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Immaterial Attachments: Performing iPhone and the Rhetorics of Dematerialization

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Abstract: Engaging with rhetorical studies, performance studies, and surveillance studies, this thesis attempts to outline the ideological construction of the experience of iPhone, underlining how this experience—and its performance—is imbricated with conceptions of social control. To do this, I begin with the cultural oscillation between extreme psychological attachment to Apple's iPhone and its complementary disposability. How can an object generate such attachment, yet remain disposable? To get at this question, I examine how attachment and disposability are layered together in an experience of iPhone structured by *rhetorics of dematerialization.* These are visual and discursive fragments that, together, construct an ideological impulse that tends toward the disappearance of the objects to which they refer, overall, working to supplement and promote iPhone's culture of disposability. In relation to iPhone, this thesis examines rhetorics of dematerialization through three intersecting vectors: the device, the human user, and the proximal space that stages their interaction.

With rhetorics of dematerialization as the larger frame, my main analyses focus on specific instances of the tension between attachment and disposability, considered as *performances of attachment*. Generally, these are everyday performances on and with iPhone—gestural interface, picking it up, throwing it out—that 1) collapse attachment and disposability into each other under the rhetorical rubric of a phenomenal dematerialization, 2) require users to enact, embody, and assume the rhetorics of dematerialization, and 3) have both *cultural* and *individual* effects. iPhone's culture of disposability relies on the dematerialization of waste and wasteful consumer practices. Individually, performances of attachment with iPhone allow new models of surveillance (through data-gathering and self-tracking practices) to permeate users' everyday experience.

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Introduction

Moore's law suggests that every two years the number of transistors in computer processors will double, leading eventually to an exponential increase in computer processing power. This law, formulated as a 'law' in 1975, emerged from observations and predictions made by Gordon Moore—co-founder of Intel—in 1965.[1] What had been merely an observational phenomenon—Moore was *describing* the present and recent past of the nascent computer industry—developed into a law that dictated this doubling, reproducing it as an impulse toward 'innovation.' It is not that transistors in computer processors *would* double in density every two years; instead, it is now imperative that manufactures ensure continued innovation by replicating this dynamic. Journalists foretelling the 'death' of this law,[2] then, are often concerned with how manufacturers will continue to manage and manufacture innovation after transistor density can no longer be increased. Moore's 'law' becomes less a scientific law useful for description and empirical analysis and more a capitalist impulse toward continuous innovation and the reproduction of the drive toward profit. 'Innovation,' in turn, comes to orient consumer desire toward the new.

Materially, we might say that the much-maligned phenomenon of 'planned obsolescence' manifests this impulse. Although some suggest that planned obsolescence is necessary and productive—because it provisions new and improved versions of technologies to consumers and because consumers request and requires these new versions—planned obsolescence essentially implants an intrinsic disposability into the devices and tools that we in Western, industrialized countries use every day. This is problematic because these devices, though they seem to

[1] "Moore's Law Is the Reason Your iPhone Is so Thin and Cheap."
[2] Bright, "Moore's Law Really Is Dead This Time"; "Why the Era of Moore's Law May Be Coming to an End."

disappear into their new versions, end up in mountains of garbage most frequently found in other countries like China and Ghana.[3] Moore's law and planned obsolescence structure consumer desire and create a culture of disposability around digital technologies. This thesis examines a prominent example of this culture of disposability: Apple's iPhone.

While iPhones are disposable, however, they also demand intense psychological and affective attachment. In fact, Wikipedia now has a fairly hefty page on 'nomophobia' or no mobile (phone) phobia, which describes a specific kind of anxiety related to being away from one's mobile phone; although it is not currently listed as a specific psychological disorder, psychologists and others have undertaken its study as a legitimate research area.[4] The existence of nomophobia testifies to the extreme attachment mandated by iPhone, but Russell B. Clayton, in a 2015 study widely cited in the popular press finding that separation from one's ringing iPhone during a cognitive test decreased one's results on that test, attempts to explain this attachment rather differently. For him, nomophobia indexes a phenomenological experience of iPhone as "part of [the] self…in which, under certain conditions, the brain incorporates external elements into the body schema, treating these as part of the subject's body."[5] It is not, then, that I feel an attachment to my iPhone; instead, I am directly *attached* to iPhone, its misplacement constituting "a loss or lessening of self."[6] 'Self,' here, indexes a kind of embodied experience that includes the technological device—iPhone—within the bodily schema, modifying the human's embodied self-relation. This is to say, most simply, that iPhone is not simply articulated to the bodily milieu. iPhone, rather, enters it, even as iPhone remains necessarily disposable.

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[3] Powell, "Assessing and Improving China's E-Waste Problem - United Nations University"; Baldé et al., "Global E-Waste Monitor, 2014."
[4] e.g. Bragazzi and Del Puente, "A Proposal for Including Nomophobia in the New DSM-V"; King et al., "Nomophobia"; Yildirim and Correia, "Exploring the Dimensions of Nomophobia."
[5] Clayton, Leshner, and Almond, "The Extended iSelf," 121.
[6] Ibid.

Beginning with this tension between attachment and disposability, this thesis analyzes specific sites, scenes, and situations in which it appears. Overall, I argue that attachment and disposability always appear together through performance of and with iPhone; that these performances are structured by a rhetorical impulse that privileges iPhone's function at the expense of its form; and that this phenomenal[7] dematerialization *both* displaces—in experience—iPhone's material conditions of production, manufacture, and distribution *and* is mirrored by the user's body. In other words, performances of and with iPhone consequentially contribute *both* to the culture of disposability concentrated around iPhone *and,* by imagining the human body as primarily and immaterially informational, to an intensive and ubiquitous (self)surveillance, (self)monitoring, and (self)controlling of the human body. Linking both consequences, I guide my analyses by considering iPhone as a *fetish* object, and performances of and with iPhone as a peculiar type of *fetishism,* one with erotic, magical, and economic valences; these variegated valences, I show, both constitute the way capital organizes the experience of iPhone and how iPhone manages to implant the drive to self-monitor into the human.

Rhetorics of Dematerialization

But how can one be attached to an object yet imagine it as disposable? Although this tension is clearly contradictory I do not attempt to resolve it. Instead, I examine how attachment and disposability are layered together in an experience of iPhone structured by *rhetorics of dematerialization.* These are visual and discursive fragments that, together, construct an impulse that tends toward the disappearance of the objects to which they refer, which, overall, works to supplement and promote iPhone's culture of disposability. In relation to iPhone, this thesis

[7] Phenomenal in the sense of pertaining to phenomena as opposed to material existents, rather than in the sense connoting 'really good.'

examines rhetorics of dematerialization through three intersecting vectors: the device, the human user, and the proximal space that stages their interaction.

In economics and engineering, dematerialization also refers to "the decline over time in weight of the materials used in industrial end productions."[8] Frequently, dematerialization is correlated with apparently 'greener' industrial practices, because less material used generally means less impact vis-à-vis processes of material extraction and waste generation.[9] However, perhaps correlated with dematerialization as an industrial trend, design of devices seems to be undergoing its own sort of dematerialization in the impulse toward ever thinner devices with fewer physical buttons and ports. These aspects of the device are, as I describe in chapter 1, virtualized and moved from hardware to the software of iPhone's graphical user interface. Importantly, this design imperative—toward thinness, simplicity, and virtualization—only further places these devices on "the bleeding edge of obsolescence."[10] Dematerialization may structure a more 'environmentally friendly' production process insofar as it uses less material, but it ultimately leaves unchanged overall structures of production and patterns of circulation that are, essentially, environmentally *un*friendly. As John Bellamy Foster contends:

> Ecological modernizers in sociology and sustainable developers in mainstream economics go beyond this by arguing that technology can work magic: "dematerializing" economic production so that the capitalist economy can then walk on air (or create a "weightless society"), thereby continuing its relentless expansion—but with a rapidly diminishing effect on the environment. Needless to say, such technological fantasies have no basis in reality.[11]

Problems pertaining to capitalism's aggressive and extractive attitude to the environment remain and, I suggest, are safeguarded in the move toward dematerialization. Although it may be

[8] Herman, Ardekani, and Ausubel, "Dematerialization," 330.
[9] Hogg and Jackson, "Digital Media and Dematerialization"; Ruth, "Dematerialization in Five US Metals Sectors: Implications for Energy Use and CO2 Emissions"; Wernick et al., "Materialization and Dematerialization."
[10] Chun, "On Software, or the Persistence of Visual Knowledge," January 1, 2005, 26.
[11] Foster, *The Ecological Rift: Capitalism's War on the Earth*, 43.

useful to move toward dematerialization in the (very) short term, this does nothing to remedy the problems caused by the underlying forms and functions of the capitalist system itself in the long term. The material is always *devalued* in relation to the functions that it can provide after processing and manufacture. Combining my notion of rhetorics of dematerialization with this industrial understanding of dematerialization, we might say that dematerialization is a material *and* phenomenal process that ultimately devalues the material in relation to the phenomenal. This is because the logical end of dematerialization, in all senses, *is the elimination of the material as such*: the thinnest device is one that disappears. Rhetorics of dematerialization rely, however, on a fundamental irony, for even as they construct this impulse toward the object's disappearance, they must rely on the continuation of the object's physical existence. Rhetorics of dematerialization assert that the object can disappear, while maintaining that it must not do so.

Emphasis on iPhone's function over its form structures that form's easy disposability. This dynamic, in turn, institutes the broader cultural oscillation between extreme attachment to iPhone (an attachment that depends on exploitative labor practices and destructive environmental habits) and its disposability (premised on the convenient illusion that the waste we produce simply disappears). In fact, waste and disposability underpin the reproduction of that attachment—if we did not throw iPhone away, we could not be directed to attach to its next version. This is analogous to how Sean Cubitt discusses the foundational importance of waste to consumer capitalism: "Waste is not an unfortunate by-product of consumerism. Without waste, including the spectacular waste of flared gas and street lighting, there can be no consumer capital."[12] Similarly, disposability appears necessary for the attachment that produces and circulates capital in the form of the commodified iPhone. My analysis goes one step further,

[12] Cubitt, "Integral Waste," 143.

suggesting that a process exists whereby this necessary—integral—waste is itself experienced as dematerializing. One could say, of course, that commodification *always* creates these dematerializing effects, and to a certain extent this is true; to be attached to that perfect pair of shoes, for instance, could be to be attached to what feelings about ourselves these shoes might provide—a certain sense of cool—rather than the shoes themselves, as a material object. And, of course, when we are finished with these shoes (or when we discover other shoes that appear to more closely approximate that sense of cool) we might simply throw them away, making them disappear (from our purview at least). iPhone differentiates itself, however, because it incorporates its user into its operation as a commodity fetish, forcing the user to mirror the process of dematerialization in a way that other commodities simply cannot. Rhetorics of dematerialization circulate between iPhone and user, and in performance the user embodies them. As I will show in chapter 2, one important way in which iPhone does this is by extracting information from the user both covertly and overtly and then presenting that information as visible and, more importantly, manipulable for its user.

Performances of Attachment

With rhetorics of dematerialization as the larger frame, my main analyses focus on specific instances of the tension between attachment and disposability, considered as *performances of attachment*. Generally, these are everyday performances on and with iPhone—gestural interface, picking it up, throwing it out—that 1) collapse attachment and disposability into each other under the rhetorical rubric of a phenomenal dematerialization, 2) require users to enact, embody, and assume the rhetorics of dematerialization, and 3) have both *cultural* and *individual* effects. Scripted by rhetorics of dematerialization, performances of attachment implement a circuit between attachment and disposability in their enactment. However, this

performed attachment is not simply attachment to the material device, considering the effects of the rhetorics of dematerialization. Essentially, rhetorics of dematerialization create a projection of the physical device, and that phantom projection is taken for the real thing; performances of attachment are structured as an embodied intentionality toward this projection over and against intention toward the real thing,[13] promoting investment in the immaterial projection while still allowing the physical object to be thrown away. As Fredric Jameson writes (about new cars) with iPhone "we consume, less the thing itself, than its abstract idea, capable of the libidinal investments ingeniously arrayed for us by advertising."[14] In my view, however, attachment to the idea of the thing replicates attachment to the physical object, but in a mediated fashion; attachment to the idea must still manage and produce some kind of attachment to the physical object, or it would not feel necessary to buy iPhone's next version. This is an iteration of the rhetorics of dematerialization's fundamental irony. If a first-order attachment refers to the physical existence of iPhone, a second-order attachment activated in performance weaves connective tissue between the user and a dematerializing version of iPhone—an abstracted, ideal version comprised of its functions and aesthetic qualities. This collapses material, first-order attachment and its reciprocal disposability into a more general process of attachment that produces and reproduces an idea of iPhone as immaterial, or, as constantly undergoing dematerialization.

The consumption of the idea over the thing is, however, intensified when considering digital devices generally and iPhone specifically, because performances of attachment with iPhone create multiple feedback loops or circuits that enact and circulate dematerialization on

[13] Intentionality as in the work of Edmund Husserl, who considers intentionality as, at its most general, the recognition that consciousness is always consciousness *of* something. See Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*; Husserl, *The Shorter Logical Investigations*.
[14] Jameson, "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture," 133.

pre-individual, individual, and cultural levels. These circuits are primarily libidinal, as I describe below, and function to 1) articulate iPhone to its user, 2) connect this scene to the larger cultural oscillation between attachment and disposability, and 3) connect attachment as performed to the rhetorics of dematerialization, activating them within the moment and scene of performance. Finally, performing iPhone intensifies the ideologically mandated consumption of the idea over the thing because it dematerializes the thing and guides consumer desire in specific ways while also managing to reorganize the user's spatial context.

Fetishism

Primarily, performances of attachment guide consumer desire through the operations of a technological fetishism. This section, and this thesis generally, approach fetishism in the broadest sense, because though there are three main ways in which fetishism has been theorized, they are all derived—whether directly or by analogy—from 18th-19th Century European anthropological accounts of what were then called 'primitive' cultures. These three discourses of fetishism are 1) *magico-religious* fetishism, 2) *commodity* fetishism, and 3) *sexual* fetishism. All three are focused on *value* and *desire,* although each discourse approaches these questions sometimes radically differently.

The discourse of *magico-religious* fetishism (though not the practice it described) emerged in 18th century Europe. As William Pietz writes, the "very word 'fetishism' was coined only in 1757 by Charles de Brosses" and was used to describe what European imperialists saw as "the most primitive moment of religion."[15] This fetishism might be most clearly outlined as a kind of animism whereby "material conditions are themselves spiritual values";[16] fetish objects,

[15] Pietz, "Fetishism and Materialism: The Limits of Theory in Marx," 1993, 131.
[16] Ibid., 141.

here, are "attributed intentional purpose and desire" or are "personified things."[17] Another way of putting this is to say that a fetish, in this context, is "a sacred item designed for everyday use."[18] Important, here, is that the purpose and desire attributed to fetishes is just that: attributed. "In truth," Pietz writes, fetishes were "merely the externalized material sites fixing people's own capricious libidinal imaginings."[19] As externalizations of libidinal 'imaginings,' fetishes derive value (and are ascribed power) from human investments of libidinal or affective energy. They become meaningful—and, crucially, apparently alive—for their bearers and wearers because these people have externalized the energy of their desire into them.

Marx writes similarly of the *commodity* fetish, suggesting that even though "the value of a commodity represents human labour pure and simple,"[20] and, thus, materializes relations between people, as fetish, the commodity "assumes here…the fantastic form of a relation between things."[21] This is made possible by a form of capitalism in which producers of goods produce separately and individually; they do not relate until they enter their product into the market. Because they only ever have a mediated relationship—because they only relate to each other through the commodities that they produce—these commodities appear to have simply emerged as "sensuous things which are at the same time supra-sensible or social."[22] And as social entities, they are ascribed the ability to enter social relations both with humans and *among themselves*. Commodity fetishism appears to construct a mystical world in which commodities create society with each other, a world that "exists apart from and outside the producers."[23] Like the magico-religious fetish, the commodity fetish becomes apparently alive because it "accrues

[17] Ibid., 139.
[18] Desmet, "Reading the Web as Fetish," 59.
[19] Pietz, "Fetishism and Materialism: The Limits of Theory in Marx," 1993, 139.
[20] Marx, *Capital,* 135.
[21] Ibid., 165.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.

an additional value as the correlate of *desire*,"[24] but as a commodity this additional value—and this aliveness that arrives as the commodity's ability to relate socially—becomes associated ontologically with the commodity. Desire that is libidinally invested in the commodity fetish is ascribed to the commodity, rather than to the human fetishist, making the commodity fetish appear as if it is *itself* able to desire, establishing *a libidinal circuit,* in which desire invested is circulated through the commodity and back to the fetishist.

iPhone clearly functions as a commodity fetish, especially when we consider that, for Marx, fetishism "attaches itself to the products of labour as soon as they are produced as commodities, and is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities;"[25] commodities become fetishes when they are produced as commodities. What's more, the commodification of iPhone, and especially our imagining of it as capable of desire, permits the rhetorics of dematerialization to project an ideal version of the device that invites attachment. This is because the commodity is essentially a formal structure that promotes the idealization of the object commoditized and, specifically, because it is imagined as having immaterial and supernatural properties, which are associated, as I show in chapter 1, with the 'magic' of iPhone's brand. iPhone as commodity becomes something more than simply material. Whether we call this supra-material aspect imaginary, supernatural, or ideal, it is emphasized over the physical device, dematerializing it and allowing us to dispose of it.

iPhone also, in rhetorically constituting its brand community (described below) institutes libidinal circuitry between it and its users. It demands desire, and promises to return this desire. In relation to the key phrases of this thesis, iPhone's fetishistic libidinal circuitry has three main

[24] Schalow, "Fantasies and Fetishes," 71.
[25] Marx, *Capital*, 165.

effects. First, it is constituted by performances of attachment, which are, here, specifically material. As I describe in chapter 1, iPhone's interface operates through specific, tactile gestures—swiping, tapping, and pinching among others. Attachment to the device is primarily generated through these gestures, which means that desire is invested in iPhone *directly* and *materially*. This actualizes libidinal circuitry when the commodity form intervenes to structure that process of investiture and, specifically, to insert the idealized and immaterial iPhone between the physical iPhone and user. Desire directly invested through touch is *mediated* by the ideal version of iPhone; desire is then *reflected* back to the user as if it were iPhone's.

Secondly, this means that libidinal circuitry represents the most specific actualization of the rhetorics of dematerialization's fundamental irony—that the process that pushes iPhone toward immateriality relies on the continuation of iPhone's materiality. Touch, and specifically fetishistic touch, is intensely material, even intimate, but this intimate attachment is diverted from the physical device (that is actually touched) and toward the ideal projection that mediates libidinal investiture in iPhone. iPhone's materiality—its physical existence as well as the processes of production, manufacture, and distribution that its physical existence manifests—is deemphasized in this process of diversion.

Finally, libidinal circuitry permits the circulation of the rhetorics of dematerialization's effects between user and iPhone. iPhone appears to desire to be with the user, but this appearance elides that this desire is the user's reflected. Libidinal circuitry engages the rhetorics of dematerialization when it deemphasizes the physical iPhone in relation to its projected, ideal version, but the user (the material source of iPhone's apparent desire) is similarly deemphasized when fetishistic libidinal circuitry is actualized. iPhone promises to reciprocate desire *as if it were another person*, even though it simply reflects the user's desire back to her. That this

promise of reciprocation is intertwined with iPhone's rhetorically constituted brand community suggests that, at least as it functions to create a libidinal circuit between itself and its user, it also functions to legitimate the user's identity as user, even if only unstably. In this way, it operates also as a sexual fetish, in Freud's sense.

Although Freud writes of *sexual* fetishism in at least two explicit ways, my focus is on his later formulation from the essay "Fetishism." There, Freud suggests that fetishism operates as a disavowal of the fear of castration, even as it remains an index of that fear's repression and, thus, of its continued existence. The male child develops this fear of castration when he sees his mother's genitals. He had previously imagined that, like himself, his mother had a penis, but now understands her to have been castrated; if someone has castrated her, his own castration becomes a pressing possibility.[26] The fetish, typically the object or quality (softness, texture etc.) that the boy sees directly before this confrontation with castration, becomes "a substitute for the woman's (mother's) phallus which the little boy once believed in and does not wish to forego."[27] Fetishism's logic of repression—in which "a very energetic action has been exerted to keep up the denial of" the fear of castration is double.[28] It is not quite true that the boy "refus[es] to take cognizance of the fact perceived by him that a woman has no penis" or that this logic of repression fully sublimates this fear.[29] Instead, "the fetish itself has become the vehicle both of denying and of asseverating the fact of castration."[30] The fear is denied, perhaps, but the very objectification of this denial functions as an index of the positive existence of that fear. Said

[26] Freud, "Fetishism," 205–6.
[27] Ibid., 205.
[28] Ibid., 206.
[29] Ibid., 205.
[30] Ibid., 208.

differently, the fetish makes present the fear of castration *through a disavowal of that same fear*, by externalizing this fear into an object that can be hidden or made present at will.

This doubling is mirrored by a doubling of fetishism's legitimatory function. The fetish functions to legitimate the fetishist as fetishist, but is also functions to legitimate the fetishist as sexually 'normal' (that is, within Freudian psychoanalytic theory, heterosexual). What emerges here is that the fetish *itself* (the object) provides an external material support for the protection and maintenance of the fetishist's pseudo-normal sexual identity: "it [the fetish] also saves the fetishist from being a homosexual by endowing women with the attribute which makes them acceptable as sexual objects…The fetishist has no trouble in getting what other men have to woo and exert themselves to obtain."[31] The fetishist is able to perform normalcy (heterosexual object choice)—and to perform it felicitously—only because he has invested the fetish with the ability to be a sort of unconscious and external prop for the maintenance and reproduction of that normalcy, even though it functions at the same time as the embodied and external proof of his inability to assume that normalcy. Fetishism is legitimated as both abnormal and normal, displaying on an individual level its variegated non-universality. The paradox of the fetish as a principle for the legitimation of subjectivity allows us to that principle as contradictory and doubled; the fetish legitimates multiple and contradictory subjectivities. Externalizing the fear of castration into an object disavows that fear and legitimates sexual normalcy, but the fetishist's obsessive introjection of the fetish as object of desire legitimates his being-as-fetishist.

iPhone is not, though, a substitute for the mother's assumed castrated phallus, nor does it legitimate specifically hegemonic categories of gender and sexuality. Similarly, my point is not that iPhone somehow replaces sexual objects. Instead, iPhone's overall dynamic concerning

[31] Ibid., 206.

attachment and disposability resonates with how the fetishist in Freud's narrative relates to the fetish. Freud insists that part of the fetish's appeal is that it is easy to obtain—reciprocally, it must be easy to discard. Although psychological, sexual fetishism involves a similar process of projection as iPhone commodity fetishism. The fetishist becomes attached to an ideal version of the fetish, while the object itself, due, in part to its ease of attainment, can be discarded and replaced with new (and presumably better) versions of that ideal projection. Because this conception of fetishism relates this process directly to the constitution of contradictory fetishistic subjectivity, however, it allows us to articulate an ideological and objective process to a complementary psychological and subjective process. This is critically important to this project, because iPhone requires a user that, as I show in chapter 1, whose performance with iPhone is both constructed ideologically and necessitates a split subjectivity that contradictorily desires iPhone only to dispose of it. As I show in chapter 1, however, this is complicated by complex processes of gestural and performed attachment, that construct iPhone and its user as, in the moment of use, one larger entity. This would suggest that the libidinal circuitry that obtains between fetish and fetishist is incorporated into the user as an auto-erotic function of consciousness, erotic insofar as consumer desire is, here, filtered through iPhone's virtualization of tactility and redirected toward the user. This, however, does not exhaust iPhone's utilization of the libidinal circuitry implemented by fetishism's multiple valences. Fetishism's libidinal circuitry also represents a sort of binodal economy staged by the emptied space referred to below, an economy that distorts and distracts from iPhone's material economy of production.

Method—Rhetoric and Performance

This thesis is *rhetorically analytic* and *performance focused*. That is, my method is oriented largely toward the explication of performance events and sites *through* the rhetorical

artifacts that they produce. This dual focus—in choice of artifact and method—is signaled by my key phrases. These are *performances of attachment*, that is, that embody *rhetorics of dematerialization.* To analyze them appropriately, I draw on the methodological resources both of rhetorical studies and performance studies. My methods are derived from the qualities of the objects I am studying. This is to say that, as Rachel Hall writes, "to do justice to my object[s] of study, I [have] to draw upon a multiplicity of methods."[32]

Methodologically, this thesis reserves references to 'rhetoric' and 'rhetorical' criticism for the discussion of textual and visual artifacts produced and disseminated by Apple, while 'performance' will describe everyday uses of iPhone. If rhetoric appears as a sort of top-down imposition, this is because my artifacts work on the behalf of the 'magic' of the brand to *rhetorically constitute* the brand community, a phrase I explore more fully below. We must first understand, though, that branding is a rhetorical endeavor that suasively creates a desire to belong—a belief in the magic of the brand—and with this desire constitutes users as a brand community through performances of attachment. If "the very existence of social subjects (who would become audience members) is already a rhetorical effect,"[33] constituted by their presumed existence within a rhetorical discourse, iPhone users are just such subjects. Users become a 'people' in McGee's sense, who "*are* the social and political myths they accept."[34] Their constitution as a brand community is evidenced (but not embodied) by the rhetorical ephemera it leaves behind, which is to say, for instance, that iPhone ads that insist on the magical nature of the device only signal that such a brand community must or will exist and do not embody the existence of that brand community *per se*. Although not an ethnography of iPhone users, then,

[32] Hall, "Letting the Object of Study Lead," 114.
[33] Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric," 133.
[34] McGee, "In Search of 'the People:' A Rhetorical Alternative," 247.

my thesis examines key moments in the constitutive rhetoric of iPhone's branding, examining how it produces its brand community as a community of actual users and guides this community both ideologically and affectively. In what follows, I analyze ephemera, including iPhone ad material; text and images from iPhone's user manual; iPhone presentations at the yearly Apple keynote addresses, specifically the 2007 keynote and the introduction of the original iPhone; as well as viral videos that encapsulate the circulating discourses around iPhone. Taken together, these artifacts serve as examples and indexes of the constitutive rhetoric that performances of attachment embody.

I approach the question of embodied performance most explicitly through the question of gesture and how gesture can signal both "adherence to law and convention on the one hand and…differentiated corporeal deployments of subjectivity on the other."[35] iPhone, of course, *requires* gesture both on and with it. Swiping, tapping, and pinching are all specific sorts of embodied motion that necessitate a kind of matching with placements of the device. In chapter 1, I explicate how these required gestural performances adhere to technological and corporeal conventions, and in chapter 2, I will examine how these same gestures might appear to function as intensely personal, expressive individual performances that are "communicating our desire to communicate."[36] In both cases, however, my attention is primarily focused on attachment and how it affects and might reorganize embodied experience. The analyses provided in both chapters explore how performances of attachments are scripted by rhetorics of dematerialization, enact dematerialization in performance, and, thus, reproduce dematerialization along three vectors: the device, the self, and space.

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[35] Rodriguez, *Sexual Futures, Queer Gestures, and Other Latina Longings*, 6.
[36] Ibid., 136.

Device—Thing

So, why 'iPhone?' With the influx of new touchscreen smartphones and Apple's decreasing market share worldwide, would it not be more accurate to use a more general term? I retain 'iPhone' for two interrelated reasons. First, as of the time of this writing, iPhone still commands 43.5% of the United States smartphone market, which both indicates its saturation of the market *and* the obsession it continues to invite.[37] Of course, this market saturation points to a more salient factor: iPhone's brand—and Apple's brand more generally—is one that inculcates intense loyalty and almost cult-like devotion in its brand community. But, as I suggest above, a culture of disposability is organized around iPhone that, through performances of attachment, orients consumer desire toward a phantom projection of the device and away from the device itself, considered as a material object. This is another iteration of the primary dynamic that this thesis investigates—the contradiction between the disposable device and the indispensable thing.

This dynamic maps onto the way that Albert Borgmann discusses 'the device paradigm" in *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life.* In the contemporary world, the human relation to technology has been reorganized. Technology always "promises to bring the forces of nature and culture under control, to liberate us from misery and toil, and to enrich our lives,"[38] and to "do so without imposing burdens on us;"[39] typically, we consider technology as a forward march of constant progression toward 'better' versions of old technologies. These better versions make their functions more easily available to us—iPhone makes communication faster and easier than the telegraph—while also imposing a smaller burden on its users—iPhone's GUI is more accessible than the user interface of DOS computers. Borgmann suggests that this replaces *things*

[37] Reisinger, "Apple's iPhone Share Is Static But iPad Is Tumbling."
[38] Borgmann, *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life*, 41.
[39] Ibid., 41.

with *devices.* A thing "is inseparable from its context,"[40] explicitly exhibits the interior workings of its functions, and constructs a small social world around itself.[41] He writes, "the experience of a thing is always and also a bodily and social engagement with the thing's world…It was a *focus.*"[42] To exemplify the thing, he discusses a fireplace. Its main function was to provide warmth to the family, but it also collected "the work and leisure of the family,"[43] structuring their lives in specific ways; in doing so, it also provided functions that exceeded the provision of warmth:

> It assigned to the different family members tasks that defined their place in the household. The mother built the fire, the children kept the firebox filled, and the father cut the firewood. It provided for the entire family a regular and bodily engagement with the rhythm of the seasons that was woven together the threat of cold and the solace of warmth, the smell of wood smoke, the exertion of sawing and of carrying, the teaching of skills, and the fidelity to daily tasks.[44]

The fireplace certainly provides warmth, but in doing so it also affords to the family an entire way of life, complete with specific roles that include individuals' bodily actions inside the world created by the fireplace. These roles are experienced as physically *burdensome*; it is difficult to chop wood, it is strenuous to carry it, and it takes skill and effort to start the fire. Additionally, the fireplace's functioning is on view, easily understandable from the outside; its machinery and its function are intertwined, both available to the human user.

Devices, on the other hand, divorce machinery from function, delivering the function provided by a thing but with "the machinery concealed [.] The [functions…] are enjoyed without the encumbrance of or the engagement with a context."[45] If a fireplace provides warmth while

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[40] Ibid., 41.
[41] Ibid., 41–43.
[42] Ibid., 41.
[43] Ibid., 41–42.
[44] Ibid., 42.
[45] Ibid., 47.

displaying its machinery and creating social roles that require performing burdensome tasks, an electric heater provides warmth while requiring only minimal effort from the user and without displaying how it is able to create heat. Borgmann discusses this by counterposing means and ends: a thing intertwines means (machinery) and functions (ends), while a device dissolves this connection, through "the concealment and unfamiliarity of the means and the simultaneous prominence and availability of the ends."[46] Interestingly, these ends, which in relation to things are referred to as functions, are referred to in relation to devices as "commodities." Although Borgmann uses the term loosely, to index merely "those aspects or properties of a device that provide the answer to "What is the device for?""[47] these commodities—which are dematerialized—often converge, with iPhone, with what is fetishistically *commodified*. In any case, these 'commodities'—these ends or functions—supersede and efface the manner in which they operate. They conceal the workings of the device, dematerializing the technological operations of the device in favor of providing seamless services and burdenless functionality. We interface with these commodities or ends without having to understand the practical nature of the technologies that deliver them. Because of this, they do not offer users specific social roles to fill nor do they order miniature social worlds revolving around themselves.

iPhone is clearly a device. We interact with icons rather than with transistors, and these icons deliver specific seamless services usable without any substantial burden—it just *works*, or it is supposed to, to reference an old Apple slogan. At the same time, however, iPhone also has characteristics of a thing; in fact, we might say that iPhone is a device that *wants* to be a thing, a wanting that underscores its fetishistic operations. The update underlines the distinction between

[46] Ibid., 43.
[47] Ibid.

iPhone as device and iPhone as thing. Considered as a disposable material object, iPhone is a device, delivering functions that operate seamlessly and without placing any burden on the user; because its functions are primary, the material object can be discarded in the update. It can be thrown away when a new iPhone is released. These functions themselves, however, operate similarly to a thing, because, through them, iPhone organizes a specific social world around itself, complete with the provision of social roles, even if all those roles are fundamentally version of the 'user.' What's more, these functions themselves do not "just work." Like most modern technologies, iPhone must be updated consistently in order to eliminate the elements that make it not work. This applies to updates to apps and iPhone's operating system, but also to 'updates' to the physical device itself. These updates index presumed difficulties with using iPhone—bugs with software, or problems with antenna. At the same time, implementing updates are experienced as such a difficulty or 'burden' in Borgmann's words. The process of updating takes time and disrupts seamless use of iPhone. Although to be an iPhone user is to embody rhetorics of dematerialization, updates underline dematerialization's fundamental irony—to perform dematerialization is to produce and reproduce iPhone as a physical object, even if updating considers each successive version of iPhone a closer approximation of an ideal, immaterial version of iPhone. Effort engages affective attachment with iPhone as device (a collection of seamless functions), but the ironic interruption of that seamlessness is the foundation of that effort.

Self—User

We might ask, though, who precisely makes that effort? I argue that iPhone's brand functions as a constitutive rhetoric that presumes the existence of a 'brand community, comprised of individuals performing attachment together. Marketing scholars Muñiz, Jr. and

O'Guinn define a brand community as "a specialized, non-geographically bounded community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand. It is specialized because at its center is a branded good or service…brand communities are participants in the brand's larger social construction."[48] These communities are not simply groups of people that admire a brand or use a product, however. For marketing scholars Kilambi, Laroche & Richard,[49] advertising functions as a sort of constitutive rhetoric,[50] which supposes that iPhone's brand and advertising *organizes* potential users as a brand community *before* they are actually iPhone users. A major way Apple does this with iPhone, specifically, is by creating "branded devices designed to simply make consumers believe they are magical,"[51] making them fetishes by design. This sort of fetish effect is modulated by Apple products, like iPhone, into a religious or cult-like experience for the brand community.[52] Branding iPhone as magical highlights the deeply felt modifications in subjective experience brought about because of participation in (or interpellation into) a brand community. One way to frame my thesis, then, is by imagining it as a critical intervention into the branding of iPhone and user experiences with the seemingly magical device.

Focus on the brand community surrounding iPhone also limits the scope of this project. Analyzing the differences in advertising and interface among different touchscreen smartphone manufacturers is beyond the scope of the thesis, for example. I consider iPhone representative of the wider smartphone market because of its continued dominance of the market and because its original form and function continue to guide the direction of phones made by other

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[48] Muniz and O'Guinn, "Brand Community," 412.
[49] Kilambi, Laroche, and Richard, "Constitutive Marketing."
[50] Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric."
[51] Diduck, "Reach Out and Touch Something (That Touches You Back)," 58.
[52] Muñiz Jr. and Schau, "Religiosity in the Abandoned Apple Newton Brand Community"; Belk and Tumbat, "The Cult of Macintosh." And, again, this has to do with iPhone's function as a fetish object.

manufactures. Given its market share and influence, iPhone's rhetorical footprint informs the rhetorical footprint of touchscreen smartphones made by other manufacturers. In any case, no other touchscreen smartphone has developed a brand community so saturated by magical, fetishistic ideas concerning the object around which it is centered. It is important, then, to retain 'iPhone' because these magical valences—in the form of fetishism—lie precisely at the center of my analysis. And as one final note, I will use 'iPhone' instead of 'the iPhone' throughout this thesis because Apple literature on iPhone and Apple representatives refer to iPhone without the definite article. Additionally, dropping the definite article continuously draws toward the word some of the fetishistic magic that is perceived to exude from the object itself. If iPhone is a fetish, this makes it appear to desire, meaning that iPhone as proper noun is especially appropriate. It is as if the device were another person, user, or performer. The phrase "performing iPhone" alludes to the murky middle between these joint performers: user and device. Because the phrase functions variably as verb and noun—I am performing iPhone, but the device is performing well or not so well—it indexes the circulation of rhetorics of dematerialization between the two performers as well as their ephemeral attachment in the moment of use.

This joint performance means that the user is, first, also dematerializing. Sensors, direct input, and surveillance practices that depend on these features create an image of the user as pure data and, as I describe in chapter 2, visualize this data in ways that allow the user to export parts of the experience of embodiment to the device. Secondly, iPhone is a specifically *mobile* device. We are meant to use it while moving, operating as modern go-getters, walking and talking about our overfull schedules. This implied user—this fantasy body of limitless mobility—clearly excludes certain kinds of bodies, specifically concerning notion of class mobility and bodily

ability, because it presumes, again ironically, certain characteristics of the user's dematerialized body. It is precisely this *presumption* regarding characteristics of the user's body that constitutes iPhone's brand community.

Space—Scene

If interactions with iPhone can be considered performances, however, *where* do these performances occur? As a first suggestion, we might return to iPhone's mobility. Because it can be used anywhere, any space can be reorganized as its scene. As Peter Brooks contends:

> I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A [person] walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching [them], and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged.[53]

He is, of course, examining theater in a conventional sense, so the scene for performance is, here, specifically formulated as a 'stage.' Although performing iPhone does not require a stage because it is essentially a kind of performance that is not strictly theater, a more general form of this idea still applies. iPhone is mobile; I can use it anywhere. This means that I can take any empty space, perform iPhone there, and transform it into the scene for iPhone's performance. This is all that is needed.

In fact, iPhone asserts that it is the only necessary condition for its own performance, although it is demonstrably not. Nevertheless, iPhone's audacious assertion of autonomy from more general conditions for performance *generates the scene for its performance*. In chapter 2, I will call this autonomous and automatically generated scene 'the emptied space' by analyzing Apple's advertising material for iPhone. This emptied space is the scene for iPhone's

[53] Brook, *The Empty Space*, 9.

performance, but it is markedly different from other senses of scene, including Brook's. As Diana Taylor writes:

> *scene* denotes intentionality, artistic or otherwise (the scene of the crime), and signals conscious strategies of display. The word appropriately suggests both the material stage as well as the highly codified environment that gives viewers pertinent information, say, class status or historical period.[54]

We are not given, however, a material stage or an environment on or in which to perform iPhone. Instead, when we turn on iPhone—when we touch, tap, pinch, and swipe over and on its lit surface—iPhone immerses us in a designed environment that reformats and modulates the physical spaces we inhabit within the moment of performance. Enacting iPhone via performances of attachment, then, performatively reorganizes proximal space into the very scene that allows for "the possibilities of the action [that] defines place."[55] Defining performances of attachment in this way is, of course, circular, but this circularity highlights how iPhone's auto-generated scene—the emptied space—is different from how Taylor describes scene: "no place is free of history and social practice."[56] The scene always furnishes relevant historical information by being embedded in and continuous with an historical repertoire of performance traditions that articulates the scene with historical time and non-performance space. By claiming to generate the scene for its own performance, however, iPhone attempts to disconnect its scene from historical time and non-performance space.

iPhone only ever appears within the emptied space, and only ever as an enactment of attachment. This is not to say, of course, that iPhone does not 'exist' as a material object. Instead, my supposition is that iPhone can only ever be experienced in its performance and that, further,

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[54] Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 29.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.

if one desires access to iPhone, one is required to perform attachment. This formulates the emptied space as a virtual space in which iPhone seems to magically appear, a space that through the requirement to perform attachment extends, in the moment of use, beyond iPhone, reformatting the space around the user as similarly empty. This emptiness has no temporal or spatial history, and so manages to displace and defer recognition of iPhone's material conditions of production, manufacture, and distribution, or, in other words, to dematerialize the space around the user as well as, I will argue in chapters 1 and 2, the user's body itself. From the outside, these subjective dematerializing effects look like an obsessive absorption—teenagers with eyes on phone inattentively crossing busy streets, young women at baseball games taking selfies instead of watching the game,[57] or even texting while driving—but this absorption, I suggest, is not the sort of generational narcissism that it is often portrayed as. Instead, performing attachment with iPhone is a respatializing activity that allows the user to toggle between 'full' space and the emptied space. However, and to again insist on an irony, this toggling underlines how the space being *emptied* rather than *empty* connotes a subdued yet continuous connection to historical time and non-performance space. If a thing is emptied, it was once full, that is, and if it was once full, it can become full again. In chapter 2, I discuss in more detail how this filling might occur. Here, though, I merely wish to insist that in the moment of performance, the user brings with her details from her own life and leaves them in the emptied space. This implies the creation of new worlds inside the emptied space, as well as—because performing iPhone, again, represents the space between user and iPhone—a reciprocal reorganization of embodied experience.

[57] KGO, "Baseball Announcers Poke Fun at Group of Sorority Girls Taking Selfies."

Overall, associating these three vectors with fetishism is meant to offer some dim optimism concerning the introjection, through technological fetishism, of contemporary forms of (self) control as performances of attachment. Because fetishism is non-universal and necessarily variegated—because it legitimates contradictory normal/abnormal subjectivities—it destabilizes, as Marx and Pietz suggest, the very thing it is meant to legitimate in addition to its own power of legitimation. As Homi Bhabha writes, "the fetish mimes the forms of authority at the point at which it deauthorizes them,"[58] suggesting that even as the fetish legitimates subjectivities—even as self-control is interiorized through fetishism—its power to legitimate is called into question, insofar as it overextends itself in attempting to legitimate contradictory subjectivities. This is not to say that we can write our way out of ubiquitous surveillance, ecological disaster, or capital's exploitation. Instead, it is to say that rather than trapping users in a closed ideological field, technological fetishism underlines ideology's implicit instability.

The Chapters

Chapter 1 examines performances of attachment as a kind of 'practical magic,' and is primarily concerned with *device* and *user*. Examining images and text from iPhone 6/6s user manual as well as ad material for iPhone's "3d Touch" feature, I examine the ways in which attachment is performed as dematerialization through iPhone's gestural interface and how this links the practice of iPhone—performing iPhone—and the magic of its brand. This interface works to 1) articulate my body to the device, 2) to visualize, virtualize, and thus dematerialize tactility itself through the construction and deployment of a slick touch and a virtual deep touch and 3) to dematerialize both, replacing them with an autoerotic 'circuit' in which my own fetishistic desire is returned to myself in the moment of touch. This dynamic and the specific

[58] Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man," 367.

practices it scripts are formulated as attachment to iPhone's brand, which magically dematerializes them and reciprocally conjures a user constantly articulated to the brand as a self-composed individual.

Chapter 2 shifts focus, and provides a critical and theoretical exegesis of the emptied space. Using de Certeau's distinctions between space and place and strategies and tactics,[59] I consider the emptied space as delivering a set of *strategized tactics*. Although it appears to promote the creative appropriation of the scene it generates, it actually contains users through the provision of specific modes of spatial appropriation and self-composure; what appears creative and voluntary is actually controlling and containing. I, first, examine how the emptied space is imagined in iPhone advertising as the scene for the delivery of fresh updates and new features and as reorganizational of proximal space. Second, I complicate this picture by examining two prominent actualizations of the emptied space: selfies and narcissism and distracted driving. Here, the constitution of emptied space through emic performance is compromised *post facto* by an etic observation that attempts to incorporate emptied space into already circulating cultural discourses. The acts of observation and interpretation apply meanings to the emptied space that contrast with the performance based meanings generated by iPhone users. Finally, I describe how observation compromises performance *even before the constitution of the emptied space.* Examining the fitness app "MyFitnessPal," and building on literature concerning self-tracking devices and surveillance technologies, I will show that MyFitnessPal (and other like apps) utilize and display the information that iPhone collects, and in this display, makes the body appear to be transparent and, by offering the body's inside to touch as perfectly manipulable. Observation—

[59] de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 2011.

construed as dataveillance—compromises the performative constitution of emptied space both after its constitution and before and during its constitution.

Finally, I conclude with a reflection on the trajectory of this thesis and the trajectory of iPhone generally. I summarize my major findings, point to some of the larger gaps in my research, and attempt to provide some avenues for further research. Additionally, I connect the rhetorics of dematerialization to larger logics of neoliberalism, especially its impulse toward individual atomization, in an attempt to find some possibilities for resisting the control that the rhetorics of dematerialization structures.

Practically Magic: Gesture, Dematerialization, and iPhone Fetishism

In 2007, during the keynote address introducing the original iPhone, Steve Jobs describes its capacitive multi-touch interface as "phenomenal. It works like magic."[60] The technological ability to touch the screen—to, as Jobs later emphasizes, touch your music, movies, and other personal material—is such an advancement over previous technologies that it appears to function supernaturally. This magical aura influenced iPhone's branding, advertising, and reception, and even continues to impact ads for iPhone's most recent iteration. For instance, "Midnight," an ad for iPhone 7's low-light camera, depicts a teenage boy skateboarding at night, pausing to take pictures. Over softly arpeggiated guitar and hushed vocals, we see him photographing sparkling sprinklers, less than timid deer, and a romantically inflated full moon. At the end, as he stands on a cliff overlooking 'the nameless town' mentioned in the ad's song, "practically magic" appears, overlaying the image.[61] The low-light camera's capabilities are so advanced that they appear magical, and though this magic is tempered by the quaintly humble 'practically,' the ad does highlight one important function of iPhone's magic—its ability to create "transcendental or magico-religious experiences" for its brand community.[62] The boy in "Midnight" is delivered such an experience and it is only made possible by iPhone 7 and its camera. The world pauses for him and his camera—nervous animals pose for pictures, the moon is overfull, and, unrealistically, all cars are parked, meaning that he can skateboard freely on city streets. When we see his face, his eyes are always wide, as if the world is somehow astounding. The experience constructed here is, while perhaps not religious or transcendent, magical in a more mundane

[60] *iPhone Keynote 2007 Complete*.
[61] Apple, *iPhone 7 — Midnight*.
[62] Diduck, "Reach Out and Touch Something (That Touches You Back)," 58.

sense: unforgettable, beautiful, somehow outside of everyday life. It is a *practical* magic that is accessible, usable, and that magnifies the quotidian from the inside.

Through analyses of Apple's 2007 keynote event, images and text from the user manual for iOS 8.4 software, as well as iPhone ad material, this chapter parses this practical magic, offering it as a primary nexus for the delivery and actualization of rhetorics of dematerialization, defined in the introduction as visual and discursive manifestations of a phenomenal and ideological process that emphasizes iPhone's functions and aesthetic qualities over its material form. "Practical" suggests the everyday, the useful, and the usable, alluding etymologically to practice. Rhetorics of dematerialization instruct the practice of using iPhone by providing scripts for its optimal usage that discard the discrete materiality of bodies and objects in favor of their ephemeral, gestural joining. I refer to "magic," on the other hand, to describe aspects of iPhone that seem to place its experience outside of the everyday. It is both an object that seems to speak, act, desire, and demand and also one that appears to disappear, as if its material form is only a fleeting instantiation of some ideal, immaterial iPhone comprised of functions, aesthetic qualities, and especially branding. The rhetorics of dematerialization evidence a phenomenal dematerialization utilized for ideological purposes. Overall, this chapter describes dematerialization as a fetishistic magic that depends on practices that generate both physical and psychological attachment. This operates, under consumer capitalism, as an ideological effect that produces both an immaterial, ideal version of iPhone that stands in for the material device, while also induces users to orient to iPhone as if it were an intimate friend.

This chapter begins with practice, with usage of iPhone at and within specific moments. I, first, describe how these moments accumulate as a gestural coupling of body and iPhone framed as disciplinary. iPhone's interface requires gestures that performatively articulate the

human user with iPhone, imagining both in pieces that are put together in and as the application of a kind of social discipline that interpellates individuals as users. Second, these interpellative practices and the users that are produced through them *invite touch*, yet *virtualize it* when it arrives. This virtualization has two reciprocal moments: a slick touch in which human touch slips from iPhone's surface; and a deep touch in which iPhone's screen itself evaporates and is replaced by icons and images. Thirdly, with this invitation and evaporation, I turn more specifically to iPhone's magic. Functioning doubly as a fetish, iPhone appears to demand desire and to desire in return—to invite and even require touch—even if, as I contend, both the demand and the reciprocation are only apparent. Finally, I contend that iPhone's fetishistic magic structures the gestural practice that iPhone invites through an analysis of an ad for iPhone 7's camera, called "The Human Family." This ad depicts a series of user selfies, but it embeds the gestures that make up selfie taking within an empty white space that stands in for the brand and its magic.

Gestural Articulation

iPhone requires gestures. "A few simple gestures—tap, drag, swipe, and pinch—are all you need to use iPhone,"[63] we are told; to use iPhone at all we gesture on iPhone and in gesturing on iPhone, we gesture with iPhone. Gesture demands that the hand make certain motions (gesture-on) while at the same time requiring a certain placement of iPhone (gesture-with). Gesture-*with* performs a matching between iPhone and the hand that holds it. Our hand must be somewhere and shaped in a specific way to hold iPhone, while iPhone must be placed specifically to be held. Matched placement mirrors matched performances that structure gesture-on. iPhone must *function* if I am to use it. By this I mean that iPhone must perform in certain

[63] Apple, "iPhone User Guide for iOS 8.4 Software," 11.

physical and technological ways that make it available for my subsequent performance with it, and my gesture on it. This 'matching' mirrors Foucault's description, in *Discipline and Punish*, of power's "instrumental coding of the body" in the context of schools and military institutions. Writing specifically of military training maneuvers performed under the watch of military elites, he writes that power's relation to gesture:

> consists of a breakdown of the total gesture into two parallel series: that of the parts of the body to be used (right hand, left hand, different fingers of the hand, knee, eye, elbow, etc.) and that of the parts of the object manipulated (barrel, notch, hammer, screw, etc.); then the two sets of parts are correlated together according to a number of simple gestures (rest, bend); lastly, it fixes the canonical succession in which each of these correlations occupies a particular place.[64]

The total gesture explicitly includes body and object, and this inclusion articulates them together. A gesture is a body/object system understood only in and as their unification. This unification is only achieved, though, insofar as both body and object are conceived of as a series of parts. The disciplinary imaginary produces the body as a dismembered effect which it can then re-member as constantly articulated with objects: "Discipline defines each of the relations that the body must have with the object that it manipulates. Between them it outlines a meticulous meshing."[65] Disciplinary power dismembers human bodies and objects, matches each body part with an object part, and then meshes these parts together through specific gestures. The subjectivating effects of disciplinary power are actuated in its application, for it induces the re-memberment of body parts and object parts as gesturally unified components of a new disciplinary subject. Gesture, when utilized as a primary micro-process for disciplinary subjectivation, subsumes body and object, manufacturing a joint subject that is something other than purely material, considering that the linkage between body and object is only ever confined

[64] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 153.
[65] Ibid., 152–53.

to specific moments—that it is, in other words, momentary, ephemeral, and imaginary, rather than essential and physical.

Although both military training maneuvers and the use of iPhone consist of gestural performances for audiences, there are important distinctions between these contexts. Gestures like military maneuvers occur within a specific institutional setting controlled and structured by the watchful eyes of certain elites (e.g. officers, teachers) who also constitute the audience for the performance of these gestures. Soldiers, in Foucault's example, perform in view for *re*view, becoming "a body manipulated by [an] authority" that only emerges as specific author*itative* individuals. The imperative to properly perform, in this context, is induced by the supervisor's gaze, and the inability to properly perform reveals a lack of discipline that demands correction. Usage of iPhone, however, does not occur within an institutional context and does not operate under the demands of institutional pressure. Rather than a lack of discipline, poor or novice users risk exposing themselves as outdated—alongside the enticements of brand, social pressure, rather than institutional pressure, constitutes an implied audience of watchful others who regard each other as only suspiciously tech-savvy. If a top-down, vertical surveillance structures the application of gestural discipline in institutions like the military barracks, a horizontal surveillance operating between and among users structures the gestural performances required to use iPhone. Mark Andrejevic labels this 'lateral surveillance,'[66] which is:

> the redoubling of the panoptic model whereby the subjects of the panoptic gaze come to take on some of the responsibilities not just of monitoring themselves, but of keeping

[66] There are various other conceptions of this or closely related phenomena with different interpretations of the relations of power involved and different general attitudes toward it. For instance, André Jansson's conception of interveillance describes a similar sort of horizontal, multi-nodal 'surveillance,' though Jansson attempts to more firmly distinguish surveillance from interveillance because he believes that to conflate them would be to void 'surveillance' of its critical force. They are *different* phenomena, for him. I prefer lateral surveillance, though, because I am concerned precisely with how it works in service of or alongside the institutional powers that generally surveil populations and individuals. See, for example, Jansson, "Perceptions of Surveillance"; Jansson, "Interveillance"; Christensen and Jansson, "Complicit Surveillance, Interveillance, and the Question of Cosmopolitanism."

> track of one another…Internalizing the gaze—in an era of governance in terms of risk—comes to mean not just turning it upon oneself (in the anticipation of the possibility of being watched), but also directing it outwards toward others (as if to fill in the gaps of the big Other's gaze, to *real*ize this gaze in a skeptical era), in the name of responsibility towards oneself.[67]

Responsibility toward myself in the context of lateral surveillance requires keeping track of others, and though the lateral surveillance involved in the general usage of iPhone is not as literal as Andrejevic's first example (a "neighborhood watch program against terrorism"),[68] it could be that the general conditions for iPhone usage provide the grounds for more specified applications of lateral surveillance, especially considering iPhone and touchscreen smartphone's perceived ubiquity. It could be that this perceived ubiquity also diffuses lateral surveillance into social domains not previously under surveillance. This is because iPhone, in part through "social network sites[,] enable[s] users to engage in practices of self-monitoring and self-actualization, while also providing a means of keeping tabs on one another."[69] Self-tracking and self-management through the internalization of a disciplinary gaze comprised of multiple others rather than one 'big Other' is generalizable beyond literal applications like neighborhood terrorist watch programs, and can come to involve, potentially, any function filtered through iPhone.[70] The inducement to perform is stimulated by the ability of these functions to imply an audience that is suspicious of your ability to adequately use that specific function of iPhone *and* your ability to adequately use iPhone itself.

Although developed in the context of the adoption of biometric technologies and the securitization of identity in an internet capable, data-driven world, Kelly Gates' conception of the 'tech-savvy citizen' helps to describe this inducement to perform. Generally, tech-savvy

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[67] Andrejevic, "The Work of Watching One Another," 485.-486.
[68] Ibid., 486.
[69] Gates, *Our Biometric Future*, 129.
[70] Chapter 2 discusses, for instance, fitness apps as one arena for this self-tracking or self-management.

citizens are "people for whom technical competency and active participation in their own self-government are two mutually constitutive responsibilities."[71] To be tech-savvy is to be *responsible* for the management and securitization of one's own identity and, in conjunction with the lateral surveillance made possible by iPhone, to be responsible for the *maintenance* of the management and securitization of *other's* identities. Both responsibilities require the tech-savvy citizen to adopt and experiment with new and updated technologies. "Experimenting with new technologies doubles as a form of experimenting with the self…reinventing ourselves as capable, competent, productive citizen-subjects,"[72] and this experimentation is mandated by perceived or implied social "pressure to adopt new devices and acquire new skills."[73]

Lateral surveillance vis-à-vis iPhone operates as a diffused social discipline that enforces tech-savviness as a civic responsibility. Under the watchful eyes of unnamed others, we are invited to perform gesture—to touch iPhone—though this invitation also is structured as a way to evade suspicion that I am, perhaps, not as tech-savvy, and therefore not as civically or personally competent, as I may seem or as others are. Performing iPhone in gesture does not take place for an institutional audience or in an institution, but it *does*, then, intervene on the individual as a kind of disciplinary subjectivation. Gesture, and its dismemberment of bodies and objects, still functions as a technique of power, one that is applied as the re-memberment of those parts as a new sort of subject, here, the tech-savvy iPhone user. Crucially, however, this re-memberment that unifies also deemphasizes the physical separateness of the body and object that have been dismembered.

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[71] Gates, *Our Biometric Future*, 126.
[72] Ibid., 129.
[73] Ibid.

Figure 1, from iPhone's user manual, visualizes this process. iPhone and body are first visually dismembered, considered as parts. We see a visual representation of iPhone's screen, disembedded from the rest of iPhone, and we see a disembodied and dismembered hand floating toward and over it. The screen demands a specific contortion of the hand: the index finger points, the thumb rests against the index finger, while the rest of the fingers curl toward the palm. In return, the hand demands that the screen remain placed steadily, for if the screen were to move too far away, gesture on it would be impossible. The overall gesture depicted demands a specific gesture *with* iPhone that places it in range of the hand and the gesture *on* iPhone. In Figure 1, this gesture on is visualized both by a doubling of the hand, with one of the doubles outlined in gray and one outlined in black, as well as a thick blue arrow pointing from left to right. Swiping across the surface of iPhone, then, is itself depicted as a series of smaller gestures, each also comprised of moving body parts. That is, the gray outlined hand represents the beginning of the larger gesture while the black outlined hand represents the end of the larger gesture; in between are an implied but unrepresented series of smaller gestures that are connected through the blue arrow. This implied intermediary series are visually folded into the motion of the larger gesture.

Figure 1

If this larger gesture contains these smaller gestures it also must include the hand and iPhone in each of these positions. The swiping image is an image of the hand being subsumed under the gesture, articulated to the screen in both positions represented as well as in the positions implied by the blue arrow. The blue arrow represents the gesture itself—the movement of the hand—but in so doing includes the hand at every position in the space between the hand's starting position and its final position. Gesture—the blue arrow—visually subsumes what would

otherwise be repetitious representation of the gesturing hand; gesture *per se* supersedes the gesturing body in the moment of gesture.

In two ways, the screen is represented similarly as an abstracted version of iPhone in every position corresponding to a position of the hand. First, the positions of the screen are subsumed in the representation because the reason we do not see the screen in any other position is because presumably the screen would not *move*. Remaining unmoved is represented, here, by a figure that is *stable* but that nonetheless theoretically includes all positions of the screen that correspond to a position of the hand. Secondly, the gesture, here, subsumes iPhone's material form—its casing, hardware, cameras etc.—by the gesture. The image is *of the gesture* rather than of iPhone or the hand or both, disallowing representation of iPhone's material form. Although the gesture relies on this material substrate, it negates it at the same time.

iPhone's multi-touch interface is imaged, then, as a first layer of dematerialization. Optimally—for the user manual depicts optimal (conditions for) use—iPhone requires gestural performances that foreground the ephemeral join created by the gesture and, in the process, deemphasize the physical separateness that surrounds and structures these moments of articulation. To deemphasize physical separateness in relation to ephemeral, gestural articulation is also to deemphasize the physical as such. As the user manual shows, the materiality of both the body and iPhone is superseded by gestures that include them. Crucially, however, representation of the material forms of the body and iPhone never fully disappears. Some minimalist materiality must remain for gesture to occur, though it is channeled into the representation of only those parts of either entity that are necessary for the moment of gesture.

Dematerialization actuated as disciplinary gesture imagines bodies in pieces, applying itself as the reorganization of these pieces into more extensive gestural wholes or, said

differently, a sort of gestural subject that includes both the human user and iPhone itself. In other words, iPhone's user manual operates as a rhetoric that scripts performances of gesture on and with iPhone as a series of articulations that is 1) molded and modeled by a social pressure to be tech-savvy and that 2) manufactures a dematerialized subject of gesture by emphasizing the imaginary gesture over the material forms of the gesturer and that which is gestured on.

Slick Touch, Deep Touch

These rhetorics do not simply script the performance of iPhone, however. Through that performance, the performers (user and iPhone) are also made to embody them, meaning that dematerialization also works on a phenomenal level. This section examines how dematerialization is actualized phenomenally, suggesting that the gestures that articulate user and iPhone as a new sort of subject are also virtualized in the moment that they appear, exhibiting a dematerialization of the very activity that makes interface with iPhone possible—the operations of tactility itself.

This virtualization has two moments: 1) a *slick touch* that dematerializes the user's gesture: iPhone's screen itself requires and constructs touch, but denies tactility, or my touch slips from its surface in the moment of touch and 2) a *deep touch* that dematerializes the surface gestured on: even as I touch the screen, I touch something *deeper* than the screen, or the touch of the surface is effaced by the technological construction of depth in the moment of touch. Slick and deep touch work together to flatten iPhone's tactile experience and ultimately to invite investment, that is lower described as libidinal, in iPhone's brand and other-than-material functions, rather than investment in iPhone as a material thing: if slick touch and deep touch

function as "extensions of the senses,"[74] touch specifically, this is only because they *virtualize* that sense.

Slick touch is best exemplified by iPhone's keyboard. In the 2007 keynote, Jobs describes the plastic keyboards of previous smartphones as a troublesome problem of terrible design. "The problem," he said, pointing to an image of older smartphones, "is that lower 40,"[75] referring to the lower portion of the phone occupied by a physical keyboard. This is because the physical keyboard cannot change depending on the specific requirements of the application currently in use. iPhone solves this problem by ridding itself of the physical keyboard and taking the form of one large screen with an adaptable virtual keyboard, exemplifying dematerialization's design mandate: replace the physical with the virtual, because the physical just gets in the way. Less material—fewer buttons and switches, thinner design—allows the device to more ably deliver its functions and more closely adhere to an ideal form delivered as pure design.

However, this keyboard was not always appreciated by users. Anna Haywood and Gemma Boguslawski, describing usability issues plaguing iPhone early in its life cycle, relate that though the "'no-button' design of touchscreen phones [provides for] a more sleek aesthetic design not 'burdened' by the need to accommodate physical buttons,"[76] "there was not widespread confidence that the performance [of iPhone's virtual keyboard] could ever match that exhibited on a physical keypad."[77] Haywood and Boguslawski, here, become mouthpieces for the rhetoric of dematerialization. Buttons are 'burdens' that must be removed in service of the

[74] Bishop, "I Sing the Senses Electric," 21.
[75] *iPhone Keynote 2007 Complete*, 31:30.
[76] Haywood and Boguslawski, "'I Love My iPhone ... But There Are Certain Things That "Niggle" Me,'" 423.
[77] Ibid., 426.

creation of a 'sleek aesthetic design.' 'Design,' as a less than material category denoting certain aesthetic qualities of the device, takes precedence over the material device—buttons are burdens even when users *prefer* them, meaning that users' actual desires evaporate in the face of dematerialization's design imperatives. We should invest in these sleek buttonless devices, rather than our clunky, old devices with them. What's more, we should invest in only the *idea* of sleek buttonless design rather than the device that design produces. Critically, per the users surveyed by Haywood and Boguslawski, the virtual keyboard's "loss of tactility was cited as a factor contributing" to this preference for buttons.[78] 'Loss' of tactility is packaged with loss of buttons, even though iPhone's interface contains 'touch' in its name. Even as iPhone's interface is explicitly and necessarily touch-based, users perceived at its introduction a loss of a specific kind of tactile experience i.e. the feel of the physical keyboard. This is slick touch: even as touch becomes more vital to the overall experience of using the phone, it is abstracted, and as abstracted, it slides off iPhone's hard, flat surface. The surface is theoretically and physically *slippery*. Intriguingly, however, in the user manual, instructions about how to use the keyboard are some of the rare instructions associated with images that depict iPhone's physical form (figure 2). Although this might seem at first to resist my reading, as this implies a specific materiality of touch, it in fact underlines slick touch's constitutive tension (as well as that of dematerialization generally). For iPhone *demands* this physical touch. If physical touch is to be abstracted, it must *first be present*; if touch is to slide off a slick surface it must first happen. If touch is to be dematerialized, it must

Figure 2: From iPhone's user manual

[78] Ibid., 428.

first have materialized. Slick touch relies on the gestural system established within every moment of use; thus, we again see disembodied hands, contorted specifically, suspended in a blank space with iPhone, hovering.

iPhone's *deep touch*, alternately, relies on the ability of iPhone's *interface* to disappear even as it is touched. In the moment of use, iPhone's material form is displaced at the same time and because the interface—the screen—disappears. In short: "Tap an app to open it,"[79] we are told, and in the tapping of the app it is imagined that we reach through the screen, even past the interface with which we reach. It is not simply that iPhone through gesture is meshed with our hand, that the device is made "unconsciously familiar…like another appendage, or an appendage enfolded within the body."[80] Instead, this unconscious familiarity becomes the basis on which tactility is virtualized as visual, a tactility that creates a visual illusion of depth. In part, this visual tactility exploits the biological intertwining of vision and touch: Easton, Greene, and Srinivas, examining the explicit and implicit memory of 2D and 3D objects, found that explicit memory—conscious memory—works from "modality-specific" sensory information to recall and interact with objects, while implicit memory—subconscious memory e.g. you remember how to tie your shoes, but you do not have to consciously work through the steps every time you do it—works from "modality-independent" information. This suggests that "vision and haptics shared abstract representations of object shape and structure,"[81] even if we remember the modality through which we experience the object. This is to say that vision and touch would share the abstract representation of the table, even if, as find Roberta L. Klatzky and Susan J. Lederman, "contrary to vision, haptic processing of common objects is impaired by reduced

[79] Apple, "iPhone User Guide for iOS 8.4 Software," 23.
[80] Diduck, "Reach Out and Touch Something (That Touches You Back)," 60.
[81] Easton, Greene, and Srinivas, "Transfer between Vision and Haptics," 403.

spatial dimensionality" indexing "fundamental differences in object perception across the modalities."[82] Visual and tactile/haptic information is intertwined insofar as the information received is abstracted: "the technologically extended hand takes on the same characteristics of the technologically extended eye; it is abstracted from the body and rationalized."[83]

iPhone's interface, with its emphasis on colorful icons depends on the intertwining of vision and touch on an abstract level; the screen displays icons that are purely visual and have only an imaginary relation to the screen itself. As Wendy Hui Kyong Chun suggests, "software, or perhaps more precisely operating systems, offer us an imaginary relationship to our hardware: they do not represent transistors but rather desktops and recycling bins."[84] For iPhone, this imaginary relationship is intensified, though, because, if the representation of 'desktops and recycling bins' elides the representation of transistors and other hardware, the representation of square icons elides the representation of 'desktops and recycling bins.' These icons abstract from the abstract or interject another imaginary relation between us and a relation that was already imaginary. Doubling occurs insofar as this imaginary relation itself relies on a touch-based interface that virtualizes touch in the moment that touch occurs. Purely visual icons demand a virtual touch that is predicated by a physical touch, but that disappears in the moment of its appearance. This is merely to say, again, that in touching the screen we touch *through* the screen, or that our touch is virtualized and visualized as the app opens. A virtual depth—a *deep* touch—is constructed insofar as the interface "erases the traces of its own functioning (in actually delivering the thing represented beyond), the more it succeeds in its functional mandate…the

[82] Klatzky and Lederman, "Haptic Object Perception," 3097.
[83] Parisi, "Fingerbombing, or 'Touching Is Good,'" 319.
[84] Chun, "On Software, or the Persistence of Visual Knowledge," 2013, 79.

more intuitive a device becomes, the more it risks falling out of media altogether."[85] Deep touch underlines the real fact of the interface even as it discards this fact.

The introduction of iPhone 6s and 6s Plus and the new "3D Touch" feature dramatically illustrates deep touch (even in its title). 3D Touch, apparently, "introduces an entirely new way to interact with your phone. For the first time, iPhone senses how much pressure you apply to the display."[86] Basically, 3D both allows for the use of two new types of pressure based gestures—'Peek' and 'Pop'—and taps back using the phone's inbuilt 'Taptic Engine,' which, of course, includes a portmanteau of the words 'tap' and 'haptic,' signaling the tactile response initiated by a harder press. Peek and Pop, through different levels of pressure while pressing, bring up condensed menus of frequently used app functions, images of emails and documents that are accessed without opening the document, allowing for quicker access.

Although the screen itself remains hard, smooth, and flat, and 3D Touch itself is based on different levels of pressure, the technology itself is described both on Apple's website and in a 30 second ad simply called 3D Touch as adding another level of 'depth' to the experience of the phone. Indeed, the ad tells us that while "nothing has changed" the experience of iPhone now "feels different. Now, you press lightly to Peek and deeper to Pop."[87] The new depth, as the overlay at the end of the ad says, creates a sense that "the only thing that's changed is everything."[88] It is a depth on two levels then: there is a depth virtualized by touch's

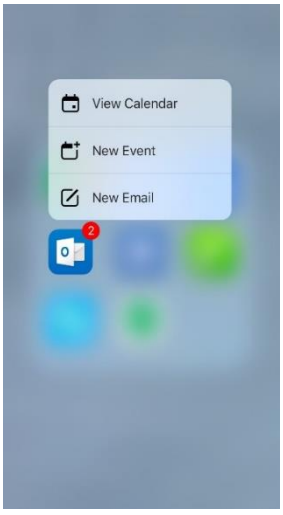

Figure 3: A Pop menu. Screenshot from the author's iPhone.

[85] Galloway, "The Unworkable Interface," 619.
[86] "iPhone 6s."
[87] Apple, *3D Touch*.
[88] Ibid.

pressure and a depth of *experience*. The ad depicts groups of happy people being together, largely outdoors. This depth activates up the magic included in iPhone's brand—this depth of experience is revolutionary, reinstating the practical magic described in 'Midnight.' 3D Touch, apparently, deepens your experience of other people and the environment even as it deepens your experience of iPhone by further extending its interface's virtual depth. For it is not simply that a harder press is imagined as going deeper, structuring a heightened sense of intimacy through the use of subtle differences of pressure. The use of these gestures visualizes depth (figure 5). When you press 'deeper' and 'pop' into an app, a menu appears over the app icon. This menu and its app icon remain clearly visible, while everything else on the screen blurs and fades, creating a contrast between virtual below and a virtual above. Depth's virtuality, here, depends on a transference between touch and vision. If as Michael Taussig writes, "with the invention of the 19th century technology of optical reproduction of reality... [a] connection with tactility is paramount, [an] optical dissolving, as it were, into touch,"[89] here we might say that a tactility dissolves into optics. As we touch the screen and touch *through* the screen, we also touch icons and information, documents and data: we 'touch' objects that are purely and only visual. 3D Touch exemplifies and deepens this deep and visual touch by augmenting it with a visually virtual depth. Tactility, which for Mark B.N. Hansen is 'primordial,' insofar as it is the undifferentiated sensory field that exists prior to distinctions between what we think of as senses,[90] is, here, virtualized. Here, a rhetoric of dematerialization is embodied by the user and iPhone as a reorganization of tactility contained within performances of and with iPhone. Reorganizing tactility as slick and deep touch combines the rhetoric of dematerialization that structures gesture on and with iPhone as a disciplinary subjectivation with a kind of implicit

[89] Taussig, "Tactility and Distraction," 149.
[90] Hansen, *Bodies in Code*.

magic—the screen disappears, and we can interact directly with intangible data. We perform with iPhone only inside of a dematerialized, magical tactile experience.

Erotic Dematerialization

As I describe in the second chapter, these magical experiences are one way in which iPhone manages to virtualize the space around its user, but, here, I wish to stress that magic originating in images in the user manual and, as we will see, ad material for the original iPhone, extends beyond these images into everyday life. The representation of hands in the user manual does not just deploy a vision of the body as dismembered, in other words; it uses this dismembered body to construct a 'magical' aura around the device, an aura that subsequently attracts body parts magnetically *through the delivery of magical life experiences*, like those represented in "Midnight" and in "3D Touch." In this section, I describe this magic as a fetishistic operation with multiple valences.

To recapitulate, we do not see iPhone itself depicted in the user manual. Instead, as in figures 1 and 4, taken from the 'Basics' section of the manual, the screen is represented as disembedded from its material context. Instead of the device itself, we see its abstraction: a thinly drawn rectangle representing just the screen. Some part of this is utilitarian, as the point, here, is to show users how to interact with the device using the gestural interface; in parts of the manual instructing users about functionalities of iPhone that extend beyond the screen and the interface itself such as changing the screen orientation and muting the sound using the physical switch on the side of the phone, these physical/material parts of the device are directly represented.[91] The

Figure 4

[91] Apple, "iPhone User Guide for iOS 8.4 Software," 25., 12.

larger point here, however, is that the gestural, touch-based interface *itself* disregards the materiality of the device. In figures 1 and 4, and throughout the iPhone user manual, hands are depicted as interacting with and gesturing with/on a screen that is disembedded and *abstracted* from its material context; the screen appears to float, magically decontextualized in a blank white space.

This is consistent with how Ryan Diduck describes iPhone's brand: it is "designed to simply make consumers believe they are magical,"[92] a belief that emerged, in part, from early ads that "depict uncannily disembodied hands emerging from darkness, cradling and caressing the divine devices."[93] As a result, Diduck refers to iPhone and especially its "slick trademarked screen" as 'totemic,"[94] and it is true that iPhone seems to "want to be your friend and companion."[95] The introduction of Siri, for instance, lets me talk to my iPhone and gives it the capability to respond, even if, as Emily McArthur writes, "Siri's acts of translation are not always successful, and the program' missteps work to break down its carefully constructed [companionate] aura."[96] At the same time, however, as indexed by Diduck's choice of 'cradling' and 'caressing' to describe how early iPhone ads depicted (and forecasted) our relation to iPhone, there *is* a curious erotics involved with our relation to iPhone that can only be described as fetishistic: "Fetishes…characteristically want to be beheld—to 'be held' close by, or even reattached to, the body of the fetishist."[97] "To be held," to be cradled, and to be caressed construct a tactile progression in which erotic investiture is increased as one progresses through each tactile mode; caressing something, that is, connotes a greater erotic content than cradling

[92] Diduck, "Reach Out and Touch Something (That Touches You Back)," 58.
[93] Ibid., 58–59.
[94] Ibid., 58.
[95] Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*, 154.
[96] McArthur, "The iPhone Erfahrung: Siri, the Auditory Unconscious, and Walter Benjamin's 'Aura,'" 124.
[97] Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*, 194.

something, while cradling something connotes a greater erotic content than simply holding something. Indeed, Claudia Springer, writing about cyberpunk, emphasizes the erotic nature of the interface with technology more generally, suggesting that cyberpunk envisions a bodiless sexuality that "associates the human/computer interface with sexual pleasure."[98] That iPhone's gestural interface demands a fetishistic erotics might be, then, unsurprising, especially considering that holding, cradling, and caressing—as increasingly eroticized forms of touch—are collapsed by and in its interface. iPhone, of course, must be held, and this holding is structured by iPhone as cradling. Heidi Rae Cooley calls this cradling 'fit:'

> *Fit*…is an innervating exchange between hand and MSD [mobile screenic device]. In articulating with the MSD, the hand-wrist complex is engaged in precision handling…The MSD's texturing, size, and ergonomic shape motivate the hand to execute fine adjustments continuously as it engages in 'active touch.'[99]

Cooley is writing in 2004, before the introduction and widespread adoption of iPhone, so the MSDs to which she refers are now outmoded, but 'fit' remains useful as a concept that helps to explain the gestural economy between iPhone and its user, underlining the ways in which iPhone *even physically* appears to make demands on and change the body's orientation to it. Indeed, Jobs, in the keynote introducing the original iPhone emphasizes the way the device fits in the hand. In his discussion of that device's design, he says that Apple has "designed something wonderful for your hand,"[100] accenting iPhone's match with the hand—it *fits* in the hand in a 'wonderful' way that allows for the precise performance demanded by its interface. But though Jobs says that the device is wonderful *for* your hand, the slide behind him says that iPhone is "something wonderful *in* your hand" (emphasis added). This slight prepositional shift spotlights two aspects of iPhone's magic. As already stated, if the device is wonderful *for* your hand, the fit

[98] Springer, "The Pleasure of the Interface," 39.
[99] Cooley, "It's All about the Fit," 141.
[100] Apple, *iPhone Keynote 2007 Complete*.

between the hand and the device are emphasized, and the magic radiates out from the interaction—the performance, the gesture. If the device is wonderful *in* your hand, on the other hand, the device itself exudes magic, though this is a magic dependent on its *design* rather than on the physical device itself. Jobs' articulates wonder to design, and this wonder emerges from a list of designed qualities such as extreme (and exceptional) thinness, a large screen with high resolution, and few buttons. Underlining how design vis-à-vis iPhone refers to a collection of purely aesthetic and immaterial qualities rather than their physical manifestations, the demonstration of these qualities utilizes a simulated image of iPhone projected on a screen, rather than a physical device, even though Jobs has one in his pocket. This image is rotated, flipped, and inverted, and arrows, numbers, and labels appear that help to describe each quality. The magic of the device that is wonderful *in* your hand emerges from aesthetic qualities attached to a simulated, immaterial version of that device.

These two senses of wonderment work together to build an experience that is delivered as magical and that remains magical through each interaction with iPhone. Each interaction produces and reproduces the magic that attracts us to iPhone in the first place, operating as a continuously magnetic demand. Consequently, the articulation actualized by performing iPhone, construed as a certain kind of 'fit,' finally demands that we caress iPhone and continue to caress it. The invitation to touch structured by gestural articulation, slick touch, and deep touch morphs into a demand. On page 11 of the user manual, we read that only "a few simple gestures—tap, drag, swipe, and pinch—are all you need to use iPhone and its apps." Other than 'tap,' these gestures are depicted as forms of caress (figure 5); to interact with iPhone, we *must* pet it, stroke it, and caress it.

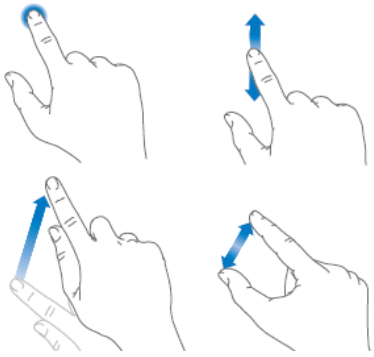

Figure 5

But iPhone's 'demand' is not, of course, truly a demand, nor is its function as fetish simply erotic. Instead, this eroticism merges with the magic exuded by iPhone into a more extensive actualization of the fetish, one that combines notions of fetishistic magic with notions of fetishistic desire in part simply because it is a commodity. As I describe in the introduction, Marx's commodity fetishism is, in one sense, a recapitulation of earlier anthropological accounts of so-called 'savage' religions designed as a (rather sarcastic) attack on the relation of self-righteously rational European capitalists to abstract capital; this fetishism might be most clearly outlined as a kind of animism whereby "material conditions are themselves spiritual values."[101] Fetish objects, here, are "attributed intentional purpose and desire" or are "personified things."[102] iPhone exhibits these by appearing to want to be touched.

Of course, this purpose and desire are only attributed, and the magic of the object that appears to wield human purpose and desire is, more or less, illusory. It is precisely this illusoriness, however, that grants commodities the *actual* power that they hold over the people to whom they relate. Terry Eagleton suggests that through the commodity, "the real workings of society are…veiled and occluded: the social character of labour is concealed behind the circulation of commodities, which are no longer recognizable as social products."[103] Relations between and among commodities and relations between humans and commodities are emphasized and the real social and material conditions that structure them are experientially dematerialized, which gives to the former "a tyrannical sway over social relations."[104] The commodity and its fetishism, here, become the focal point for the workings of an ideology that conjures an illusory world of magical commodities (that has, of course, real power and

[101] Pietz, "Fetishism and Materialism: The Limits of Theory in Marx," 1993, 141.
[102] Ibid., 139.
[103] Eagleton, *Ideology*, 85.
[104] Ibid.

significant effects) in the place of a real world of relations between producers. The magic that iPhone wields and that its advertising manifests helps to invoke such a world. iPhone appears to appear, out of thin air, a fully formed person-thing complete with desires and purposes. Its desires and purposes are, though, oriented *toward the user*—as in "Midnight," iPhone delivers magical experiences when caressed and, what's more, it appears to *want* to deliver these experiences. It wants to labor on my behalf.

Commodity fetishism vis-à-vis iPhone seems to braid magical and erotic valences of fetishism into one coherent experience. Important to remember, however, is that my imagining of gesture articulates human bodies with objects in such a way that bodies and objects can be considered as *one larger gestural assemblage*. If iPhone's desire to be caressed—its fetishistic desire to be 'reattached' to me—[105] erotically saturates the suture between it and myself, this erotic saturation can only be described as my own desire returning to myself through iPhone. If labor invested in commodities subtends a commodity fetishism that allows iPhone to appear to labor on my behalf by transmuting human labor into non-human capabilities, within the system established between myself and iPhone through gesture, my desire returns to me as if it is iPhone's—it wants to be touched and it wants to work for me. In touching iPhone and being articulated with it, that is, I am touching myself. Indeed, as Baudrillard in *Xerox and Infinity* suggests of the computer:

> the Other, the sexual or cognitive interlocutor, is never really aimed at—crossing the screen evokes the crossing of the mirror. The screen itself is targeted as the point of interface…The secret of the interface is that the Other is within it virtually the Same.[106]

[105] Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*.
[106] Baudrillard, *Xerox and Infinity*, 5–6.

As Springer suggests, Baudrillard here implies a kind of autoeroticism of the interface, an autoeroticism that is heightened by my interface with iPhone.[107]

More accurately, however, the system created by gestural articulation with iPhone consists of a *libidinal circuit* in which libidinal energy invested is entered into a kind of feedback loop through which it is increased at every passage through the circuit. Investing desire in iPhone is not merely erotic, that is. Instead, the investiture of erotic energy manifests a more primordial sort of libidinal economy that is the "drive-based origin and energetic source" of both the iPhone's sexual economy and the political economy that brings it into being.[108] Both, that is, emerge from attempts to fulfill wants and needs, or from the desire that takes shape as just this attempt. This implies two linked contradictions. First, I desire iPhone; it appears to desire me. Each turn represents an investment of libidinal energy into the either the phone or myself, but because this energy emerges from inside the system rather than outside of it, this amounts to constant cycle of investment, dis-investment, and re-investment in which I become more intensely attached to iPhone through every use. The contradiction, here, is that because this is a closed system, no energy can escape implying that my attachment to this object would increase *ad infinitum.* As Bernard Stiegler suggests, in consumer capitalism, "desire is protention—an infinite investment in its object."[109]

How, then, could I bear to dispose of such an object, a disposal that consumer capitalism necessitates? This is the second contradiction. Stiegler suggests contemporary industrial capitalism "controls the individual and collective behavior of consumers by channeling their libidinal energy toward commodities—by provoking the investment of desire in the object of

[107] Springer, "The Pleasure of the Interface," 20.
[108] Stiegler, "Pharmacology of Desire: Drive-Based Capitalism and Libidinal Dis-Economy," 152.
[109] Ibid., 159.

consumption it becomes possible to derive profits from industrial investment in the apparatus of production."[110] More simply, to profit from controlling the means of production, when what is produced is not strictly necessary for living, capitalists must provoke consumers to want the commodities they produce. This 'wanting' invests libidinal energy both in the moment that one first sees an iPhone ad (I want that) and in individual moments of use that are always predicated by wanting to use iPhone. This ongoing investment of libidinal energy in iPhone harmonizes contrapuntally with the goal of "consumerist fantasy…The object of consumption, as soon as it is invested, must be dis-invested: consumerism is an economy of disposability, that is, of infidelity."[111] Capitalists and marketers must convince consumers that *the very same object* deserves both investment and disposability in order to continue to profit from the feedback loop instantiated by the libidinal system established between iPhone and myself.

In relation to iPhone, dematerialization, construed as the overall impulse toward the evaporation of material elements of the commodity, an impulse that has both material and immaterial consequences, emerges as a subliminal attempt to displace these contradictions before they can be transposed into crises, which temporarily resolves them. To preserve the overall metastability of the capitalist order, dematerialization mediates libidinal investment in iPhone by provoking such investment only through its immaterial functions (interface), aesthetic qualities, and magical aura (brand). iPhone fetishism, that is, urges us to invest in an idealized version of iPhone that is only ever imperfectly instantiated. Dematerialization encourages us to invest in the *idea* of iPhone—its perceived ability to labor on our behalf, its fetishistic magic—rather than in the object itself. Its material consequences (such as, for instance, the elimination of the home

[110] Ibid., 150.
[111] Ibid., 151.

button and the headphone jack from the most recent iPhone) underline how this intensely ideological process has more than imaginary effects: we invest in the idea of iPhone, and this investiture takes shape as a promise that iPhone will, at some point, actually disappear, a promise that must ironically remain unfulfilled.

Crucially, if iPhone advertising establishes a constitutive rhetoric that incorporates users into a brand community of a specific kind of user, the contradiction that dematerialization displaces (and in displacing, illuminates) requires this user to be *split*. She must be a user at once *attached* to the iPhone, investing in it, and *unattached* to the iPhone, disinvesting in it. The contradiction, then, exists 1) at the level of a general economy, 2) between iPhone and its user as a process of autoerotic libidinal investment and disinvestment, and 3) within the user herself, taking the shape of a user who invests and a user who disinvests. iPhone, its marketing, and its interface must legitimate *both*, though, for dematerialization to adequately displace the contradiction. Freud's later conception of fetishism offers a valuable rubric for explicating how this might occur, especially considering that iPhone's function as a fetish structures in large part its delivery of a doubled user.

As I described in the introduction, the fetish in Freud's description is a kind of talisman unconsciously created by the male fetishist to ward against the fear of castration, though its function as ward always indexes the fear that it is meant to displace. Fetishes maintain the existence of the fear of castration through the creation of the ward against it. This allows the fetishist to operate as if sexually normal while preserving a sexual aberration. The fetish at once legitimates the fetishist as fetishist *and* as normal—the fetishist is *split* and his (for fetishists are, for Freud, always male) orientation to the world *through* the fetish is contradictory.[112] As for the

[112] Freud, "Fetishism."

sexual fetishist, so for the iPhone fetishist: it is not simply that the rhetoric of dematerialization constitutes the user as contradictorily split. It is also that both 'users' are legitimated in the same moment by the same discourse. Fetishism and dematerialization do not simply operate externally to displace or resolve the contradictions that emerge from consumer capitalism. They operate *within the subject herself*, constituting a contradictory subjectivity that displaces its own contradiction into the future, in the service of maintaining the overall metastability of the capitalist order.

The Human Family: Self-Composure, Selfie Arm, and the Emptied Space

However, the two major aspects of iPhone fetishism—its generation of a libidinal circuit and its constitution of a contradictory user subjectivity—are not merely magical. Instead, they have significant structuring effects on iPhone practice as well. Practice and magic are never disarticulated, only ever appearing as a kind of practical magic. If, as I outline in the introduction, rhetorics of dematerialization are performed as attachment to an ideal, ideological version of iPhone, practical magic emerges as just this performance. In performing attachment, the user inhabits the space between individual motion and ideological mandates—rhetorics of dematerialization and iPhone fetishism script gestural performances of attachment, though those gestures are not determined by their scripts. As Juana María Rodríguez suggests, "gestures exceed the intentions of their signification without ever becoming more than their own momentary expression."[113] Although her work provides a reparative reading of various social phenomena in the service of providing an account of queer Latina gestures typically read as excessive, this understanding of gesture also applies to iPhone's practical magic. Performances of attachment to iPhone are not fully determined by ideological forces like rhetorics of

[113] Rodriguez, *Sexual Futures, Queer Gestures, and Other Latina Longings*, 119.

dematerialization because they depend on gestures that can express individual and group preferences and epistemologies. At the same time, these gestures' personal expressiveness is tempered by their ideologically scripted nature.

Gesturally practically magic instantiates the two major aspects of iPhone fetishism as specific forms of practice. Gestural practice appears as if expressive of a user's individuality, but these practices are provisioned by the brand's magic, a provisioning that is subsequently hidden. To show this, my analysis now turns to Apple's "The Human Family," an ad for iPhone 7's camera. This ad, I will show, reformats the user's contradictory subjectivity as a manipulable divide between image and body and presents a practical instance of iPhone's libidinal circuitry in what I will call "selfie arm." Although these appear to be purely personal and expressive self-portraits, I contend that their appearance within an emptied space signifies their constant relation to iPhone's brand and its magic.

"The Human Family" has a five-part formal structure. First, the ad shows a series of still images and videos that are all portraits. Second, each portrait is paired with an attribution underneath it, formulated as a first name and a last initial. Third, vaguely inspirational music plays in the background. Over a jangly electric guitar that quickly strums major thirds, a piano arpeggiates those same chords in the right hand, while the left hand softly touches them in a lower register. The piano begins and ends by playing the same major chord, but with the difference of an octave. Passing from low and soft to higher and louder, the overall impression during this minute is slow uplift. This is not quite the celebration Apple proffered it as in their press release about the ad,[114] but it does imply a certain kind of inspirational affective experience. Fourth, alongside the music, we hear Maya Angelou reciting her poem "Human Family," which

[114] "Apple Celebrates Diversity with 'The Human Family.'"

ends with the lines "we are more alike, my friends, / than we are unalike."[115] Finally, there is the emptied space itself, constituting an unshifting white border around the shifting space in which the images are displayed. This section provides a close reading of the ad, specifically the relation between the images displayed and the emptied space, examining how the ad uses selfies to construct each of these selfie takers as self-fashioning, 'diverse,' individuals—even though not all the images shown are selfies—and how the diversity and individuality of the selfie takers displayed is at once expressed and submitted to corporate control as represented by the emptied space.

These images are *portraits*, though only some of them are self-portraits. This might seem to be an obvious—and minor—distinction. However, I want to suggest, here, that the placement of portraits marked as selfies alongside portraits that are not marked as selfies informs the viewer to read these non-selfies as selfies, sublimating portraiture to the selfie and foreshadowing the way that the ad sublimates these instances of self-portraiture to the white space. As Gannon and Prothero suggest, selfies are a distinct genre of self-photography "because the taker, and often his/her arm, is in the frame, thus making visible the construction of the image."[116] In the ad, all the selfies are of this style, clearly marked by what I will call here the *selfie arm.* Selfie arm, I suggest, makes visible the construction of the image as well as more firmly centering the photographer in the photo, which at the same time centers the photographer's active role in the

[115] Angelou, "Human Family."
[116] Gannon and Prothero, "Beauty Blogger Selfies as Authenticating Practices," 1859.

manipulation of her own image. In figure 6, selfie arm is displayed by the woman centered in the frame: her shoulder is slightly raised and her right arm is raised and extends out of frame. Selfie arm establishes an implied intimacy between the phone and the photographer by indexing an out of frame touch but it also serves to privilege the photographer over any other person in the image. The other woman in figure 1, for instance, seems to struggle to enter the frame, looming awkwardly over the photographer's raised shoulder. No matter who else is in the selfie, that is, the photographer, because of selfie arm *is who the branded selfie is of*. Even though other kinds of selfie experiences—as I suggest in chapter 2—offer a kind of collective photo booth experience that can structure collective positive aspects, here, selfies are pictured as subsumed to the brand. Selfie arm constructs a sort of circuit between the photographer and the phone, a circuit that implicitly excludes other persons in the selfie who are *imaged* but not *centralized*. Selfie arm emerges as a dramatically represented instantiation of the libidinal circuitry generated in using iPhone. The photographer appears to smile directly at iPhone, at the same time grasping it. iPhone rewards the photographer by representing her as central to both its world and hers. Although her smile indexes the conventions of photography (say cheese!) as well as the affective experience of taking a selfie with a friend or family member (joy or amusement), in this context we might also take her smile as an indication of her affective experience of simply taking a selfie and, more generally, of the

Figure 6

libidinal energy she invests in iPhone in the moment of selfie taking. Interestingly, however, because the viewer of a selfie is placed in the position of the camera, the circuit created by selfie arm subliminally connects the selfie-taker to the viewer. Simply, the selfie-taker appears to be staring directly at us and touching us, which in turn draws our attention. Selfie arm is, then, a set of gestures that implies a specific sort of relation among the persons imaged in the selfie, between the selfie-taker and iPhone, and between the selfie-taker and the viewer who is, in viewing the ad, equated with iPhone.

This is dramatically emphasized by figure 7, also from "the Human Family." Selfie arm is demonstrated by the woman on the bottom. Although she is laying on the bed, her right shoulder is raised, and her arm extends forward out of frame. She stares smiling into the camera, while the woman laying on top of her kisses her cheek. Crucially, although the woman on top is focused entirely on the selfie-taker, and though the selfie-taker herself appears joyful because of this exchange, she, herself, *is focused entirely on the camera.* This disjuncture centralizes the selfie-taker in the image, almost separating the selfie into two images, a phenomenon encapsulated by each of the women's eyes. One image is a tender, almost awkwardly embarrassed, image of queer love culminating in the lover's gaze being directed toward the selfie-taker. This image underlies another image, a selfie that becomes almost conspiratorial in its intimacy. The viewer, here, is both shown a scene from an intimate relationship—it appears that these women are laying on a bed—and is connected to the selfie-taker through the intimate gaze constructed by selfie arm.

Figure 7

Contrasting intimacies lend the image a transgressive appeal. The real intimacy between iPhone and its user—the libidinal circuit—is translated into a kind of pseudo-intimacy between the selfie-taker and the viewer, especially when the selfie is purposefully constructed for the purposes of sharing to a specifically defined audience. We are not, of course, in the room pictured, but it feels as though we are in on a secret or that, perhaps, we are the secret. The personal and expressive gestures actuated by selfie arm are translated into an appeal to an audience that is equated with iPhone but that, because of physical distance, cannot be collapsed into it.

Not all the images in "the Human Family" demonstrate selfie arm, of course, because not all of them are selfies. However, features of the ad, I suggest, prime the viewer to interpret all the images as selfies. The first few images we see exhibit selfie arm. Attributed to Arpana R., this is a color photo of a young Native American woman standing in a desert environment, perhaps in the Southwest United States. Although not completely visible, her left shoulder is raised in a suggestion of selfie arm. The second image is a black and white photo of an older white man in sunglasses and a cowboy hat, standing in an environment like that displayed in the first photo. In the far background, we can make out the barest silhouette of a Ferris wheel and a circus tent. His left shoulder is raised, and he stares directly into the camera, implying selfie arm. Although the third image is a short black and white video of an Asian man and woman spinning around in what appears to be an artistic exhibition of old streetlights, the man exhibits selfie arm, so woman cranes her neck to force herself into the frame. It is not until the fifth image shown that selfie arm is not exhibited. Even so, we cannot be sure that the woman imaged is not the photographer, considering that we cannot see her body below her chin and that she looks directly into the camera, addressing the viewer similarly to those images that demonstrate selfie arm. The

next image is the first that is *certainly* not a selfie. Here, an older man looks up and to his left, away from the camera. His shoulders are not lifted and we cannot see either of his arms.

After this image, we see eleven others—some videos and some photos. Eight of these do not exhibit selfie arm, while three of them do; additionally, only one of them does not image a subject looking directly into the camera. My suggestion is that even though there is a roughly equivalent number of selfies and non-selfies represented, that the first four images are all certainly selfies combined with the ways that the images maintain an almost unbroken direct address to the viewer permits the viewer to read all the images as if they were selfies. Non-selfies are sublimated to selfies. The ad, then, functions similarly to selfie arm by centering selfies in 'frame' and convincing viewers that non-selfies are selfies. Because this ad is established as one that is 'about' selfies, each image lends to the series a sense of selfie 'inertia'—it is easy to read non-selfies as selfies because of the cumulative selfie momentum that the ad has already accrued.

Each image, then, is read as an image the photographer herself, as if *the object of the selfie is the subject of the selfie*. That is (perhaps too obviously), each image appears self-fashioned or self-composed. The circuitry between the phone and photographer introduced, implied, and amplified by selfie arm consistently functions to provide the experience of self-composure to the user of the phone—gesture expresses who the user is. At the same time, however, this self-composure also indicates a cleavage between the selfie-taker's image and her body. As Roland Barthes writes of self-portraiture before digital photography, "'myself' never coincides with my image."[117] My portrait marks "the advent of myself as other: a cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity."[118] In the self-portrait, I see the self who is not the

[117] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 12.
[118] Ibid.

self, the self who I have passed by, who I am but no longer can be. I know that who I see in the self-portrait is me, but it remains differently embodied. It indexes a "that-has-been,"[119] a confirmation "that the object has been real,"[120] the object being in this case the self-embedded in a context that has passed.

Although selfies and other digital imagery do manifest directly as images—when I take a selfie I automatically see it—they also automatically present a gap between the image and captured light, a gap that is filled in with editing technologies. This is because digital images are not directly transposed onto a material medium, as with film. Instead, as Lev Manovich writes:

> representing even one image digitally requires lots of numbers. For example, an image with HD resolution (1920x1080) contains 2,073,600 pixels, or 6,220,800 distinct RGB values—making it impossibly hard to comprehend the patterns such sets of numbers may represent if you examine these numbers directly.[121]

Digital images present as images but are essentially data, and in between are processes of visualization that allow that data to appear as an image. This means that digital images are manipulable after the point of capture in a way that film images are not. Apps like Instagram, for instance, allow the user to upload images, and then edit and apply various filters to them. iPhone's camera interface, further, includes some of these same features, allowing users to directly and immediately manipulate the images they capture. If film self-portraits distinguish between the self and the image, consciousness and identity, as per Barthes, digital selfies distinguish between the image and the body. Selfies do not index a specific "that-has-been" for the iPhone user; instead, they provide a resource that can and must be edited and manipulated to become presentable. It still necessarily was, but it no longer must remain that way. With selfies,

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[119] Ibid., 77.
[120] Ibid., 79.
[121] Manovich, "Media after Software," 36.

the confrontation with the self as other puts it under my control, even as it remains in an object that is not myself. The contradictory subjectivity inaugurated by iPhone fetishism manifests here as an imaged me that is fully invested in iPhone—that requires iPhone to exist—and as the embodied me that controls my own imaging. iPhone entices me to self-compose.

"The Human Family" operates under the assumption that the subject/object of the selfie is a self-composed individual. Beyond Maya Angelou's recitation and the byline attributing each image to its creator, they are all presented without comment, which makes it appear as if these images are displayed just as their diverse creators imagined them. Since they are all read as selfies, these images appear to be a direct representation of how these diverse individuals wish to portray themselves. However, selfie arm's direct address to its viewer—that it directs the look of the subject/object of the selfie to the viewer—underlines how selfie arm, as a set of gestures, is never only personally expressive and how it also performs under the aegis of broader ideological forces and for an audience. Because selfies generate pseudo-intimacy between the subject/object of the selfie and the viewer by 1) looking at the viewer and 2) placing the viewer in the position of the camera that is touched, allowing the subject/object of the selfie to virtually touch the viewer, selfies—even those created using an inner facing camera—are faced outward toward both an audience of presumably self-composed individuals *and* toward the structuring power of iPhone's ideological magic. This means that "in some instances and certain moments, the lived experience of selfies can indeed possess a quality of emancipatory liberation,"[122] while in others "such means of self-documentation are used to shape and discipline our actions, both individually and as a society."[123] "The Human Family's" presentation of individuals constructed

[122] Kedzior and Allen, "From Liberation to Control," 1899.
[123] Ibid., 1894.

as diverse through self-documentation, then, might implicitly entangle the experience of self-composure associated with taking selfies to larger forms of corporate and peer-to-peer surveillance and control. Said differently, the space between self and selfie can be filled with both technologies of self-composure *and* techniques of social control both of which are activated through selfie arm. This, I contend, is represented by the interplay between and among the image space of the ad, the bylines under each image, and especially the emptied space.

The images in "The Human Family" are all rectangular, though they are all different sizes. This means that the space in which they appear is constantly changing. By contrast, the emptied space has specific dimensions that do not change, even though the mathematical area of the emptied space changes along with the area of the image space. As the image space becomes larger in area, the emptied space becomes smaller in area, while the height and width of the emptied space remain constant. Image space is always within the emptied space and is constituted by it; emptied space defines and delimits the variable image space.

This dynamic vividly visualizes how Deleuze describes controls: "Enclosures are *molds*, distinct castings, but controls are a *modulation*, like a self-deforming cast that will continuously change from one moment to the other, or like a sieve whose mesh will transmute from point to point."[124] Emptied space images this control. It modulates in response to certain actions by individual images and, in so doing, restricts the ads image space to certain dimensions. The emptied space appears to change, that is, *while remaining emptied;* in effect, it 'appeases' the images by allowing them to change, even as its overall structure and mechanism remains the same. Crucially, this sort of control provides individual agency, but only within certain bounds. In the ad, image space can become larger and smaller depending on the size of the currently

[124] Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," 4.

displayed image, but it can never exceed the boundaries of the control mechanism put into place. Emptied space controls by providing individual agency *only in defined limits*. Self-composure can be maintained even as it is provisioned through control by the emptied space.

Further, because the emptied space is white—because nothing about it catches the eye—it is easily overlooked. However, this ability to be overlooked is crucial to its operation as a more-than-metaphorical mechanism of control. What might be found in this overlooked space once one looks at it? In "the Human Family," curiously, one finds bylines. Figure 8 is the image of a young girl staring into the camera. She smiles, revealing braces. However, this image is attributed to "Jorge S.," not really a unisex name, meaning that this girl is implied as not the image taker. Intriguingly, if you look closely, you can make out the silhouetted figure of another person in the girl's eyes, underlining that this image is not a selfie. The girl, though, stares directly into the camera, and considering my comments above on how the viewer has been primed to read all these images as selfies, this look can be contextually interpreted as part of selfie arm, that is, as constitutive of a sort of intimacy between the object of the image and the viewer based on formal characteristics of the selfie.

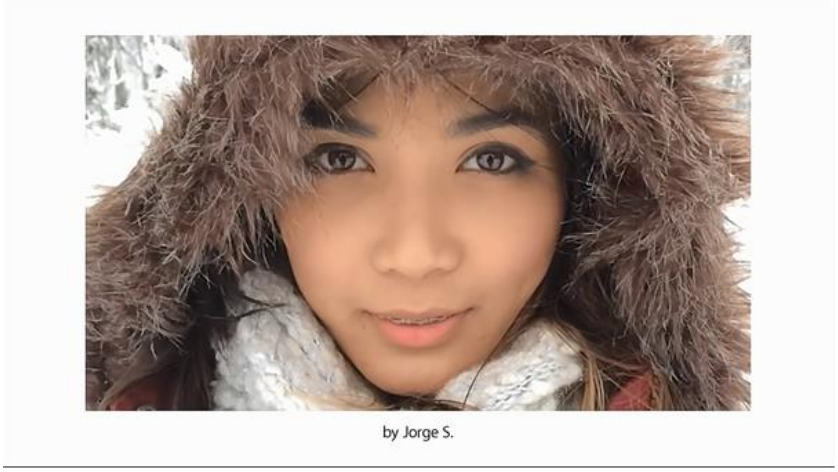

Figure 8

There is a disjunction between the way that the image is displayed and contextualized and its attribution. This disjunction, however, is sublimated to the emptied space because the

attribution—the byline—is only in the white space. Because the emptied space is naturally overlooked, that which is in the emptied space is also overlooked. That is, the byline becomes invisible because it is placed within the emptied space and outside of the intimacy created by the display of the series of selfies. This both further emphasizes how "the Human Family" asks its viewers to read all the images it displays as selfies, and how selfies are formally and structurally outward facing and constituted by surveillance and mechanisms of control. What's more, it underlines the distinction between image and body that selfies maintain for it is only because of this distinction that images that are read as selfies can be attributed to people who are not in the selfie at all.

That this invisible, dematerialized other—the photographer of the selfie revealed as someone other than its object—resides only in the emptied space (through the attribution) emphasizes how the emptied space functions as a mechanism of a scripted control that establishes an aura of self-composure. Though we might presume that the photographer posed the young woman in figure 3, this incitement to pose—this kind of informal control—is crossed out and associated with the emptied space; because the emptied space frames each image as if each were of a self-composed selfie-taker, the informal control of the pose appears as if in the hands of the young woman herself. Finally, even this kind of tensely negotiated practical magic is articulated to the brand through the emptied space. At the end of the ad, the words "Shot on iPhone" appear, representing the culmination of both the attributions and the images themselves. It functions as an attribution because it is in the same typeface as the others and maintains a similarly referential position; "Shot on iPhone" refers to the ad and to the series of images and attributions displayed. But it also appears as if an image—a selfie—because it is centered in frame and modulated by the white space. The human family represented in the ad, then,

ultimately is framed as the perfect product of iPhone's brand—the ad becomes legible as a selfie of the brand itself. Each self-composed image becomes an instance of the brand replicating itself. Even as selfie arm marks each image with individualized personality, the emptied space of iPhone's brand magic manufactures each instance of self-composure as an instantiation of iPhone's dematerialized economy. Emptied space, in fact, appears as the condition of possibility for self-composure, but a condition that must remain invisible in order to function as a mechanism of control.

The Emptied Space: iPhone, Emic Performance, and Etic Observation

In the last chapter, I described how iPhone's rhetorics of dematerialization function as a kind of practical magic: they script the gestures with which we perform iPhone and offer these gestures as avenues for, ultimately, a kind of creative self-composure. Gesture vis-à-vis the rhetorics of dematerialization operates as a joint nexus of social and self-control. As demonstrated by my analysis of emptied space in "The Human Family," iPhone's brand magic structures and defines, though never absolutely, everyday practice with iPhone, by functioning as the condition of possibility for a self-composure within ideological limits.

But the emptied space is not merely a representational phenomenon. In the introduction, I suggest that iPhone generates the scene for its own performance. In being embodied and performed, the rhetorics of dematerialization saturate the space around the performing user, dematerializing her local spatial context and actualizing the emptied space. That this emptied space presents itself as if it were not a scene—as if it were removed from contextual space and time, from history and politics—is precisely the effect that this chapter will analyze, for this apparent *lack* of scene is the iPhone's self-generated scene. This chapter argues 1) that performing iPhone, a phrase that captures both how the user performs the device *and* how iPhone itself appears to perform, actualizes the emptied space and 2) that because the emptied space appears empty it produces an incitement to "fill in" the space, meaning that emptied space induces the user to creatively perform the self *and* the space. The user becomes an artist whose medium is the self and the emptied space. That this space is *emptied* rather than *empty*—there was something there before that has been forced to recede—emphasizes how this space relies on rhetorics of dematerialization. Performance space is, as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o suggests, "bare, yes, open, yes but never empty [and] always the site of physical, social, and psychic forces in

society,"[125] meaning that, for iPhone's emptied space, it is only the rhetorics of dematerialization that allow the emptied space to appear as if disconnected from both the user's local environment and Apple's provision of iPhone to users. Emptied space functions as a medium for users' artistry only insofar as rhetorics of dematerialization convince users that iPhone was built solely for them, a device that grants them creative power over their image and themselves.

To defend this argument, I will first analyze Apple ad material in order to show how Apple envisions the emptied space. This material has used the emptied space through every iteration of iPhone, meaning that iPhone has always been delivered with its promise. Next, I turn to instances of the emptied space's actualization. I analyze a viral video of college-aged women taking selfies at an MLB baseball and videos from a US government anti-distracted driving campaign to show how the emptied space quite literally removes users from everyday space. From the outside, this appears as narcissism and distraction, though from the inside of emptied space this appears as empowerment of the self and the building of affective bonds among friends. Lastly, I examine MyFitnessPal, a fitness app, in order to show how emptied space provides the scene for the establishment of a new self and a new world and to underline how emptied space is predicated on the dematerialization of its own origins in structures of corporate control and dataveillance.

The Emptied Space in Apple Advertising for iPhone

Performing iPhone reformats proximal space into an emptied, virtual space in which the only relevant context is performing iPhone. A noticeable trend in Apple's advertising for the iPhone has been the visualization of this emptied space, usually as white, though sometimes as

[125] Thiong'o, "Enactments of Power: The Politics of Performance Space," 13.

black. Usually, such ads exhibit new features or new updates to the iPhone, placing their optimal use in this emptied space.

Figure 9: Screengrab from "Watered Down," 2007

"Watered Down,"[126] a 2007 ad for the original iPhone is one of the first to visualize the emptied space (figure 9). Not only does this ad exemplify the dismemberment of the body on which gestural articulation with iPhone is founded (chapter 1), it also, in contrast with an earlier ad called "Hello," which attempted to place the iPhone as the culmination of the telephone's history, emphasizes the iPhone's difference from previous smartphones. "This is not," the young male voice tells us, "a watered-down version of the internet." During this sentence, the white hands holding the phone turn it horizontally, allowing the internet browser to enter landscape mode. These hands, throughout the ad, swipe through various webpages, like the New York Times website, displaying how fully functional the iPhone's web browser is. All of this turning, swiping, navigating—all this performance—hovers suspended within an empty black space. The frame disconnects the space itself from other space that is necessarily contiguous with it, while the hands are curiously disconnected from the rest of the body. Other space is implied, of course, but it is never visualized. What is in the emptied space is just the iPhone, the world it seems to open to my touch, and, in conjunction with the "Hello" ad, the update to the telephone that it embodies through its new features.

[126] Apple, *Watered Down*.

We find this empty space throughout iPhone's advertising history and nearly exclusively when new features or functions are introduced. "HeyHiHello,"[127] an ad for the most recent version of the iPhone's operating system, iOS 10, for instance, introduces new functions of iPhone's Messenger app through use of the emptied space, while also exemplifying how iPhone appears as if an intimate friend, as I describe in chapter 1. Though white in this incarnation, the space again provides the scene for the ideal or optimal performance of certain new features of the iPhone. In figure 10, the implied user has just sent "Congratulations" to her friend; as the message is delivered, confetti explodes from the top of the phone's screen, emphasizing the message. The phone floats within the emptied space, magically appearing as if gifted from Apple to you. Performing iPhone allows old features to appear within the emptied space only insofar as they are articulated to or overlaid with new features. Old habits are updated, though this update is merely an image that disappears on arrival.

Figure 10: From "HeyHiHello," 2016

By presenting new features of the iPhone 1) as articulated to old features and 2) within an uncluttered background that makes these features the focus, the emptied space provides the necessary context for smooth updating. New potential habits connect to old habits. Both become visible in this moment and *only* in this moment. As Wendy Hui Kyong Chun writes, habits "are practices acquired through time that are seemingly forgotten as they move from the voluntary to

[127] Apple, *iOS 10 — Hey Hi Hello*.

the involuntary, the conscious to the automatic."[128] Media collect and generate habits, becoming habitual, thus remaining as habits only "by disappearing from consciousness."[129] "Hey Hi Hello," and other ads that display new features also display new habits, and this display allows old habits and features to reappear in contrast. The visibility of old habits allows new habits to seem tenable or natural, while the visibility of new habits makes the old habits seem deficient. I now want these new features and these new habits in part because the emptied space makes them appear as if only for me—magical.

But though the emptied space appears as a vital representational resource for the provocation of further consumption, thus including the user in its machinations, it also more directly includes the user. A 2007 ad for the original iPhone called "Kristen: "The Winger,"[130] dramatically visualizes the user's inclusion in the emptied space, while at the same underlining how the emptied space is only ever proximal. Kristen, a young, white woman, spends the ad in the emptied space describing her blog: she is a ballet dancer, and she uses her iPhone to post images from the wings of the ballet to her blog while not at home. People can see, she says, what the dancers are doing in real time, all thanks to the iPhone. Figure 11 appears at the end of the ad. Kristen now sits outside on a black cloth while using her iPhone. This is likely an attempt to make Kristen seem like a real person. We are seeing 'backstage;' the background

Figure 11: From "Kristen: "The Winger,"" 2007

[128] Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same*, 5–6.
[129] Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same*, x.
[130] Apple, *Kristen: The Winger*.

behind Kristen appears now as a draped cloth, and we see the orange tape showing her where should stand. At the same time, however, she now sits, head down, using her phone. The black cloth voids part of the building behind her and separates her from the ground. A few seconds later, a businesswoman with a briefcase disappears behind the cloth, and we never see her return; Kristen in using the iPhone becomes, it seems, unaware of people passing by her. Indeed, they disappear.

Kristen's whole body is contained within the space delimited by the dimensions of the cloth. This is the emptied space, inclusive of the user, proximal, and focused on optimal use of the iPhone. That the name 'iPhone' appears in the center of the top portion of the black cloth emphasizes that this scene is generated through performing iPhone. Using iPhone, again, voids proximal space, proffering the iPhone itself as the only relevant context for its own use. It also, though, mandates that the user throw herself bodily into the space when the she performs (with) the iPhone.

It is not just the user's body that is included in the space, however. iPhone ads suggest, eerily, that subjective experience itself is articulated to this space. "Family Man,"[131] a 2010 ad for the iPhone 3GS, for instance, has a young husband and father narrating his family's experience with his iPhone. Set in the emptied space, we are never permitted to see the man. We see, instead, his fingers tapping and swiping through the portions of his life accessible through the iPhone. We see pictures and videos of his children, recipe apps for his wife, Sesame Street to placate his son, while the man says, "as for me? I use it for just about everything." This is paired with an image of him opening with an iPhone app the back of his Volkswagen hatchback, an outside object included in the emptied space only as it is articulated to the iPhone through an

[131] Apple, "Family Man."

app. So useful, we think. How functional. But also: how necessary. The ad ends with these words: “Yup, I think we’d all be lost without my iPhone!” Use and functionality yield to *necessity*. The iPhone is not simply fun for the kids, or a nice thing to have around. Instead, it comes to structure the collective experience of this family to such a degree that they could not find their way in the world without it. They *need* it. This sort of need could only be developed within the emptied space, *because inclusion in the emptied space presupposes use of the iPhone*

Performing iPhone becomes necessary to everyday life; it appears to descend into the past, establishing itself as primary for experience. Because the iPhone proffers itself as the only relevant condition for the generation of its performance space, to be included in that space is to interact with the iPhone as if it is the only relevant condition for the generation of its performance space. To be and to continue to be in the empty space is to continually move toward the iPhone—to be and to continue to be in the empty space presupposes a need for the iPhone, because the emptied space can only be generated by performing iPhone. On the other hand, this space does not remain empty. Through use, it is filled with elements and objects from the user’s life. Kristen uses the space to blog, sharing her life and her favorite activities, while the Family Man places his car and, indeed, all the elements of his domestic life in the space. Though Kristen is literally an artist and performer (she is a dancer), meaning that her use of the space is a direct extension of her everyday life, the Family Man also becomes an artist. He remakes his own life through his performance with iPhone because iPhone becomes vital to that life, and reimagines the emptied space by filling it with aspects of his life. Performing iPhone creatively reorganizes life as tied to use of iPhone, and this is reciprocated insofar as the life of the user fills in emptied space.

Narcissism and Distraction: Performing Emptied Space

iPhone ads visualize the emptied space as the scene for the creative reciprocity between iPhone's reorganization of everyday life and the user's ability to fill in the emptied space. In performance, however, this reciprocity brings the emptied space off the screen, allowing it to saturate and reformat the real space in which the user uses iPhone. In part, this reciprocity's establishment and reliance on a spatiality parallels how de Certeau describes strategies and tactics. In relation to the city, he writes that strategies originate from a rational, 'panoptic' viewpoint, creating a theoretical 'city' made of marks that represent acts.[132] From this vantage, the city becomes a *place* where "each [element is] situated in its own 'proper' and distinct location [implying] an indication of stability."[133] Tactics, on the other hand, imply that "pedestrian movements […] are not localized; it is rather they that spatialize."[134] Though institutions that create the idea of the theoretical city as a static place—through, especially, maps—pedestrians tactically reappropriate these maps, and in doing this, transform a place into a space: "A *space* exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables […] Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities."[135] Overall, "the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers."[136] Strategies define the city as static locations mapped out, while pedestrian tactics spatialize what is given, creatively reappropriating the idea of the city from a position of relative weakness:[137]

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[132] de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 2011, 92–95.
[133] Ibid., 117.
[134] Ibid., 97.
[135] Ibid., 117.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid., 37. He writes that "a tactic is an art of the weak."

> if it is true that a spatial order organizes an ensemble of possibilities (e.g., by a place in which one can move) and interdictions (e.g., by a wall that prevents one from going further), then the walker actualizes some of these possibilities. In that way, he makes them exist as well as emerge. But he also moves them about and he invents others, since the crossing, drifting away, or improvisation of walking privilege, transform or abandon spatial elements.[138]

Walking around the city becomes a creative, tactical reorganization of the theoretical place of the city; it resists the rational, panoptic vantage of the map by reusing and reworking theoretical place. Performing place—walking around physically—transforms it into a space filled with micro-resistant actions and meanings.

Performing iPhone is analogous to walking through the city as both are forms of embodied movement that have the capacity to reinterpret and redesign theoretical places offered by institutions of cultural power. The emptied space appears as a theoretical place, given by Apple as emptied to users who then creatively and tactically fill it, respatializing it. However, the emptied space differs from de Certeau's city in two important ways. First, it anticipates its own tactical usage. Users' tactical reappropriation of emptied space is designed into iPhone, in part because iPhone epitomizes the interactive device (or at least asserts this about itself). As Mark Andrejevic writes, "the promise of interactivity is that viewers can be cultural produces as well as consumers—that, furthermore, their participatory consumption can be creative and fulfilling."[139] This sort of creativity vis-à-vis the 'prosumer' of the mid-2000's—the media consumer who is also a media producer, ah creative consumer—foreshadows how iPhone provisions a space that invites and requires its own tactical reappropriation. Every space, in being emptied, becomes interactive but only when performing iPhone, and this interactivity allows for the creative revisioning of the self. What is important about iPhone is that the tactical

[138] Ibid., 98.
[139] Andrejevic, *iSpy*, 29.

reappropriation of the emptied space and the reciprocal "savvy recognition of the staging of self" is designed into the emptied space. The emptied space, ironically, provides both the theoretical place that is appropriated and the tactical means through which users might reappropriate it. It represents a group of spatial tactics of reappropriation that have been absorbed into the strategy conceived and implemented by Apple through iPhone (encouraging consumerism through iPhone's practical magic). These strategized tactics—the everyday gestures and moments of use that I described in the previous chapter—appear to grant self-composure, but only within invisible limits.

Second, the emptied space represents a potentially omni-present and abstracted version of any space in which performing iPhone occurs. Though related to both, this space is different from 1) that activated by previous forms of interactive technology because of iPhone's insistence on extreme mobility and 2) from, as I describe below, telephonic space, the transcendent space developed through the telephone. As Mark B.N. Hansen suggests, "digital technologies are literally virtualizing the physical" which, [140] with iPhone, includes the human user's ability to tactically perform space. Performing iPhone extracts the user from her specific location and places her in the emptied space, which then moves with her as she moves. Because the user enters a liminal, virtual space that is both inside and outside of her everyday location, emptied space as actualized in performance can appear much different depending on one's relation to it. As my analysis will show, for those interior to the emptied space, it produces positive effects, while for those exterior to the space, it appears to have negative effects. This, I show, is because, while an emic performance manifests the emptied space, allowing insiders to fill emptied space with their own actions and meanings, an etic observation applies already existing meanings to it

[140] Hansen, *Bodies in Code*, 27.

after its manifestation. I will, first, examine a viral video in which the emptied space appears to produce unfettered narcissism, and then analyze an anti-texting while driving campaign that frames the emptied space as a platform for distraction.

Selfie just of a Selfie: Narcissism

Baseball is not a particularly exciting sport. It consists of long periods of inactivity punctuated by short bursts of frenetic activity. In late September 2015, a group of sorority sisters from Arizona State University, attending an Arizona Diamondbacks game, filled these long, boring periods with selfie taking. Making faces and posing with hot dogs and churros, these young women utilize selfie arm in performing iPhone. Generally, they look happy; they are laughing, smiling, and appear as if they are having fun together as a group. The announcers, two men, see this much differently, however. Even though video begins with the announcers urging viewers to tweet their "strongest fan photo" with #azdatastrongfan so that they might be "featured in an upcoming broadcast,"[141] and even though the announcers explicitly relate the women's selfie taking to this campaign, the rest of the minute and a half long clip consists of the announcers viciously mocking the women for their perceived self-obsession. After they announce the selfie campaign, they immediately begin laughing. "Look at the one on the right,"[142] says one announcer, the other responding, "do you have to make faces when you take selfies?" They go on to make sounds that seem intended to skewer the perceived stupidity of the faces these women make into their cameras, while also making remarks that imply that these women take far too many selfies ("That's the best one of the 300 pictures I've taken of myself today!).[143] Crucially, about halfway through the video, one commentator says, "Every girl in the

[141] KGO, "Baseball Announcers Poke Fun at Group of Sorority Girls Taking Selfies."
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid.

picture is locked into her phone!" The other responds, exasperated, "Oh lord." It sounds as if he is rolling his eyes. The first continues, "every single one, just dialed in. Welcome to parenting in 2015. They're all just completely transfixed by the technology." During this exchange, the television camera is pointed at the young women, and they continue to take selfies, laughing, smiling, and showing each other the pictures they are taking. But after this last comment, the camera turns to the renewed action on the field: a pitch, an attempted bunt, and the pitch being called a ball. It is clear that these selfies are taken during a period of inactivity on the field, even though the commentators, toward the end of the video after a hit to center field, say of the girls, "and nobody noticed!" The camera continually returns to the girls, checking and monitoring their activity. It is suspected that they are more involved in their phones and themselves than in the game.

There are, of course, multiple levels of misogyny on display, here. These women are imaging themselves, voluntarily, utilizing their phone cameras to extend their view of themselves; this competes with the way that the camera functions as an avatar of the male gaze. The announcers use the camera to view these women imaging themselves, and then to accuse them of narcissism and even stupidity. Though they are explicitly exhorted to take selfies, the right to look at women's bodies is afforded only to the camera as a proxy for the male announcers and the male audience. In viewing themselves, these women are seen as transgressing this dynamic.

This moment maps onto early 2010's cultural commentary on selfies, which was frequently related specifically to the practices of women on the internet. Narcissism is contrasted to empowerment vis-à-vis women's selfie taking practices. If the late 2000's saw what Anders Albrechtslund calls a 'moral panic' about privacy and information sharing on social media

websites,[144] the early to mid-2010's saw a quite different moral panic about the value and purpose of selfies, specifically concerning their relation to women's display of their bodies and the narcissism these practices indexed. As John Suler writes, commentators in the early 2010s, "when very light-weight mobile phones included cameras with dual-view LCD screens,"[145] complained that selfie making "was pure narcissism…an act of self-indulgence,"[146] especially for women who used "nude and provocative selfies [as] a powerful way to attract an online audience, especially [when] seeking male attention."[147] This has meant, for some feminists like feminist blog *Jezebel*'s Erin Gloria Ryan, selfies are "a high tech reflection of the fucked up way society teaches women that their most important quality is their physical attractiveness."[148] For her, selfies are always "calls for affirmation,"[149] a kind of control through narcissism that requires women to be on view for men, "a reflection of the warped way we teach girls to see themselves as decorative."[150]

Others view selfies rather more positively. Tiidenberg and Gómez-Cruz, for instance, explore NSFW (Not Safe for Work) Tumblr blogs, examining how women who post nude selfies to these blogs experience this 'self-shooting' as "a self-therapeutic and awareness-raising practice. It has allowed for a new kind of body to emerge—a powerful, sexual, female body."[151] Minh-Ha T. Pham, alternatively, examines online feminist and undocumented Asian-American activist projects that utilizes selfies and the composure of the fashionable female body in way that networks vanity, allowing:

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[144] Albrechtslund, "Online Social Networking as Participatory Surveillance."
[145] Suler, "From Self-Portraits to Selfies," 178.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid., 179.
[148] Ryan, "Selfies Aren't Empowering. They're a Cry for Help."
[149] Ibid.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Tiidenberg and Cruz, "Selfies, Image and the Re-Making of the Body," 95.

> the networked subject-as-represented object a hand in shaping and controlling their representation. They make choices about when to take a selfie or fashion blog style outfit photo; where to position the head, face, and body in relation to the camera […] when to share it online or whether to share it at all.[152]

Selfies provide an experience of self-control—of a sense that one can manage one's image and its proliferation and dissemination. As Slate's Rachel Simmons writes, selfies might allow "girls [to] practice promoting themselves" by placing the control of camera—and its ability to fashion one's image—in the hands of girls.[153]

The video exhibits these contrasting ideas about selfies. Though it is not explicit from the video that these women feel empowered through their selfie-taking, it is interesting to note that, after the video went viral (the women were even featured on *Ellen*),[154] the Arizona Diamondbacks offered them free tickets to a future game, perhaps as a sort of apology; instead of accepting the tickets, the women requested that they be donated to "families at A New Leaf, a local [Arizona] non-profit that helps support victims of domestic violence."[155] Though this is not, perhaps, an explicitly feminist gesture aimed at the patriarchal visualities that shamed their selfie-taking practices, it does reveal that they used the virality of their collective image as a kind of solidarity building, empowering practice, oriented toward a cause frequently identified with feminism. This gesture is a direct attempt to contravene the accusations of narcissism and stupidity hurled at the women during the viral clip, meaning that it also provides an example of a nexus of these competing ideas about selfies.

What is interesting, however, is that narcissism and empowerment appear, both in the clip and in the discourse about selfies, to emerge from different viewpoints that I contend develop

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[152] Pham, "'I Click and Post and Breathe, Waiting for Others to See What I See,'" 224.
[153] Simmons and Cauterucci, "Selfies Are Good for Girls."
[154] TheEllenShow, *The Selfie Sorority Girls Are Here!*
[155] "Selfie-Taking Sorority Girls Use Internet Fame for Good."

from different relations to the emptied space. This is to the say that the same gestures look different for those outside of emptied space (the announcers) in contrast with those within in it (the sorority sisters). The women in the clip use their phones to take selfies at a baseball game, reorganizing the space around them into an alternative space that is slightly outside of the baseball stadium. For them, this space operates as a platform for building friendships, having positive affective experiences, and, simply, having fun. Rather than, as Sherry Turkle says, "making it hard to settle into serious conversations with ourselves and with other people because emotionally, we keep ourselves available to be taken away from everything,"[156] selfies here—and more specifically, the common space that selfie arm actuates—allow these women to experience being together in a different way and in a different space. Crucially, this is only indirectly related to the baseball game itself. Not only could we imagine this scenario occurring in many different physical places, the announcers are irritated that the women are not paying attention to the game because they are not quite in the baseball arena any longer. When they say that "nobody noticed" the hit to center field, their tone suggests that if these women are attending a baseball game, they should pay attention to the game.[157] They are "locked into" their phones—the announcers see them as isolated, narcissistic individuals, who are oblivious to their surroundings. What they do not comprehend, in spite of clear signs of joy and fun on the part of the women, is that *they* are not experiencing the game as isolated individuals. They are, rather, transported into the emptied space, which allows them to build intimacy amongst themselves. In embodying rhetorics of dematerialization through gestures on and with iPhone, in using selfie arm and reducing the distance between them and their phones, they utilize the spatializing capabilities of their own bodies to transform proximal space into the emptied space, remaining both inside and outside of

[156] Turkle, "The Documented Life."
[157] KGO, "Baseball Announcers Poke Fun at Group of Sorority Girls Taking Selfies."

their physical surroundings. By tactically reappropriating the space given to them by iPhone, the women can creatively self-compose both themselves as individuals and as a group; even if this creative self-composure represents the strategized tactics of the emptied space, their performance has actual effects that are not all negative.

Texting while Driving: Distraction

Campaigns against texting while driving similarly display the operations of the emptied space, though in this case, the ramifications of existence in that space can be rather more negative. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSFA) has, since around 2010, been producing short videos aimed at reducing texting while driving; these videos emphasize the potential tragedy that this sort of distraction may. Generally, these videos depict teenagers (though some videos picture adults) laughing in cars with their friend. The driver gets a text or wants to check their phone for some reason, and just at that moment, the car is totaled in some disastrous highway accident. "OMG!," a video from 2010, follows this trend. 30 seconds long, OMG! follows three separate groups of teenagers, all within similar tragic narratives. One driver wants to "text Allison," another calls a friend with news that he has "got the food and we're on our way right now," while the third is shown texting. The passengers in the cars all are laughing, as if they are having a lot of fun—they seem carefree, young, and happy. In two of the three scenarios, the driver looks up to see an unknown obstacle and cannot stop in time to prevent an accident. The third has the teenagers' car hit from the side. In all three, we see dramatic images of bits of metal and clouds of smoke; we hear tires squealing and loud crashes. The camera zooms out and, to emphasize the danger of texting while driving, the obstacles

struck by the cars turn out to be giant, metallic looking instance of text speak: L8R, LOL, and OMG (figure 12). The cars are stopped, crumpled against the letters; in one, we can see the blonde hair of a teenage girl hanging out of a passenger side window. Here, the emptied space takes drivers out of real space to distracted, disastrous effect.[158] The implied physical existence of text speak—it ability to function as a physical threat—underlines how performing iPhone actualizes emptied space. It is not simply that texting while driving distracts drivers who then cause or are in traffic accidents: it is that the communicative functions of the emptied space become actual dangers when they are performed. The emptied space both distracts and threatens not because it provides distracting functions to the driver, but because it changes the qualitative experience of space itself. Distraction occurs when the user steps out of real space into the emptied space.

Figure 12

In this case, the emptied space appears somewhat like Gary Backhaus's 'telephonic space.' Gary Backhaus suggests that telephonic space can constitute a 'we-relationship' between two telephone conversationalists that allows for the asymmetrical completion of joint projects through a transcendent telephonic space. If I am cooking, for instance, and I call a friend for help, we share a project that 1) is shared only through a telephonic space that is transcendent in relation to either of our physical locations, 2) allows for the completion of the project directly by me through the use of my friend as a source of knowledge about the recipe, and 3) allows for the

[158] USDOTNHTSA, *OMG!*

completion of project indirectly by my friend vicariously through me. She tells me that I have to cook the food for such and such time—I do this, completing the project only through our shared telephonic space.[159] Most saliently for my purposes, this means that "the telephone as a substitute for other forms of interaction qualitatively alters the very nature of the experience of environmental space."[160] Use of the telephone and entering telephonic space allows me to experience proximal space differently: I gather information about cooking through telephonic space and, as a result, I experience the kitchen differently i.e. I know more about it and develop a different relationship to it. Telephonic space is at work in "OMG!," considering that only one of the phones in the video is a touchscreen smartphone, and especially that one of the distractions, here, is actually a phone call that exhibits a project shared in telephonic space. One of the drivers appears to have picked up food for friends at another location, and is now bringing that food back. In each case, though, the qualitative experience of proximal space shifts quite dramatically, causing them to forget actual space and get into car accidents.

The emptied space, however, differs from telephonic space in at least one important respect, though emptied space does rely on and in some cases extends telephonic space. First, to be actualized, it does not need multiple people in conversation—indeed, it does not require conversation at all. Instead, it merely requires use of iPhone. We might say that, because iPhone functions as a fetish—because it appears as if a friend and interlocuter—it stands in for the person on the other end of a phone call, even if iPhone does activate telephonic space (it is, after all, a phone). All it requires is touch—it just works. We might also think, specifically, of how iPhone can operate as a mobile gaming device, which is to say that we do not have to be talking

[159] Backhaus, "The Phenomenology of Telephone Space," 219-220.
[160] Ibid., 204.

to someone else to be distracted while driving. The emptied space, perhaps, can provide social functions without any necessary connection to a social world, or, it at least can distract without anyone being the distractor. This also means that emptied space, unlike telephonic space, does not need a shared project to be actualized; instead, it is activated merely in performance, mere use. Where telephonic space requires a sense of intention—you are on the phone to *do* something other than talk on the phone—emptied space does not. It is not surprising, then, that another video, called "Emoji 30,"[161] visualizes the distracted driver as one who is only nominally doing something on the phone. This video tells the story of a teenage girl whose boyfriend dies because of an accident caused by her own distracted driving. Her face is replaced by emoji, cartoon versions of various emotional states that crudely signify her feelings concerning the accident. When the narrative flashes back in time to the moment of the accident, we see that she had been idly scrolling through emoji at the time of the accident. Though it could be presumed that she was attempting to insert a relevant emoji into a text message, the video does not specify her purpose, framing her use of her phone as a kind of idle, aimless activity. By eliminating any reference to her reasons for using her phone at that moment, "Emoji 30" imagines use of iPhone as purposeless—as, that is, pure distraction. Telephonic space requires that interlocuters focus on a shared purpose; emptied space requires that a user is idly distracted by iPhone.

But even though the emptied space, in the context of distracted driving, has demonstrably negative effects, these effects—and their encapsulation under the label 'distraction'—still appear only for those outside the emptied space. For those within it, it functions as an interactive, connective space. Another video produced by NHTSFA, called "Liz Marks: Texting and Driving

[161] USDOTNHTSA, *Emoji 30*.

Story," suggests this.[162] This video tells the story of Liz Marks, 20 years old as of the video's filming in 2014, who, after receiving a text from her mother, crashed her car. This accident had multiple permanent effects. She says:

> I am blind in one eye now; I cannot smell; I cannot hear [very well] because a bone broke in half and cut my ear drum; I can't create tears because both my tear ducts got damaged, and I can't put my body to sleep naturally. I take medicine to go to sleep.[163]

The video juxtaposes her condition after the accident with her condition before it, constructing a before and after narrative focused around the condition of her body. Before, she is "preppy," models occasionally, and has multiple friends and a vibrant social life. After, she has scars over her left eye and on her neck. Her mother is immediately horrified at her condition. She says: "I was getting ready for work and then 12 hours later I'm in ICU staring at my daughter, who's bald and [has] tubes running in and out of her body and it's just overwhelming devastation."[164] Liz has become monstrous and disfigured. Her body has been violently reconstructed, and now serves as a symbol to warn against the (very real) dangers of distracted driving. In a way, this narrative is a perverse version of the narratives of makeover TV. As Brenda Weber describes, makeover TV narratives operate as a "form of shame-induced governmentality,"[165] that requires 'ugly' subjects to submit to aggressive humiliation before they can be reconstructed as citizens that are normative, beautiful, and good. Juxtaposition of the ugly Before and the beautiful After allows "the After to highlight the dreadfulness of the Before."[166] Women whose Before bodies were not-quite-feminine enough and, thus, shamed and shameful,

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[162] USDOTNHTSA, *Liz Marks Texting & Driving Story*.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Weber, *Makeover TV*, 82.
[166] Ibid., 83.

are remade as approximating the 'ideal' woman, shaped (sometimes literally—and violently) into the apex of white American femininity.

Liz's story operates according to a perverse version of this narrative logic. As with makeover TV, Before- and After-bodies are shown next to each other, as if to emphasize the transformation, and as with makeover TV, Liz's transformation leads to a reconstructed citizenship—in this case, a normative acceptance of the dangers of distracted driving. But, in contrast with makeover TV narratives, Liz's body *before* represents the apex of American teenage femininity—she is white, 'preppy,' and popular—while her After-body is that which is framed as monstrous. Thus, rather than functioning as a "transformation […] of the subject's capacity to see and thus assert selfhood,"[167] Liz's perverse makeover—and especially her reconstructed, monstrously framed body—functions as a disempowered symbol that warns audiences about the dangers of distracted driving. Rather than granting a sense of subjectivity, however tied to controlling norms of beauty and femininity, the perverse makeover reconstructs Liz's body into a powerless symbol that functions purely as part of dominant discourse about distracted driving.

However, what is crucial is Liz's reasoning for her distracted driving. Though she seems to have been aware of the way that the emptied space manifests as distraction, her insider position in relation to the space urged her to "ignore those warnings about texting while driving," privileging the emptied space's social functions over its potential harmful effects. In fact, Liz says, "I used my cell phone every second, every minute, every hour. Like, if I didn't have it I would freak out because I couldn't connect with my friends, I couldn't connect with anyone. I

[167] Ibid., 125.

couldn't connect with social media or anything. If I didn't have my cell phone I felt lonely."[168] The emptied space, as with the video of the selfie talking sorority sisters, allows those within it to build friendships and connect socially, though in this case the emptied space more closely approximates telephonic space. It also, however, stages the fetishistic relation that Liz has with her phone—not being able to connect with friends is elided into not being able to connect with anyone, this transforms into not being able to connect with social media, and this, finally, allows Liz to say that without her phone, she would be lonely. This succession of phrases seems to stage the phone as a friend who grants access to a rich world of social connection. A fear of loneliness predicates the fear of being without a phone (nomophobia, as in the introduction), and both fears revolve around entry into the emptied space. Fears and desire for social connection privilege entry into the emptied space over driving. What appears as distraction to outsiders, functions as thick social webbing for insiders.

MyFitnessPal: Information, Self-Management, and Datafication

Previous examples have underscored differing attitudes toward the emptied space: 1) an emic perspective in which the emptied space functions—through gesture—to connect people socially, both through iPhone's social media capabilities and the common gestures that enact the emptied space and 2) and etic perspective that understands the emptied space as individual instances of narcissism, self-involvement, or distraction. Though the etic perspective does accurately view the emptied space's primary effect—the direct virtualization of the user's proximal space—it does not understand the space spatially; instead, the emptied space's effects are pinned to individuals (or groups) as negative characteristics. Additionally, the etic perspective on the emptied space is, generally, dominant. The effects of the emptied space, thus,

[168] USDOTNHTSA, *Liz Marks Texting & Driving Story*.

circulate and, in part, constitute and re-constitute larger cultural discourses. In the first case, the etic perspective reproduces archaic ideas connecting women and narcissism and the function of the male gaze to (solely) determine the meanings of the female body. In the second case, we might say that the etic perspective is a primary force in the constitution of the discourse pinning extreme social disconnection, narcissism, and distraction on young people. Though a counter-narrative has recently emerged, so-called 'millennials' are often blamed for most or many of the US's social problems. This is often explicitly related to their use of social media and touchscreen smartphones. For example, NPR, in summarizing findings supposedly revealing that "millennials are simply more narcissistic than previous generations,"[169] suggest that an obsession with the self—and an overvaluing of one's own talents and abilities—might lead "the rude awakening many millennials face in their twenties when their high expectations don't match reality."[170] Interestingly, this article specifically references usage of social media and touchscreen smartphones, directly linking to an article about "how Millennials use and control social media."[171] While this thesis does not directly consider social media, social media—especially after the advent of iPhone—is, currently, deeply intertwined with usage of touchscreen smartphones. Social media and the emptied space work together to deepen the distinction between etic and emic perspectives on social media. But though the emptied space manifests in performing iPhone, its continued production—and the ways it is filled in by culture more generally—becomes a joint project between both perspectives.

This means that every actualization of the emptied space is both user performed through gesture on and with iPhone and part of larger cultural genealogies that attempt to imprint on the

[169] "Me, Me, Me."
[170] Ibid.
[171] am, "How Millennials Use and Control Social Media."

emptied space after the moment of its actualization. In other words, the etic perspective attempts to do through pure observation what the emic perspective does through embodied performance—namely, constitute and complete the emptied space as well as the subjects who perform (inside) it. But if the previous sections examine how these discourses are applied *after* the performance of emptied space to discipline the space into more closely resembling proximal space, insofar as proximal space is saturated with the discourses that perspective attempts to apply, this section examines an instance in which these discourses—and the genealogies they embody—come to partially constitute the emptied space in the moment of its performative manifestation. This final section examines the fitness app MyFitnessPal in order to describe how the emptied space can be constituted by the etic perspective by ordering the gestures through which the emptied space is performed. Rather than disciplining user's tactical reappropriation of the emptied space, here I examine how iPhone, through the emptied space, utilizes the provisions of tactics in its strategy—how it strategizes tactics.

MyFitnessPal's main website describes it as, primarily, a calorie counter app. Basically, the app allows its user to search for foods he or she has eaten, and if the food is in MyFitnessPal's database, which has "over 5,000,000 food items,"[172] it can be entered into the user's 'diary.' After it is entered into the diary, it is translated into numbers—calories, nutrients, fats, fiber, protein—which allows the user to monitor and track his or her body in a way that is expected to lead to weight loss. "Lose weight the healthy way,"[173] the website exclaims. All you must do is "simply keep track of the foods you eat,"[174] which, curiously, removes the material effort of weight loss from its own scene. Technologized weight loss becomes immaterial, that is,

[172] "Free Calorie Counter, Diet & Exercise Journal | MyFitnessPal.com."
[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid.

when the performance of *tracking* what enters the body takes precedence over the embodied actions that might materially lead to weight loss (eating, working out, etc.).

In conjunction with the app's focus on weight loss—on getting 'into shape'—self-tracking through technology becomes a form of (moral, physical, and psychological) *self-control* over the body's weight, shape, and size; at the same time that self-control is enacted, however, it and the body that enacts it are rendered curiously immaterial, a purely numerical visual nexus. Alexander Galloway's distinction between data and information is useful, here. He writes, "The Latin *data*…means literally "the things having been given." Or in short form one might render the term more elegantly as 'the givens."[175] The world gives data as empirical traces—as ontological 'substance.'[176] For Galloway, this means that data "*have no necessary visual form,*"[177] or, that visualizations of data do not proceed logically from the data themselves, which is to say that to visualize data is always to introduce an exterior order in the data. Instead, visualizations of data are primarily visualizations of the rules for visualization—a graph of my body weight over time first visualizes the axes on which data is graphed, and only after visualizes my body's data as a jagged line on that graph. Information, on the other hand, "stresses less a sense of presence and giving-forth, and more a plastic adoption of shape,"[178] so if data relates to the philosophical conception of substance, information relates to the philosophical conception of form. Information is in-formed data, data that has been given form, ordered and structured. If data opens onto the ontological, information opens onto the aesthetic. Even if "data has no necessary information,"[179] information will, in this conception always be the aestheticization

[175] Galloway, *The Interface Effect*, 81.
[176] Ibid., 84.
[177] Ibid., 82.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Ibid., 83.

(visualization) of ontological data. Though it does not follow from data's status as pre-visual that data opens onto an ontic realm of pure objective truth, the idea that there is a gap between data and information is useful for my analysis. Data, in becoming information, is on view, and with iPhone, able to be touched and directly manipulated. Data gathered and tracked by MyFitnessPal is related contextually *only* to the disembodied act of tracking rather than the embodied actions from which the data is gathered *and* because performing self-control through technological self-tracking, in this case, hails the human user as an immaterially informational being—a being whose embodiment is only the data gathered by the app and presented back to the user as information. Even if "nondigital [i.e. material] methods are still used by many people…who self-track for monitoring and recording aspects of their lives;"[180] even as "self-tracking [writ large] is not simply about quantified (or quantifiable) information;"[181] and even though many scholars have questioned and are questioning the presumed immateriality of information on bodily or infrastructural grounds,[182] MyFitnessPal emphasizes immateriality over materiality, because it operates as a site for the application of rhetorics of dematerialization. Device and user hover as information within the emptied space, ironically dematerialized only because of embodied (and material) performance. Both must answer to the challenge of what Jon McKenzie calls technological performance: effectiveness:

> The performance of a technology refers to its technical effectiveness in a specific application or set of applications undertaken in a particular context…Performance [in these contexts] means effectiveness, an effectiveness that, in most cases, must be quantified for measurement and endlessly qualified for evaluation.[183]

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[180] Lupton, *The Quantified Self*, 29.
[181] Ibid.
[182] e.g. Starosielski, "Warning"; Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*; Galloway and Thacker, *The Exploit*; French, "Gaps in the Gaze."
[183] McKenzie, *Perform or Else*, 97.

Human users become "high performance technologies," exhibiting specific "behaviors and properties…while executing specific tasks in specific contexts."[184] Eating, exercising, and even walking are performed in specific, controlled ways, quantified as data, then presented as visualized information, and consistently evaluated by the user herself, which also makes the user more transparent and available to outside monitoring. MyFitnessPal's data-based self-tracking reformats the human body as a self-monitoring machine, required to perform effectively. That this performance is regulated by the creation of an entire world around the user—the accumulation of water bottles, healthy foods, cookbooks, running shows, and gym memberships—emphasizes how the continued performance of attachment to iPhone can be modulated into both the manifestation and filling of emptied space. Additionally, as I will show in the second part of my analysis, even the performance of the space of the fitness app is negotiated between etic and emic perspectives on the emptied space: users of MyFitnessPal bring the space into being, and then subsequently fill it in with their new, fit selves' detritus, but, here, the manifesting performance of emptied space is itself constituted by cultural conceptions of both what an ideal (feminine) body is, should do, and should look like and the value and usage of personal information

My analysis will, first, briefly sketch out MyFitnessPal's layout and interface, emphasizing how it requires the performance of self-control through both the input and gathering of information about the user's body and how this networks embodiment, constituting it as a relation between the user and her information double (i.e. the graphs.) Secondly, I will turn to a clip from the TODAY show that tells a story about a young woman who used MyFitnessPal to lose weight. Implicitly moral in tone (it is 'good' that she lost weight), the clip sublates the

[184] Ibid., 130.

woman's story to the larger narrative of the clip. I will suggest that this clip underlines the *datafication* of the user's body by making ambiguous the distinction between self-tracking, self-control, and self-evaluation and tracking, control, and evaluation of individuals from without.

Inputting Information, Gathering Data

Figure 13, a screenshot from the author's iPhone, images MyFitnessPal's basic interface.

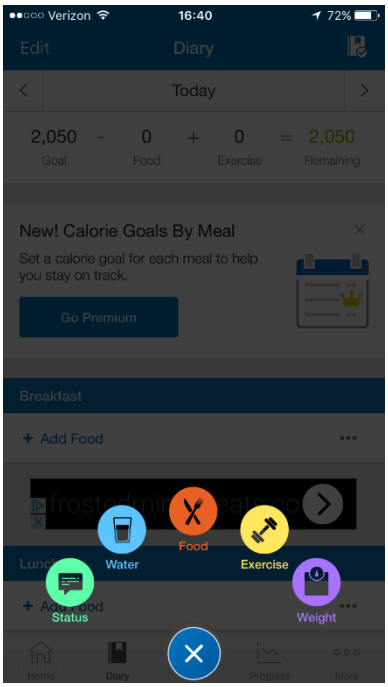

Figure 13: MyFitnessPal's interface. Screenshot from the author's iPhone.

After the user inputs basic information about her body—height, weight, age and biological sex—she is asked about her fitness goals. These are rather narrowly defined in terms of weight loss goals. Users can input what their 'target weight' is; how fast they would like to lose this weight, in pounds per week; their activity level, on a four-position scale ranging from 'not very active' to 'very active;' and their daily calorie goal. If the user does not specify a daily calorie goal the app decides what this goal should be, based on the available information about the user's body, fitness goals, and activity levels. This calorie goal appears on the main interface as the first term in a simple equation: calorie goal minus food plus exercise equals remaining calories. Simply, calories, here, are placed into a gamified bodily economy in which one has limited 'funds.' By eating, a user expends funds, but through exercise a user can earn funds. 'Remaining calories,' the result of this equation, is a running score that is updated throughout the day as the user eats and exercises. Of course, as figure 1 shows, MyFitnessPal has the capability to track things other than added and subtracted calories, including water and grams/percent daily values of nutrients ingested from foods eaten.

However, calories remain the most important things tracked by MyFitnessPal, as well as, crucially, the only item that can be tracked without direct input; by linking with the pedometer function on many modern touchscreen smartphones, MyFitnessPal can track users' steps and other daily movement and automatically add these steps to the exercise portion of users' diaries and translate these steps to estimated calories burnt providing 'extra' funds for the main calorie counting equation. Here, we might say that MyFitnessPal primarily relies on a passive datafication because it is consistently pinned to sensors that automatically gather data about the user's activity, and automatically visualizes that data as information that you can then manipulate. iPhone's ability to function as a sensor and to the "forms of pervasive, always-on passive" data gathering that this allow, [185]provides a subliminal datafication of the body through the automatic capture of, here specifically, number of steps taken per day.

Though the interface is largely based on direct user input, the automatic addition of 'extra' calories provides an incentive for the user to input data when they otherwise may not have. Perhaps accidentally, the presentation of automatically gathered and generated data becomes a rhetorical technique that subliminally attempts to persuade users to input more often and to become more involved with the app. It is not unhelpful that calories burnt through everyday movement are framed as 'extra' or 'bonus.' You have won a prize, already, so why not try for more? Immersion is *created* through the automatic gathering of information about the body, but it is *performed* through direct input by the user. Active datafication, or datafication based on active input of data into the device is, here, predicated by passive datafication—passive data gathering makes it easy to convince the user to in the future actively input larger quantities and types of data. Active data input is, in the experience of the app, sublimated to passive data

[185] Andrejevic and Burdon, "Defining the Sensor Society," 34.

gathering; the app's interface attempts to make active data input habitual, automatic, and, thus, more passive. As Wendy Hui Kyong Chun suggests, "through habits users become their machines,"[186] which suggests that as data input becomes habitual, it becomes more like the passive data gathering performed by iPhone. Immersion occurs when these dissimilar processes converge in one technological performance. Within this performed immersion, embodiment is dematerialized, or, made virtual. As Diana Taylor writes, "digital platforms create their own experiential environments," environments that:

> prompt the need and desire for embodiment, even if that embodiment is simulated or virtual…Experiencing, once again, becomes a privileged way of knowing. But experience can no longer be limited to living bodies understood as pulsing biological organisms. Embodiment, understood as the politics, awareness, and strategies of living in one's body, can be distanced from the physical body…We are or have avatars in virtual environments. We have data doubles, our very own powerful digital other composed of bits and pieces of information.[187]

MyFitnessPal and apps like it provoke just this desire for embodiment through immersion in an informational environment or articulation to an informational milieu. By providing new 'strategies of living in one's body' through various fitness techniques, MyFitnessPal extends embodiment. This requires performing input which extends and helps to reproduce the milieu that provokes it. By performing input, the user's embodiment becomes, like the milieu to which she is articulated, virtual data. At the same time, this virtual body requires the physical body for the data that comprises it. Embodiment exists somewhere between the phone and me. My physical body becomes virtualized as data and visualized as information, though never just once. Instead, virtualization becomes both a series of disconnected instances (input) and a continuous stream (gathering), though the former, through habit, begins to merge with the latter. This

[186] Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same*, 1.
[187] Taylor, *Performance*, 138.

parallels how Tobias Matzner describes how Big Data allows for "the decoupling of data generation and analysis:"[188]

> Many methods related to Big Data try to tie in all kinds of sources that might be useful for the desired outcome. This can be data that has been generated at different times, different places, and in different contexts compared to where the analysis takes place. Consequently, a rule of thumb to store all available data has emerged, since it might be useful in the future…Concerning surveillance, this leads to a phenomenon which could be called 'prospective surveillance:" huge databases that are just stored for the time being—but with the possibility to be used for purposes of surveillance at any time in the future.[189]

It is not until these databases are analyzed that the data within them becomes correlated together and understood as a pattern, or, as information. My suggestion is that the data collected by MyFitnessPal—whether through input or gathering—constitutes something like a database that is visualized as a temporal aggregate of the user's body. Past activity levels, past meals, past calories and nutrients are instantiated as individual points and then presented to the user in a conveniently legible manner. The body becomes a graph (figure 14). Its history collapses into one virtual image, always under the label of 'progress.' Ironically, this progress visually implies and relies on the anti-progressive; instead of pointing toward the careful curation and continued existence of the user's body, the conventions of data visualization in MyFitnessPal are a direct manifestation of the rhetorics of dematerialization. Even though the graph is the body in a directly referential sense, its representation conventions suggest that at some point that body will disappear. To become thin is to make progress, which is also to tend toward zero. This zero is the

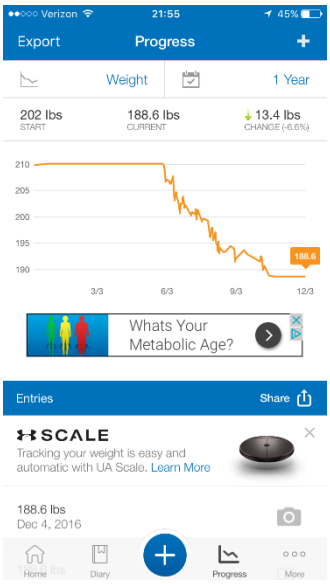

Figure 14: Progress. Screenshot from the author's iPhone.

[188] Matzner, "Beyond Data as Representation," 199.
[189] Ibid.

subliminal *telos* manifested by MyFitnessPal's data visualization, shepherding users toward progress, even as this progress relies on the body's future existence.

Even so, embodiment is managed as a relation between this graph—the data double—and the physical body, which becomes, above all, a source of data. The graph, as an aggregate, appears to reflect how the user's body 'actually is.' Because quantified and static, it appears as if more trustworthy, predictable, reliable, and rational than the user's moment to moment experience of her body, especially since that moment to moment experience is, when using the app, always articulated to the graph. José van Dijck, describing Big Data's surveillance of people online, calls this 'dataism.' Its most important quality is "a belief in the objectivity of quantification,"[190] and of the automatic truthfulness of that quantified data. Dataism supposes that data always tells the truth; because it presumes objective accuracy, dataism imagines data as pure given—raw and unprocessed. Considered in this way, Galloway provides crucial philosophical support for dataism by asserting that data opens onto a quasi-mystical ontic realm that exists before measurement. This is not to say that data has no claim on some kind of truth; instead, I am underlining that data "need to be imagined *as* data to exist and function as such, and the imagination of data entails an interpretive base."[191] Data analysis clearly underlines this. As Sara Degli Esposti writes, analysis occurs within a set of "performative expectations [that] indicate sets of assumptions, or even theories, explaining the relationship between individual's prospective and desired behavior."[192] These expectations define and describe what data gathered comes to mean by structuring its analysis. This explanatory structure is what allows analysts to interpret individuals' present behavior and guide their future behavior. But these expectations

[190] Dijck, "Datafication, Dataism and Dataveillance," 201.
[191] Gitelman, *"Raw Data" Is an Oxymoron*, 5.
[192] Esposti, "When Big Data Meets Dataveillance," 211.

also direct data gathering by providing a framework in which data about only certain kinds of behavior are gathered: "Most applications of Big Data are developed, marketed, and used on the premise that the data represent a certain aspect of the world in computable form."[193] To gather data is to gather data about specific aspects of the world or human behavior, aspects that are *defined in advance* of the gathering, meaning that the data is already defined as something other than purely ontological. Vis-à-vis MyFitnessPal, because of a dataist conception of the ontological verity of data and the authority of quantification, we are primed to accept numerical conceptions of embodiment as more accurate than the everyday, lived experience of embodiment. We are willing to submit to the authority of the data picture, as if the process of data visualization authorizes the 'raw' data as raw and, therefore, unquestionable.

Here, the emptied space functions as if to make the user the data analyst—by presenting a database available to the user's direct manipulation, her deep touch (chapter 1). It appears as if the user controls this information, both through the direct input of data and through the ability to touch, swipe, and zoom on this most intimate portrait of the body as perfectly transparent. At the same time, the emptied space itself orders the conventions of data visualization themselves, meaning that any information that is manipulated by the user is always-already conceived within in parameters set by the app, parameters that become invisible even as the visualization embodies them. In figure 2, the axes of body weight and time (in the form of dates in which I logged my weight), nearly disappear. In fact, the axes themselves, as physical lines are completely gone, while the numbers that index the existence of those axes are in a thin, grey typeface. By contrast, the line representing the aggregate of my body weight over time is orange, and the number representing my current weight stands out in white against this orange color.

[193] Matzner, "Beyond Data as Representation," 202.

Meanwhile, the only other colors in the image (other than the ad, asking "What's your metabolic age?) are the dull blue of the interface and the cheery green of the downward pointing arrow next to my change in weight. The graphed body double appears friendly and inviting as opposed to the nearly invisible numbers that structure it. The conventions of data visualization, here, produce the dematerialization of the body—its becoming thin—a productive impulse, while concealing the fact that this 'progress,' and gestures of self-control that it implies, are ordered by conventions of visualization that disappear in the process of visualization. What's more, the emptied space actually appears in the visualization—the graph itself foregrounded against both lines implying invisible axes and white space, which I would suggest is more-than-metaphorically connected to the emptied space. By emphasizing the graph as a colorful, inviting picture of the body over the graph as a set of purposefully ordered numbers, the graphed body double can 1) appear as if an authoritative friend who helps through the process of weight loss while 2) relying on the unstated premise of dataism—that observable numbers are more authoritative than lived experience.

Crucially, however, because the presentation of the graphed body double relies on the performance of the real body, embodiment is reconfigured as a networked relation between real body and the graphed body double. This relation is a disciplinary relation in which networked embodiment through the presentation of the graphed body double provides the substrate for the human user's subliminal introjection of technological performance's challenge of effectiveness. Because her sense of embodiment is detached from her physical body and because it is managed or mediated by the app, the user's bodily experience becomes technologized as information that is visible and manipulable to the user. This visualization and potential manipulability means that using the app necessarily involves her in the evaluation and maintenance of herself. She

evaluates her eating and her exercise in order to maintain the shape of her body's graph, and this maintenance involves her performing effectively in any context. Emptied space functions as the scene that contextualizes this performance, here constituted by both its emic performance as self-control and its etic surveillance as exterior control. Crucially, as I show in the next section, because of the genealogies involved—Weight Watchers, personal trainers, makeover experts, dieticians, etc. — the app and the data double that emerges in and as the graph are in a position of power relative the user. The user submits to the app because the app automates older versions of fitness disciplinarians. At the same time, this data double doubly doubles as an application of Haggerty and Ericson's surveillant assemblage:

> We are witnessing a convergence of what were once discrete surveillance systems […] This assemblage operates by abstracting human bodies from their territorial settings and separating them into a series of discrete flows. These flows are then reassembled into distinct 'data doubles' which can be scrutinized and targeted for intervention.[194]

The emptied space abstracts users from their everyday circumstances and considered only in terms of activity level, made modifiable through its presentation as information. The emptied space is, then, doubly constituted by strategized tactics. First, MyFitnessPal formulates the space as the stage for the technologization of disciplinary fitness technicians. Second, MyFitnessPal reveals one way in which the emptied space more generally functions as a personalized version of what many have called "dataveillance," which is, at its simplest, the surveillance of individuals or populations through the collection and analysis of data gathered by information technology systems.

[194] Haggerty and Ericson, "The Surveillant Assemblage," 606.

Effectiveness and Evaluation

Self-control through and as technology vis-à-vis MyFitnessPal is formulated as an internalized requirement to constantly monitor and evaluate the self. This is predicated by the app's management of embodiment as a technological relation that exists neither within the app nor as the user's physical body but, instead, between the physical body imagined as only ever a source of data and this data's virtual aggregation—the creation of informational graphs that comprise the user's virtual body double. The user evaluates this relation, and then controls what she is eating or how much exercise she is doing in order to more closely align the physical body with the goals that her virtual body—acting as a disciplinarian—urges her toward. This tends toward immateriality: the virtual body is a body of 'progress' toward lower and lower weights which means that extended to its limit, the body would disappear. The most effective body is one that is data and, hence, purely transparent, weightless, and manipulable.

However, because 1) embodiment is made relational and consistently multinodal, 2) this relational embodiment is articulated to an interiorized challenge of effectiveness, and 3) the emptied space is constituted by both emic gesture and etic surveillance, self-control over the body through performing iPhone blurs into (or becomes seamless with) exterior control. This section will utilize a clip from TODAY's Joy Fit Club segment to show this, focusing specifically on the way that clip constructs its narrative and on two 'mirror moments' in which the body is confronted with its double.

The Joy Fit Club is a segment on TODAY, hosted by the always effervescent Hoda Kotb and Kathie Lee Griffin, in which Joy Bauer, a dietician and "one of the [self-proclaimed] nation's leading health authorities,"[195] shares "inspirational weight loss success stories from

[195] "Joy Bauer's Personal Story."

members" of the club,[196] as well as health, diet, and fitness tips. These stories are paired, generally, with the introduction of the story's subject.

In March of 2014, a young woman named Brittany Bush was featured in a segment about two people, who as Kathie Lee Griffin said, "both lost nearly *half* their body weight…the old-fashioned way, everybody: through diet and exercise."[197] This insistence on these individuals losing weight "the old-fashioned way" is curious in Brittany's case because it is made clear that her extreme weight loss was facilitated by MyFitnessPal.[198] Her use of the app is sublimated to "the old-fashioned way:" diet and exercise, pure self-discipline and self-control. This underlines how the app contributes to the networking of the user's experience of embodiment. The app disappears as an external measure of self, instead becoming integrated into the body schema as an internal regulatory device. Nevertheless, that the app is differentially embodied—that it remains formally within a device that is only incorporated into the user during the moment of use—has two effects that I will describe through my analysis of this short clip. First, it structures the experience of embodiment as consistently mirrored, including both discrete events of recognition of the self in the mirror and the continuous mirroring effected by the virtual body created by MyFitnessPal. Second, this diffusion of embodiment into multiple nodes—networked embodiment—creates a space into which external control can enter the scene of embodiment itself.

Mirroring explicitly structures how the clip narrativizes Brittany. Joy describes her as understanding herself as literally being "born with a preoccupation for food."[199] Both Brittany

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[196] "Joy Fit Club."
[197] TODAY, "Two Joy Fit Club Members Drops 324 Pounds." 0:06-0:13. All transcription is by the author.
[198] Ibid.,1:07-1:09.
[199] Ibid., 0:35-0:36.

and Joy appear to consider body size *essentially*, that is, as an unchangeable and *a priori* facet of embodiment. Thus, Brittany is not 'much smaller:' she is instead "half her size."[200] Her body is only ever truly one size, and all variations of her body must be necessarily related to that one size. This essentialism presumes that the body image mirrored would be immediately recognizable to that body. However, the clip makes this somewhat more complicated by contrasting two 'mirror moments,' one before weight loss and one after. In one sense, this clip follows the conventional narrative of makeover TV, as opposed to its perverse version written of above. Here, the juxtaposition of images of Brittany's Before and After bodies functions to shame the Before and glorify the After.[201] Unsurprisingly, Brittany's narrative begins with a moment of intense shame. This is the typical 'a-ha' moment, we are told:

> She was in her early twenties, she had peaked at 265 pounds. She was in the midst of a stress eating episode and looked into the mirror and out loud said, "This. Is. Ridiculous. I have to stop behaving like that.[202]

Brittany's feeling echoes Susan Bordo's comments on slenderness and the pathologicization of eating vis-à-vis women's bodies. She writes that "images of unwanted bulges and erupting stomachs [operate] as a metaphor for anxiety about internal processes out of control—uncontained desire, unrestrained hunger, uncontrolled impulse."[203] Britany is 'out of control,' and appropriately, we here see images of her body, bulging—this is 'ridiculous' and requires control. Peaking at a certain weight is implied as a moral and physical nadir, while losing weight connotes progress and moral value. Immediately, Kathie Lee responds appropriately, saying, moralistically, "Good for her."[204] Joy's description of Brittany's state when she decided to lose weight emphasizes this, for she describes Brittany as degraded,

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[200] Ibid., 1:20-1:23.
[201] Weber, *Makeover TV*
[202] TODAY, "Two Joy Fit Club Members Drops 324 Pounds.", 0:49-1:03.
[203] Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*, 189.
[204] TODAY, "Two Joy Fit Club Members Drops 324 Pounds.", 1:04

humiliated, and out of control vis-à-vis her own body; she is at her largest, she is in the middle of an eating that is pathologized, and as she looks into the mirror she both recognizes the image as herself and disavows that image through aversion. Though she realizes that it is her image that she sees she does not internalize that image as herself. Her mirror image is already enounced as the shameful Before-body that must be replaced. She remains articulated to that Before—recognition and identification—yet this size is at the same time displaced into a set of behaviors that can be changed into the After-body. This is not simply a "*repression* of [a pathologized] female hunger,"[205] however. Instead, self-control enters the scene in this gap. As Bordo contends, "power works also 'from below,' as women associate slenderness with self-management."[206]

The essentially excessive female body becomes controllable, here, when its size is exported to behaviors that can be controlled. MyFitnessPal can enter and reformulate embodiment at this moment because it makes these behaviors visible and manipulable by graphing them—self-management to slenderness is effected through the manipulability of the graphed virtual body, the aggregation of behavior through time. The creation of this virtual body is, however, necessarily reliant on processes of mirroring through which the user can recognize herself. Brittany, that is, does not download MyFitnessPal until after she recognizes and disavows her Before-body, until she projects the image of an After-body to which she can work.

[205] Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*, 212.
[206] Ibid.

Curiously, the juxtaposition of Before and After-bodies, and the valuing of the latter over and against the former, is suggested by the layout of the Joy Fit Club Set and Brittany's entrance. When we are first able to see the entire set (figure 15), Hoda, Kathie Lee, and Joy are centered in both the shot and the set, standing between two tall, silver, wheeled tables that have examples of the diets the two featured individuals in the segment used to lose weight. Behind the three women are three physically disconnected screens. The center screen has the Joy Fit Club logo on it, the right screen has a 'before' picture of Andrew, the other featured individual, on it, while the left screen has Brittany's before picture on it. In the picture, she looks happy; smiling, her arms are outstretched, and she appears far removed from the image of the degraded over-eater painted by Joy. Looking closely, legs are visible underneath the photo. They are, of course, Brittany's, as becomes evident when she is introduced. After Hoda shows the audience her before picture, imploring them to "look at her," Kathie Lee says, "step on out Brit!" And Brittany does step on out, from behind her own before picture, spatially suggesting that this 'new' Brittany and the 'old' Brittany are the same person, that one Brittany hid the other. New Brittany emerges from behind old Brittany, half the size. For Weber, what becomes significant in moments like these is that the After-body is understood as the authentic self because it more closely approximates societal norms and standards; this authentic self is glorified as empowering because of its conformity. However, the individual performances that construct the After-body—the work and measurement that bring it into being—"serve only to shift the woman's place on

Figure 15: the Joy Fit Club Set

the scale, not to eradicate the scale itself […and…] can only happen in the context of a perception revolution that makes it clear that there are still heavier or more saggy women than the transforming subject herself."[207] In this clip, these other "more saggy" women are represented by the constant presence of the disavowed Before-body. Because of the intervention of MyFitnessPal, however, the 'scale,' here, indexes more than either the physical device or the metaphorical scale that measures women against other women. Brittany's scale is almost entirely *herself*: when she measures herself, it is less against the bodies of other women and more against the overall body narrative that MyFitnessPal's graphs represent. Every instance of self-control—weighing the body, counting calories, measuring portions and proportions—becomes involved with the ongoing project negotiated between the body as source for data and the graph as the information body double. The emic performance that constitutes the emptied space, here, is comprises of individual instances of self-control that discipline the body toward the emergence of an empowered, affirmed After. This appears as a joint performance between the body double and the real body, who together constitute and fill in the emptied space.

But this emic performance is, here, complicated by an etic observation that is built into the device itself. Passive datafication, of course, invisibly submits the body to observation of steps, but the app itself also functions as a technologization of fitness disciplinarians in such a way that what seems like voluntaristic self-control can be ordered by exterior evaluation. For Weber, makeover TV uses cruel 'style experts' to apply what she calls "affective domination," which "relies both on shaming and love-power to accomplish its transformations."[208] "Cruelty disguised as humor" functions to shame the transforming body into submitting to the

[207] Weber, *Makeover TV*, 85.
[208] Ibid., 82.

transformation,[209] while the subsequent application of love-power encourages the transforming body to continue transforming. Love-power, generally, is the modification of disciplinary techniques from violent, corporal punishments into intimate, encouraging, and loving practices.[210] Affective domination is the passage from shaming to love-power: "shows [like *What Not to Wear*] that begin with a premise of critique, shame, and objectification resolve with hugs and praise."[211] Style agents on these TV shows begin as cruel disciplinarians, but end up gaining "their social authority as an extension of the community of friends and family that instigated the process of change in the first place [functioning] as a sort of super-friend-cum-therapist."[212]

MyFitnessPal technologizes affective domination. Though it does not shame the user directly, it does index a potential moment of shame—as Brittany's story suggests, one does not download MyFitnessPal until one is confronted with the shameful Before-body. In between this moment and the emergence of the After-body, MyFitnessPal functions as the encouraging trainer, sending users notifications reminding them to weigh themselves and offering diet and exercise tips. This structures the performances of self-control that push the user toward the After-body and the emic constitution of emptied space—a new world is created around the user, as long as your body fits. MyFitnessPal functions as the tough love trainer *and* as a part of the self, thereby introjecting technological performance's challenge of effectiveness. If makeover TV relies on purely external evaluation to monitor the body's progress toward the After-body, MyFitnessPal allows the user, through networked embodiment, to be outside and inside the body, allowing her to monitor herself. That the body is technologized is underlined, disturbingly, by Brittany's extreme regulation of her diet. She does not merely limit calories: she eats the same

[209] Ibid., 92.
[210] Ibid., 97.
[211] Ibid., 98.
[212] Ibid.

thing every single day. Her life appears perfectly regulated, and her body becomes extremely effective. She has filled the emptied space with items that persist in spite of her mobility through real space, voluntarily controlling herself with minute detail, even though this self-control only exists because of the technologization of tough love physical trainers.

This means that the voluntary nature of this self-control is both contestable and unstable. Brittany's entrance stages another mirror moment that, again, allows Brittany to identify with her mirror image while also distancing herself from it, while also underlining how self-control is compromised by control. Hoda and Kathie Lee compare new Brittany with old Brittany and perform disbelief. "No!" says Hoda. "Whose picture did you use?" says Kathie Lee. Here, the performance of disbelief distinguishes between new and old Brittany as if they are different people. Brittany incorporates both, however, in her response. As if to 'convince' Hoda and Kathie Lee, she says "No, that's me," drawing out the vowels in each word. Others viewing her against her mirror—the before image—insist that she is now a different person, but she, in order to emphasize the behavioral self-control that allowed her to become 'half her size,' explicitly identifies with that image. This mirror moment is, however, explicitly structured as a TV makeover, complete with the intervention of a tough love trainer, Joy. Even though Brittany completes her transformation alone and in the emptied space, etic observation continues to constitute that space, allowing it to circulate within already existing regimes of visuality. The app technologizes the trainer and allows for their internalization as a part of the user's body and behavior and this allows for that trainer's reemergence as a physical, other body and the appropriation of Brittany's story as another instance of makeover TV.

These mirror moments are, thus, inverses of each other. If the first requires the moment of identification before the fat body's disavowal, the second places disavowal before

identification. In both cases, though, disavowal and identification are inextricably linked and, further, constitutive for control over a body specified as excessive. This control is instituted as and in the gap introduced by mirroring the body. In the first case this is clearly self-control as organized through technology, but in the second case this self-control is modified into control, here, literalized as the placement and movement of Brittany's body in the space of the TODAY studio by people other than herself. She does not, that is, choose when to appear and when to remain invisible, which metaphorically underlines the porousness between self-control and exterior control as they are enacted through technology.

We might think of Richard Schechner's famous description of performance as "twice behaved behavior" or "restored behavior."[213] Here, "performance means: never for the first time,"[214] and this allows access to a subjunctive mood—an always future oriented 'as if'—in which "I am 'beside myself,' or 'not myself…' as if there were multiple me's' in each person."[215] It is clearly that self-control as enacted through and as technology is twice behaved. Brittany's story revealed this by showing how a double moment of identification and disavowal structures any performance of self-control. Literally appearing within two moments, Brittany's technologized self-control is performed as versions of this double moment, that is, as twice behaved. Further, between these explicit moments, MyFitnessPal intervened to allow Brittany to perform self-control. Any use of the app necessitates identification with the virtual body presented in it as well as disavowal of the physical body; this means that between the two mirror moments narrated in the analyzed clip were a string of performances of self-control structured as disavowal and identification. Finally, because these performances of self-control are necessarily

[213] Schechner, "Excerpt from 'Restoration of Behavior,'" 71.
[214] Ibid., 70.
[215] Ibid., 71.

mobile, considering the devices through which they are performed, they can be performed in any context, meaning that they can be structured and restructured in radically different ways from performance to performance. Self-control as the introjection of the challenge of technological effectiveness becomes control when the self-evaluation mandated by it is contextually restructured as exterior evaluation. Thus, if Brittany's first mirror moment inaugurated self-evaluation through performances of self-control, the repetition of this performance in a context like the TODAY show—highly and specifically structured, under another's direction—directly submits it to exterior evaluation.

Critically, both sorts of control are predicated by the practices of data gathering made possible by iPhone and fitness apps. Passive datafication, here, promotes active participation in the processes of one's own embodiment through techniques of self-management. Corporate practices of dataveillance, as developed and deployed through iPhone and fitness apps, appear to rise to consciousness as the user's manipulable, informational body double. Self-control appears possible because figures like Brittany are presented as role models; self-control appears perfect because the graphs that make it possible are manipulable and appear to make the body perfectly transparent and known. The appearance of techniques of datafied self-control, however, dematerializes the processes of sensored dataveillance that make it possible—it is not only you who controls your embodiment, as the TODAY show clip so forcefully visualizes.

Among these three nodes, "the seemingly natural connection between the body and the identity of the person reveals itself to be in perpetual slippage, a never-ending mirror stage of development where identity never precisely occupies the body or vice versa."[216] It is not simply that embodiment is networked between the body and its data double; these maintain a further

[216] Gates, "Biometrics and Post-9/11 Technostalgia," 38.

relation to exterior control through the dataveillance that makes technologized self-control possible and that it hides. What's more, this control maintains an ongoing and continuous split between your body and its other self, the data double, its mirror image. MyFitnessPal and iPhone appear to grant perfect self-control, but only on the condition that its user participates in a doubling of herself, a doubling that allows for technological intervention on the embodiment that obtains as the relation between the user and her data double. The data double—the informational graph—is retroprojected as the condition for data gathering; the product of processing becoming an ontological truth about the person through the performance of self-control offered by iPhone and MyFitnessPal, even as the body and its double must remain distinct. Crucially, the emptied space, as the manifestation of both emically performed dematerialization and etically observed surveillance operates as the *scene* for the maintenance of this distinction and the ongoing articulation of self-control and exterior control.

Conclusion

The year of this writing will mark the tenth anniversary of iPhone's introduction. Stunningly, though, the advertising apparatus set in place a decade ago remains largely unchanged. New versions of iPhone—no matter the banality of their updates—remain 'revolutionary,' new, and exciting. iPhone continues to be advertised as innovative, and, here, innovation refers to a rhetorically constructed dematerialization that increases (or decreases?) with each innovation. Each new version more closely approximates the ideal version of iPhone projected and performed by rhetorics of dematerialization—they are thinner, brighter, better, with fewer ports, and presumably, fewer problems. For example, iPhone 7 and 7 Plus, to which I have updated recently, saw the largely bewildering elimination of the 3.5mm headphone jack, even as its design and interior components received only minor modifications. Instead of wired headphones, iPhone 7 is physically packaged with an adapter that permits their usage and packaged in advertising with Apple branded wireless earbuds. Innovation equates to the elimination of physical aspects of using iPhone—no more tangled wires! Rhetorics of dematerialization present at the first introduction of iPhone continue to circulate, and perhaps gather new and increased potency as they do so—and as they become unnoticeable features of the topology of everyday life.

Coincidentally (or perhaps not) as iPhone has approached immateriality in design, it also has become more deeply intertwined with its users' everyday experiences. Apple Pay, for example, attempts to replace individual credit and debit card payments with a simple touch to iPhone's fingerprint reading home button. All users must do is enter their bank account information, and they will no longer have to carry around so many bothersome plastic cards. Many of the artifacts I examine in this thesis also evidence the iPhone's increasing embededness

in our everyday lives. As I have argued, phenomena like fitness apps and selfies (and especially selfie apps like Instagram and Snapchat) help to reorganize the experience of friendship, proximal space, and even embodiment.

But, intriguingly, even this intertwining of iPhone and everyday life began with the original iPhone—or was, at least, foreshadowed by the way it was talked about. At the keynote introducing the original iPhone, Steve Jobs described its interface in a strikingly odd way. "We don't want to carry around a mouse,"[217] he says, with an image of iPhone projected behind him. "Oh! A stylus! We'll use a stylus!"[218] A stylus appears directly over the image of iPhone. But Jobs responds flatly: "No. Who wants a stylus?"[219] Apparently no one does: after describing the tedium of using (and losing) styli, Jobs exclaims, "Yuck." The stylus becomes more than simply bothersome; it is actually disgusting. Unsurprisingly, Jobs' response adheres to rhetorics of dematerialization, but with a twist. The stylus certainly disappears and, ironically, some physical "pointing device" must remain. Jobs suggests that "we're going to use the best pointing device in the world, a pointing device that we are all born with. We're born with ten of them; we're gonna use our fingers."[220] If the stylus is dematerialized, then, it is replaced by our fingers, but, conversely, our fingers disappear into a more general conception of the "pointing device." A double dematerialization, then, in which the technological device and the human user disappear into each other. iPhone is deeply intertwined with everyday life from the beginning—interacting with iPhone reconstitutes the human finger as a stylus. Even more intriguingly, though, this technicization of the human capability of pointing is cast back as an essential characteristic of the user. She is *born* with pointing devices—once technical, the finger was always technical.

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[217] Apple, *iPhone Keynote 2007 Complete*, 6:44-7:14
[218] Ibid.
[219] Ibid.
[220] Ibid., 7:00

Formally, this is similar to Butler's conception of gender performativity. Essentially, conventional ideas about gender mean that "certain kinds of acts are usually interpreted as expressive of a gender core or identity…based upon the perception of sex, where sex is understood to be the discrete and factic datum of primary sexual characteristics."[221] Contra this conception of gendered acts as expressive, Butler suggests that gendered acts are performative, and constitute the illusion of an essential 'gender core.'[222] Performativity would then have the secondary effect of theoretically casting this illusion back in time—each performative gender act constitutes the illusion of an essential gender identity in the moment of performance, with the illusion of essentiality providing a stable temporal past to an identity that is, basically, present tense. Though unrelated to gender identity, Jobs' revisioning of human fingers as pointing devices establishes gesture on and with iPhone as similarly performative. Each gesture allows the finger to function as a pointing device while also establishing an illusory, essential past for itself. Thus, we are *born* with pointing devices already attached to us, even though finger-as-pointing device can only be constituted in present performance with iPhone. This specific actualization of performativity, however, operates in service of rhetorics of dematerialization that, in this example, serve to allow the device and the user to disappear into each other (as I described in chapter 1), dematerializing in the moment of use.

Device, User, Space

In the introduction, I suggest that the rhetorics of dematerialization circulate according to three intersecting vectors. This final example serves as one way that we might imagine how some of these intersections work in practice. In this section, I will briefly summarize how this

[221] Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," 221.
[222] Ibid., 214–25.

thesis imagines how rhetorics of dematerialization operate on each vector, describe some limitations of this thesis as well as avenues for future research, while also attempting to highlight some of the more useful connections among the vectors.

First, vis-à-vis the *device*, rhetorics of dematerialization function to dematerialize the device in the moment of use; at the same time, they project an immaterial version of the device that mediates user attachment to it. This is *fetishistic* in effect because it works to both interpellate a contradictory user that must both libidinally invest and disinvest in the same object and because iPhone's immaterial projection functions to defer this contradiction into the future, temporarily resolving it in order to preserve capitalism's metastability. Even so, these rhetorics are foundationally ironic because even as they move the device toward immateriality, they must also ensure the continued existence of the physical device so that touch, which primarily generates the affective investment in the object and its projection, can continue to occur. Because of this, new devices are continuously manufactured while the disposal of old devices functions more like pure disappearance, at least in relation to the user's direct experience.

But though this thesis suggests some broad connections between rhetorics of dematerialization and questions of e-waste, ecological devastation, and the overlap between iPhone's spaces of production and spaces of disposal, it does not fully engage with these questions, instead focusing merely on the ideological construction of iPhone's user experience. This is a major deficit because even though I want to suggest that rhetorics of dematerialization are specifically ideological, it could be argued that my thesis operates purely within the ideological field, meaning that I do not make any specific connections between the user experience and its economic conditions of possibility. A more thoroughgoing engagement with conceptions of ideology and literature on labor in the computer industry could have remedied

this, and in the future it would be fruitful to explore these questions and link iPhone's user experience more specifically to how and *where* iPhone is produced and disposed of.

Additionally, my focus on the device and this device specifically was a way that I attempted to limit the scope of this thesis. As the thesis progresses, however, I think it is relatively clear that rhetorics of dematerialization and performances of attachment have much more broad applicability than to simply iPhone or digital devices generally. This thesis could have more specifically delimited the differences between how rhetorics of dematerialization appear and function in relation to iPhone and how these might shift when applied to different sorts of commodities.

Second, vis-à-vis the *user*, rhetorics of dematerialization function to reciprocally dematerialize the human user, primarily as a mechanism of control through surveillance. If iPhone's user manual visualizes the human body as disembodied hands, put back together as a new kind of tech-savvy subject through gesture-with iPhone, this process of subjectivation is supplemented by processes of datafication actualized by some of iPhone's features. The gestures that articulate users to their iPhones—and the sort of brand magic that structures and defines them—also presume the existence of a certain kind of informational user. This is a body that is perfectly weightless and transparent, one that "no longer [has] any secrets or interiors"[223] and is, thus, radically open to exterior control.

However, one major deficiency of this thesis is that, though I describe *what* the body hailed by iPhone's rhetorics of dematerialization is, I neglect *who* it is. Though I describe how the emptied space provides the scene for the user's creative self-composure, I neglect to mention

[223] Hall, "Of Ziploc Bags and Black Holes," 321.

that the corporate and state dataveillant practices that underpin this composure actively rely on the *de*individualization of the user: the user, according to dataveillance, is less a person and more an anonymous member of a demographic category. Examining this tension in more depth could provide one fruitful area for further research. Additionally, in the introduction I describe the body hailed by rhetorics of dematerialization as a 'fantasy body of limitless mobility' as one way to gesture toward who this body is, but I quickly move past the classist, racist, and ableist connotations of this ideal user. Focusing on "mobility" would be one way to remedy this. A critique of mobility could, first, incorporate disability studies and theory asking questions like: who is mobile? What does it mean for bodies that are immobile or not as mobile that iPhone attempts to interpellate them as mobile? One way to perform this critique would be to focus on iPhone's poorly implemented accessibility features. Second, a critique of mobility could focus also on the class valences of 'mobility' and define how iPhone represents, reproduces, and might reinvent conceptions of so-called class mobility. This could easily move into a critique of race and racism, when we consider how certain bodies are confined spatially and how the emptied space might function differently for those bodies in spaces in which they are not typically welcome.

Finally, vis-à-vis *space*, rhetorics of dematerialization reorganize proximal space into an emptied space apparently devoid of historical and real spatial content and context. This space provides the scene for other actualizations of the rhetorics of dematerialization. Constructed from the complex contract between these emic, performed, actualizations and etic observation that applies already existing cultural meanings to it, the emptied space allows for the delivery of a kind of creative self-composure—but only within strictly defined limits. This means that it operates primarily as mechanism of social control, by which apparent freedoms—here the

freedom to creatively constitute one's own self—are cynically constructed by corporate dataveillance practices. While I do not wish to undermine the real affective experiences of self-sovereignty that iPhone permits, it is important to underline how iPhone allows for the deep penetration of these practices into our everyday lives.

Sovereignty and Utopia

As Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker suggest, then, "network control is unbothered by individuated subjects (subjected subjects). In fact. Individuated subjects are the very producers and facilitators of networked control. Express yourself! Output some data!"[224] Networked control—the sort that iPhone and the emptied space actualize—requires individuated subjects. And how better to ensure that subjects are individuated than to outsource this individuation on subjects themselves? This is precisely what performing attachment to iPhone in the emptied space does. Users are each tasked with the creative performance of the self, but, with iPhone, to perform in this way mandates that users accept that they will be on view—monitored, tracked, and located. Additionally, this performance must remain within the available options provisioned by iPhone. Even though iPhone 'wants' us to believe that the gestures we use to perform (with) it are purely expressive, they are in fact expressly and specifically delimited. In parallel, to perform the self as attached to iPhone is to remain within the constraints set by iPhone. Selfies, for instance, have been shown to be highly generic (figure 16); though the generic composition might vary from city to city

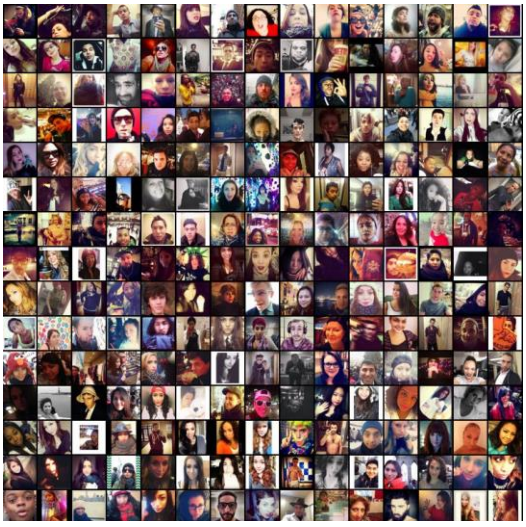

Figure 16: New York's 'posegrid,' from selfiecity.com

[224] Galloway and Thacker, *The Exploit*, 41.

or country to country, the fact remains that in specific locations the composition of selfies is very similar.[225] A practice that appears highly expressive—and one that exemplifies how we perform the self in attachment to iPhone—is actually bound strongly to regional conventions. Voluntary expression appears as something rather more conventional, and this expressive, self-composed individual is revealed as one of many similarly self-composed individuals. Nevertheless, iPhone and the rhetorics of dematerialization continue to push users to individualize themselves—or at least to believe that they are.

This is similar to how some have described neoliberalism and its relation to the self. Wendy Brown has described neoliberalism as "a governing rationality through which everything is 'economized' and in a very specific way: human beings become market actors and nothing but, every field of activity is seen as a market, and every entity […] is governed as a firm."[226] This means that market rules penetrate aspects of life that they may have been barred from, including even questions of ethics: "In markets, the good is generated by individual activity, not by shared political deliberation and rule. And, where there are only individual capitals and marketplaces, the demos, the people, do not exist."[227] Markets insist on the, not coincidentally, self-determining, self-directed activity of individual actors. What is good is determined by what is good for these individuals even over against other individuals, which means that neoliberalism attempts to make collective action impossible. As Bryan McCann writes:

> the neoliberal subject is one who is optimally autonomous from the influence of that state and solely accountable for her/his actions…public discourse and pedagogical practices normalize neoliberal logics in civil society at the expense of collective consciousness and responsibility.[228]

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[225] "Selfiecity."
[226] "Booked #3."
[227] Ibid.
[228] McCann, "Redemption in the Neoliberal and Radical Imaginations," 94.

Individuals become responsible solely for themselves and to themselves, meaning that—again not coincidentally—they must self-define, self-create, and be self-composed. Though she does not explicitly link them to broader neoliberal logics, Dana Cloud's conception of the rhetorics of therapy might exemplify the neoliberal imperative to create the self. For her, rhetorics of therapy are a trend in late 20th century political discourse, perhaps best exemplified by the self-help movement, in which individuals are "exhorted to create one's own success and blamed personally for failure."[229] Though they recognize the structural problems created by capitalism, they ultimately offload them onto individuals as psychological issues that one can 'work through:' "Therapeutic rhetorics must acknowledge 'dis-ease,' but they also hold the individual or family responsible for the problem, thereby ignoring broader structures of power."[230] This takes shape, often, as the construction of an "impulse to examine, express, analyze, and improve one's self." [231] Performing attachment to iPhone, perhaps, takes cues from these rhetorics of therapy—both demand that the individual express herself and both hide the ways that this expression is tied to broader structures of power. If rhetorics of dematerialization and the performances of attachment they script are ideological on a broad level insofar as they create a projection of the device that allows the underlying processes of capitalism to remain unchecked (even as dematerialization is proffered as a check on these processes), they emerge here as ideological in a more specific sense. The structures of surveillant control that they embody and actuate are hidden in their actuation, replaced by the impulse to self-compose and expressively perform the self.

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[229] Cloud, *Control and Consolation in American Culture and Politics*, 27.
[230] Ibid.
[231] Ibid., 28.

This is a rather bleak picture. Even if, as I suggest in the introduction, the contradictions of fetishism provide an untapped, if meager, foundation for micro-resistant practices (perhaps on stylistic or purely critical grounds) these practices would remain tied to the structures of control that enable them. It would be the *individual* who performs resistance, a resistance that must remain inside the emptied space of control. Control itself would remain in place. Can there be performances of resistance that strike directly at the heart of these structures of control, or even at the capitalist system that makes them possible?

Fredric Jameson in "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture" might help us provide one answer. For him:

> the works of mass culture cannot be ideological without at one and the same time being implicitly or explicitly Utopian as well: they cannot manipulate unless they offer some genuine shred of content as a fantasy bribe to the public about to be so manipulated.[232]

For works of mass culture (he examines *the Godfather* and *Jaws*) to operate as ideological they must do so by "deflecting…the deepest and most fundamental hopes and fantasies of the collectivity, to which they can therefore, no matter in how distorted a fashion, be found to have given voice."[233] Hopes for a far-flung and better future are embedded in even the most ideological texts, providing a utopian kernel as a 'fantasy' bribe that placates audiences. Although it is crucial to resist the academic impulse toward what Dwight Conquergood calls scriptocentrism,[234] in which all cultural phenomena are read as if they are texts even if they are resolutely non-textual, we might apply this conception of a utopia embedded in ideological phenomena to the rhetorics of dematerialization, and especially to the performances of attachment that are staged by the emptied space.

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[232] Jameson, "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture," 144.
[233] Ibid.
[234] Conquergood, "Performance Studies."

For what could be more utopian—more like a non-place—than a space apparently stripped of its content? What could have less content than a blank stage? Performances of attachment, that is, *already occur in a potentially utopian space*. The emptied space is not simply a space of surveillant control; it is also a space that offers a radical opportunity for the creation of new social worlds determined by users. This is not to say that somehow performances of attachment can be retooled for a more general political project. Neither is this to say that the emptied space can *automatically* and uncritically function as a utopian stage. Both of these would be also to accept the neoliberal logic of individualization that is packaged with the emptied space. This is the critical mistake Zizi Papacharissi makes in *A Private Sphere*. Though writing about social media rather than iPhone specifically, her conception of the internet's private sphere has parallels with my conception of the emptied space. She writes:

> the values of *autonomy*, *control,* and *expression*…are generously afforded via SNSs [social networking sites]. The technology enables expression, affords autonomy, and enables control of the self and its multiple performances. At the same time, the technology presupposes an aware and literate user who recognizes and can manage the exposure his/her self-performance will receive.[235]

Like the emptied space, the internet's private sphere requires users to perform an expressive, controlled (and controllable) self. Papacharissi imagines, however, that this enables users to engage in a new kind of political engagement. Essentially, her 'private' sphere is opposed to a public sphere of collective, democratic debate; rather than creating a technologized public sphere, the internet enables "a private, digitally enabled, intrusion on a public agenda determined by others."[236] The digital citizen does not have to enter the public or even engage with publicness to affect this public agenda—she "is alone, but not lonely or isolated. The citizen

[235] Papacharissi, *A Private Sphere*, 143.
[236] Ibid., 131.

is connected and operates in a mode and with a political language determined by him or her."[237] We might ask, first, how a digitally connected citizen can develop a political language on her own; if this is even possible (and, to be clear, I do not think it is), further, could such a language even be legible as political to others? And if this language is not legible as political, how could it then come to affect the public agenda? Further, what sort of democracy is this? Digital citizens can 'affect' the public agenda after its invention, but *still seem to have no say about its invention*. The public agenda is created somewhere beyond the reach of the digitally connected citizen, who only reads about it after it has already come into effect. The individuated user exists in a purely reactive or responsive mode—she can only comment on the public agenda. This is not a model of democratic deliberation in which the digital citizen helps to create the public agenda, then. Instead, the public agenda is already given, and the digital citizen's participation is limited to an epiphenomenal world of online discourse that concerns the public agenda but does not constitute it. In my view, this is because Papacharissi uncritically embraces a neoliberal logic of individualism. Indeed, she writes, "the citizen is able to become an agonist of democracy, if needed, but in an atomized mode."[238] An atomized mode: hyper-individualized and alone, yet mysteriously connected, the digitally connected citizen affects democracy through her self-defined political language. Without leaving the comfort of her computer chair, she individually engages with an already intact public agenda: she takes individual responsibility for structural problems, which disassembles the potential for collective action. If democracy on the internet requires atomization, that is, it is a democracy that can be only slightly effectual, at best.

[237] Ibid., 132.
[238] Ibid.

Although I am not saying that such individual actions on the internet are completely useless, I do think that because these actions must accept neoliberal individualization they help to reproduce and reify the structures that insist on it. The emptied space certainly does insist on this individualization, but read from a utopian perspective, it might be possible to recognize a democratic desire for self-rule within performances of self-composure. Wendy Brown says, "democracy requires that citizens be modestly oriented toward self-rule, not simply value enhancement, and that we understand our freedom as resting in such self-rule, not simply in market conduct."[239] Self-composure is value enhancement, and the emptied space requires this. Users, today, have social media 'brands' and social media 'capital' and this all adds up to a conception of self-worth as social value. But the rapid acceptance of the practices of self-composure made possible by the emptied space also points to their utopian potential: a desire for self-rule and, perhaps, for a democracy that is founded on individual sovereignty, which might take shape as a self-determination rather than a merely aesthetic self-composure. But, critically, to harness this utopian potential for any kind of broader political project, it would be necessary to resist the atomization that is packaged with the emptied space. There are, that is, others in the emptied space with you, who are all performing attachment similarly to or differently from you. It might not be necessary to throw away your iPhone—and, in fact, it might in some ways that this thesis has attempted to outline be better to keep it—in order adequately resist the control it implements. Instead, retooling self-composure as self-rule mandates, primarily, a thinking of the emptied as space as empty and full, mediated and live, and individual and collective. If we are alone in the emptied space as empty—if we operate as a digital citizen in an enclosed, private sphere—we are with others in the emptied space as full. We toggle between both, carrying

[239] "Booked #3."

usable elements between them. Because of this, the social worlds we create in the emptied space are never created alone. They manifest, instead, out of collective hopes and fantasies that through the emptied space can be shared, seen, and extended beyond local spatial limitations. If we are to have self-rule in the emptied space, and if that self-rule is to extend beyond the emptied space, it can only be through a recognition that self-rule must be founded on these collective, utopian hopes.

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