneur*, is most often gendered as male—potential threat because his circulation is legible only in its digital traces. While the *flâneur* has become a celebrated figure, representing a reflexive engagement with the changes that capitalism enacted on space and sociality, the lurker enjoys no such similar cultural cache. The name alone suggests devious and voyeuristic practices that dehumanize the actor precisely because he cannot be properly identified within the constructs of networked sociality. Often associated with a kind of predatory presence, the lurker has pathological and aberrant connotations, despite the fact that most people willingly admit to lurking behavior within networked sociality. As social media scholar danah boyd has demonstrated, the concept of lurking evokes both an invisible and all-seeing audience that persists over time (2007, 3). The lurker sees, but does not present himself in return as a spectacle. He is the spectator, but not the spectacle, a materially afforded *flâneur* who can see without being seen although his traces, if archived, may then be surveilled as behavior. He similarly circulates socially, but his circulation seems to afford no similar

[14] Latour's characterization of the circulation of images engages but differs from the theories of an earlier French philosopher, Henri Bergson. In his 1896 *Matter and Memory*, Bergson states that "The recognition of a present object is effected by movements when it proceeds from the object, by representation when it issues from the subject," underscoring his assertion that consciousness is born in perception, and that what we perceive of as either external to ourselves (matter), and internal (memory), are images, visible only in their movement (78). Latour's theory emphasizes the individual's ability to compile and edit images for circulation rather than just perceive them as a result of their circulation.

capitalistic disruption. He instead expertly exploits the network's anonymity, strolling through its social paths undetected, but always detecting, always seeking out the clues of identity others willingly offer. The concept of the lurker is deeply, if complexly, rooted in a genealogical understanding of the *flâneur* as a necessary figure that is both alienated and alienating. Just as the *flâneur* frustrated the capitalistic aims of public space, he also performed a vital function: by turning a space into a scene, his practice made visible the capitalist logics at work within that social space. Through this performance the *flâneur* both upheld and disrupted the framework and standards of social space. His disruption offers not revolution, but a greater visibility of the ways in which the system of sociality is dependent upon such practices, even as they engender its own precarity. In a similar manner, the lurker's manner evokes an unseen but registered presence, gesturing toward the massive affective labor of maintaining the city as a social space, as well its embodied cost.

Stillness in a Space of Circulation: Nadar's Souterrain Mannequins

In the conclusion of his essay, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century," Benjamin quotes radical French philosopher Blanqui: "The number of our doubles is infinite in time and space…These doubles exist in flesh and bone—indeed in trousers and jacket, in crinoline and chignon. They are by no means phantoms; they are the present eternalized" (25-26). Blanqui was writing from his cell as a prisoner of the Commune of 1871, and Benjamin reads this passage as "resignation without hope," signaling a "world dominated by phantasmagorias" which he understood as symptomatic of "modernity"

(1939, 26). Benjamin was particularly critical of the cultural tendency to define modernity through discourses of progress that suggested a teleological movement from the past to the present. From his vantage point in the twentieth century, he turned his gaze to a key period of modernization in the nineteenth century to articulate historical resonances, or dialectical images as he termed them, that would illustrate not progress, but repetition and recursion. Like a critical *flâneur* Benjamin believed in and demonstrated the power of space and image to sound these historical resonances. As a result, he took a deep interest in the work of the nineteenth-century French photographer Felix Nadar, who was well known for his photography of the spaces of Paris. In the "Exposé of 1935," Benjamin writes of the photographer, "Nadar's superiority to his colleagues is shown by his attempt to take photographs in the Paris sewers: for the first time, the lens was deemed capable of making discoveries" (6). Benjamin sets this photographic exploration apart from the portraiture of Nadar's contemporaries, which he characterizes as reiterating painting, rather than exploring the specific artistic affordances of the new medium of photography.

The importance of Nadar's project beneath the streets of Paris however, "becomes greater still as, in view of the new technological and social reality, the subjective strain in pictorial and graphic information is called into question," as Benjamin describes it (6). What Nadar's work on this innovative project reveals, Benjamin argues, is the divide between painting and photography. After an initial period of aesthetic overlap, painting becomes more engaged with the subjective expression of color and abstract representation, whereas photography "greatly extends the sphere of commodity

exchange" through its ability to flood the market with "countless images of figures, landscapes, and events" which had previously been out of reach of everyday citizens (6). Through photography, then, everyday citizens had the opportunity to occupy the position of the *flâneur* by circulating between and juxtaposing these images of space, people, and happenings. As Benjamin describes in "The *Flâneur*" convolute, "The 'colportage phenomenon of space' is the *flâneur's* basic experience…The space winks at the *flâneur*: What do you think may have gone on here?" (418-419). Here Benjamin suggests that the *flâneur's* experience of space is both deeply personal—the space literally interpolating the subject of the *flâneur* with a direct question—and fragmentary. Colportage, for Benjamin, is detached from its religious or propagandizing connotations, and instead represents the juxtaposition of history, images, culture, and the literary brought together in a montage effect. Like the ability of Nadar's photography to extend and explore modes of seeing, colportage offers the *flâneur* a new mode of seeing that is at once private and particular, as well as social and historically constructed. Despite the wide circulation of the *flâneur*, one space he did not have access to at the time of Nadar's *Souterrain* project, was the catacombes. But the cultural significance of this space for Haussmannization is its connection to historical and contemporary reorganizations of social space.

In many ways the discourse of unhealthy circulation necessitating the restructuring of space had credible roots in the city's history. In the late 18th century the stench of millions of rotting corpses in the overcrowded cemeteries of Paris, particularly Les Innocents located in the heart of the city, began to create health and aesthetic problems that forced the city to confront the problem of cemetery overcrowding. Mass

burials and the construction of charnel houses surrounding the site had lessened but not solved the problem. After an outbreak of disease believed to be the result of the circulation of bad air prompted a public crisis, Louis XVI closed the cemetery in 1782 and ordered the relocation of the interred bodies in various states of decay.[15] The sites underneath the city were a logical choice; they had already been cleared in their former function as a quarry site, and were not immediately required for any other purpose. The multitudes of bodies in the cemetery were exhumed, quick limed, disarticulated, and relocated to their new resting place underground. One of the delightful ironies of this process, as literary scholar David Pike notes, is that it physically enforced the ideals of *Egalité* and *Fraternité* championed by the French revolution: "although [it] did so in the brutal manner of millions of bones stacked upon and interlaced with one another" (110). The disarticulated femur of an aristocrat ended up stacked below the femur of the lowest laborer; identities held no sway, and only the demand for space and the accident of death determined one's place below the city streets. Moved because of their inconvenient organic process of decay, equality reigned in the catacombs in the sense that no femur was deemed superior to any other femur. As Nadar wryly remarked of the space at the outset of the project, "In the egalitarian confusion of death, the Merovingian king keeps the eternal silence next to the massacred of September '92" (140).

The development of the Catacombes in the eighteenth century solved two problems: it eased the sensory and health crisis above ground and created a site of order in a subterranean space typically known for its disorder. In the nineteenth century, the

[15] For a thorough description of this process, see Pike's *Subterranean Cities*.

ghastly order imposed upon the relocated bodies served to map the subterranean spaces in the service of the state; along with the subsequent development of the metro and the modern sewers furthers this reorganization signaled a shift in the way these spaces served the civic imaginary. As Pike points out, the sustenance of the vertical city as a rhetorical construct of modernity required imposing order on the spaces beneath the city. This was expressed in the process of establishing modern sewers and mass transit, but also in the ways in which the unruly discourses of the revolutionary space beneath the city had to be tamed in order to sustain the foundation for the technological order above ground (2005, 6-7). Under Haussmannization, these subterranean spaces became sites of orderly function and service, altering the disruptive and revolutionary valences for which they were prized before the reinvention of the city. Previously Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas had both set novels in the underground spaces of Paris, imagining that location as a space without the strict order imposed above, and therefore open to new lived conceptions, as Lefebvre would characterize it.[16] Much like the rotting corpses of Les Innocents had to be relocated to the catacombs beneath the city in order to clear the air above ground in the eighteenth century, the underground spaces had to be reimagined again in this century in order to provide the proper foundation for the establishment of a truly modern city. After Haussmannization the spatial order from above was imposed on the world below, but the revolutionary and chaotic possibilities of this lived space were

[16] Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* (1862) used the sewers as the refuge of protagonist Jean Valjean and Alexandre Dumas's *Les Mohicans de Paris* (1854) used the catacombes as the site of revolutionary meetings.

never fully eradicated. As Nadar's photos show, there is still an echo of chaos within the newly reimagined space.

Nadar was well known for his technical innovations in the field of photography and had begun experimenting with electric lighting for his studio portraits. In February of 1861 he filed a patent for an electric arc light he had invented and had massive batteries installed in his studio to supplement the process.[17] He was dissatisfied with the result of his studio photographs, finding that the harsh lighting washed out his subjects and left them with startling dark eyes, creating an almost inhuman effect. Although the portraits themselves were largely unsuccessful, news of his work with electric lighting spread throughout the city. Determined to demonstrate the potential of electric lighting, Nadar conceived of a stunning technical experiment by which the reconstruction below the city surface would, literally, be brought to light. He financed the project himself, and eventually sold a set of the prints to the city, but the project was devastatingly difficult and expensive. As Nadar later remarked in his 1889 memoir *Quant j'etais photographe*, he "would not wish these three months on [his] worst enemy" (15). This is due in part to the project's elaborate technical demands: Nadar was required to run massive lengths of cables from his shooting site underground to the fifty Bunsen batteries monitored by assistants above ground.[18] But he persevered because his personal motivation coincided with the city's interest in generating a cohesive visual rhetoric of the city. Charles Marville had been designated official photographer for the city during the renovation, and

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[17] Hunt, Will. "Going Souterrain." *Intelligent Life* (Nov/Dec) 2012.

[18] Howes, Chris. *To Photograph Darkness: The History of Underground and Flash Photography*. Glouchester: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1989. Print.

was taking care of this project above ground, while Nadar's experiment offered the opportunity to demonstrate the impressive work taking place below ground as well.

In addition to the extensive technical demands of the shoot, Nadar ran into another key problem that he notes in his autobiography, a passage which Benjamin quotes at length in the Photography convolute of *The Arcades Project*. Nadar writes that he "had judged it advisable to animate some of these scenes by the use of a human figure—less from considerations of picturesqueness than in order to give a sense of scale, a precaution too often neglected by explorers in this medium and with sometimes disconcerting consequences" (674). By Nadar's account the accurate visual register of space takes priority over the human figure, foregrounding his interest in mapping the space of the catacombs and in the technics rather than the affect of the project. He struck upon the idea of using mannequins, again in deference to the technical demands of the space and medium: "For these eighteen minutes of exposure time, I found it difficult to obtain from a human being the absolute, inorganic immobility I required" (674). Mannequins, he found, were able to remain still despite the inhospitable conditions of the catacombs and allowed him to indulge in the long exposure time of the wet plate collodion process. He was able to work thoughtfully and deliberately, assured of the stillness of his subject. Although Nadar insists on his technical priorities in recounting the project; the visual rhetoric of the mannequin series suggests an alternative reading of the project that evokes Blanqui's notion of doubles: "These doubles exist in flesh and bone—indeed in trousers and jacket, in crinoline and chignon. They are by no means phantoms; they are the present eternalized" (25-26).



Fig. 1. Nadar. ***Autoportrait, Paris Souterrain***

Blanqui's theory of doubles is particularly poignant for Nadar's project, which includes a single self-portrait alongside the many mannequin photographs. In the portrait above (Fig. 1) Nadar sits on a bench, his cap pulled down low over his eyes, obscuring the viewer's access to them. The bench on which he sits is nestled in a corner of the catacombes, and the photographer rests his back on a wall composed of disarticulated femurs that serve as a backdrop for his apparent slumber. Nadar notes that sitters had to sit motionless for the eighteen-minute exposure time, explaining both the napping narrative and the slight blurriness of the photographer's face. The fuzziness slightly obscuring the outlines of his face contrasts so dramatically with the sharpness achieved

with the mannequins, suggesting that Nadar himself was unable to achieve the absolute stillness he required. And stillness is, in fact, what the photograph evokes. Despite the cluttered framing that fills the foreground with bottles, papers, and rags—ostensibly the tools Nadar required for the development of negatives—Nadar and the bones behind him are deathly still. The sharp contrast in tone is further heightened by the harsh shadow of the unlit lamp that leans ominously toward Nadar; its extinguished form conjures the scythe of the grim reaper straining to claim Nadar. This dark outline, along with the dark sockets of the skulls dotting the wall behind him calls into question the photographer's state: is he sleeping or is he dead? In the absence of motion, or the suggestion of motion, Nadar's *Souterrain* self portrait, unlike his many other self-portraits, denies the viewer access to his much commented upon vitality, suggesting that it too serves as a ghostly double in his own extensive autobiographical oeuvre.

The mannequin portraits similarly exist in a colportage with Nadar's solitary self-portrait, suggesting that they serve as a kind of inorganic autobiographical double for the photographer. In their stillness and their stiff poses, these mannequins mirror Nadar's own immobility and seem to resist the discourse of circulation and movement that characterize the reinvention of the city above ground. Although the photographs inevitably participate, and in some ways work in concert with such discourses, they stage a space of autobiographical resistance to the totalizing effects of that discourse. If we take it a step further, and read the photographic series as a diaristic exploration of both the technics of photography and of urban space, we can read these mannequins as Nadar's uncanny double, existing, as Blanqui suggests, outside but in correlation to the

photographer. The power of the photographic series, as Benjamin asserts, is its ability to juxtapose these bodies with the spaces in which they are set through a narrative possible only in photography. Because Benjamin was so interested in the aesthetic of juxtaposition in his own work, it makes sense to read Nadar's series through the same lens, given Benjamin's repeated return to its ability to mark out new horizons for both photography and the technics of perception. That these intertwined discourses are deeply linked to a kind of *flânerie* that is inherently subjective and even autobiographical, we can go one step further to suggest that Nadar's subterranean photographic project is a diaristic colportage that uses his uncanny double to create a narrative critique of the subjective effects of the shifting urban landscape.

Despite this deeply human resonance, humanistic mannequins were themselves a recent development, resulting from the new visual demands of public commercial spaces such as the arcades. The development of the plate glass window and the improvements of public and commercial lighting, as Wolfgang Schivelbusch's landmark study has demonstrated, led to the ambulatory practice of "window shopping" whereby shops had the opportunity to tell their potential customers something about the store before they ever set foot inside (1995, 146-148). While adjustable dressmaker's dummies had sufficed during the bespoke era of fashion prior to the industrialization of clothing production, the changed economic and social circumstances in the middle of the nineteenth century demanded a different form of display. As Hillel Schwartz explains, these displays became a space of performance: the shop windows became "stages" and the passing crowds audience members. "Commanding dramatic scenes comparable to the

new tableaux in natural history museums," Schwartz writes, "by 1900 mannequins stood at the center" of a convergence of architecture, fashion, and culture (1996, 90). By creating a scenario in the space of the shop window, the mannequins became actors who brought a scene to life through narrativization. Fashion became deeply embedded as a cultural narrative device, and Nadar was at least cognizant of this process. He reports: "I tried to get round this difficulty [of unsuitable human subjects] by means of mannequins, which I dressed in workman's clothes and positioned in the scene with as little awkwardness as possible" (674). Despite his declaration that mannequins were used simply for scale, Nadar creates a kind of shop window tableau within the catacombs by carefully dressing the mannequins in distinctively lower-class clothing, posing them, and capturing them from various perspectives. Set against the seemingly endless landscape of bones, the mannequins do narrativize the space by employing familiar capitalistic spectacles of display and consumption. But like Nadar's self-portrait, and the bones themselves, the stillness of the mannequins creates an uncanny otherness at odds with the *flânerie* typically associated with these modes of visual spectacle.

The staging of a narrative scenario through fashion and posing is especially tangible in the photograph below (Fig. 2), one of the most widely reproduced of the series. The bland title, "Mannequin Pulling a Cart of Bones" describes the scene accurately, but fails to anticipate its shocking affect. The mannequin is dressed in a billowing blouse that consumes almost the same vertical register as the cart behind him, suggesting a solid body beneath, but also one prone to adornment. There is a suggestion

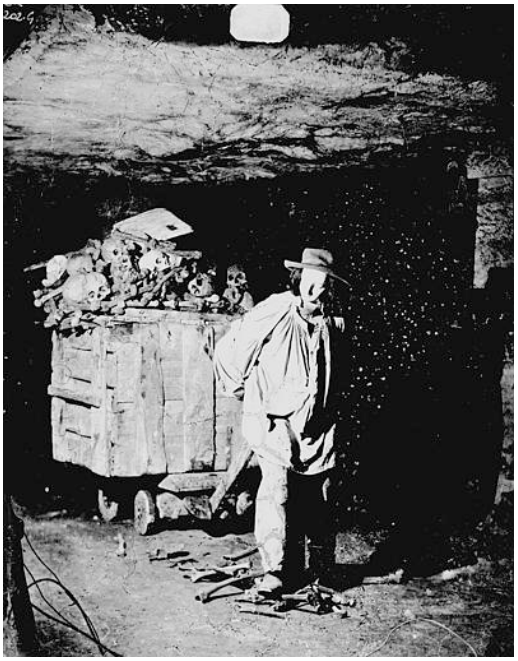


Fig.2. Nadar, *Mannequin Pulling a Cart of Bones*

of the significance of performative or affective labor here, as the shirt's excessive draping call to mind Nadar's earlier and well-known work with the mime Pirandello, whom Nadar captured in a series of exaggerated poses with the camera, suggesting an aesthetic connection between photography and mimicry. Like Pirandello, the mannequin anticipates the camera, but turns away from it: his head glances off to his right, avoiding the disconcerting black sockets that, Nadar knew from experience, would develop with a head on shot in the harsh light. The bones lining the wall behind the mannequin are indistinguishable, but the bones overflowing from his cart, and being suggestively crushed beneath his heavy boot register immediately. Here, too, the mannequin's sideways glance returns suggestively: it is almost as if he can't bear the sight of the bones he is about to crush, but also can't avoid them in the course of his work. His only choice is to look away, to direct his gaze elsewhere in order to bear the weight of proceeding.

His inability to look, and the spectacle of his grisly labor, is what pulls the viewer in. The positioning of the mannequin's head in the center of the frame and the excessive lighting direct our eyes immediately to his face, to his glance. Instead of similarly averting our eyes, however, the light directs the gaze backward, behind the mannequin, to the harshly lit femurs and skulls, whose dark sockets come as a shock of the inorganic. We read this scenario not as an index of any lived experience of the catacombs, but as a spectacle of disappeared bodies and space. Even in his stillness, the mannequin evokes the transitory and the ephemeral in the inorganic body he occupies. He stands in for the viewer, literally giving the space appropriate scale, but also inviting us to follow his travels through this typically inaccessible space. He is still, but his pose promises the promenade. At the time of Nadar's project the public had no visual access to these spaces. As such, the photographs caused a sensation when they were exhibited in London in 1862 and Paris in 1863, and they were eventually included in the official Paris guidebook (Howes 17). The visual access his work granted was followed by physical access as well: the catacombes were reopened to the public and the modernized sewers were one of the highlights of the 1867 exposition. Tourists could ride in the boats Nadar's mannequins commandeered, although they were provided with carpets and pillows in order to observe the sewers in luxury.

But in the moment of the bone cart photograph, the mannequin performs for us the affective register of an immobile, inorganic space only temporarily brought to light. The performative element of this tableau is further underscored by the visibility of the electric cords—those lifelines to the power located in the world above—in the lower left

half of the frame. Those cords disrupt a truly organic cohesion of the space and remind the viewer that this performance, and our visual consumption of it, is technologically mediated, made possible only through the arc light, and the Bunsen battery, and the process of wet collodion developing. Like a *flâneur* stopping at a particularly poignant picture window, we are allowed to look in, but we never forget the artificiality of the scene, or the pane of glass separating us from it.

The intellectual distance of mediation and the register of performance do not preclude, however, the shocking affect of the photographs. There is a resonance that haunts the process of looking, conveying not melancholy or nostalgia, but a sense of the uncanny. This scenario is both familiar and strange: there is something hauntingly human, but distressingly macabre about both the dismembered skeletons and the lifelike mannequin. As if looking into a cracked mirror, we seem to recognize but disavow the reflection we see. This too, I argue, is a crucial part of the aesthetic significance of the series. In his foundational essay, "The Uncanny" Freud works through the etymologial roots of the *unheimlich* experience in order to argue that it represents either a supressed infantile complex or a "primitive" belief that re-emerges in the present so as to confirm either that earlier impulse or an unaffected belief. Within the context of psychoanalysis, the concept interested Freud because it allowed him to develop the theory of repetition-compulsion, which he believed was stronger than the pleasure-principle, giving therapists insight into the development of individual neurosis. But what is striking about the essay, and what Freud both relies on and glosses over, is the extent to which the essay is an exploration of how the uncanny is produced as an *aesthetic* affect (1919). Indeed, the

essay relies very little on data from case studies, and gleans most of its insights from the close reading of short stories and fairy tales. The essay is chiefly concerned with how an author produces an uncanny affect through the asethetic manipulation of setting and subject.

Freud's essay bears upon the discussion here because it explores how the uncanny occurs when the past, literally the buried past, disrupts the present by throwing perceptions of reality into doubt through the appearance of that which cannot be believed as real. Unlike simple ghost stories, the uncanny occurs when the producer "pretends to move in the world of common reality…he deceives us into thinking that he is giving us the sober truth, and then after all oversteps the bounds of possibility" (125-126). Here, and elsewhere in the essay, physical setting is paramount to the production of the uncanny. Freud himself experiences the uncanny when, lost in Italy while on vacation, he returns repeatedly and inexplicably to the same red-light district (130). He recognizes the space as real, but because he can't connect it to his lived experience, he thus finds the repetive return unsettling. He is a disconcerted *flâneur*. If the setting and the space of a narrative translates as both real and contiguous with the experience of the reader, then there is a certain resonance by which the reader comes to trust the resulting constructions of the presented narrative. When disturbing events occur within a setting we have accepted as real, we are required to confront the possibility that the uncanny events—most often the return of the past or the doubled self long since conquered in the present moment—are also possible.

More recently, Masahiro Mori has explored the affective dimension of the uncanny by mapping it onto a degree of mimetic resemblance to the self (1970). In his theory of the "uncanny valley," Mori's parabola of affect charts the shifting emotional response of the viewer to the inorganic body as it takes on more inorganic and artifical forms of movement. On one end of the chart, positive familiarity and human likeness align in the figure of the healthy human; on the other end, familiarity and human likeness are on the low end of the register in the figure of the industrial robot. At the trough of the parabola sits the zombie and the corpse, whose familiarity drops into the negative zone of the chart even as the figure retains strong human likeness. Mori indicates that there is a point at which resemblence is so successful that it creates identification and affection, but the point at which the similarity creates a sense of strangeness causes a "negative familiarity" that results in "a kind of horror" (34-35). Mori charts two separate types of bodies: those that move, and those that do not. The moving body has both greater highs and lows on his chart, suggesting that movement has a strong affective link to familiarity or dissonance. Nadar's mannequins, for instance, are still, but they read as strongly uncanny in the portraits because of the lengths to which Nadar went to give them humanistic movements and qualities.

The essays by Freud and Mori illustrate that the uncanny is an aesthetic effect whereby subjective resonance works to reveal the inherent instability of viewing as a strategy of sociality. Indeed, many of the stories Freud analyzes focus on the eyes or vision. This instability necessitates the circulation and repetition of the *flâneur*, as Freud himself experienced. This instability also echoes the transformation of the cityscape and

the discourse correlating circulation and morality that accompanied or prompted it. In the inorganic stillness emblamatized by the mannequins, but achieved through the medium of photography, the uncanny becomes an aesthetic spectacle of the subjective experience of social viewing. These mannequins make a spectacle of the alienation that characterizes the subjective experience of *flânerie*. In every photograph they are looking, glancing, gazing at the landscape around them, seemingly unable to make sense of it, or of their location within that landscape, despite their active engagement with the crowds of bones surrounding them. Through their unrewarded labor of looking, that is their inability to read the landscape of bones around them, the embodied logics of viewing are revealed as precarious strategies of sociality. Similarly subject to the shifting conditions in which they labor, the mannequin photographs enact the model of endlessly flexible subjectivity required by the new visual logics of the city: unceasing circuits of circulation and return, which demands reading anew, each time, the spaces that have become both recognizable and unfamiliar in their absence. Looking for their own reflection in the disarticulated others surrounding them, and failing to find it, the *flâneur* repeats the circuit again, signaling the cruel optimism that posits that maybe next time the labor of circulation and reading will produce a different result. The silent skeletons, circulating themselves in response to the demands of the city, seem to counter that hope with the macabre truth: *flânerie* never truly rewards just as it never truly ends; it only changes shape.

Paris: Invisible City and the Virtualization of Viewing

"Virtual Paris was detached from real Paris long ago.
It's time we updated our panoramas"
—Bruno Latour

Whereas Nadar's project privileges the pathos of the uncanny affect, Bruno Latour's and Emilie Hermant's project 130 years later goes further in assuming the fragmentation of the subject, and articulates a model of lurking through a deconstruction of the processes of the city. Bruno's interactive online project, *Paris: Invisible City*, is a technotext that requires an active, seeking practice of looking in order to bring together the fragmented project into a coherent whole. Begun in 1997 with the help of photographer Emilie Hermant, Latour's "sociological opera" is a four-part project in which the various bureaucratic systems of the city are explored in detail, cohering only through a sense of compilation that challenges prevailing notions of the Social as a monolithic sphere separate from individual subjectivity. In the four stages of the project: "Traversing," "Proportioning," "Distributing," and "Allowing," users navigate along a Metro-style map, each stop presenting an analysis of the bureaucratic systems that regulate the economy, temporality, security, and social processes of the city by bringing to light the work of individuals that are typically invisible. By disarticulating the city itself into a series of complex processes, Latour's aim is to demonstrate that the "social sphere," as it has been popularly theorized, is a farce: society is a flat surface that has no outside vantage point by which one could grasp its complexity. *We* are the social. We are those often-unseen actors that produce and monitor the systems that govern the very processes we take for granted, or rail against. Even more importantly for Latour, the

ergodic, fractured process of viewing helps reveal that we are only ever a series of fragmented identities ourselves: there is no true essence of the individual that can be reached through an analysis of the social. Instead, he exhorts, theorists would be better put to use by investigating the multiplicity of that which we understand as the social, revealing its interdependency on the spaces and technologically complex systems that surround us and hold together as our sense of subjectivity. These finely tuned and intricately connected systems would thus reveal to us in their fragments more about what we understand as the social than any theory of spherical unity could ever hope to. Like Nadar, Latour expresses this theory through a visual spectacle. But unlike Nadar, Latour never appears within the frame. He is the lurker: unseen but authorially present. It is through his circulation that users experience this city. As the viewer anticipated but unseen in this project, the user too becomes a lurker, looking in on these hidden bureaucratic spaces not often revealed. The user as lurker sees through Latour's eyes as he interviews the people he finds working in these bureaus, laboratories, offices, and cafes. Hermant photographs the screens and documents by which these individuals begin to make sense of the processes over which they have control. These often inscrutable images represent their own partial perspective of the city, illustrating Latour's theory of the "oligopticon" as the totalizing but partial view by which we see the social whole. He valorizes the work of these unsung individuals as composing the city of Paris itself; they provide the tools by which our own individual oligopticons are made possible.

In Plan 32 Latour writes, "I'm…in the same position as the oligopticons: blind but plugged in, partially intelligent, temporarily competent and locally complete." Latour

posits his theory of the oligopticon to both critique his fellow sociologists for their totalizing tendencies, and to update Foucault's theory of the panopticon, which he believes is outdated. Foucault himself was revising the theories of the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham, who imagined a new prison that centralized power by way of an architecture that allowed for total surveillance of its inhabitants. Moreover, the surveillance of such a panopticon would be so totalizing, Bentham asserts, that it would be internalized by the prisoners themselves, who believed they were so completely surveilled that they modified their own behavior even without proof of surveillance outside of the structure of the prison.[19] As Foucault later notes of the design, "the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they themselves are the bearers" (201). Foucault reads Bentham's vision for the panopticon prison as a moment of disciplinary transition by which the function of surveillance is not punitive—as in watching a law-breaker disemboweled—but disciplinary, enacting reformative behavior on the level of the individual rather than by way of a public spectacle. Presaging the discourse of lurking, Foucault writes, "The more numerous those anonymous and temporary observers are, the greater the risk for the inmate of being surprised and the greater his anxious awareness of being observed" (202), anticipating the twinned discourse of visibility and vulnerability that characterizes the precarity often attributed to industrial-scale lurking.

Latour takes a different perspective than Bentham and Foucault in his diagnosis of the breakdown of the panopticon in favor of the oligopticon. Rather than imposing order,

[19] Bentham's original ideas about the panopticon were outlined in a series of letters in 1787 and a subsequent series of postscripts to other works from 1790-1791. All of his writings on the panopticon have been collected into a single volume: *The Panopticon Writings*. Ed. Miran Božovič. London: Verso, 1995. Print.

the oligopticon works only to constrain the chaos of the increasing proliferation of modes of viewing. As such, the viewpoint the oligopticon presents is not the centralized and totalizing vantage point of the panopticon, but the scattered, partial perspective afforded by the innumerable cameras and screens that now structure our experience of everyday life. "In every case," Latour writes, "the oligopticon captures a different matter, different aggregates, different behaviors, a different physics. All these aggregates aren't plunged into a common matter of which each oligopticon seizes only an aspect. There's no more common medium in the social world than either in the physical world" (Plan 40). Challenging the multitude of viewpoints that all coalesce in the panopticon, Latour rejects the premise of centralization and argues that there are—and only ever have been—those disparate multitudes of viewpoints. What the rise of screen culture reveals, and what his projects aims to capture, are the ways in which those screens make visible the farce of centralized viewing, and instead enable a discourse of fragmentary and partial viewing as the structuring principle of identity and sociality.

One of the ways that Latour champions this viewpoint is through the structure of his project. The publically available website presents a navigational map signals the reflexive engagement of the text with the theme of its content and the specificity of its medium.[20] I categorize the project as a technotext following Katherine Hayles' definition of "a literary work that interrogates the inscription technology that produces it, mobilizing reflexive loops between its imaginative world and the material apparatus

[20] Although *Paris: Invisible City* has been published as a scholarly book, Latour has made two versions publicly and freely available online: the interactive website analyzed here, and a PDF of the text presented in chronological order.

embodying that creation as a physical presence" (2002, 25). Like tourists lost in the city, the user is required to consult the map, make a choice, and make sense of each destination. In this way, the project is also ergodic, which Espen Arseth has defined as a text that requires a "non-trivial effort" on the part of the reader (1997, 1). *Paris: Invisible City* offers no user guide and even a sequential navigation of the map creates more fragmentation in the text than coherence.

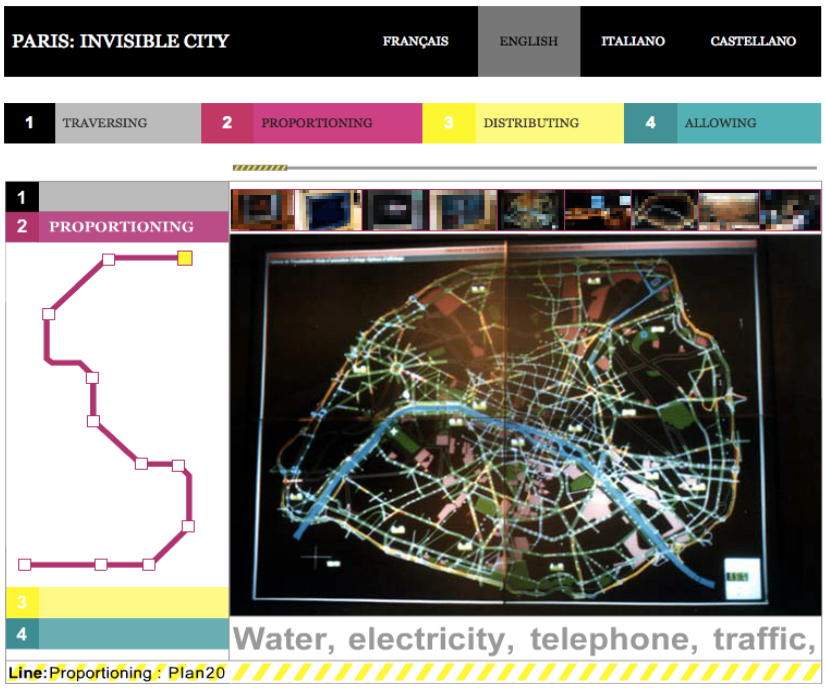


Fig. 3. Doubled navigation map in Paris: Invisible City

Like the functions of the road signs Latour lovingly explores in depth within several of the plans, he has laid out his project like an organized city that requires a nontrivial effort of navigation from the user, but that also ultimately results in a legible map on various layers. The project is comprised of a series of nested systems that descend from project, to topic, to plan. The header provides the only constant source of

navigation: users select their language of choice, and one of the four topics, “Traversing,” “Proportioning,” “Distributing,” and “Allowing,” to explore. Each topic corresponds to a color, and opens up to a metro-like in the navigational window, the structure of colored lines and stops echoing the familiar layout of the RATP maps. Within the selected topic ergodic reading occurs when the user clicks on an individual stop, which brings up fragments of text and an array of images organized as a “Plan.” Each topic has its own standard navigational interface that the user must learn to manipulate at the outset in order to gain access to the text and images to begin engaging with the technotext. The interface is both dynamic and static: the topic screen, containing the individual navigation map, occupies about 1/3 of the total window screen, and the size never changes through any stage of the navigation. Within this structuring frame, there is another controlled frame, that of the interactive screen. The content of this window changes in every plan, but the size and position of this frame remains stable. At every point in the project the top menu, containing the title, language choice, and topic map, remains visible, giving the viewer a constant site of exit that lessens a total feeling of disorientation. Despite the varying content and interactivity, these familiar markers and static frames create a kind of familiar navigational experience that quickly orients the user.

But the content does share some similar features. Each plan is an exploration of some corner of city management, and these spaces are themselves comprised of historical and contemporary perspectives of the city—some graphical and some representative—and on images of people using these perspectives to orient themselves. Each plan further contains a fragment of text that must be raised to the foreground by clicking on its title

bar at the bottom of the viewing screen, at which point the text rises from the bottom to overlay the pictures, its opaque surface still allowing some vision of the pictures underneath.

Despite these thematic similarities each topic generates its own functional standards that are learned via the interactivity of navigating the viewing screen. In "Traversing," for instance, the pictures of every plan present as a vertical scroll: navigating the mouse over the pictures causes them to scroll up and down depending on mouse movements, and swiping the cursor off of the viewing screen stops the scroll and enlarges whichever picture was central. This is the most frustrating of all the interfaces because it is also the least controllable, requiring repeated interactions to bring a desired picture to the foreground. "Allowing," in contrast, presents its images as thumbnails distributed in a web-like shape across the viewing screen. Clicking on any one image enlarges it, and displaces its position within the web slightly, so that interacting with the thumbnails creates a new network image on the screen. This mode of interactivity embodies the kind of theoretical approach that Latour is proposing, where "All the images are partial, of course; all the perspectives are equal…the visible is never in an isolated image or in something outside of images, but in the montage of images, a transform of images, a traverse through different views, a progression, a formatting, a networking" (Plan 19). We begin to see only by seeing in parts and in progress, and such vision takes work. There is no total view of Paris, just as there is no totalizing concept of the Social. Only by following the traces of information transfer do we begin to

understand the material ties that bind us together in what we understand as the social sphere, but which Latour would argue is the social surface of networks.

The text itself is both conversational and fragmented; it slowly and methodically develops the larger theory underlying and motivating the project's visual surfaces through a series of what seem to be disconnected and random explorations. Within our virtual stroll through the city we encounter a university classroom planner, the weather bureau, the traffic bureau, a neurology lab, a natural science museum, the street sign bureau, and a café, just to name a few. In each location the images within the viewing window first work to disorient the viewer, creating a kind of guessing game as to where in Paris the project had taken us, and what kind of work this location engages in. After several stops it is clear that this is a project about perspective, about the ways in which contemporary sociologists have lost a perspective grounded not in theory, but in actual fieldwork. *Paris: Invisible City* is further illustrating how the city itself is designed to be represented perspectivally, even as it resists such totalizing views in its persistent architectural claims to both history and futurity. All we can hope for, Latour argues, is a realization of our own limited claims to vision, a clear glimpse of our own oligoptica that are both more complete and far more limited than Bentham and Foucault's imagined panopticon. What the text labors to produce is a kind of paean to bureaucracy and the people who seemingly push papers around, but in reality, uphold the invisible networks that create order within the urban space and allow us to exist together in complex configurations:

> Yes, there is a common world, full and whole existences, civilizations, but we have to agree to study how totalities are summed up in narrow temporary places where they paint

> their pictures; and then follow them in the worlds they perform—streets, corridors, squares, words, clichés, common places, standards—and finally, we have to agree to explore how these scattered totalities provide beings, themselves multiple and variable, with ways to gather themselves as coherent wholes (Plan 50).

The montage described here is not Benjamin's colportage; instead it is a panorama that simultaneously widens the scope of perspective and acknowledges its fragments construction. And, as Giuliana Bruno has noted of the rise of panoramas as public entertainments in the eighteenth century, these visual entertainment spaces required ambulatory engagement and depicted geographic spectacles: "Scanning sites and cityscapes, moving through and with landscapes, this opening of spatial horizons fashioned spectacular spectatorial pleasures" (2002, 172). Latour suggests that the panorama of vision today reverses the dynamic Bruno identifies, and instead of a static picture, presents a complex, networked series of images which can be arranged and rearranged in different patterns of meaning. Here, looking is a generative action as much as it occupies a position 'before' a perspectival space. Learning to see the social through this veil of represented "traced actions" requires navigation, a kind of strangely persistent lurking we exert effort to effect; we must follow the social through the urban spaces—streets, corridors, squares—that are both public and private, in order to understand how those fragments of meaning cohere. But the spaces themselves are ephemeral; they blur and change shape, and we must understand how the transition between spaces, and the material traces such transitions effect, compose what it is that can be understood as the social. The significance of Latour's approach, as it is developed in both this project and his well-known Actor-Network-Theory, is that the inorganic and immobile elements of the social—the architecture and objects that create social space—are as significant as the

actors within them.[21] By forcing a nontrivial engagement with the physical network of reading through the technotext interface, Latour enacts his theory through user engagement.

Whereas the *flâneur* was an individual engaging with the spectacle of the crowd, the lurker engages with the spectacle of multiplicity: the network is composed not simply of systems of information, but of individuals laboring to manipulate those systems. Within this new framework of sociality, the perspective of the panopticon, the individual looking out and seeing all rings false. The oligopticon, the multiplicity of individuals seeing only a detailed portion, emerges to describe the new experience of networked sociality. And as a result, a new model looker is required. From the catacombs of *flânerie* emerges the lurker of the networked city.

In one of the most striking examples of lurking as an informational function of the social network, Plan 25, pictured below (Figure 4), is where we are introduced to Alice, who becomes the protagonist, or the closest thing the "opera" has to one, as she stands in for the "typical" Parisian. The plan, "Proportioning," is all about how Alice's identity functions as a complex system of signifiers from the past and present. Here we learn how her clothing is composed of gifts and hand-me-downs from a series of friends and lovers. We also witness her performance as 'the lover' for tourists in one of the most famous cafes in the Latin Quarter, Café Flore. Alice is a beautiful, elegant woman. As we navigate through pictures of her in the café, we gain an intimate sense of her from various vantage points, we are witness to the delicate complexity of glance and gesture that create

[21] Latour fully outlines Actor-Network-Theory in his 2005 book *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*.

such a compelling whole from various fragments, just like the composition of her clothing. One of the later pictures in the plan, however, reveals that we are not the only

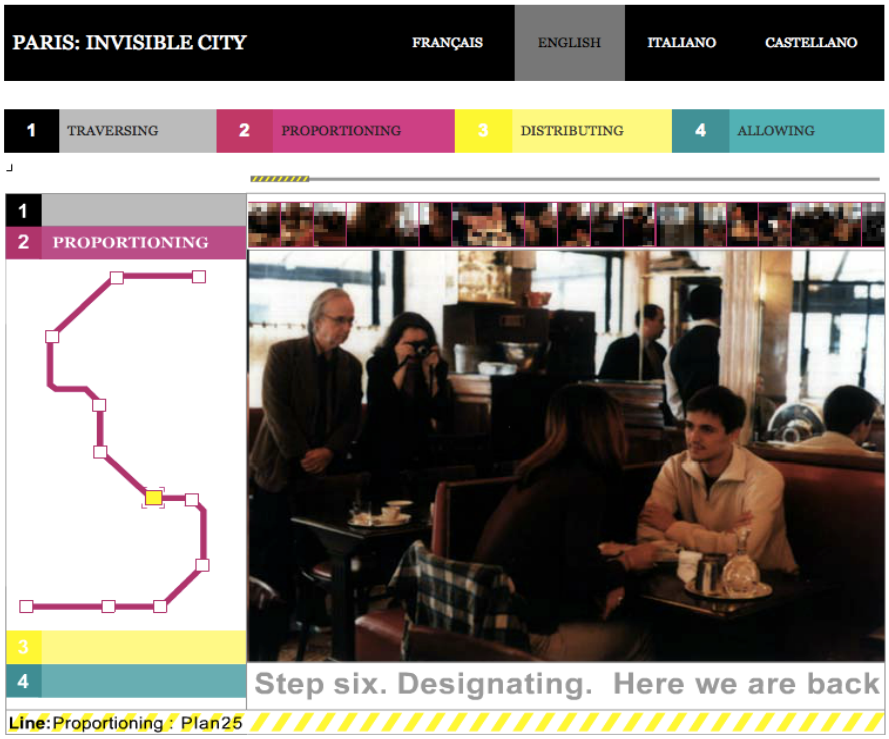


Fig. 4. The Beckers watch Alice and her lover in the Café Flor

ones watching Alice. In the only long shot in the series we see in the background an older couple engrossed in their visual consumption of the archetypal scenario Alice is enacting. We learn that this couple is well-known American sociologist Howie Becker and his wife, photographer Dianna Becker. They are clearly entranced by Alice, and in the photograph above we see their close proximity to Alice's table; they perceptibly lean in to observe, but not participate. While Dianna documents the moment with her camera, Howie stands with his hands folded neatly in front of him, straining to overhear Alice's conversation like a good ethnographer. The Beckers' presence is clearly obtrusive, but it is clear that Alice and her lover work to ignore the attention as just another invasive form

of tourism. As the Beckers look at Alice, she looks at the paper, at her lover, at her coffee: everywhere but at the various mechanical and human eyes trained on her.

The framing of this scenario is very deliberate, calling attention to the many levels of looking contained in this scene. The most obvious is the scene of one couple absorbed in watching a second couple, but both couples are also the objects of the user's gaze, a fact reiterated by the persistent navigational framing of the project. The frame is a reminder that this picture, as engrossing as it might be, is only one of over a dozen pictures of the same scene, as signaled by the horizontal navigational bar at the top of the screen. Likewise, this plan is only one stop within the second topic, and the topic itself is nested within the larger project. The visual rhetoric is that of embedded and partial information; we as watchers, like the American couple, are only privy to a partial understanding of Paris as either a picture on a screen, or a typical couple in a famous location. This message of fractured and partial viewing is further underscored by the mirror behind the banquette in which the Parisian couple sits: we see the back of Alice's lover's head reflected in the mirror as it is projected back to us. It provides another view of him, one that provides very little more in the way of information, but it does offer another perspective of the space of the café, but no reflection of us. As viewers, we are always lurking on the outside of intimate scenes, our access granted by mediated means which offer no full "reality," but which frame our understanding in very specific ways. It is this very limitation that brings us back again and again to the same scenes like repetitive diary writers returning again and again to the same topic. At each moment

viewing these scenes in different ways and from different angles as we try to piece together a cohesive whole from the fractured information to which we have access.

"Is there a more Parisian scene," Latour asks in the plan's accompanying text, "than lovers engaged in a passionate conversation, oblivious of their surroundings, the glasses and the waiters, the academic reading his newspaper, the manager and his business concerns; indifferent even to these tourists, so typical, shamelessly clicking away at them." Latour fuels the voyeurism of the picture through the text, making no apologies for the American couple who stands in as his double. He places the French couple in the same position as the Beckers place them and uses this scene as a larger cultural mapping of the city as an emblem of its complexity. Latour suggests that the conversation between Alice and her lover is so passionate that it makes the couple oblivious to the shameless attention focused on them. At the same time he is also careful to situate that moment within the larger setting of the café by bringing our attention to the other things that both couples are ignoring: the objects and people that compose the social space of the café and thus make the passionate conversation and the shameless watching possible.

But just as our view of the present is only ever partial, no matter how detailed, our understanding of what we see is also informed by what we have seen in the past, by the archive of images that help us to make sense of new scenes. This is apparent when Dianna Becker whispers, "Just like a Doisneau," as she snaps Alice's picture. Robert Doisneau was a twentieth-century French street photographer known for his Parisian café scenes. A photographer of everyday life, Doisneau captured the story of the city, as it was

told in the streets and cafes before and after the Second World War. The Café de Flore was a frequent setting for his photographs and one of his most famous, known as "The Kiss," captures a Parisian couple in an embrace as they leave the café. In the photograph, the couple is captured in sharp focus, emphasizing their striking stillness in contrast to the pedestrian traffic that swirls around them. The brisk movements of the crowd register in the blurred lines of their figures while the couple, oblivious to it all, gives themselves over to the moment of their embrace. The tension between the trace of motion and the clarity of stillness enabled by the technology of photography is emphasized in the title of Doisneau's book of photography: *Three Seconds of Eternity*, the cover image of which is the photograph Dianna alludes to here (1997). Dianna aims for her own Doisneau moment, attempting to capture the intimacy she feels herself witness to, but outside of, in this famous setting. She is seeing the couple as refracted through both her lens and her memory of the photograph; her view is partial not just because of what she sees, but because of what she has seen in the past as well. The history of images is the model against which she measures Alice and Paris now. Her husband responds to this whisper with an amused observation: "Paris will always be Paris" as if, in fact, there is no lapse in time from Doisneau's photograph to the moment in front of them. Paris, for Becker the sociologist, is essentialized in these witnessed moments of intimacy, circulating throughout the world as proof of an enduring quality of the city's inhabitants. To circulate in Paris, here, is to risk always being a lurker, to be looking inside these intimate moments, but only to read them as an addition to the archive of images that stands in for Paris in the eternal present.

One of Latour's explicit aims in this project is to demonstrate the flaws of his fellow sociologists: Bourdieu, Lefebvre, and de Certeau, and their misconception of the social as either a sphere or a totalizing system.[22] Both conceptions, he argues, are limited because they don't account for the fragmentation and partiality of the social as it is experienced, a reality almost flawlessly demonstrated here. Howie Becker illustrates these other schools of thought; he is so consumed in constructing a totalizing perspective of the city that he cannot glimpse the larger flux of the social that surrounds him, and in which he circulates, because it operates beneath his aesthetic register. Or, perhaps because the visual register he imposes disappears it. There is nothing passionate about the other actors in this scene: the academic perusing the newspaper, or the café manager hunched over his columns of numbers, or the waiters silently clearing dirty glasses. Without their background work, however, there is no Café de Flore for Alice to sit in with her lover. Here the Beckers as lurkers are presented not as dangerous, but as dangerously blind to the reality of the serially, complexly networked social space. As they see, they too become part of the scene that we, as viewers of the sociological opera, are watching. They represent not the omnipotence of such perspectives, but its potential limitations. Although their largest offense seems to be the way that they intrude on Alice's intimate scene, Latour suggests that it is actually their failure to appreciate the complex interplay of actors and systems that make such scenes possible. The Becker's do not know what it is that they do not see, and yet they feel a sense of knowledge and satisfaction in composing a totalizing "picture" of Paris that is a copy of a previous

[22] See Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (1991); Bordieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993); and de Certau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) for examples of the theories Latour is engaging.

picture, and which takes us no closer to the reality of the Social than the first picture did. And by choosing Howie Becker as his double, Latour indicates that he is just as susceptible to this partiality as anyone else.

Where we gain that perspective, Latour suggests, is through the work of connecting the overlapping systems of the social: both the spectacular and the mundane. Only by placing the academic, and the waiters, and the manager, and the couples, and even the cups—along with their reflection, refractions, and blindspots—in relationship to one another, do we begin to understand how the sociality of Paris appears and disappears in the Café de Flore as we arrive, lurk, and move on. But this mode of seeing is labor intensive, as the project suggests. The lurking user has to scroll through many previous images, some seemingly unconnected to the scene at hand, in order to make sense of Alice in the Café de Flore. Latour has created an ergodic text, where a lurking perspective requires haptic navigation, reading, and manipulation of the text and images. We don't just enter into this scene; we work our way here very methodically, gaining small insights into the manager, the waiter, and the academic along the way. In this moment, these figures only represent the background for Alice's drama, but our ergodic lurker-reading lets us know that they are just as much as part of Paris as Alice and her lover.

And yet it is not for them that Alice performs; she performs for the camera, for the American couple watching her. Even as she seemingly ignores them, she is aware of them, aware of the ways in which she becomes Paris for them, mapping their future memories with every elegant gesture and glance. Only we, as outsiders to the entire

scene, approach anything close to a properly framed perspective, but that is only a result of piecing together an understanding of this scene through Latour's theory of the social, through a series of fragments and difficult texts that threaten to deny us at any moment. Recognizing our limited and fragmented knowledge and perspective is the only way by which we gain a greater understanding. The user as lurker cannot represent the totalizing threat of an objectifying gaze to Alice, even in her apparent vulnerability to the invasive viewing of the lurkers of whom she is aware. The lurker can only ever make us aware of the limitations of individual perspective, necessitating a continual return from a new angle, or a new screen. Lurking makes us simultaneously aware of our own vulnerability as a result of the visibility of our traces of watching that come to represent intimate acts of self accounting, as well as the limitations of such accounts. Such traces represent fragmented parts that can never add up to a full picture of our subjectivity, even as they offer a more intimate perspective.

Just as Alice's clothing, displayed publicly, tells us something about her past, it reveals nothing cohesive about her in its compilation. As a system of signifiers Alice remains as much of a mystery to the user as she does to the Beckers. As lurkers, the project implies, we are only capable of creating a partial view. Through that partiality, however, we also reveal the dependence of the Social on such perspectives. As we watch the Beckers watching Alice as she ignores them and the other actors around her, we create the illusion of totality. But it is only through the persistent labor of viewing that the illusion of precarious totality is given credence. Networked sociality depends on the labor of lurkers just as much as it does on the labor of producers, because without their

repeated and partial practices such a scene goes unseen, undocumented, and thus ceases to exist. It is this imminent disappearance that motivates Dianna's breathless comparison to an earlier image that connects her perspective to the previous image in a way that strengthens the social meaning of Doisneau. In the same gesture, Howie's historical comment encapsulates Paris in an endless and enduring present. The threat of disappearance is not literal, but the threat of the ephemerality of Paris as a totality motivates the actors to set it down in all its partiality.

The Theoretical Mode of the Diary

What is significant about *The Arcades Project* and *Paris: Invisible City*, and why I've chosen to juxtapose them here, is their similar mode of forwarding a theoretical construct about perception. The two texts share many common features: the setting, their central preoccupation with modes of looking, and particularly their montage form and reflexive voice. They are both laced with distinct authorial traces that evoke the intense visuality of the *flâneur* and the lurker. And in their disorienting, and fragmented format, they represent a scholarly engagement with the diaristic mode that is expressing not the formal specifics of the diary genre, but its aesthetic powers and effects. What happens, the two texts seem to ask, what forms of new knowledge emerge when the form expresses the very phenomenon under analysis? The diaristic mode becomes, for Benjamin and Latour, a fundamental rhetorical device that allows the two authors to evoke as much as articulate their theory. This is crucial for Benjamin whose intention, Tiedemann notes, "was to bring together theory and materials, quotations and

interpretation, in a new constellation compared to contemporary methods of representation" (931). Benjamin rejected the linear, teleological development of argument in favor of a constellation, or montage, of discourse and analysis that would, in the end, bring the reader to a site of personal understanding, rather than proscribed reading. The reflexive element of theoretical argument is crucial for Benjamin, who believed that "the historian should no longer try to enter the past; rather, he should allow the past to enter his life. A 'pathos of nearness' should replace the vanishing 'empathy'" (935). Benjamin heeded his own advice and turned his attention to the city of Paris in the nineteenth century, structuring his exploration through architecture as a way of allowing the past to enter his life in the present. By strolling the same arcades, and pondering the subterranean spaces of Nadar's photographic series, Benjamin juxtaposes impressionistic fragments of these experiences, related both in his voice and in the voice of others, including Nadar, in a montage of meaning. The gaps between meaning are the space of nearness, he suggests, the constellation of meaning represented in the collection, and the spaces not yet accounted for create a space for individual meaning and nearness to history as Benjamin suggests. *The Arcades Project* can be read as diaristic in its formal structure, in the way that it uses the allusive, the fragmented, and the partial in order to facilitate a nearness with a past that we have not progressed beyond, but continuously return to in our own *flânerie* of self accounting, as the very structure of the city reminds us.

The diary form bears many formal connections to the theoretical mode of Benjamin and Latour because it is itself a demonstration of the slippage between the intention to record everything, and the fragmented and partial reality of what ends up on

the page. As Lejeune notes, "To be a sort of 'panopticon.' That is what [the diary] sometimes claims to do…But that is an illusion. Far from being a sorcerer's mirror, the diary is a filter. Its value lies precisely in its selectivity and discontinuities" (179). Like the two other scholars analyzed here, Lejeune relies on the metaphors of vision to articulate his theory of the representative function of the diary. The diary writer, Lejeune suggests, begins with the hope and intention to surveil herself completely, but in the process of writing she realizes that she can only ever record a fragment of her experience, and thus of herself. But it is in these very fragments, Benjamin and Latour illustrate, rather than the all-seeing eye of the panopticon, that the very structure of the self is revealed. As Latour states, "Either I really see and I see nothing, I am nothing; or I see nothing directly, I look at a trace and I begin to really see, I gradually become someone." Latour suggests, like Benjamin, that an overly focused vision actually creates a form of blindness that in turn disrupts the flux of subjectivity with spectacle. Partial vision, on the other hand, is the process by which one's surroundings, as well as one's own being, become clear. Like Benjamin, Latour foregrounds the deep connection between perception and the construction of subjectivity, and like Benjamin, he haunts the margins of his theoretical project. The city of Paris is narrated in the first-person, and the partial and discontinuous landscape that he reveals is deeply personal. The underlying oligopticon that undergirds the everyday functioning of the city that he reveals reflects his own refracted image on our screens. And yet, like Benjamin, he provides a space for the reader, a gap between his argument and the process of reading. The ergodic

experience of navigating through the technotext creates an individual engagement with the theory and its representation on screen.

Both men create a mode of engagement that facilitates an experience of nearness without requiring either an overt identification, or a participatory ethos. And they model that participation through a double that uses *flânerie* or lurking to arrive at the fragmentary knowledge through social modes of perception. They invite us to inhabit the gaps and spaces between their own experience and representation of knowledge, and make of that space something of our own. Within their self-reflexive works the image comes to stand in for a mode of perception that is both personal and social. At the level of the text, we are invited in by the space created by the montage mode that asks us to become *flâneurs* or lurkers. Our path through the city the two authors depict must be our own, but such wanderings will bring us an affective experience of closeness with both the historical moment they occupy, and its resonances in the present.

Latour reminds us, however, that path will leave traces that will make us indirectly visible as a reader, or an observer. Like the lurker we may not be seen, but our presence is recorded. And this duality of watching and being watched becomes increasingly central not just to sociality, but also to cultural notions of reality, as the next chapter explores. As Mark Andrejevic characterizes it in his work on reality television, "surveillance provides a certain guarantee of authenticity…this authenticity becomes a process of self-expression, self-realization, and self validation" (2004, 108). In this reformulation of the work of looking, Andrejevic charts the alignment of surveillance not simply with reality, but with a cultural genre of realism dependent upon surveillance as a

formal component of its construction. This implies both an extension and a reinvigoration of the work of looking emblematized by the *flâneur* and the lurker. This work of looking within this paradigm creates the conditions for self accounting by which authenticity is measured, recalling Baudelaire's elegant articulation of the "nobler aim" of looking as providing both individual and social meaning, validated by the lived experience of *flânerie*.

2. This is Your Realism: Mass Observation and the Aestheticization of Surveillance Culture



Fig. 5. View of exhibit hall for *Mass Observation: This Is Your Photo*, 2013.
© The Photographer's Gallery.

The exhibit hall for *Mass Observation: This is Your Photo*, shown at The Photographer's Gallery in London in 2013, is at once spare and crowded. It is an odd juxtaposition achieved by the tight groupings of photos, as seen in Figure 5 above, surrounded by purposeful expanses of empty white wall space. This design decision is perhaps evocative of the source material for the exhibit, the British Mass Observation project, an ongoing public autobiographical project that "proposed a new form of realism aiming to understand the tensions and turbulence of the period. In its early years it looked

to blur boundaries between literature, psychology, art and social science as part of its radical departure from the conventions of anthropology," as curator Russell Roberts explains (2013). Mass Observation was founded in the late 1930's by three middle-class artists and social scientists: Tom Harrisson, Charles Madge, and Humphrey Jennings, who strove to present the everyday reality of the majority of working class Britons whose "voices were absent" in the accounts of British life circulated in the press and government documents (Roberts 2013). To achieve this aim the founders developed a network of observation techniques adopted from anthropology and social science in order to accurately record the everyday routines and social spaces of the British working class. The two most significant methods included the covert observation of working-class locales by trained observers, and the creation of a series of 'day diaries' in which volunteers observed and recorded the world around them on particular days. Within the first year the founders brought in a third member, the aspiring photographer Humphrey Spender, who helped initiate a new photographic phase of the project. Spender visually documented the sites and people observed by the early phases of the project in what has become a well-known series of photo-essays, including *Worktown* (1937) and *Blackpool* (1938). Some of these photos are included in the 2013 exhibit, but it also contains many lesser or completely unknown images from the project's more recent iteration as a volunteer public autobiography project.

After a lull in the mid-twentieth century, Mass Observation was revived in the 1970's by Tom Harrisson, one of the original founders, in the form of collecting, curating, and depositing the massive archive at the University of Sussex. Through this

process of curation Harrisson reignited the project, but with an exclusive emphasis on the power of self-observation to generate a representative image of the larger social landscape of the United Kingdom. This third phase of the project also marks an increasing reliance on what today, in the context of digital media, we would call user-generated images in the form of autobiographical snapshots, drawings, and diaristic responses. All of these recent forms of response are also featured in the 2013 exhibit, in a separate area of the exhibit than the one shown above. Despite the difference in the aesthetic level and style of images, and the abundance of text, what the *This is Your Photo* exhibit makes clear is the centrality of visual culture, and the cultivation of specific images to the project. Curator Roberts makes it explicit that "the exhibit explores some of the diversity and richness of the visual worlds created by the organisation and its nationwide panel of observers. In doing so, it looks at the Archive's place within contemporary interest in realism and expanded documentary practice" (2013). The archive Roberts mentions consists not only in the materials from Mass Observation itself, but from other aesthetic movements within visual and literary culture that influenced the forms of images developed by the project.

While the founders and many scholarly critics have recognized the significance of the contemporary movements of Surrealism and documentary realism—as exemplified by the writing of George Orwell in particular—there has been scant scholarship on any older aesthetic genealogy for the autobiographical image production of the Mass Observation project. As Roberts twice notes in his caption to the exhibit, "realism" is a fundamental aesthetic of the project, and this aesthetic was informed not just by visual

culture and science, as many scholars have explored, but also by the literature that preceded it. Although the founders of Mass Observation were deeply influenced by the progressive politics of the interwar years and the art of Surrealism, the exhibit reveals a historical and ongoing preoccupation with a form of realism that has its roots in nineteenth-century fiction. Moreover, the concept of observation as a route to both the production of images and objective truths has a strong precedent in both the high form of realism and the popular form of detective fiction that dominated mid to late nineteenth-century fiction. The exhibit further indicates that these roots continue to inform the project today. Although the project is well-known for producing a visual archive, as the 2013 exhibit and contemporary film and photography engagements with the project demonstrate, the autobiographical participants today consider their work as primarily authorial. Utilizing quantitative and qualitative results from archival research on self-reflexive responses to the Mass Observation project, I argue that instead of reading the project as either primarily textual or visual, by considering the deep entanglement of these two forms of representation in the development of a discourse of realism informed by nineteenth-century fiction, we should instead consider both image and text as participating in a form of self-writing aimed at producing legible and lasting images of identity for the archive. It is, in fact, the social context of the archive, that enables the discourse of the personal diary to emerge as a form of social participation, and I will consider how realism itself is an archival practice that works to record and preserve everyday life in its accumulation of material details that create an image through their compilation. Juxtaposing materials from and about Mass Observation with key instances

of the entanglement of observation, self-writing, image making from nineteenth-century realist and detective fiction, this chapter constructs an aesthetic genealogy of realism as an archival practice of reflexive image production. Such a genealogy illustrates that this discourse is crucial to an understanding of the aesthetic function of surveillance in the diaristic mode.

The Aesthetics of Observation

The Mass Observation project prioritized the democratizing potential of their project; they framed surveillance as a form of social justice. Mass Observation (MO) was launched by three young British intellectuals indebted to the aesthetics of Surrealism and the politics of Socialism in the interwar years of the 1930's. The three founders: Tom Harrisson, Charles Madge, and Humphey Jennings were middle-class, college educated aesthetes. Harrisson was the author of a successful book on anthropology, *Savage Civilization*, based on his experience living with the native population of New Hebrides. Harrisson had just returned to Britain from an observation trip, and had established himself in the working-class town of Bolton in the northern industrial counties. He envisioned a new model of anthropology that redirected the ethnographic gaze from the colonial edges to the granular reality of everyday British life. Harrisson had written a book on ornithology while in high school, and proceeded to read natural history at Cambridge, but dropped out when he was invited to participate as a natural scientist on a scientific expedition. As a result of this experience Harrisson structured the sociological component of the Mass Observation project and worked primarily with the trained

observers and implanted himself, like he had in New Hebrides, in the communities he was studying. Harrisson had an interest in both the broad aspects of his subjects' lives and the quotidian. One Mass Observation report on women, for example, focused both on where women worked and how they arrived, gesturing toward the larger economic aspects of class society. But the report also included details about when and how many cups of tea the women drank per day and how much they spent on stockings (1939).

Harrisson's original collaborator, Charles Madge, was an Oxford educated poet who was actively involved with the English Surrealist movement while also working as a reporter for *The Daily Mirror*. Madge was primarily responsible for the directive responses and the day diaries and his house became the unofficial archive of these documents during the early days of the project. It was Madge who authored the January 30, 1937 letter to *The New Statesman* that essentially marks the founding moment of Mass Observation. The letter announces that the project combines "anthropology, psychology, and the sciences which study man" through the work of "a mass of observers" who will surely find their work transformative in a very particular way. "In taking up the role of observer," Madge writes, "each person becomes like Courbet at his easel." Madge likens the process of observation to the work of the artist, but not all observation, nor all attempts at art, result in the same product.

The last founder was documentary filmmaker Humphrey Jennings, who was also educated at Cambridge and would go on to work with the founder of the British documentary movement, John Grierson, producing home front documentaries during WWII. All three men shared a belief in the democratizing ability of the image—be it

created in an ethnographic account, a poem, or a documentary—to realize high-minded intellectual ideals. And they translated this belief into the three-headed hydra of Mass Observation.

"This particular organization was enabled by the collective decision to treat 'images' as the social facts of the investigation," Nick Hubble writes in his comprehensive analysis of the aesthetics of the Mass Observation project (2010, 6). The intention, from the outset, was to focus on generating concrete images of everyday life without predetermining the aim or purpose of those images in order to counter representations of the working class in the press. "The initial aim," Hubble notes, "was to provide social facts that could not simply be reduced to statistics" through the generation of these detailed images (7). The Mass Observation founders were not alone in their adherence to this imagistic realism; their contemporary, author George Orwell wrote *The Road to Wigan Pier*, which also focused on the everyday reality of the northern working class through vivid descriptions and was also published in 1937. As the Mass Observation group included a documentary filmmaker, the project also reflects the emerging importance of British documentary, headed by director John Grierson, who famously coined the definition of documentary as "the creative treatment of actuality" in the 1930's (Nichols 2010, 6). Grierson was also interested in working-class life in the northern counties and in 1931 produced the film *Industrial Britain*, which pairs the educated voiceover narration of Grierson with vivid images of the docks, factories and mines, and the men who rely on these sites for their living. Hubble likewise notes the strong contemporary aesthetic influence of Surrealist art and imagist poetry, particularly

that of Ezra Pound, who insists that "the author must use his *image* because he sees it or feels it, *not* because he thinks he can use it to back up some creed" (1914, 6). Pound's insistence on the affective and ethical power of the image is mirrored in Madge's *New Statesman* letter, which notes, "The observer is to ask himself at the end of each day what image has been dominant in it" (1937, 34). Mass Observation aimed to produce "a distinct aesthetic component that promises to bring a new perception" as Hubble characterizes it, through the generation of specific images drawn from the astute observation of everyday life (115). In concert with the rising socialist sentiment of the period, Mass Observation was squarely located within a larger aesthetic movement focused on illuminating the lives of those often unseen and little represented in the popular press and fiction through the creation of specific images.

It is perhaps poetically apt, then, that the Mass Observation project generated these images through the use of the diary. In her work on the contemporary diary form, literary scholar Kylie Cardell writes, "Long associated with private lives, secret knowledge, and the threat (or promise) of self-exposure, the contemporary diary is a highly popular form, a matrix through which key social discourses are played out and made visible" (2014, 4). Two key elements that inform a reading of the Mass Observation diaries appear in her statement about the relationship between the threat or promise of exposure, and the popularity of the diary form; it "makes visible" key social discourses through vernacular self expression. These two facets of diary writing, and the resulting diary as textual product, are two sides of the same coin. The diary as a personal document is privileged because it allows for a private space of self-exposure, much like the

darkroom affords a photographer to develop analogue photographs in the privacy of his own home or studio. In the space of exposure, the phase in between a visible and still emerging image, the photograph resides as both process and product. But this very word exposure suggests that the imagistic information in the diary will eventually be revealed to a wider audience. Hence the danger of diary writing also informs its compulsion, as well as its popular appeal. Diaries are valued not for their aesthetic value, but for their informative value, which reveals not only information about the self, but information about society as well, as the Mass Observation founders relied upon. Madge's direction that the mass observer should faithfully record in written form the most significant image of his day suggests that such an image will be 'revealing' about the private nature of the diarist. But Madge's insistence on that observer focus on an image that "has forced itself on him and which has confirmed its importance by recurrence of some kind" also suggests that such images are directly connected the diarist's engagement in the public sphere and also work to "make visible" key social discourses, as the Mass Observation founders were deeply committed to.

But Cardell's visual metaphor of the diary is not simply a tried and true cliché; the reliance on visual metaphors to describe the effects of the diary underpin Mass Observation from its outset. Despite the fact that the project was always highly textual, and dependent on forms such as the day diary and the directive response, the discourse about the project was always highly visual. This ranges from the coverage about the project in the popular press to the enduring legacy of the documentary elements, as the Spender photographs demonstrate. This discourse of visuality and visibility resonates

most importantly with how the founders themselves understood the basic function of the project. In the first publication from the project, the 1937 pamphlet *Mass Observation*, Charles Madge writes, "In the detection which we intend to practice, there is no criminal and all human beings are of equal interest…the object of detection will be the image, something between an idea and a sensation" (30). Like Cardell, Madge suggests that through the diary something hidden will be revealed. Here, however, the scale of the project is much larger, the image the diaries are intended to uncover is no less than a representation of British identity, and the "reality" of lived conditions in Britain, with the aim of—in keeping with the Marxist and progressive affiliations of the founders—enacting social change through this "image" of the nation as it really is. Just as Cardell suggests that the power of the diary lies in its ability to make visible key social discourse, nearly eighty year earlier, the founders of Mass Observation were already mobilizing the same rhetoric to enlist a national diary project. And because of this overt visual rhetoric, the diary project was based on the ability of writers to observe and record their observations. They became, in Madge's terms, 'detectives' of daily life who sought not to criminalize behavior, but to document it for the greater social good through their powers of observation. As Nick Hubble describes this dynamic: "It seems more appropriate to describe these mass observers as extra/ordinary people: a term which acknowledges a full stereoscopic vision" (241). Hubble breaks the term—visually and literally—into a dialectic tension between the 'ordinary' or everyday citizen who therefore bears accurate and unique insight into the everyday life of her neighbors, and the 'extraordinary,' which allows the observer to stand outside of this life and report back on it. Like Madge, Hubble

relies on familiar visual terminology for the inherent sociality of vision, as was explored in the first chapter. Hubble, too, goes back to Bentham and Foucault to imagine the Mass Observation diarist as seeing in a sort of multidimensional way, as invoked by his use of the term stereoscopic. The stereoscope is an optical instrument invented in 1838 by Sir Charles Wheatstone; it's a viewing device with two eyepieces for helping the observer to combine two pictures taken from slightly different points of view into a single image. The resulting view creates an effect of solidity and depth. Suggesting that the Mass Observation diarist is both extraordinary and ordinary brings those two meanings together to produce a new term: extra/ordinary, which allows us to see the diarist in a new way, as a multidimensional figure.

Hubble's thorough text does an excellent job of articulating the aesthetic and political movements contemporary to the emergence of the Mass Observation project, which inform its shape, scope, politics, and aesthetics. But Hubble attributes the intense insistence on detection and vision within the project to the established paradigms of archaeology and social science, without a clear aesthetic genealogy for this discourse. What both his terminology, and the rhetoric of the founders indicates is a clear connection to the production of socially and personally revelatory images that characterizes realism in much of nineteenth-century fiction. I posit that the detective novel and the aesthetics of high realism are clear antecedents for the project that have not yet been fully articulated. Rather than simply connecting the project to forms of life writing—which is, in itself, an important scholarly project—I want to explore how the paired rhetoric of detection and revelation suggest an evolution from fictional realism

because Mass Observation understood itself as operating in this liminal space between fact and art, as Madge's similie comparing the diarist to Courbet the artist makes clear. This literary precedent also resonates with the project's stated aesthetic aim of presenting of everyday life as existing somewhere "between an idea and a sensation" as Madge suggests (1937, 115). This characterization of aesthetics as an entanglement of affect and intellect recall the detective who 'follows his gut' as the saying goes. This isn't to say that such an influence was overt or even dominant, but it is a precedent which has been neglected in the scholarship on Mass Observation, and once revealed, suggests a clear throughline in the larger historical aestheticization of surveillance. Such a reading is reflective of the contemporary positioning of the project as a visual archive that can be observed and detected by viewers in settings such as the museum, which is itself a space balanced between the visual and the textual, the archival and the social.

'Crude' Chalk Images and the Ethics of the Image

The 1938 Humphrey Spender photograph ,"This is Your Photo" (Figure 6 below), is the image from which the 2013 exhibit at The Photographer's Gallery takes its name. The image is one of the many photographs produced as part of the project that explored the habits of the working class on holiday in Blackpool, a seaside area on England's western coast. Spender was directed to capture photographs of the crowds on vacation while remaining unnoticed by his subjects (that is, in effect, while lurking). The resulting photographs illustrate the juxtaposition between the carnivalesque atmosphere of the Boardwalk during the Easter holiday week, and the anxiety over the cost of the holiday,



Fig. 6. Spender, Humphrey. "This is Your Photo," (1938). © Bolton Council. From the Collection of Bolton Library and Museum Services

as the Mass Observation survey revealed. The photo series features images of crowds gathered around peep show entrances, cautiously approaching the booths of carnival games, and enjoying sweet treats. But in a sharp departure from the primary theme, Spender also captured an image of graffiti drawn on one of the wood-paneled walls of the boardwalk. The black and white print is focused on a white chalk drawing of a stick figure whose wide square body contain the words, "This is your photo." Either the print or the drawing has been nearly washed out in the top corner, and the faded circular splotch nearly obscures the simple outline of a round head crowned by bubbled curls that looks back at the photographer with large white dot eyes and a horizontal grimace. The l-shaped stick legs stand on turbulent ground, the wavy white lines invoking the Blackpool coast and the rise and fall of the ocean waves to which the crowds were retreating. The unnaturally long stick arms of the figure extend horizontally away from the boxed body

and the right hand grasps onto an object that resembles a piece of chalk, as if the stick figure had drawn itself onto the wall. The sparse photograph invokes a playful sense of the whimsical atmosphere of the boardwalk holiday, but the crude figure and its ambiguous text also invokes a slightly more negative connotation. The isolation of the figure within the frame of the photograph and the mysterious object in the figure's hand suggest that the figure engaged in an agential act of self-imaging through the use of the chalk. The chaotic lines upon which it stands and the hollowed out center of the body, however, suggest that such self authoring resulted in a crude product, fit only for an object of amusement rather than reflection. Indeed, the square, hollow core suggests a lack of center, or even, perhaps, because of the holiday scene or the written text, a self dependent on the images of others to provide a personal sense of meaning.

One wonders if Spender himself drew the image, reflecting on the photographer's dependence on the image of others to create a 'body' of work through which the image of the photographer would begin to take shape. Spender was as committed to the ethnographic impulse as the other Mass Observation founders, so it seems far more probable that the image was a serendipitous discovery, one that reflected themes that both Spender and Mass Observation were interested in exploring. If the image is simply anonymous graffiti, then, who created it and to what purpose? It seems likely that the hand-drawn graffiti is a comment upon the intense visibility of the individuals at Blackpool; not only had the seaside town become, at that point, *the* holiday location for the working classes, but the practice of strolling the boardwalk was a practice of social

visibility heightened by the presence, however unobtrusive, of photographers and observers.

The Spender photograph elegantly illustrates the discourses of visibility, anxiety, and spectacle that characterize the Mass Observation project. Although the founders aimed to create an ethical project that served a democratizing social function, this chalked drawing suggests that there is also an alternative narrative. Perhaps surveillance doesn't always feel like liberation. Or democracy. The wavy chalked lines beneath the figure's feet suggest an unstable foundation for the project, as well as a process of continual change. Strikingly, this is exactly what the project aimed to capture—these kinds of large-scale changes and anxieties—from a ground-view perspective. The project's insistence on the authority of authorship that accompany the surveillance component of the project thus prove crucial to its success and longevity. From the beginning of the project, the information generated from the Mass Observers was posited as providing an authentic view of common British life. But through that process of observing, these observers also became authors. They were the authors of their own experience of everyday life, and that ethos of preserving something unseen for the future is a recurrent theme in the diaries, even today. The repeated insistence on presenting something that isn't readily visible in cultural representation grounds much of the project's appeal, both for its contributors and its authors. The sense of revelation and preservation inherent to the diaristic mode is also apparent in the development of the project as an aesthetic archive of authentic British identity. The Photographer's Gallery display of diary entries beneath glass cases or framed and posted to the wall of the gallery serves to mark such

entries as both information and aesthetic material, with a strong pedagogical effect. People come to the gallery to "look" and to "learn" about themselves through the pages of the Observers diaries. The suggestion is that through this process of engagement, just by looking—on both sides of the diary—one becomes a more ethical citizen.

In the simple chalk drawing on the boardwalk there is also an elegant tension between the idea of observational authorship, and the fugitive representativeness of an image. The firm white lines of the body's outline reinforce the hand-drawn, amateur aesthetic of the image, and the figure seems to be holding a piece of chalk in its right hand, as if to suggest that the figure drew herself into being. This implication foregrounds the importance of authorship in creating an image, however parodical, of the self that might counteract the sense that one's character can be determined by a simple snapshot taken by another. Instead the strong text and the outstretched arms invite the viewer in, bringing attention to the worded middle, as if it were a sandwich board. But this authorship is not firmly established either, as the figure's position on the unstable and undulating ground indicates. The slight grimace on the character's face also suggests a sense of uneasiness, as if the figure stands in between the authorial power of text, as foregrounded by the caption emblazoned on its chest and the representativeness of its amateur aesthetics. Through this tension, the photograph of the chalk drawing articulates the uncertain capacity of text and image to represent an individual, as well as the individual's ability to represent himself, in however crude a fashion, by his own hand.

Strikingly, this tension between representation and visuality is central to scholarly definitions of the genre of realism. As Nancy Armstrong explains, "realism does not

indicate a genre or mode of writing that strives to document actual social conditions by means of visual description…[it is] a shared set of visual codes operat[ing] as an abstract standard by which to measure one verbal representation against another" (1999, 11). Modernist writer Virginia Woolf famously critiqued realism in her 1923 essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" for its reliance on the physical detail to 'reveal' significant realities about individuals. Armstrong here suggests that such details are important within the genre not because they point unequivocally to a factual reality outside of the narrative, but because they participate in a system of representation by which "these novels made the world intelligible to a mass readership in an entirely new yet seemingly mimetic way" (11). Realism's efficacy was not in the absolute truth-value of its descriptions, but in the power of those descriptions to generate 'images,' as Armstrong terms them, to serve as the foundation of fiction. Writers, then, participated in the increasing entanglement of modernity and visuality by mooring narrative in the production of images that increased the cultural legibility of the novel precisely because it could be read as engaging in the larger discursive system of visuality Armstrong identifies. Woolf's critique suggests that there is an ethical absence to this form of representation because it relies on exteriority to project a form of interiority, but Armstrong suggests that realist fiction proposed its own ethical imperative. "'Realism' not only taught readers to make a match between image and object," she argues, "it also filled them with a sense that it was imperative to do so" (27). The function of realism, like Mass Observation, Armstrong suggests, was didactic; its production of images taught readers how to participate in the emerging discursive system of visual culture by making

them literate in its standards. Far from aiming solely at mimesis, realism strove to use the image to instruct viewers in larger ethical issues prompted by social changes wrought by modernity by way of the image. Thus the representativeness of the image becomes a shorthand for social cues that allow the viewer to process increasing amounts of visual information effectively. The power of this process echoes Madge's insistence on the key role of individual and recurring images for observers, and constitutes a central function of realist plots.

For instance, in one of the key scenes of Charlotte Brontë's 1848 novel *Jane Eyre*, Jane forces herself to observe her own image in a mirror so that she can sketch it faithfully in a drawing. The protagonist, Jane, is a plain orphan who is forced to work as a governess to support herself because of the deaths of her parents. When she finds employment with the wealthy Mr. Rochester as a governess for his illegitimate daughter, she begins to believe that he might have developed feelings for her, despite her plainness and lack of connections. Jane is disabused of this notion by the news that Rochester has gone to spend time with a group of friends that includes the beautiful heiress Blanche Ingram, who has set her sights on marrying Rochester. Upon returning to her room after hearing the news from the housekeeper Mrs. Fairfax, Jane says to herself, "Listen, then, Jane Eyre, to your sentence: to-morrow place the glass before you, and draw in chalk your own picture, faithfully; without softening one defect: omit no harsh line, smooth away no displeasing irregularity" (164). Jane uses the power of observation to punish herself into recognizing the reality she cannot often see: the image of her own face. By surveilling her self-image thus drawn, she will then have set down her likeness faithfully,

in order to impose "a course of wholesome discipline" (165); the process of rending and then observing her self portrait will provoke a change in her behavior as a means of controlling her unruly feelings for Mr. Rochester. Or so she hopes. In the production of an image that readers are meant to understand as not truly capturing Jane's likeness, but creating a caricature of it, Brontë signals that the autobiographical voice is problematic because it is not always aligned with either reality, as Jane's portrait demonstrates, or even autobiography, as the fictional novel makes clear. With this scene Brontë further suggests the power of observation serves an important disciplinary function that allows the subject to use autobiographical images to reinforce regulated class positions.

Although such a scene seems antithetical to the progressive and even radical aims of the Mass Observation founders, this chalked image of Jane recalls the unruly and anxious chalk drawing photographed by Humphrey Spender. The slippage of 'reality' present in these examples illustrates that observation becomes surveillance when watching is used to collect, categorize, and quantify the self and other into forms of data that can be recorded, circulated, and used for disciplinary purposes. This transformation of observation into surveillance is apparent in Jane's use of her self-portrait, but also in the boardwalk figure's resistance to the disciplinary potential of the faithful likeness that is invoked by its crude aesthetics.

As part of this same discipline, Jane also requires herself to "paint in your softest shades and sweetest hues, according to the description given by Mrs. Fairfax of Blanche Ingram" (164). This description evokes the other half of the Mass Observation project, the representation of others as a point of comparison. Jane draws the most pleasing image

of Blanche Ingram precisely to foreground the crudeness of her own image. The fidelity to the description given by Mrs. Fairfax finds manifestation in Jane's "freshest, finest, clearest tints," and "most delicate camel-hair pencils," suggesting that the power of observation, once turned on another, only serves to further discipline Jane. Indeed, the whole purpose of the exercise is to make vivid for Jane the differences between a "Governess, disconnected, poor, and plain," and "An accomplished lady of rank" as she titles the two images (164-165). Much as the mass observers turned their gaze on the occupants of Bolton to paint a picture of them that is both faithful and differentiating, Jane uses the two images to create a greater understanding of her own place in society. She is disconnected, while Blanche is not only connected, but ranked. Jane's observation relates her to Blanche not at all directly but in terms of an impossible relation between non-relation and full belonging, that is, between precarious appearance or even disappearance, and accomplished desirability, rendered reasonably and sympathetically. And while it might seem more direct to connect the Mass Observation project to scientific discourse, or contemporary aesthetics, as other critics have done, the project asserted a strong aesthetic preoccupation that can't be fully articulated through these discourses alone. And, as James Hinton notes, "the 'practical psychology' popular at the time [of the inception of Mass Observation] had less to do with the insights of psychoanalysis than with the re-articulation in modern, scientific language of values and attitudes associated with Victorian ideas of self-improvement, character, service, and the ethical life" (2010, 37). Hinton notes that discourses about the self were routed through ideals that realism aimed to represent aesthetically, as the moral corrective provided by

image production in *Jane Eyre* suggests. Jane uses self-observation as a character-building process of self-improvement in order to lead her to more ethical behavior in her dealings with Mr. Rochester. She surveills her own image while observing the image of classed female accomplishment.

Moreover, Jane uses the image as a kind of diaristic practice. The drawing is aesthetically crude, but faithful. She chides herself not to omit anything, in order to achieve accuracy. Like the diarist who faithfully accounts for the self through a process of noting down the events of the day, Jane filters the devastating news that Rochester's affections are likely spoken for, and her own emotional world thus contracted, through the image. She recounts the emotions to the reader by way of the autobiographical narrator, but most importantly, she expresses these feelings to herself—in order to control them—through the construction of an autobiographical image. And it is the centrality of this idea that the image is perhaps even more faithful than the autobiographical voice that shapes both Mass Observation's initial beginnings, as well as its contemporary context. Just as Madge focuses his interest on the dominant and recurring images in his diarists lives, the image of Blanche Ingram seems to "force itself" upon Jane, and reoccurs in her imagination until it is fixed on paper. Jane accounts for the complexity of her emotional life not by narrating her complex feelings upon receiving the news from Mrs. Fairfax, but by detailing both her own autobiographical image and the faithfully recorded image of Blanche. She is both self-surveilling and observant of the other. She is also an artist, and just as Madge hopes that the process of working as a mass observer will rival "Courbet at

his easel," Jane uses her ability to produce images to lead her to a more rational course of action, while overriding her less trustworthy emotions.

This blending of the artist, the autobiographer, and the observer is key to the aesthetics and science of Mass Observation. As Hinton notes, one of the few strong ideological alliances between Madge and Harrisson was "the fact that both men, while aspiring to a science of society, saw the artist as having a vital role to play. Citing the 19th-century novel's 'illumination of the inner man'…they argued that the role of the artist was to lay out terrain which science would eventually colonize" (47). Here Madge and Harrisson suggest that the artistic project of the self precedes the scientific project of subjectivity, but is of no less importance. In their 1937 pamphlet, *Mass Observation*, they write, "Whenever it becomes historically necessary for man to view the world in a new way, artists will arise who are sensitive to the change and will display to man the world which science will then proceed to classify and interpret" (14). Artists are pioneers in this framework, whose prescient aesthetics lay the groundwork for later acceptance of the rational discourse that stabilizes aesthetics as ethics. Such a reading also echoes Armstrong's assertion that "the gap between image and object does not challenge the relationship between seeing and knowing…but quite the contrary, that gap makes seeing that object seem more desirable than ever" (122). Following this shared logic, it is important to read image production as a key process of enculturating surveillance sociality; it is a project rooted in both the self and social observation projected in the realist novel and the astute observation of self and others projected in Mass Observation.

Not all images are equal, however. Just as Jane uses the aesthetic value of her two different images to suggest a larger social divide, the crude chalk drawing in Blackpool points to the indexical divide between the representative chalk figure, and the representative power of the photographic print.

"The Book of Life" : Observation and Detective Fiction



THEY MAY BE WATCHING *YOU*

By MARION DEWHIRST

HAVE you ever been for the day to the seaside, or strolled on Hampstead Heath, or merely talked to a friend in a 'bus or tram, and suddenly realised that someone was recording your conversation in a little note book?

The chances are that the scribe was neither a plain-clothes detective, nor a lunatic, but merely a Mass-Observer. The chances are, also, that—if you hadn't a guilty conscience, in which case, doubtless, you melted unobtrusively away, fearing the worst—you turned on the recording angel, and said indignantly: "Here, what do you mean by eavesdropping like that? You ought to be ashamed of yourself," or words to that effect.

How We Behave

THEN, again, the chances are that you have been Mass-Observed and *don't know it*....

Mass Observation sets out to be a new science; or, rather, a new method of finding out scientific truths.

The originators of it reasoned that if a body of information were available as to **why we do and say certain things, how we behave in special sets of circumstances, this would help us to know ourselves and other people better.**

So they issued an appeal for helpers—people who would be willing to keep their eyes and ears open, and write down exactly what they saw or heard.

The first big thing they attempted was a survey of Coronation Day. Every Mass-Observer wrote down everything that happened to him or her on that day, down to the smallest detail. The published results made a most interesting record of just what the popular reaction is to this sort of ceremony.

Another survey—recorded in the recently published report of the first year's work in Mass-Observation (Lindsay Drummond, 3s. 6d.)—dealt with not one particular day, but a particular habit—cigarette-smoking.

Tappers or Non-Tappers

It was found that about 17 per cent. of smokers feel definite hostility to non-smokers, because a non-smoker does not seem "one of them"; that 44 per cent. of men and 64 per cent. of women smokers began to smoke purely because other people do.

Various smokers' habits were recorded. Fifty-four per cent. of smokers tap their cigarette before placing it in their mouths, 52 per cent. of "tappers" place the tapped end in their mouths, and 21 per cent. the untapped end—but hardy any of them can give a reason for their tapping!

At present the Mass-Observers are working on a Northern industrial town—Bolton. Public houses, football pools, the newspapers people read, the things they laugh at—all the details making up everyday life are being examined and tabulated.

Suddenly realized that someone was recording your conversation.

Its Use?

THE use of it all? The machinery for an analysis of motives, feelings and behaviour, may become of inestimable service to us, living as we do in an age when, while the mechanical sciences have advanced tremendously, the social sciences have lagged far behind.

Everybody June 18, '38

Fig. 7. Dewhirst, Marion. "They May Be Watching You" *Everybody*, June 18, 1938. Image from the Mass Observation Archive at The Keep, Sussex, UK.

In recalling his work in Blackpool, Humphrey Spender notes, "There was an uncomfortable element of spying in all this and the press was often hostile. We were called spies, pryers, mass-eavesdroppers, nosey parkers, peeping-toms, lopers, snoopers,

envelope-steamers, keyhole artists, sex maniacs, sissies, society playboys" (1987, 67). As Spender's quote suggests, and Charles Madge states overtly, the concept of detection informs the practice of mass observation. This connection, as Spender points out, particularly characterizes the contemporary press coverage of the Mass Observation project. One example is the June 18, 1938 article from *Everybody* titled "They May be Watching *YOU*" in Figure 7. The sketch in the center, around which the article unfolds, contains a couple strolling arm-in-arm while a lone man follows behind them, jotting notes on a notepad. The solitary man is so absorbed in his task that he barely looks up, and the visibly flipped pages suggest that he has collected scores of notes about the behavior of this ordinary looking couple. Strikingly, the couple looks at one another instead of their unwanted companion, their expressions neutral, as if they are not overly concerned with the man following close at their heels. Despite this fact, the caption below the image reads, "Suddenly realized that someone was recording your conversation," as if an omniscient viewer is cueing the couple as to the presence behind them. This caption is taken from the lede, which asks, "Have you ever been for the day to the seaside or strolled on Hampstead Heath…and suddenly realized that someone was recording your conversation in a little note book?" This question perfectly describes the central image of the article, but also hints at its everyday quality. The observed parties are engaged in actions as mundane as riding the bus or walking in the park, and yet their actions and conversations prove compelling for a keen observer. The article goes on to assure readers, "The chances are that the scribe was neither a plain-clothes detective, nor a lunatic, but merely a Mass-Observer" Here the binary of observation is split between

madness or detection, and the reference to chance also suggests that obsessive interest in others still bears a trace of madness, even if paired with a purpose like Mass Observation. The article is quite overt that there is a method to this potential madness, and it lies in science: "Mass Observation sets out to be a new science; or, rather, a new method of finding out scientific truths." The man following the couple, the article implies, is no threat because his observation constitutes a form of scientific endeavor. This is a similar rhetoric to that employed by Madge and Harrisson when describing the project to the press, and such an idea has a clear precedent, particularly in the social sciences. The relationship between observation and the scientific method has been remarkably well articulated in both scientific texts and the history of science and technology. But what is specific here is that the "experiment" is no less than human behavior, which Mass Observation attempts to rationalize into digestible data points, as the article goes on to demonstrate: "44 percent of men and 64 percent of women smokers began to smoke purely because other people do," the article reports, suggesting not only that a form of consumption such as smoking can be quantified into percentages, but that such numbers suggest larger truths about society, such as the influence of peer groups on daily behaviors.

Although the founders of Mass Observation saw themselves as offering a progressive, self-motivated autobiographical project, the article in Figure 7 suggests an alternative discourse about the project's methods that drew upon the aesthetic archive of detective fiction. And, as Spender's opening quote makes clear, the techniques of observation used by the mass observers are clearly indebted to the novelistic figure of the

detective, and practices of policing. The mass observer takes not the criminal as his subject, but the actions of everyday life. Observers are directed to "write down exactly what they saw and heard," without sorting or categorizing the information. Here it's not that the 'devil is in the details,' as detecting would have us believe, but more aptly, that 'the data is in the details,' as the project aimed to create, and the popular press promised it would, a new science from this method of observation and data collection. This promised science is not the science of criminology, as Ronald Thomas has explored in his analysis of detective fiction, but a science of identity. Essentially the Mass Observation project promises to teach the public about itself, about what it means to be British—in both a situated and universal way—through the process of careful observation and the faithful record of everyday life.

What detective fiction indicates that image may be, however, is complicated. Most scholars of nineteenth-century detective fiction have suggested that realism represents the "high" aesthetic of the nineteenth-century novel, while detective and sensation fiction constitute the key "low," or popular form of the aesthetic. As Caroline Reitz argues, "Victorian knowledge like Victorian realism was based on an accumulation of details, any one of which might be either essential or inconsequential," recalling the figure walking closely behind the strolling couple, frantically jotting down everything he sees and hears. Realism illustrates, however, that this kind of accumulative data wasn't sufficient, these details had to add up to something. Nancy Armstrong has argued that these details engaged the indexical media of the period in the creation of images. Armstrong suggests that Victorian realism produced an "image" which was

representative, but not indexical or iconic. These images functioned to indoctrinate "a way of seeing and a picture of the world that a mass readership could share," pointing to the ways that images linked an increasingly literate and visual culture with shifting social dynamics (7). Detective fiction, on the other hand, points more directly to the link between such images as garnered from observation of material details, and identity. Ronald Thomas argues that the detective novel laid the groundwork for the cultural acceptance of the concept of identity over character (1999, 3). He suggests that the genre is entangled with the discourse of self championed by earlier novels: "detective fiction must be regarded as an equal accomplice in the important cultural work often ascribed to the biographical novel in this period" (10). And like Jane Eyre's insistence on recording the details of both Blanche Ingram's face as well as her own in order to acquire the necessary knowledge to regulate her behavior, Thomas illustrates how this new discourse of subjectivity arises from a focus on the body (2). Whereas the concept of 'character' is based on a cumulative set of actions and behavior, 'identity' assumes that behavior writes itself onto the body and intimate objects in a visible way. While character is largely revealed discursively, identity is indexically linked to the physical body, like a snapshot indicating a lived moment. This discursive transition, Lawrence Frank argues, is linked to the rise of the natural sciences, and Darwin's theories in particular, which suggest that the history and environmental factors of an animal could be read through careful observation of the physical body (2003, 143). Caroline Reitz pushes even further on this notion of identity and suggests that detective fiction was closely linked with shifting concepts of Empire and "allowed the detective and the imperial project to become

extensions of rather than anathema to English national identity" (2004, xiii). A key intersection between these three arguments seems to be the relationship between the ability to 'read' the body in detective fiction, and the development of complex discourses of identity, that engage the personal, the social, the scientific, and the national in "realist-ic" ways.

This intersectional indication of identity seems particularly well-expressed in *A Study in Scarlet*, the 1887 novel in which readers are first introduced to Sherlock Holmes. The novel is a frame narrative, which embeds the story of the detective within the memoirs of John Watson. In the early days of the famous duo living together Watson peruses a marked magazine article over breakfast and proceeds to scoff: "Its somewhat ambiguous title was 'The Book of Life,' and it attempted to show how much an observant man might learn by an accurate and systematic examination of all that came in his way" (10). Holmes' method of deduction is articulated in the further narrative frame of the article Watson reads from, and its scientific rhetoric of the article is apparent: observation must be both "accurate and systematic" in order to provide learning for the observant man. And while the publication of Holmes' ideas in article form seems to suggest a scholarly paradigm for disseminating his scientific methods, based on Watson's description the article is presumably printed in a popular magazine, and therefore aimed at the common, rather than the academic reader. This distinction is further underscored by Watson's summary of its argument that "an observant man" as opposed to a scientist or academic is capable of mastering and wielding this method, just as the mass observers do. But Holmes is no social radical, and his article also clearly sets up a distinction

between those who are capable of mastering this technique—the observant—and those who are not—the blind. This idea is further underscored by the title, "The Book of Life" which alludes to the biblical concept of a book containing the names of those who are saved, in the Book of Revelations. Here, then, the science of observation is not just a science; adherence to its methods promises, the title suggests, a form of salvation from the mundane process of life. A reality Holmes is forever trying to escape through detection and drugs.

Holmes's article goes on to suggest, rather poetically, "all life is a great chain, the nature of which is known wherever we are shown a single link of it" (11). Holmes carefully constructs a clear image for his reader that expresses both his methodology and the very aesthetic of realism in which he is participating. Life has so far been evoked as both a book and a chain, clear material images for the reader to use to comprehend his more scientific process of deduction. This clarity of imagery is perhaps what causes Watson to scoff. Watson is himself a medical doctor, who continually doubts the 'science' behind Holmes' method. As Armstrong notes, "fiction equated seeing with knowing and made visual information the basis for the intelligibility of a verbal narrative" (7). Armstrong suggests not only that narrative evokes the visual to better produce understanding, but that our primary mode of understanding *is* visual. And this preoccupation is not isolated to high realism alone, in "The Book of Life" Holmes relies on the image of a linked chain to convey his theory of the connectedness of life, and he foregrounds the significance of visuality for detecting, in what Latour might term an oligopticonic fashion: "Let [the detective] on meeting a fellow-mortal, learn at a glance to

distinguish the history of the man, and the trade or profession to which he belongs" (11). Here Holmes evokes the instantaneity of the snapshot, which frames and freezes identity in just a moment, as well as the indexicality of the photograph, and its ability to 'reveal' the truth about a referent precisely because it shares a physical trace with that referent. Indeed, Holmes goes on to encourage his reader, "By a man's finger-nails, by his coat sleeve, by his boots, by his trouser-knees, by the callosities of his forefinger and thumb, by his expression, by his shirt-cuffs—by each of these things a man's calling is plainly revealed" (11). Holmes's article uses the most minute details of a man's bearing and clothing to reveal some sort of fundamental truth about him that is visible only through careful looking. Here too, in the listing of personal details, we see the preoccupation with physical detail and the material world that characterizes realist fiction as well.

Also resonant in Holmes' description is the increasing importance of photography to forensic science, as Thomas has noted, as well as photography's manifestation of the desire to 'read' a subject visually as the photographic portrait allowed viewers to do.[23] In detective fiction this reading allows the detective to sort individuals into the binary of guilt and innocence, while in realist fiction this visual detail allows the reader to similarly sort the characters into a larger phylum, often associated with class, as György Lukacs has pointed out in his Marxist reading of realism.[24]

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[23] Thomas includes four chapters on the significance of photography to the emergence of forensic science, and many scholars have noted the importance of Francis Galton's experiments in composite photography to produce a criminal type, not for their accuracy, but for the development of a discourse of criminality that is read on the body of the subject.

[24] See Lukács's *Essays on Realism* ed. Rodney Livingstone. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1980.

Indeed, the connection of class to both occupation and heredity is a dominant theme in both detective fiction and realist fiction, as well as in the project and responses to Mass Observation. In speaking of his article, Holmes tells Watson, "There is a strong family resemblance about misdeeds," which allows him to function as a genealogist of sorts, tracing the family tree through revelations about motive and character by way of occupation and habit that can be read in a man's hands and clothes. Holmes here reads the body as a type, of which one significant component is class, a concept of which is still strongly tied to heredity, as his mention of a "family resemblance" makes clear. As Armstrong notes, "These images presumed to offer such an accurate reading of the human body that just on the basis of that reading, one could assign any body to its proper category" (17). But what the rise of visuality in connection to class makes apparent is that the connection is not only visible, it is as fixed as the photographic image removed from the developer's tray. This "proper category" is evoked by Jane Eyre, who uses the crudest materials at her disposal to create her own portrait in a manner that was as mimetic as possible, emphasizing her use of her worst tools to get her plain features just right. In constrast, for Blanche Ingram's portrait she uses her best materials in order to create a perfect image of a high-born beauty, and through the material differences in these images, an outside observer would be able to correctly categorize the two women, and Jane would be able to submit her unruly feelings into their proper channel.

Through these examples we see that both the image one projects to the world, and the image one creates of oneself are autobiographical within the realm of realist and detective fiction. This aligns with the critical consensus that Armstrong summarizes as

such: “The new sciences of identity…invariably used photographic technology to make the body legible” (17). The process of making oneself legible was a process of making oneself into an image. In one sense, this was a process that removed individual agency as Galton’s composite photography has made clear, and Jane Eyre’s disciplinary rendering and reading of her portraits suggests. But at the same time, both models of realism suggest that visibility as a subject, under any circumstances, requires this kind of legibility as a readable image. In a sense, one is always authoring one’s own image—be it in the gestures you use, the clothes you choose, or the style of your hair—but by making a mimetic image of the self, you have the ability to exercise a great degree of agency. While Jane’s image is crude and undeniably cruel, the disciplinary function it serves also gives her a sense of emotional separation from, a non-belonging to Rochester, and allows her to create an autobiographical image that restores a sense of agency to her unequal involvement with a wealthy landowner. Jane’s self authoring through the image seems to assert a kind of control over her fate precisely through these class differences as they can be read on the surface. Strikingly, it is only once Rochester is struck blind at the end of the novel, that Jane feels as if they can live together as equals (423-437).

But class isn’t the only mode of classification that Holmes reads. *A Study in Scarlet* is also deeply interested in national types as well, further expanding the notion of ‘family resemblance’ to include a notion of national identity. The criminal of the novel, Jefferson Hope, is an American who writes the word “Rache,” the German word for revenge, at the scene of the murder to throw off the police. At the conclusion of the case, the daily paper *The Echo* asserts, “If the case has no other effect, it, at least…will serve as

a lesson to all foreigners that they will do wisely to settle their feuds at home, and not carry them onto British soil," implying that the work of detectives serves also to police national borders because "foreign" types will be outed by their behavior and appearance (70). As *The Echo* article makes clear, "detection [is] a modern and distinctly English methodology," as Reitz argues (xiv). This also suggests that the "family resemblance" Holmes notes of misdeeds, creates a genealogy of type that is flexible and responsive to the multiplicity of identity.

Rather than suggesting that observation uncovers only class, or only nationality, detective fiction suggests that identity is enmeshed in a complex set of signifiers as well as acts. Hope, for instance, was entangled with the Mormons of Utah, denoting him as an even more specific type of American, and perhaps emphasizing his foreignness. Detection, then, and the images it produces, must be specifically attuned to the specificity of both the crimes, and the criminals, making observation a deeply social practice.

As Reitz point out, this concept is deeply ingrained in the discourse of policing and detecting in the nineteenth century: "In all manner of discourse, from courtroom speeches to colonial treatises to works of fiction, detection was represented as the acquisition and centralization of 'local knowledge,' a ubiquitous phrase in these texts. Local knowledge was the product of rigorous observation aided by familiarity with the people and circumstances observed" (xxiii). Like the *flâneur* who uses his strolling to create an intimacy with public spaces, and like the lurker capable of reading details at a distance, here there is a discourse of governmentality that relies on a kind of *flânerie* practiced by the lurking police. Reitz goes on to note, "Samuel Smiles's article titled 'The

Police of London' explains that policemen were directed to 'make themselves roughly acquainted with the geography of their respective sections...the police-constable is even expected to possess such a knowledge of the inhabitants of each house as to enable him to recognize their persons' (101)" (xxiii). Here the work of observation is taken one step further to require "recognition," suggesting not just that people remain anonymous under surveillance, but that surveillance is a practice by which identity is repeatedly produced and confirmed by an authority figure whose specific duty it is to surveille while lurking in order to preempt the need to control. The resulting object of identity becomes a key data point that allows the police force to operate in a more standardized fashion, as Smiles' article suggests. In this configuration there is no central figure observing all of London, instead there is a network of observers whose information is put into practice in a local context. But these *flâneurs* also funnel this information upward to create an informatics of identity that further reinforces the effectiveness of this system. This mode of policing is continuously evoked in the Holmes stories, which often feature the detective in 'local' disguises so that he can observe without evoking notice.

This great chain of practice, as Holmes might view it, continues to acquire links even today. The French philosopher Armand Mattelart sees a direct connection between nineteenth-century policing practices and contemporary surveillance society: "Throughout the 19th c., one can see emerging the outlines prefiguring technocracy, in the sense that they insist on organization as the construction of reality in accordance with scientific and technical rationality. These doctrines took mathematics as their model and paved the way to the 'scientization' of the economy as well as they management of the

population as a whole" (2007, 10). Mattelart's Marxist critique of this development suggests that surveillance society developed in response to the demands for a biopolitically controlled population suited for the modern workforce. The links between nineteenth-century policing, and contemporary social theories are convincing enough, but there seems to be a critical step missing that Reitz' description alludes to, and which the Mass Observation project manifests, and that is the social component of observation. By encouraging police officers to learn the identity of each inhabitant in a local area, Smiles's article indicates that the police officer must then necessarily interact with his subjects and incorporate surveillance into his everyday social practice. Policing is thus facilitated by sociality. Likewise, Mattelart's beautiful and frightening description of technocracy seems to step outside of the individual actor and imagine instead a society constructed outside of and in contradiction to the everyday. This reading stands opposed to Foucault's notion that the networks of power are enacted through the smallest of increments and interactions, and by individuals within these larger structures rather than imposed on individuals by these structures. Indeed, this is the very granularity of observation and individuality that Latour points to in *Paris: Invisible City*; traffic and roadsigns, and the metro are not controlled by a faceless agency, but by actual people who take as their starting point the observation of behavior as the basis for their mode of regulation of the city.

This mode of policing, and much of detective fiction, also further evokes the *flâneur*: he is the lurking looker that doesn't just take in the flux of everyday life, but zooms in on details. But the *flâneur* is not simply the genealogical predecessor of the

lurker, he indicates another mode of observation that is overlaid but perhaps not always differentiated from lurking. And in *flânerie*, detective fiction, and Smiles' policing manual, the significant power of observation—to which realism attests—is the use of such details to get at not just identity, but interiority. Detection creates unbreakable links between observation and conclusion so that they can be followed accurately and systematically not just to action, but to the very nature of man. As Watson notes of Holmes' article, "The writer claimed by a momentary expression, a twitch of a muscle or glance of an eye, to fathom a man's inmost thoughts…His conclusions were as infalliable as so many propositions of Euclid" (11). In this way, the regulation of the body through the science of detection extends to the regulation of intention, as it can be enacted by the body. The core of Holmes' argument is that observation is as rational as mathematics, and the conclusions can be as reasonably and logically deduced as one of the classical geometric propositions.

The article's further implication is that interiority is subject to the same mathematic precision as action through the applied power of observation. Put another way, it is possible to not only reveal interiority, as expressed by identity, is possible to not only capture in an image, but also to rationalize it into data. This same conclusion is evident in the 1938 article about Mass Observation, which states that "all the details making up everyday life are being examined and tabulated," similarly suggesting a mathematical precision to observation that allows the project to arrive at exact percentages of people who began smoking as a form of social acceptance. Like Holmes, the Mass Observers were directed to be as detailed as possible: they were instructed to

"write down exactly what they saw and heard," in the same way that the day diarists are expected to write down "everything that happened to him or her on that day, down to the smallest detail." This strong connection to mathematics in both *A Study in Scarlet* and the Mass Observation article is underscored to legitimize the practice of observation not simply as eavesdropping, or infringing on another's social space or inner life, but possessing the power of revealing significant human behaviors so that they may be computed within scientific discourse and presented to the public as data that serves a greater purpose. Given the problematic of rendering self and other in the way the project was framed, any such computation would be conditioned as much as on the overlaid visual practices of surveillance and observation, and on the overlaying of *flânerie* and lurking as on emerging statistical and computational methods. As such, realistic detection of images of self derive as much from nineteenth century fiction as from historical or futural imperatives of social science.

The *Everybody* article about Mass Observation is less clear about the final purpose of the project, outside of its potential contribution to science; and the terms by which it is characterized as science are particularly situated within its historical moment. "The use of it all?" the author wonders, "The machinery for an analysis of motives, feeling and behavior, may become of inestimable service to us, living as we do in an age when, while the mechanical sciences have advanced tremendously, the social sciences have lagged far behind." Significantly, the article stresses the very different achievement in the technology of production and management, and the science of human behavior. This understanding echoes James Hinton's assertion that the Mass Observation project

was more deeply rooted in nineteenth-century discourses of identity than the contemporary discourses of psychoanalysis, which had yet to reach widespread acceptance. This connection is clear when the author suggests that the project is developing a "machinery" of analysis for human emotion and behavior, suggesting a positivist attitude toward both observation and technology that is underscored by the author's characterization of the aims of the project as "finding out scientific truths." Here the science of observation is entangled with the technology of mechanization that promises to routinize and demystify human behavior much as Sherlock Holmes does. But while Holmes relies on an internal database comprised of his "knowledge of the history of crime," here the Mass Observers are described as simply one part of a larger social scientific machine that promises truth in the form of quantifiable results. Whereas Holmes is a kind of genealogist, holding "the details of a thousand" at his fingertips, the Mass Observer records and turns over his information to an external processor. The responsibility of interpreting the information he collects is not done internally, in the same way that Holmes operates, but is instead collated with the observations of countless others in a kind of public diary practice that reveals the "great chain of life" to which Holmes refers. But only after a process of routinization that turns observation into data. This is the process to which the project should aspire, the Observer article suggests, when it compares the social sciences to the "tremendous" advances in the "mechanical sciences." The larger contour of the Mass Observation project, however, in its warranting of self and other in visualized self-identity conditioned in a social imagism derived from

letters as much as arts, is such that it draws the future of social computing as later chapters will illustrate.

Self-Authoring, the Snapshot, and the Archive



Fig. 8. View of contemporary section of *Mass Observation: This Is Your Photo* exhibit, 2013. © The Photographer's Gallery.

Realism's access to interiority by way of identity is expressed in a series of intersecting dialectical tensions: text and image, self and social, and data and interiority. But there is one further dynamic in realism that the Mass Observation exhibit at The Photographer's Gallery manifests, and that is the projection of temporality in realism. The consideration of temporality is important because it allows us to consider issues of

affect and archive as they relate to realism and its relationship to the development of surveillance sociality. Frederic Jameson reads realism as a symbiosis of the "antinomies" of narrative and scene, which he projects as two different human investments in temporality. "Realim," Jameson writes, "is a consequence of the tension between…destiny and the eternal present" that result in our inability to talk about realism itself, only "a potential emergence of a potential breakdown" (2013, 26). On the one hand, realism depends upon a shared sense of linear time, which connects to both biological destinies, or stages of life, and social destinies, as well as stages of life. Realism thus feels familiar, or real, because it grounds its image production along this linear timeline. However, there is also "the sliding scale of the incremental," which is the experience of the present as a different series of affective intensities (42). This is the realm of the endured present in which an affective experience of events only turns into narrative once it is in the past. This is the sense of realism which is much more difficult to narrate, and where media technologies step in to play a key role. Jameson creates a dialectic between emotion and affect, in which emotion denotes a processed and rationalized response, whereas affect is experienced, lived intensity prior to an events processing into emotion. Such a dialectic suggests that images can and are immediately experienced affectively, while narrative always remains in the realm of emotion because it must first be processed as language. In this way Jameson suggests that realism attempts to bridge the divide between affect and emotion by using language to create images, which results in a complex projection of time in realism.

This complex engagement with temporality as an expression of the affective experience of surveillance is evoked by the design of the "This is Your Photo" exhibit in Figure 8. This photograph, taken from the archives of the Photographer's Gallery 2013 exhibit, "Mass Observation: This is Your Photo" shows the section of the exhibit focused on the amateur snapshots that accompanied the gallery's exhibition of selected diaries from the Mass Observation project. The design of the display of these photos, in contrast to the professional Spender photographs, or the official book covers, is striking. These amateur photographs are not scaled to gallery size. Although some of them are enlarged to an 8X10 size to make certain geographic details visible, the dominant size is the standard 3X5 or 4X6 print size of amateur photographs. On the one hand this sizing decision retains the documentary value of the photographs because it ostensibly displays them as they were originally submitted to the Mass Observation project. On the other hand it speaks to a certain dimunition of their status; the small size allows for larger groupings of photos on individual shelves, but also for a smaller space of representation against the white walls of the gallery. The resulting effect is one of data: these photographs convey and are valued as information, rather than as aesthetic objects. The small size suggests that these photos have something to tell the viewer about the life of the photographer, and by extrapolation, the life of Britain as refracted and experienced by an individual; but they are also not aesthetically representative enough to stand on their own against the wall. Instead the photos, like individual bytes of data, must be strung together in an odd assortment to create a mélange of dailyness through a process of visual bricolage. In many ways this process evokes the original ethos of the project: to create a

larger picture of the British citizenry through the combination of individual accounts that gain value as they are accumulated.

The exhibit also emphasizes the amateurism of these photos through the design of the shelves. The snapshots lean directly against the wall, unframed and untitled. A grouping of photographs instead conveys a common theme through their grouping on a horizontal shelf that is protected from the viewer by a plexiglass frame that also leans against the wall. This common frame is shared by all of the snapshots, emphasizing the



Fig. 9. View of snapshot shelving for *Mass Observation: This Is Your Photo* exhibit, 2013. © The Photographer's Gallery.

importance of their grouped status. Even more telling, however, is the open framing of the shelves. The plexiglass frame is unenclosed at both ends, allowing air and unfiltered light to mingle among the photos. Unlike the Spender photographs, which are preserved

carefully within a staid black frame and archival glass, and hung in a traditional manner on the wall, these photos are open and exposed to the public and the elements. This suggestion of access almost tempts you to reach a hand in and grab or rearrange the photos. The open framing evokes a kind of democratic aesthetic, as if the grouped photos are open not only to interpretation, but also to arrangement. The viewer is seemingly invited into the shelves themselves, an affect absent from the rest of the exhibit. The professional photographs are all carefully framed and marked, and the original Mass Observation collections; the magazine spreads, and even historical directives are all locked down under a long glass table-case that allows the viewer to look onto the carefully sorted materials, but prohibits the same breezy openness of the snapshots.

While this differing choice of display is due, in part, to the demands of the materials themselves, it also creates a rhetoric of difference that reflects the classed status of materials in the Mass Observation archive. Many of the snapshots are taken from the One Day for Life project, a 1987 photo campaign that solicited snapshots of daily life along with an entry fee to raise money for cancer research. But most of the displayed photographs are either the published selections from the campaign, or finalists for the publication. When I accessed the materials in the archive, the archivist informed me that she doubted that the remaining photographs housed in cold storage would make it to the digitzation stage any time soon because of the sheer number of them. The Mass Observation archive contains a substantial and rich amount of information, but that amount is also overwhelming. Like the exhibit itself, the information must be sorted, prioritized, and selected for its different documentary or aesthetic value. But because the

project values the democratizing potential of information gathering, it has to espouse those same values in its display of the archive in some form. This is where the unique design of the shelves comes in. By evoking openness and even replacement, the shelves suggest that any number of snapshots could be appropriately placed on this shelf. All of the snapshots have a value that only the limits of space prevent from fully manifesting. By diminishing the value of any one individual snapshot, the exhibit aims to uphold the value of all of the snapshots as a collective.

The amateur area of the exhibit creates a simulation of the realist and detective novels: the gallery visitor is privy to a wealth of visual information, but like a detective, she is required to piece it together to create some sort of coherent narrative. And this is precisely what the original Mass Observation project aimed to do, to "help us know ourselves and others better." The democratized presentation of images implies that the exhibit will produce a variety of narratives through the different powers of observation and juxtaposition. Just as Jane Eyre sees herself more clearly *after* comparing her hand-drawn image to Blanche Ingram's, here the Mass Observation project suggests that we know ourselves better only in relationship to others. The focus on the minutiae of daily life that constitutes the subject of the snapshots further implies that it is in the smallest or least important details of life that personal meaning is made. Just as Holmes reads the relationship between the cuff and the condition of a man's hands in order to develop a narrative about that man, so too, "This is Your Photo" suggests, do we understand such snapshots to contain inductive power in their ability to reveal unknown details about their producers. This is the power of the detail in both realist fiction and Mass Observation.

And this process of detecting, as Holmes' article foretells, is a process that will democratize surveillance, allowing anyone with the power of observation to begin to construct narratives and categorizations. This progressive potential is not as apparent in the early stages of the project, which funneled all data through a centralized point and which used a professional photographer instead of amateurs. But the evolution of the project in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, very overtly gives over the power of both image creation and image interpretation to the masses. This is why the exhibit contains snapshots alongside professional images, and also why the snapshots are simply laid out, so that the visitor feels as if the power of categorization, and thus narrativization, rests in her hands. This new direction of the project was indebted to the *One Day for Life* photo campaign and is further extended by the more recent *Video Nation* and *Britain in a Day* new media projects, which take up the ethos of Mass Observation to continue producing user-generated images of national identity.

But the design of the exhibit also expresses some of the tensions of realism Jameson describes. The historical aspect of the project is clearly separated from its present, and while the past is clearly narrated though titles and information, the present area of the exhibit contains very little language and relies on the power of the images to express themselves. The clear connections to the development of national identity throughout the twentieth century is clear in the historical section, but the contemporary section hasn't yet resolved that narrative; instead it projects different intensities of Britishness in the present as expressed through pictures of where observers live, what they eat, where they work. Just as the diary is an unresolved form, only ever able to

capture its present without access to its own future, so too does the exhibit gesture toward a cohesive future, without having full access to it. There are complications within this divide, but following Jameson, I read the "This is Your Photo" exhibit as expressing the antinomies of realism that also exist in the dialectic tensions of the diary form. I am suggesting that the project itself is a kind of experimental diary form, not only in the information it solicits from its observers, which perhaps stands as its narrative, but in its attempts to express the lived intensity of the present as an ongoing negotiation between the poles of emotion and affect, past and present, and identity and character, that is to say, in its "diegesis."

This is a tension expressed at the granular level of the project as well. During research conducted at The Keep, the archival home of all of the Mass Observation materials, I came across a directive that reflects directly upon the Mass Observation project and the role of the individual observer in it. Since its most recent reinvention, Mass Observation relies on directive responses, which are surveys with pre-determined questions that are completed by volunteers and returned to the archive. These directives can be commissioned by researchers, but are often updated versions of older directives. This format replaced the day-diaries and war diaries of the early and mid-twentieth century, but the responses themselves are still very diaristic in nature and format. The tone is confessional and addressed to a 'reader' who is unknown, but still very much the addressee of the narrative, much as many writers begin their dairies as if speaking to the diary itself. This is diary as text and interlocutor.

One such reflexive directive from October of 2010 is titled "Taking Part in the Mass Observation Project," and explores the ongoing impact of Mass Observation through the answers of 187 respondents. During my time in the archive I read through all of these responses and realized there was a clear pattern to the responses in one question in particular that shed light in the question of authorship and visuality driving the analysis here. The question asks, "What do you get out of writing for MO? (we asked this before in 1992)." The rhetoric of the question is striking. Writing, in this context, is framed as a role, or job fulfilling the mission of the project, and little considers the autobiographical nature of the writing in question. In response, however, the vast majority of respondents framed their answers within their personal context first, and for the project as a secondary benefit. Along a similar line, the question overtly asks respondents about writing, although they are also often asked to provide images. Finally, the question makes it clear that this is a repeat question, gesturing back to the recent history of the project, and suggesting a reflexivity of the archive itself; it almost seems as if the archive asks the respondents to describe the nature of their relationship with one another. Perhaps such personification takes this reading to the extreme, but I exaggerate here to emphasize the significance of the dynamic relationship between writing, images, and the archive—which is largely figured as an anonymous agglomeration of scholars and viewers—in an ongoing and reflexive conversation. Like the vernacular mode of the diary addressed to an other, this model of interactivity also invokes the early development of the field of Human Computer Interaction (HCI) on a model of "conversation," determined by "the structure of interactional sequences…[and] expected and familiar formats," as M. A.

Norman and P. J. Thomas demonstrate (1991, 248). Mass Observation, like HCI and the diary, then, uses the structure and inherent rules of conversation in order to create a mimetic interpersonal environment that affords revelation and reflection.

Invoking both HCI and the diary, the respondents of the Mass Observation directive largely characterize their work as both autobiographical and scientific. They are contributing to their own well-being and the well-being of the archive through their writing. They understand their fates as intertwined. They are also deeply invested in both the past and the present as a way of moving toward the future. I encoded all of the answers for the question listed above for four key factors derived from the explicit terms and metaphors used in their responses. I noted whether the respondent was motivated by individual or social factors; whether their engagement was cognitive or social; whether they used written or visual metaphors to describe their contribution; and whether their orientation was in the present, the past, or the future. This encoding structure very closely mirrors the key elements of realism as this chapter has outlined, but was informed solely by what I found in the responses, which suggests a deep connection between narrative realism and the ongoing experience of diaristic realism associated with a legible social self. In short, what I found is that the majority of the respondents participated in Mass Observation for individual reasons (151 respondents), cognitive benefit (97 respondents), and were oriented in the present (151 respondents). The most common metaphorical response was written (84 respondents). This suggests that current mass observers understand themselves as engaged in a diaristic practice. They are motivated by their own

sense of reward or benefit, they feel this reward in the present, and they understand themselves as authoring a written record in which they can be "seen" and observed.

There are many nuances to these findings, but for the purposes of this analysis, what these responses suggest is that Mass Observation is itself an expression of the dialectical tensions informing and expressed in realism and in the diaristic mode. The Photographer's Gallery exhibit and recent multimedia projects suggest a strong visual, imagistic drive to the project, while the observers themselves understand the project as a public diary practice. This is a tension similarly expressed in the realist examples we have explored. Jane Eyre uses the production of an image to regulate her emotions, but she reports on that image production through an autobiographical narrative that the narrative frame would have us believe was authored by Jane herself. Likewise, Sherlock Holmes practices detection by expertly reading individuals as if they were images, but disseminates his message through his own article and the autobiographical work of John Watson. So what does any of this add up to for the analysis here? Significantly, it suggests that the relationship between autobiography, visual culture, and realism has yet to be fully explored by scholars. It further indicates that Mass Observation engages or expresses the aesthetic tensions of realism within its development of a social practice of surveillance. In effect, Mass Observation took the process of self and social surveillance, as expressed by both the diary form and nineteenth-century fiction, and extended it to the realm of practice. But even more importantly, Mass Observation illustrates that this mode of sociality is not only the most rational or exact method of understanding individual

identity, but that identity must increasingly be expressed within these paradigms in order to be culturally legible.

In this way, the realist novel and the detective novel are responding to the problematic of disappearance, the shadow of the increased visibility wrought by the industrialization of visual media. The realist novel makes visible, or zooms in on that which might be overlooked, raising it to the level of social and cultural significance. The detective novel, on the other hand, works to recover what has disappeared, further exposing it to disciplinary discourse. On a larger level, the disappearance of this genealogy is what this chapter seeks to recover. By placing Mass Observation within this larger context, it makes visible the ways in which the project acts out the appearance and disappearance of the self-authoring subject in a way that helps to condition the self-authoring of later networked media. As the extension of this genealogy into the present demonstrates, in order to compute social media realistically for digital cultures, algorithmic networks must already be able to compute the antinomies and dialectics of realistically warranted self-identity, even if it cannot (yet) adequately compute intelligence or life. In the next three chapters I'll consider in more detail how this paradigm is expressed through specific examples of diaristic new media in order to more fully articulate the increasing relationship between the aesthetics of surveillance and sociality explored in chapters 1 and 2, and the material specificities of digital media.

3. An Artificial Character: lonelygirl15 and the Ethics of Authenticity in Vlogging

"How many people, carried away by these orgies of secret literature, manage to fashion themselves into an artificial character that they must then play and sustain!"
— Georges Duhamel, Le Notaire du Havre

On June 16, 2006, a teenage girl named Bree used the new video sharing platform, YouTube, to launch her first videolog, or vlog, entitled "First Blog/Dorkiness Prevails." Dressed in a tank top and jeans, Bree sits in front of the camera with one knee raised in front of her chest and speaks with a soft and slightly babyish voice. She describes for her imagined viewers the "boring" town she lives in, her complicated relationship with her best friend Daniel, and her frustration with her overbearing parents, who are involved in a secret and mysterious religion that she can't talk about. Bree loves science, is a self-described geek, and looks to emulate other vloggers she's seen on YouTube. She ends the brief two-minute video with the promised dorkiness of the title: a series of goofy faces set to music that temporarily distorts her lovely face. With that, one of YouTube's first viral stars was born. Lonelygirl15, Bree's screen name and the title of the vlog series, became one of the first certifiable successes for the social video platform.

As the series progressed it became clear that Bree's overbearing parents were involved in a cult, and that Bree was in danger. The mystery within the show was mirrored by a sense of mystery about the production of the show. Part of lonelygirl15's meteoric rise was the suspicion, almost from the start, that the series was a hoax. Because of the regular release of posts, lack of response to fans within the videos, and the nearly professional editing techniques, viewers started to question the veracity of the series within a few months. This suspicion only fueled traffic to the site. The controversy

elevated the cultural profile of both Bree and YouTube, as many people watched the series in order to engage with both the mystery unfolding within the narrative and the paratextual mystery surrounding the authenticity of the series. This led to questions about the genre of the series: was it a performance, or was it reality? Because the paradigms of performance on the video-sharing platform were not yet clearly articulated, the series presented viewers with a dilemma. On the one hand, Bree seemed to be adhering to a refigured, outsourced one-way media model implied by the company's slogan, "Broadcast Yourself." But in their challenge to the show's veracity, a small group of viewers asserted the significance of the interactive model of social media.

Determined to discover the "truth" about Bree, in September of 2006 three fans launched a sting that led to the revelation that Bree was actually actress Jessica Rose, and the show the brainchild of an artistic collaboration hoping for a future production deal. Commentators largely described the rupture of Bree's authenticity in terms of the assumed disappointment for her fans. As one commenter put it, "that's pretty bad news for lonelyboy15."[25] As a result of this dynamic, much of the subsequent analysis of the series centered on the quandary of authenticity within social media, as well as its larger cultural implications. The aftershock of the revelation of Rose's identity resonated throughout the YouTube user community, who viewed the performance as undermining potentially meaningful affective dimensions of networked sociality within the site. At the same time, Rose has been enshrined as YouTube's first 'star,' essentially legitimizing her performance. The lonelygirl15 channel's 200 million page views suggest that it has

[25] See Henry Jenkins's reference to this dynamic of desire in Jenkins, Henry. "Astroturf, humbugs, and lonely girls." Confessions of an Aca-Fan blog, posted September 13, 2006.

subsequently become an integral element of YouTube's public narrative, as well as an important model of performance within social media.[26]

Nearly ten years after the lonelygirl15 debut, this chapter revisits the scandal provoked by the series in order to recover its significance as a social text that articulates the often elided, highly gendered dynamics of the labor of performance within social media. This affect arises from a tension between amateurism and virtuosity within social media performance, a tension that, as performance studies scholar Tavia Nyong'o's has suggested, makes such labor precarious.[27] Here I invoke precarity as a lived condition of dependence on economic and social systems over which we exercise minimal amounts of control. The labor of performance within networked sociality—the labor that is performed daily by a significant percentage of the global population—is rarely characterized as labor, because it is typically theorized as social, or communicative, and thus outside the sphere of labor. But as scholars such as philosopher Paolo Virno have suggested, the labor of communication is the definitional form of labor in the immaterial economy, and a significant portion of this work is routed through the culture industry (2004, 56). In a similar vein, political science scholar Jodi Dean terms this development "communicative capitalism," and argues that this new public sphere is specific to networked sociality because the internet represents both the means of transmission and site of action for the convergence of culture, politics, and the economy (2010, 4). This formulation of communicative labor as both ubiquitous and precarious provides a useful

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[26] Jessica Rose graces the cover of *Wired Magazine's* December 2006 issue, and an eight-page feature story claims that the vlog series had a fan-base significant enough to challenge mainstream television.
[27] This tension is one of three key dynamics of precarity identified in Nyong'o, Tavia. 2013. "Situating precarity between the body and the commons." *Women & Performance* 23(2): 157-161.

framework for understanding social media communication as encompassing performance and labor through the extension of the culture industry into the sphere of the everyday.

One response to this convergence, as Lauren Berlant argues, has been an aestheticization of precarity designed to provide modes of navigation for this lived condition. Berlant offers a helpful analytical distinction within broader theories of communicative capitalism by focusing on how the precarity of everyday life manifests as an aesthetic mode. In particular, she suggests that the rise of the 'situation' drama, such as the police procedural, provides strategies for coping with "the emerging event," an enduring present that posits a dialectical tension between everyday life and "a state of things in which *something* that will perhaps matter is unfolding" (2011, 4). This extended anticipation creates a sense of disorientation in response to unstable and shifting conditions in which subjects must find clues as to what will matter in the future in order to anchor them in the present. Berlant suggests that these genres foster the development of a hypervigilant subject who "collects material that might help clarify things" in both everyday life and artistic genres (4). Precarity, in essence, creates a public of watchers who use tactics of revelation to secure the modes of meaning in aesthetic expression as a way of solidifying boundaries typically dissolved by the shared experience of precarity. Berlant's formulation suggests that the energy spent on dismantling the authenticity of the lonelygirl15 series and Bree's identity is part of the aesthetic mode that the series tapped into, as well as a vital condition of the networked public sphere. As a result, identifying and discussing clues within and external to the series helps viewers try to pin

down the genre of the series and, by extension, its larger implications for the networked social sphere.

This observation and surveillance as a mode of consumption also has its roots in the original autobiographical claims of the series. As literary scholar Philippe Lejeune has theorized, the autobiographical text creates a pact with its reader that assures them that because of the clear boundaries of the genre, the content is true and can be believed (1975). Lejeune terms this the 'autobiographical pact,' and despite its clear boundaries, it is a pact that authors and readers or audience members are constantly negotiating. Just a few months before the lonelygirl15 scandal broke, for instance, author James Frey was taken to task by talk-show host Oprah Winfrey after it was revealed that his memoir, which Oprah had selected for her book club, was largely embellished. Similarly, because the lonelygirl15 series suggested that it was a diary, there was a clear discomfort around the obvious editing of the series because the diary form is typically prized for its unedited, and thus authentic, nature. As literary scholar Kylie Cardell notes, "Diary is valued as a document written in media res," suggesting that it contains only immediate truths, rather than polished narratives (2014, 14). At the same time, she argues that the diary also represents a rhetorical choice, a vehicle for certain forms of self representation the effects of which extend beyond the individual. As a result, the diary is also a highly social text, despite its often private origins. Of course, privacy is also deeply social in the discursive sense, as Jodi Dean's work on the blog genre suggests. "As with blogging," Dean writes, "our participation in social networks relies on the supposition that we expose but are not exposed, that we are unique but ultimately indistinguishable" (2010,

66). Dean gestures toward the complex notions of agency that inform social modes of self writing online, which seek to present an individual truth that has the power to circulate as a representative truth.

This complex dynamic is especially true for girls' diaries, and the diary of Anne Frank in particular. Her personal account is one of the most well known published diaries, praised for its intimate glimpse into the life of a fugitive Jewish family in hiding during the Holocaust. But the diary is also regularly taught as a social text depicting the real life of European Jewry during World War II, and yet, as Lejeune explores, documents have recently been released demonstrating the extensive editing that first Anne, and then her father Otto made to the diary prior to its publication, as the 2005 edition of the text makes clear. There is a clear tension between the diary as a discursive practice, and the labor of editing that allows the diary to circulate as a social text. This is one of the key factors in the lonelygirl15 hoax, but it is a discourse that extends to autobiographical expression more generally and dairies—especially girls' diaries—in particular.

The excessive policing of the authenticity of girls' diaries suggests that such discourse is culturally precarious because it is valued for a consumability whose requirements are based on unfulfillable standards of authenticity, and the propriety we associate with authentic girlhood. The series aestheticizes precarity through a sustained focus on the gendered maintenance of desire and consumption within and external to the frame of the screen. Lonelygirl15 offers viewers increasingly intimate glimpses into Bree's world as she becomes increasingly vulnerable to forces beyond her control. This

increasing vulnerability coincides with the revelation of more information about Bree's life, or more opportunities to visually consume Bree—such as scenes of her frolicking in a bathing suit—illustrating how the series grounds its claims to authenticity by offering escalating modes of intimacy and voyeurism. But because there has been no sustained analysis of the series that considers both its diegesis and the discourse surrounding it, this aestheticization of its performative precarity has been overlooked. In fact, most of the criticism has presented a narrow, and often limited understanding of the show's significance to studies of social media. By reclaiming both the series and the hoax as significant discursive performances in social media, I aim to shift the analysis away from questions of individual authenticity and suggest instead that authenticity is merely one effect of the personal branding required by social media performance that works to simultaneously brand social media platforms. Reading the series within this framework, the lonelygirl15 hoax has further significance as it highlights the increasing importance of amateur productions to the cultural industry in the neoliberal affective economy.

A Brand of Amateurism

Very little scholarly attention has been paid to the content of the series, and this could be ascribed, in part, to its seemingly narrow narrative appeal. The lonelygirl15 video blog is very much what you would expect from the diaristic musings of a teenaged girl. Most of the videos are one or two minutes long and feature Bree talking to the camera about her parents, or her relationship with her friend Daniel, or sharing interesting facts about

history or science. Many of the videos also feature more technically edited scenes of Bree dancing around her room, reading, or performing other tasks at an almost manic speed.



Fig. 10. Still from August 25, 2006 episode of lonelygirl15 vlog

Other videos are edited with a montage effect, and most of these sequences are set to music. The songs are carefully labeled in the video's description section, evoking the amateur compilation of DIY mix-tapes of an earlier generation. In the June 21st episode, "School Work in Summer…BLECHH!!" Bree mentions that Daniel is responsible for all of the "cool editing tricks." However, in the later August 18th episode, "Mysteries of My Past…REVEALED!" which takes place after a fight over the subject of her mysterious religion leaves Bree and Daniel not on speaking terms, Bree writes in the video description: "I did all of the editing myself and even used some tricky speeded up stuff (Yay!)." Despite its trickiness, Bree's editing fits almost seamlessly into the aesthetic already established by the series. As a narrative turn, it also works to open up the

possibilities for the series because Bree could claim the more technical aspects of the performance for herself, rather than simply attributing them to Daniel.

This transition within the series is significant because the vlog was critiqued for being suspiciously polished, and the narrative premise relied on the amateur aesthetic of the videos. The tension between the technical skill of the show and its amateur status is one of the key factors that first led fans to challenge Bree's authenticity. This dynamic reveals the highly gendered nature of labor in online spaces, where the work of women is largely assumed to be technically 'unskilled' and aimed primarily at making a connection with the audience. In her work on gender in cyberspace, media scholar Susanna Paasonen suggests that amateur productions evoke "intimate contact" because "their authors are not assumed to be *skilled enough* to manufacture the things they depict, but are assumed to merely record things with the available technology" (2005, 93). As a result, amateur productions are thought to have a high documentary value, and often become overtly gendered as feminine. This paradigm is apparent in lonelygirl15; Daniel is given credit for the technical aspects of the show, while Bree is responsible for its affective registers. Bree's amateurism gives her a greater claim to authenticity, and must be effectively maintained in order to support the narrative construct of the show. Even when Bree does begin to take ownership of the production process, she foregrounds her own status as an amateur, referring to the process as "tricky." In the August 20th episode she claims, "I'm getting better at the speeded up stuff. Hope u like!" Bree refers to the effect of the editing rather than its process, and immediately follows her technical claims with a highly affective, social appeal: "Hope u like!" This comment emphasizes that Bree's primary

work is to make her fans like her, and such a function must be prioritized even in the assumption of technical skill.

Being liked is, of course, a fundamental premise of social media, but the foundation of this affective connection, and the labor required to produce it, is very different for men and women in social media spaces. Daniel is reticent, homely, and often unlikable. He is valued, however, for his technical skill. Bree, on the other hand, is a chatty, attractive, charismatic figure; she is approachable and offers an easy sense of intimacy with her character. While Daniel maintains a strict distance from the audience, Bree works constantly to erase it, going so far as to whisper conspiratorially to the camera about Daniel. The diminishment of her technical ability and parallel increase of intimacy is one of the ways that Bree develops her brand of microcelebrity. Media scholar Teresa Senft defines microcelebrity as "a commitment to deploying and maintaining one's online identity as if it were a branded good," pointing to the labor of liking on the Internet (2013, 346). Senft suggests that within most media forms celebrity functions discursively by creating a distance between the star and her fans. Web celebrity, however, "depends upon a connection to one's audience, rather than an enforced separation from them" (2008, 26). This is due, in part, to the significance of amateurism in social media content, which works to reduce the separation between the producer and the viewer by presenting the self as documented rather than stylized, and thus more authentic. By presenting her as visually documented, and thus accessible on various levels, the series facilitates an intimate engagement with Bree that is grounded in her age, gender, looks, and vulnerable status. This is her personal brand. And as Senft

points out, “Web micro-celebrities share something important with mainstream media stars: both must brand or die” (2008, 26). Bree’s brand is both what made her so popular, and what led to her revelation; she was open and accessible to fans, and in order to maintain that component of her brand, she had to remain vulnerable to revelation.

Bree’s brand of microcelebrity, however, was not brand new. Senft has traced a clear precedent for the lonelygirl15 series in the Camgirls of the 1990’s-2000’s. A Camgirl is a girl who has acquired the technical set-up to broadcast her life via a private homepage. Subscribers to the site have access to either updated still shots or a live feed from the webcam for a fee. In essence, fans can pay for unlimited visual access to a Camgirl, making her life and her image available for constant consumption. One of the most famous Camgirls is Jennifer Ringley, a college student who decided to broadcast her life via webcam in order to raise money. Her site, Jennicam, received over four million daily views during the late nineties, but has since been shuttered (Hart 2010). In her dedication to present the ‘reality’ of her life, Jennicam famously documented Ringley having sex with her boyfriend and masturbating. Despite the fact that this comprised a very small portion of the feed, this sexual potential is one of the lasting legacies of the show and exemplifies some of the assumptions people bring to the representations of girls on the Internet. The assumption is that girls should be authentic, revelatory, and available for consumption. Camgirls whose primary aim is sexual arousal are referred to as camwhores, a context that is evident in the comments section of any lonelygirl15 video, and one that the producers embraced to continually amp up the popularity of the show. In the August 29th episode, “Swimming!” montage shots of Bree frolicking in a

modest black bathing suit are set to music. The narrative pretext of this episode barely supports its overtly sexual visual appeal. But the release of the episode on the same day that Bree was contacted by the group that would eventually reveal the hoax suggests a complicated entanglement between the ongoing and increasing process of revelation that was crucial to Bree's brand.

This kind of structured vulnerability is one of the necessary components for any female brand in online spaces, but it also works to brand amateur content platforms as authentic. In her work on the affective relationships that emerge through the process of branding, communications scholar Sarah Banet-Weiser argues that the forms of self accounting by which a young girl's brand is established online must correspond with "an endlessly open cultural script…that makes sense within a cultural and economic context of recognizable and predetermined images, texts, beliefs, and values" (2011, 284). Banet-Weiser suggests that the ascension to microcelebrity requires that a producer understand both the specific cultural demands of her image, as has been previously established by popular visual culture, as well as the specific material demands of the medium she has chosen as a platform. The formulation of "endlessly open" cultural scripts evokes the unlimited availability of Camgirls, and seems to define the qualities necessary for young girls in particular, who present themselves as consistently vulnerable to the forms of cultural scripting that give them virality and thus legibility. But the "cultural and economic context" of Banet-Weiser's formulation also speaks to the "unrealistic" framing of Bree's technical development "detected" by active members of her audience. Her brand, like that of the Camgirl, is more valuable because her amateurism holds out the

promise of an uncensored and unscripted view into her life. The aestheticization of this visual access maps expertly onto the access promised by Bree's chosen medium, merging her individual brand of microcelebrity with the cultural brand of the YouTube platform.

The lonelygirl15 vlog series was initially posted during YouTube's rise to prominence as a social media platform, and was one of the most visited websites on the Internet in the summer of 2006.[28] But the social video site was also still very new. The company was founded only a year earlier, and the very first YouTube video, "Me at the Zoo," was posted in April of 2005. Prior to its purchase by Google in the fall of 2006, YouTube itself was largely viewed as a platform for DIY, amateur productions. As a result, part of the YouTube brand was its amateur aesthetic, and one of the values of the YouTube viewer community was the embrace of this amateurism. Even after its corporatization and emergence within the social media establishment, amateurism is still an essential component of the YouTube brand. Many of its most popular videos today, such as "Charlie bit my finger—again!" are amateur productions (YouTube 2012). This suggests a shifting ethos in the larger cultural script about the value of amateur social media performance. Google acquired YouTube for $1.65 billion in October of 2006, six years before the company began producing content of its own, highlighting the economic value of the amateur culture industry as branded by YouTube.

The merged branding of lonelygirl15 and YouTube suggests that the series stands as a virtuoso social media performance because it communicates important norms about

[28] *Advertising Age* notes on July 21, 2006 that "web traffic to the site grew 297%" in the first 6 months of 2006, making it "the fastest-growing site online" with the highest user group of 12-17 year olds. Media tracking organization Hitwise states that YouTube was "the 26th most visited website by US Internet users" (2006).

the medium and its function within the neoliberal economy. Philosopher Paolo Virno defines virtuosity as communicative performances that produce communication, which replaces political action in the public sphere (2004, 52). This effect is apparent in the amount of communication produced about what lonelygirl15 communicated about the value of authenticity in social media, as well as its emotionally charged tenor. Virno suggests that performance and discourse are deeply entangled because they engage and produce cultural scripts, or communication. His theory aims to illuminate the political dimension virtuoso performances, like lonelygirl15, which is often obscured because they reveal important communicative norms about labor in the form of a consumable spectacle. In this way, the virtuosity of social media performance is its "double nature" in Virno's terms; such performances work to define both the product of the culture industry, and its production. Lonelygirl15 communicates that authenticity is not only an essential component of the amateur brand, but also as a distinctly gendered facet signaled by the production of branded availability. As a communicative performance, then, lonelygirl15 is, in part, a communicative negotiation over the gendered norms of authenticity within the social media culture industry.

Faking Authenticity

The policing of authenticity that characterizes the discourse of the hoax speaks to the textual tradition from which vlogging emerges: the diary. Instead of separating the series and the hoax, I want to read them together as they point to an important connection between editing and authenticity that has its roots in the girls' diary as a social text.

Reading the series as a fake, reveals important discursive norms about documentary forms, such as documentary video, as well as external forms such as the diary. Exploring the history of the fake within these genres is important because it reveals the powerful gender implications that are often elided under the banner of "reality" posited by their claims to authenticity.

Perhaps most obviously, lonelygirl15 initially presents itself as an autobiographical account, specifically as a video diary. Despite its increasingly frenetic plotline, early episodes recall moments from the past that proved formational for Bree. For instance, in the episode "My Lazy Eye," Bree recounts how she was born with a lazy eye, and that her parents insisted that she receive an operation to correct her vision. After a brief pause Bree looks down and asks, "what if that was an important defect because it taught me how to see things differently?" The overt critique of her parents is that they blindly adhere to their cultish religion, failing to recognize Bree for who she really is. But this question contains a further suggestion for the viewers. Bree seems to encourage viewers to look past what they see on the surface, even past the diegetic world in which they are engaged. Such moments seem to both uphold the diegesis of the series, while simultaneously challenging its truth claims.

This double-move is, paradoxically enough, one of the hallmarks of feminist autobiography. Literary scholar Leigh Gilmore suggests that because the autobiography emerged from a masculinist understanding of the self as stable and claimed an authoritative position on the subject of one's own life, female autobiographical practices had to present their truth claims differently because of their different claims to

authenticity and thus authority, routes that are mapped out by discourses of gender (1994). One of the key examples she explores is *The Book of Margery Kempe*, the fourteenth-century autobiography from a middle-class woman that is now considered the first autobiography written in the English language. The text details the life of Kempe, including her conversion to an evangelical form of Christianity that made her the subject of much abuse as she followed the directives she believed were handed down directly from God. Her truth claims, she reveals, were excessively policed, and often challenged. The highly revelatory nature of the text feels somewhat at odds with the third person voice of narration. This is a result of the fictional narrative device, revealed in the preface, which posits the text as an oral confession to a scribe. As a result, there is both a deep intimacy and a distance from the subject of the text. For instance, the narrator reveals that, "She spoke many sharp and reproving words; she recognized no virtue nor goodness; she desired all wickedness; just as the spirits tempted her to say and do, so she did and said" (42). The narrator is clearly privy to deeply personal motivations, but related in the third-person, the structure of the statement implies an external viewer to the details related in the book.

The unusual structure of the text, Leigh Gilmore suggests, is a result of the double-bind of truth telling for women, which has as much power to punish as to reward, and thus stems from a complex relationship to the authority inherent in the confession (106-107). Such authority, Gilmore notes, paradoxically frustrates the notion of a complete truth because of the structural demands that dictate the form of confession (107). This suggests that authority, for male autobiographers, is an assumed inherent

quality, while for female autobiographers, it is a socially negotiated one. These structures, she argues, are highly gendered, and thus highly problematic for female autobiographers. This is perhaps why Kempe suggests that her story was an oral confession to a learned male scribe, a structure that upholds both cultural and aesthetic norms as literary scholar Lyn Staley argues (2000). As a result of these strictures, Staley calls for a reevaluation of the text that acknowledges both the truth claims and the deception, in order to understand it not simply as autobiography, but as "the work of a self-conscious author…who employed a character called Margery for as many and as varied purposes as Chaucer used Geoffrey throughout his poetry" (15). By claiming the text as both fiction and fact, Staley suggests that it has a more radical and important potential as a social text, rather than an autobiographical one.

Through her reinvention of the genre of confession and female sacred biography, Kempe draws on readers' familiarity with both conventions in order to gain legibility for her truth claims. This constant remapping of genre within women's autobiography is so important, Gilmore suggests, because "the law of genre stakes its claim through a rhetoric of purity and contamination" (1994, 33). By contaminating the autobiographical genre not just with other formal qualities, but also with an implied sociality, authors like Kempe challenge not just the formal strictures of the genre, but the rhetorical violence upon which claims to truth and identity are upheld through recourse to the authority of such forms (45). Through its genre disruptions, then, feminist autobiography challenges both the authority of the idealized subject, and the rhetoric by which such fables are maintained. From this destabilized position, Gilmore asks us to focus on "not what

autobiography is, but what it does," moving us toward a more relational definition of self representation, but also one more directly concerned with the ethos of such expressions (39). Gilmore points out that autobiographical discourse is best understood as a social action rather than a stable text, and feminist rhetorical scholar Judith Butler extends such a reading through an exploration of the stakes of self accounting. There is a tension in such discourse, Butler suggests, between the affective sense of exposure required to establish the singularity of the subject, and the norms dictating the structure of address (2005, 39). The fundamental problem with this dynamic is that while an all-encompassing narrative is demanded, subjects don't have access to the full conditions of their own emergence, and as a result, "I am always recuperating, reconstructing, and I am left to fictionalize and fabulate origins I cannot know. In the making of the story, I create myself in new form" (39). Butler posits a second self that emerges in self accounting, one that has the authority of totalizing information to which the actual author is not privileged. Similarly, in her work on fake autobiography, literary scholar Susanna Egan ascribes an important agency to this fictional second self: "for honest broker and impostor alike, even if the life is not the origin for the text, the text is the origin for some kind of life" (2011, 14). Read within this framework, Kempe's fictional scribe can be read as both a narrative device allowing Kempe to adhere to generic and cultural norms, and the site of authority by which Kempe recuperates the conditions of her own subjective and spiritual emergence.

In some ways Kempe's fictional scribe prefigures a key characteristic of diaristic discourse; the diary becomes partially personified as an Other to which the author

confesses all. As one of the most famous of all diary writers, Anne Frank begins her text: "I hope I will be able to confide everything to you, as I have never been able to confide in anyone, and I hope you will be a great source of comfort and support" (1942, 2). Because the diary becomes, in part, a second self to whom the author confides fully and completely, the notion of editing the diary disrupts both the site of writing and its later circulation as a text. Frank went so far as to name her diary Kitty, referring to her directly throughout the text. But Anne was also a budding writer, as Philippe Lejeune agues, and understood the significance of plot and character, knowledge that led her to continuously revise her diary while still in hiding. Thus the original diary drafts are not addressed to anyone, while her subsequent revisions begin on the first page by addressing herself to Kitty, who functions almost like a character in Anne's autobiographical story. Anne's extensive editing of her diary, Lejeune illustrates, led both to the very quality that has gripped readers for sixty-five years now, but it has also led to suspicions about the diary's authenticity. "The quite astonishing adult savvy that she brings to the task [of editing]" Lejeune notes, "is one of the reasons for the suspicion that surrounded the book" (247). The authenticity of the text was almost immediately challenged after its publication in 1950, and subsequent publications have revealed to a greater extent, the amount of editing that Anne herself completed, as well as the necessary edits her father, Otto Frank, made prior to the original publication.

One of the reasons for Anne's extensive editing, Lejeune makes clear is her growing awareness that the diary might eventually have a circulation outside of herself. Tracing the rewriting that Anne undertook in 1944, months before her arrest, Lejeune

notes that this version of the diary is "now conceived in relation to a reader" (247). Key to this revision is the invention of Kitty as addressee, and a method of colportage that Lejeune understands as crucial to "representing the speaker" (247). Anne began pasting autobiographical photographs and external documents in the diary as she revised, realizing that in her attempt to depict herself, these kinds of external documents served to underscore both her identity and her authenticity. At the same time, Anne began reworking key scenes that had been captured minutely in earlier drafts in order to present a more sanitized and acceptable version to the public that might eventually read the diary. As a result, Lejeune significantly claims Anne as a writer first, and reads the diary as "part work of art and part document," a negotiation that doesn't undermine her claims to authorship or authority, but that allow the diary to speak more effectively to the larger social conditions of its production, primarily the persecution of Jews during WWII and the scale of psychic damage wrought by the holocaust (237).

And it precisely this larger cultural and historical context which motivates both Anne's writing and her editing, because she anticipates that her writing will be consumed by a larger audience, and that there are structural demands on such consumption. Her understanding stems from a clear precedent in the nineteenth-century, the publication and popularity of the adolescent diary of Marie Bashkirtseff in 1884. Marie was the daughter of wealthy Russian émigrés living in the South of France, and she crafted her diary with the notion that "there is no photograph as yet of a woman's existence, of all her thoughts" (4). The use of the metaphor of photography is striking, and Marie's dairy was her attempt to capture such a picture through her unique method of framing. From the outset,

Marie believed that her writing would be published to great acclaim, and it was this eventual reception that inspired her narrative. Despite its widespread acclaim of authenticity, Marie herself repeatedly points to her blurring of the line between fact and fiction, echoing Bree's same diegetic gestures in lonelygirl15. "I wrote for a long time without dreaming of being read," Marie writes, "And now it is just because I hope that I will be read that I am absolutely sincere. If this book is not the exact truth, it has no reason to be" (12). Marie juxtaposes claims to absolute sincerity and denials of the necessity of exact truth. In anticipating an audience, like Anne, Marie characterizes the text as a book rather than a diary, and intimates that it is the thought of public circulation that drives her to disclosure and the blurring of fact. Like Anne she understands that her diary will circulate as both a social text and an autobiographical one, and is thus required to adhere to two different structural requirements. Unlike Anne, however, Marie embeds such tensions within her narrative, embracing the possibilities they offer her completely without apology.

Historical Context of Media Production in Girls Culture

Part of what drove the narrative of the narrative of the hoax of lonelygirl15, as the history of published girls' diaries demonstrates, is the intense scrutiny and surveillance of adolescent media production. As media scholar danah boyd has pointed out, teenagers' concentrated use of social media emerged in response to the increased policing of public social spaces available to teenagers, spaces used to negotiate identity through sociality (2014, 5). Social media provides a discursive site of negotiation that replaces these

physical locations, much like the diary represents a site of individual subjective negotiation. But social media sites are now, as boyd's work asserts, increasingly under surveillance and regulation, leading to yet another turn in discursive networks: the anonymous social network defined by space rather than personal connection. Yik Yak is the most popular of these new networks, and its use of the intersection of space, autobiographical discourse, and social networking suggests that these dynamics are never fully resolved, but continue to change shape (Smith, 2015).

I digress briefly into the future to gesture toward the ways that space, media production, and adolescent culture and deeply intertwined in the present. And as cultural studies scholars have demonstrated, this combination is nothing new. Starting in the last third of the twentieth century, cultural studies scholars such as Stuart Hall and Dick Hebidge increasingly turned their attention to adolescent subcultures as a site of important discursive production.[29] This field grew out of the Birmingham school's interest in sub-cultures in the 1970's, particularly post-war male adolescent subcultures that led to rise of the punk movement. What scholars such as Hall and Hebidge posit is that adolescence is not only a unique state of subjective development, but one marked by intense forms of community that arise from a shared sense of alienation from mainstream cultures and generational connections forged through media forms such as music and film. One of their central premises is that media consumption and production are central to the process of adolescent subjective emergence.

[29] A key example of their work is the 1979 text *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain*.

Working within the Birmingham school at the same time, feminist scholars such as Angela McRobbie took as their particular focus adolescent female subcultures, critiquing the gendered assumptions of Hall and Hebidge. Girls in post-war British culture had more restricted movement than boys, McRobbie argues, and as a result were expected to identify more strongly with occupations within the home (1978). This structure didn't prohibit a similarly strong interest in music and film, but such attachments were routed through heteronormative consumption in alignment with the lifestyle models available to them because of their restricted access to space. The result was the development of the "bedroom culture" of adolescent girls; a space of freedom within the home where girls were able to indulge in modes of media consumption and production that often took the form of intense fan cultures.

But as more recent scholarship has pointed out, girls' bedroom culture didn't necessarily limit girls to media consumption, it also provided a space of freedom to engage in forms of media production in the form of fan zines, scrapbooking, diary writing, and, later, video production. In her book-length history of girls media production, media scholar Mary Celeste Kearney charts the development of girls culture in the late nineteenth century that took on the form of proactive feminist expression from in the late twentieth century. Of particular importance in her historical genealogy is the link between the subjective emergence of girls through media production, such as diaries and letters, and the *social* function of such productions. Just as Foucault argues that epistolary male relationships in classical society formed the foundation of the legibly ethical identity in the form of disciplinary technologies of the self, Kearny suggests that

diary and letter writing served a similar function for girls. Kearney's argument extends and specifies Foucault's theory of self writing, posited as a discourse between an almost ideal other who served as a mentor and responded to the private letters of young males with wisdom and advice during the Hellenistic period (1982). "A relation developed between writing and vigilance," Foucault argues, "the experience of self was intensified and widened by virtue of this act of writing. A whole field of experience opened which earlier was absent" (232-233). While Foucault's work has been hailed as foundational for the field of autobiographical discourse, feminist scholars have critiqued his limited focus on masculine relationships, while working to extend the usefulness of his theoretical framing.

One key difference that Kearney explores is that while young males in Foucault's analysis assumed the privacy of their correspondence, for girls, the letter and diary were always social documents to be read aloud by family members and friends. As such, these documents were less concerned with ethical challenges than they were with an accurate accounting of people, places, and events. Diary writing, Kearney explains, became a kind of affective labor that served as "a primary means for not only filling daughters' time, but also teaching them the habits of organization and regularity. Therefore, girls were instructed to use their diaries to document, in correct chronological order, the events of their day, such as the weather, school activities, and social visits" (32). Here, self accounting is a kind of mechanical labor that parents used to occupy their daughters' idle time and teach rote habits of recording. In the nineteenth century, then, diaries were not

spaces of self-expression and exploration, but of precise documentation, perhaps due in part, to their function as character-building devices.

Kearney points out that by the twentieth century diary writing began to take on a more personal and expressive tone as it became increasingly private while letter writing, paradoxically, expanded to a wider network beyond the family. The result was an interesting shift where girls' expression became both more private, and more public. As it transitioned from a disciplinary tool to one of individual expression, writing became more intimate at the same time that it was circulated much more widely. As a technology of the self, then, letter and diary writing operated differently for young men and women because of different patterns of circulation, but also because of the gender norms dictating the disciplinary function of such self-accounting. Foucault suggests that young men were encouraged to circulate in the public sphere as a way to develop their ethical being, whereas women's writing circulated in the public sphere as the symbol of their ethical development ("Self-Writing," 219). While their actual bodies were hidden away in their bedrooms, even well into the mid-twentieth century, their writing became more and more vital as their circulating social presence. This suggests that the interlocutionary function of the public sphere operated quite differently in the ethical development of young men and women. Whereas young men used the social sphere as a test performance of their ethical development, their letter writing was an intimate space of interlocution for that practice, as Foucault anlayzes in "Self Writing." For young women, however, letter and diary writing was to perform the faithful record of the ethical life *already* lived. So while young men's self writing presumed a future state of editing, young women's self

writing suffered the double-bind of amateurism—that is the strictures of the account of the ethical life so accurately recorded that editing destroys its integrity, and thus the authenticity of an ethical self. As feminist scholars point out, basing concepts of adolescent development on unexamined assumptions about the access to and disciplinary function of space, led to a highly masculinized notion of adolescence and subjective development. By recovering the spaces and practices of adolescent females, recent scholars have articulated more specific sites of difference in the process of emergence, a consideration that is particularly important given the different histories and functions of self writing within these two processes.

What Kearney also makes clear, and previous sections have outlined, is the long history of encouraging girls to document their life in diaristic form. But this documentation also took, and continues to take a visual form as well. Kearney points out that the early Kodak Brownie cameras were advertised as ideal for children because of their portability and affordability. She charts how "photography became one of the primary means by which girls of this period documented their lives and expressed themselves creatively" (28). While widening the public sphere for girls' media production, Kearney makes clear that the bedroom remained the primary site of media production for girls well into the late twentieth century as photography gave way to video.

The video diary genre, along with its complication of the strictures and potentialities of girls self-writing, is perhaps best exemplified by the video work of Sadie Benning. The fifteen year-old Benning began making autobiographical videos in 1989

after she received a Pixelvision video camera as a Christmas present from her father. The Pixelvision was an inexpensive home video camcorder made for children and sold by Fisher Price in the late 1980's. Benning was an isolated only child who was wrestling with her emerging lesbian identity. Through a series of amateur videos titled "If Every Girl Had a Diary," Benning recorded and edited short diaristic video entries that narrated her inner world. Benning embraced an amateur, DIY aesthetic that contrasted with the technical sophistication of the videos manifested in the editing. Many of the short black and white videos feature Benning's homemade collaged images, cutout drawings and masks, and even images of her handwritten diary, invoking the textual materiality of earlier twentieth-century bedroom culture media production. Like lonelygirl15, most of Benning's videos are shot in her bedroom and utilize a direct engagement with an imagined audience/viewer. Also like the character Bree, Benning narrates her feelings of isolation and dissatisfaction with her parents. Benning's videos likewise show a sophisticated grasp of editing and framing, despite their overtly amateur aesthetic.

In spite of these similarities, the critical reception of lonelygirl15 and Benning's video work couldn't be further apart. Benning has received widespread critical acclaim; her work has been shown at MoMA and the Whitney, and is largely read by critics as a significant aestheticization of queer adolescent angst. Film scholar Christie Milliken suggests that "Benning's autobiographical narratives, and her angular and frequently off-center compositions visually suggest that the child/lesbian image maker's point of view is one that is inherently skewed by her socially inscribed marginal position," granting

Benning an insightful and representative cultural position that celebrates the aesthetic tension between amateurism and sophistication inherent in her work (2002, 748).

Despite Benning's ascendance to the artistic elite, her authenticity was also attacked when the tension between amateurism and virtuosity in her videos was undermined by gender and age dynamics. Writing in response to the lonelygirl15 scandal, Jenkins connects the series to Benning's work, explaining: "I was reminding by [sic] the autobiographical pixelvision films produced by teenage filmmaker Sadie Benning which became a *cause celebre* in the art world in the 1990s…and which produced grainy and very authentic feeling images" (2006). Jenkins suggests that the affect of authenticity that Benning achieved was primarily the result of the amateur, or "grainy" appearance of the videos. In his assessment, the works are celebrated precisely because this amateur aesthetic correlates with a high degree of authenticity. But Jenkins throws this achievement into doubt when Benning's amateur status, and thus her authenticity, was challenged: "In this case, the 'authentic' teen girl turned out to be the daughter of an established avant-garde artist who used his connections to the art world to help launch her career" (2006). Like a real life lonelygirl15, Benning expertly navigated the network of media production and circulation, displaying a virtuosic market savvy that Jenkins reads as undermining the authenticity of her videos. Jenkins's implicit critique is that because viewers and the art world positioned Benning as a naïve young girl, any challenge to that position, say through the expert mobilization of such assumptions, automatically undermines any authentic affect the videos produced. Like the fans who 'outed' Bree, Jenkins 'outs' Benning in his critique of lonelygirl15 by suggesting that we are supposed

to read Benning and Rose as frauds because they expertly manage the emotional assumptions of their viewers, thus transposing the gendered assumptions of immaterial labor and duping their audiences.

Like the textual diarists before her, Benning uses the rhetorical construct of the diary to make claims to authenticity. But also like previous diarists, Benning understands the structural and technical demands of her chosen medium, and anticipates an audience outside of herself, shaping the final product of her video diaries. But as the term 'outing' implies, there is also an implicit sexual component to girls' bedroom culture. And as any search on YouTube makes clear, the bedroom remains the primary site of video production today whether it be to stage a dance video, a tutorial, or a confessional or diaristic vlog. This applies to even overtly fictional vlogs such as Pemberley Digital's *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, a vlog series based on the fictional life of Lizzie Bennet, the protagonist of Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*. The series takes the form of a



Fig. 11. Still from Episode 1 of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. Pemberley Digital, YouTube

girls' video diary, and retells the story of Lizzie and Darcy's romance as set in the twenty-first century. The series went on to win a Primetime Emmy in 2013, the first YouTube series to do so (Pemberley Digital). *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* clearly relies on the putatively nonfictional norms of social media, and uses the aesthetic standards of girls' media production, wisely choosing as its setting the bedroom of 24-year old graduate student and heroine, Lizzie Bennet to evoke these shared standards.

As the successful series demonstrates, although the bedroom remains the primary site of production for girls' vlogs, the wide circulation of these videos blurs the easy distinction between the public and private spheres for girls as media scholar Amy Shields Dobson has argued (2008). The easy public circulation afforded by social video sites such as YouTube seem, on the surface, to be at odds with the history of girls culture as private and invisible; as Benning's videos demonstrate, however, visual media circulates widely and in different contexts than textual diaries, even while the site of their production remains private and intimate. This results in an uneasy tension between intimacy and publicness in girls' media production; the assumed vulnerability of the girl's body is transposed to the media representation of that body. A systemic adoption of such assumptions has resulted in three cam-girl archetypes, as Dobson has coined them, that respond to this tension: Cam Girls, Cam Whores, and Cam Artists, pointing to the ways in which traditional, limiting notions of gender whereby feminine identity resides in the polar sexual extremes of girlhood and whoredom, with the asexual figure of productivity, a la the artist, residing in the middle (128-134). What Dobson suggests is that girlhood becomes a media performance whereby girls can adopt and try on different personas from

within the confines of their bedrooms. Dobson is not suggesting that CamGirls are naïfs, whores, or artists solely, but that both adolescence and media practice allow girls to perform these roles in order to gauge their public reception in their own process of subjective emergence. In this way, the bedroom becomes a crucial proving ground not of the girl herself, but of her ability to perform a mediated and legible, and thus consumable, form of girlhood.

Revealing and Consuming the Young-Girl

Dobson's formulation indicates that the process by which girls test their social and cultural reception is similar to the process of branding, as Sarah Banet-Weiser has argued of girls' performance on YouTube (2011). In recognition of lonelygirl15 as a successful brand, then, I categorize Bree as a young girl, despite the actual age of the actress Jessica Rose. Within this context, Rose's performance is not only a significant example of neoliberal virtuosity, but an important instance of embodiment of the figure of the Young-Girl. In their analysis of the social structures of late-capitalism, Tiqqun—the name chosen to represent a collective of French scholars—argues that the Young-Girl is an emblematic figure of late-capitalism, representing "the *model citizen* as redefined by consumer society since World War I," (original emphasis 2007, 15). Through a materialist reading of neoliberal society, Tiqqun suggests that the threat of revolution is forestalled by incorporating the citizens most displaced by capitalism—women, adolescents, and queers—by privileging their consumption as a form of liberation. The process raises the status of such figures and works to fully integrate them into capitalism

in the process. Tiqqun reinforces the turn to the study of adolescence turn within cultural theory, and suggests that Young-Girlhood is a spectacle of capitalist desire that reifies such desire as both eroticized and empty because of its inability to be fulfilled.[30] The result is that all erotic attachments become rerouted through such figures, which assures the delay of satisfaction in order to allay it through consumption. The danger of this process is that such consumption is substituted for individualization, further alienating all social relations through such empty figures. Young-Girlhood, Tiqqun argues, is a performative subject position, rather than an inherent identity, and can thus be occupied by anyone, regardless of age or gender. Although Tiqqun's work appeared before the rise of social media, their theorization of the routing of social relationships through economically elevated cultural figures seems particularly prescient and relevant to the discussion at hand.

Bree narratively foregrounds her vulnerability to various outside groups who want to consume her in various ways, but are repeatedly deterred. By repeatedly engaging the topic, and contextualizing it within the domestic space through scenes of baking, cooking, and eating, Bree suggests that just as she is vulnerable to consumption by others, she is also a consumer herself. This position provides her with an understanding of how to masterfully route such eroticized desires through discursive channels that work to firmly establish her brand. One of the more compelling engagements with this dynamic was Bree's own fascination with the practices of consumption. Several episodes focused

[30] The turn to adolescence within cultural and media studies is signified by Dick Hebidge's *Subculture: The Meaning of Style,* a study of adolescent subcultures published in 1979. More recent work focused on adolescent media practice includes Mary Celeste Kearney's 2011 *Mediated Girlhoods: New Explorations of Girls' Media Culture*, and danah boyd's 2014 *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*.

on the preparation and eating of food, and there is an unusual cannibalistic subtext to many of Bree's anecdotes. In "School Work in Summer…BLECHH!!" Bree mentions that the Romans were noted for their cannibalistic practices. Similarly, in the August 29th "Swimming!" episode, Bree jokingly states in the filmed car ride to the river that maybe Daniel is "taking me into the middle of the woods to hack me into a million little pieces and eat me." And, in the most viewed episode of the series, "My First Kiss," Bree's research on kissing reveals that the act of turning one's head to the right in the moment preceding a kiss is known as "going in for the kill." These seemingly minor moments contribute to the larger narrative arc that leads to the eventual consumption of Bree's blood by The Order for its "trait positive," or genetically desirable, qualities. This focus on the simultaneous desire for and danger posed by the threat of consumption is one of the most overt ways that the series aestheticized the precarious conditions of Bree's mediated life.

Strikingly, this same sense of danger and vulnerability also permeated the press coverage of the hoax that revealed Bree's 'real' identity. Such coverage offered a paratextual mode of consumption of the lonelygirl15 brand through its near salacious description of the process of revealing the identity of actress Jessica Rose. The *LA Times* hailed the technical skill of the fans who, "Driven by hours of conjecturing and late-night instant-messaging analysis, three amateur sleuths who met on the discussion boards on lonelygirl15.com hatched a plan in August to lure lonelygirl15 to MySpace profiles they had created for the purpose…." (2006). The sting is characterized as highly predatory, going so far as to describe the fans "luring" Bree away from a site of comfort to one of

danger, a term that echoes the language used to describe online sexual predatory practices. Change the players in this story to an underage girl and an adult male and the entire valences shift, suggesting that the celebration of such abilities is a celebration of our own maintenance of particular hierarchies of vulnerability that serve a disciplinary social function. Such a threat also echoes Bree's joking suggestion in the episode that aired on the same day that Daniel was luring her to the woods to chop her up and eat her. Both narratives allow for a dissection of Bree that makes her more available for consumption. Similar to the way that The Order wants to drain Bree of her "trait positive" blood, it seems that Bree becomes more available for consumption through the deconstruction of her performative or affective integrity.

But as the *LA Times*' laudatory coverage of the incident suggests, some audiences refused to be duped. The article describes how "the team was able to see that seconds before lonelygirl15 had sent the note, someone had looked at Seth's profile. This visit was the only one the profile had received in 17 hours, suggesting that whoever was at the controls of the lonelygirl15 account on MySpace looked at Seth's page before sending the message" (2006). The fact that Bree researched the profile of a person privately messaging her seems to suggest a level of professionalism, rather than personal protection, that is suspect. The fans used this common move to triangulate the viewer's IP address and thus pinpoint the location of the server at Creative Artist's Agency (CAA), a top Hollywood talent agency in Beverly Hills. This predatory move is described as a kind of technical triumph for the suspicious fans, rather than a shared vulnerability that is unduly ascribed to women performing online. This cyberstalking is significant within the

context of the series as well because Bree repeatedly fears and experiences stalking. In the very first episode, Bree mentions that she won't say where she lives because "you might stalk me," and in later episodes Bree publicly shames Daniel for following her, suggesting that she constantly endures a shadowy and slightly menacing presence in her life.

This recurring trope also underscores that Bree's vulnerability was an essential component of her brandedness, and the sting paradoxically worked to reify this carefully crafted narrative. The production collective played to this desire within the series, but that desire also exceeded the frame of the screen, and contributed to the development of paratextual forms of revelation that allowed for increased access to Bree/Rose. Lonelygirl15 saw a significant spike in viewers after news coverage like the *LA Times* article, and Rose's image was splashed across the pages of the *New York Times*, *The Guardian*, and *BusinessWeek* in 2006. Taken together, the narrative of the series, and the later narrative *about* the series cement Bree's unique brand. The scandal has become an essential element of the cultural significance of the show, and the sole reason why the series has garnered the critical attention that it has. While the dominant narrative, as demonstrated by the *LA Times* article, is that the lonelygirl15 hoax calls into question the authenticity of social media connection, such a narrative only focuses on one part of its larger significance. As the show demonstrated, lonelygirl15 was a brand by which a Young-Girl "authorizes herself to be consumed through her own self-production" as Banet-Weiser argues (2011, 283). This process relies on both the desire for consumption and the intensification and multiplication of that desire. In effect, the series worked to

create the conditions of its own total consumption, and rather than undermining that feedback loop, the revelation of the hoax presented the lonelygirl15 brand to an increasingly broad audience.

The Economics of Swarming Collectivity

Although the precarity of the labor of performance is concentrated within certain identities, as the rise of the figure and brand of the Young-Girl demonstrates, the widespread engagement with the lonelygirl15 hoax suggests that this precarity is part of the collective experience of the social media community, offering one explanation for the tone of the *LA Times* coverage. The series gestures toward this, as well, in another framing of the process and power of consumption. In the July 7th episode, "Daniel Returns, and More Interesting Factoids (Yay!)," Bree introduces one of her intellectual idols, the American physicist Richard Feynman. She tells her audience that in one of her favorite books, *Surely You're Joking Mr. Feynman*, we learn that the scientist never simply researched the answers to the questions he was interested in; he conducted experiments to discover the answer himself because, "he believed it was better to figure something out for yourself." When Feynman wanted to learn how ants found food, he devised an experiment that placed ants in a large room with piles of sugar at various locations. What he learned, as Bree reports, is that "ants, individually, are really, really stupid. But when they work together, they can do amazing things" (2006).

One week after the scandal broke, on September 8th, 2006, the lonelygirl15 collective posted a statement on their website that suggested a kind of radical reimagining

of social media performance, "With your help we believe we are witnessing the birth of a new art form" the statement begins. "Our intention from the outset has been to tell a story– A story that could only be told using the medium of video blogs and the distribution power of the Internet. A story that is interactive and constantly evolving with the audience" (2006). The opening claim moves away from the question of individual authenticity and toward the idea of artistic authenticity through the genesis of a "new art form." Like Feynman's ants, the group suggests that their work is only possible within the context of the YouTube and fan communities, who are smarter and better as a consuming collective. The group also signals their savvy understanding of the relationship between their chosen medium and the narrative possibilities it enables. But in their analysis of the series, media scholars have largely overlooked how the series understood its relationship to the YouTube community. The dominant critical narrative positions Rose and the collective as naïfs, and the fan community and sleuthing group as technically savvy guardians of social media standards. In his critique of the project, Henry Jenkins acknowledges the transformative potential of the series, but suggests that the creators erred in not making the genre clear to the viewer. The interactive medium of social video calls the audience to action, but the norms of genre provide a clear directive as to what kind of action is appropriate. As a result, Jenkins suggests, the community was forced into a policing mode whereby identifying the "reality" behind the series became the only legible form of engagement. Jenkins champions such action as upholding the "common cause facilitated by the shared communication context provided by the web" (2006). Jenkins here implies that when the genre of productions is not clear to audiences,

producers enact a betrayal of community norms. But as Mark Andrejevic points out of the policing of reality television, "the appeal of the real is lined up alongside that of the resuscitation of the community, as well as of the critique of the abstraction of artifice," suggesting that Jenkins rehearses a familiar argument for a new medium (2004, 87). Such a reading also echoes Virno's theorization of virtuosity in some ways, but Jenkins foregrounds the fans who executed the sting, celebrating their actions as a form of political power that determined not only the cultural value of the series, but also important social paradigms for the social media platform.

One problem with this model is that Jenkins doesn't include the non-sleuthing fans in his formulation, or consider how the show facilitated multiple forms of paratextual engagement. Such a reading effaces the real and realistically gendered labor of both the fans and the producers in developing the community that gave the detection of the sting its cultural significance. In other words, the sting was covered so widely in the press because the show already had an impressively large and engaged fan base. The lonelygirl15 collective was savvy enough to realize that they needed to develop a nurturing fan community through the interactivity the show invited. Amanda Godfried, wife of the lawyer hired to represent the producers, was quickly put to work corresponding with fans, at one point responding to nearly 500 emails a day, even *after* the hoax was revealed (Davis 2006). This engaged fan community went so far as to create and maintain a lonelygirl15 website once one of the original producers dropped out of the collective and shuttered the original site. This community, however, has been largely ignored in the press coverage of the hoax, as has the real affective labor of Rose and

Godfried in sustaining that community. The authentic *connection* these fans experienced seems to have outweighed the sense of technical betrayal that others were suggesting resulted from her inauthentic girlhood *identity*. In other words, the series successfully routed authenticity through the development of an ongoing, engaged community that was as vital to the success of the lonelygirl15 brand as Bree herself.

One of the ways that the artists' statement signals the significance of this authentic community is by opening up Bree's identity to a collective position: "Right now, the biggest mystery of Lonelygirl15 is 'who is she?' We think this is an oversimplification. Lonelygirl15 is a reflection of everyone, she is no more real or fictitious than the portions of our personalities that we choose to show (or hide) when we interact with the people around us…" (2006). In much the same way that Tiqqun argues that anyone, regardless of age or gender, can inhabit the role of the Young-Girl and her specific subjective relationship to capital, the artist's collective opens up Bree's identity beyond reality, and instead suggests that she is a paradigmatic figure within social media. The statement bypasses the question of authenticity as a signifier of identity by distributing that identity amongst the networked social sphere. By shifting her identity depending on whom she is interacting with, the identity of lonelygirl15, like all subjects in networked sociality, is contingent and endlessly flexible. Highlighting her distributed identity is one of the ways that the artists' collective signals that the vulnerability and consumption to which Bree was subject is a condition shared by all social media users. In its invocation of the collective precarity of lonelygirl15, the artists' statement gestures

toward the entanglement of identity, performance, and labor within the social media culture economy.

The statement goes on to point out that consumption is a collective activity—echoing the parable of Feynman's ants—and should be rewarded within the new economy ushered in by Web 2.0. This move aligns the brand with the common cause of the viewers: "We want you to know that we aren't a big corporation. We are just like you. A few people who love good stories. We hope that you will join us in the continuing story of Lonelygirl15, and help us usher in an era of interactive storytelling where the line between "fan" and "star" has been removed, and dedicated fans like yourselves are paid for their efforts (2006). Despite their IP address at Creative Artist's Agency, the collective is careful to identify themselves as authentic amateurs rather than professional producers and performers. The statement further blurs the line between producer and audience in order to mine the division between amateurism and professionalism. The larger implication is that the series represents a radically open art form that recognizes the labor of networked performance as the work of community building, which involves both fans and producers. This is significant because it anticipates YouTube's implementation of remunerative models for popular amateur productions. YouTube instituted this structure in 2007, after other online video sites, and after it introduced ads on the site. But these payments are notoriously low and work to the benefit of only a small fraction of

producers.[31] Here, "being everyone," means the feminization of labor in the digital vernacular of social media.

YouTube has also since made moves to begin producing content, but was and remains primarily a content aggregator, providing hosting and distribution services for content producers at no charge (Burgess and Green 2009, 14). YouTube is able to discursively promote collective intellectual and creative labor while supporting such aims through forms of ownership that often get obscured by their own discourse of content democratization. The consumption of successful amateur brands, such as lonelygirl15, is a simultaneous consumption of the YouTube brand. And just as Bree is vulnerable to forces outside of her control, the artists' statement reveals the larger precarity of the feminized labor of amateur performance in the social media culture industry. Bree's example, like the artists' statement, focuses our attention of the collective power of ants to find the piles of sugar in Feynman's experiment, without recognizing that the conditions for reward are artificially constructed and determined by factors beyond their control. Although the artists' statement suggests that fans and producers can collaboratively determine the conditions of social media labor, the discourse surrounding the authenticity of the series indicates how such gendered controversies serve as a flashpoint to either highlight or obscure the larger conditions of distributed precarity within the social media culture industry.

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[31] For more about the economics of page views on YouTube, see Edwards, Jim. "Yes, You can make six figures as a YouTube Star…and still end up poor." *Business Insider* 10 February 2014, and Stetler, Brian, "YouTube videos pull in real money." *New York Times*, 10 December 2008.

The lonelygirl15 Vision Machine

In her first "Proving Science Wrong" episode, Bree introduces the "uncertainty principle" from physics. This principle, she tells viewers, "states that no one can truly observe the universe in its present state, because as soon as you look at it, it changes." Within physics, this is often described as the Heisenberg principle, which holds that measureable quantities within an experiment are altered through the act of observation. This principle suggests that scientific precision is impossible because the act of viewing alters, however slightly, the very qualities one was hoping to measure.[32] This theory of surveillance indicates a different model than the one forwarded by Mass Observation. While the Mass Observers—both trained and amateur—aimed for a mode of observation that witnessed without altering the observed behavior, much of the paratextual engagement with the project implies the reverse is true. Both the boardwalk chalk drawing and the *Everybody* newspaper article indicate that observation alters behavior, often in the form of alternative, reflexive, and imagistic self-authoring, just as the chalk drawing ironically stating "This is Your Photo," in response to Humphrey Spender's lurking mode of photography illustrates suggest.

Gradually widening the perception of precarity and consumption surrounding the lonelygirl15 hoax, as the shared aesthetic engagement with Mass Observation and realist

[32] For a full discussion of the Heisenberg principle within physics see Masanao Ozawa's "Position Measuring Interactions and the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle" in *Physics Letters A* 299.1 (2002) 1-7.

fiction calls us to do, allows us to attend to the stakes of such an analysis, stakes that have been missed by many media scholars. But this is precisely why it is important to look again, to refocus our attention on seemingly specific instances of social media precarity in order to begin to articulate the deep entanglement of identity, performance, and labor as structured by social media in the neoliberal economy. In its branding of the consumption inherent in surveillance, lonelygirl15 invites a prolonged gaze into the spectacle of social media, but its aestheticization of the resulting precarity also demands a reflexivity about the means of production by which such surveillance is possible.

In a similar vein, Tiqqun argues, "Retaking the offensive for our side is a matter of making the battlefield manifest. The figure of the Young-Girl is a *vision machine* conceived to this effect." Read as a Young-Girl, lonelygirl15 has the potential to change our perception of the field of social media studies and precarity theory, a call that performance studies scholars have already issued. Tavia Nyong'o, for instance, suggests that we now consider issues of race, gender, class, and sexuality as bearing an undue share of precarious labor. Nyong'o asserts, "If 'precarious life' is to offer a means towards new solidarities based on shared vulnerabilities, then those who proceed under its sign must remain scrupulously attentive to the constitutive and uneven distribution of that vulnerability" (2013, 158). Through the analysis of sites of heightened vulnerability and precarity, Nyong'o suggests, only then is it possible to trace out the larger and more widely experienced effects of precarity within everyday life. Like Tiqqun, Nyong'o's argument points to how an understanding of the larger systemic effects of precarity must begin with a close reading of individual experiences of heightened precarity, because

such cases illuminate the social and material conditions that make such experiences possible.

The result of this refocus is two-fold. At a first glance, it calls our attention to the very concrete ways in which identity has become the primary commodity of the social media culture industry. In the final episode of what turned out to the first season of lonelygirl15, Bree dies when she is sacrificed in an occult ritual designed to drain all of the "trait positive" blood from her body. Her virtuosic performance of amateurism left Rose, however, with a different legacy. She was named YouTube's first certified "star" by Wired magazine in 2006, and went on to land a role in the TV series *Greek*. It seems her "trait positive" performance raised the profile of both the vlog as a genre and YouTube as a medium. The series increased its viewership after the hoax was revealed, and turned LG15, the name the collective adopted after the hoax, into a multi-million dollar company with integrated placement deals and a spinoff series, *KateModern*, in the UK (Wei 2010). Despite the attacks on Bree's authenticity, or perhaps precisely because of them, the Young-Girl vlog has become a definitive cultural brand. Contemporary vloggers such as Bethany Mota and Jenna Marbles take up the position of the Young-Girl as both performative and authentic, just as Pemberley Digital mobilizes these affects for their fictional vloggers like Lizzie Bennet. These vlogs utilize the same amateur aesthetic to create personas that exceed the definition of reality and fiction, and blend the two in the performance of a highly consumable personal brand.

Widening the field of our focus, we further begin to see how an engagement with such figures calls our attention to the widespread precarity engendered by the

entanglement of the culture industry and the expression of subjective emergence. Too often this connection is elided because the space of social media is largely read as dominated by adolescents, and thus frivolous and subject to different power dynamics. But as Tiqqun makes clear, such figures represent the new vanguard of political action; dismissing them risks missing significant dynamics of power and capital within neoliberal culture as it manifests as the very affective condition of everyday life. In his reading of Tiqqun's figure of the Young Girl, Mackenzie Wark traces how "It is not the factory that was extended across the social domain, but the boudoir," a transition manifested by the importance of bedroom culture to networked self accounting, and emblematized by the figure of the Young Girl, and it is through her that "this modification in the world of images is managed and felt" (2013, 198-199). At the same time, Mark Andrejevic argues, "the consolidation of reality as a form of entertainment—and the complementary development of entertainment based on reality—coincides with the emergence of webcam sites," recalling both the extension of the realist genre, and the significance of girls' bedroom culture made social by way of the specific affordances of visual media. And the discourse of this new space marking the convergence of self and social, and reality and entertainment, is self accounting. From the girls' diary to the webcam, the discourse of affective labor in this new site of production is self accounting. As Andrejevic notes of contemporary 'reality' genres, participation "helps reposition surveillance as the guarantor of individualism and self-expression and thereby as a means of overcoming the homogeneity of mass society," (18). This reveals one of the paradoxes of social self accounting: in its production of self accounting as a consumable spectacle,

the rationalized practices of policing extend beyond the spectacle, to regulate the very "realness" of experience and memory itself.[33] But as the next chapter illustrates, such experiences are often mediated and experienced through the camera, and constructed as a record of memory only through the editing process.

I am thus suggesting that amateurism, as a kind of virtuosic performance of authenticity, is the emblem of immaterial labor within social media. It is the hallmark of all performances, but in particular, the personal brand that the Young-Girl must aspire to. Read within this framework, we can read the lonelygirl15 hoax as a specific gendering of a contemporary "vision machine" that reveals the precarious labor of social media performance through the ongoing process of Bree's observation, detection, and revelation. In its indication of a feminized digital labor of self authoring, the orientation toward purity and experience constitute the terms of gendered authenticity. These terms also go some way to explaining the persistence of "slut-shaming," which Leora Tanenbaum describes as "a multiplicity of ways in which females are called to task for their real, presumed, or imagined sexuality," as a discourse informed by these terms, a tension apparent in some of the lonelygirl15 comments, and in the response to the Amanda Todd video, as I'll explore in Chapter 5 (2015, xv).[34] Through its enactment of authenticity as a brand rather than an individual trait, the series makes visible the

[33] In this formulation of memory I am thinking through the aesthetic manifestations of Bernard Stiegler's formulation whereby "industrial investment in memory is then a taking charge of the mechanisms of retention that, in negotiation with the technical tendency, produce the technical characteristics of new, different identities" (2009, 99-100)

[34] Tanenbaum distinguishes between "slut-shaming" as more casual and indirect behavior, and "slut-bashing" in which a targeted girl is bullied for her sexuality (4). Despite these differences, she notes that "the Internet has made it easer than ever before for any girl or young woman to project and circulate a sexually sophisticated identity that bears no resemblance to her actual sexual experience, which may be nonexistent, and for others to respond by damaging her reputation" (2).

increasing political significance of gendered amateur performances to communicate cultural norms about the entanglement of the economy and identity in networked sociality.

4. "An Art of Repetition and Variation": Self-Authoring as Editing, from the Film Editor's Table to the Database Montage

One of the most well-known film diarists, Jonas Mekas, notes that the process of making a diary film is similar to producing a written diary: "When I am filming, I am also reflecting…I do not have much control over reality at all, and everything is determined by my memory, by my past" (quoted in Frye 2001). Mekas suggests that despite the immediacy of the process of recording his daily life as a film diary, the selection and framing of everyday life is not determined objectively by what he sees, but subjectively by his own relationship to his past. The diary film, he indicates, is an aesthetic expression of memory, rather than of the present, even as it documents and is preoccupied with the present. This is likewise one of the key problematics of the textual diary form; although it is a *practice* of writing and thus grounded in the present, the *subject* of that writing is always in the past, even if that past is only hours ago. As a result, the diaristic form is a practice of engagement with the personal archive, and the diary is always an archival document. It represents what was far more than what is. This is because, as Mekas points out, a filmmaker's understanding of the present is always determined by his past. Recognizing the significance of memory to the diaristic mode, this chapter offers another perspective on the dynamic between surveillance, realism and detection, and the feminization of self-authoring. This chapter deliberately explores the diaristic films of three male directors, to consider how they engage the gendering of affective labor, and the problematic aestheticization of memory as spectacle—sometimes upholding and sometimes challenging Mekas' definition above—by way of the technical practice of editing, extending the gendered dynamic explored in the lonelygirl15 series.

A focus on the technics of editing requires an exploration of the complex temporality inherent in the diary form. For the three filmmakers considered here: Jerome Hill, Jonathan Caouette, and Kevin Macdonald, the diary film is an inherently archival film, and thus the function of the filmmaker is largely editorial. All of the diary films projects is inherently archival in its materiality, but each of the three resulting narratives articulate a different relationship to that archive. The specificity of this relationship manifests in the film aesthetically, based on how the filmmaker understands the archival function of the editor. For Hill, the editor is an "alchemist," and his edits in *Film Portrait* reflects the trace of his involvement in the form of hand-coloring, re-enactment, and reimagined scenes from his family's vast archive of home movies. Jonathan Caouette also relies largely on his family's home movies, but he positions the role of the editor as archivist, and as a result the edits in *Tarnation* serve to both preserve certain images in their historical context while manipulating others to bring their personal truths to the surface. Conversely, Kevin Macdonald doesn't work with a personal archive in *Life in a Day*, but with the archive produced by thousands of others in the form of user-submitted videos to the social video site YouTube. Macdonald's edits are thus curatorial, pulling and juxtaposing archival documents to project not a personal truth, as Hill and Caouette do, but a universal truth based on the shared experiences of humanity on a single day. While all three of these editorial modes is reflected to some degree in the aesthetics of all three films, I consider the dominant aesthetic in each diary film in order to articulate how the diary film negotiates its relationship to the past—to "memory" as Mekas puts it—in order to project a narrative of the self, or selves, that is coherent and culturally legible.

Autobiographical documentary films have garnered an increased amount of scholarly attention in the past thirty years, a change that reflects the increase of autobiographical discourse in both texts—"the memoir boom" of the 1990's is one example—and media forms such as reality television, and social media as we have previously explored.[35] Despite the increase in autobiographical modes of media, the number of scholars working in the field of autobiographical film and video, like the number of scholars working on autobiographical texts, is disproportionately small. This is somewhat odd, given the dramatic increase in the number and complexity of autobiographical documentaries since the 1970's as film scholar Jim Lane demonstrates. Lane suggests that the rise of autobiographical documentaries is the result of a three-fold occurrence in the second half of the twentieth century: the increased portability and synchronous sound technology of direct cinema; a widespread move toward reflexivity pioneered by New Wave auteurs such as François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard; and a transition in revolutionary discourse from collective movements such as the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960's, to a rise in identity politics and selfhood movements such as the Women's Movement in the 1970's (2002, 15-17). Prior to the 1970's, Hill argues, documentaries were primarily "observational," and foregrounded the detached, objective position of both the camera and the director (12). Transitions in cultural discourse and media technology allowed for a deconstruction of the position of the documentary filmmaker that manifested as an explosion in the autobiographical mode in documentary film. This directorial position, as feminist scholars of autobiography and film Susanna

[35] For a full account and analysis of the memoir boom, see Rak, Julie *Boom! Manufacturing Memoir for the American Public*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2013.

Egan and Elizabeth Bruss have argued, "replace[s] the literary autobiographical self with a self that is characterized by an absence of unity and singularity" (1976, 28). The fractured, polyvocal nature of alternative authorial roles opens up autobiographical authority for subjects often excluded by the coherent unity suggested by more traditional modes of autobiographical discourse as literary scholars Leigh Gilmore and Sidonie Smith have explored.[36] At the same time, as the previous chapters have argued, it is important to not romanticize film as providing an inherently subjective multiplicity, just as it is important to problematize any reading of autobiographical discourse as unified and singular, a dynamic that the diaristic mode, in both mediums, brings to the forefront. Both of these considerations are apparent in the avant-garde autobiographical documentaries that became a favored mode for subjects traditionally excluded from more mainstream autobiographical discourse, such as women and subjects of color. The same is also true, however, for filmmakers with a more mainstream subject position who sought to represent a more decentered understanding of subjectivity and autobiographical discourse. What emerges from this wide-spread movement is the rise of deeply intimate autobiographical documentaries, which very often take the form of the diary. For female filmmakers, this is apparent in the video diary work of Lynn Hershman Leeson in the 1970's through the video diary work of Sadie Benning in the 1990's. Male filmmakers have likewise favored the diary form, perhaps most famously in the films *David*

[36] For a full discussion of the destabilization of the universalized white male position of authority within autobiography, see Gilmore, Leigh. *Autobiographics*, as well as Smith, Sidonie and Julia Watson's *Reading Autobiography*.

Holzman's Diary in 1967, and in Jonas Mekas' large oeuvre of diary films that stretch from the 1970's to the present.

But the diary film is more nuanced than the term might imply. Because this genre is the focus of this chapter, it is also important to note here that I will be exploring diary films, rather than the film diary, a key distinction. The film diary typically refers to documentary record of the making of a film, such as *Hearts of Darkness*, Fax Bahr's 1991 documentary about the making of Francis Ford Coppola's 1979 classic film, *Apocalypse Now*. Alternatively, the diary film is a term for a cinematic project that films everyday life on a day to day basis without necessarily having preconceived narrative ends other than the projection of a subjectivity through the accumulation of images. Jim Lane calls this the "journal entry approach" and describes it as a process "in which performative and physical reality present themselves to the camera" (50). The diary film, like the textual diary, begins *in media res* and typically focuses on a specific period in the filmmaker's present, a narrative frame through which a larger sketch of the autobiographical subject emerges. The diary films explored in this chapter do rely somewhat on the "journal entry" technique, and they do reflect on the significance of memory and mediated memory to the development of subjectivity. They differ from the prototypical model, however, in their scope and in their primary investment in the archive, foregrounding its relationship to mediated memory through spectacular editing.

All three films are diaristic in their reliance on the compilation of imagistic 'entries' that follow a chronological order, but both *Film Portrait* and *Tarnation* are using this method to narrate an autobiographical story from birth to the present—or in the case

of Caouette's film, the period preceding his birth as well. In this way, the diaristic mode allows the filmmakers to use a chronological approach to both ground and challenge their archival footage. The movement along the timeline of their life allows these two films to narrate an indexical, or mimetic, story of their process of subjective emergence. At the same time, their distinctive editing techniques produce an aesthetic rendering of that same documentary material in order to reveal the emotional or hidden truth that can't be captured by the archival footage alone. In a similar manner, *Life in a Day* also relies on a shared chronology and a series of compiled entries. But instead of lengthening the chronological scope, the film actually compresses it into the diary of a single day: July 24, 2010. The limitations of the film's timeline are balanced by the surprising breadth of its representation: instead of focusing on the life story of a single subject, the database documentary focuses on a day in the life of the entire planet. Using submitted entries from video diarists across the globe, the film aims to tell the story of a single day as it is experienced by citizens around the world. Although this format seems to differ from the other two films in significant ways, all three films share a commitment to the power of the archive to produce a meaningful record of daily life that is brought into narrative significance through the technical process of editing.

This format acknowledges a shared genealogy with the textual diary, but gestures to a diaristic mode specific to the affordances of film. These three films, like the textual diarist, work with material from the past to communicate an important narrative about the subject in the present. Although film scholars such as Patricia Zimmerman and Michael Renov have similarly considered the richness of the personal archive of home movies,

and the important subjective relationship between the documentary and archival footage, I am reconsidering and foregrounding the connections between the textual diary and the diary film mode in order to signal important connections that previous scholars have not yet explored.[37] While previous transmedia scholarship on the diary genre forwards a dialectical distinction between textual and film diaries, this chapter articulates a diary film grammar that engages without subsuming itself to the grammar of its literary cousin.

This distinction is important in order to highlight differences in materiality and mode between the two genres of self accounting. The diary film, like the written diary, is a practice of engaging the past by shaping it into narrative, and an archival document. It is always oriented toward a past revealed by the process of editing in the present. This difficult separation of the past and the present is inherent in the textual diary form as well, as literary scholar Philippe Lejeune argues. "The diary, which is often seen as a struggle *against* time (pinning down the present, etc.—preserving memory)," he writes, "is actually based on a prior *yielding* to time (which is atomized, exploded, reduced to moments)" (original emphasis. 2009, 170). As Lejeune notes, time becomes malleable and even destructive in the diaristic mode. It is often perceived as a mastery of time, as its use to fill girls' idle time and teach them accuracy in the nineteenth century illustrates. But the diary form makes visible the instability of time, and can only ever narrate the relationship between the perception of time and its effect on subjectivity, rather than its "reality." This impossibility is a preoccupation that appears again and again in the diary

[37] For a more complete analysis of home movies, see Zimmerman, Patricia. *Reel Families*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995. And for a psychoanalytically inflected analysis of the filmmaker's relationship to the archive, see Renov, Michael. *The Subject of Documentary*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

films considered in this chapter. Because of the instability of time itself, editing becomes the process that visualizes how our perpetually shifting relationship to time shapes our perception of reality and subjectivity. Editing thus shapes the aesthetics of the film while teaching its viewers, through this technical process, how to "read" the diary film as an engagement with the inevitable mediation of memory, and thus the past of its subject. The narrative framing within the films represents a yielding to time on a technical level, while the aesthetics produced by editing can be read as the ongoing struggle against time. Through this temporal engagement, editing becomes both an interior and public process of accessing and narrativizing the past. So although the films share key narrative and aesthetic gestures with the other diary films more often considered by scholars, these films articulate an archival ontology for diary films that foreground the role of the editor as both subject and director, a focus that has not previously been explored in the scholarship on the diary film.

For this reason, these films illuminate an important interface between the archive and self accounting that is at the heart of the autobiographical project, and of the diary in particular. The diaristic mode is a form that is simultaneously archival and performative in key ways that differ from the traditional autobiographical text or film. The diary film, regardless of scale or scope, relies on editing not only to shape the narrative, but to gesture constantly to the unnaratable, or unframable materials from the archive that shape subjective development. The process of editing is thus a process of revelation and elision: it makes the self visible and obscured, suggesting a tactic of engagement with surveillance sociality that both conforms to and resists the demands for a

"communication of communicability"—as Paolo Virno terms it—that structure visbility. Editing is thus a personal practice of negotiation with the public nature of the archive. Such a formulation echoes Jaques Derrida's characterization of the archive as "the unstable limit between public and private, between the family, the society, and the State, between the family and an intimacy even more private than the family, between oneself and oneself" (1996, 90). Although Derrida here refers to the instability inherent in the concept of the archive, his definition is just as apt for the diary, signalling a conceptual resonance between archive and diary as both practice, and site of meaning.

And both the diary and the archive are "troubling," to use Derrida's term, precisely because they seek to discursively contain, while also gesturing toward the impossibility of such an aim. In the diary it is the accumulation of individual entries that constitutes the archive of the self, and creates a sense of meaning in the shape of a narrative. But because these entries are often overlapping, digressing, or even unconnected, this meaning can seem to get lost in the overflow of information. It is not that these two forms of self accounting are at odds with one another, but they do signal different modes of meaning making and self-authoring. The archive signals plentitude and heterogeneity, while narrative signals linearity and development. There is that which exists in our daily lives and makes it onto the pages or screens of our diaries that doesn't rise to the level of enlightenment, self actualization, or even long-term significance. At the same time, there is the excess of experience that fundamentally shapes our understanding of everyday life without necessarily shaping our narratives about

ourselves. The diaristic practice is thus a site of negotiation between these two modes of subjectivity and self accounting.

The diary form signals the fluctuation between the insignificant and the unnarratable. As in the cue card confessions, which are explored in chapter 5, this excess is sometimes signaled by emoticons and ellipses as that which is experienced but exceeds the space of the narrative. In the lonelygirl15 video diaries, Bree's unseen archive was the fictional context of the show's production, the space outside of the narrative that fans wanted complete access to while denying its legitimacy. In both of these examples, the archive signals an excess of experience that exceeds or precedes narrative. But the diary film also makes clear the significance of that archive to generate meaning. As viewers and readers we understand that there are experiences and contexts beyond the text, and that autobiographical production—by its very nature—is an editorial process. One reveals particular elements of the life narrative through a process of selection; one event is deemed more important than the other, and so it is revealed. But as Judith Butler points out in *Giving an Account of Oneself*, one can never actually narrate the conditions of one's own process of emergence because that archive is actually unknowable and thus unarticulated (2005). The diary thus stands as a repeated engagement with this archive where subjectivity is shaped by as much as documented such material records of memory.

The further use of archival materials in the diary film serves to remind viewers of its existence, of meaning beyond the frame that resists or even undermines the narrative presented on screen, and thus destabilizes the authority of the narrative position. This

instability is what these three films continually point to, which is why the filmmakers foreground their role as editor. The filmmaker in this sense is most importantly an editor, an archivist who sorts through materials and brings some to the surface and pushes others to the recesses. We can see this too in diaristic writing, where writers select certain events, experiences, and emotions to record, and often gestures to or obscures other experiences that readers nonetheless understand to have occurred.

The legibility of the diaristic form, despite these gaps, cuts, and overlaps, as Lejeune argues, is only possible through the editing that first occurs at the moment of recording, and then again upon reading. Editing, then, is the essential function of the diary. Despite a diaristic intention to tell or record everything from a life, or even a single day, Lejeune observes, "the diary's discontinuities are organized in series and rewoven into continuities…The diary…is methodical, repetitive, and obsessive…In the tapestry of your life, you follow very specific threads, and only a small number of them" (179). Lejeune argues that instead of recording everything in a single day, or even reflecting on all of the various components of your life over a series of entries, the diary form reflects a recurring and persistent series of images that continuously present themselves. This concept strikingly echoes Charles Madge's directive to his diarists in the Mass Observation project to begin the daily diary by recording the single image that impressed itself upon him by recurrence over the course of a single day. While the psychology behind such a repetition certainly seems to call for a psychoanalytic analysis, that type of approach to the autobiographical film has already been ably handled by film scholars

such as Michael Renov.[38] In an alternative approach, Lane argues that the autobiographical project in film is one in which the filmmakers assembles the technical, aesthetic, and narrative gestures of film to project a unified "voice" that signifies both the singular subject, and the subject embedded in a specific historical and cultural discourse (25). As a result, the "voice" of an autobiographical film is the coherence of these disparate elements as they are experienced by both the filmmaker and the viewer as an autobiographical narrative. All of these critical approaches to the autobiographical film take us closer to both a historical and a subjective understanding of the urgency and relevance of the diary film. And while many of these approaches, and Lane's in particular, draw from literary theories of autobiography, none of these approaches considers theory about either the diary, or about the archive. Neither theory considers the specific grammar of the diaristic mode: reflexive, recursive, and continuously rewoven.

Recognizing this gap both as a scholarly opening, and as an aesthetic marker of the films under consideration here, I consider how the editing aesthetics of the dairy film reflect a filmmaker's understanding of his relationship to the archive, and thus to memory as mediated by materiality. This approach illustrates how the process by which a narrative appears is a process achieved post-production in the process of editing. The director, like a flaneur or lurker must first circulate through the archive and collect the fragmented and partial images that represent his perspective on that which might still remain unnarratable—this own process of subjective emergence. Recognizing the complexity of this process attends to both a nuanced understanding of diaristic discourse,

[38] See Renov's *The Subject of Documentary*, MIT Press, 2004 for a Lacanian reading of desire and subjectivity in the diary film.

and of the significance of the cinematic archive to the development of a particular discourse that marks the diary film.

The Editor as Alchemist: Jerome Hill's *Film Portrait*

In the final scene of Jerome Hill's 1972 *Film Portrait* the filmmaker reflects upon the process of filmmaking, and its relationship to time. "Everyone has seen a cameraman, a director," Hill's voiceover intones, "But who, outside of the trade, has the slightest idea of the role of the editor, perhaps the most important of all." Onscreen we see Jerome surrounded by various lengths of celluloid film while he pulls them out, seemingly at random, and examines them.[39] He is the unseen yet important figure of the film editor. Jerome selects a length of film and turns to his editing table with mounted reels of film on his left and his right, and a sync block in the center. We watch as Jerome draws his selected length of film across the center of his table and begins to splice it with another reel of film on his right. With his red grease-pencil he delineates the boundaries of the shot that will merge the two reels, and then closes the splicer on top of them, joining them together. This deliberate shot of marking the film, literally imprinting his mark upon it, serves as a metaphor for the authorship that Hill exerts over the archival footage that makes up the basis of his diary film. This footage has been hand-treated with drawings, animation, and coloring, giving the loose, *bildungsroman* film a surrealistic quality that is Hill's unique signature. The work of the editor, this scene reminds us, is

[39] In the interest of both clarity and recognition of the temporal split between the selves of the past and present, and also between the filmmaker and the subject of the film, I refer to the autobiographical subject onscreen by first name, and the filmmaker/editor by last name.

both functional and aesthetic. It requires the technical knowledge of timing, equipment, and direction, but it is also an artistic practice. The editor imprints himself visually on the film both in the selective choices he makes, but also in overt techniques that make visible the artistry, or alchemy as Hill terms it, of editing. He refers to the editor as the "alchemist of modern times" in this final scene, calling attention to the fact that the editor doesn't just create sequences, he mixes and experiments with the very elements of time to see what the result might actually be. For Hill this allusion imbues his film with scenes of saturated color, creatively reperformed footage, and even the inclusion of his 1932 surrealist short film, *La Cartomancienne*. In Hill's film the viewer is dropped right into the bubbling cauldron of memories and mediation, as Hill expertly stirs the pot and adds unexpected ingredients to his strange autobiographical brew.

The medieval science of alchemy is most commonly known as the search for a process to turn ordinary metals, such as lead, into gold, but alchemy also refers to a process of transformation that creates something new in an extraordinary or mysterious way. Both of those meanings are at play in Hill's invocation of the editor as alchemist. For instance, in the opening scene of the film Jerome stands shaving in front of his bathroom mirror, an ordinary everyday scene. The coloring of the negative has been reversed, however, and the result is an ordinary scene transformed by the effect of unusual coloring. The aesthetic, like Hill's 1932 short film, is highly surrealistic. Jerome's skin is an ashen gray and his hair, eyes, and mouth are shockingly white. The shaving cream coating his face, however, is a deep red, and as he expertly maneuvers his razor over the contours of his face, he removes strip after strip of red from his face. Once

removed, Jerome drops the red shaving cream into a filled sink, which swirls with green, yellow and blue tendrils as a result of hand coloring of the negative.

As he finishes shaving, Jerome looks directly into the camera, which in this instance is aligned with the mirror, and simultaneously reflects his image back to him and into the camera. “This is the me that am,” he intones. In this statement, Jerome uses the present indicative form of the “to be” verb that is normally paired with the pronoun “I.” Grammatically speaking, Jerome would have been correct to state, “This is the me that is,” but this slight syntactical error calls our attention to a particular grammar of temporality in self accounting. This reversal echoes the switch in the coloring, and the shift in perspective from mirror to camera. After Jerome speaks this line, there is a quick cut that returns the scene to its everyday coloring. Jerome’s pale skin, graying hair, and white t-shirt replace the reversed coloring, and we stare back into Jerome’s corrected image as he states, “Or, rather, that is the me that was in that instant...” The scene reverts again to the reversed coloring: “but will never be again.” Jerome’s repeated use of the various forms of the “to be” verb call our attention to a pervasive interest in the subject’s relationship to time, a recurring theme that structures the entire film. Jerome’s ability to exist in the past and the present, the scene suggests, is possible through film, which allows an editor to control aesthetic elements such as camera position or coloring, as much as he controls higher level, even metaphysical elements such as time.

“The me that am,” Jerome continues, “doesn’t even last as long as a single frame of motion picture film.” At this moment there is another quick cut between the saturated and unsaturated scene that is so quick it lasts about the duration of a blink of an eye.

Cliché aside, Hill uses this quick cut to suggest that one reality—the reversed color shot—is actually embroidered into another reality—the ordinarily colored shot—and that only the passage of time separates the two. In the schema Hill has created the present is disorientingly colored, suggesting that the present is, in some respects, an experience that exceeds rationality. In contrast, the past fades into alignment with familiar patterns or codes, such as color. "Hold on to the present moment," he instructs, "if only for a second. It already belongs to the past." As Jerome speaks these final lines, the camera focuses again on a close-up shot of the sink and the swirl of colors contained within. As drops of aftershave fall from Jerome's hands into the sink, the swirl seems to stop, interrupted by the addition of a new ingredient that changes the entire chemistry of his concoction.

Film, Hill reveals in this scene, is far from indexical; it is constructed down to its very DNA. By altering the coloring of the negative while still allowing it to reveal familiar shapes and actions—Jerome engaged in the everyday task of a morning shave—Hill demonstrates that film documents and it constructs. What it shows the viewer is not determined by film itself, but by a figure who manipulates its representative power to tell a story that the editor wants to tell. Creating a film is, at its core, a process of careful editing, this scene suggests, one that negotiates a present and a past sense of self that is constructed through the process of narrative. But that construction is always colored, Hill slyly asserts, by our inability to control time, even if we can control how it is represented. "Through cinema, time in annihilated," Jerome states toward the end of the movie, suggesting that although the film relies on documentary or archival footage, the function of cinema—as Lejeune suggests of the diary form—is not preservation, but destruction.

For Hill that destruction comes in the form of imaginatively recreating or editing documentary or archival footage; he takes something ordinary, and through a mysterious process, turns it into something else. Editing is alchemy. That something else achieved is an unusual perspective on an everyday scene, such as the opening shaving scene, or the revision of memory through the use of cut-out paper figures to re-enact Hill's memory of taking childhood naps in his mother's room.

Hill's *Film Portrait* is, indeed, a carefully constructed autobiographical portrait, but it is not necessarily a documentary portrait. The film contains an embedded short film from his past alongside a projected future in which Jerome is an unruly and decrepit old man waited on by a staff of nurses. The film does mine and reimagine archival family footage, but not to present the past as it was, but as it exists in Hill's present memory: a collection of aesthetic experiences that shaped the artist of the present. This is a form of recycling, as film scholar Rebecca Swender has termed it, of home movie archives (2009). Swender identifies three modes of archival footage recycling that veer increasingly away from alignment with their original intended purpose. Hill's use of not only his family's film archive, but also his own artistic archive, is a mode that Swender calls "contradictory." In this mode, the diegetic text of the autobiographical film "destabilizes the meaning of the original…exposing its supposed truth claim or adding a new context that fills it out with supplementary meanings" (2009, 7-8). Hill doesn't reimagine his family's home movies in order to uncover some sort of hidden truth about the family, but to re-narrate key moments from his past so that they align with his own experience of them since the moment of their actual occurrence. Just as the film

continuously reminds us that our present is always in a process of slipping into the realm of our past, Hill suggests that through the process of editing, that past can be surreptitiously reclaimed and incorporated into the present. Like the jumble of colors swirling in his sink as he shaves, then, our experience of our own temporality is constantly in a swirl, and can't always be separated as neatly as can individual frames of film. Instead, they flicker together in an illusion of coexistence, making the present a process of constantly reclaiming the past as well.

This complex temporality is not just the domain of film, but of autobiographical writing as well. Christian Quendler argues that in the diary, "the date not only documents the diary's commitment to time, it also frames the diarist as an ethical subject, a being situated in time…[and its] ethical questions concern predominantly issues of fidelity, truthfulness, and sincerity" (347). The autobiographer sits down to narrate the past, but is transformed in the present by that process of swirling temporalities, as Georges Gusdorf has suggested (38-39). Even though Hill's film is in many ways structured like an autobiography, it has many aesthetic resonances with the diary form that emerge in the editing. Lejeune has suggested that the diary is discontinuous, allusive, and repetitive (170). These characteristics are marked in Hill's film as well; although we roughly follow a narrative arc from childhood to the present, the film is filled with archival gaps (from the age of thirteen to twenty-three), projections into the future, and the recycling of key moments or scenes of footage that Hill renders differently several times based on the placement of the clip in the diegetic timeline of the film. This incomplete act of recursion, Lejeune suggests, likens the diary to a piece of lacework; it is full of holes and

gaps, and composed of threads that twist around and then back upon themselves without leading directly to one another. “But for the person who is writing,” Lejeune reminds us, these “discrete points of reference…hold an invisible galaxy of other memories in suspension around them” (181). Read through Lejeune’s lens, then, we can return to the image of the swirl of colors in the sink at the end of the opening scene of *Film Portrait*, and read this unruly mass not just as the swirl of time that characterizes the autobiographical process, but also a galaxy of experiences that are constantly in swirl for the diarist, who must bring out their meaning through a process of alchemy.

Hill, then, is part mystic and part scientist, and the final scene of the editor assiduously working to create the film we have just watched is set to a voiceover analysis of the relationship between time and art. “What is this ephemeral present about which one cannot speak?” Jerome asks, “For me the only real, valid present is the eternal moment, seized and set down once and for all. That is, the creation of the arts.” Hill was a Renaissance Man who was adept in various visual arts, but he chooses to end his autobiographical film, his masterwork, on a scene of his work as an editor. Paired with the voiceover allusion to the art’s ability to “seize” and set-down our experience of the present, this scene suggests that it is the editor who uses technical means, such as the sync block, to bring our sense of the past and the future into cohesion in the present. Through the art of editing, which is ultimately a technique of authoring an experience of time, Hill suggests, the past and the future collide in an “annihilation” of time that Hill affords uniquely to cinema. Working both from his family archive and his vision of what the future might hold—as in the scene of Hill pretending to be a doddering and senile old

man—Hill articulates a theory of cinematic art as a practice of creative editing. What his film and the later technically innovative diary film *Tarnation* demonstrate, is that for the individual diary film, authorship is achieved through the artistry of editing that is facilitated through technical means.



Fig. 12. Still from *Film Portrait* depicting Hill at the editor's table

This final scene of Hill's work at the editing table manifests the film's deep preoccupation with the representation of time, and cinema's ability to represent, or re-represent the past as if it is unfolding in the present. As he sits at his work at the editing table, Jerome muses, "I often think of the reels on my left as the past, and the reels on my right as the future." The work of editing, of bridging the phenomenological experience of reality, is where Hill locates the present. The moment of the present is represented by Jerome hunched over his desk, surrounded by the symbols of a past and a future in the form of excessive film reels spilling over their metal canisters. Jerome the editor is busily

at work, finding ways to bridge these two ephemeral senses through the creation of art. This scene reveals several key connections to theories of both film technics and a formulation of the diary as practice and product. The films reels on Jerome's left stand in for the past, or the archive that Hill draws upon to develop his diary film. Hill suggests that these images in their untouched form represent a material marker of the past, a record of his youth as it was experienced from the outside. Like the dated diary entry, these images stand as indexical traces of the past: this is time that was lived in a specific way on a specific day. Jerome's ongoing movement in the center of the frame, and the fragmented film pieces themselves signify the present, or the diarist's work of editing and shaping the past through a process of creation. Through the assistance of visual media and its attendant technologies, he shapes the past into a cohesive future through the work of art.

The creation of art, as Hill points out, is a process of taking time and setting it down once and for all. Cinematic art, like narrative, is an ongoing practice of shaping, and setting down the past in a way that corresponds to the subject's experience of two different temporalities. The editor, Hill thus suggests, is both artist and author: not only yielding to, but ordering time in an aesthetic form. The reels on Jerome's right, the representation of the future, are the images we finally draw closer and closer to in the scene, eventually entering the diegetic frame of the images he is editing. As we are drawn into the image, we see the product of Hill's work and we are returned again to the meaning of diary as product. But as the hand-colored frames demonstrate—spliced out of temporal order and generating no clear teleological narrative—this is not the diary as

authentic record of the past as documented; this is the past reshaped into an artistic version of the past as experienced. The underlying image still bears its indexical traces to the historical moment, but the brilliant coloring, and reimagined setting reveal the work of editing and authoring. That is, Hill's direct and constant focus on the process of film editing, as both authorial practice and metaphor, reminds us that what we see on screen is a result of both the captured image and his process of reworking it. It is the filtered access to the archive that nonetheless reveals a deeper truth about that archive that can only be accessed through manipulation. Hill's diaristic index is a register of both the film footage and its manipulation, both are made visible at all times in order to express his vision that the process of art is one of both documentation and authorial control.

The Editor as Archivist: Jonathan Caouette's *Tarnation*

Whereas Hill calls attention to the aesthetic function of editing by visualizing the technical work of the editor, Jonathan Caouette, director of the 2003 diary film *Tarnation*, makes the work of editing visible by digitally manipulating archival footage in ways that highlight the tension between the two forms of images. Caouette's autobiographical film—famously made for only $218.32 on an iMac computer—mines home videos, photographs, and voice recordings to narrate the story of a deeply troubled and rocky upbringing.[40] Like Hill, Caouette reworks these images to create an aesthetic vision of his past that matches the emotional experience of his childhood. Interspersed with textual intertitles that date and drive the narrative forward much as the dated diary

[40] $218 is the figure Caouette cites in interviews with *CineScene*, *BOMB Magazine*, *The Austin Chronicle*, and *Slant Magazine* to name a few.

entry does, the film employs raw footage; shots with dramatic editing effects such as multiplication, quick cuts, and dissolve; and clips from film and television to try and depict the sense both of a young man's process of coming into his own artistically, and a persistent, haunting sense of depersonalization, represented by the ever-present camera that separates Caouette from the dramatic and overwhelming events shaping his reality. The result is a dizzying, surrealistic journey from the past to the future that doubles back, repeats, and rewinds in order to present a journey toward the present.

Caouette made *Tarnation* in three and a half weeks on his desktop computer using the consumer editing software iMovie, and dubbing in music from his own CD collection. For this reason, the film is often cited as a DIY documentary anticipating the rise of social video sites like YouTube, and recalling the gendered specificity of amateur media productions as explored in chapter 3.[41] This mode of production also signals that the editing techniques that characterize the film are the result of both Caouette's creative use of the software, and the software's specific affordances.

Like Hill, Caouette develops a deeply personal aesthetic for the film through his heavy editing, and his most distinctive editing technique is the split and multiplied shot, which works to illustrate the sense of subjective multiplicity he and his mother both experience as a result of their psychological disorders. But the technique also communicates a fracturing or splitting apart the surface of the images in an effort to get at the kernel of truth hidden within. Caouette repeatedly reworks the same set of images in an attempt to understand their power over him. This ability to manipulate the image

[41] An illustrative example of such a characterization is found in the 2003 *New Yorker Film* press kit for *Tarnation*.

through digital means grants Caouette a great deal of authority over the image, but the repetition of manipulation also suggests an impenetrability of the image that allows it to be shaped and reworked at a surface level without granting any deeper access into its hidden meaning.

The multiplication edit, a recurring technique in the film, consists of a single image, typically a digital copy of a photograph, that is multiplied onscreen while the camera zooms out to accommodate the additional accumulating images. This is an effect that would be onerous with analogue editing, but is easily achieved through digital editing because of the malleability of digital versions of photographs, and the functionality of iMovie. In Caouette's film it becomes a directorial signature, pointing to the importance of editing to the development of an individual aesthetic, as the lonelygirl15 series also demonstrated. The first multiplication edit occurs in the first ten minutes of the film as the intertitles explain that Renee, Jonathan's mother, fell from the roof of her family's home at the age of 11 and experienced paralysis for the next six months. Rosemary and Adolph, Renee's parents, suspected that the paralysis was psychosomatic and followed advice to give Renee shock treatments twice a week for two years. Immediately after this information is related through a series of short textual intertitles, a quick shot of Renee as a baby appears, a shot we have seen just minutes before in the film, but this time it is quickly reduced and fractured before a rapid-fire series of quick cuts carries the viewer through a repeating series of archival photographs of Renee's childhood that flash and multiply on the screen in rapid succession. The

images pass so quickly in front of the camera, multiplying with each short shot, that it is nearly impossible to discern any particular image.

The quick scene lasts only three seconds, and during that time the camera quickly pans out as the number and sequence of images on screen rapidly multiplies, and then zooms back in as the images rapidly decrease in number, closing in on a side by side black and white image of Renee as a teenager. "All throughout her treatment," the subsequent intertitle reads, "Renee remained a beauty." This information is again followed by a multiplication edit, but this sequence is much slower, and the number of fractured images is much smaller, allowing the camera to linger over striking black and white images of a young and incredibly beautiful Renee. These shots emerge over an all white screen, and the images are often framed in black, as if the viewer is looking through a look book for a model, or a series of negatives on a lightboard. There is the sense in this seven second scene that this lovely visage, the public face of Renee, hides the fractured frightening interior that resulted from the shock treatments represented in the brief earlier scene. The juxtaposition between the speed and focus of images in the two scenes illustrates the fractured and differing views that Caouette takes toward his past.

Like Hill, then, Caouette mines his archival footage not to reintegrate its original meaning, but to reshape it to represent some "truer" version than the one represented on film. Returning again to Swendler's categories of archival usage, Caouette uses his archive in a "contradictory" way. This is particularly marked for Caouette, who includes incredible scenes of himself as a teenager, acting out "testimonies" of marginalized

figures who have experienced some sort of extreme trauma. These scenes function both as archival footage—showing us Jonathan as he really was as a teenager—and as clues to his state of mind in the present. In these testimonials, Caouette has set up the camera so



Fig. 13. Caouette as Gerina in *Tarnation*

That it focuses on him in a medium-shot, framing his upper body and face so that our eyes are drawn to both his speech and his distinctive, repetitive gestures. The short clips feature Jonathan confessing as a fictional character, but the viewer's knowledge of the deep foundation of trauma structuring Jonathan's childhood make these testimonies read as so much more than the precocious media stylings of a charismatic teenager. For instance, in the testimony of "Hilary Chapman Laura Lou Gerina," Caouette performs the role of a housewife who becomes increasingly distraught as she reveals that her husband abused her and threatened her life. "I'll kill you bitch," Jonathan screams in the character of Gerina, who, in turn, is recounting the words of her husband as he held a gun to her

head. “This is like, a testimony, isn’t it?” Gerina asks as she finishes her story. The line between Jonathan as the character, and Caouette as the director in this moment is frighteningly blurry, almost as if Caouette has split himself into both figures much in the way that he splits and refracts the archival photos throughout the film. This is a very deliberate editing choice, we learn, because Jonathan suffers from Depersonalization Disorder, which makes the teenaged Jonathan feel as if he is experiencing his life as if it belonged to someone else, someone on-screen. This is why the fictive “testimonies” serve such an important archival function in the film; they are more documentary in many ways than the nonfiction footage Caouette uses.

In this way, Caouette’s relationship to his process of editing is as an archivist. Like Hill, Caouette uses archival footage in a contradictory mode, slowly revealing the dark secrets of his family’s past by literally trying to crack them open through his dominant mode of multiplying and refracting images. But his footage is assembled to reconstruct a narrative of his childhood that makes such trauma publicly legible in a way that is important to his sense of self in the present. Whereas Hill understands his role as a methodical process of reimagining time through film, Caouette uses editing to understand his past through film. Indeed, clips from childhood film favorites, such as *The Wiz*, and *Zoom!* are embedded alongside his home movies, like a jumbled mix tape. Jonathan uses his role as an editor to preserve and classify this footage, showing the viewer through this juxtaposition how these disparate images carry equal weight in the story of his life. So much of Cauoette’s diary film is a reflection on the function of media and storytelling in his life; from his ‘testimonies,’ to the musical he directed in high school, to the

significance of a nightclub that held movie night lock-ins, media is central to how Caouette understands his own life in the present and in retrospect.

And as an archivist, his role as editor is both to collect these archival documents and to give them some sort of order. One way he does this is through the placement and editing of specific images and clips, but another way he does this is through his use of the camera on-film, a reflexive move that both illustrates the importance of media in his life, and demonstrates his participation in this world of meaning-making. As Caouette says of the editing process, "The movie essentially told me what it wanted to do because it was already this available footage, like, this is what you have to work with," he notes of the 160 hours of Super 8 film, Hi8 videotape, mini DV footage, and sound recordings that composed his archive (Wilcha 2008). Caouette states that the footage had an inherent narrative, and his job was to bring that narrative to the fore, rather than to impose one on the material. The process, he notes, allowed him to come to terms with the multiplicity of truths about his past, rather than advance a single distilled version of the truth. The dense editing of the film was a way to illustrate that multiplicity, in the same way that his testimony as the abused housewife Gerina reveals the truth about his teenage reality in many ways. Editing, then, becomes a process for Caouette where he negotiates between his memory and the archival footage.

Caouette's characterization of editing echoes film scholar Michael Renov's theorization of the process of editing as one of enunciation: a simultaneously intimate and technical process that allows the director or filmmaker to engage with the material that his camera captures. "Video, as apparatus and potentiality," Renov notes, "becomes…a

facilitator to self-examination" (2004, 214). Through the technical requirements of editing the filmmaker processes the raw emotion captured on film, in a moment of seclusion. What began as a strategy for surviving a volatile and fragile family structure, Caouette's persistent filming in the diegetic present lays the groundwork for the processing that would come in a future moment. In a way, then, the moment of filming resonates with the moment of writing a diary, capturing experience without fully processing it, as Lejeune and Mekas have both suggested. The process of editing, in both filmmaking and diary writing, creates a space for reflection through the technical process of shaping the archival material into a narrative. As Caouette states of his editing process, "It was a way of making sense of everything. I felt like if I did it long enough, something would click. There would be this revelation and all the information, all the cards, the truth and the sense of it, would be laid out on the table and I could to rest with it" (2004). But as Caoutte himself admits, there was no one truth revealing itself in the material. Instead, the process of editing allows Caouette to recognize and give space to the multiple truths that shaped his experience.

In this way the camera as diary becomes a lifeline for Caouette both during filming, and in the process of editing. In the opening scene of the film we learn that his mother has been hospitalized for a Lithium overdose and that the result may be permanent brain damage. We watch as Jonathan processes this information—delivered over the phone and via the internet—searches for answers, and physically reacts by crying, throwing up, and smoking. The shots are close and insistent on Jonathan's face, and it feels as if we are invading his privacy, intruding on the moments that are

unpleasant and painful to watch. But this proximity also implicates us in the narrative revealed. Like invited voyeurs we look over Jonathan's shoulder as he scrolls through the results of a Google search for "Lithium Overdose." We hear his partner David whispering to him that it will be OK, and we again feel ourselves intruding. There is a tension in the film between being invited in to such intimate scenes, and then feeling oneself outside of them because we lack an understanding of their true meaning. This disorientation mirrors Jonathan's own experience of trying to sort out the truth about his mother's condition, her childhood and their implications for his own life.

Jonathan turns to media, to the continual documentation of his life and a ritualistic performance in front of the camera to help him survive his everyday life. Caouette attempted suicide, damaged his family home repeatedly, and struggled with drug use at an early age. We learn all of this information through the diary film in the form of the intertitles and voiceovers from a teenaged Jonathan. In fact, much of the most explosive information in the film is revealed in these intertitles, and they function very similarly to diary entries by structuring the narrative chronologically, and providing a narrative throughline that much of the footage resists. The intertitles are the factual narrative voice that sorts through the archive of images and footage, and gives them a place, a sense of order, and a categorical relationship to the story they are illustrating: the story of Jonathan's childhood and emergence into adulthood and the yearning for an independence from his mother that he might not ever be able to achieve. Like Hill, Caouette manipulates the archival footage to hint at an emotional truth that the straightforward language of the intertitles might never fully capture. But in the process of

manipulating and re-presenting these images, the effect is again one of bringing order to a chaotic and painful collection of images. Despite the sometimes frantic and often overwhelming visual effects of his editing, there is a sense of an authorial hand, a shaping influence that guides the viewer from a past that is most often a surface performance—whether it be modeling in front of the camera or performing testimonies—to a more documentary present that allows the filmmaker to revel in everyday images, such as David laying on the couch, or shots of the two of them walking in the snow, or on the beach. There is a progression from the chaos of the past to the created order of the present that appears through the editing of the film.

But even in this present there is no escaping the past, as the film reminds us by bookending the opening and closing scenes with very intimate shots of Jonathan grappling with his complex relationship with his mother, and his mother's illness. The film begins and ends in essentially the same place. In the opening scene Jonathan is dealing with the immediate aftermath of her overdose, and at the end of the film he has brought Renee to Brooklyn to live with him and David. The narrative arc of the film questions how the constant pull of a past that Jonathan has struggled to overcome continues to exert such a strong claim on his present and his identity.

In one final testimony, Jonathan sets up the camera in his bathroom, and like Hill, presents the viewer with a reflected image of Jonathan in the present and in the past by way of the mirror. Like the testimonies he made as a teenager, Jonathan faces the mirror/camera, but without adopting a character, he finds it hard to begin. Struggling to find the right words, he finally confesses, "I don't want to turn out like my mother!" As

the tears streak his face, his distorted features recall the young, sobbing Hilary Chapman Laura Lou Gerina who confesses that her husband tried to kill her while she was tied up. Caouette here seems similarly trapped: "I love my mother, I can't escape her," he reveals, "She's in my hair, behind my eyes, she's under my skin." Renee literally inhabits the being of Jonathan, and like a camera, she looks out from his eyes, recording or shaping the recording of what he sees. It is both a burden and an intimacy that Caouette understands as unique. Like Gerina, he is both victimized by and sympathetic to the person who has captured him. And there is no real resolution to this problem, either in the past or the present of the film. Just as we never learn if Jonathan's grandfather Adolph was abusive or just maligned, we never really find out how Jonathan resolves his relationship to his mother in the present. Just as Lejeune suggests that in the process of diary writing, "We are writing a text whose ultimate logic escapes us; we agree to collaborate with an unpredictable and uncontrollable future," so too does Caouette demonstrate that he can only document, again and again, his complex reality (208). He cannot control it, and he cannot predict its direction in the future; Caouette can only serve as the diarist of his own life, recording and sorting experience into some sort of narrative shape. Caouette and Lejeune both suggest that the role of the diarist is, ultimately, more similar to the role of the archivist rather than that of an author. Even though the entries of a diary have an imposed external order in the form of dated entries, there is also an internal emotional "spiderweb" of meaning—as Lejeune terms it—that is full of gaps and holes while still revealing of a larger pattern with a greater internal significance than just chronology. This is the pattern that the editor as archivist must work to make clear. He

must collect and reveal the pattern embedded within the entries, he must tell the story that chronology alone cannot tell.

The multiplication of images in Caouette's diary film represents a process of repetition and reworking that is present in Hill's work as well as in the textual diary form, as we saw in the diary of Anne Frank. Hill revisits scenes and images repeatedly in *Film Portrait*, but his reworking of these images is both analogue and singular. There is also the distinct sense that Hill is a professional, trained and adept in the various techniques of editing as evidenced by his extensive and impressive equipment. Caouette, on the other hand, emphasizes his status as being closer to that of an 'inspired' amateur. While we often see Caouette with a camera in his hand, we never see him hunched over his laptop working through his images. Instead, we see him working on the laptop to research his mother's prognosis after a Lithium overdose. The situation is reversed for the two directors, although the message is the same. Hill foregrounds his role as an editor and a professional, both diegetically and on the level of aesthetics, grounding his authorship of the diary film in the visible technics of editing. Caouette foregrounds his role as an archivist by making visible the process of setting up and adjusting his camera in order to interview his family or record a testimony. His aesthetic is determinedly amateur and he grounds his authorship in his ability to wend these divergent images into a coherent narrative through digital technics. Although his process of editing isn't visible, as is Hill's, his digital editing techniques function as a kind of extradiegetic guide, calling the viewers attention to the way that the straightforward facts presented in the textual intertitles occurred at the level of lived experience. In this way, Caouette uses editing to

express a distinct directorial perspective, while Hill uses editing to express a distinct editorial perspective. Both films, however, use editing to engage a complex and multimodal family archive, and their editing techniques further manifest their sense of relationship to that archive. That reflexive self-observation leads to detection of the less obvious indexicalities of the archival footage of the diary, resulting here in the tendencies toward directorality and editoriality in these two films.

The Editor as Curator: Kevin Macdonald and *Life in a Day*

Life in a Day opens with three intertitles that contextually situate the viewer in the documentary she is about to watch. As if mirroring pages in a diary, the intertitles appear as black text against a cream background, the visual sparseness matched by the delicate strains of classical music in the background. "We asked people around the world to film their lives and answer a few simple questions," the first entry reads. The words fade from view without revealing what those questions were—that is revealed as the film unfolds—but this first intertitle immediately establishes a strict narrative frame for the film. Yes, this is a documentary "Filmed by you," as the trailers proudly proclaim, but the solicited videos also had some predetermined guidelines that worked to pre-sort the type of footage that would be submitted. Those questions, circulated through social media, were: "tell us your story, tell us what you fear, and show us what's in your pockets." These

questions aimed for a balance, director Kevin Macdonald states in an interview with National Geographic, between the banal and the emotionally charged (2011).[42]

"We received 4500 hours of video from 192 countries," the next intertitle reads as it fades in to replace the first. Again, the rhetoric of the intertitle reveals so much about the construction of the film. Who is this "we" receiving the videos? This is a question that the film doesn't answer, but it does provide an interlocutor for the footage before it is even filmed. The "we," of course, are big names in Hollywood: producer Ridley Scott and director Kevin Macdonald.[43] Just as diary entries are directed to an anthropomorphized other who is addressed in the salutation, "Dear Diary," so too, the film immediately establishes, were these video entries addressed to someone, or to a group of people who had ultimate control over their inclusion prior even to their conception. This second intertitle also emphasizes the massive scope of both the archive collected, and the contributors. This documentary, the intertitle suggests, is truly global participatory media, representing nearly every single country in the world.

Despite the massive scope of the project, however, it is tightly bounded temporally, as the final opening intertitle reveals: "All of it [the submitted video footage] shot on a single day: 24th July 2010." Again, like a journal entry, viewers were constrained by a single calendar day, making the film a kind of global diary entry. This precise relationship to time, and to the way that the editors of the film used it to construct

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[42] *Life in a Day* was distributed by National Geographic Films, who posted the interview article containing this information on their *NatGeo Films* website.

[43] Both men are British directors working primarily within the Hollywood studio system. Ridley Scott is the Oscar nominated director of films such as *Gladiator* (2000) and *Black Hawk Down* (2001). Kevin Macdonald is the director of the documentary *Touching the Void* (2003) and *One Day in September* (1999), the latter of which won the Academy Award for Best Feature Documentary.

their narrative, suggests the clear diaristic mode of the film. But the use of the questions, and the figures who stand in for the interlocutor, or the addressee of these entries prior to their conception, complicates the notion of diaristic authorship. The film instead asserts the significance of the editor, who in this case precedes the author in determining much of the shape of the resulting film. In this way Macdonald functions as a curatorial editor for the final film explored in this chapter. Although he couldn't determine the exact nature of the clips he would be receiving, he created a framework for entries that suggests the affective tenor of the material he wanted: that of the banal and the emotional juxtaposed. He thus curates the diary project from its inception.

Macdonald really foregrounds the editorial role of the director, but his relationship to his archive is completely different than either Hill or Caouette because his is a bounded, cultivated, and somewhat impersonal archive. Rather than relating the story of his own life through archival footage, Macdonald aims for narrating a kind of universal truth about human life by curating a solicited archive.[44] This aim has clear echoes to the Mass Observation project, which attempted to narrate a national truth about daily life in Britain, and Macdonald readily admits the connection. In his 2011 *National Geographic* interview, Macdonald cites documentary filmmaker and Mass Observation founder Humphrey Jennings as one of the inspirations for his film. "I see this film as very much like that," he states, "[it] was a wonderful opportunity to hear the voices of ordinary people describing the world as they see it." Like Mass Observation, *Life in a*

[44] Other similar recent projects include Rick Smolan and David Cohen's photo books of various countries based on the collected works of photojournalists. Such books include the 1993 *A Day in the Life of America*, the 1994 *A Day in the Life of Israel*, and the 1989 *A Day in the Life of China*.

Day creates an archive of the now, and of the everyday by soliciting particular responses. Also like the day diaries of Mass Observation, the submitted entries for *Life in a Day* focus on the timespan of a single day, and the ability of the banal—such as the contents of one's pockets—to reveal some deeper emotional truth that is shared by contributor and viewers alike. Although Macdonald notes the overt Orwellian discourse of the surveillance required by Mass Observation, he adopted the model without hesitation. "They did diaries, and I thought we could do that with video," he admits, "We stole (the idea) from somebody else. It's always the best way" (Goodman, 2011). Like *Tarnation* and *Film Portrait*, *Life in a Day* uses editing to reveal truths that aren't overtly narrated, but unlike these films the emotional core of these truths is predetermined. The surface is the truth in this film. And by juxtaposing a multitude of truths in a kind of corresponding montage, the editing suggests that these truths are universal more than they are individual.

Some of the rhetoric of the film is a result of the technics of the editing process. Videos were solicited over social media, and were then submitted to a *Life in a Day* channel on YouTube, the company that originally approached Ridley Scott about making the documentary. Macdonald worked with editor Joe Walker, who brought in a team of 25 assistant editors to watch every submission and then tag and rate it. This initial editorial process is clearly informed by the materiality of YouTube itself, which produces search results based on both metadata (tagging) and popularity (ratings). The assistant editors tagged the videos based on the primary content, developing a clearer system as patterns emerged. For instance, "mybeautifulgirlfriend" became a default tag for loving

shots of women clearly made, or inferred to be made, by amorous partners (National Geographic). The clips were then rated on a scale of 1 to 5 to indicate their narrative or



Fig. 14. One of the many "mybeautifulgirlfriend" clips from *Life in a Day*

aesthetic quality. One was reserved for "truly awful" contributions, as Macdonald describes it, whereas a five indicated a "fantastic" clip. Once the editorial team whittled down the contributions to ten hours of footage based on this system, Macdonald stepped in and determined the narrative structure of the final film based on the patterns, or "natural pathways" as he termed them, that emerged from the combined clips. The resulting narrative follows both the clock and the pathways Macdonald uncovered. The film opens at 12:01 with multiple shots of the full moon, and the rest of the clips were similarly patterned together along both the chronological structure of the day, and the narrative structure laid out in the initial directives to filmmakers. As a result, we move through the twenty four hours of the day following rituals of daily life, such as morning routines and the preparation of meals, as well as extraordinary moments such as a

proposal, a vow renewal ceremony, and a son meeting his father to celebrate his graduation from university.

Life in a Day was initially screened at the Sundance Film Festival and the South by Southwest festival in 2011, but its aesthetic and editing technique are quite familiar. Macdonald signals the influence of Humphrey Jennings and twentieth-century British GPO films such as *Listen to Britain*. But the tight crafting of the thematic core through the persistent use of montage also gestures back to the early montage documentaries of Russian filmmaker Dziga Vertov. Vertov's 1929 *Man with a Movie Camera* is an avant-garde documentary made by capturing and constructing footage and editing it together in an extended montage. Like Jennings, Vertov was deeply invested in capturing a national identity, and maintained a positivist belief in the camera's ability to decipher the world in a "true Marxist" sense (Dawson 2003).[45] Vertov named this power the Kino-Eye, and described it as using "every possible means in montage, comparing and linking all points of the universe in any temporal order" (1929, XX). Vertov suggests that the camera has an almost internet-like function; it uses the juxtaposition of image to connect disparate locations through the organization of time. Such an understanding reverses Hill's belief that cinema "annihilates" time, but corresponds with his belief in the centrality of the function of editing to achieve their disparate temporal ends. Documentary scholar Bill Nichols categorizes Vertov's film as reflexive, emphasizing Vertov's adamant position that film should forge new models of representation, rather that relying on previous models (2010, 156). Like Hill, Vertov includes scenes of the film's editor—Elizaveta

[45] For a full account of Vertov's theses on the positivist power of the camera and the revolutionary potential of film, see *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, University of California Press, 1985.

Svilova, Vertov's wife—at work editing the film, emphasizing that the new model of representation is dependent on editing. By calling the viewer's attention repeatedly to the scene of editing, Vertov, who was a prolific writer on the subject of film, seeks to make the viewer aware of the process by which the images on screen appear. The result of this reflexivity, as Nichols notes, "deconstructs the impression of unimpeded access to reality and invites us to reflect on the process by which this impression is itself constructed through editing" (196). Reflexivity, Nichols suggests, has a primary pedagogical function that teaches viewers as much about the medium as about the impressions it creates.

Like Vertov, Macdonald understands himself as pioneering a method of perception dependent upon both his chosen medium and the editing that medium requires. Macdonald notes, "While the concept of a global project like this may not be new, the media in which the elements are laid out—the Internet, and in particular YouTube—is certainly groundbreaking" (2010). What Macdonald implies is that while the topic of the documentary may be familiar, the method and materiality is completely new and thus requires a new mode of representation. His task, like Vertov before him, is to use editing to reflexively call the viewer's attention to both the material specificity of the archive, and the methods required to make that archive accessible through film. Macdonald's montage, however, is produced not by a single cinematographer, but from multiple, globally sourced cinematographers. And although his montage shares many aesthetic similarities with Vertov, his task was searching through the material using the tagging and ranking system imposed by the initial editorial team, and his method of using this metadata to create patterns is almost algorithmic.

One of those clear patterns is time. From the specific call for user-made videos created on July 24, 2010, to the narrative construct of relating as many perspectives of the globe within that twenty-four hour period (and here the tongue in check numerical date of 7/24—or 24/7 in European standard notation—seems to evoke the aphorism's invocation of the unrelenting pace of life) the film reminds us constantly of the passage of time, and illustrates the unfolding of life as it is experienced by the precisely determined calendrical and clock time. The videos comprising the film not only repeatedly note the date and time, but the progression of videos roughly follows the period from sunrise to moonrise to show the repetition of human routines: getting up, making breakfast, brushing one's teeth, departing for work or social engagements, and coming home and getting ready for bed. This rigid adherence to normative time works to structure the film, but as Helga Lenart-Cheng has suggested, the film also uses editing to suggest the temporal concept of simultaneity in order to accommodate all of the global events occurring along routine times (2014). The film does this through a heavy reliance on the editing technique of montage, which Lenart-Cheng reads as evoking simultaneity: she points out that in order to represent all of the people brushing their teeth in the morning, the user videos have been edited in a series of juxtaposed quick cuts that flash multiple different images of toothbrushing in order to suggest that many, perhaps even millions of people engage in similar routines at the exact same time. As Lenart-Cheng's phenomenological reading of the film asserts, this technique is used to suggest that calendrical and clock time work as a kind of universalizing and thus uniting force for humanity. But she goes on to critique this project as not only historically repetitive, but

potentially dismissive of the important inequality experienced between the citizens who contributed videos.[46]

While I agree with Lenart-Cheng's reading of the significance of simultaneity montage in the film, I think such a reading doesn't fully account for the ways that the film gestures toward its material origins. Reflecting his unique archive and editorial process, the film employs what I am calling "database montage." Database montage is a technique that signals a form of logic determined not by either time or content, but by patterns whose logic is not always available at the surface, similar to the algorithm. For example, in one of the most difficult montage scenes to watch, three African women sit on a mat pounding grain with mallet-type tools. As they work, the women sing a rhythmic, plaintive song that keeps their repeated gestures of pounding and sifting perfectly in sync. While the song continues to play in the background, other scenes are edited in, embedded within the rhythm of the song, the only time this technique appears in the film. But the scenes that are edited in are horrifying, because they demonstrate the often obscured cruelty behind our eating habits. One scene shows live piglets being roasted on a grill, their screams piercing through the song. Intercut with this scene is the methodical scene of how a cow is killed with an airgun in a meat factory. The scenes are unflinching, focused on the undeniable pain of these animals, and yet they are set to the peaceful, meditative sound of the song. Repeated edits return the viewer to the beautiful sun-filled scene of the women at work preparing their meal, as it so strikingly contrasts

[46] Lenart-Cheng cites Maxim Gorky's 1935 project "One Day in the World," and *One Day in China* in 1935 as important precedents, but neglects to mention significant British examples such as the day diaries of the Mass Observation project, perhaps because of the limited scope of her article.

with the artificial or dark light of the cruelty of the other scenes of food preparation. This scene is striking because it is unlike any of the other included scenes in the film in both its pathos and its technics. But I include it here because it represents an important instance in which Macdonald makes visible the process of editing. Rather than relying on postproduction sound, Macdonald uses the diegetic sound of one of the clips to create a "natural pathway" between scenes that seem so disharmonious on the surface. While other scenes, such as multiple views of a concert in Germany that ended in a tragic trampling, also use sound to coordinate multiple videos, those montages combine already clearly connected clips. In the food chain montage, although there is a clear connection through the idea of the food chain, such a pattern only becomes clear through the music. The song, then, like the embedded code of a language we cannot understand, becomes a kind of algorithmic link that brings the scene into cohesion not because of its content, but through the juxtaposition and union made possible through music. And once you've witnessed the montage, its linked narrative is impossible to forget.

Public Diary, Public Archive

What is so significant or experimental about *Life in a Day* is not, then, its ability to present a national or even global picture of life—that experiment has been ongoing since the early twentieth century—but the way that it uses the specific materiality of new media to bring the dialectic tension between the archive and the diaristic into full view without necessarily mediating these through narrative as such. Clearly all of the submitted footage didn't make it into the studio-released film, but all of the contributed

clips are available for viewing on the film's YouTube channel. Likewise, the official YouTube blog for the *Life in a Day* project informs contributors, "Regardless of whether your footage makes it into the final film, your video(s) will live on in the *Life in a Day* channel as a time capsule that will tell future generations what it was like to be alive on July 24, 2010." The rhetoric of life and preservation imbues the project with a kind of vitality that isn't limited to the selection or circulation of the film. Each video will "live on" to inform potential future viewers "what it was like to be alive" on a specific day.

By sourcing the film from a public video database, the film necessarily gestures to the archival function of photofilmic technologies, as well as documentary films. But in this process, it also signals the significance of excess to the diaristic enterprise, of dailyness as an accumulation of experiences outside of the frame, as an archive, or a site of slippage in the totalizing potential of autobiographical narrative. As a result, editing becomes a process that creates the spectacle of the diary film, and makes visible the excess of the archive by which the documented self exceeds and escapes our notice. This simultaneous evocation of excess and elision is the particular domain of the diary, as Lejeune has pointed out, and it speaks to why the diary form has been so often utilized for both global "snapshot" projects, as well as individual narratives of becoming. As Lenart-Cheng points out, such mass or public diary projects are not only not new, they are themselves serial and repetitive. There is a perennial engagement with documenting, archiving, and broadcasting a representative view of the world, or of the nation, at a particular moment in time, or in response to a particular event, as is the case in the Mass Observation day diaries.

As we have seen in previous chapters, this persistent engagement with the diary form, is due, in part, to the assumed authenticity of diaristic expression. Presumably these global snapshot projects aim for a high degree of veracity in order to justify both the aims of the project, and their long-term cultural and informative value. The diary mode of production also allows for a wide range of submissions because of the low threshold of participation is easily afforded by the accessibility of amateur media practice. A smart phone video takes equal place alongside a more professionally recorded video, equalizing the submissions in significant aesthetic ways. Both of these reasons point back to the discourse *about* diaristic production that has determined its marginalized position within more established literary traditions and visual cultural productions. Namely, here, these qualities of amateurism and authenticity denote a lower aesthetic standard. But this is precisely its value for a film like *Life in a Day*, which aims not to join the canon, but to stand apart from it by signifying a closer connection to the reality of everyday life. In this way the diary film also holds a closer bearing to the trace of its production, which—like the textual diary—is not seen as filtered through artistic vision and layers of external mediation. It promises contact with the immediate, the unfiltered, with the visualized trace of life as it is experienced. This, too, is what the diary promises, which is why it has often been prized by scholars for its historical value much more than for its aesthetic value. But as recent scholarship on the diary form has suggested, and the previous chapters have articulated more specifically, this valuable trace of reality is itself an aesthetic produced by and within diaristic discourse on the appearance and disappearance of the subject in mediation.

One of the central preoccupations of the *Life in a Day*—evident in both its structure and its thematic grouping, is the question of time, or rather the diarist's relationship to it. Philippe Lejeune writes, "dairies, even those created with the help of a computer, are addressed to a future self" (23-24). Diaries are often prized because of their private nature, and even here Lejeune suggests that diaries are not intended for a future public audience, but rather a future private audience of one: the author. But his insistence on the function of diaries to organize time for the subject are instructive here because it gets at the motivation for keeping diaries in the first place. It is not just that the diary serves to delineate experience chronologically, but also that the archive created by the practice re-presents a future self with a snapshot of the past. Because the conditions of subjective emergence can never be fully recovered, as Judith Butler has argued, the diary serves as a kid of stop-gap for this continual process of subjective loss. Diary writers don't aim to recreate those fundamental subjective conditions, but instead begin to account for the self in the present so that the future self can look back and try to piece together a narrative of emergence that serves to explain the yet to be imagined present. This is why Hill and Caouette's films use archival footage to narrate an individual story up to the present. While these individual films and photos may have seemed random and scattered at the moment of their creation, by weaving them together into a narrative, the present self is able to look back and at least attempt to address the process by which emergence was shaped. This is how the diary serves as both process for the present self and product for the future self.

So why is the figure of the editor, either visualized or implied through technique, so significant to a reading of these films as diary films? There are clear significant functions of editing for film that link it strongly to the diary form and thus make editing a crucial thematic of the diary film. First, editing creates flexible expressions of temporality, as is particularly dominant in *Life in a Day*; secondly, editing is a technic of expression as we see in *Tarnation*; and finally, editing is an aesthetic practice as Jerome Hill suggests in *Film Portrait*. What is different in these three films is the increasing erasure of the figure of the editor in favor of editing as meaning-making. So while we see the central figure of the editor at work in *Film Portrait*, we see direct allusions to his work in *Tarnation* while his function as a narrative figure is almost completely effaced in *Life in a Day*. This transition indicates that the work of the editor, far from being the specialized realm it is for Hill in 1973, is a technical function of everyday life because of the preponderances of self images and archival material that all subjects have access to. The question is no longer, is that person watching you, as it was during the early days of the Mass Observation project. The question now is how one exerts a form of agency over the multiple forms of surveillance that constitute sociality and governmentality.

The answer, as these films suggest, is through the technics of new media, which allow you to reshape the personal archive into a allusive, metaphoric reflection not just on where one is today, but how one got there; the very conditions that Judith Butler pinpoints as the source of the excessive need of self accounting (2005, 39). Because these conditions cannot be factually accounted for, they must by narrativized and, as these films suggest, aestheticized through the diaristic form, which has historically been the

provenance for such stories. This is why the films make such an overt connection to the archive as the source material for these diary films. The archive functions recursively: it suggests that the self accounting is *more* factual, even if more surrealistically edited and presented, because it is drawn from these historical or crowd-sourced documents that, in their unedited states, are documentary in the way that the diary is not. Here indexical footage stands as the historical record that the filmmakers pull apart and examine through the process of editing, manipulating the images in order to take the indexical image and make it account for a more complex reality outside the boundaries of the frame. And it is this reality beyond the confines of the frame to which the elaborate editing of all three films point. Hand-coloring, multiplication, and montage all suggest significant contexts that exceed the filmic frame. It is these other realities which must not only be accounted for, but that point to the deeper meaning of the indexical image on the screen. This is what editing makes clear to the viewer: these images might have a great degree of veracity because they are indexical, but they are simply, in fact, limited and surface, the reality behind the construction of the images, and thus the construction of the subject to which they point, can only be indicated through a complex process of editing which brings context and nuanced meanings into focus. These films indicate that it is through the destruction of the aura of indexicality that meaning really comes into being.

And this kind of approach is not necessarily radical for either the documentary film or for the diary form. There is, then, already a fictive element that Macdonald finds necessary to documentary filmmaking: “You have to take facts, and somehow find the story in there. You have to find the almost fictional thing that binds all these facts

together, because a bunch of random facts is meaningless" (Quinn 2013, 185). Macdonald's description of the necessity of fiction to the presentation of reality is strikingly aligned with Lejeune's notion of the work of diary. "One day is, in reality, a continuous sketchy mass," he writes, "and the diary is the sculptor who gives it its form…or a draftsman who draws a silhouette in a sketchbook with three pencil strokes" (179). What both Macdonald and Lejeune point to is the fact that even the narrative forms in which we place the most cultural value of 'truth' and 'reality' are coherent only as a result of their editing. And rather than suggesting that this manipulation moves such productions further from the truth, both the scholar and the filmmaker suggest that editing, in fact, brings such productions closer to the truth. The reason for this, as Lejeune asserts, is because "this work of sifting—separating the real, digesting it, rejecting most of it, and making sense of the rest—is the work of life itself" (179). The ongoing process of editing the archive is not just a mediated function of representation, but the very process by which one creates a coherent sense of self. Like Macdonald, Lejeune suggests that the "bunch of facts" that make up reality are, in fact, meaningless until subjected to the artistic eye of the editor, even the self-editor, who uses what is useful, and discards what is not. This specificity of medium in Lejeune's metaphor is no mere stylistic flourish. Lejeune sees the materiality of the diary form as crucial to its purpose. In his exploration of the development of the diary from wax tablets, to paper, to the computer, Lejeune is deeply concerned with how the materiality of the diary form shapes the discourse that emerges from it. By pointing to the raw materials of the sculptor and the draftsman, Lejeune likewise suggests that the nature of the raw materials of the diarist,

whether it be the pen and paper, or the computer screen, deeply affects the narrative that emerges, because it changes the nature of editing.

And the raw material these editors are working with, as they remind us in various ways, is an archive that is at once deeply personal, and necessarily public. This understanding of the diary as a public document, rather than a private practice, is exactly the understanding that all of these films are working from. In fact, their public diary presents the archival material as the private diary, and the edited form as the public document. So just as we see Caouette reworking his "testimonies" in the guise of various characters, we are privy to that diary process not simply as a practice, but as a public testament to his own process of revising and editing his experience through the adopted persona of someone else. But what I am also trying to get at, and what Lejeune points to in his metaphors of editing, is that all diarists work with a massive archive of material, be it the events of everyday life, or the home videos accumulated over decades: as the raw elements of not life, perhaps, but self-authored living. These fragments must be woven together by the authoring self as editor, but the archive still stands in its unedited form as the excess haunting the final project. The handwritten diary is notable for it discontinuity and gaps as Lejeune makes clear, but those gaps are not absences, they represent that which is not narrated but which informs the final edited product (170). Editing in the diary film is a process of both making the self visible by way of the chronological narrative, and making space for the self that exceeds or resists such representation. The aesthetic effects of such editing suggests the fragmentation, the connectivity, and the

continuous archiving that we have come to connect with surveillance models of sociality rooted in visually driven networked publics.

5. Selfies and Self Writing: Social Media Technologies of the Self

Thus far in this dissertation, I've explored the diaristic mode primarily as it has been theorized within the fields of literary and media studies. That is what I attempted to do initially in the following chapter, except that it kept falling to pieces. It never quite seemed to hang together in a convincing way. Instead, it read like a jumbled series of parts for which there was no coherent key. Describing my frustration to my chair, he told me that he thought I had a cathectic relationship to the material, which made the writing so difficult. He was right. That is why I begin this chapter in the autobiographical mode, something I typically deplore in critical writing. I indulge myself momentarily in the first person because the material seems to ask it of me. Not in the sense that it calls to me to be its savior, but it does represent something directly connected to, yet slightly different than the works I've explored in the previous chapters. The material seems to interpellate me directly in some way, hence the autobiographical opening.

The first step in reworking this material, then, was to move the entire chapter to the end of this dissertation, to recognize its place as both my starting and ending point for this project. The second step was for me to narrate the difficulty I've faced in pinning down the works I analyze in this chapter, perhaps because they are strangely resistant to categorization. On the surface, they are quite straightforward: photographs or videos featuring the producer holding handwritten signs of a confessional nature. But they are also surprisingly slippery, refusing to cohere to the diaristic mode I've been mapping out, while still evoking some of the same aesthetic characteristics. What I've come to realize is that these cue card confessions, as I have come to call them, stand apart because they

point to an aspect of the diaristic mode that I've yet to explore. Instead of a roadblock, I need to reframe them as a bridge to a more expansive and flexible definition of diaristic discourse: one that incorporates the diaristic mode not just as it has been theorized within literary and media theory, but that points to both the deeper historical roots and forward motion of this mode. So in this chapter I stretch much further back into history, through a reconsideration of Michel Foucault's genealogy of self writing as a technology of the self, and look to the present moment to consider what the persistent and widespread use of the cue card confession suggests about the future of the diaristic mode.

The example that led me to this topic was the cue card confession video of a teenage girl. After years of nearly constant online bullying, fifteen-year old Canadian teenager Amanda Todd responded by making an autobiographical YouTube video. In "My Story: Struggling, Bullying, Suicide, Self Harm," Amanda stands in front of the camera clad in a tank top, her perfectly curled hair flowing over one shoulder as she looks into the camera. The background music swells and she silently holds up a handwritten index card that reads, "Hello!" As the eight-minute black and white video progresses, these handmade cue cards detail an increasingly macabre autobiographical account of online harassment and bullying, self-harm, and suicide attempts that began after a semi-nude picture of Amanda was circulated online without her consent. Her own video similarly foregrounds her body, but it is partially obscured by the cue cards, and she constantly directs the gaze of her viewer to her written text. The cards are punctuated with emoticons, ellipses, and misspellings, highlighting the difficult process of narrating her experience. Although the circulation of an image of her body through social media

networks had been the source of so much of her trauma, Amanda chose a nearly identical process to try and wrest back control over the story of her past. Moreover, she used a formula that has become well established for confessing similar tales of bullying, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts: the transmedia cue card confession trope.

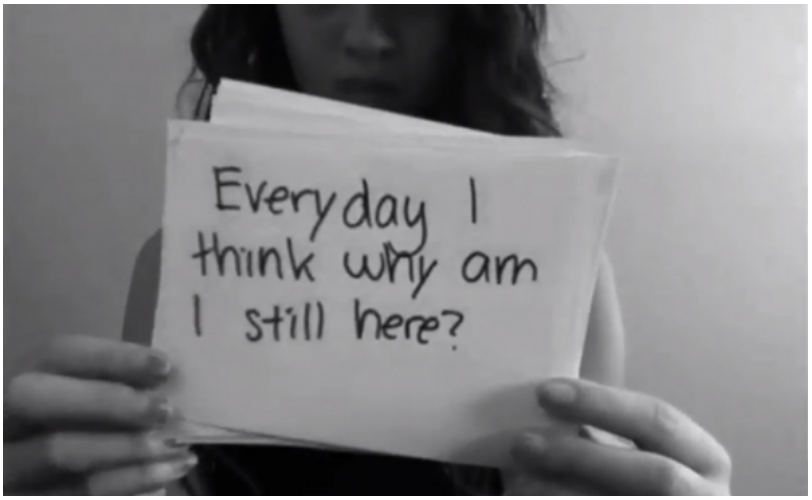


Fig. 15. Amanda Todd. "My Story: Struggling, Bullying, Suicide, Self Harm" (YouTube, 2012)

There is a coherent formula for this trope, and Amanda's example highlights some of its key characteristics. A cue card confession is an autobiographical account that circulates in the form of digital video or photography on social media. These digital videos and photographs are self produced, and the cue cards are typically handwritten index cards, sheets of paper, or whiteboards, which foreground the DIY aesthetic of the trope. The narratives conveyed by these handwritten cue cards reveals something deeply personal and not always obvious about the confessant, who is featured in the videos or photos holding her cue cards. The confessant is most often a teenager or young adult, like Amanda, and the image or video also always features the producer's body, either in part or in full, in a medium close-up. The videos do not feature dialogue, but are often set to

music, the lyrics of which contribute to the overall messaging of the video. Individual productions are almost always identified as part of a larger subgenre of the trope through the use of tags, titles, hashtags, or inclusion on a specific blog. Strikingly, a cue card confession is typically a one-off production, often differing greatly from a producer's other forms of social media presence. Although Amanda actually produced and posted many videos about her everyday life, her cue card confession differs quite significantly from these earlier videos in style and content.

But despite this difference within her individual practice, Amanda's cue card confession taps into both the current popularity of the trope, as well as its historical genealogy. Amanda's video, for instance, is only one of thousands of videos on YouTube made by teenagers that utilize this same cue card trope to relate autobiographical stories of bullying, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts. A similar method of cueing is used with the hashtag #whyidontneedfeminism on Tumblr, and famously used by first lady Michelle Obama in 2014 when she responded to the kidnapping of 176 Nigerian schoolgirls with a social media circulated photo of her holding a cue card that read #bringbackourgirls. The use of cue cards to report the speech of others has been used in awareness campaigns such as I, Too, Am Harvard and Project Unbreakable, where producers use cue cards to relate the speech of others. The trope has appeared in mainstream television commercials for MinuteMaid Orange Juice, the Minnesota Travel Board, and the pill Estroven. The trope has even been used to refer to its use within marketing: a friend recently texted me from the Inbound 2014 marketing convention in Boston to report that a marketing professional used a cue card confession video in a presentation on his unsuccessful

former sales practices. Cue cards, however, are far from new. They were originally developed in mid-century America for use off-camera to prompt the speech of performers in live television, and are still favored today over teleprompters for late-night talk shows. In front of the camera, cue cards have been featured in music videos by artists such as Bob Dylan and INXS, and in movies such as *Love Actually* and *Bob Roberts*. It is no exaggeration to state that the cueing trope is enjoying a current moment of discursive salience, but it has also been used perennially in various media forms for almost seventy years.

There are four key factors that define the trope in its current use and connect it to significant technologies of the self in the Classical and Christian traditions as Foucault has explored. The first is that the confessions are handwritten, suggesting the centrality of self writing, which Foucault has defined as an "element of self-training" that serves as "an agent of the transformation of the truth into *ēthos*" (1994, 209). Indeed, all of the cue card confessions ask for an ethical engagement on the part of the viewer: whether it's Michelle Obama's demand for the release of kidnapped schoolgirls, or Amanda Todd's plea for a friend, the cue card confessions are not just confessional, they seek to turn a personal truth into an ethical engagement. Secondly, self writing is typically confessional. While there are many examples of the trope employed for non-confessional discourse, the primary and most viral mode is autobiographical and confessional, which is why I will confine this analysis to those examples while still recognizing the widespread adoption of the trope for other modes of discourse, perhaps because of the ethos conveyed by the confessional mode. Whether relaying insults they've sustained or personal behavior, the

cue card confessions are revelatory, and they are highly focused on discourse about the self as it conditions their own sense of subjectivity. Which brings me to the third key characteristic, which is the image of the self. The cue card confessions always contain an image of the confessant, whether in full or in part. For most producers this is a self-portrait, but even when the image is captured by another, it is constructed as an autobiographical image authored by the subject of the photograph or video. This factor is particularly important for the cue card confessions in I, Too, Am Harvard and Project Unbreakable, which use the self-image in relationship to the discourse they are relating. Finally, these images are always public, always circulating in social media, suggesting the centrality of the other to the diaristic discourse. This is quite different than the diary as produced first for the self, and later made public, although it still retains some of the same self reflexive processes of production and editing. But whereas I've considered the question of audience only in relation to the lonelygirl15 hoax, the production and circulation of these images and videos requires a consideration of the audience. Not in the way of reading and analyzing viewer comments—that is the type of work already being well-handled in communication studies—but considering the question of audience as it shapes the mode of self writing. Understanding the cue card confessions primarily as public discourse intended for an interlocutor who may be personally known, and who will certainly include those that are unknown and anonymous, I want to consider how this informs the changing nature of diaristic discourse. By anticipating an audience dispersed across both time and space, the cue card confession "makes the writer 'present' to the one to whom he addresses it. And present not simply through the information he

gives…rather present with a kind of immediate, almost physical presence," as Foucault notes of epistolary self writing (216). As both diaristic and public discourse, then, the cue card confessions suggest a new technology of the self that engages key components of self writing in the past, and gestures toward its process of transformation in the present.

Self Writing, Surveillance, and Sociality

Working toward a flexible definition of this trope is one of the aims of this chapter because the trope has cohered so consistently across various mediums and purposes. In its contemporary use, the reinvigoration of the trope points to significant elements of social media expression that speaks across the fields of literary, aesthetic, media, communication, and rhetorical study. Despite this scholarly nexus, the cue card confessions remain surprisingly understudied. In the only scholarly article to date on the topic, communications scholar Sabina Misoch uses a quantitative analysis of cue card confession videos—which she refers to as 'card stories'—to argue that the cue card confessions create an "asynchronous, unidirectional situation, which enhances private self-awareness and a low social presence" (2014 10). This regulation of social media messaging, she argues, makes producers more likely to self-disclose than they would in face-to-face communication scenarios. Misoch's study provides an overview of the key characteristics of the video subgenre, but one of the limitations of her study is that she does not address the historical and aesthetic contexts of the trope, which neglects an important factor in understanding how the cue card confessions cohered as a culturally legible form of expression for particular types of self-disclosure. Similarly, she doesn't

address the transmedia development across video and photography, obscuring important connections between the two contemporary forms of cue card confessions.

In a similar manner there seems to be a gap in the current scholarship on social media that overlooks this kind of "unidirectional" and singular form of social media expression. For instance, in one of the most comprehensive analyses of production factors for social media expression, social media scholars Alice Marwick and danah boyd report in their analysis of Twitter engagement that the collaborative development of communicative norms afforded by the social media environment similarly includes an ongoing affective demand for authenticity (2011, 117). Marwick and boyd argue that social media fosters a form of "publicity culture" which rewards producers "for displaying themselves in an easily-consumed public way using tropes of consumer culture" (2011, 119). Marwick and boyd point out that social media audiences are simultaneously expecting authenticity *and* consumability. Or that authenticity is a prerequisite for engaged consumption. As Amanda's video makes clear, cue card confessions are explicitly engaged with this aesthetic of exposure and consumption, and yet, the trope is also understood to present one of the most "authentic" versions of the self available in social media.

Featuring both a visible body and a narrative presented as an image, the cue card confessions quite literally put the producer and their story on display. But they also mobilize this dynamic for the particular ethos of their productions. As Misoch makes clear, the cue card confessions frustrate the affordances of social media interactivity in their unidirectional presentation of self that establishes an authorial rather than dynamic

relationship with an audience. In contrast to the presentation of the author as editor, as is explored in diary films. The cue card confessions insist on a form of authorship that precedes video capture. Through this move they realistically anticipate and fulfill a visual requirement for viral reception, and therefore put forward a production that is easily consumable in terms of a warranting of the labor of self-authoring rather than, say, of the work of detecting whether the self-authorship is "merely" theatrical rather than "documentary."

In their careful repetition of the trope, then, cue card confessions create productions that are both easily consumable and which 'hold' onto the viewer, as Banet-Weiser terms it, through their claim to authenticity. This suggests that the cue card confession enjoys a unique *kairotic* salience that conveys both intimacy and social media savvy. *Kairos* represents the fourth dimension of rhetorical appeal; it is the expression of an understanding of the appropriateness of the timing, form, and content of expression. This is the opportune nature of expression, the right thing expressed in just the right way and in just the right moment. *Kairos* represents the tacit nexus of authenticity: the socially agreed upon expressive harmony of media form, consumability, and intimacy. The effective mobilization of these affects speaks to a canny grasp of the rhetoric of self writing in social media. The rhetorical dimension of Marwick and boyd's Twitter study is marked because the authors draw upon theories of "imagined and actual" audiences in order to articulate their theory of social media audience construction, which is largely based on a concept developed in composition theory by Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford. In turn, Ede and Lunsford were working through Walter Ong's theories of the invoked

audience, suggesting the imbricated theoretical concerns of media studies and rhetorical theory. Ede and Lunsford stress that the primary task of writers is not to anticipate what a reader might expect and then adjust their writing to suit that demand, but instead, to use "semantic and syntactic resources…to provide cues for the reader—cues which help to define the role or roles the writer wishes the reader to adopt in responding to the text" (1984: 160). *Kairos*, then, is not just anticipating an audience, but anticipating the modes by which an author will make herself legible to that audience. These "cues" work within self writing to invoke an audience to whom the writer is legible. This further articulation of the complex notion of correspondence evokes Foucault's theorization of the aim of self writing as "bringing into congruence the gaze of the other and that gaze which one aims at oneself" (221). Through self writing, then, the author cues the viewer to see her as she sees herself. Authenticity is thus generated by aligning social perception with self perception.

Ede and Lunsford suggest that cueing helps define the role of the reader, and this notion returns us to the original use of cue cards and their transformation in use across media forms. Cue cards were originally developed for live comedic television in the 1940s and are still favored today over teleprompters for late night comedy show hosts because they direct the gaze of the performer toward a space either below or off camera, creating a visual connection between performers or between a performer and the audience, this sense of shared perception imbuing the performance with an affect of

intimacy.[47] This connection also relies on the physical labor of an unseen, off-camera body that develops a similarly intimate connection with the performer through the process of cueing. When the process of cueing is revealed, as is often done on late-night shows that rely on cue cards, it is a moment in which the apparatus of television production is revealed.[48] This revelation of the set as a limited and constructed space, as well as the performer's reliance on the language of another, is a moment of reflexivity that calls the viewer's attention to both the constructed nature of the live television performance, as well as the unseen labor of various bodies who make such a seamless construction possible. These moments of revelation also work to detach speech from the body of the performer, and relocate it, or double its embodiment within the body of the unseen laborer off-screen, often to great comedic effect because this embodiment is read as a moment of dissonance.

Despite this momentum, the study of social media as a contemporary mode of autobiography is still largely absent. Scholars primarily theorize social media as primarily a communicative practice. This is where a reconsideration of Foucault's theories of self writing is particularly useful, because it offers an important bridging of these two theoretical fields. This is particularly true if we read such productions as diaristic, because the diary is both accepted as and liminal to studies of autobiography as literary scholars Kylie Cardell and Philippe Lejeune demonstrate. Lejeune emphasizes the "dynamic, forward-looking image" of the diary as a project that documents the past in

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[47] For a full history of the development of cue cards, see Karen Herman's 1997 interview with Barney McNulty for *Archive of American Television*.

[48] *Saturday Night Live*, *Conan*, and *The Late Show* are just a few examples of live television shows that have used the revelation of the cue card holder for comedic effect.

order to project a more cohesive subjectivity into the future (207). Moreover, Lejeune and Cardell both note that the diary is often an addressee for the self, a correspondent who never answers, but always receives self writing. In this way, the diary constitutes an ongoing practice by which one "bring[s] into congruence the gaze of the other and that gaze which one aims at oneself" as Foucault states of self writing. What I am suggesting here is that the cue card confessions represent a hybrid mode where self writing is both diaristic and a mode of correspondence. It is both addressed to an Other, and to the self, and thus offers, as Foucault suggests, a way of turning the individual and the social gaze on the self.

This is also why it is important to note that the cue card confessions are addressed to a public, but not necessarily to engender a response. There is, of course, the consideration of engagement that is vital to social media expression, but I am more interested in how this form of self writing constitutes a "technique of living" as Foucault terms it, whose significance rests in the action of self writing—the repeated action—more than the response. And it is from this understanding that I suggest that the cue card confessions enact the *kairos* of social media expression as a space of self writing through the structure of correspondence. At the same time, they are dependent upon a response to enact their ethical imperative. In other words, the cue card confessions are, like diary writing, addressed to an Other who is not expected to respond, but who is expected to register the confessional act.

In this assertion, and differently than Jodi Dean's 2010 treatment of self-writing in social media as "drive" motivated in general by loss rather than communicative

virtuosity, I am thus arguing that the diaristic mode in social media may indeed indicate, in some instances, a new stage of virtuosic self writing. In his two essays, "Self Writing" and "Technologies of the Self," Foucault traces the development of the entanglement of two classical principles: "Know Thyself," and "Care of the Self" (228). While deeply connected, Foucault traces how "Know Thyself" begins to supersede and obscure "Care of the Self," particularly with the rise of Christianity, "because our morality, a morality of asceticism, insists that the self is that which one can reject" (228). As such, he charts a transition from Classical to Christian modes of discourse in which the care of the self moves from a primary practice of ethical knowledge to an immoral site of self indulgence that requires pastoral surveillance. Moving even past pastoral to scientific and juridical surveillance, Foucault considers the rise of confessional discourse as a mode of governmentality in *The History of Sexuality, Volume I*, whereby self knowledge becomes increasingly embedded in embodied practices. This evolution, he argues, leads to discourses of sexuality as a marker of identity rather than a physical practice (1978).

Rather than suggesting that contemporary self writing in social media has moved beyond any of these earlier modes, I intend to suggest how they inform self writing in the present. At the same time, I read this turn to the anonymous and dispersed social sphere as the primary site of self writing in the present as indicating a new ethos for self writing. The cue card confessions are correspondence, confession, embodied, and engaged in self governmentality like self writing of the past. But their primary aim is the projection of a subjective legibility governed by visibility and consumability, and thus also by disappearance and precarity. So while self writing still evokes the "relation between

writing and vigilance," as Foucault notes, today that vigilance is both an individual and a social practice of and against often feminized precarity vis-a-vis a globalizing biopolitics of the future, and as such constitutes a key site of contestation for sociality and subjectivity in networked social spheres (232).

Cue Card Confession Photographs

Foucault takes care to foreground the visuality of letter writing as a technology of the self: "it should be understood that the letter is both a gaze one focuses on the addressee (through the missives he receives, he feels looked at) and a way of offering oneself to the gaze by what one tells him about oneself" (216). Although the letter of self accounting is revelatory for only one party, Foucault suggests that such a revelation in fact works to enact a feeling of surveillance—one becomes subject to the gaze of the Other—in both parties. This sense of looking while being looked at is particularly poignant in the photograph strand of the cue card confessions. By including the handwritten confession along with a direct gaze into the camera, the photographs seem to visualize the mode of surveillance that was abstractly enacted by letter writing.

In the Tumblr feed Women Against Feminism, the visual blog is composed of selfies of women holding handwritten accounts that detail the reasons why the authors reject feminism. In a photo posted on September 14, 2014, a bespectacled woman dressed in a blue t-shirt leans in toward the camera, her smile emerging just above her handwritten cue card that reads: "I don't need feminism because: As a self-respecting adult, I am accountable for my own actions, I don't blindly cling on to emotional



Fig. 16. Unknown Producer. "#Women Against Feminism." (Tumblr, 2014)

arguments/propaganda and recognizing that a victim complex is not empowering. #womenagainstfeminism." Red marker decorates the cue card, highlighting or underlining certain words or phrases, such as "feminism," but also framing the word "empowering" as if to give it even more prominence in the account. The resulting image recalls a graded composition paper, with the instructor's red pen drawing the author's attention to phrases or ideas that need further articulation. For this producer, however, the irony of decrying feminism by using the gendered argument that feminism is grounded in an emotional response, and therefore akin to a form of propaganda, goes unnoticed by the red pen. In keeping with the force of her political statement, the visual composition of the cue card evokes an authority figure who has the ability to judge both the text and the political self-authoring it engenders. She usurps the lived experience that led one to

feminism with the visual power of the red pen at the same moment that her face registers a friendly, even somewhat effacing presence in the way she slightly covers her chin with her cue card. This paradoxical image adheres to the consumability of the selfie and the authenticity of the handwritten statement and assumes the authority inherent in each.

This particular picture highlights one of the most visible and significant visual component of the cue card confessions: the importance of the handwritten cue card to evoke complex notions of authorship. In one of the most well known photos from British artist Gillian Wearing's 1992-1993 cue card confession photographic series, a well-dressed young man, presumably employed in business, holds a sign that reads, "I'm Desperate." Despite the words he's written, the blonde young man looks directly into the camera with a slightly amused expression, as if he, too, sees the humor in the dissonance between his appearance and his message. To create the project, Wearing approached random strangers on the streets of London during the creation of the series, and asked her subjects to write down whatever was in their heads, and then photographed the strangers holding their signs. The project includes over fifty color photographs, and the subjects range from retirees dreaming of the countryside, to a homeless veteran angry that his service gave him "nothink." The image of the desperate businessman, however, emerges as the distilled essence of the ethos of the project. Perhaps this is due in part to Wearing's choice to title the project, "Signs that Say What You Want Them to Say and Not Signs that Say What Someone Else Wants You to Say."



Fig. 17. Gillian Wearing. "I'm Desperate." ***Signs that Say What You Want Them to Say and Not Signs that Say What Someone Else Wants You to Say"*** **(Tate, 1992-1993).**

Clearly the desperate businessman is confessing something very personal, something that disrupts our expectations of his thoughts based on his image. In this way he denies what the viewers expect or even want him to say, and reveals instead an emotion that surprises and contradicts the image he projects with his dress, appearance, and even expression. Wearing thus indicates that the cue cards represent a truer expression of the individual than even the documentary image of their bodies. Wearing writes that this privileging of the cue cards is a result of the way that the project "interrupts the logic of photo-documentary and snapshot photography by the subjects' clear collusion and engineering of their own representation" (1997, 3). Wearing asserts

that the presence of the handwritten cue card endows the subject with autobiographical authorship of the image, even though the actual photograph was taken by another person. She further argues that the handwritten cards usurp the indexical authority of the photographic image in a remediation of the documentary logic of the photograph, a striking argument for a visual artist.

Wearing's series, like the other cue card confessions, remediates both the material logic of the photograph and the function of text by foregrounding the handwritten text within a photorealistic image. By using the handwritten account, these producers implicitly engage the use of handwritten text in the tradition of both television cue cards and diaries. The latter is especially invoked in the confessional nature of the narratives revealed on the cue cards. But this explains only part of the significance of the handwritten text, as it would be employed in any medium. The handwritten text conveys an authority over the emotional account, as well as the affordances of the medium itself, an authority that is often effaced by the interactivity of social media. The handwritten text, however, also asserts an indexical authority that digital texts cannot claim to the same degree. Like analogue photography, the handwritten text enjoys an authoritative relationship to truth-value due to the material imprint registered by the means of production.[49] The handwritten text bears the material trace of the hand that imprinted it, just as analogue photography materializes through the direct imprint of light. In the idiosyncrasies of spelling and punctuation, and the physical imprint that results from the

[49] In his foundational work on the logic of semiotics C.S. Peirce asserts that the indexical sign is linked to its referent through an actual connection that isn't troubled by interpretation and thus maintains a 'real' relationship to that which it represents. Within media theory, indexicality typically refers to signs that are created through a material imprint of the process that created the sign, and both meanings are invoked in my use of the term here.

pressure of the ink or marker tip on the paper, handwriting marks the historical event of the writing of the cue cards in a distinctly material way. Unlike the transitory nature of circulation, or the seemingly ephemeral nature of digital formats, the handwritten text stands as a marker of a particular moment than survives in its specificity. This is apparent in the anti-feminist's use of underlining in red pen, or in Amanda's use of emoticons, as well as in the Wearing series, which captures the handwritten sign exactly as it is written, misspellings and all. These differences within the handwritten account individualize each cue card confession photograph or video, even when it coheres fully with the characteristics of the larger trope.

When reading the cue cards, it seems almost as if we are able to access the producer's innermost thoughts via the handwritten document. The intimacy and privacy of the diaristic genre, paired with the indexicality of the handwritten text, grants these productions a high level of authenticity, an affect that the producers rely on to assert their authority over their related account. But the function of the cue cards is not simply to record for one's self a revelatory statement; the cue cards are always meant as public discourse, a kind of circulating correspondence that remains attached to the image of the producer's body. In this way, as Foucault points out, a cue card confession photo "sets up a face-to-face meeting" with the reader that, paired with the autobiographical image and direct gaze of the author, projects "the reciprocity of the gaze and examination" (216). Foucault suggests that we are ethically implicated by our reading in such instances. While we feel a mediated distance evoked by the screen or the glossy surface of the photograph, we are still addressed by the diaristic discourse. Just as we see, we are also seen. The

result of this double process, Foucault maintains, is that such communication "works toward the subjectivation of true discourse…it is a way of giving ourselves to that gaze about which we must tell ourselves that it is plunging into the depths of our heart at the moment we are thinking" (216-217). The significance of the handwritten cue card is that the indexicality of handwriting projects an immediate authenticity: these are the producer's own thoughts, authored by his own hand. Because we affirm their authenticity, they have an ethical power that implicates the reader. Because this process of confession is so deeply enculturated as a vital function of subjectivity, such discourse works to affirm the subjectivity of the producer and to interpellate the viewer. Both, then, are entangled in the discursive production of the diaristic discourse as photographic correspondence.

Misoch approaches this idea from another angle, while similarly affording a discursive advantage to the author. "To write instead of to tell," she argues, "means having more control over both one's feelings as well as the disclosed content for the disclosing individual" (2014, 7-8). Misoch suggests that interpersonal verbal interaction leads to more unpredictable emotional dynamics, due to the visible signs of response from the interlocutor. Misoch suggests that the process of writing affords an editing stage, whereby the author has the chance to view and process her emotions before projecting them onto the screen. Moreover, by using the photofilmic apparatus, the producer stages a further mediation between herself and her reader, giving her more distance than would be possible in face-to-face communication. So although the cue card confessions feel raw and immediate to the viewer, they have already been discursively

processed by the author and are, in fact, highly mediated. In this way, the photographic correspondence truly does gaze at the viewer with a power that results from the editing and mediation process. This is part of what gives such images so much power.

An understanding of these images as both authentic and emotionally resonant through their interpellation of the viewer is at the heart of the aims of social media expression. As I suggested in the introduction, the effective mobilization of these affects speaks to a canny grasp of the rhetoric of self writing in social media. *Kairos* is often described as the fourth dimension of the rhetorical appeal, but has become an increasing focus of rhetorical analysis as the field has experienced a "re-turn to the public sphere" in order to more accurately account for the multimodality of writing and speaking within networked sociality. [50] Scholars of digital rhetoric have particularly engaged with *kairos* in order to account for the multimodality of digital productions. Marwick and boyd's draws upon composition theories of "imagined and actual" audiences in order to articulate a theory of social media audience construction, which is largely based on a concept developed in composition theory by Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford. Ede and Lunsford stress that the primary task of writers is not to anticipate what a reader might expect and then adjust their writing to suit that demand, but instead, to use "semantic and syntactic resources…to provide cues for the reader—cues which help to define the role or roles the writer wishes the reader to adopt in responding to the text" (1984, 160). *Kairos*, then, is not just anticipating an audience, but anticipating the modes by which an author will make herself legible to that audience. These "cues" as Ede and Lunsford call them,

[50] David M. Sheridan et. al. discuss this public turn in rhetorical theory at length in *The Available Means of Persuasion: Mapping a Theory and Pedagogy of Mutimodal Public Rhetoric.* (2014).

work within writing to invoke an audience to whom the writer is legible. This further articulation of the complex notion of correspondence evokes Foucault's theorization of the aim of self writing as "bringing into congruence the gaze of the other and that gaze which one aims at oneself" (221). Through self writing, then, the author cues the viewer to see her as she sees herself.

This visual component of *kairos* is particularly pronounced for the cue card confession photographs that directly engage issues of identity. One of the most significant collections of these photographs is the I, Too, Am Harvard project. I, Too, Am Harvard is a Tumblr blog featuring black Harvard students whose cue cards cite the speech of others that marginalizes their identity as students at the most elite university in the country through comments of racial microaggression. In one of the photographs, a young woman wearing a white sweater stands against an all-white concrete wall. She holds up a small whiteboard in front of her chest and the red handwritten text on the board reads, "Don't you wish you were white like the rest of us? —Old friend." To the right of her body, at the same level as her head, the hashtag #itooamharvard has been superimposed in black over the white wall. The woman looks directly into the camera with a slightly bemused expression, as if just remembering the statement recorded here on the whiteboard. The brilliant aesthetics of the photograph invoke a visual rendering of the statement: the all-white background, the white sweater, and the whiteboard surround and almost envelop the woman. Moving against this almost literal whitewashing that the campaign reacts against, the viewer's eye moves from the dark red text up and away from the vast expanse of white and toward the woman's frank expression, and her dark wavy

hair that draws the eye right to the hashtag. The woman's face and hair counteract the oppressive feeling of whiteness in the frame, leaving the eye with moments of relief and particularity that the all-white background denies.

What the I, Too, Am Harvard campaign visualizes is the performance of race that is expected of hybrid subjects. Performance studies scholar José Esteban Muñoz explores this concept of racial and sexual hybridity in depth, and articulates the forms of performances it engenders. He writes that performative moments of reflexivity, such as, for my purposes here, the cue card confession photographs, express hybridity "not [as] a fixed positionality but a survival strategy [for those] who are subject to the violence that institutional structures reproduce" (84). These Harvard students are visualizing the hybrid performance their status as racialized bodies and elite students calls upon them to produce. They are expected to embody a particular cultural notion of blackness in a historically white space, just as their status as intellectuals undermines notions of the role or appropriate location of blackness within society. By cueing the viewer to repeat the microaggressions lodged against them, the producers of the I, Too, Am Harvard trope use their bodies to ground the rhetorical violence of such speech, bringing the viewer's immediate attention to the ethical implications of such a gesture. The selfies use self writing to cue the viewer into correspondence with the gaze to which they are continuously subjected. Part of the ergodic function of this blog is to ask the viewer to align with either the speech or the spoken against, forcing the work of ethical alignment either way. As a whole the blog, with its collection of dozens of images, also works simultaneously to unburden any particular body from bearing the entire weight of cultural

notions of blackness, as the cited speech asks them to do.

Such complex engagements with the politics of identity gain discursive coherence as they are adopted and transformed in social media forms. In the case of I, Too, Am Harvard, the line has been adopted as a hashtag and a Twitter handle, carrying the original meaning conveyed by the cueing trope into other platforms and contexts.



Fig. 18. Unknown author. "March 1, 2014" *I, Too, Am Harvard.* (Tumblr, 2014).

Such transition thus allows the trope to accrue additional meaning, but the ethos conveyed by the original cue card confession remains: the black American subject bearing witness to overt and covert forms of racism that reflect social norms about where and how blackness circulates in our culture. As a result, the hashtag has been deployed effectively in other mediums such as Twitter, and on other topics such as the police shooting of unarmed citizen Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO in the summer of 2014. The I, Too, Am Harvard extension of the *kairos* of the cue card confession photographs demonstrates the way in which cueing affords a kind of authorship over both the message displayed on the cue cards, and the message conveyed by the visual image of the body.

In a similar manner, the producers who employ the cue card confession trope in the Project Unbreakable Tumblr blog similarly use the image of their body to assert a mediatized, rather than embodied form of vulnerability. In this iteration of the trope, producers hold up cue cards that recount statements expressed to them by their attackers. In revealing themselves as victims of sexual assault, the producers confess a deep trauma.



Fig. 19. Unknown Author. *Project Unbreakable*. (Tumblr, 2014).

But in placing the image of their body in opposition to the statements of their attackers, the producers refuse the narrative of victimhood imposed upon them by their attackers. In one black and white photo, a twenty-something woman holds up a cue card that reads, "'That's a lesson in understanding each other sexually.' –the guy I was dating." The woman looks directly into the camera as she holds the cue card. With her head tilted to the side and a determined expression on her face, she is visibly discounting the validity of the words of her attacker. Even more significantly, however, she wears a tank top. The bare skin of her chest and shoulders is visible over the top of the cue card. Invoking the

rhetoric of slut shaming that haunted Amanda Todd, and which attempts to blame sexual assaults on victims who wear revealing clothing, this producer assertively bares her body to challenge such discourse. Refusing to be educated by the 'lesson' of either her attacker or discourses of victim blaming, this woman challenges the viewer to accept both her ownership of her sexuality and her experience as a victim of sexual assault. She cues the viewer to see her appropriately and, at the same time, cues the viewer to read the larger social situation for which she speaks—like the I, Too, Am Harvard project—congruently. These examples use the *kairos* of their self writing to adjust the gaze aimed not only at them, but at the larger social group of which they are a part, and use that gaze to adjust "the rules of a technique of living" as Foucault defines self writing (221).

Cue Card Confession Videos

These broad visual similarities across time and media forms suggest that the cue card confession is more than just a subgenre of autobiographical expression; it is a coherent discursive trope that supports a wide range of meanings. While the most familiar definition of "trope" refers to a recurring literary or discursive device, I am interested in pursuing this concept through and beyond that definition. It is aptly applied to the cue card confessions because cueing is a both an action and a meaning that coheres across a variety of applications—from live television, to movies, to social media—it is a recognized vehicle for particular types of expression. But the original Greek *tropos* also means, "to turn, to direct" and this meaning is also important to an understanding of the cue card confessions. In one sense, the trope signals a turn away from other forms of

social media expression, but it also invokes the turning of the cards to reveal the narrative content. As cue cards were originally developed to direct live performers in their speech, the cue card confessions too, seem to direct the viewer to repeat the speech or the cueing device itself. The layers of meaning within the term 'trope'—as both discursive device and performative action—best capture the complexity of the cue card confessions.

Cue cards were originally developed for live comedic television in the 1940s and are still favored today over teleprompters for late night comedy show hosts because they direct the gaze of the performer toward a space either below or off camera, creating a visual connection between performers or between a performer and the audience, imbuing the performance with an affect of liveness and intimacy.[51] This affective connection relies on the physical labor of an unseen, off-camera body that develops a similarly intimate connection with the performer through the process of cueing. When the process of cueing is revealed, as is often done on late-night shows that rely on cue cards, it is a moment in which the primarily invisible function of television production is revealed.[52] This revelation of the set as a limited and constructed space, as well as the performer's reliance on the language of another, is a moment of reflexivity that calls the viewer's attention to both the constructed nature of the live television performance, as well as the disappeared labor of various bodies who make such a seamless construction possible. It also works to detach the speech from the body of the performer, and relocate it, or double its embodiment within the body of the unseen laborer off-screen, often to great comedic

[51] For a full history of the development of cue cards, see Karen Herman's 1997 interview with Barney McNulty for *Archive of American Television*.

[52] *Saturday Night Live*, *Conan*, and *The Late Show* are just a few examples of live television shows that have used the revelation of the cue card holder for comedic effect.

effect because this embodiment is read as a moment of dissonance.

This reflexive function of the visibility of cue cards is the primary discursive circulation outside of live television. The cue card trope first appears in D.A. Pennebaker's 1967 documentary film, *Don't Look Back*, about Bob Dylan's 1965 British tour on the cusp of his emergence as a certified celebrity, and has been used perennially in films and music videos.[53] The framework established by Dylan remains remarkably similar in the cue card confession social media trope. In the opening scene of *Don't Look Back*, Dylan stands in front of a stark alleyway that is cluttered with construction scaffolding and garbage bags. To his left, the poet Alan Ginsburg stands absorbed in a conversation with someone else, completely ignoring Dylan. Dylan holds cue cards of poster-board size, and turns them over at a quick pace that is timed to the lyrics of his own song, "Subterranean Homesick Blues," that plays in the background. Although Dylan is dressed casually and adopts a neutral stance, he is absorbed in the work of turning over the cards in time with the music, and makes direct eye contact with the camera only occasionally. The labor of cueing appears to consume most of his attention. He often works to adjust the height of the cards, or to shift the stack; each gesture divides our attention between the work he is performing and the lyrics being visually and aurally narrated.

Pennebaker and Dylan create what Espen Arseth has termed an "ergodic" experience, a textual engagement in which "nontrivial effort is required to allow the

[53] A selected genealogy of the cue card trope includes the following: INXS's 1987 music video for "Mediate;" the 1992 Lionsgate film *Bob Roberts*, the 2003 Universal film *Love Actually*, and the 2012 "Heir Time" video by rapper MaLLy.

reader to traverse the text" (1, 1997). Arseth suggests that an ergodic experience is one that requires conscious cognitive effort in order to find a clear path to meaning. Dylan's video doesn't evoke the kind of work required by the *I-Ching*, or other cybertexts described by Arseth, but it does require cognitive labor in order to create meaning. Arseth's theory suggests that certain images and texts don't allow viewers to passively intake information. They are instead required to seek out meaning through conscious cognitive engagement. In cue card confessions, such as Dylan's seminal example, our attention is divided between many images within a single frame. The remediation of text within the video troubles the division between text and image, and asks for two forms of viewership at the same time.



Fig. 20. Pennebaker, D.A. Still from *Don't Look Back*. (1967)

The dynamic performance of cueing depends on more than just the cue cards themselves; the body of the producer is foregrounded as an integral part of the message

as well. Dylan is dressed casually in jeans, a button-down shirt, and a leather vest, his hair full and wild around his face in his video. Smoking a cigarette, and struggling to keep up with the pace, his manner is jovial and relaxed, as if the cueing were part of some elaborate joke about the song itself. This visualization of the doubled labor of performance—here both Dylan and the viewer are being tasked with a kind of simultaneous work—calls our attention to the labor required in meaning-making. But perhaps even more significantly, Dylan points to the embodied action of writing and communicating. As viewers we focus on his body at the moments that his gestures either line up or create discordance between the narrative and the image. The body, then, becomes a significant component of the cue card confession videos, that connects both to a historical relationship between the body and confession, and also contemporary theories of the complex affect of visual media.

In a different engagement with the ethos attached to an image of the body, what Amanda recounts in her cue cards is the vulnerability she faced as a result of the unwanted circulation of an image of her body. That image began to autobiographically represent her not just as a person, but as a particular type of person. The early portion of her cue card confession covers how an image of her body came to serve as a tipping point for later bullying behavior. She writes,

In 7th grade I would go with friends on webcam
Meet and talk to new people.
I got called stunning, beautiful, perfect etc…
He wanted me to flash…
So I did…1 year later…
I got a msg on facebook
From him…Don't know how he knew me..
It said…If you don't put on a show for me I will send ur boobs

He knew my address, school relatives, friends family names.
Christmas break…
Knock at my door at 4am…
It was the police…my photo was sent to everyone

The dangerous potential of such spectacles is apparent in Amanda's case in particular; the image of her exposed body circulated beyond her control with a kind of pernicious permanence, but it was also the record of a brief moment, a live encounter that was supposed to pass away into memory. Instead it endured and persisted in its circulation. This image became a spectacle of her identity, and came to represent her as both vulnerable and sexually available, two factors that characterize her later treatment by lovers and enemies. This transformation of her identity was one she found almost impossible to escape. And yet she chose to again place her body within the frame of the camera for her cue card confession. This seeming dissonance highlights another key aesthetic component of the cue card confessions: the performative function of the representative image of the body.

Amanda engages the power of that particular initial image through the very deliberate positioning of her body within her own video. Although her body is front and center, the cue cards cover the majority of her chest, the words almost literally shielding her breasts from the voyeuristic gaze. But she also, interestingly, frames the majority of her head out of the video. She is visible, but also partially hidden, as if through the framing she reasserts control over the exposure of her body. Amanda's video is unique in this aspect, because most of the producers feature their entire body in their photographs or videos, but such aesthetic decisions foreground the rhetorical function of the body within the act of cueing.

In many ways, this evokes the function of the body in the lonelygirl15 videos, or the work of Camgirls as I've discussed in earlier chapters. Media scholar Theresa M. Senft uses the term "grab" to define the characteristics of looking and being seen online, and connects this affective experience to the physical experience of being touched, sometimes inappropriately. For Senft, the grab refers to both the physical actions of capturing a screen shot—as was done to Amanda's webchat image—and the experience of visual arrest by way of a spectacular image (2008, 46). In her extension of Senft's work, media scholar Susanna Paasonen uses the concept of the grab of online images to explain the appeal of mainstream online pornography. Paasonen underscores the active element of the grab, the two-directional experience of literally being touched or moved, and responding in kind. When we are grabbed by an image, she suggests, the "affective dynamic is contingent and often disturbing" (2011, 262). The grab is not always pleasurable, but the experience connects the conscious and physical experience of a negotiated relationship with another. The grab of the image is so often used to describe images of the body because it allows for a theorization of mediated physicality that such images evoke.

The cue card confessions evoke this visual archive of the body in order to grab the attention of the viewer, but the grab of these images also helps us get at the physicality of both the bodies represented and the repeated physical gesture of cueing that allows the diaristic narrative to unfold. While the cue card confessions are narrative images, they are also overtly physical and performative. The repeated gesture is the handling, shifting, and turning of the cards, as Dylan's video demonstrates. The producer literally grabs and

releases the text as image, and invites the viewer to do the same. This grabbing gesture calls our attention to the body, while dividing it between that body and the confessional narrative it slowly reveals. This process creates a kind of titillating experience. Like a strip tease, the slow reveal of unseen secrets in the cue card confessions grabs the viewer's attention, and promises to fulfill the endless desire to see more.

This performative element of cueing is similarly utilized in the YouTube video of Jonah Mowry, one of the most viral videos of the cue card confession vlog subgenre. The video frames the teenaged Jonah as he sits on his couch, earbuds dangling from his ears. His second cue card reads, "I look happy, right?" and he smiles into the camera as he lowers the cards. That smile quickly fades as he holds up the next card: "well I'm not," his face growing increasingly gloomy as he drops the stack of cue cards into his lap. As his story progresses via the cue cards, he eventually breaks down in tears. In one crucial moment, Jonah reveals that he has practiced self-harm in the form of cutting, and drops the cue cards to show the scars covered by his t-shirt. This moment of the grab—Jonah literally grabs his shirt, but our attention is also grabbed by what such a gesture promises to reveal—is not simply about making a spectacle of self-harm. In fact, the scars are barely visible because of the resolution of the video. Jonah's gesture, in its contradiction of the narrative, foregrounds the separation he feels from his image as a happy teenager. The scars can be read almost as a process of cutting into that image, and as minimizing the feeling of mediation within the self: a process that many of the cue card confession videos attest to. By making those scars visible, by bringing them to the surface, Jonah makes visible how the logics of mediation enact physical realities. Mediation itself grabs

us, and begins to structure not just our relationship to the social, as Debord argues, but to the very self, as Jonah's cutting suggests.

For Jonah, cutting was an embodied response to the alienation he experiences as a result of his sexual identification as a gay youth, a context that is hinted at in the names he recounts that have been hurled at him: "gay, fag, homo." Recounting those names in text, just like revealing his injuries in the form of his scars, makes visible the social and personal separation discursively enacted on Jonah. In her work on emotions, cultural theorist Sara Ahmed challenges us to rethink the purpose of scars: "the covering [of scars] always exposes the injury, reminding us of how it shapes the body" (2004, 202).



Fig. 21. Mowry, Jonah. Still from "Whats Goin On." (YouTube, 2010)

The scar thus becomes both mediation and mediatization. It separates us temporally from Jonah's injury, but in its material persistence it makes visible the physical enactment of othering that the injury attempted to overcome. In straining against the grainy resolution to glimpse the promised scars on the provocatively bared skin, we are grabbed by the physicality of the image, of the scar, and the ability of such a sign to both cover over and reveal the injury beneath.

The majority of the cue card confessions evoke physical pain in some way. This is one of the ethical challenges of the productions. Jonah's video is not simply about being called names, but about how such discourse is embodied and felt. The act of writing out those slurs enacts a form of discursive scarring that makes visible the mediation between the verbal act and the discourse that results from it. In making a spectacle of such scars, Jonah can be read as performing a melancholic attachment to the identities and discourses of injury. But in his re-reading of Freud's concept of melancholia in *Disidentifications*, José Muñoz suggests that for marginalized subjects, such as queers, and people of color, such melancholic attachment can be "identity affirming" (1999, 74). The persistence of injury in the form of scars, and the physical attachment to the discursive enactment of scarring in the form of the physically inscribed and repeatedly handled cards offers "a melancholia that individual subjects and different communities in crisis can use to map the ambivalences of identification and the conditions of (im)possibility that shape...minority identities" (74). Read against the grain, as Muñoz suggests, melancholia can be understood as making visible the mediatization of othered bodies, as well as the logics by which such bodies are used to discursively represent cultural others. By making visible the scars that result from such logics, the cue card confessions actually use melancholia to enact a form of community that maps the discursive networks that mediate sociality and identity.

But this visual marker of the confessional body also connects back to Foucault's reading of the significant connection between the body and penance in the early Christian tradition. Whereas in the Classical period control of the body was a care of the self that

led to a greater knowledge of self achieved through the constant practice of self writing, Foucault suggests that this relationship becomes inverted in the Christian tradition. Instead of knowing the self through the care of body, in early Christianity one used a renunciation of the body to publicly broadcast the process of self knowledge. The most extreme example Foucault notes, and one that connects to Jonah's public revelation of his scars, in that of penance, which becomes "not nominal but theatrical" through a process Foucault terms exomologesis. In the middle ages exomologesis "is not a verbal behavior but the dramatic recognition of one's status as a penitent," whereby one's status as a penitent "must be visibly represented and accompanied by others who recognize the ritual" (243-244). This visual, performative, embodied nature of penitence differs greatly from care of the self during the early Greek and Roman periods, but it also points to key differences in the functioning of the cue card confessions. The majority of the cue card confession photographs gesture outward, using the discourse of confession to connect the self to either a larger social or political position. The cue card confession videos, on the other hand, typically feature the producer as penitent: revealing personal information for a process of healing. And unlike the subjects of the selfies, the producer is always implicated in the narratives of the cue card confession videos. In some ways, then, the cue card confession videos are even more deeply personal, and even more revelatory. Similarly, the narratives almost always directly invoke an Other by name, such as when Amanda writes. "I'm going to tell you my never ending story," suggesting an interlocutor even more overtly than the selfies.

The resulting dynamic between the producer and the viewer is much more

confessional, and positions the producer as penitent, and the viewer as interlocutor. But this relationship is further complicated by the medium of video. As Misoch points out in her study, the handwritten component of the cue card confessions works to separate the speaker from the emotional context of the narrative through the process of their production. By creating asynchronous moments of confession and reception, the mediation of social media, even in its apparent synchronicity, creates space for the producer to create, review, and edit not only her handwritten account, but also the overall production of her confession. Video scholar Michal Renov has termed this process enunciation, whereby the producer of a confessional video, or by further extension a digital photograph, serves as the first audience. Through the processes of revision and editing, the producer also plays the role of interlocutor. The cue card confessants write and produce for themselves first, and only publicly circulate their confessions after the process of enunciation, creating an emotional distance for themselves while forcing a deep cognitive engagement with their viewers through their remediation of the framing and logics of the photofilmic medium. The implication is that the process of writing is largely viewed as therapeutic and healthy for those who produce autobiographical accounts because of this critical distance.

This ethical enactment is particularly important to note in relationship to the confessional nature of the cue card confessions. In Misoch's study of the video trope, she qualitatively analyzed over 6,000 videos and summarized that "these videos do not serve purposes of 'classical' self-presentation; rather, they conduce confessions" (5). Despite this assertion, Misoch refers to the videos as "card stories," neglecting the specific

dynamics of confessional communication, and foregrounding the narrative function rather than the rhetorical function of these communicative acts. Confession is a structure of self accounting that is authorized not only by the speaking subject, but also through an intimate intersubjective exchange by which confession becomes legible as a defining discourse of the self as Foucault maintains (1978, 61-62). This implies that the individual only becomes legible in relationship to the social, and thereby depends on cultural legibility in order to enact a process of personal emergence. Put another way, it is only through recognition from the other that the individual become legible as a subject (Butler 2005, 22). But as Foucault asserts, confession requires interlocution: an act that requires both a confessant and an interlocutor who first witnesses the confession, and then enacts a discursive response. But as Renov argues, despite their confessional nature, the process of producing and editing the videos allows the producer to usurp the interlocutionary function through the process of enunciation, and the result is that the viewer is asked to engage not as an interlocutor, but as a witness with all of the complex discursive demands that such witnessing implies.

Exomologesis and Autoethnography

But penance also serves a further social and personal function, Foucault suggests, that points to one of the other key dynamics of embodiment in the cue card confession videos. Foucault writes that while penance is confessional, its public embodiment also represents "the affect of change, of rupture with self, [and] past…it represents a break with one's past identity" (245). This notion of a rupture with the self is effected in the cue

card confessions on the material and the discursive level. The body serves as a reminder of how markers of identity, such as gender and race, also resonate—to use Paasonen's concept—with the narrative to create an image that "grabs" us affectively (2011, 258-262). The overt ethos of these images, however, suggests that rather than narrowing the affective distance of mediation, such images make visible the logics of the grab.

Here I use the term mediatized as opposed to mediated to refer to a particular media logic that informs the discourse and circulation of particular bodies as representative, rather than unique. While the two terms are often used interchangeably to discuss social media, they in fact signal very different understandings of media effects. Both terms underscore the separation between a perceived object and the actual object, but what lies within this separation is a point of debate. In most contemporary media economies that separation takes the form of a screen—whether it be film, television, or computer—that brings objects of representation into view, and typically enjoys a neutral connotation. Mediation, as Bolter and Grusin very simply state, is the cognitive awareness of that separation. Mediatization, on the other hand, is an awareness of the systems of meaning that result from mediation. As Jean Baudrillard argues, "What is mediatized is…what is reinterpreted by the sign form, articulated into models, and administered by the code" (1994, 79). Mediatization is thus both a result of mediation, and separate from its meaning. It is the secondary process by which mediation creates a system of meaning making that requires both technological ecologies and human actors. Mediatization is the socially enacted systems of meanings and values that result from mediation that further signal a rupture from the self on screen and the self that produces

that image.

The rupture of exomologesis then, reveals both something about the body on screen, and how the informing media logic makes representative spectacles of the marginalized bodies of the cue card producers. Such images then serve as cultural Others against whom discourses of normativity develop. A systemic process of Othering is the dangerous prospect of mediatization that the cue card confessions call our attention to. The mediatized body as visual spectacle signals a larger cultural condition these producers reflexively engage. In his materialist theory of visual culture, sociologist Guy Debord defines the spectacle as the visual manifestation of our own conditions of alienation in the face of structures of power that determine not just the conditions of labor, but the social relations upon which such connections are dependent (1967, 29-32). Here Debord invokes the larger cultural logics of mediation, and suggests that the relational affordance between media forms and social perception alters our relationship to perspective as a whole. Debord offers a largely cynical view of the function of such changes and argues that spectacular images don't actually call our attention to the function of mediation, but work to replace all other forms of perception so that the spectacular image becomes more real than the actual bodies it captures (36). The process of othering is thus enacted on the social level, and within the individual as well. This is the mediatization that Amanda works to counteract in her video, and the structural enactment that is called to our attention when the actual bodies of cuers are revealed on live television.

Recognizing the mediatized effects of the spectacle of self accounting is part of

the *kairotic* essence of the cue card confessions. Rather than simply presenting an autobiographical image or account, the cue card confessions are used primarily as autoethnographic accounts, as the producer speaks as part of and through a larger social identity. As Carolyn Ellis et. al. assert, autoethnography is primarily about a form of witnessing: the author bears witness to and for a larger social group or issue. Through personal narrative, the author allows the reader/viewer to bear witness for her (2012, 27). I, Too, Am Harvard is thus a repeating mirror of witnessing: the subjects in the Tumblr feed are bearing witness to the kinds of racism they have endured and then ask viewers to bear witness to those encounters through the use of cue cards. As the hashtag has developed social and cultural salience, it has been used to further bear witness to other forms of racial violence or injustice pertaining to the same social group invoked in the autoethnographic act.

What this campaign, like Project Unbreakable, brilliantly enacts, are the ways in which the mediatized body comes to stand in as a discursive representation of a larger social group. In essence, making a spectacle of the body performs a kind of autoethnographic act in which the individual speaks for the many through a story of the self. Like autobiography, the autoethnographic act involves self (*auto)* writing (*graphy*), but in this instance the individual (*bios*) is replaced by the social (*ethnos*). This is the very method that the cue card confession trope is working through and against. The I, Too, Am Harvard pictures recognize that the visual representation of certain bodies, and black bodies in particular, invokes a kind of representative discourse. Indeed, all of the cue card confessions express a social position that marginalizes the producer. As a result of actions

such as bullying or sexual assault, or identity, or a political position such as anti-feminism, the producers have experienced an isolation that is minimized by participating faithfully—and thus legibly—in the sociality of the trope. As such, the cue cards confess both an individual and a social truth. Invoking the ethos of "the personal is political" of feminist movements, the autoethnographic act allows the producer to visualize the "process of recognizing as social and systemic what was formerly perceived as isolated and individual," as Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw has defined it (1991, 1241). This is one of the key characteristics of autoethnographic speech as Ellis et. al. have defined the subgenre of autobiographical discourse: a process of witnessing which grants "the ability for participants and readers to observe and, consequently, better testify on behalf of an event, problem, or experience," creating a method by which the personal has the power to become political (2011, 27). Ellis and he co-authors describe the process of both producing and viewing autoethnographic accounts as a form of "witnessing" that marks the validity of both the event or experience itself, and the authority to stand as witness to the event.

Although autoethnography allows the producer to bear witness to an event, experience, or problem, the authenticity of such witnessing isn't guaranteed. In fact, Ellis et. al. identify three key factors of autoethnography that determine the effectiveness of this form of self accounting: reliability, validity, and generalizability (33-35). When encountering the autoethnographic account, viewers consider whether the events described could have likely happened to the author, whether that author and the account related is believable, and whether or not that account speaks to some larger cultural truth

that extends beyond the individual experience. When all of these factors are determined to be true and valid, the viewer accepts that the producer has legitimate claims to bear witness to an actual event that has a larger social import. The cue card confessions fulfill all three of these criteria and thus assume the legitimacy of their accounts through the aesthetics of their productions. The cue card confessions use the handwritten text, with its indexicality and allusions to the confessional diary to anchor their reliability. By similarly foregrounding the mediatized body, as a representation of race, gender, or age, these producers demonstrate the validity of their account in reference to how their identity makes them vulnerable to rhetorical violence against such representations. Finally, the producers adhere to the narrative norms of the trope in order to demonstrate the generalizability of their confessions. By speaking through and as part of a larger social experience, these producers ground their individual accounts within the cultural currency that the trope has enjoyed through repetition.

Autoethnography is a controversial research method in the social sciences, as Ellis et. al. point out, and the clear metrics of authenticity that they provide work, in part, to provide a basis for the objective analysis of the method rather than content.[54] As an autobiographical subgenre, however, autoethnography has been particularly employed by women and people of color because of its destabilization of the author position, which disrupts individual truth in favor of articulating larger social truths. Literary scholar Francoise Lionnet asserts that this double function is a result of the use of autoethnography as "a mode of cultural performance…that transcends pedestrian notions

[54] Ellis, et. al. note the paradox of autoethnography: it is simultaneously viewed as not rigorous enough for a social science method, and not artistic enough for an autobiographical expression.

of referentiality, for the staging of the event is part of the process of 'passing on,' elaborating cultural forms, which are not static and inviolable but dynamically involved in the creation of culture itself" (1989, 99-100). Lionnet suggests that autoethnography is effective because its flexibility reflects the process of culture: because both are always in a state of transition, and bear a shifting relationship to the "truth" of an experience, the rhetorical challenges of autoethnography actually best suit it to accurately depicting cultural truths. And because the cue card confessions, as Amanda Todd's story exemplifies, evoke the effects of the past, the writing of the cue cards and the production and circulation of the video or photograph is a process of negotiating the subject's relationship to that past. This revising, or editorial function of autoethnography is crucial to its more affective claims to truth as Muñoz makes clear: "Autoethnography is not interested in searching for some lost and essential experience, because it understands the relationship that subjects have with their own pasts as complicated yet necessary fictions" (82-82). Muñoz suggests that it is precisely these moments within autoethnography where aesthetic elements don't "line up" with the narrative that capture the intersectionality of autoethnography. In the video work he explores, this is often the "not lining up" of sound and image, but in the cue card confessions, as I have previously explored, this dissonance is often the result of the mediatization of the body and the invocation of the confession in the handwritten text. These cognitively jarring aesthetic functions suggest an aesthetic gesture of rupture that works to underscore rather than undermine the truth claims of autoethnography because they so resemble the jarring effect of the shifting nature of identity and sociality.

The cue card confessions, as a form of autoethnography, however, don't just speak for the individual; they speak through their productions as part of a social group. In turn, cueing itself, as an action, literally asks the viewer to repeat the words written on the cards. It is an active, rather than a passive viewing experience, implicating the viewer in the narrative presented. Even if the viewer does not actually repeat the narrative, the social context of cueing, and of the use of cue cards to narrate a marginalized position, makes self accounting possible only through the context of the social. This determining element of the social is a central feature of autoethnography, which "relies on a process of self discovery that does not separate personal reflection and social inquiry" as psychologist Jürgen Kremer has suggested (2003, 5). Just as the producers of the I, Too, Am Harvard confessions bear witness to the forms of casual racism as they are simultaneously speaking against them, their expression of identity is a complex engagement with the social constructs conveyed in the speech to which they are bearing witness.

Within this context, autoethnographical productions anticipate the *kairotic* conditions of social media expression. Indeed, Kremer refers to autoethnography as a "practice of radical presence," recalling Foucault's notion of correspondence bringing the writer into a direct visual relationship with the reader, and foregrounding the rhetorical dimensions of self accounting that always anticipate the social context in which individually defining speech will be received (3). The viewer as active interlocutor operates as a social agent, but can only understand the subject, and the attending social group through which she speaks, through an aestheticization of the past in the form of

autoethnographic self writing and imaging.

Amanda imagines more than an audience for her video, she invokes a witness who would bear an ethical burden to her self account through the process of witnessing. This ethical dimension of viewing has been the subject of a great deal of scholarship within the field of communications. Television scholar Jonathan Ong summarizes mediation theory as the study of the "'circulation of meaning' across moments of text/production/reception" (2012, 180). Ong's thorough review of the various approaches to mediation theory focuses on the ethical dilemma of viewers of live television, who feel compelled to respond to the events they witness, but find themselves with limited avenues of response. Ong questions why previous studies focus solely on the viewer, or the ethical responsibilities of the producers of live television. Mediation theory, he asserts, is most usefully applied to the experience of those on the other side of the camera.[55] The result of this shift in focus will result in a reinvigoration of mediation theory, he claims, because "a mediational approach can link the critique of the intentional object of representation (the 'moment' of the text) with the experiences of all those involved in the process of representation (the 'moment' of production), including the experiences of the 'sufferers' recruited and interviewed by television producers" (191). As Ong points out, these 'sufferers' are often constructed as "non-Western others" who serve to evoke an emotional response from viewers at the same time that they function to

[55] In his article, Ong focuses on television in particular, and so understand the producers to be the media companies and news outlet staff members who televise account of suffering in news show contexts. While I formulate the producer differently in this article—social media producers typically serve as the subject, producers, and distributors of their own accounts—I find his ethical questions pertinent and necessary to a sustained analysis of the function of mediated witnessing in social media.

distance the impact of the event itself. By overlooking the context of mediation for these central figures, mediation theory essentially works to reinscribe the process of othering enacted by live television. Ong's theory provides an important dimension to this discussion because his (re)turn to mediation theory allows us to bridge the gap between television and social media—as the cue cards themselves do—while foregrounding the marginalization of figures who function as others in society, an experience the producers of the cue card confessions often testify to.

Ong's destabilization of mediation theory further allows us to attend to the alterity of social speech, and to identify the complex ways in which identity must be negotiated and established in social media constructs. Within a social media context, it allows us to recover the complex rhetorical dimensions of social media production and reception, a dimension of both practice and theory that has been often overlooked in the current scholarship. In essence, the producers of the cue card confessions make visible, in a spectacular way, how the experience of being the subject, but not the author, of the social conditions through which identity emerges, is a process of mediation. But by attending to these producers, and to forms of social media expression that make visible the logic of these larger social constructs, the cue card confessions illustrate a little-studied form of social expression: the individual and limited, rather than the negotiated and ongoing engagements to which we are more often attuned. The cue card confessions ask us to bear witness to individual experiences, as larger social and political truths, but also to the power of mediation within social media to enact or deconstruct such conditions.

Self Writing as Seeing

The cue card confession trope is such an interesting case study because it makes visible the ways in which the aesthetics of visual culture are specifically deployed in order to enact ethical engagement with multiple audiences. Beneath their deceptively simple surface, the cue card confessions enact the larger rhetorical stakes of social media practice. Their deployment reflects a sophisticated understanding of the multiplicity of audiences, and a masterful demonstration of how modes of engagement from these older media traditions can be utilized in order to enact a new form of engagement, one I am calling the mediated witnessing of social media. The cue card confessions are not comprehensive records of a life, nor are they offering an articulate form of political response that can be mobilized within the affordances of social media platforms. Like Amanda's final cue card reading, "I have nobody. I need someone ☹," she asks the viewer to empathize with her position, but she does not create a direct call to action. Indeed, the overwhelming response to the video did not alter her decision to take her own life. The viewer of the cue card confessions is asked to bear witness to a form of suffering that often has a political dimension: racism, sexism, bullying, and sexual assault, that all bear a direct relationship to identity. The audience is asked to recognize how identity operates in relationship to the rhetoric of those politics, but is not given a clear context for an appropriate response. In fact, like many social media tropes, repetition of the trope rather than direct engagement is implicitly indicated as the most effective and ethical form of engagement. Thus the I, Too, Am Harvard Tumblr feed has become a hashtag and a Twitter handle; and Project Unbreakable invites submissions or replications of the

format. Here I am not suggesting that individual enactments don't offer overt directions for engagement, some in fact do. Rather, the trope itself, and its deployment in various movements that often seem at cross-purposes with one another, invokes a cultural ethos for which there is no one determined responsive action. Instead, the cue card confession trope asks audiences simply to enact a materially legible form of witnessing.

This is perhaps why Misoch uses the term "stories" to define the cue card confessions; they are difficult to discursively pin down because of their layered valences within the acts of production and circulation. What they enact through confessional self writing is an imagined witness who will validate both their confessed experience, and the larger social issues to which such experiences point. In this way, the autoethnographic function of the cue card confessions doesn't just serve the identities they individually represent. Instead, they bear witness to the entanglement between structures of power and mediatized representation, and the ways in which this relationship is enacted discursively. By repeating harmful speech, and asking the social media audience, both in its imagined and actual functions, to bear witness to the relationship between such speech and the bodies it works to marginalize, the cue card confessions disrupt the dominant interactive logic of social media, and enact a mediated form of witnessing. The producers of the cue card confessions ask not for an interlocutor, but a witness. They literally prompt the viewer to repeat the handwritten speech, to feel the heavy weight of its implications in their own voice, and to reject it through silence, or validate it through repetition. The cue card confessions make visible the speech that had hoped to go unremarked, and only by further revealing and denying the power of such speech, does the witness fulfill his

ethical function.

I have personally struggled with the painful ending of Amanda Todd's video. In her final two cards she pleads, "I have no one. I need someone ☹." And the millions of views and thousands of comments her video has accrued cannot negate the finality of her suicide. Her cue card confession would have presumably connected her with many people willing to be her someone. Such an act, such intimacy, however, had betrayed her before. Interactivity, she had learned, could be dangerous, even harmful. And yet, even that fact does not explain the complexity of her decision to take her own life, and leads nowhere productive for either this analysis or her memory. Just as the autobiographical voice, effectively modeled in the first-person narrative novel *Jane Eyre*, leads Jane to create an image of herself that was true to one aspect of her identity without capturing it fully, Amanda too relies on the ethical imperative of the autobiographical voice for her production. Focusing on the aesthetics and the rhetorical enactment of ethical address in her video calls us to recognize its complexity. It recognizes the effective aesthecization of the reality, or the "realness" of her experience by way of her autobiographical voice. At the same time, it makes real her ethical demands on the viewer even in the production of a visual spectacle.

What I have come to understand is that Amanda was asking for someone, but perhaps she was asking for someone to bear witness to who she really was. Not just a screen shot of bared breasts, not just a victim of bullying, and not just a suicidal teen, but someone who was all of these things, and not reducible to any of them. Amanda was not asking, then, for an interlocutor, or an audience, but for a witness who would really see

her, and see the validity and authenticity of her account, and all that it represented, both in her life and after her death.

6. Self Writing as Ethopoietic Engagement

"For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably" –Walter Benjamin

Recently a friend emailed me to let me know that he had seen a Twitter account using my name and profile photo, but with Tweets that seemed out of character. No offense, he offered, if it really was my account, but he wanted me to know in case it wasn't. I did have a dusty Twitter account that I barely used and was pretty embarrassed by, so I clicked on the link he sent me to see if it was time to delete some of those forgotten tweets. What opened up instead was a profile that was by all accounts mine, but clearly a fake. My profile picture from another website stared back at me like a cracked mirror. The information about me: "I love my husband so much because he served in the military. Go USA!" was farcical, but factually sound: my husband did serve in the Air Force, and I did live in San Diego. As I looked at the handle @yourtigermother, I realized that it referred to a memoir I had taught in a Basic Writing course two years previously: *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* by Amy Chua. The banner was a clever close-up of the book's cover. As I read through the tweets, I laughed aloud and gasped in horror. I hadn't ever uttered the phrase, "Gotta grade all these essays cuz I got bills to pay," but isn't that, in fact, an accurate summation of the labor of teaching composition? The one that horrified me most read, "Call me Kimberly cuz it makes me feel young. K. Thnks." I *was* young, wasn't I? More importantly, didn't I still *look* young, I asked friends, family, even strangers in the coffee shop? This comment had been favorited by two followers, both of whom I recognized from the same composition course. Both had seemed so quiet and

kind in class, perhaps they had been seething at me in silence for the entire quarter. These students had struggled in class, but had come to see me in office hours and the meetings had an easy, open flow to them, nothing like the hostility that sometimes accompanied graded essay reviews. All in all, there were about 20 tweets, some of them were non-sequiturs, but most of them made oblique references to our class, or my teaching persona. I had to remind myself of that: this Twitter account was responding to my persona, not to my actual self. Wasn't it?

I took action right away. It was a job market year and I couldn't afford to have an unprofessional, albeit funny, representation of me and my opinions about teaching circulating online, just in case a committee searched for my social media presence. I filed an impersonation report with Twitter, and directed a Tweet to @yourtigermother: "Please remove this account immediately. You are using my name and image without my permission." That felt adequately firm, but appropriate enough to appear on my wall, assuring the public that there was only one Kimberly Hall tweeting, and it wasn't @yourtigermother. The account was removed within the hour, and I went to bed that night wondering if I should follow up with the academic integrity division of the university, pursuing the student(s) who created this. That this happened to me at all seemed out of the realm of possibility. I had always thought I was successful at engaging students in the classroom, getting them excited about the material, even in a basic writing course. That is what I told myself on the surface.

The dark undertone of my reaction was one of rejection. In reality I always strove to get my students to *like* me, a dangerous proposition for an educator. The fake Twitter

account underscored that not only had I failed, I might, in fact, be an object of ridicule. It was a painful moment, despite the fact that most of the tweets were playful, rather than vicious. And yet I felt vulnerable, exposed to the eight colleagues who had followed that account thinking it was me, and to the peer who informed me of the account, someone who I had always admired. I also felt foolish that I hadn't kept up with Twitter, hadn't realized this on my own, despite the fact that my research and teaching focuses on social media. The imposter syndrome hit with full force: this incident reveals that I am a fraud in the classroom and in the larger social sphere, I told myself.

By the next morning, the embarrassment had faded, and the gentle irony of the situation forced its way into my psyche. Autobiographical representation in social media was the topic of my dissertation and I was invested in articulating the stakes for producers and developing theories of social media audiences. This exposure, I realized, is what I wrote about from an academic distance, but this complex range of emotions is what lived vulnerability feels like on a very muted scale. I have always been very private online, and I felt exposed in a way that many of the producers in the previous chapters have willingly sought out. In some respects I had been on the receiving end of a kind of online aggression; the creator didn't work in a vacuum, clearly there was an intended audience in mind, and I assumed that it was created and circulated either during or just after that class. Meaning that my class had been the intended audience, but who was the eventual, unintended audience, the one who truly worried me more. My own shifting focus from questions about the producer to questions about the audience made vivid for me the rhetorical stakes of self accounting in social media. I often focus on marginalized

figures in my own research, those who use social media to gain a kind of cultural legibility they have otherwise been denied. But this incident raised the specter of unwilling self accounting, exposure not by choice, but as a consequence of living life in an era of extreme documentation.

This unwilling self accounting has been a topic very much at the forefront of discussions of privacy in an online age. Questions about the causes of and appropriate response to cyberbullying have intensified in the wake of the rising popularity of anonymous, location-based social media sites such as Yik Yak.[56] At the same time, the leaked National Security Aagency (NSA) information from Edward Snowden reveals that such anonymity may be little more than a farce. In interviews and in leaked documents, Snowden emphasizes that the NSA has the ability to create shockingly accurate profiles of their targets by correlating significant points of metadata from cell phone usage, credit card usage, and even facial recognition software.[57] There seems to be an increasing tension between privacy and cultural legibility, which is further complicated by the interests of private companies who benefit from both angles of this debate. As Armand Mattelart notes, "so-called post-industrial or 'immaterial' capitalism, by promoting structures of subjectivation and production of knowledge, culture and social networks for commercial ends, has opened up a new kind of struggle at once cultural, social and economic," pointing to the deep imbrication of the three foundations of everyday life

[56] See, for example, the extensive coverage of Yik Yak problems on college campuses in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, such as "A New Faculty Challenge: Fending Off Abuse on Yik Yak," 29 January 2015.
[57] For extensive full coverage of the Snowden leaks, see *The Guardian's* "NSA Files: Decoded," as well as Laura Poitras' 2014 documentary *Citizenfour*. Both Ewan MacAskill and Laura Poitras were part of the original team that interviewed Snowden in Hong Kong and facilitated the release of the NSA documents.

(2007, 202). What I would add to that formulation, and what I've tried to point to in my earlier chapters, is that we must also attend to the specificities of the technologies by which such self accounting/surveillance are facilitated. Just as my student pulled the profile picture I had willingly posted to Google+ for another social network, on a larger scale we are in the process—wittingly and oftentimes unwittingly—of providing such information that is both accurate and liable to misapplication. Most of the people who followed my false Twitter account did so because enough of the information lined up to make it legible as a representation of me. In other words, the image and metadata seemed right, even if the details did not.

I end on this personal, forward-looking note because it highlights, for me, the stakes of self accounting in an age of surveillance. I have focused on the diaristic mode to underscore its discursive significance as a mode of self accounting perfectly suited to the kinds of material and cultural demands of networked sociality. The diary, as Philippe Lejeune and Kylie Cardell have argued, has a complex textual history as both central to and marginalized within autobiographical production. It is seen as both amateur and authentic, two characteristics that make it perfectly suited to the modes of self writing undergirding social media practice. By tracing its development as a discourse of self and sociality, I have argued that it represents a technology of the self that is informed by, and that informs, the development of media forms through which it circulates. By tracing such discourse through a longer historical trajectory, I have tried to disrupt some of the presentist-bias in the study of social media, to suggest that this entanglement of media forms and self writing has been in the process of negotiation since the nineteenth-century,

and perhaps even longer as a study like Foucault's might suggest. My aim in revisiting Nadar's *Souterrain* series, the Mass Observation project of the twentieth century, and the individual films, videologs, and self portraits of the late-twentieth and early twenty-first century is not to suggest an unbroken aesthetic chain, but instead to point to this entanglement as a key site of subjective formation. That the questions of surveillance, sociality, and self are not brand new, and not occasioned only by the rise of networked sociality means that perhaps there is something to be gained by turning our gaze backward as much as forward. As Walter Benjamin reminds us, "the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We must attain to a conception of history that is in keeping with this insight" (1968, 257). Like Benjamin, who looks to visual culture and aesthetics as a way of engaging the ethics of discourse, I have tried to demonstrate how visual culture emerged as a dominant discourse of self writing, and how it is connected both to autobiographical discourse and the discourse of visuality as healthy, necessary modes of well being and sociality. In this way, I am suggesting that the question of ethics, the 'care of the self' as Foucault has termed it, is dependent on our ability to negotiate these dynamics. Whether by forging the diary, relying on aesthetic editing, or asserting one's identity on a handwritten card, the works explored in this dissertation suggest that we are neither helpless victims nor masters of our domain. Instead, we are in a process of constant negotiation with the quantification and overexposure of the self. We do have tactics of reflexivity that aim not to completely evade, but to engage the terms of this negotiation, by making visible its stakes.

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