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PERFORMING THE NETWORKS OF DOMESTIC AND PUBLIC PERSONA

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INTRODUCTION

In this preamble to the newest collection of contributions to *Persona Studies*, we draw on the growing terminology from its initial offerings to consider the co-infiltration of the public and the domestic in the presentation of the online self. We provide two case studies that explore the overlapping of regions of public life that interface with social media and provide individuals with the means to curate persona micro-publics. These very different examples of persona performance are both organised around accounting for the ‘intercommunication’ of self-identification and presentational media (Marshall ‘Persona Studies’). Further, we suggest that the public spaces of social media and the web have been domesticated; that is, they have been made to ‘fit’ into the interpersonal demands of an individual’s many micro-publics of attention. This domestication has occurred via the individualised presentational media strategies of persona formation, such as memes and selfies, involved in the intercommunication of the self across multiple platforms and services to perform different roles.

It is the conceptual and material move between the public and the domestic that is of interest in many of the contributions to this volume. As will be discussed below, other contributors attend to the role of objects and audiences in the public/domestic interface that is the experience of networked living. A persona requires an audience, whether actual, physical, virtual, or imagined, and despite rumours of its demise, the audience is still an important description of those involved intentionally or accidentally in the networks of individualised public identity. These audiences include both human and non-human participants arranged in their micro-public constellations of connections, making the persona an assemblage of socio-technical performances that comprises the contemporary experience of the public presentation of the self. We see persona studies, its growing lexicon, and multi-disciplinary contributions, as an expanding and emerging framework for closer understanding of the arrangements, performances, and audiences (as well as the media and communication technologies, platforms, and formats) that constitute the conditions bringing the domestic, the personal, and the private into their contemporary and fragmentary public arrangements.

PERFORMING DOMESTIC PUBLIC NETWORKS

This public ‘enclosure’ of the personal, and on occasion the private and intimate, occurs with the regulatory structures of identity management across multiple social media sites and services. At the same time, this enclosure reciprocally but unequally domesticates public zones of industrial, professional, and political influence with activities that were previously inaccessible to audiences of broadcast media formats. The enclosure of the personal operates via the intellectual property rights expressed in the End-User Licence Agreements and Terms of Service contracts that ensure the services offered by Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Reddit, Google, Tumblr, and many others are funded by facilitating state and corporate surveillance, Big Data farming and other forms information harvesting. This is nothing new, but one of its unintended consequences is the reciprocal, but unequal, reverse movement of domestic spaces into the public sphere: the messy bedroom via YouTube, the untidy kitchen via Instagram, the unkempt

backyard via Facebook, the uncleaned toilet via 4Chan, the dirty laundry via WordPress, and so on. This taming of the public through social media intimacies domesticates these platforms and unravels previously stable professional identities.

The patterns of domestication, too often oversimplified as socio-technically determined ‘disruptive technologies’, are dramatically transforming professional and industrial occupations, from journalism, to hospitality and education, additive manufacturing, public transportation, and beyond. The ride-hiring mobile application Uber is perhaps one the most domesticating service apps, as it connects the need for individualised on-demand services with access to the driver’s most domesticated spaces outside the home or office space: the personalised car, which is for many an extension of domestic private space.

The concept of the ‘domestic’ here is located within a sphere of anticipated acquaintance, accompanied by a host of social and cultural conditions that are included in the experience of the personally mediated zones of public performance, most typically associated with the being and doing of the everyday. Nonetheless, the Instagram #nofilter campaigns and similar claims on authenticity of an imaged-based identity performance are extensions of previously well-known media framing and presentational devices and techniques. These now enter regular and mundane practice directly alongside the utterly extraordinary and rare: for example, meteor strikes captured via vehicle dashboard cameras. Such domestic formatting carries a range of important implications that serve to illustrate the role of objects, platforms, and devices in the assemblage of an online persona.

We acknowledge the movement of the public into the personal or intimate domains of private lives is not always empowering, but invasive. Nonetheless, we see a signalling that this allows the domestic to infiltrate, inhabit, and weaken some of the more fragile boundary policing actions and formal notions of the public. Weak points in the boundaries between public and private become targets of domination and resistance as social media platforms and new media formats domesticate the commercial, the professional, and the industrial. The techno-social arrangements of social media and the internet permit complex social groupings, connections, and relations that users reformat within individualised ecologies of interest—different micro-publics that might or might not intersect. This produces a massive range of constructed and active audiences located within a hybridised understanding of what constitutes publicness.

The domestic opens up the public, permitting the individual to latch on, taking what is needed, making the public persona a “domesticated but wild” construct (Latour, 4). As users, we attempt to personalise our smartphones and mobile devices, wrestling with them, attending to them in protective containers, updating, curating their contents, managing their batteries, all to bring them under our control, forcing them to fit into our way of operating. Of course, this quickly turns into an endless negotiation between the user, device, operating system, carrier contract, and local quality of connection and so on. Personalizing the phone changes its character, however slightly, from being an undetermined public object into a domestic companion. Even the act of carrying the device over time creates patterns of wear that are unique to the individual user:

In what is called “conversion”, personalized phones become symbolically charged objects that “speak” for their owners. These artefacts tell other people who their owners are, and convey the message that they take care of their “image”. (Lammes 93)

A warning accompanies this taming, because we have imperfectly, and only recently, domesticated our devices for the purpose of our persona performances, demonstrated by the

assemblages of digital and material objects. They may be “tangible everyday reminders to their owners that they are in charge of their own lives” (Lammes 103-104), but they also remain ‘underdetermined objects’ with a chequered history of potential revelation.

When we domesticate social media platforms and convergent media technologies, we treat our micro-publics by extension as a resource to be both consumed and produced according to the industrialised requirements of the public performance of the self. This is a pragmatism and parasitism that allows the public to burrow into the domestic and vice versa, regardless of the unequal flows that occur. The domestic is often overlooked as a political domain for contesting the network of relations that construct and bind it according to the histories of empires, nations, and the “colonial will” to control space and make it familiar, comfortable and safe (Presner, Shepard and Kawona, 8). By extension our domesticated objects too easily fail to register their own impact, leading to distributional trends like “destruction” memes where objects like mobile phones, portable devices, and tablet computers are dropped, microwaved, compressed, distressed, and otherwise abused. It is as if the dispossessed labour, environmental impact, and other costs for the objects assembly (and spiralling costs of its appropriate disposal) are equally ignored in this purest expression of affluence.

How individuals use these technologies, whether physical, digital, or a combination of the two, to engage with the domestic in public was an emergent theme in this issue of *Persona Studies*. Many points along the spectrum of performance in the different assemblages of persona will be explored in this edition as its authors address issues of personality, celebrity, audience and knowledge formation, while engaging with the commercial, the personal, and the political. In the following case studies we draw on key *Persona Studies* terms in order to propose alternative ways of thinking about how different scales, arrangements, and networks of objects, performances, and platforms come together to form personas.

CELEBRITY PERSONA AND THE NETWORKS OF DOMESTIC SELVES

Arnold Lois Schwarzenegger is an Austrian-born professional bodybuilder, actor, American politician, and prolific social media user and self-promoter. Schwarzenegger has demonstrated a long-term propensity for the creation of multiple professional and public roles, identities, and celebrity personas with the ability to move successfully between them. His translation from professional actor to Governor of California (2003 - 2011) and back again, with durations of clear overlap, involves a highly sought after competency in negotiating the presentational modal shift in the production and management of public identity that can be understood in terms of domestication. Schwarzenegger, like many celebrities, has embraced the changes to the conditions of celebrity that have incorporated convergence culture and enjoyed direct access to the economics of participatory media culture.

One of his official websites, *Schwarzenegger.com*, presents a specifically nuanced and individualised persona management strategy that is less comparable to other genre actors of the same vintage such as [Sylvester Stallone](#), whose own web site links to a password-protected fan community site. Rather, *Schwarzenegger.com* is equivalent to heavier social media users and recent action movie stars [Vin Diesel](#) or [Dwayne Johnson](#). The ‘official’ site is contemporaneously arranged, with links to similarly authentic Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Google+ accounts prominently featured at the top of the page. This locates he site as one among many different locations of an intercommunicated online persona. Each is effectively a digital object, a node in a network, and each is complete with their own (frequently overlapping) micro-publics, and their own part in the collective identity experience.

The site includes banner links and advertising for the political, non-government organisations and associations connected to various public identity iterations, which sit atop advertising for *Arnold.com*, a different site for the entrepreneurial persona which reproduces black and white images from his undefeated seven-year history as world body building champion to sell sports foods and dietary products. Both ‘official’ websites present recognisable elements of the Hollywood ‘star’, and this multi-faceted celebrity persona is further organised around the perceived value of the individual as an actor, politician, and entrepreneur. The visual and technical intercommunication between sites, roles, and activities encourages and directs visitors and fans to adopt similar investment across the other sites in which ‘Arnold’ is a presence. This approach works to encourage a deeply affective investment of a personal and direct engagement that is evidenced on sites like Reddit, through activity including the popular ‘[Ask Me Anything](#)’ AMA session on the site, where it is Schwarzenegger’s ongoing participation in the ‘sub-reddit’ forum *r/fitness* which indexically domesticates and authenticates this activity.

Part of the maintenance of his appeal is the curation of an audience that is predominately familiar with his broadcast media performances. This audience attention is maintained using social media to actively subvert the former restrictions and representational rules of media stardom through his interpersonal approach to the online performance of the public self. The deliberate lack of clear boundaries between his professional and personal selves, both during and after his time in political office, involved the strategic remediation of prominent identity features. These identity features include the celebrity history through the physicality of his body (Vartanian, Grant and Passino 2001) and its presence and familiarity on the screen (Boyle 2010).

There has been gradual shift from the representational modes of broadcast media industries to the presentational media experience of many-to-many distribution and the individualised content aggregation of social media. This shift has produced a new set of claims to authentic selection and framing of events relevant to the ongoing management and presentation of online identity to personally curated audiences. Presentational media are mediatised digital objects with subject forming properties that allow for intercommunication between audiences, technologies, and platforms. Intercommunication is an elaborate layering and re-transmission of types and forms of personal mediated communication objects that are filtered, directed, and engaged with by particular individuals in interpersonal ways (Marshall “Intercommunication”). This intercommunication could be the sharing of a link to a music video, which moves from blog, to tweet, to Facebook status update; or the movement of a single meme across 4chan, to Reddit, 9Gag, and similar websites.

Marshall (“Intercommunication”) uses the concept of intercommunication as a way of understanding of the changed nature of subject and object in contemporary culture that involves a strategic negotiation of the intersections between public and personal categories of the self across digitally mediated and networked communication technologies. The dynamic movements of content and meaning between different identity performances are not contradictory. We can understand the ‘Mr Olympia’ bodybuilding character of *Pumping Iron* (Fiore and Butler, 1977); the ‘Arnie/Arnold’ action hero of the 1980’s and 1990’s; the Republican ‘Governator’ of the 2000’s; even the post-2011 regretful cheating husband star persona (perhaps best adopted previously by Tiger Woods). (The latter emerged with news of marital betrayal and a secret child.) All are part of a network of identity performance that involves the movement of the public into the personal, and the domestication of the familiar in public.

The celebrity performance matrix, which anticipates a specular approach to the self-aware 'beingness' of celebrities in everyday life (Marshall 'Specular') is useful for considering the domestication involved in the online public presentation of the self. Film, Boyle argues has been the most powerful promotional tool for Arnold Schwarzenegger in his political persona, and while it is certainly the case that film is the representational medium inhabited by multiple culturally significant screen identities from *The Terminator* to the *Kindergarten Cop*, these were appropriated to symbolically represent specific political values during his campaigning. Political representation, suggests Street (2004: 446-7) drawing on Marshall (*Celebrity*), is aligned to the logic and practices of 'show business' in the sense that the embodiment of 'sentiment' is as familiar to the politician as it is to the actor.

The web became an important publicity tool during Schwarzenegger's governorship, and the mobile devices and the convergent services it provides are now his primary and most powerful promotional tools. The celebrification of politics and the politics of celebrities was previously dominated by the representational limitations of the legacy broadcast model, which mediates the embodiment of values as sentiment coordinated along parallel formats for actors and politicians. The screen, with its compression of time, space, perspective, and framing, along with the production of narratives, dramas, and characters, the promotional and electoral campaigns, news media interviews, and embedded placement in public events, all require a voting or consuming audience that was previously considered to be largely passive. This expectation of passivity and one-way communication has been overturned by the domestication and personalisation of the internet through portable computational devices, mobile telephony, and convergent technologies.

Schwarzenegger's use of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Reddit, and other social media platforms, responding directly to fan-requests and incorporating his on-screen personas, commits to the domestication of his identity. This occurs both in the break down in the professional presentation of the characters associated with his identity, and the more informal and personal setting of their presentation. His fundraising via Reddit, for example, where he is highly celebrated as 'GovSchwarzenegger', includes the filming of fan-sponsored movie quotes remediated in short videos recorded with a mobile device in an intriguing mix of everyday and celebrity environments of private jets, golf courses, dressing rooms, and roadside driveways. The 'revisualisation' of politics by technologies of mass communication, identified by Meyer and drawing on myth, history, narratives, and popular contemporary legends, are exponentially expanded through social and digital media, and the affordances of digital technologies are propelled by the dynamics of participatory media culture. Schwarzenegger's Reddit videos are evidence of this trend. Social media is no guarantee of success, and despite the expertise involved in its production, Schwarzenegger's public identity has not been retranslated as an entirely triumphant return as Hollywood screen performer.

Registering the degree of intercommunication between Schwarzenegger's characters, roles, politics, and performances across multiple media platforms and formats assists in expanding attention to the new, old, and hybridised configurations of the online public self. The intercommunicative self involves the appropriation of the affective dimensions of media content and its strategic dissemination in the service of persona assembly management across multiple public and private micro-publics. The interconnections in the many-to-many experience of content distributed via social media and the web provides many conduits for the selective transmission of the individual's creative appropriation. The remix and reassembly of popular culture, public and private information, and other media in the processes of assembling personal networks of connections that intersects in dynamic and challenging ways are just a few options for this production of persona.

The act of sharing media messages not previously associated with the broadcast entertainment industries is now a fundamental part of the translation of representational political identity as participatory and presentational media politics (Marshall “Promotion”), which has contributed to the changing aesthetics of political imagery. Schwarzenegger is one among many celebrities, politicians, and public figures to have tamed the precarious public interfaces of social media through the everyday blending of interpersonal communication, mobile photography, memes, online video, microblogging, text, and social recommendations.

The successful communication and dissemination of highly mediated interpersonal communication across Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Reddit, and other sites and networked locations, is evidence that Schwarzenegger is adroit in making the most of interpersonal web structures to maintain and expand a following across multiple registers of communication. The ‘official’ website still plays a role, but only as a non-central hub in the inter-networking of the multiple personas and connections to different kinds of information, audiences, and settings. The collapse of the Governator as a public figure, and the return of Arnie (however tarnished and reformulated), can be understood as the domestication of the public persona of the celebrity politician. This is not a discrete category, but rather an ongoing assembly of the forms of performance from the resources available, such as personal spaces, that were previous unseen or scrubbed clean for public consumption.

THE DOMESTICALLY SCALED PERSONA ON PUBLIC NETWORKS

As the collected papers in this issue demonstrate, personas that are produced and performed can range drastically in type, scale, and structure. Whereas Arnold Schwarzenegger’s personas reach international audiences numbering in the millions, the personas we produce from a personal sphere radiating outwards from the performance of the self are intended for much smaller, intimate audiences. However, by engaging with these domestically scaled personas, we have a means to examine how the everyday self impacts, and is impacted by, the shift to wholesale access to presentational media.

This second case study introduces a comparative study of an online persona unlikely to garner much public attention, due to the desired or imagined audience. Through analysis of the persona of Rayna Fahey (expanding on data collected by Barbour), we can show how domestically scaled personas demonstrate the five key components of intercommunication identified by Marshall (“Intercommunication”): individual, interpersonal, multi-registered, inter-networked, and indexical.

In a 2012 research interview, Rayna Fahey explained that she described herself on her curriculum vitae—an older form of public interface with the professional territories of employment, and part of the persona currency iteration as labourer—as “mother artist crafter gardener lover activist”, but noted that she uses the term ‘artist’ rarely, preferring ‘crafter’ or ‘maker’. Since our talk, she has expanded and evolved this description of self to “radical crafter, organiser, mother, activist, gardener, writer and lover” (radicalcrossstich.com). Fahey’s craftivist work is based around the tradition of needlework, particularly cross-stitch, which has a long history of being marginalised as a woman’s craft that is ‘decorative’ rather than ‘artistic’ (Parker).

The pieces that Fahey creates, either working solo or as a member of collectives, generally operate in one of two overlapping modes. The first mode connects to the domestic origins of the medium in the home, radicalising the personal domain as an expression of public engagement: Fahey creates, hacks, redesigns, and re-purposes cross-stitch samplers and needlework to incorporate political, feminist, environmentalist, or other activist messages. The

second scale is begins at as a more public arrangement, where she uses cross-stitch techniques to bring the domestic into much larger formats: using chain-link fences and scrap fabric rather than linen or Aida fabric and embroidery floss. The two formats bring together the domestic and the public in vastly different scales. The publicly scaled pieces intervene in vacant lots, neighbourhood parks or gardens, and other communal or publicly visible spaces. On occasions, these different scales of work come together through gallery shows and artist-in-residence programs: domestically scaled and themed samplers and aprons are exhibited alongside images and representations of fence stitching and other public interventions.

Fahey differentiates between the types of content she presents in her blog, her Facebook page, and other online spaces. By individualising her online persona, Fahey domesticates her blog as much any public-private social technical interfaces, such as a smart phone or other mobile device, bringing her blog (radicalcrossstich.com) her own creative work, and the history of political and activist craft together in the personal and public a digital archive of both. Through Facebook and Twitter, she engages with and produces networks of makers, artists, activists, politicians, and business people, and links together varied interests in permaculture, environmental degradation, deforestation, women's rights, and anti-capitalism to create a diverse, multi-layered activist persona in a diverse micro-public formation.

Her work building an online history of activist craft does much to link current craftivist practices to their oft-forgotten roots, working to counteract what Newmeyer (443) describes as "an ahistorical understanding of crafts as political but also a remarkable ignorance of feminist theory, practice, and indeed crafting". Fahey's education in women's studies, her activism, and her political expertise mean that the connections between the traditions of embroidery and marginalised women's labour, the economies of consumption and making, and the potential to use her chosen craft to register dissent are bound together in her online persona. Equally important are her roles as mother, partner, friend, and community member. These overlapping roles anticipate the public enclosure of the personal, and use this osmosis to rupture and domesticate the political potential of the public.

The visibility Fahey has achieved within her digital networks is something she is able to convert from social value into capital and back to social value of a different order, promoting the wide range of causes in which she is invested. The overlapping philosophical underpinnings of the various groups and causes that Fahey supports increases the likelihood that the people involved in her various personal networks will be interested in more than one specific activity. She promotes and facilitates interest in permaculture, environmental protection, animal rights, 'green' political causes and groups, and feminist groups along with her role as a craftivist. By posting links along with personal commentary, Fahey provides access to a particular position on an event or news item in a multi-registered form, increasing the potential for positive change. Fahey promotes cross-community networking in an 'internetworked movement' (Marshall, 26) by distributing invitations to a range of events where her contacts are points of potential participation. Through these networks, she extends the activist activities of her micro-publics beyond the point of initial connection, encouraging a diversity of activism.

The interpersonal dimensions of the networked approach to the production of Fahey's online persona are an extension the individualised act of writing in public. Fahey distributes her online persona across the overlapping patterns of identity performances of multiple digital platforms. These are locations where content from one site is multi-registered: content is shared, liked, tagged, re-shared, commented on, and moved to another site or users curate micro-publics. Boundary management does take place—Fahey does not post family photos to her blog, for example—but the domestication of the public via the networks of public presentation of the self demonstrates that the collapse of personal and professional spaces

occurs through the sharing of hobbies and the activities of interest groups. These activities add depth and breadth to Fahey's activist and artist personas. In the case of Fahey's focus on environmental, feminist, and left-wing political interests, her artist's persona draws on expectations associated with bohemianism. Fahey's experience of persona creation directly connects with Goffman's conceptualisation of role-play, where individuals enact different fronts depending on their situation. Diversifying her indexical identity in this way works for the multifaceted career she is building, where her activist, artist, and environmentalist priorities feed into and draw from one another.

Much of Fahey's craftivist work examines the intersections of femininity, motherhood, and production. To address this issue in a 2012 exhibition *There's always time to mend*, she created a 6 minute film titled '[The Making and Baking of Banners and Biscuits](#)' (Fahey). The clip features time lapse footage of Fahey involved in a diverse range of home based activity, as she works, mothers and entertains over two and a half hours. The audience watches through a static frame of her living room as Fahey entertains her children, changes a nappy, feeds the children, cuddles the children, talks on the phone, talks to someone off camera, and returns time and again to continue her embroidery. Rather than seeing the creative process as inviolate or sacred, occurring only within the bounds of a studio space, Fahey presents a version of artistic production that is haphazard, interrupted, and embodied.

Encouraging people to consider the labour involved in the production of handmade goods, Fahey's depiction of creative labour "was born out of a desire to contribute to the conversation about the value of handmade" (Fahey). Although Fahey is content to name the products of her labour 'art', when describing herself she alternates between the labels crafter, maker, and artist. For this film, she has chosen the latter descriptor. In our discussion of her identification with the different labels, she says that she mostly identifies as a crafter, but also commented "It depends on whether I want to have the conversation or not... 'I'm an artist'—it's just quicker." By describing herself as an artist for the purpose of this clip, shared through a variety of online spaces including her blog, Fahey gives legitimacy to the work that she is producing. Identifying as an artist—a role that has significantly more social value than that of a crafter or maker—transfers that value to the product of her labours.

It might be tempting to assume that the level of activity and interruption seen in the short film was staged for the purpose of making her point more explicit, that the artistness on display was in some sense a theatrical performance for the camera. However, in our interview Rayna revealed how little 'uninterrupted creative time' she is able to have as a mother of three young children. Describing a day full of stops and starts, child care, visits from friends and neighbours, and household management, she says there are only two periods of time she can work in a focused, continuing manner: firstly during quiet time after lunch, and secondly after 11pm, when the children are in bed and the house has been readied for the next day. This experience of making art is at a different end of the spectrum of creative practice from the stereotype of an artist in a paint splattered studio space, working furiously for days or weeks on end, or for as long as the spark of creative inspiration lasts. In sharing the domesticated normality of this type of creative labour through her digital networks, Rayna brought together her interrelated commitments to gender equality and feminism, conservation and environmentalism, labour, and creative practice for her networked micro-publics.

IN THIS ISSUE

Through the movement in and between the public and the personal, the domestic and the distant, these two case studies have described two very different personas, one that works on a commercial scale with a massive audience, the other scaled and targeted to a more intimate

audience. This discussion is designed to offer a way to think about the range of persona studies projects that are included in this issue. This collection registers new, old, and refashioned connections between the domestic and the public, the commercial and personal, the unpopular and the massively well-known, with the domains of a performance of persona that are new and familiar, unknown and welcome. This complexity is not as uncertain as it may appear, but exists as the result of the interface between the various elements and modes of contemporary persona performance. Take, for example, the first creative practice contribution to the present volume by xtine burrough, whose uses a Twitterbot to create a “wordhoard”. We see a network enacted between the public display of the artist’s public identity and their personal vocabulary, one that domesticates the publicly accessible bot, an interface that is so often used to promote products, show off technical skill, or troll other users. By embedding a live Twitter widget into the journal, this artwork will continue to grow as both the artist and the bot tweet. Even xtine’s account of her work in this collection creates a new node in the micro-publics of attention that are attracted and linked to the wordhoard from elsewhere. xtine performs a domesticated publicness in the assembly of a vocabulary that is both deeply personal and intimate, as well as impersonal and entirely a practical and automated extension of her persona as artist.

In Mata Haggis’s piece, the second creative practice contribution, we see quite explicitly the domestication of the typically public spaces and stories of digital video games. In the documentation, and in the accompanying embedded video, we encounter highly successful attempts to involve the player in deeply personal stories, to create experiences that border on the autobiographical, and tend to be grounded in conveying notions of an authentic encounter. In the game, *Fragments of Him*, Haggis has retained control over the story and design, establishing a new personal order in the game world, ultimately an encounter assembled out of multiple impressions, memories, and objects copied from the tangible world. The public space of Haggis’s game world is domesticated by paintings of his grandfather and friends, where we experience the translation of the product designed for an audience, and a user that encounters explicitly and purposefully directed narrative constraints.

The traditional articles in the collection likewise chart new connections and relations between the public, commercial, and political, and the domestic, private, and intimate. Belinda Morrissey and Susan Yell demonstrate the way that online trolls work to diminish the public persona of powerful or influential women by criticising their private or intimate selves, an action made more coherent by the traditional patriarchal narrative reducing women’s lives and influence firmly to the domestic sphere. Morrissey and Yell chart the connections between the public and the personal in the speech utterances of Internet trolls by considering three instances involving a former Australian Prime Minister, celebrity comedian, and reality television judge which demonstrates a spectrum of trolling as disruption. The experience of disruption through trolling is a common one online, and Morrissey and Yell use these case studies to represent a peak period of public interrogation of character and clear harassment by individuals in the public of the in Australia’s social media sphere.

Casey Schmitt looks at how the public persona of Clint Eastwood worked to influence audience interpretations of two 2012 performances: firstly in a Super Bowl XLVI advertisement for Chrysler Group, and secondly as a speaker at the Republican National Convention. The persona and the person worked to create two performances that received radically different receptions from the public, one lauded as embodying the American spirit, the other dismissed as confusing and disjointed. The public character of Eastwood is recognised and celebrated, while his domestic, personal self disappoints his audience.

Kate Warren’s article also looks at a projection of a different kind of persona into the public realm: the parafictional persona. Warren’s account suggests the parafictional is a

phenomenon shared between performers and artists who enact “versions” of their public identities in the process of entertaining and creating the potential for creative and critical strategies public self-presentation. Parafictional personas, Warren argues, are a specific iteration of persona that are characterised by interconnecting self-reflexive moments and the appropriation of their own “proper name” to construe a fictionalised double. The focus moves between Israeli-American Omer Fast, and Lebanese Walid Raad, both artists whose public personas are performances of themselves. The public’s encounter with parafictional personas involved the authentic and the fiction, which is playfully rendered in the contextual collapse between dimensions of identity that would be otherwise distinguished between the fictional and real, the historical and the contemporary.

Paul Smith examines the quasi-subjective properties of commodities that permit the emergence of persona and imagined subject-hood as part of the transformation of artistic practice. Smith incorporates two theories for understanding artworks as quasi-subjects, and investigates the role of artworks as distinguished, unique, and special objects emerging from a specific understanding of minimalist critics of the sixties. He considers the capacities and characteristics of artworks to function as potentially ethical objects, and commodities and subjects of artwork: not as fetishised consumer items, but as prostheses for communities and ethical objects for societies of art.

This journal has always been intended to be interdisciplinary, reaching beyond the disciplinary backgrounds of the founding editorial team. Joining the range of approaches that have been assembled in the two issues of volume one, this issue includes a response to Marshall and Barbour’s (2015) initial editorial drawing on the positivist direction in public relations. Stephen Mackey’s exploration of alternative conceptualisations of persona is a welcome expansion on the preliminary advance, connecting it to structural divisions between image and identity, offering some ways in which less constructivist or critical scholars than ourselves could engage with persona studies.

Equally distinct from prior articles in this publication is Coorevits, Schuurman, Oelbrandt, and Logghe’s exploration of persona from a User Experience Design perspective. The authors introduce a methodology for designing, testing, and evaluating effective personas for use in software design, and this form of persona—a fictional character designed to embody the end user of a product—provides an interesting contrast to the work of qualitative researchers theorising mediated personas. In a sense, the personas developed in this final piece are domestic, as they represent people using technology in their own homes, while also being commercial objects, created for the purpose of testing a piece of software.

Collectively, the following articles expand our understanding of the spectrum of persona performances in both legacy media and through new media forms, through physical performances, parafictional portrayals, and theoretical constructions. We look forward to the conversations that result.

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