Produced Subjectivities and Productive Subjects:
Locating the Potential of the Self-Reflective Blog

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For my Father,
who taught me that computers do more than just talk to one another.

Abstract

Blogging software has popularly been used as a mode of writing about everyday life to interact with others. This thesis examines the political potentials that are opened up by self-reflective blogging. The self-reflective blog is a synergy of self-reflective practices and computer-mediated communication. A genealogy of the history of computer-mediated communication and various public self-reflective practices is conducted to uncover affect as the utility of various economies of subject production. Efforts made to blog—like the efforts made to interact online in other CMCs—are positioned as a kind of affective labor. Adapting Hardt and Negri's (2005) theorization of the multitude, whereby affective labor—the production of social relationships—is a kind of biopolitical production, affect will be determined as a kind of biopolitical power that exists in everyday life.

Introduction

Reaching a Critical Popularity

If popular culture works self-reflectively, then the prevalence of the blog can be marked with the publication of cartoons and popular texts openly poking fun at the practice of blogging. In a comic taken from the New Yorker (see Figure 1), a husband encourages his nagging wife to "save that for [her] blog." *That*, it can be assumed, is her complaining. But why encourage her to blog? Why share that, the details of their lives, in a publicly accessible forum? It is not *that*—the sharing of everyday life in blogs— which this thesis attempts to understand, but rather seeks to uncover an alternative answer to *why* share that.

"You might want to save that for your blog."

Figure 1. Jack Zeigler, *You might want to save that for your blog*

Expression of the Problem

The blog has entered into a communicative space in which other protocols—or what is now commonly referred to as social software—have fruitfully existed. If the blog has entered into a communicative space in which other computer-mediated protocols have already fruitfully existed, then to what extent is the blog revolutionary? In addition, how have practices that require the constitution of the self in discourse online and offline

contributed to the development of the blog? If blogs that chronicle everyday life are more popular than other blogs, then in what way does everyday life emerge as the site of a politics? In opening up the discourse on the writing of everyday life in blogs how else can the reasons for the blog's popularity be understood and what potentials become apparent? Also, if cyberspace is equally the result of popular interest as it is of industry and commercial interest, and the diary-style blog is a kind of self-reflective practice in which a discourse on the self is constituted, then how can we understand the potentials— socially, but implicitly politically—of the subjectivity that emerges?

This thesis focuses specifically on the popular practice of what will be referred to as self-reflective blogging and on how the production of relationships and interactions is an indicator of affect. The formation of cooperation in communities, relationships and the production of affect is, for Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2005), a kind of affective labor. This category of labor is a kind of biopolitical production. Biopolitical production, unlike Foucault's biopower, is immanent to society. For Hardt and Negri (2005), biopolitical production is not limited to waged labor, but is inclusive of all creative work (p. 105) and produces not only goods, but also relationships and social life. The biopolitics of the self-reflective blog is simply to produce affect in everyday life.

Affect, as Brian Massumi (2002) explains, is often used as a synonym for emotion since a vocabulary specific to affect does not exist. Emotion is the content of the experience, but affect is the felt or perceived sensory response. Affect is a combination of psychic and bodily modifications (Massumi, 2002). Since affect occurs in the blogger, it is in excess of the blog and only indicators of affect are evident on the blog's interface.

This work cannot begin with an authoritative definition of the blog. What the blog is and the kinds of blogs that are legitimized are largely dependent on competing discourses. Mass media representation, the first hand accounts of bloggers, and academia have taken different perspectives on the blog as both a mode of publishing online and as a kind of communicative practice. In order to begin, terms can be very loosely understood as:

> Blog (noun): a frequently updated website with entries dated in reverse chronological order or the software which enables this website to be created
> Blogger (s) (noun): the person or persons who maintain and update the blog
> Blogosphere (noun): a term referring to the whole of blogs that are published and circulated online. These blogs do not need to refer to each other or link to each other; they must only be made available online
> To Blog (verb): the act of updating a blog

The group of bloggers who first became popular—commonly referred to as the original weblog community—stressed the ease of blogging (Blood, 2000, 2002a, 2002b; Doctorow, Dornfest, Johnson, Powers, Trott, and Trott, 2002; Bausch, Haughey, and Hourihan, 2002; Stone, 2002, 2004). With the presence of free, easy to use software, the original blogging community encouraged more people to take up blogging. Blogging for this group implied using the blog as a tool for gathering and disseminating information. With the increasing popularity of the blog, members of the mainstream media envisioned the blog as something special, something *revolutionary* (Sullivan, 2002; Kline & Burstein, 2005; Hewitt, 2005). Kline and Burstein (2005) suggested that the development of the blog signaled the coming of the 'citizen journalist' (p. 239), who gathers information from traditional resources and then offers remarks (p. 24). The citizen journalist would offer a "meta-view" of current events, providing an edited version of the news (O'Brien, 2004). Thus, the notion of a possible blogging revolution

emphasized the blog as a tool for gathering information. The power of the blog, for the revolution, was to empower individuals to disseminate information outside of mainstream media channels.

The notion of the blogging revolution privileged blogs that are political or business related and, as a result, blogs that focused on everyday life and the trivial existence of their authors were the least represented. The media tended to focus on these blogs, perhaps because they were more newsworthy. However, the Perseus study (2003), Guernsey (2002), Orlowski (2003) and Herring et al. (2004) found that a majority of blogs typically dealt with trivialities such as dog stories (Roberts-Miller, 2004). The diary-style blogs maintained by Howard Dean and Salam Pax were indicative of the negotiation between the personal and the political. Nevertheless, the personal was more *popular* than the political.

Laurie McNeill (2003) and Nardi, Schiano and Gumbrecht (2004) suggest that diary-style blogging is not simply diary-keeping, but a conversation. They, like Andreas Kitzmann (2003), approach the diary-style blog as an expression of agency—a choice to share information about yourself in order to interact with others. Indeed, not only did bloggers recognize that they were writing in a public forum (McNeill, 2003, p.35), but they were "standing before 900 million, sometimes with an attitude of indifference, sometimes with the hope of reaching out to new people in the ever-expanding blogosphere" (Nardi et al., 2004). Diary-style blogging is a social activity, and expresses the need and desire for community (Blanchard, 2004; Miller and Shepard, 2004; Scheidt and Wright, 2004; Efimova, Hendrick and Anjewierden, 2005).

The concept of virtual community (Rheingold, 1993) and the community formation of bloggers is suggestive of the effectiveness of the software; communing is free and easy. However, the popularity and effectiveness of the blog does not speak to the pleasures of blogging; it overlooks the affects of blogging. As Torill Mortensen (2004) notes:

> The sensations behind the choices, the sensual element of blogging is beyond the tools of the pure gaze, and cannot be broken down into standardized categories or organized according to strict formal rules. These belong to the barbarians, and can only be studied by understanding and accepting involvement as a quality of the methodology and not a problem for the analyst (p. 4).

Thus, to describe the sensual effects of blogging is problematic. An autoethnographic approach, as implied by Mortensen, would provide for a first hand account of participation in the pleasures of blogging; however, instead this work takes a theoretical approach to the production of affect.

The production of a discourse on the self within the interface of the blog is a kind of subject constitution. The constitution of the self online, where the discourse on the self is a kind of objectification, is the subjectification of the self within the blog. The production of an online subjectivity is a productive subjectivity in that its actions—the interactions with others—produce social relationships. Affective labor, the production of social relationships, is a kind of biopolitical production. Thus, the production of a subject position produces the possibilities for affect where affect is a kind of biopower that exists in everyday life.

Brief Outline of Thesis

The opening chapter of this thesis reviews published literature on the blog by dividing the literature into stages of development. The literature review takes as its

sample not only scholarly work, but articles from popular magazines in order to better understand how the blog has been imagined and represented in dominant cultural discourse. It further identifies the ways in which the various genres of the practice have been legitimated. The first stage is largely introductory, describing the blog as a new form of web publishing. The second stage explores the political and personal uses of the blog. More specifically, it examines what a blog is, the impact on political and news reportage, issues of representation and participation, whether the blogosphere could be a public sphere, using the blog to publish everyday life, and the community forming potentials of the blog. The third stage is the latest emergent stage to which this thesis belongs. Again, while the possible socio-cultural effects of the blog have been discussed, the affects of the blog have been largely ignored.

In order to negotiate the tension between the common connotations of diary-keeping and the public practice of blogging, the term self-reflective blog is suggested to highlight the synergy of self-reflective practices and computer-mediated communication. Chapter 2, 'Approaching the Blog' conducts a genealogy by "[isolating] points of emergence" (Foucault, 1984, p. 83) in the history of computer-mediated communication and various public self-reflective practices in order to elucidate the uniqueness of the self-reflective blog. Both online and offline practices are considered in order to emphasize the continuity of the practices. The genealogy locates instances, cultural practices and artifacts that assist to capture the relationship between public practices of self-constitution and communication. In other words, this chapter works toward an understanding of the space—the venue—of production and practices which with to

recognize the act production to uncover the utility of various economies of self-constitution or subject production.

Chapter 3, 'Subject Production' examines the production of a subject position within the structure of the blog. It describes the role that the various parts of the interface play in the constitution of the self in discourse. The constitution of the self in discourse—the construction of an identity—is likewise the constitution of a subject position with which to encounter others online; it produces a place from which to act and interact.

If, for example, religious discourse enshrouds the confession with a use-value actualized in ritual, then the use-value of a ritual or practice is derived from social discourse. If self-reflective bloggers exhibit everyday life to those with the power to actualize their experience, then Chapter 4, 'Productive Subjects,' locates affect as the utility of the blog for the blogger. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's (2005) theorization of the multitude is used in order to understand the efforts to produce a subject position as a kind of affective labor whereby the exchanges produce not only social relationships, but affect.

Uncovering an alternative response to 'why blog?' is the first step toward recognizing that a kind of politics is possible within the socializing that occurs within and between blogs. It is the goal of this work to create a critical framework with which to re-consider the activity of self-reflective blogging as a kind of affective labor. In reconsidering this practice as a kind of affective labor, the efforts undertaken to blog can be understood as a kind of biopolitical power that exists in everyday life. Affect, then,

becomes a kind of biopolitical power in everyday life, and the self-reflective blog is

indicative of the functioning of affect in everyday life.

Chapter 1
Approaches to the Blog: A Literature Review

The blog's definition is dependent on competing approaches. What the blog is and how it can, or should, be used is largely contested. Mass media representations, the first hand accounts of bloggers, and academia have taken different perspectives on the blog as both a mode of publishing online and as a kind of communicative practice. Navigating these discourses is one of the tasks of this literature review. The blog as social software, a communication technology, will be differentiated from the media representation of the blog and developing blogging cultures.

Stages of Writing

In order to approach literature on the blog, it will be first divided into stages. These stages of writing mimic the development of research and writing on cyberculture more generally. David Silver (2000) has documented both the progression of practices conducted online and the progression of research correlating to the practices. His delineation of cyberculture will be used to make sense of emerging literature. For Silver, cyberculture studies as it progressed from 1990-2000 can be divided into three stages: popular cyberculture, cyberculture, and critical cyberculture. The first stage, popular cyberculture, is mainly descriptive in nature and employs the internet frontier metaphor. During the second stage, cyberculture proper, cyberculture begins to gain academic attention and as a result theoretical work on virtual identities and communities emerges. It also expands the discourse on blogging and begins to examine online interactions, digital discourse, the access and denial of individuals to the internet, interface design and the intersection of all these areas. It is important to note that the progression of research

has developed from descriptive and largely ethnographic work focused on the medium to an examination of the theoretical and practical implications of the praxis. The approaches taken to studying the blog mimic the perspectives of cyberculture because the blog is a subset of practices conducted in cyberspace.

Unlike the stages of cyberculture, for the blog these stages, while they can be divided chronologically, are better divided in terms of approach and focus. The first stage of literature on the blog spans from 2000-2002 and focuses on establishing the blog as a new media form that revolutionized information dissemination. During this stage the blog's technical features are the focus of attention. The second stage begins in 2002 and is only now slowly fading. This stage can be characterized by a more focused approach to the blog by isolating blogging techniques, uses, and practices. It expands the discourse of blogging and can be characterized by a burgeoning critical perspective. Writings on cyberculture and the blog have progressed from the technical to the social, from describing software to understanding the collective experiences of those who use the software.

The first stage of blog writing acts as an introductory comment on the blog's format and software. It is written largely by political and business bloggers who describe the blog as a new form of web publishing (Blood, 2000, 2002a, 2002b; Doctorow, Dornfest, Johnson, Powers, Trott, and Trott, 2002; Staufer, 2002). They focus on the new developments of web publishing that the blog's software made possible. These writings contain personal, almost autobiographic, testimonies about the simplicity of content publishing, the positive social and commercial outcomes of blogging, and

encouragement to join the ranks of established bloggers. The writing tends to position the blog as useful mode of news and information sharing.

Resulting from the blog's proliferation and the media attention that it generated, the second stage of literature explores a more diverse set of concerns. The writing can be more broadly divided by the political and personal uses of the blog. More specifically, the development of concerns surrounding the blog include: questions of delineation; what is a blog (Walker, 2003; Miller and Shepard, 2003; Himmer, 2004; Curtain, 2004; Scheidt and Wright, 2004), the impact on political and news reportage (Sullivan, 2002; Kline and Burstein, 2005; O'Brien, 2004; Hewitt, 2005, Davis, 2005; Singer, 2003; Caroll, 2004; Gallo, 2004; Boese, 2004; Blood, 2003), issues of representation and participation; who blogs (Herring, Kouper, Scheidt and Wright, 2004; Perseus Study, 2003; Guernsey, 2002; Orlowski, 2003; Lampa, 2004), whether the blogosphere could be a public sphere (Mortensen, 2004; Roberts-Miller, 2004; Baoill, 2004), using the blog to publish self-reflection and everyday life (McNeill, 2003; Kitzmann, 2003; Nardi, Schiano and Gumbrecht, 2004), and the community forming potentials of the blog (Miller and Shepard, 2004; Scheidt and Wright, 2004; Blanchard, 2004; Efimova, Hendrick and Anjewierden, 2005; Herring et al, 2005; Tseng, Tatemura and Wu, 2005). During this stage aspects of the blog's software are emphasized as enabling enclave discourse. In sum, this literature review divides writing into stages in order to organize the development of key questions and theories that inform blogging discourses.

Notes Toward a Definition

The first stage of writing on the blog is largely an introduction to blogging as web publishing written by users (Blood, 2002a, 2002b; Doctorow, Dornfest, Johnson, Powers,

Trott, and Trott, 2002; Staufer, 2002; Biz Stone, 2002 and 2004). Like Silver's description of popular cyberculture, these writings are mainly descriptive, drawing attention to what the blog is, how to blog, and how the development of the blog has changed online communication. The introductions are enthusiastic in tone, and encourage readers to join the ranks of established bloggers. The resulting enthusiasm may be an indication that the blog, due to its format or software design and function, not only serves, but fulfils the needs of those already communicating online better than the protocols before it. This is not to suggest that other communicative protocols were deficient, but that blog software has qualitatively improved the process of online publishing and communicating.

Though the arrival of the blog software was well received, what the blog was and how it was to be used was largely debated. The blog was initially defined technically, in terms of its format: a frequently updated website with entries dated in reverse chronological order. Blog content was expected to be little more than "links with commentary, updated frequently" (Blood, 2002a, p. ix). Content was typically a log of online activities: literally, a web log. Jorn Barger, creator of one of the original weblogs *Robot Wisdom*, is credited with originating the term "weblog" in 1997 (Blood, 2004). The "we" was eventually dropped, and it became known as the blog. Bausch, Haughey, and Hourihan (2002) describe the emergence of the weblog as "spontaneous" and "evolving out of a handful of websites at the same time" (p. 8). In addition to Barger's *Robot Wisdom*, they cited Justin Hall's *Links from Underground*, which began in 1994, and Michael Sippey's *The Filter*, which began in 1996 as examples of early blogs. At this stage of development, the only two criteria for blogs were the presence of the

hyperlinks and that entries were posted in reverse chronological order. Thus, the initial understanding of the blog was determined by how the software structured the content.

The introductory texts on the blog each broadened the definition slightly. Beginning with the basic classification, *Essential Blogging* defines the blog as a web page that "contains brief, discrete chunks of information called *posts*. These posts are arranged in reverse-chronological order. Each post is uniquely identified by an anchor tag, and it is marked with a permanent link that can be referred to by others who wish to link to it" (p. 3). The blog was thus not only a log of web activity for an individual, but could serve as an index of concise information for others. For Biz Stone (2002) in addition to simply "logging", there are three basic components of a blog: chronology, the ordering of posts; frequency, how often the blogger posts; and focus, how well the blogger links to information on a given topic. The blog's "relationship to the flow of time" (2002, p. 39), Stone stresses, is important for searching the blog's content. It should be noted that the flow of time, while important for searching, also serves to demarcate the progression of content, the continuation of narratives, the emergence of new stories etc. During the initial uptake of the blog, being able to access a blog's content helped to position the blog as a useful tool for knowledge sharing. Further, the emphasis on the hyperlink and temporality speaks to the blog's use to publish and condense current events and news stories.

As the blog became more popular its application became diversified. Rebecca Blood (2002b), and Bausch, Haughey, and Hourihan (2002) mention some initial genre distinctions. Blood (2002b) differentiates between three different types of blogs: blogs, notebooks, and filters (p. 6). *Blog* blogs tend be brief. Notebook blogs tend to focus on

the writer's inner world and relate it back to a given topic (p. 7). Filter blogs are understood to be the "classic weblog," one characterized by a list of links about a given topic, similar to the log of links. Similarly, Bausch, Haughey, and Hourihan (2002), describe blogs as being either link driven around a particular interest, such as current events, as short bursts of text, or as a reflective commentary, like a journal. Most importantly, although they attempt to differentiate between kinds of blogs, content is not described as an "either/or situation" (p. 61), rather it is understood as fluid, existing along a continuum of links and commentary. The content of the blog, even if not link driven, is nevertheless presumed to refer to other online materials. Not unlike a log, the blog is understood to be a condensed, concentrated and abridged version of information available on the web.

Introductory Texts

Since the blog software distinguishes the blog from other protocols, it follows that the introductory blogging texts serve to acquaint their reader with the blog software (Doctorow et al, 2002; Blood, 2002a; 2002b; Bausch, Haughly and Hourihan, 2002; Staufer, 2002, Rodvzilla, 2002; Stone, 2002, 2004). *Essential Blogging* (Doctorow et all, 2002) offers little more than a definition of the blog and a cataloguing of the various types of blog software (Moveable Type, Blogger, Pitas, etc). Likewise, Rebecca Blood's *The Weblog Handbook: Practical Advice on Creating and Maintaining Your Blog* (2002b), serves as an introduction to blogging, but adds topics such as finding your voice and etiquette. *We Blog: Publishing Online with Weblogs* (Bausch, Haughey, Hourihan, 2002) also is exemplary of the initial publications and is divided into three categories:

what is a blog, blog elements, and advanced blogging. In sum, each text is primarily dedicated to describing the whats and the hows of blogging.

With further attention to the cultural response, Todd Staufer in *Blog On* (2002) makes four suggestions as to why blogs have gained such momentum and significance. For Staufer, blogs offer a sense of democratization, anyone can use them; the ability to play editor, links are assembled and organized based on the whims of the blogger; create content, publishing online is simplified; and form communities, gather like-minded individuals. In addition to Staufer's suggestions, the availability of free blogging software and web hosting allows greater access to individuals who are interested in online publishing, but may not know how to program.

Moving beyond simple description and explanation are *We've got Blog* (2002) and Biz Stone's books. Biz Stone's two publications *Blogging: Genius Strategies for Instant Web Content* (2002) and *Who Let the Blogs Out?* (2004) offer strategies and suggestions for effective blogging. Stone focuses his attention on business blogs, offering tips for html programming, getting noticed, and an entire sub-section on how to blog for profit. This book's most useful feature are the "genius tips"—located in the margins—which offer ideas for improving the blog's interface. These tips include effective ways of organizing and presenting information within the interface.

Stone's second text, *Who Let the Blogs Out?* (2004), features two major contributions to discourse on the blog: first, it includes an informal or blog-like forward by Wil Wheaton[1]; and, second, it makes reference to the development of the web.

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[1]Wil Wheaton is a former child star, who rose to popularity with his role as Wesley Crusher in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. In his forward "Where is My Mind?" Wil Wheaton articulates his own experience with blogs, relationships that he has developed by reading other people's blogs and how his own blog has enabled him to regain a form of celebrity.

However, neither explanation, nor inference is made to how these developments have specifically aided and assisted the development of the blog; Stone simply offers a linear history of the web. Understanding the context and history of cyberspace would help to put the blog in perspective. The development of the internet and a discussion of the medium's conditions will be conducted in the next chapter of this work. Stone's contribution to the development of the blog lies in both his influence with regard to offering free software and his contribution to blog publications

Unlike the texts that focus on software, *We've got Blog* (ed. John Rodzvilla, 2002) offers a glimpse into the practice and development of the blog from the perspective of individuals who were involved in the creation and development of the blog. *We've got Blog* brings together media figures such as Douglas Rushkoff and Rebecca Blood, journalists and bloggers. Included in the collection is the most exemplary of the early writings on the blog, "Weblogs: a History and Perspective" written by popular blogger Rebecca Blood[2]. The perspective offered in "Weblogs" is limited in scope and functions as an introductory manifesto. At the crux of Blood's argument is the belief that the blog can transform the otherwise passive audience to a creative public (p. 16). The blog facilitates not only easy web publishing, but offers a mode of participation between the blogger and audience.

We've Got Blog (2002) places a particular emphasis on the social relationships between the individuals involved in the development and the resulting social climate of

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[2]Blood's "History" was initially featured as blog entry *In Rebecca's Pocket* (Sept. 7, 2000); it was later re-published in popular feminist magazine *Bitch* (Fall 2005). "History" is widely cited and seemed to serve as a turning point for Blood's career as both a blogger and blog-theorist as she later became a highly sought after blogger. She was keynote speaker at several blog conferences including BlogTalk (2003).

the blog. This approach is evocative of older publications on cyberspace[3], in which the

personal events and experiences of the people involved become a part of the technology's

history. Specifically, Rebecca Mead's "You've Got Blog" (2002, p. 47-56) attempts to

concretize the influence of Meg Hourihan and Jason Kottke[4]. Both Hourihan and Kottke

were successful bloggers on their own right. Hourihan began to infuse personal asides

between the hyperlinks posted on her blog in order to attract the attention of Kottke.

According to Mead (2002), the two dated briefly, but decided that their passions were

best put toward the creation of Blogger (p. 51). While the text focuses more on their

relationship than the creation of Blogger, the insinuation is that their relationship

influenced the type of content being published in blogs. By dropping hints of their

admiration for each other between links and commentary, they changed how the blog was

being used. This use signaled a shift in blog content; this instance—however

unintentional--could be regarded as a turn to the personal. The appearance of personal

asides in blog posts can be considered the first instance of what comes to be known as the

diary-style blog.

It is ironic that the original weblog community—the community which stressed

the functionality of the blog software and which was involved in producing blog

software—is credited as influential in the development of diary-style blogging. Unlike

the practice of blogging promoted by the original blogging community, which involved

logging hyperlinks, the diary-style blog rarely contains links. Moreover, the free

software available to blog, such as Blogger, unlike other software such as MetaFilter,

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[3]For example, publications such as Howard Rheingold's *The Virtual Community* (1992) in which experience of the author is used to describe the practice. These texts straddle the boundary of ethnography and autobiography.
[4]The two married in 2006 and recently had their first child. This personal information is included to emphasize the intimate nature of the public knowledge about these people.

does not require the inclusion of hyperlinks in the content. Therefore, when writing a

Blogger blog, the blogger is not required to post hyperlinks. Rebecca Blood (2002b), a

key figure among early blog writers, suggests that the popularity of the diary-style blog

could be attributed to a desire to emulate the creators of Blogger, specifically Hourihan

(p. 11). Blood articulates her distaste for the link-less blog in several of her texts (see

2002, 2004). For Blood, it is the presence of hyperlinks, which serve to make the blog

participatory media. Although this diversion is not integral to understanding the

literature published on the blog or the variances in blog style, it is an instance that

illustrates the value placed on different kinds of blogs by different groups.

The Role of the Blogger

Many bloggers and people who have contributed to the creation of the blog also

write about blogging. For example, Cory Doctorow the co-author of *Essential Blogging*

(2002) is likewise the co-editor of the blog *Boing Boing*. It is this sort of identification as

both blogger and blog theorist that is typical within early blog writings.[5] The authors of

We Blog: Publishing Online with Weblogs Paul Bausch, Matthew Haughey, and Meg

Hourihan, have each participated in the development of the blog and its social impact.

Paul Bausch helped to create the popular blogging software Blogger. Matthew Haughey

began the MetaFilter.com weblog community. Meg Hourihan is a co-founder of Pyra,

the company that supports Blogger. She also published the infamous *New Yorker* article

"You've got Blog: How to put your business, your boyfriend, and your life online" (cited

in Mead, 2002). Biz Stone worked at blog software companies Xanga and Blogger

(2002). The influence of Bausch, Hourihan and Stone is not simply technical, but social.

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[5]These bloggers include: Rebecca Blood, Jesse James Garrett, Jon Katz, J.D. Laisca, Meg Hourihan, Matthew Haghley, Paul Bauch and Cory Doctorow

They have not simply created the software, but influenced how the blog is perceived and used.

In addition, popular bloggers, such as former child actor Wil Wheaton, serve as representatives of the blogging community in the emergent literature. Wheaton, as mentioned, was not only interviewed in Biz Stone's first book, *Blogging: Genius Strategies for Instant Web Content* (2002), but also wrote the forward to *Who Let the Blogs Out* (Stone, 2004). Wheaton is also featured in *Blog!* (2005).[6] Blogger on blog insider comments offer a first hand account of the benefits of blogging. Bloggers such as Biz Stone are eager not only to promote blogging, but to share their experience of blogging. Since members of the original community participated in the creation of free blog software (Paul Bausch, Matthew Haughey and Meg Hourihan), their writings speak to the initial imagined intentions of the blog.

The blogger, while directing the conversation, is but one voice, one part of the conversation that is housed by the interface of one blog within a group of interconnected blogs. In the first stage of publications the role of the blogger in dialogue and as a part of a community is not discussed. Explaining the role of the blogger, how they communicate and how they share information, would serve to later lessen the general anxiety that seemed to erupt around the presence of news blogs and journalistic blogs. Also omitted is an account of how the concept for the blog interface and practice developed. With the exception of the brief history in *We've Got Blog* (2002), no definitive reference is made to the socio-cultural development of the blog.

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[6] In his interview he makes specific reference to the content of his blog and suggests that his popularity as a blogger is the result of his honesty and his humility, "I was a geek just like them" (p. 259). In posting details about his current struggles to find employment and support his family, readers of Wheaton's blog wrote him words of encouragement. Wheaton's experience as a blogger is illustrative of like-minded individuals encouraging one another.

The Second Stage of Writings on the Blog

As previously stated, dividing blog publications into stages is misleading because it suggests a hard break or severe change in the way the blog is approached and studied. However, the stages of publications on the blog can roughly be divided temporally. Certainly, within the second stage of literature there are some overlapping ideas. It is the emergence of academic interest in the blog—at least within the context of a literature review—that signals a point of departure. Where in the first stage of publications bloggers were the majority of authors, in the second stage the role of the blogging academic is more prominent. The texts written by bloggers during the first stage of publication such as Meg Hourihan's "You've got Blog: How to put your business, your boyfriend, and your life online", and Rebecca Blood's "Weblogs: A History and Perspective", are often referred to by non-blogger academics. Bloggers, such as Meg Hourihan, Rebecca Blood, Jesse James Barrett, and other bloggers who are referred to as the original blogger community, and their texts are interpreted by authors such as Himmer (2004), Miller and Shepherd (2004), as being representative of the greater blogger community. Furthermore, these texts have come to serve as kind of a canon of blog literature. Wherein the first stage of publications the blogger played a more prominent role, during the second stage of publications, the role of the blogging academic is more prominent. Jill Walker and Torill Elvira Mortensen are key figures who use their blogs to make their academic papers accessible to the public. Exemplary of the academic interest on blogs is *Into the Blogosphere: the rhetoric, community, and culture of weblogs*, a website maintained by the University of Minnesota. *Into the Blogosphere* takes a blog-inspired approach to the posting of articles; it allows for commenting and

dialogue between the commenter and author. Academic interest in blogs signaled a shift in the writing on blogs.

Unlike the approach taken by the original blog community and the academics, members of the mainstream media envisioned the blog as something special, even something revolutionary. In 2004 both *Time* magazine and ABC named the blogger the person of the year. For ABC TV, the practice of blogging offered a first hand perspective and extended political coverage. Likewise, for *Time* magazine, since the blogger can offer first hand reportage of events. Blogs were new. Bloggers were reporting on news and were news themselves.

In sum, during the second stage of writing on the blog the initial writing put forth by the original blogging community is expanded upon. The academic interest in the blog brought forth critical perspectives and examined the social ramifications of the technology; it re-defined the blog, determined who blogged and applied academic research methods (genre analysis, etc.) to study blogs. Further, members of the media espoused the commercial and political potentials of the technology. Though there was a differentiation in the approach to the blog between the academic and user discourse, neither should be considered less important. Thus, during this stage the discourse opens, academics become involved, and the idea of the blogging revolution is introduced.

Notes Toward a (Re)Definition of the Blog

If the initial publications on the blog work toward setting out a definition of what the blog is, then during the second stage of publications the definition is re-worked and further elaborated. The blog was initially defined as a technology, software or tool for web publishing. Technically, it is a reverse chronological listing of web activities

frequently updated. Jill Walker (2003) in her publication for the *Routledge Encyclopedia*

of Narrative Theory, defines it as such:

> A weblog, or *blog, is a frequently updated website
> consisting of dated entries arranged in reverse
> chronological order so the most recent post appears first
> (see temporal ordering). Typically, weblogs are published
> by individuals and their style is personal and informal.
> Weblogs first appeared in the mid-1990s, becoming
> popular as simple and free publishing tools became
> available towards the turn of the century. Since anybody
> with a net connection can publish their own weblog, there
> is great variety in the quality, content, and ambition of
> weblogs, and a weblog may have anywhere from a handful
> to tens of thousands of daily readers.

Within the continuum of genres from confessional reflective diaries to links dealing with

a particular topic, blog genres are primarily text based. However, at this time new visual

genres began to develop: photoblogs and videoblogs or vlogs.[7]

With the ease of publishing and availability of free software, blogging began to

converge with other practices. Genre studies were applied in order to differentiate

between the kinds of blogs emerging (Walker, 2003; Miller and Shepard, 2003; Himmer,

2004, Curtain, 2004; Blood, 2004; and, Scheidt and Wright, 2004). Adapting methods of

genre study is problematic when approaching the blog because they seek common or

"repeated gestures" (Miller and Shepherd, 2003) and fixed characteristics. The blog, on

the other hand, has been described as resistant to commoditization (Himmer, 2004), a

moving target (Miller and Shepherd, 2004), and queer (Curtain, 2004). Curtain (2004)

argues that the blog is the reconstruction of genres, and as a result it challenges

assumptions about the blogosphere as it advances.

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[7]Currently other platforms such as the Tumblr exist which are hyperlink driven and do not encourage
commentary.

In spite of the challenges to differentiating between the various uses and purposes of blogging, genres are still used to delineate between kinds of blogs. Miller and Shepherd (2004) suggest three determining factors for generic division: characterization, how we can differentiate the blog from other forms of writing; origin or ancestors, the practices that directly influenced the blog; and intentions, the topics of focus for the blogger. The convergence of topical content with blog style maintains Rebecca Blood's (2002) initial genres: the blog, the filter and the notebook. By synthesizing the approaches taken by Miller and Shepherd (2004) and Blood (2002b) developing styles and kinds of blogs can be divided by genre. For example, politics and journalism are typically disseminated in filter blogs or appear in blog blogs[8] with brief commentary. Other approaches to the blog include the notebook blog[9], which expanded to become used for various kinds of lifestyle blogging such as the self-reflective blog and craft blogs (see Kitzmann, 2003; McNeill, 2003; Roberts-Miller, 2004 and others).[10] Publishing webzines or ezines using blog software also began to emerge.[11] Thus, while the blog software determines the way in which the information posted is organized, within that structure various approaches can be taken.

The convergence of topical content with blog style maintains Blood's (2002) initial genres: the blog, the filter and the notebook. Politics and journalism are typically disseminated in filter blogs or appear in blog blogs with brief commentary. The notebook blog expanded to become more self-reflective and began to be compared to the diary (Kitzmann, 2003). The popularity of this use was reflected in popular magazine

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[8]Blood (2002b) describes blog blogs as containing only condensed and brief writing
[9]Blood (2002b) describes the notebook blog as focusing on the writer's inner world.
[10]The popularity of this use was reflected in popular magazine articles (see Barenblat, 2004; Sohn, 2004).
[11]Blog-zines that are presently circulating include: *The Sneeze Half* zine, half blog (www.thesneeze.com) and *Boing Boing* (www.boingboing.net), a culture and technology zine that is co-edited by Cory Doctorow.

articles (see Barenblat, 2004). In addition, skills sets such as summary, paraphrase, the development of voice, and the simplicity of the software made blogging applicable for educational purposes (Priebe, Nichols, Brooks, 2004). In sum, although the blog software determines the formatting of content, the format can be adapted to suit various styles of content.

The different functions and uses of the blog were validated depending on the bias and discipline of the author. Content, thus, becomes a kind of currency. For example, the hype of the blogging revolution emphasized the blog as a tool for gathering information, and thus, it emphasized the link-driven blog. This is not to suggest that only the media have framed the blog in a particular way. As Torill Elvira Mortensen (2004) argues, impositions are also a dilemma for scholarly research particularly because for an "object to be worthy of study, it needs to flatter a cultured taste, and not a barbaric one" (p. 2). The biases of the authors will be noted while navigating blog literature.

The Blogging Revolution?

Unlike the approach taken by the early blog writers (Blood, 2000, 2002; Staufer, 2002) and the academics (Mortensen, 2004; Roberts-Miller, 2004), members of the mainstream media and had envisioned the blog as something special, something revolutionary (Kline and Sullivan, 2002; Burstein, 2005; Hewitt, 2005). Media hype suggested that suddenly the blog threatened to change *everything*. As an emergent technology, it was a tool that could be obtained free of charge and was easy to use. As a mode of knowledge sharing it filtered and published information in a condensed, orderly fashion. However, the strength of blog, at least socio-politically, was that of the blogger. The blogger, as a citizen journalist, whomever they may be, can broadcast information

outside of media channels that are otherwise dominated by conglomerates. The blogging revolution was supposed to have been the uprising of the impassioned individual to report on current social and political events.

The coming of the citizen journalist was widely discussed. In a *Wired* magazine article entitled "The Blogging Revolution", Andrew Sullivan (2002) argues that in addition to the democratizing of online publication, allowing anyone to seize the means of publishing, blogs are powerful because they are the writings of an individual. David Kline and Dan Burstein (2005) echo this sentiment by emphasizing the voice of the individual: "The only difference now is that everyone has finally gotten one" (p. 252). For Sullivan, this voice, the subjective articulations of an unknown person, are "more in touch with our current sensibility (p. 2)"- a sensibility that has grown increasingly dubious of mainstream media. The assumed subjectivity of the blog does not position it as *trustworthy*, but rather implies that its fallibility is an inherent part of its characterization. The fallibility of the blog is attributed to the individual behind the blog.

The individual's ability to blog about current events as they are happening in addition to being able to gather information online, thus shifts the power dynamic and expectations of both news reportage and news gathering. Kline and Burstein (2005) suggest that the development of the blog signals the coming of the 'citizen journalist' (p. 239). Unlike traditional modes of news media, Kline and Burstein note, few bloggers actually gather and report the news. Rather, the blogger gathers information from traditional resources then offers remarks (p. 24). Bloggers collect and combine information and perspectives from many sources, including other blogs; they offer a "meta-view" of current events, providing an edited version of the news (O'Brien 2004).

Unlike the journalist proper, the blogger who shares information is simply collecting—logging—information.

In addition to the distinct role of the journalist blogger as a collector of data, Sullivan (2002), O'Brien (2004), Kline and Burstein (2005), and Herring, Kouper, Scheidt and Wright (2004) emphasize seizing the means of production. The blog is a direct publication from blogger to audience. Blogging "bypasses" editors looking for a certain kind of story, publishers seeking to push a particular venture, and advertisers who influence the editors and owners (Sullivan, 2002). As Herring et al. note, one of the most attractive things about the blog is that the bloggers "retain ultimate control over the blog's content" (p. 6). The content is posted with only the intentions of the blogger in mind, free of influence and pressure from external sources. The citizen journalist, despite the moniker, thus typically provides an overview of already circulating information, rarely providing first hand reportage, from their own 'editorial' perspective. Thus, the blog's content is not constricted by the editorial process, but is the direct intention of the blogger.

In addition to reforms of political discourse and journalistic practices, Hugh Hewitt (2005) extends the revolution to include business practices: "No matter what you do or who you are, the information delivery systems in the United States have just experienced a revolution" (pg. x). Written from the perspective of a business executive, this text makes reference to the changing role of the media as a result of the presence of the blog, and how this change can impact business, specifically, the marketing of products.

The power of the blog, for the revolution, was to empower the individual to disseminate information outside of mainstream media channels. Blogs are interactive and interconnected; they are a medium for dialogue between bloggers and readers, readers with other readers, and bloggers with other bloggers and *their* readers (O'Brien, 2004, p. 3). In the software lies the potential for a kind of communication revolution; however, it requires human efforts to bring it to fruition. The content of the blog is the voice of one blogger. While blogging, as a new mode of communication and political information dissemination, was well received, it was unclear as to who was choosing to participate in online politics. It was particularly unclear if these individuals were exemplary of the rest of the population. Richard Davis (2005), in his discussion of online politics, argues that rather than making claim to the internet as the coming to fruition of direct democracy, it should instead be examined as a public space that contains conversations which may not be representative of the entire internet, let alone the entire population (Davis, 2005). Online political citizens, or OPCs as O'Brien calls them, who engage in political discourse and online discussion groups exert a disproportionate influence[12]. As bloggers, these OPCs lead discussions and filter news. Since "blogging is all about what *one* person has to say" (O'Brien, 2004, p. 201), the content of their blogs signal to the media the concerns of the online public. This is exemplified in televised newscasts by the oft-employed phrase: "let's see what the bloggers are saying." Thus, despite the popularity of the blog format, the circulation of information tended to remain within circles that were already seeking out the information.

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[12]In context with O'Brien's line of inquiry it would be advantageous to examine whether blogs have encouraged political interest in people who are typically apathetic toward politics.

Claims, such as Andrew Sullivan's, of the blogging revolution are reminiscent of the claims that the internet would be the great democratic medium (see Barlow, 1996). However, the emergence of the blog did not simply divide old and new media, but put into question the balance of power over the influence of public opinion. Jane B. Singers' (2003) probing article, "Who are these guys?", outlines the threat that online journalists or news bloggers pose to professional journalism. The presence and activity of the online journalist pose a threat to the journalists' presumed exclusive influence over the assemblage and reportage of information to the public. Singer (2003) argues that the journalistic skills, tasks and values are being made suspect, in addition to the role of the journalist and what they do as "knowledgeable, ethical and autonomous professionals" (p. 147). The threat is present because there is no requisite skill set for journalists, and as Singer suggests, professional education is as much a socialization process as it is a marketing tool (p. 150). The blogger thus poses a threat to the journalistic practice. Blogging allows for the "passionate outsider" (Carroll, 2004), the non-journalist, the bystander, to offer their personal account of events. News and information blogging is based on values such as immediacy, transparency, interconnectivity, and proximity to events (Carroll, 2004); values such as inclusiveness and community, participation and deliberation, free and unfiltered expression of personal publishing, run counter to the values of traditional journalism. For online journalism to be incorporated into the community of mass media it is necessary that either the role of the journalist be reconsidered or how online journalism is carried out requires better evaluation. Jason Gallo (2004) argues for the infiltration and integration of the blog as a medium for journalists. With regard to the struggle over news representation Christine Boese (2004)

likens the power struggle over meaning between textual creators and fan cultures. For Blood (2003) blogging should not be understood as a new form of journalism, but rather as a participatory medium that facilitates interaction. In each case, authors are indicating a power struggle over information dissemination and the individuals validated to disseminate information.

Unlike the immediate change that is implied by most of the writing, the so-called blogging revolution for Gallo (2004) is more of a slow progression toward blogging uptake, and the assimilation of interactive media. The blog revolution is happening under a backdrop of media-controlled ownership; multiple channels of media are falling under the same control and ownership. In addition to the corporate media strong hold over information, according to Gallo (2004), there is a unidirectional flow of information from the reporter to the recipient. Positive effects of the blog include the creation of a real-time virtual feedback loop that breaks down traditional barriers between journalists and the public (Gallo, 2004). The feedback from the public serves to establish greater press accountability. Where messengers of the blog revolution assume that news and opinions are a product of the media industry and the blog can return objectivity, for Gallo, a true blog revolution remains a future phenomenon at best (2004).

Even though instances of people coming together for a political cause as a result of blogging interactions have happened, as Carroll (2004) notes, the traditional media seemed to consistently undermine the Dean campaign, and thus the potential of the blog. Proponents of the blogging revolution stress the blog's ability to voice political concerns. *The Blog for America*, Howard Dean's official blog during the 2004 American

Presidential candidacy, exemplified the efficacy of their claims. Online supporters of Howard Dean raised over $45 million in online donations (Kline and Burstein, 2005).

The blog which is exemplary of first hand reportage is the internationally recognized blog *Where is Raed?* authored by the Baghdad Blogger, Salam Pax. Pax's rise to fame came with the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Pax brought political discourse to a personal level in his, what would otherwise be referred to as, diary-style blog. His blog described his everyday experiences; the music he listened to, the food he ate and his worries about not being able to get in touch with family members and friends. Pax offered a voice that people could come to recognize, a voice that articulated the reality of the Iraqi experience. The consequences of political decisions were a subtext to the daily experience. The voice of the blogger served not only as an additional voice in news and journalistic coverage of events, but as an adjunct to the discourse, an alternate perspective. This particular perspective was an attempt between friends to stay in contact. *Where is Raed?* quite literally chronicles his fear of not being able to find his friend.

The blog offered an alternative mode of disseminating information, one that runs counter to mainstream media and can be seized by the individual. The convergence of the blog with other already existing means of disseminating information and media practices (celebrity gossip, etc.), seemed to undermine these other modes and legitimize the blog. The kinds of blogs that made up the revolution were mainly link-driven or filter-style blogs; blogs intended to sift through, categorize and relay information. According to a quantitative study of blogs, they constitute a minority of blogs (13%) (Herring, Kouper, Scheidt and Wright, 2004). The media focus on filter style blogs

because they are more newsworthy; however, it was the more personal blogs, the blogs of Howard Dean and Salam Pax, around which people rallied. It is necessary that the social domain be inscribed as part of the political domain.

The Blogging Public

The notion of the blogging revolution privileges blogs that are political or business related. The representation of blogs more broadly tended to focus on these kinds of blogs. In a content analysis of 16 articles from November 2002 to July 2003 Herring, Kouper, Scheidt and Wright (2004) found that not only were male bloggers mentioned more frequently, but that their names tend to be repeated in articles more often than female names. Males tend to maintain k-log and filter style blog. Since the content of these kinds of blogs deal specifically with newsworthy information about world events, they are more useful to journalists. Thus, media reportage tends to focus on male blogs specifically because of its usefulness to journalistic practices. The unfortunate result of this is the misrepresentation of the blogging phenomenon and a privileging of the minority.

The Perseus Study (2003), Guernsey (2002) and Orlowski (2003) determined that the majority of bloggers are women (Guernsey, 2002) and teenagers (Orlowski, 2003). If this is the case, then there is a discretion in the writing on the blog. In 2003 the Perseus Development Company conducted a survey "The Blogging Iceberg." The results of the survery determined that two thirds of public weblogs created with hosting services have not been updated within a two month period, and were thus considered "abandoned." The typical blog, they concluded, was written by a teenaged girl who updates her blog twice monthly in order to keep in touch with friends. Like an iceberg, the blogs that are

visible, or rather predominant, in the public eye are not exemplary of all blogs, and further, the majority of blogs are largely unseen. These unseen blogs, Graham Lampa (2004) agrees, are rarely linked to by other blogs, and they more closely resemble personal diaries rather than the classic link-commentary mode of blogging.[13]

Blogs are not only public, but create a public. Public discourse is a direct potential of the blog's design. The blog, as Blood (2003) describes, is a participatory medium. The comments section, for example, serves as a point of interaction between the blogger and their audience. Likewise, linking between blogs serves to unite bloggers and their audiences. The blog audience or participants are smaller publics. Mortensen (2004), Roberts-Miller (2004) and Baoill (2004) all refer to Habermas' notion of the public sphere in context with the blog.

For Mortensen (2004), the blogosphere is "rarely dominated by clear, touching prose, deep academic thinking or political debate" (p. 2); however, it nevertheless acts as a way of preparing or training for a broader political public sphere (2004). Similarly, Roberts-Miller (2004), from a semi-ethnographic approach, argues that blogs "facilitate the expressive public sphere and enclave based discourse. However, they neither preclude nor require good faith argumentation" (p. 1). The structure of the blog, for Roberts-Miller (2004), has the potential to maintain online debate and to attract likeminded people. What is problematic about the kind of discourse that the blog maintains is that the blogger is privileged because their text is at the center of the debate and they have the ability to edit any posted comments.

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[13]The presence of isolated discussions is not a recent phenomenon. Bulletin Board System were also often isolated groups.

Although the individual blogger may be at the center of debate within their own blog, they are part of a larger conversation between other blogs. Baoill (2004) adopts Habermas' notion of the public sphere, "the organized discussion among private people that tended to be on going" (p. 239), to assess the potential blog as a place for debate. The present formation of the blog relationship, he argues, prevents it from becoming a public sphere. These obstacles are the time commitment necessary to develop a reputation and to integrate oneself into online debate and the presence of A-list bloggers who maintain a strong influence and lead the discourse. Inclusivity, disregard of external rank and rational debate until a consensus is reached are Habermas' three tenets of the public sphere. While the blog, and the internet more generally, allow anonymous access *to* discourse, what Baoill (2004) does not address is that access to the internet is still bound socio-economically. It is my contention that Habermas' model of the public sphere is applicable to the blogophere. However, rather than referring to a larger public sphere, the discourse should be understood as happening within smaller groupings. Within these groupings either a geographical commonality or political commonality wherein bloggers, whose content reproduces a specific hegemonic or counter hegemonic position, engage in debate. Nancy Fraser, in her article, "Rethinking the Public Sphere" (1992), argues that for Habermas' model to be useful in studying actual existing democracy during the period of late capitalist development, then it must be re-worked. Multiple publics, rather than being read as a sign of fragmentation, have, according to Fraser's historiographic research, always existed. Further, smaller publics allow subordinated groups an arena for deliberation. By constituting alternative publics, what Fraser calls subaltern counterpublics, these individuals can formulate their identities,

interests and needs (p. 67). Enclave based discourse is possible within a single blog or between multiple blogs.

In order to locate and form identities, bloggers seek enclave-based discourse. The content of the blog is the result of the blogger's specific subjectivity and the arguments expressed are through this guise. Bloggers and blog readers choose to engage with blogs that they can relate to; they seek identification with others. Since readers seek out identification, Roberts-Miller (2004) argues, they are more interested in trivialities like dog stories than political debate. The personal is more *popular* than the political. It is important to note that identification, or, in other words, affinity with the blogger is sought. This affinity is a kind of recognition of mundane commonality such as the dog stories that Roberts-Miller (2004) mentions.

The Diary-Style Blog

Blogs that focus on everyday life and the trivial existence of their authors are the most popular and yet, the least discussed. The classification of this kind of blog is largely contested; however, it is mostly compared to the diary. The diary is a literary genre commonly understood to be a private and monologic text (McNeill, 2003, p. 27). As McNeill argues, "given the conventional understanding of the diary as a private form, a public online journal seems to many people an abomination, or at least a contradiction in terms" (p. 26). While the diary is typically intended only for the author, the blog is a public text for conversation and community. In terms of its venue, the diary is antithetical to the kind of blog in which everyday life is written about; however, their content and intention are similar. Blogging, thus, poses a challenge to the common understanding of the diary.

The diary-syle blog is an awkward figure that elicits confusion. Laurie McNeill (2003) suggests that she is "[ambivalent] about online journals...[confused] about 'how to bring one's literary' opinion to bear (p. 27)." In "Cher écran," Philippe Lejeune (2000) offers two possible responses to the presence of online journals: one can revel (s'extasier) in the possibilities for the genre that online production presents, one could also perceive the internet as being totally opposed to the conditions for developing a *journal intime* (cited in McNeill, 2003, p. 26). Likewise, Andreas Kitzmann (2003) argues that studying the diary-style blog evokes two approaches: either an adaptation of life-writing or a progression evolution. Thus, the new technology is celebrated or "a prior authentic mode of expression" is lamented (p. 1). Kitzmann's approach, however, pays close attention to the material and experiential conditions of self-documentation and how those conditions are more broadly related to what he deems "the phenomenon of material complexification". That is to suggest that Kitzmann's piece focuses on the relationship between human experience and technology, in particular how these relationships are articulated in four specific conditions: identity, privacy, reality and time.

The diary-style blog is being cast in the role of mediator between the external public domain and the interior space of the self. The content of the self-reflective blog deals with the trivialities of the blogger's life. Like a diary, it chronicles the experiences of the blogger, but publishes the writing online. The degree to which the blogger adds highly subjective and personalized writing on the blog contributes to writing them into being online. As Blood (2002) notes: "No matter how random or structured or impersonal a weblog may seem, each one, whatever its nature, provides for an intimate portrait of its maintainer, a portrait drawn over time. Random observations, selected link

diatribes- accumulated, these elements resolve into a mosaic revealing a personality, a self" (2002b, p. 30). While it has been acknowledged that people are choosing to blog about themselves, their personal experiences and everyday lives, members of the original blogger community argue that diary-style blogs are not blogs. Blood (2004), for example, argues that blogs without links are "are diaries, not weblogs; weblogs are about links". Despite the emphasis on the link by the original blogger community, blogs which contain self-reflective or diary-like information are still considered blogs because they use blog software to publish online.

Likewise developing the notion of the development of the self within the content of the blog, Joe Clark (quoted in Jarrett, 2004) uses the metaphor of technological extension. He uses the metaphor of technological extension, describing the blog as a form of exteriorized psychology: "It is a part of you, or of your psyche; while your titanium hip joint or pacemaker might bring technology inside of the corporeal you, a Weblog uses technology to bring the psychological you outside of itself". Like Clark, for Kitzmann the blog "is the closest we could come to achieving a mind/medium interface"(p. 4). This choice to interface, to create oneself for others to read, is a form of agency. Kitzmann's text is a call to action for new critical strategies that recognize technology as a thing in itself and strategies that recognize "the autonomy and the significance offered by the new material conditions of Web-based self-documentation" (p. 9). The conditions of self-documentation undertaken by bloggers need to be understood as being equivalent in experience to the conditions of self-documentation undertaken by diarists. The diary-style or self-reflective blog is not a new kind of diary. The venue of cyberspace, however, brings new possibilities to diary-keeping, it changes

its function from mere self-reflection to communication between individuals using the "stuff" of everyday life as catalyst. The conditions of self-documentation undertaken by bloggers need to be understood as being equivalent in experience to the conditions of self-documentation undertaken by diarists. The diary-style or self-reflective blog is not a new kind of diary. The venue of cyberspace, however, brings new possibilities to diary-keeping; it changes its function from mere self-reflection. This use of the blog needs to be understood as a unique form, a practice in its own right.

The blog's venue, cyberspace, presents opportunities not available in material conditions of self-reflection like diary-keeping. McNeill (2003) and Nardi, Schiano and Gumbrecht (2004) suggest that diary-style blogging is not simply diary-keeping, but a conversation. For McNeill (2003), not only did the blogger recognize that they were writing in a public forum, but sometimes they even asked for the advice and opinion of other bloggers (p. 35). The presence of conversation cues such as salutations, advice giving and invitations would not appear in diaries (Nardi et all, 2004). As Nardi, Schiano, and Gumbrecht (2004) conclude, "bloggers aren't letting 900 million people read their diary, but they are standing before 900 million, sometimes with an attitude of indifference, sometimes with the hope of reaching out to new people in the ever-expanding blogosphere" (2004). Kitzmann (2003), Nardi, Schiano, and Gumbrecht (2004) and McNeill (2003) all agree that diary-style or self-reflective blogging is a form of agency. To blog is the choice to share information about yourself in order to interact with others.

Community

    The blog is not simply a tool for writing about the self or conveying information that one finds interesting—it also allows for social interaction. Blogging, including and especially diary-style reflective blogging, is a social activity (Nardi, Schiano and Gumbrecht, 2004). Not only is blogging a social activity, but it also expresses the need and desire for community (Miller and Shepard, 2004; Scheidt and Wright, 2004). If blogging is a social activity, then how can its socializing be understood? Writings on blogging and community have determined that socializing occurs within a blog (Blanchard, 2004) and between blogs (Efimova, Hendrick and Anjewierden, 2005; Nardi, Schiano and Gumbrecht, 2004). In addition, how the format of the blog creates a distinct kind of community (Blood, 2004; Blanchard, 2004), the formation of relationships (Herring, Kouper, Paolillo, Scheidt, Tyworth, Welsch, Wright and Yu, 2005; Tseng, Tatemura, Wu, 2005), and norm formations within communities have been studied.

    Sites of communication are not communities. Communications sites or virtual settlements, as defined by Quentin Jones (1997), are a precursor to a virtual community, determined by the ability of a medium to provide people with a place to interact. Communities are not just settlements, but virtual places that evoke feeling. As Howard Rheingold (1992) articulates, "virtual communities are social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace". In order to determine if the blog can act as both a settlement and a community, Anita Blanchard (2004) examines *The Julie/Julia Project*, a cooking blog. The blog, she determines, does have the characteristics of a virtual settlement as the software allows for interaction and

participation. However, the interface of the individual blog displays only the interaction that is taking place for the blogger and their audience, an interaction that is asynchronous.

The individual blogger is one voice in a greater conversation. This conversation occurs not only in the comments section of the blog, but *between* blog postings, blogrolls and trackbacks. Hourihan (2004), Blood (2004), and Blanchard (2004) each examine how the nuances of the blog software determine relationships between bloggers. Blood (2004) and Blanchard (2004) both make significant contributions to how the format of the blog creates a distinct kind of community. Blanchard (2004) notes that the comments section is important in community development; the comments section allows for participation and interaction. The ability to participate in discussion is the key difference between the static webpage that discloses only the interests of the author, and the more dynamic blog, which allows for discussion and argumentation. A blogroll, which *The Julie/Julia Project* did not have, or hyperlinking between blogs could have brought audiences from other blogs. Hourihan (2004) stresses that the hyperlinking between blogs, either in the blogroll or the in the body of the post, "creates the [connection] that binds". Interactive blogrolls connecting blogs with highly active comments' sections may create communities of bloggers who share an audience. If this interlinking of blogs develops around particular topics, it is possible that a sense of community may develop and be shared *between* these interactive blogs. This will decrease the dependence of the virtual community on any one blog author and increase the chances of viability for the virtual blog community as a whole.

In addition to the blogroll and comments, Blood (2004) stresses the role of trackback and the permalink in making the blog a participatory medium. The permalink

is a distinct url for each blog post. Thus, when bloggers were referencing one another rather than simply making reference to the entire body of the blog, they could target specific entries. Trackback, which was introduced by the Moveable Type platform in 2001, is a reciprocal link between blogs. If, for example, a blogger references another blog entry by using a link in the body of their post, the trackback will allow the referenced blogger to know that they have been linked to. Trackback serves as an invisible link from the referenced to the referencer.

Like Blanchard, Carolyn Wei (2004) also examines hobby-based blogging communities; however, she focuses on the expectations and norms of communities that do not have a shared space, clear boundaries or clear membership. Her intention to is create a method with which to understand these looser, more open, groups of interacting individuals to understand how they form relationships and how these relationships are signified. The results of her work show that norms develop organically, in a grassroots fashion; the expectations of membership are created 'bottom up' through their social interactions, and not predetermined by members in a position of power. Similar content and shared values are the basis for these blog communities. Likewise, Kumar, Novak, Raghaven and Tomkins (2003) argue that forming communities through blogs is not a random process, but an indication of shared interests. A hyperlink or rather linking between blogs symbolizes a social connection.

If it is understood that linking indicates a relationship between blogs, then Efimova, Hendrick and Anjewierden (2005), Nardi, Schiano and Gumbrecht (2004) and Tseng, Tatamara, Wu (2005) establish methods that use linking patterns to study community formation. Belle L. Tseng, Junichi Tatemura, and Yi Wu (2005) use

'mountain views', a visual map that represents the 'popular' or most linked to blogs, to represent the formation of blog communities. These mountain views map out who produces information and who simply links to their blog. Herring, Kouper, Paolillo, Scheidt, Tyworth, Welsch, Wright and Yu (2005) likewise examined linking patterns between blogs, only to determine that not all blogs are interconnected. Exploring other modes of signifying relationships, Efimova, Hendrick and Anjewierden (2005) refine research methods based on community norms, practices and artifacts that are articulated through links. More specifically, they use meme paths, weblog reading patterns, linking patterns, weblog conversations, indicators of events and "tribe" marks, group spaces, and blogger directories to refine communities. While linking indicates a relationship between two blogs, Efimova, Hendrick and Anjwerdien (2005) argue that there are also alternative modes of signifying relationships, which poses a challenge to researchers. These alternative modes have yet to be researched. Unlike the virtual communities of the past, blogging software has allowed for dispersed communities that are not centralized or localized on one specific page, but are proliferated across many web pages.

In sum, during the second stage of blog writings the blog's social and political influences are noted. The writing during the second stage most importantly indicated a dissonance between the representation and usage of the blog. Although the blogging revolution stressed the commercial and political implications of the blog, personal blogging is more popular than the political. If during the first stage of writing the blog software was described, then it is during the next stage in which the practical consequences of the software are evident. The software has allowed for both publishing and relationships to take on a new formation. Unlike the communities of the past,

blogger communities are not localized on one site, but indicated on blog sites by trackbacked hyperlinks. Relationships between bloggers can be indicated not only by the sharing of a space, but through a connecting hyperlink.

Though the implications of a possible blogging revolution are alluded to, largely this stage recognizes the potential information flows made possible by blogging. The blog need not be classified as either an emergent technology to bring democracy or an imposing form to re-organize current structures, but can instead be approached as a conduit to interact online. Richard Kahn and Douglas Kellner (2004; 2005) approach new media in general, and new social software in particular, as aiding in the facilitation of social movements. Kahn and Kellner note that the political potentials of social software like the blog may promote a revolution of the everyday life (2005, p. 76). New media and blogs "make possible a reconfiguring of politics and culture and a refocusing on everyday life" (2004, p. 93). While the focus of their analysis is on the success of ordinary individuals to be mobilized through political blogs, Kahn and Kellner argue that the "success of blogging should not be judged on solely on whether it generates obvious political effects" (2004, p. 92). The blog, in this instance, has enabled ordinary individuals to become politically active. The efficacy of the blogging revolution is not the instant publication of political content, but the potential for ordinary individuals to participate in politics. The efficacy of the blog as a democratic tool is the ability to produce social channels and to openly socialize. The access and production of social networks is equally a component of the 'blogging revolution.'

The blog is a simple to use and typically free online software publisher. It allows ordinary individuals to disseminate information. Self-reflective blogging is an emergent

online practice that has been under-represented and under-theorized. Additionally, affect as a consequence of blogging or blog participation has not been addressed. In the subsequent chapters this thesis will approach the practice of self-reflective blogging as an affective mode of conducting interpersonal relationships.

The personal and the communal, the social reasons for blogging, have been reduced to the presentation of the self and the desire for communication. To examine blogging from this perspective overlooks the pleasures of blogging: the catharsis of writing and affects of interacting. Indeed, as Torill Mortensen (2004) asserted it is problematic to describe the sensual effects of blogging. However, the relationships articulated on the screen are not indicative of the full extent to which the blog is effective. Lacking is an articulation of the affects of blogging. Indeed, blogging is not interesting because it is an effective way to communicate, but because it is effective in conveying communication that is affective.

Chapter 2
Glimpsing into Cyberspaces and Self-Reflection

A strange arrogance compels us not only to possess the other, but also to penetrate his secret, not only to be desired by him, but to be fatal to him, too. The sensuality of behind-the-scenes power: the art of making the other disappear. That requires an entire ritual.

Jean Baudrillard (1981)

Since the blog is a form of social software, the terms "diary-style blog" or "online journal" are problematic.[14] These terms connote a kind of self-intention as the diary and journal in their *purest* forms are intended for the writer alone.[15] Like the diary and the journal, the author of the blog is identical to its protagonist. Further, the diary, journal and blog are similar in that the diary or journal is a book of days—*jour*—that reconstructs events from the past or recent past in which aspects of the author are typically denied or celebrated (Lejeune, 1989, Smith & Watson, 2001; Freeman, 1993). Unlike these literary forms, the blog, due to its venue, is public. The blog is public, and is intended not only to be read, but also discussed.

In order to move away from the connotations of the diary and journal, this kind of blog will be referred to as the self-reflective blog. Although the conversational elements of the blog have been acknowledged with reference to the diary-style blog (Kitzmann, 2003; Nardi et all, 2004; Roberts-Miller, 2004; Scheidt & Wright, 2004), this term will be introduced as a way to re-frame thinking on the practice of writing about everyday life in blogs as a way to produce affect in everyday life. Self-reflective indicates the author's focus on what Lejeune would refer to as the story of the personality or of the self (1989).

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[14]Diary and journal tend to be used interchangeably through texts such as McNeill (2003).
[15]The term pure diary is taken from autobiographical studies to suggest a text which is intended for the author alone.

This term does not attempt to locate a fixed or knowable self, but rather refers to the larger set of discursive practices in which a social subject is constituted.

The self-reflective blog exists at a crossroads between reflective practices, life writing and online social software. The conditions of self-documentation undertaken by bloggers are equivalent in experience to the conditions of self-documentation undertaken by diarists. However, unlike other modes of self-reflection, the blog—due to its venue— has the potential for communing with others. As Mortensen (2004) notes: "While weblogs have many non-digital predecessors, blogs cannot live outside of the computer. They are ergodic texts, and demand the assistance of technology in order to be created and used". In order to elucidate the uniqueness of the self-reflective blog as a self-reflective practice that is posted in cyberspace, this chapter contains a genealogy of online social interactions and self-reflective practices. This approach is taken in order to supplement the currently existing research on the blog. It will isolate moments in online and self-reflective practices by displacing them from their cultural and historical moment in order to locate the labors and efforts undertaken to socialize.

Method

This genealogy is not an attempt to draw a linear history, but is rather a way to locate instances, cultural practices and artifacts that assist to illuminate the self-reflective blog. Specifically, this genealogy will shed light on the relationship between the practice of self constitution and self-reflection, and the blog, not only as a practice of writing, but as a communicative venue. Further, this genealogy is not a quest for origins or an attempt to ascribe a beginning to the blog, nor is it a way of creating a consistent narrative for the blog. As Foucault articulates:

Genealogy does not pretend to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of forgotten things; its duty is not to demonstrate that the past actively exists in the present...it is to discover that truth or being does not lie at the roots of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents (Foucault, 1984, p. 81).

It is precisely what lies beyond the accidents and incidents of practice that is of interest. Thus, the following is not a *history*, but a displacement of practices. It removes practices from their context and isolates them. Once isolated, the practices are described. A history, in this particular case would not suit the work, as it would imply a linear progress and not bring to bear the often concurrent developments that occurred in the development of cyberspace. The genealogy will serve to locate instances in both online and offline practices wherein efforts have been undertaken to constitute the self in order to commune and interact with others.[16] Further, this genealogical analysis affords evidence toward the evolutionary—not *revolutionary*—status of the blog and frames the productive actions associated with this particular set of socio-technical practices as a kind of biopolitical production (Hardt & Negri, 2005).[17] The blog is the newest incarnation of computer-mediated communication. However, it is preceded by a history of successful, often parallel—operating at the same time— protocols and various practices of self-reflection and life writing.

In order to best illustrate the how subject of the blog operates, Chapter 3 includes screenshots of various blogs. These screenshots are used as exemplars of various blog softwares and the interfaces that they allow. As Torill Mortensen (2004) noted in relation

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[16]The relationship between online and offline practices is noteworthy; it recognizes the continuity of practices and suggests that computer-mediated practices are not divorced from material everyday practices.

[17] Biopolitical production is not limited to waged labor, but is inclusive of all creative work (Hardt & Negri, 2005, p. 105); it produces not only goods, but also relationships and social life (Hardt & Negri, 2005, p. 108). Unlike Foucault's biopower, it is a part of society and is not state directed. Falling within the distinction of biopolitical production is affective labor. Affective labor is biopolitcal production because involves producing affects, relationships and cooperation among families and communities. Thus, it directly produces social relations and forms of life.

to blogging, the sensations behind choices are often left unidentified; this is likewise the case with the selected blogs. The written and posted content of the blog is inconsequential for the purpose of analysis, and thus the choice of blogs does not effect the research conducted. The sensational content of the reading experience—coincidentally the guiding principle of this research—became the motivator for choosing the samples; the blogs have been selected for their affective relation to the researcher.

Contextualizing the Blog as a Practice Conducted in Cyberspace.

The internet is a series of interconnected computer-mediated networks which serves to create a virtual space used to share information and communicate. The internet, as a domain of interaction, has its own particular history. The internet, as a conceptual space, is not a domain that can be characterized by a given function; it is not strictly political, economic, or social. The political, economic and social domains occur within webpages and groups of webpages that are only differentiated from one another by a pretense, by an overt gesturing in their content. As was articulated in the literature review, the blog, for example, can house political, commercial or personal information. In order to differentiate between the purpose for writing or the kind of material present, the format and the presentation of material are not as important as the content. The format of the protocol dictates how the information is presented, but it does not dictate who has access to the medium, who attempts to socialize or the kinds of relationships that are formed. Within the content of the website, it is necessary to not only distinguish between the protocol and how the protocol maintains social relationships, but also distinguish between the intended and the actual use of the protocol.

The ARPANET was the first incarnation of the internet. It was developed by the United States Department of Defense in an attempt to create a network for sharing information. ARPA, the Advanced Research Projects Agency, was created as a response to the Soviet space program, specifically, the launch of the Sputnik (Hauben, 1997). Further, it was rumored to have grown out of an older project for a communication, command, and control network that could survive a nuclear attack without a central control (Rheingold, 1993). Thus, the communication network was created to share military information. UCLA had the first node non-military node attached to the ARPANET. By the mid 1970's several universities, including the University of Southern California and Stanford, also had nodes. Since ARPANET was intended only to share research and information, any informal socializing that resulted was not anticipated.

Mailing lists were created less than a year after the ARPANET became operational. The mailing list was a method of communicating by posting a comment and listing responses under the post in chronological order. In addition to the military research that was being shared, one of the most popular and earliest mailing lists was SF-LOVERS or science fiction lovers, a forum for fans of science fiction (Reid, 1994). The socializing that took place on the ARPANET occurred alongside the research. More interestingly, the sharing the non-military or research related information developed spontaneously.

Thus, computer networks were initially limited to the military and universities. According to Elizabeth Reid's (1994) account, three students at the University of North Carolina developed a communicative protocol known as USENET. These students wanted to design a better system for disseminating information between multiple people.

The original version of USENET was set up by a network between Duke and the University of North Carolina (Harrison, 1997). USENET was a worldwide network of cooperating computer sites that exchange public user messages, known as *articles* or *postings*, which were arranged and stored by subject divisions or newsgroups. Conversations on USENET were asynchronous; one posting had the potential to receive multiple responses at a later time. Therefore, it was not necessary that people were online at the same time. The structure of the posting is very similar to the post and response format found on the blog. However, unlike USENET, responses to the individual blog posts are only visible if the response link is selected.[18]

Unlike other networks, USENET was and still is voluntary and cooperative in nature. There is no central governing board, and thus all the free software used in the daily operation of USENET had been written and maintained solely by volunteers (Reid, 1994, p. 4). These volunteers were enthusiasts who partook in USENET for enjoyment in their leisure time, rather than for business or commercial reasons. USENET does not require the internet, as it was created using modems and dial-up telephone line and can be adapted to just about any communication medium (ex. satellite). USENET exemplifies the results of commonly interested individuals laboring not for profit, but for a leisure activity.

The bulletin board system was also run voluntarily by individuals. Much like USENET, the bulletin board system, also known as a conferencing system, is a form of asynchronous information sharing. The bulletin board system is organized much like a physical bulletin board; the postings are listed in a linear organized fashion on the screen. Like the communication on the mailing list, responses to posts appear chronologically

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[18] The format of the responses will be further addressed in Chapter 3.

underneath the initial posting. However, bulletin board systems were on different servers that need to be dialed into. Most bulletin board systems were run as a hobby and typically offered free of charge by systems operators. However, since the server had to be dialed into, and because servers could be located at great distances from the individual, long distance charges to post messages were rather expensive. Thus, it was common to have geographically localized bulletin board systems. Members of localized bulletin board systems would often gather to interact face-to-face. The members of these online groups knew each other not only through their interactions online, but also in person. The same can be said of bloggers, who despite their seeing their friends in face-to-face interactions, will still read each other's blogs. Thus, interactions online were typically adjunct to non-mediated interactions.[19]

While the a majority of the content shared online was related to research, hobbies and lifestyle interests, programs soon became outfitted to support another leisure activity: gaming. The games were typically role playing games in which users participated in text-based virtual realities. These text-based virtual realities are also referred to as MUSH, multi-user shared hallucination, or, MUD, multi-user domain or multi-user dungeon. In 1979 Roy Trubshaw used the name MUD when writing a multi-user dungeon at the University of Essex, England (Reid, 1994). The term dungeon is taken from the development of dungeons and dragons players, and other fantasy role-playing gamers, who began to congregate and play online. The software program consisted of objects, accepts connections from other users on a computer network and provided each user with access to the database (Reid, 1994). This access broader range of access is important to note as in North America those with access to cyberspace were computer

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[19]   This was earlier demonstrated with Toril Mortensen's blog.

enthusiasts, university students, members of ARPA and the United States government, and some commercial groups. Text based virtual realities were a way for members of these groups to make friends get together with likeminded individuals to 'play' online.

Within the MUD, text served not only to create an imagined space, but the words chosen by the user performed and acted in their stead. Reid stresses the importance of the user's *willingness* to treat the imaginings as though they were real; "It is not the technological interface itself that sustains the willingness of users to treat this simulated environment as if it were real. Rather it is each user's imagination, but mediated between the user's imagination and their communication to others of what they have imagined" (1994, p. 3). The MUD is not just a technical construct, but a social construct that is meant to facilitate both the user's imagination and communicate their imaginings to others. Unlike the other forms of communion that related back to the user's everyday life, the experience of online virtual games requires imagination and the suspension of reality. Simulation and exaggeration is assumed, expected and necessary for participation.

Despite the simulation or *unreality* of the MUD, players often expressed attachment to or affection for other players. In her seminal text, *Life on the Screen*, Sherry Turkle (1995) argues that MUDS are not simply fantasy games, but ways of constructing a self-identity and communing with others.[20] For Turkle, the MUD is both a virtual game parlor and new form of community (1995, p. 11). Thus, the social relationships and communities that developed in MUDs were independent of a relationship to the person's everyday life.

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[20] Turkle's (1995) main area of research is how the MUDs enabled not only player participation through text, but how the self and new selves, as a result of cyberspace's anonymity, are constructed through the text and social interaction involved in the MUD.

Unlike the emergent group or communal communication of the early 1980s, internet relay chat was a synchronous chat mode in which the participants involved chatted together in real time. Several people can communicate in the same window at the same time and as a result all text is being viewed by all the viewers. While internet relay chat was typically used for group conversations, discussion forums were also popular on channels that allowed for one-to-one communication. Wellman and Guila (1997) note the presence of "topic-oriented collective discussion groups", whose discussions range from politics to sexual fantasy groups. For both internet relay chat and Usenet newsgroups, the communities can be very narrow-existing only to process information. MSN messenger, ICQ, and Yahoo messenger are derivatives of internet relay chat. However, in the case of these recent developments, software is locally downloaded, and the user has the option to choose with whom they wish to interact. Gumbrecht (2004), in her research on the blog as a personal protected space, inquired as to her informant's preferred mode of online communication. Instant messaging was specifically avoided because it required an immediate response, whereas the blog was favoured specifically because it did not demand an immediate response. This kind of avoidance suggests that people have preferences for different kinds of computer mediated communication because of the protocol specificities. The features of the software design thus influence the kinds of computer-mediated communication people choose to engage in.

While the aforementioned communicative modes USENET, the bulletin board system, multi-user domains and internet relay chat, each involved only computer enthusiasts and hobbyists. It was not until the installation of a public network that others contributed to the communication. The TCP/IP information packet switching technology

had already been developed in 1978 with the ARPA project (Computer History, 2006).[21] However, it was not being widely put to use. By the mid 1980's a distinction had emerged between the internet and the Internet. The internet was any network using TCP/IP while the Internet was the fully public, United States subsidized network that was made up of many linked networks all running the TCP/IP protocols. In other words, the key difference was that that unlike the servers of the bulletin board systems and USENET that had to be specifically dialed into, TCP/IP brought the servers together to create a large open information network. The inauguration of the packet switching technology is significant because it changed the internet from being private to public (Hafner and Lyon, 1996, p. 244). TCP/IP opened access to anyone interested in purchasing the required technology to participate.[22]

Despite the national access to computer networks, some groups retained their regional access. One such group was the WELL (the Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link). In his 1993 article "Small Town on the Internet Highway System", Cliff Figallo (1993), an EFF (Electronic Frontier Foundation) member, reflects on the WELL as the joint venture of Larry Brilliant and Steward Brand, who united to form a regional (not national) computer conferencing network. For Howard Rheingold, a key advocate of the virtual community, people who were looking for a grand collective project in cyberspace flocked to the WELL. Howard Rheingold's wife describes it as "a bunch of intelligent misfits [who] have found each other, and [are now] having a high old time" (Rheingold, 1993).

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[21]Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol is a series or *layers* of software coding that links various networks to create the world wide web.
[22]It is misleading to speak of the internet as being completely open due to the cost of the technology—an economic barrier—required for participation.

The time commitment that people were making suggested that the WELL was not simply about being online, but enjoying spending time online with other people.

The personal home page is the most similar to the blog of all previous communicative modes. Like the blog, the personal home page was typically used to produce an identity online. However, the software used for the personal home page was still HTML based, thus the content was more static or less frequently updated and different in terms of layout. The popularity of the personal home page reached a peak in the mid to late 1990s as the result of free web hosting offered by GeoCities, Angelfire and Tripod. Daniel Chandler (1997) describes the personal home page as embodying the dual meanings of self-publishing: "being able to produce webpages is like owning your own printing press, and what some might call 'self-advertisement' seems to be a key function". The content of the personal home page includes: personal information such as personal statistics, biographical details and/or CV; interests or hobbies; ideas, beliefs and causes (religious, political, philosophical); current activities and experiences; original creative work; references to other works; references to friends, family, workmates and web acquaintances; and contact information. Subtle gestures and overt references serve to create the author's identity. However, unlike the blog and unlike all previous protocols, the personal home page did not have a social component—it was simply a platform to perform and present an identity.

To summarize, the format of the blog is a synergy of the previous online communicative modes. Like USENET and the Bulletin Board System, a given blog can be topic-specific and the software design lays out the interaction in a similar fashion with each response chronologically ordered under the next. While the play of the Multi User

Domain does not resemble the discussion that takes place on the blog, the kind of interaction that happens in a MUD serves as a reminder that online encounters are not consistently and strictly commercial or research oriented; rather, the internet facilitates a breadth of social interaction. It is the personal home page that is most like the blog because it is published by the individual and is about the individual.

Online computer-mediated communication [cmc] emerged, somewhat unexpectedly, as a tool for using the communication capacities of the networks to build social relationships across barriers of space and time. A continuing theme throughout the history of CMC is the way people adapt technologies designed for one purpose, typically to share research, to suit their own, very different, communication needs. As Rheingold (1992) notes in his introduction, "the most profound technological changes have come from the fringes and subcultures, not the orthodoxy of the computer industry or academic computer science". The uptake and proliferation of the blog, like social software before, is equally the result of the computer industry and popular interest.[23]

Self-Reflective Practices

The aforementioned communicative modes involved individuals who were interested in and actively sought out interaction with likeminded people online. The topics of their interaction tended to deal with what they had in common; commonalities included research or hobbies, for example, an affinity for science fiction. Individuals who partook in online social practices utilized a public venue to seek out other individuals, and the blog is no different.

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[23]More recently, webcams, podcasts, MySpace, YouTube and other developments have also allowed individuals to not only share information, but communicate and create communities with others online.

The following will elucidate practices that examine the relationship between the self and the external world, practices that result in a discursive constitution of the self. These practices include self-portraiture, the confession and different kinds of self-reflective or life writing: autobiography, diary keeping, introspective texts, and the perzine. Each of these practices externalizes the lived experience, personality and psychic interiority of subject; they are discourses on the self that are constituted to interact with others. Implications and the changing cultural and theoretical assumptions of the terms self and subject, at least in the content of this genealogy, will not be discussed. However, what is of particular interest are practices in which the self, as an ever changing and *loaded* term, is constituted and how subjectification has been used as a vehicle to commune. In other words, this section of the genealogy will examine labors undertaken to constitute the self discursively in order to commune with others.

Foucault's (1986) study of the cultivation of the self in context with the ethics of pleasure is particularly useful to elucidate self-reflective practices. While it is the self that is under scrutiny, the practice of writing about the self is not only to become more familiar with oneself, but rather to improve and develop oneself, to *care* for the self.[24] The delphic principle "know thy self" implies to understand, recognize and become familiar with one's experience and personal history. However, this is not what is at the heart of the care of the self. To cultivate, or otherwise to put forth the effort into taking care of one's self is to prepare and develop the self for encounters with others, whether these encounters be with spouses, small affective communities such as a family, or political groups. The care of the self can result in the formation of an ethical subjectivity

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[24]The self that is referred to in this particular section of the History of Sexuality (1986) the Care of the Self is a fixed knowable self that is subject to the power relations within the Roman political system.

(Foucault, 1986, p. 76). Thus, the Socratic care of the self is not only a social practice, but a practice in socialization.

The care of the self, as described by Foucault, can also be understood as an "art of existence" congruent to an aesthetics of existence. The art of existence, or attempting to live a "good life," is exemplified by Goethe's (1917) protagonist, Wilhelm Meister. Traveling and trying different social roles, Wilhelm eventually discovers the suitable profession for himself. Within the literary expectations of the *bildungsroman* and the Romantic discourse of the self, it is not enough for Wilhelm to discover his inner perfection, but to find that perfection within his community structure. The communal structure and social roles determined by cultural context, are required first to determine the experiences and practices available to Wilhelm, and second to actualize Wilhelm's choices. The care of the self and living the good life each concern themselves with the individual's ability to direct themselves in relation to others, their community and socio-cultural context.

The care of the self may focus on the individual, but it is not an individualistic practice. Foucault (1986) distinguishes between:

> (1) the individualistic attitude, characterized by absolute
> value attributed to the individual in his singularity and by
> the degree of independence conceded to him vis-à-vis the
> group to which he belongs and the institutions to which he
> is answerable; (2) the positive valuation of private life, that
> is, the importance granted to family relationships, to the
> forms of domestic activity, and to the domain of
> patrimonial interests; (3) the intensity of the relations to
> self, that is, of the forms in which one is called upon to take
> oneself as an object of knowledge and as a field of action,
> so as to transform, correct and purify oneself, and find
> salvation (p. 42).

The practice of self-reflection is given meaning dependent upon the cultural context. The cultural context determines the value of the practice and it determines what is necessary for the ritual of self-reflection to take place. In this ritual the transformation, correction and purification, and salvation of an individual are exchanged for a given thing that must be produced by the individual. Thus, a transaction occurs between the individual and their cultural context: this is the economy of self-reflection. The economy of the ritual determines both the product and what is produced.

For example, within the ritual of the confession in order to be forgiven the Christian must produce the truth of the circumstance in exchange for pardon. In the economy of salvation, the confessor must produce the truth in order to set himself free. Regarding confessions and religious power, Foucault writes that it is the ultimate aim of the church to assure the individual salvation in the next world (1994, p. 333). This form of power, he notes, "implies a knowledge of the conscience and an ability to direct it" (p. 333). It is the internalization of the church's value structures and ideology, and its enmeshing with our daily existence that maintains the power of the church. It is only within this structure that rituals, like confessions, have a meaning and a value. Foucault (1986) best articulates the relationship between the ritual of confession and the power of the church to subjugate its members in *The History of Sexuality [vol. 3]* :

> The confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive and console and reconcile; a ritual in which the truth is corroborated by the obstacles and resistances it has had to surmount in order to be formulated; and finally, a ritual in which the expression alone, independently of its external consequences, produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it: it

exonerates, redeems, and purifies him, and promises him salvation (p. 61-62).

A derivative of the Christian ritual of confession is the confessional text or conversion narrative. In St. Augustine's *Confessions* (1961), for example, he constructs a narrative about his sinning self. Other examples of confessional literature include Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1985), Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* (1987) and James Frey's *A Million Little Pieces* (2003), which feature the revelation of addiction and dependence.[25]

The blogger may be accused of being solipsistic, narcissistic, and inauthentic by publishing their lived experience in a public and accessible forum (see De Zengotita, 2004; 2005). However, the blog is simply the newest mutation in a long standing tradition of confession, public admission, life writing and diary keeping. None of these practices, however, are fully solipsistic as they require the presence of others to actualize them and legitimize them. If each of these practices economizes the life experience of the individual, then there must already exist a system to not only recognize the practice of self-reflection, but actualize its use-value.[26]

Recognizing the value of artistic expression, Vincent Van Gogh, for example, wanted to democratize art. Van Gogh believed that "Paintings are not playthings for the rich. Rather they should be used to decorate walls for the pleasure and benefit of all.

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[25]Despite the controversy--lead by Oprah--surrounding Frey's book as 'authentic' it remains a confessional narrative. Another controversial life narrative is W.N.P Barbellion's (1948) autobiography *The Journal of a Disappointed Man,* which was published under the pretense of the author having already died, when in fact he was alive. Barbellion, a pseudonym, lived for another two years after the initial publication, just long enough to approve a second edition for publication.

[26]The terms use-value and exchange-value are used intentionally here as a nod to Marxist analysis. Most specifically, this is an intentional reference to Negri's work in *Time for Revolution* (2005) in which he revisits ideas of use-value and exchange value set out in the first volume of Marx's *Capital* to determine love as a constitutive force of the common. This is also a reference to *Multitude* (2004), in which the transactions of biopolitical production are understood to be both "immeasurable" and "excessive with respect to capital" (p. 146).

Work like this should be used to beautify public buildings where all can enjoy it" (Honour, 1976, p. 132). Van Gogh's vision also served to open up the possibility of artistic expression, making it available not only to those who could afford it, but those with the desire to paint. Vincent Van Gogh had wanted to create a painters' colony in the South of France where artists could gather to inspire each other. In order to help begin the colony Van Gogh wanted Paul Gauguin's help. Together Van Gogh imagined them beautifying their civilization "as the Greeks beautified theirs" (Honour, 1967, p.132). In order to entice Gauguin to come to the South, Van Gogh painted a series of paintings to decorate his room, *The Sunflowers* (1889), for example. However, other paintings, such as two paintings of chairs, one Gauguin's and one belonging to Van Gogh, are understood not only as an enticement for the starting of a colony, but as an articulation of the delicate relationship between Van Gogh and Gauguin (Honour, 1967). The intentions of Van Gogh to bring people together through art, though unrealized, serve nevertheless as a sub-text for a series of paintings. Van Gogh's Sunflowers (1889) exemplify the desire to create art and offer an aesthetic experience of art for others.[27]

While Van Gogh used objects to convey his desire to commune with others, what of self-reflective painting and portraiture? Artists, such as Egon Schiele, Pablo Picasso, Rembrant van Rijn, Edgar Degas, Diego Velazquez, and Albrecht Duerer, have examined themselves self-reflexively and creatively expressed their objectification in self-portraits. Photographic self-portraiture also allows the artist to reflect on and use their body. The manifestation of the body is a vehicle for the contemplation and critique of the external world. Cindy Sherman and Claude Cahun for example, have used their bodies as

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[27]The BBC series The Life of a Masterpiece suggests that Van Gogh regarded himself as a disciple of Gauguin's, and so the sunflowers--as a sign--communicate an intimate message between the two.

vehicles for social comment. In these instances, the artist is both subject and object. Other artists, photographers such as Nan Goldin, use their everyday experiences and the *stuff* of their intimate realm to create art. In these instances the self is used a vehicle for either the visual expression of artistic ability or to visually critique the external world. Rather than a meditation on the world, art is a visual mediation of that meditation. It is a way of making sense and reflecting on the relationship between the external world and the constitution of the self.

Most akin to self-reflective blog is autobiographic or life writing. Autobiography, Philippe Lejeune (1989) states, "is the retrospective narrative in prose that someone makes of their own existence by putting the principal accent upon life, especially upon the story of his own personality" (p. 5). However, even this understanding is not all encompassing; as Lejeune suggests, one keeps coming up with more questions, and other ways of problematizing the boundaries of autobiography.

Autobiography, for Lejeune (1989), is a form of language, both in terms of narration and prose. The topic of narration or prose is the life of an individual and their personality. The question of identity is of particular significance for life writing. Within the text the author and the narrator are identical, and the narrator and the protagonist are identical; this identification is necessary for the text to be considered autobiographic. The identity, however, of these identical figures poses a problem. The assumed identity of the narrator is autodiegetic: it is being created as the diegesis of the story continues (1989, p. 5). Both the narrator and the protagonist are grammatically expressed as "I" (1989, p. 7). This "I" refers to a single name, the proper name of the author. For Lejeune (1989), it is understood in lieu of social convention, the autobiographical pact, that name

of the author refers to a *real person* (p. 11). It is this real person that is the subject of the narrative or prose. Within the on going narrative of the blog, the assumed blogger has not only a life that is written on the screen, but a life that extends beyond the screen into their *real life*. [28] The writing on the screen makes reference to the person's life; it stands in for them and relays information about their experiences.

Life writing not only conveys the experience of person, but for Mark Freeman (1993), diary writing specifically, is "a process by which one's past and indeed oneself is figured anew through interpretation" (p. 3). Life writing has a particular relationship to modes of remembering, cultural memory and meaning-making. Both the autobiographic and diary writing processes are characterized by self-reflexivity. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (2001) use the term life writing as a general term for work that takes a life as its subject; a form of writing that is likewise a moving target with ever-changing practices and no absolute rules (p.7). The blog is likewise fluid. The content of the blog is not restricted to the self, and will vary from a discussion of lived experience to secret wishes to reflections on events and critical commentary on current events.

The relationship of the voice or author to the content determines how life writing can be characterized. It is the autobiographical pact, the author-narrator-protagonist relationship, which distinguishes autobiography from fictional autobiography and biography. As Lejeune (1989) argues "In biography, it is resemblance that must ground identity; in autobiography, it is identity that grounds resemblance. Identity is the real starting point of autobiography"(p. 24). Identification with the author as the protagonist

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[28] I have chosen to refer to non-virtual interactions as real life in order to reference the work of Sherry Turkle. Turkle's influential text *Life on the Screen* provides key insights that distinguish the conditions of virtual interaction as providing opportunities for thinking about the self and social interactions in new ways.

is what distinguishes the first person narrative, and is necessary to establish a relationship between the author-protagonist and the audience.

Anaïs Nin (1966) chose to publish her diaries. Anne Frank (1997) expressed interest in having her diary published, a testament to life during World War II. Her diary, which she affectionately addressed as Kitty, was a record of her experience hiding from the Nazis in the secret Annex. Otto Frank, Anne's father, published the diary posthumously (Frank, 1997). Frank's diary serves as both record of a young girl's life and a historical testament.

Literary traditions that blur reality and fiction include novels that take the form of a diary such as, Rainer Maria Rilke's *Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge (1910),* Jean Paul Sartre's, *Nausea* (1938), Hjalmar Soderberg's, *Doctor Glas* (1905), Wilhelm Johann von Goethe's, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774). In addition, there is also the classic romantic epistolary novel *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship (1917),* also by Goethe, that follows the protagonists' *bildung*, his development.

The format of the epistolary novel is particularly relevant to the diary-style blog as it emphasizes life experience in context with the progression time. Both genres, the epistolary novel and the diary, are equally influential as they follow the same chronological ordering; the content of the novel, like in the content of blogs, refer to events that have just transpired or have transpired since the last exchange. These traditions are based upon what Lejeune refers to as resemblance, and not identity. They are personalized fictions.

The published diary or diary-style book is written under the pretense of being private, it is not intended to be seen by anyone other than the author. The epistolary

novel, on the other hand, is addressed to a recipient. The narrative of the autobiography, unlike the narrative of the diary, assumes an audience outside of narrator-author-protagonist whereas the narrative of the diary unfolds unto itself, in the private space of the narrator-author-protagonist. This privacy is assumed, unless transgressed by a curious outsider who reads the narrative that is not intended for them. This logic is undermined with the blog because the blog is written into a shared public venue. Rather than being hidden, as is noted by Kitzmann (2003), it is the logic of the blog to allow people access to its information in order to communicate. The blog's content most closely resembles the epistolary novel because of the exchange of expression and response between people.

In non-fictional self-introspective texts, authors have written explicitly on themselves, such as Vladimir Nabakov's *Speak, Memory* (1951). Semi-autobiographic novels include Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1991), and Ayn Rand's *We the Living (1964)*. Texts are likewise semi-autobiographic but which approach the self from a postmodern perspective include *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* (1994), Jorge Luis Borges' *Borges and I* (1964) and Raymond Federman's postmodern, or what he calls surfictional (see Federman, 1981) autobiography-cum-holocaust memoir *To Whom It May Concern* (1990).[29]

Still another example of a cultural text that is self-reflective is the perzine or personal zine, a sub-genre of the zine. The perzine, like the diary-style blog, is a sub-genre of a practice that is self-reflective. Zines tend to be understood as small publications that are typically hand crafted and, even, reproduced by hand. According to

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[29]*To Whom It May Concern* effaces any narrative information or knowledge that is possible to purposefully destabilize the relationship between author and reader.

a definition in "Factsheet 5" from 1994, the perzine is "a zine written by one person with essays and comments typically dealing with the publisher's daily life" (cited in Bailey and Michel, n.d., para 2). Like the blog, the content of the perzine is highly personalized; topics range from sexuality to mental illness to the banality of the everyday and writing styles range from the almost illiterate to the highly academic. The choice and selection of content, Bailey and Michel ("The Photocopied Self") describe as being *strategized*; deliberate in nature as to produce and perform a textual identity (para. 22). The "I" of the zine is identified over time as the culmination of personal elements.

In sum, the genealogy has isolated instances in the history of online communication and public practices of creating discourses on the self in order to understand the "exteriority of accidents" (Foucault, 1984, p. 81). Each of these practices externalizes the lived experience, personality and psychic interiority of a given subject. What is of particular interest is how individuals manifest their desire to commune, and how these practices create social encounters based on mutual affinities and affection.

Chapter 3
Subject Production

"Thus my life is a flight and I lose everything and everything belongs to oblivion, or to him."
Jorge Luis Borges (1964, p. 247)

The blog is not a genre of fiction, nor is it a diary. The blog, like other practices of self-reflective writing, enables the blogger to reflect upon their everyday life while encountering others online. Self-enlightenment, as Goethe's protagonists demonstrated, was for the artist and the bourgeois, for persons with the means to achieve it. To blog, to complete the mediation of the meditation on the self[30], requires a computer and internet access. Blogging thus requires access to given technologies.

Unlike the other self-reflective practices, the blog is immediately introduced into a public domain where others can access and read it. In *Against Interpretation*, Susan Sontag (1966) aligns the publication and reading of private journals with the *commoditization* of personal experience. She blames the recent "insatiable preoccupation with psychology" as the "latest and most powerful legacy of the Christian tradition of introspection, opened up by St. Paul and St. Augustine," a legacy of public confession that equates the self with the suffering self (Sontag, 1966, p. 42). Religious discourse enshrouds confession with a use-value actualized in ritual. The ritual acts a symbolic exchange in the economy of salvation. But, it is the writer who is, for Sontag (1966), the exemplary sufferer, pecisely because he has "found a professional means to sublimate it (p. 42)." As a man, he suffers. As a writer, he transforms his suffering into art (Sontag, 1966, p. 43).

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[30] As noted in the previous chapter, the term is used within this text to refer to a fluid subject who is indicated in the subject of the discourse within the blog and whose identity is narrated therein.

Like the writer, bloggers sublimate their suffering and reproduce their lived experience in blog form. The memory, once published, no longer serves to translate lived experience into the privacy of a psychic interiority, but mobilizes it for collective consumption. As a person, one has experiences. As a blogger, that experience is transformed into content to be read. The content serves to constitute the blogger online, where others read about them and consume their life story. But, blogs do not only enable exemplary individuals to share their experiences, they enable those with computer access to share their experiences.

A Comment on Identity and Subjectivity

If identity is the self in discourse, then the semiotic elements which make up the blog are the identity of the blogger[31]. The textual and visual elements that constitute the discourse of the self are an objectification of the blogger. This conscious process of objectification is subjectification. The creation of a discourse on the self within the interface of the blog makes the self an object, and that object is situated within the power structure of cyberspace. By subjectivity I refer specifically to the Foucaultian sense of the term wherein the individual is subject to a form of power that categorizes and marks them. The subject is "tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge" (Foucault, 1994, p. 331). The constitution of the identity in blog form is a decision that both subjugates (produces a subject position) and makes subject to (subjectifies to the domain: cyberspace). In other words, within the content of the blog, the narratives of the blogger's experiences and personality are relayed; their identity is constructed. The construction of the self in discourse—the construction of an identity—is likewise the

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[31] The self is understood to be always shifting and in flux.

constitution of a subject position with which to encounter others online; a place from which to act and interact is produced.

The constitutive power of the blogger to blog is situated within a different power structure than other self-reflective practices. Power, in this case, is unlike the biopower of the church, as described by Foucault (1986) which relies on discipline and imposes order from above; it is a networked power (Hardt & Negri, 2005, p. 66). Rather than being transcendent, the networked power is immanent (Hardt & Negri, 2005, p. 94). Further, since the blogosphere is not a separated quadrant or strategy within cyberspace, the self-reflective blog remains subject to the same feild of power as other websites, a power that is dispersed or *networked.* Everyday life is thus intersected by the networked power structure.

In relation to previous writings on the blog, Rebecca Blood (2002a) notes "No matter how random or structured or impersonal a weblog may seem, each one, whatever its nature, provides for an intimate portrait of its maintainer, a portrait drawn over time. Random observations, selected link diatribes accumulated, these elements resolve into a mosaic revealing a personality, a self" (p. 30).[32] The self that Blood refers to is the identity of the blogger; it is a discourse on the self that emerges over time and is shifting and updating as the blogger constructs, assembles and writes. Thus, the identity—the discourse on the self—emerges as one *blogs.*

Within the graphics user interface (GUI) of the blog functioning identities are constituted.[33] On the WELL, the first virtual community, the only disclaimer was: "you

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[32] This argument taken from its context is slightly misleading. It should be noted that Blood's work typically concerns filter-style blogs and blogs whose focus is to disseminate and comment on news or current events, and *not* blogs which focus on everyday life.

[33] Henceforth the graphics user interface (GUI) will be referred to only as the interface.

own your own words." This sentiment was to emphasize the responsibility of the user when writing. It stresses the performative function of language when interacting online and draws attention to what Deleuze and Guattari (2007) refer to as the "immanent relationships between statements and acts" (p.79). Language is thus is both performative and illocutionary (Deleuze & Guattari, 2007, p. 78); the assemblage or collective of elements that makes up the discourse on the self performs as an identity and speaks that identity.[34] The aggregate of symbols socializes. It—the discourse on the self that is constituted on the blog—acts and interacts with others.[35]

The medium enters as a condition for the creation of the discourse. Like Levi-Strauss' *bricoleur*, the blogger establishes "analogical relationships between his own life and the life of nature and culture" (Hawkes, 1977, p. 35), the life that is made available to him in cyberspace and *material* space. However, in using hyperlinks the signifier is also deferred as the intended meaning of the text is not clear until the hyperlink is seen. The hyperlink establishes a relationship between the individual and any given piece of information. Thus, the self is constructed in relation to other things in the external world of culture; it is constructed using the symbols made accessible via the internet.[36]

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[34] Language, it should be acknowledged, is not a form of complete knowledge, alternate meanings and excesses occur. As Brain Massumi notes: "A normative deployment of language has provoked the production of a singular excess of meaning. Then, in a second moment of reporting about the production, that deployment brings the excess-over-itself into itself" (2002, p. 211).

[35] Theorizations on identity, specifically the legible body as put forth by Allucquere Rosanne Stone would be useful extension here; however, for the sake of concision it will be reduced to a footnote. The legible body is "a textually mediated physicality" (Stone, 1998, p. 40) which is a social actor, rather than a physical presence and cultural codes including gender and ethnicity are "legible" (Stone, 1998, p.40) on the surface of the body.

[36] A useful way of thinking about the relationship between the subjectivity (the blogger), signification (the text) and reality (the person who lives in the world) can be found in Deleuze and Guattari (2007) in approaching the three as a relationship of assemblages (see p.23). They later go on to explain: "there is no subject, only collective assemblages of enunciation. Subjectification is simply one such assemblage and designates a formalization of expression or a regime of signs rather than a condition internal to language" (Deleuze & Guattari, 2007, p. 130).

The interface begins as a blank slate for the assemblage of discourse. Previous cultural responses to interactions in cyberspace were characterized by unease due to the perceived anonymity of interaction.[37] Anonymity was both the source of anxiety and liberation. On the internet nobody knows that you are a dog, or so the famous New Yorker cartoon claims. This brought nervousness for some and perhaps this was a residual anxiety from early online interactions when questions of identity concealment and gender deception were stressed. Issues of nervousness relate to questions of identity and identification. Components of identity, such as questions of gender, ethnicity and race will not be examined as they are beyond the scope of this work (see O'Brien, 1999; Turkle, 1995; Reid, 1994; Stone, 1998; Burkhalter, 1999; Nakamura, n.d. for discussions of identity).[38] For Lejeune (1989) within the context of autobiography identity is not to be negotiated: "Here, there is neither transition nor latitude. An identity is, or is not. It is impossible to speak of degrees, and all doubt leads to a negative conclusion" (p. 5). Within the theorizations set out here, the result of interactions between two bloggers is of importance and not the process of negotiating that relationship. Inquiry into the identity of the blogger is limited to the relationship of *identification* or, otherwise interaction, between bloggers. The following will examine the structures of the interface in order to explain the function and use of the self-reflective blog in its encounter by other bloggers.

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[37]The possibility of interaction being anonymous is troublesome within the framework set up here as identity is understood to always be influx and unstable—and the product of discourse—thus, what is understood to be anxious elsewhere is here part of the process of discursive construction.

[38] Components of identity as I have called them here including gender will be relegated to being understood as an aspect of the discourse that is constructed within the interface of the blog as an identity. The avoidance of discussion of gender, ethnicity and race is not to deny nor ignore the importance and value of such an exploration, but it is not explored simply because blogging software enables identity construction in a similar way to other social softwares, and thus would simply repeat previous research with reference to the the blog.

However, it is subjectivity, as the power to deploy and interact in cyberspace using the blog as locus, that is of importance.

The Interface

If design is the mediator between invention and realization, then design is what determines the structure and functioning of the blog. The software design holds implication for the structuring of the interface. The interface displays the assemblage of information; it displays the text, images, sound bites, video clips, etc. The use of the term interface is particularly relevant, as the interface is the site of convergence between the expression of the blogger and the presence of the others.

Depending on the blog software chosen, the interface of the blog will appear slightly different. Distinctive features as well as software flexibility give the blogger options to create a unique interface. The interface of the blog can be divided into syntactical elements, those that are determined by the software, and semantic elements, those chosen by the individual blogger.

The syntactic elements of the interface are the communicative platform; they are part of the software design. The syntactic elements include the title, blogroll (with hyperlinks to other blogs) and the entry or post (with a title, timestamp, hyperlinks to comments, and a comments section). The syntactical elements are common to all blogs and differentiate the blog from other online computer-mediated communication; they determine the blog's ability not only to house creative content, but also to create relationships between blogs.[39] Little can be done to change the structural elements of the interface unless the blogger has knowledge of HTML. Nevertheless, as Scheidt and Wright (2004) demonstrated in their content analysis of blog interfaces, rarely is the

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[39]These are the features emphasized in the first stage of writings on the blog.

interface altered. Thus, the blogger can only select and input data (visual, textual and oral) into the structural elements. In this way the blogger is bound by the design of the programmer.

The syntactical elements form a grammar into which the semantic elements are placed. Unlike the syntactic, the semantic elements of the blog are dependent on the creativity and imagination of the blogger. The semantic elements of the blog include: the avatar, the design of the title, content postings, and any images, videos or sound clips that are uploaded. Creativity and spontaneity characterize these elements. While this can be said of any blog, choices made refer to the style of the blog. For the self-reflective blog in particular, creativity and spontaneity are emphasized because they are markers of identity. Creativity, the ability to artfully convey everyday situations, and spontaneity, the frequent and continued narration of the everyday situations, construct a sense of humanness. That is to say that within the semantic elements of the interface, the personality—the unique identity—of the blogger is revealed.

Blog semantics are as varied as the bloggers themselves. The blogger expresses their idiosyncrasies through each syntactical element. The entire contents of the blog do not need to be read in a given order. The interface of the blog, however, requires at least an acquaintance with the codes of signification in order to be understood. A hermeneutics of the interface, a way of reading and understanding the component parts that structure the interface will be given. In what follows each element of the blog interfaces will be addressed individually. Each element contributes to the creation of a communicative platform, a platform from which to interact with others. In making reference to the interface several screen shots of blogs are used in order to visually

demonstrate placement and organization. The sampled blogs were not chosen because they are exemplary in any way. Rather, they were selected because they make use of the software in a normative way.

The Title

To begin, the title and subtitle are typically located at the top of the page. The title is the name of the blog. In cases where an individual has more than one blog or if perhaps they have chosen to use different blogs to house different themes and ideas, then the title serves to differentiate between the individual's blogs. If, for example, a blogger has a stamp collecting blog entitled *Post It* and a blog that details historical research entitled *Private Memories, Public Places*, then the title of the blog would be used to differentiate between the two and not the name of the blogger. More secretive bloggers, who choose not to reveal their name, can be referred to by using the title of the blog, which then acts as the name of the blogger. For example, Torill Elvira Mortensen (Fig. 2) has chosen to identify herself using her proper name. However, if she had not given her name, then the blog's title *Thinking with my Fingers*, would serve as the name. *Where's Raed?*, to offer another example, could also serve as an alternate name for Salam Pax.

Figure 2. Torill Elvira Mortensen's Blog, *Thinking with my Fingers*

The relationship between the name of the blogger and the title of the blog is important for audience identification. Lejeune (1989) argues that it is necessary that the author, protagonist and narrator are identical for a text to be considered autobiographic. For the blog's audience it is likewise necessary that they have a name with which to frame their experience of the blog. This name or title refers to the real person who is experiencing and relaying the narrative about their experience. As Lejeune (1989) explains, "the place assigned to the name is essential: it is linked, by a social convention, to the pledge of responsibility of a *real person*" (p. 11). The pledge of responsibility is called the autobiographical pact; a "pact that the name on the cover refers to the "I" of the text, even though their name is not uttered" (p. 13). The autobiographical pact is thus a convention that insures the written text belongs to a person.

The blog name and title allow for audience identification. In the case of figure 1, Torill Elvira Mortensen has identified herself using her name. Her blog is an extension of her face-to-face relationships, and relationships that are mediated by other means. Her

identity as an academic and as a friend is integral to the functioning of her blog. The

blog in this instance acts as a site that facilitates and continues discussions that are going

on elsewhere. This is evident as she not only discloses personal information, but also

publishes current and on-going research. Through this disclosure real life and online life

are made inseparable.

The Blog Roll

Located underneath the title and typically along the right side of the screen is the

blog roll. The blog roll is an abbreviated version of the blog, it functions like a table of

contents and abstract. It makes brief reference to the blogger: who they are, where they

are located, etc. and lists, with hyperlinks, the blogger's most recent posts and their

favorite blogs. Sometimes the blog roll will also feature buttons or 'widgets'[40] to show

affiliations to organizations or groups, such as the EFF or Creative Commons.

Figure 3. Laura Ebe's blog, *Shhh... they might hear us.*

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[40]A widget is any html based software that can be embedded into a website. The weather monitor on
Laura's blog is an example of a widget.

The blogroll is limited in size and rarely updated. Thus, the hyperlinks to blogs that are found in the blogroll are understood to be blogs with whom that blogger wants to be directly affiliated. Anchoring a link, as Hourihan (2002) argues, "creates the connection that bind." The hyperlink *virtually* links two blogs, but it also signifies a social relationship.

The blogroll indicates a blogger's preferred blogs, but it can also bring together the audiences of other blogs. If the reader enjoys the content of the blog they are reading, then they may feel inclined to see which blogs the blogger reads. Conversely, an interesting blogroll is indicative of the blog's content. The relationships delineated by the hyperlink can bring together audiences from different blogs. Blanchard (2004) in her study of the *Julie/Julia Project* noted that a blogroll would have helped to bring different blogging communities that share an interest, and a sense of community could have developed between these blogs.

The Post

Each individual blog entry is referred to as a post. The post is located in the centre of the page and is constructed out of a combination of text, hyperlinks and images. Posts occur in reverse chronological order, so that the most recent post will appear at the top of the page directly under the title. The post is written, edited and deleted only by the blogger. It is, as Michelle Gumbrecht (2004) describes, "a personal protected space". Most entries are shaped as brief independent narratives and are episodic.

Depending on the blogging software chosen, the post layout will include different details. It can be expected that the entry is formatted to have a title, date, time, and comments hyperlink that lists the number of comments already made. The LiveJournal

software as illustrated by Trevor Haldenby's blog (Fig. 4) allows users to customize the details they wish to include. While Haldenby's post does not include a title, it does have the date and time: July 23, 2006 at 2 pm. In this particular LiveJournal configuration the current location, current mood and current music serve as sub-titles to the post. This feature offers additional intimate information. For Laurie McNeill (2003), this kind of intimate information "heightens the reader's sense of identification with the writer, since the reader can experience vicariously the events in the diarist's life almost in 'real time'". It allows us to follow along with the goings on in Trevor's life and provides some context for the post. The sense of being able to follow the goings on in the blogger's life offers a sense of *participation* in their lives. It is a way of getting to know them and living along with them.
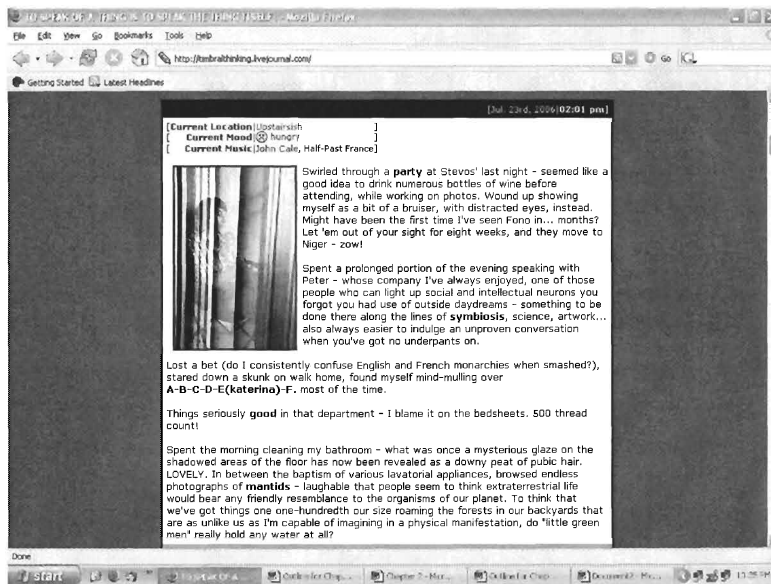

Figure 4. Trevor Haldenby's blog, *To Speak of a Thing is to Speak the Thing Itself.*

The interface of the blog can support not only text, but also images, video clips and music. Images articulate ideas and emotions that the text does not necessarily convey. Photographs, as Smith and Watson (2001) suggest, are not only present to be

representations that accompany a written narrative, but serve as an adjunct—a narrative in themselves. As Smith and Watson (2001) explain; "Each photo tells a separate story and, taken together, they form a separate meaning. And the stories in photographs may support, or be in tension with, or contradict the claims of the verbal text" (p. 76).

Figure 5. Tudor Costache's Blog, *Broken Images, All Alike*.

Images serve not only as sources of visual identification, but of intimacy. The images relay the blogger's real life encounters to their audience. For example, Tudor Costache's blog, *Broken Images, All Alike* (Fig. 5), like Trevor Haldenby's blog, utilizes a combination of text and images. Tudor's images serve as a visual accompaniment to his narrative about being unemployed. However, the content of the image does not provide context or reveal the contents of the blog post. On the other hand, Trevor's blog includes an image of the woman he describes in his post, thus directly offering a sense of identification.

The Comments

Each post is accompanied with a section for comments. Only a hyperlink with a count of the responses is visible on the blog interface. The comments remain invisible until selected, and it is only upon clicking the comment hyperlink that the comments are exposed. Hiding the comments maintains a less cluttered interface.

The ability to respond to the posted information transforms the position of the reader to a participant. Rather than passively reading, the blog's audience can interact and engage in conversation with the blogger. For Blood (2004), "commenting has meant a further democratization." The comments section of the blog is a discourse that is not only facilitated by the person whose blog it is, but is directed and controlled by this person. The comments section may be the site of discussion, but the blogger retains ultimate control as they can delete and edit any comments posted on their blog. In the case of Lauren's LiveJournal blog *Hipsteresque* (Fig. 6) all responses are listed in chronological order oldest to newest. It is important to note, as was outlined by Efimova, Hendrick and Anjewierden (2005), that while interaction occur between blogs, it is in the comments section where the discourse that directly responds to posts, or is otherwise directed at the blogger, is housed. In the case of Lauren's blog, the conversation is in response to an episode of America's Next Top Model. The comments made each respond to criticisms made by Lauren.
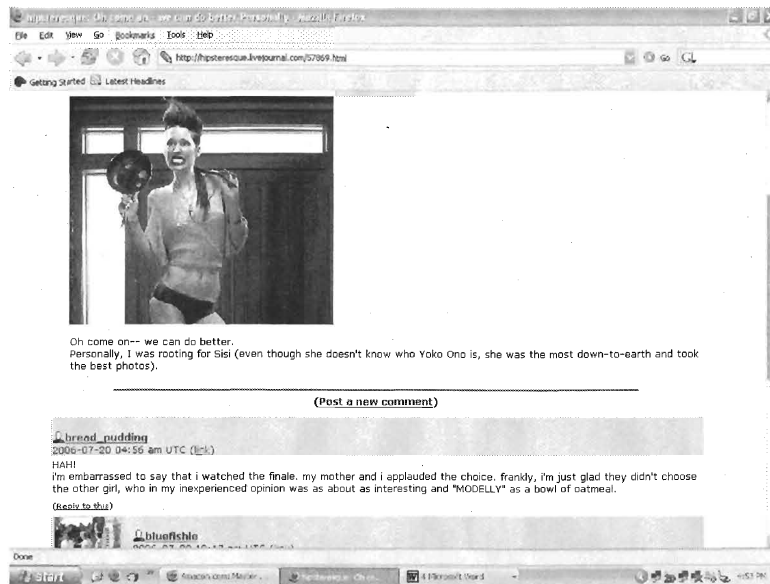
Figure 6. Lauren Raham's Blog, *Hipsteresque.*

Advertisements

Although most blog software is free, some platforms do contain advertisements. Conversely, some bloggers choose to include advertisements in order to gain revenue. The advertisements serve as an adjunct to the text, but do not contradict, elucidate or expand on the information within posts; they may however link to products mentioned, similar or similar sounding products. In proportion to other elements, the advertisements take up the same amount of space as the blogroll. However, unlike the blog roll, the blogger has no control over the advertisements that appear.

The presence of advertisements on a blog can be understood as: 1. a consequence of free web hosting that is not detrimental to the practice (an ambivalent response); 2. companies capitalizing, and thus infringing, on the practices of individuals (a negative response); 3. individuals choosing to benefit monetarily from a practice that they would be carrying out regardless (a positive response). Some self-reflective bloggers have been

openly thankful for the ability to earn profit from their blogs.[41] Wil Wheaton, for example, has used his blog in order to sell articles during times of financial strife (Kline & Burstein, 2005, p. 257). The presence of advertisements, however unsightly, remains a part of the blog interface.

Creativity

As a result of free hosting, the layouts that are offered are rather basic. The structural elements of the interface, such as colors, fonts, proportions and scales of objects, translate into a rather plain interface. The plainness or the degree to which the blog is decorated is not necessarily indicative of the user's ability but their desire to transform and adapt the free layout into something a little different. Bloggers who lack programming knowledge, but have the desire to make their blogs visually appealing, can insert images, choose animated avatars, etc. Individuals with programming knowledge can either use a flexible blogging software like Moveable Type and alter it slightly, or simply script their own software.

In their content analysis, Scheidt and Wright (2004) discovered that most bloggers did not change the layout of their blogs and that few contained images. Scheidt and Wright (2004) used content analysis to assess visual elements being employed within a sample of 154 blogs collected during September 21, 2004. They concluded that most bloggers do not make any significant customization to their site. Any modifications that required knowledge of html were infrequent and the blog interface was typically a slightly modified version of the software given to the blogger. The majority of

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[41]It should be noted that individuals who earn a profit from their blogs are not necessarily career bloggers. Career bloggers, bloggers who have left their day jobs to blog full time, are typical of news, political and business bloggers, but also includes information bloggers such as; "a-list" blogger Jason Kottke of kottke.org.

customization occurred in the sidebar, where favorite links, links to friends, RSS feed button, and lists of recent posts are located. The inclusion of animated avatars, fonts, digital photographs, digital drawings etc. serves to personalize and decorate the blog content. These are also indicators of the blogger's creativity and artistic ability. A set of aesthetic criteria with which to judge and evaluate blogs has yet to emerge. Perhaps this is partly why reportage on the blog framed the blog as a form of media that enables individual expression, rather than as a vehicle for individual expression. The blog's features as a communicative platform that was easy to use and could sustain virtual settlements were espoused rather than its creative potentials.

Nevertheless, the creative and spontaneous expression of the blogger is indicative of the blogger themselves. Both images and references to the time and place of writing are sources of intimacy; they refer to the actual conditions of the blogger's *real life*. The choice to include aspects of real life in blog content is the prime source of intimacy. Intimacy, the sharing of personal of information, can be expressed in various gradations of openness. For example, a blogger may use an image of herself as an avatar to relate the content to herself directly. In order to be more anonymous, she may choose a movie still or band logo as an avatar. What is significant is that the blogger chooses how much of the information posted has a direct correlation to their experience of everyday life and to their offline or real life identity. Tudor Costache (fig. 4), for example, shares that not only is he unemployed but that he fills his days by focusing on the mundane: his cactus and the pleasure of eating tangerines. His chosen images refer to moments of his day. Additionally, as was discussed with Mortensen, her blog is an extension of the

relationships that she maintains elsewhere and she thus includes an image of herself and frequently makes specific reference to events in her life.

The identity that is constituted within the interface depends on how the blogger wants to be understood, how they want to be *read* by others; they can choose to add, omit and change details. In their article on the perzine, Bailey and Michel (The Photocopied Self) note that the choice and selection of content is often being strategized[42], that is to say that the content is deliberate in nature as to produce and perform an identity. Beyond the identity, the content speaks to a certain notion of creativity that is prevalent in the crafting aspect of zine culture; skill and artistry, the markings of the zine author, are identified directly as the "product" of a given crafter. The skill and technique to blog more creatively, rather than simply using the provided interface, are an aspect of blogging that is yet to be studied.

In addition to creativity, the process of acquaintance, of *getting to know* the blogger has yet to be conducted. The repetition of gestures and information serves to acquaint the reader with the blogger. While a genre study or other quantitative method can determine the repetition of elements such as links or personal pronouns, which is important to determine the gender of the author or the kind of blogs written, these methods cannot capture the process of getting to know and understand the blogger. The repetition of idiosyncratic gestures, such as the frequent use of short sentences when particularly stressed or the inclusion of photographs when particularly inspired, is significant in understanding the blogger. For the process of identification and relationship between bloggers, these are the repeated gestures that matter. These are the

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[42]Bailey and Michel's use of the word strategy is not be confused with De Certeau's use of strategy which implies a relationship of power over something, but rather is used to imply deliberateness and an undertaking that is premeditated or methodic.

repeated gestures that signify the experience of the individual and, thus, are sought after by the audience as indicators of a given feeling. Patterns in the actual writing and publishing of the blog speak to the emotional and affective qualities of the blogger themselves. Beyond the structure is that quality that engages the participants in the practice of blogging. The pleasures of the blogging—the affects—are not located in the individual parts of the interface.

The self-reflective blog is a synergy of self-reflective and online communicative practices. Both practices are imbued with social expectations. As a kind of life writing, the self-reflective blog shares information about a person's everyday life. The blogger must share their subjective outlook. The blogger must share their thoughts, experience and that which is most human; they must, as the saying goes, speak from the heart. As Kitzmann writes "One thus belongs to a community by writing from the heart and the home—those corporeal and cultural places where authenticity and reality are *believed* to reside" (2003, p. 5) (my emphasis). The audience of the self-reflective blog assumes that the blogger will share information about themselves. Sharing personal information is an expectation determined by the genre of life writing. The blogger assumes that as a kind of online communicative practice, the audience will interact with them by leaving comments on the blog.

The use-value or the economy of the blog is a direct product of its venue. The conditions of the practice, like the cultural texts already mentioned, are determined by their domain or venue: cyberspace. For Philippe Lejeune, "the computer is no more artificial than the notebook, it simply changes one's relation with writing" (cited in Zuern, 2003, p. vi). Sherry Turkle (1995), in a similar vein, sets out in *The Second Self* to

suggest that the computer is simply an object to think with. What Lejeune and Turkle forget, however, is that while the computer may not change the *experience* of writing, it *does* enable the writing to be published online in a venue that is accessible to anyone. The writing is made public.

The self-reflective blog concerns itself with issues of the intimate realm, day-to-day events, mundane and personal details about individuals. Individuals interact from an earnest commonality based on life experience and value system. Unlike the confessing individual who needs to produce the truth in order to set himself free, within the exchanges of the blog truth is not a requirement. It is required only that the self-reflective blogger relay information about themselves, their experiences, their perceptions of goings-on, etc. In other words, for self-reflective bloggers and their audience, the disclosure of private life is not assumed, but expected.

Chapter 4
Productive Subjects: The Social Economy of Public Access

The subject is a product
The subject produces a subjectivity that is productive
The engine of subjectivity is within relations of power
These relations of power are crossed by the desire to live

All resistance must be through this engine
It is through resistance that lies the potential for excess
Excess cannot be reabsorbed into product movement.
It may be blocked, but it will reemerge someplace else.

Antonio Negri (2006)

The subjectivity created and the information posted are produced for an

interactive audience. The consequences of the blog's publicity or, conversely, the

benefits of an online presence are the ability to interact with others and create

communities. Still, there are unforeseen social outcomes to the blog's publicity and

access.[43] Despite any negative consequences of blogging, it is intention and logic of the

blog to be public. Publicity allows the individual to share their life experience with

others, to affect them and to be affected by them. The sharing of affect is one impetus for

blogging. Affect, as a motivator for the socializing that occurs between blogs, is the

result of actions chosen by individuals who participate in the practice.

In the previous section I have outlined how a discourse on the self is articulated

and identified within the interface of the blog. The blogging subject takes part in a

practice that is a network based on communicating everyday experiences and produces a

different way of communing online. More simply put, the computer does not simply

change the experience of writing, and blogging is not simply thinking with your fingers—

as the name of Mortensen's Blog suggests—or spewing thoughts into a machine. Not

only does the self-reflective blog externalize the individual psyche, but publishes it in a

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[43]Publicity is used here to denote the public presence of the blog. Access is used here as a direct reference
to Kitzmann (2003) to denote the possibility of encountering and reading the blog.

fully accessible domain making anyone with internet access the potential addressee of the blog.

Publicity or the presence of others takes on an important role. For Lejeune (1989) the act of confessing is at the heart of the autobiography. However, confessing does not hold the same ritualized potency as the Christian ritual of confession. Where the writer economizes his suffering for art, the lay person and the saint exchange their confession for salvation in the ritualized practice of telling one's sins to a clergy member. In the case of St. Augustine and Rousseau, however, such confessions are published. Kitzmann (2003) notes in regard to St. Augustine, that it is not important to identify him as "the seed for future forms of self-documentation, but rather [to recognize] what constitutes as a departure from earlier forms of expression, and determin[e] what this break might suggest about changes in the human condition" (p. 52). It is because St. Augustine, a great sinner who became a saint, shared his confession publicly, to an open audience and not only to a member of the clergy, that he is rendered important.

The publicity or privacy of self-reflection, consciousness of one's life and self-awareness, is dependent on cultural context.[44] In "Technologies of the Self", Foucault (1997) on the other hand observes that the confession, the Christian act of receiving penance, requires the individual "to show shame, to make visible humility and exhibit modesty...[these] are the main features of punishment" (p. 244). Unlike the Christians, the Stoics conducted their self-examination, their version of the care of the self, privately. Thus, what was private for the Greeks was public for the Christians. Publication, Foucault (1997) notes, was a way to show the sins of the sinner—for the sinner to present

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[44]It should be noted that although this assumes a stable and fixed self, this assumption is within the context of deconstructing practices from a given moment in time and from a particular cultural context.

himself as a sinner. This presentation of self as sinner is not to identify oneself, but rather to refuse one's past and identity to be reintegrated into the Church (p. 245). Specific qualities must not only be exhibited, but these qualities must be exhibited to those with the power to actualize the transformation.

In the economy of salvation, the confessor must produce the truth in order to set himself free. Regarding confessions and religious power, Foucault writes that it is the ultimate aim of the church to assure the individual salvation in the next world (1994, p. 333). This form of power, he notes, "implies a knowledge of the conscience and an ability to direct it" (p. 333). It is the internalization of the church's value structures and ideology, and its enmeshing with our daily existence that maintains the power of the church. It is only within this structure that rituals, like confessions, have a meaning and value.

Like the confession, blogging is a ritual in which the writing subject is also the subject that is being written about. Unlike the confession, the power structure in which blogging is situated is not a direct one—bloggers produce within a network. In other words, it is a ritual situated within the power structure of the cyberspace. It is bound by both online practices (the format of the communication) and the social expectations of a known and unknown audience. Blogging is a ritual in which the truth is relative to its environment and dependent on context. However, blogging is not necessarily independent of what Foucault (1986) calls "external consequence" (p. 62), as the consequences are inextricably linked to the practice. External consequences include making friends, gathering information, etc.; these occur in addition to the speaking subject being pardoned, and experiencing psychic modifications. It is the pardoning and

the forgiving of the subject that requires an interlocutor or a community, social or power structure to recognize the act.[45] There must already exist a system to not only recognize, but also actualize the use-value of practices. Simply the presence of another is not enough.

The presence of another person acts as simply a witness to events. The economy of the ritual imbues the practice with meaning and value. Wherein Foucault's (1986) research the ritual is understood not as an act of social forgiveness, as religious discourse would suggest, but rather as a form of social justice, of civics on the micro scale, the theorization conducted here will only posit the affect as an impetus to blog.

<center>Being Public and Creating a Public</center>

Self-reflective blogging is little more than ordinary people writing about ordinary everyday things online. The internet is a public venue, and once a person acquires the required technology they are able to surf webpages and create content. Public in this sense implies 'of the people' that the means of production are attainable for all; it implies 'for the people', that it is produced for the consumption of all; it implies 'by the people', it is produced by ordinary individuals. The information disclosed within the content of the self-reflective blog is personal. The access to the discourse on the self is likewise access to everyday life. The information reveals who people are, what their preferences are, how they entertain themselves, the food they eat, their feelings, emotions, etc.

For Andreas Kitzmann (2004) privacy takes on common connotations; privacy can be understood as hiding an object, or making it hidden from anyone other than the person to whom the object or idea belongs. Privacy, for the blog, is likewise a matter of

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[45] The venue of cyberspace and the networked structure of the blogosphere changes the dynamic of power

access to personal information. Kitzmann (2004) describes privacy as "the measure of control an individual has over 1) information about himself, 2) intimacies of personal identity, or 3) who has sensory access to him" (p. 65). For the self-reflective blog that is rhetorically accessible, the language is an admission into the person's private life.[46] However, this does not assume that the blog is *outside* of the power structures that determine cyberspace. If the blogger has control, it is to simply make an entry hidden— to conceal it—from direct sight.

If it can be accepted that all of cyberspace is intersected by broader power relations, but that within the interface of the blog the blogger has a limited sense of control over the who reads their blog, then public and private are not a set of binaries but occur in degrees of accessibility. Depending on the blog software used the blogger may be able to decrease the access to their blog.[47] The blog itself has three levels of access. These levels are akin to gates; they do not protect or disguise the content, they merely serve a barrier to keep content out of sight. The most private blog is password-protected. The most public blog is listed by the user's blog service and will be easily found by search engines. An unlisted blog is less likely to be found but it is not fully private; it is unlisted by the blogging service directory, similar to that of an unlisted phone number (Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, 2004). The degree to which information can be restricted depends on the capabilities determined by the blog software. LiveJournal, for example, allows anyone to search the blogs that it hosts, but the blogger can determine the level of

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[46] It should be noted that although I am referring to the private life of the individual, I mean specifically the constructed narrative written by the blogger that is taken to be their private life.
[47] The term access is used in order to negotiate between the models of Kitzmann (2003) and Hardt & Negri (2005). Since Kitzmann's theorizations focus locally on the blog as a diary or *journal intime*, his approach to privacy is some what more akin to hiding a diary under a pillow — a place where it cannot be found — and thus remain 'pure'. Where for Hardt and Negri (2005), everyday life remains part of the broader power structures; there is no inside or outside, there are simply relations within power.

accessibility for each post. The blogger has the option to make each post private (just for herself), friends only (allowing only other LiveJournal bloggers who she lists as friends to access the post) and fully public. As Gumbrecht (2004) elucidates, rhetorical strategies such as sweeping generalizations and undefined contexts alienate readers who are not familiar with the blogger or who have not encountered them outside of the blog. The blogger has ultimate control over the comments section and can delete comments. Some software, such as Blogger, can restrict comments to individuals with a Blogger username and password only. Conversation is limited to those admitted by the blogger. Access, then, is both the degree to which information about the individual is shared and narrativized in a clear way, and the chosen privacy settings determined by the software design. Thus, access is the result of semantic and design choices.[48]

The Deceit of Blogging

The deceit of the diary-style blog is that its intimacy lies only in its details, and not in its access; access to the everyday life of the individual places it within the relations of power of cyberspace. This practice also has, as Foucault (1986) deems, "external consequences" (p. 62). These external consequences can be commercial, communal and personal. Some self-reflective bloggers, for example, may receive revenue from the advertisements that appear in their blog rolls. The blog is away of encountering and interacting with people online. It is a new mode for building community. However, it cannot be ignored that locally each blog has a corporate presence: advertisements, and that more broadly the blog is under the potential auspices of anyone with an internet

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[48]Security, or at least a sense of security, according Hardt and Negri (2005) requires "rather actively and constantly shaping the environment through military and/or police activity"(p.20). The relationship between accessibility, security and subjectivity is an important one, but beyond the scope of the work set out here.

connection. No matter how informal the blog or casual the content, the communal

aspects of the blog are always paired with a silent commercial co-presence.[49] The content

of the blog serves as a catalyst for communication, community building and reaching out

to others; however, the blogger must be accountable for the information that is posted.

While the blog may support new kinds of social bonds, there are also negative

aspects to the kind of access made possible by the blog. Lurking is a form of invisible

participation; it involves observation without participation. It is a benevolent form of

voyeurism. The silent periphery participant may simply observe a community with the

intention of active participation in the future. Typically, the lurker does not pose a threat

or impose upon the activities of the community's participants. Members of the unknown

audience can threaten the security of the individual or community may have malevolent

intentions. Strategic lurking or a practice known as "googling" can prove detrimental.

The rhetoric of privacy offers the illusion that blogs are somehow hidden or

concealed, and thus gives the impression that any kind of information can be shared. For

example, many bloggers have shared information about their jobs, and then later been

reprimanded. Whether a causal mention, a photograph, an aside or a full blown rant

about their workplace, employers are firing their employees for blogging about work.

Being fired for blogging is commonly referred to as being "dooced." This term comes

from Heather Armstrong, who was fired because of content posted on her blog *Dooce*.[50]

Publicized cases include Michael Hanscom, a former Microsoft employee, who was fired

as a result of a blog post entitled "Even Microsoft wants G5s". In addition, in France,

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[49]The presence of advertisements on the blog's interface is exemplary not only of the degree to which social relations and everyday life have been colonized, but of Hardt and Negri's dichotomy of inside/outside.

[50]The name of the blog came from her inability to spell dude quickly during instant messenger chats with coworkers.

Catherine was fired for content on her blog *La Petite Anglaise*. A semi-popular blog (up to 3,000 hits per day), Catherine wrote about work, her relationship and being a single mother. The content of her blog was written semi-cryptically using pseudonyms (her husband: Mr. Frog, and her daughter: tadpole) in place of names. Despite her attempts to be covert, her employer claimed that by using images she made not only herself, but her work recognizable. Each of these cases exemplifies the tension over what is considered to the private experience of the individual, and poses an uncertainty as to what part of their life *belongs* to them.[51]

As previously mentioned, the blogger has some control over the access of information. Rather than simply concealing parts of the blog, the EFF (Electronic Frontier Foundation) is trying to fight for blogger's rights so that bloggers can blog openly (see http://www.eff.org/ bloggers/). As part of their initiative they have instructions for how to blog and not get fired. Their suggestions include making the blog not googleable and by deleting the update on blog trackers such as technorati. However, the choice to disclose and include this information is the responsibility of the blogger. Nevertheless, differing discourses on the notions of public and private have created a tension surrounding what is appropriate to blog about.

The Conceit of Blogging

The access to everyday life has been framed as the presentation of the self, not simply as a representation, but as a form of self-conceit, a kind of narcissism. The blogger can be understood as solipsistic and narcissistic, where by a mobilization of their interiority for collective consumption online they are attempting to attain a form

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[51] Future analysis could approach this in relation to Deleuze's Control Society (1995).

celebrity.[52] Mediating the memoir for an interactive audience externalizes the experience of the individual for the reading pleasure of a mass, largely unknown audience. This externalization, as the product of cultural developments and tendencies such as the blog, for cultural critic and Harper's magazine columnist, Thomas De Zengotita (2004) has enabled "the celebration of people refusing to be just spectators" (p. 117). The mediation of the private lives of ordinary men for De Zengotita makes *jedermensch ein uebermensch*, it allows the zero to be hero (2005). Implied in this rhetoric of celebrity and fame is the positioning or framing of oneself as "special" or worthy of being read.

Subject production becomes a critical target for the inauthentic; it is understood as a mode with which to attract the attention of others. For De Zengotita (2004), this kind of public mediation allows for the democratization of celebrity. The blog is all about you, and you are "celebrated. Just for being you" (p. 126). Individualism is being positioned as a cultural norm. The everyday experience of ordinary individuals by this logic does not belong in a public venue. De Zengotita's discourse implies that the relaying of personal information is a transgression. However, blogging is not privileging the everyday, it is not celebrating the everyday, it is merely stating the everyday and using it as a vehicle for communication. Blogging is a mode of attracting the attention of others, however not necessarily for the kind of attention that De Zengotita describes. This is not to deny that some individuals may choose to blog in order to seek the validation of others, however, it is to suggest that blogging should not be shrugged off simply as a form of narcissism and presentation of the self. Instead, blogging can be examined as a kind of communication based on the sharing of intimate details for the purposes of communing.

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[52] This however, is more commonly associated with gossip blogs or celebrity blogs such as Perezhilton.com

For critics, like De Zengotita, the blogger is understood as being solipsistic, individualistic and narcissistic, and the blog, then, is a place to show off who you are and what you know. Certainly self flattery may be the intention, known or unknown, of some bloggers, but even Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1987), an *exemplary sufferer*, wrote his Confession under the pretense of "being like no one in the whole wide world." "I may be no better" Rousseau writes, "but at least I am different (p. 1, book 1)." Claims of narcissism could be levied against Rousseau and, perhaps especially, St. Augustine, who writing from the position of repentance reconstructs himself as a sinner. However, to strictly examine this practice as narcissistic stunts the possibility of opening up discussion for alternate possibilities.

A given blog, however conceited, is still a social space and a space for socializing. In response to the notion of narcissism I turn to Derrida (n.d.), who suggests that there is not simply narcissism and non-narcissism, but rather degrees to which narcissism occurs. To the most open degree, what would otherwise be called non-narcissism, is a more welcoming kind of narcissism, a "hospitable narcissism, one that is much more open to the experience of the other as other" (Derrida, n.d.). Love requires narcissism. Love requires, what Derrida (n.d.) refers to as a "reappropriation of the other in the image of the self." The presentation of the self is an opening up to or a point of admission for others to interact. As argued previously, the care of the self and self-reflection is not an individualistic practice even though it focuses on the individual. The production of a subject position produces encounters with others.

Sontag (1966) refers to the history of Christian public confession, which equates the self with the suffering self, as being the starting point for the more recent "insatiable

preoccupation with psychology" (p. 42). Religious discourse enshrouds confession with a use-value actualized in ritual. The ritual acts a symbolic exchange in the economy of salvation. For the blog to have a use-value there must already exist a system to not only recognize, but actualize the use-value of the practice. The use-value of the blog is a direct consequence of its venue; access to the everyday life is this consequence. For Sontag (1966) the writer serves as a cultural exemplar for the utility of self-reflection. Like Sontag's exemplary sufferer or De Zengotita's democratized celebrity, the blogger sublimates their suffering and reproduces their lived experience in blog form. The memory, once published, no longer serves to translate lived experience into the privacy of the psychic interiority, but mobilizes it for collective consumption.

Blogs do not only enable exemplary individuals to share their experiences, they enable anyone who has the means and the desire to use them. As a person, one has experiences. As a blogger, that experience is transformed into content to be read. The content serves to write the blogger into being online where others read about them and consume the narrative of their daily life. The process of posting, reading and responding is the ritual of self-reflective blogging.

Not only is the blog public, but it creates a public. This public interacts as a result of the personal information shared on the blog. The self-reflective blogger offers intimate details and in exchange their narrative is actualized and legitimized through interaction. They are mutually affected by each other. While authors and artists offer exemplary manifestations of personal experience, the fragile human condition is common to everyone. The desire to commune online by critiquing the external world is common

to self-reflective bloggers. The desire to use online computer mediated communication to affect others and to be affected through interactions is common to bloggers.

Economizing Everyday Experiences

Depending on the historical and cultural context, the presence of others takes on a specific role in the economy of self-reflective practices. Foucault (1997) makes explicit reference to the Christian ritual of confession. The economy of salvation depends on the exchange of repentance for pardon. The sinner must demonstrate modesty and show himself to be repenting in the presence of the clergy (p. 244). Within the context of the confession, it is the clergy member, who has the power to accept and actualize the sinner's repentance. In the same way that a sinner must exhibit modesty and humility for their sins to those with the power to offer them forgiveness, the blogger must exhibit their everyday life earnestly to other bloggers. Within the discourse of the blog, the bloggers do not have power over each other. Each blogger is the equal of any other blogger. Bloggers simply actualize each other's subjectivities and life experiences through interaction. The economy of the self-reflective blog depends on the exchange of personal information. In the exchange of information and comments, the bloggers actualize each other. No blogger is more powerful than the other, despite their software and in spite of their popularity. They are equals. The social networks formed are networks of equals who are different from one another. In the practice of blogging the participant is not transformed, but they are affected.

The culture that has developed as a result of access to information is more important, than the developments made in terms of software. Blogging is not a unique practice; it is a synergy of already existing online computer-mediated communication.

The blog is an evolutionary step, not a revolution, in the development of online communicatory practices. It is an emergent form of communication. Socializing occurs in addition to the information shared. It is not enough to be there online, but to be there with others online. The utility of the blog for the blogger is to *be* there online, and to be there *with others* online. The effect of the blog is affect.

Self-reflective blogging is an affective practice that is a synergy of self-reflective practices and online computer mediated communication. As a self-reflective practice it utilizes the subjective experience of everyday in order to interact with others. As a practice undergone in cyberspace it utilizes the public venue in order to seek out likeminded people. To paraphrase Foucault, the exchanges, the expression alone, produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it. The person who articulates is affected.

The function of the practice is determined by both the software design and deployment of the practice. How the software is used, the habits and conventions that develop, are as important as the software itself. The self-reflective blog, as a recognizable form of blogging, has certain generic expectations. For example, it is expected that the blogger reveal intimate details about their everyday lives. The social conventions of this kind of blogging are unique emergence. However, the social economy of the blog is derived from other, already established, forms of computer-mediated communication. Personal information is posted online not simply to produce and consume, but to share with other people. Like the science fiction fans of the ARPANET, bloggers share information as a way to commune and find community.

The term community comes to hold a particular value. As Kitzmann

(2003) writes;

> Most portals hosting Web diaries and Webcams represent themselves as
> functioning communities, groups conditionally united by common
> interests, mutual empathy, and the willingness to share personal
> experiences and thoughts. One thus belongs to the community by writing
> from the heart and the home- those corporeal and cultural places where
> authenticity and reality are believed to reside (p. 55).

As was articulated in the previous chapter, the sense of intimacy provides a kind of

authenticity.[53] By sharing details of everyday life the bloggers construct a sense of

intimacy. This constructed intimacy identifies them as a self-reflective blogger. What

Kitzmann addresses is that not only is it necessary for the blogger to adhere to the

cultural assumptions of writing with a sense of authenticity about their lived experience,

but that the larger practice is represented as a functioning community. Kitzmann's point

is particularly resonant. It is not the utility of the blog for the individual blogger that is

emphasized, but the ability to function as a community. The ability to achieve

community becomes a measurement of success.

Indeed the focus of much research on the blog has attempted to located it within a

framework of virtual community (Blanchard, 2004; Kumar, Novak, Raghaven &

Tomkins, 2003). Community has positive connotations of togetherness and cooperation.

As sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (2001) explains; "Company or society can be bad; but

not *community*. Community, we feel, is always a good thing" (p. 1). If culturally we

assume that community is a good thing, then this same cultural assumption applies to

cyberspace. The ability to achieve a virtual community must be *a good thing*. However,

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[53] Authenticity is used here as a reference to Kitzmann's work specifically is not meant to refer to questions
of veracity or truth in relation to identity or subjectivity.

due to the nature of the virtual, the criterion for a functional community needs to first be determined.

While software facilitates communication between individuals, the individuals maintain communication. "Not all virtual groups are virtual communities" as Blanchard (2004)[i] made explicit in her discussion of *The Julie/Julia Project*. The concept of the virtual community carries a discursive and practical significance. Quentin Jones (1997) differentiates between software that can sustain prolonged socializing, the virtual settlement, and a socializing group of individuals who perceive themselves as belonging to a group, the virtual community. The cyberspaces that people inhabit are not necessarily communities. It is precisely the *sense* of community that differentiates the virtual community from the virtual settlement. The sense of community, or in other words, the affect, is the perception that the activity in which one is engaging is meaningful and authenticates the practice.

'Community' becomes a way to validate and authenticate the goings-on in cyberspaces and venues such as the blog. As a result, the potential for community becomes a measurement. Community comes to mean an objectified measurement for a kind of belonging that takes place within virtual channels. If social space is a social product, then social conventions of the practice are a condition of the space. They are a condition of the space as much as the software design. The comments, trackback and permalink were identified by Blood (2004) as integral to the success of the blog as a participatory media, but are also able to support affective communication.

Jenny Preece (1998) examined the exchange of empathic and factual communication within the bulletin board of an online support group. At the time of her

study she suggested that better tools are required to help empower patients to seek out empathic and factual information from others with similar experiences. Her suggestions for improving the software include: making private communication via email easier, better interactive protocol, skillful moderation, allowing personal book marking within the bulletin board system, and the creation of a technique for supported searching. Blogging software has either eliminated or incorporated these suggestions. Most blog pages will link to a separate page with the blogger's information, this typically includes contact information, a photo and all of their blogs. The use of photographs, video and audio within the interface allows for a heightened sensory experience. As was articulated in the previous chapter, the hyperlinks in the blogroll and features such as trackback have practical implications for developing virtual community, which can otherwise be understood as a network of affection. These design features are what differentiate the blog, and allow virtual communities to function in way that they have not before.

In addition to the software components that help to sustain a community, other components speak to the popularity of individual blogs. Hit counters, guestbooks, being linked to, and appearing in another blogger's blogroll as a permanent link each provide the blog's visitors ways of signifying their approval and enjoyment of individual blogs. These features are indications of a blogger's popularity. While the software creates the channels of communication it is the aforementioned signifiers that offer ways to quantify and qualify the blog's appeal within a greater community. The socializing that takes place on blogs is done so under the pretense of being or becoming a community. However, these quantitative measures do not speak to the reasons behind these choices, nor do they suggest the individual implications of community. Mortensen (2004) writes

of academics and pedagogues imposing a kind of symbolic violence by "imposing meaning according to one particular system of understanding and disregarding an unknown universe of alternative meanings." In the case of the blog, she argues, the sensations behind the choices are ignored. The effects of the blog are characterized, but the resulting affects are ignored.

At A Lack of Words

The literature surveyed in the second chapter of this work indicated that blogging satisfied a social need. Studies focused on ways of quantifying and locating community formations or social networks (Kumar, Novak, Raghaven and Tomkins, 2003; Nardi, Schiano and Gumbrecht, 2004; Tseng, Tatamura and Wu, 2005; Herring et. all, 2005; Efimova, Hendrick and Anjewerdien, 2005). Miller and Roberts (2003), for example, concluded that what "motivates bloggers is related less to the need for information than to the self and the relations between selves" (p. 157). This relation between selves has been discursively framed as a mode of gaining attention or popularity (see De Zengotita, 2005). According to a quantitative study done by Nardi, Schiano and Gumbrecht (2004), 20% of the bloggers they spoke to started blogs because of requests from their friends. Nardi, Schiano and Gumbrecht (2004) also suggest 5 motives for writing a blog: 1. update others on activities and whereabouts; 2. express opinions to influence others; 3. seek other's opinions and feedback; 4. think by writing; and, 5. to release emotional tension. It is worth noting that only two of these are self intended reasons. Thus, the main motivation, at least implied by these works, for blogging is the potential to relate to others. Yet, also implied within these writings are traces of affect. For example, former child actor Wil Wheaton had his star status revived with the popularity of his blog *WIL*

WHEATON dot NET. In an interview for *Blog!* (2005), Wheaton describes both the affection and attention given to him by the readers of his blog.

Social contact and community are manifestations of affect. As Hjamlar Soederberg's (1969) protagonist Doctor Glas explains, "We want to be loved; failing that, admired; failing that, feared; failing that, hated and despised. At all costs we want to stir up some sort of feeling in others. Our soul abhors a vacuum. At all costs it longs for contact" (p. 60). It is the possibility to stir feeling, to induce an affect, and to receive affection that is part of the transaction. Where the writer has economized his suffering for art, the blogger economizes their life experience for affective social contact.

It is important to distinguish affect from emotion. In his text *A Sketch for a Theory of Emotions* (1962), Jean-Paul Sartre argues that if there were a phenomenology of emotion, then it "would deal with affectivity as an existential mode of human reality" (p. 28). Sartre's work is limited to treating emotions as phenomenon, as "an organized form of human existence" (p. 25). For Sartre, "the emotional subject and the object of emotion are united in an indissoluble synthesis. The emotion is a specific way of apprehending the world" (p. 57). Emotion is a way that consciousness understands the external world; it is an articulation of our relationship to the outside world. Antonio Negri (2005) states that; "unlike emotions, which are mental phenomena, affects refer equally to body and mind. In fact, affects, such as joy and sadness, reveal the present state of life in the entire organism, expressing a certain state of the body along with a certain mode of thinking" (p. 108). An affect is *felt* or perceived not only psychically, but also bodily.

Affect is both actual and virtual. Brian Massumi argues that since there is not a cultural-theoretical vocabulary specific to affect, emotion tends to be used as a synonym for affect. In *Parables for the Virtual*, Massumi (2002) sets out to distinguish affect. Affect is an intensity. The affective is the difference between the content of an experience and the intensity of its *effect*. The content of a blog may be emotionally written, but affect is that which is felt. Affect is the perceived response. What Sartre, Negri and Massumi express is the distinction between affect and emotion. Emotion is a mode of interaction, where affect is the modal sensation. The quantifiable markers of blogging: hit counters, blog rolls, track back, are all manifestations of affect.

The style and content of the self-reflective blog may be emotive in its expression, but it is affective in its effect. The feelings that a blogger has are relayed verbally through the blog post or in a comment, but they are not captured in their lived moment. Affects cannot be quantified. Hit counters and trackbacks may quantify the traffic a blog receives and how many times it has been linked to; however, it cannot measure the perceptions and responses of the visitors. The responses indicate the content of the reaction and the number of responses indicates how broadly the message was reached. The responses are a broad indication of how many people were affected by the blog post; they are a direct indication of the number of people affected with enough intensity to respond. Catherine of *Le Petite Anglaise*, for example, received 247 comments of encouragement on her blog after being fired. Tudor of *Broken Images, All Alike* receives enough hateful comments that his blog features an addition page where he posts them. These responses are the direct effects of the blogger's posts. The affect of the exchanges, how each party felt and perceived the interactions, are not articulated in the blog or the

comments. The blog only indicates affect; it shows traces of it. The affects incurred are in excess of the exchanges of the blog.

Affect cannot be located within the interface of the blog, it is a perceived sensation in the blog's reader. Affect is an excess. It is outside of the blog and the social networks. The affect incurred as a result of blogging interactions is in excess of the blog's content. Affect is in excess of both blog content and methodological quantification. Affect is, for time being, beyond methodological quantitative measures. Affect poses a problem when attempting to be studied. The consequence of this, as Torill Mortensen (2004) suggests, is that we are ignoring alternate meanings. An alternative meaning for the practice of self-reflection is the sharing of affect. The affective is being ignored.

Affect as a Biopolitical Power

Self-reflective blogging is an affective practice that is a synergy of self-reflective practices and online computer mediated communication. The exchanges, to paraphrase Foucault, produce intrinsic modifications in the persons who participate; they are affected. However, the contents of the blog only indicate affect. The affects incurred are in excess of the exchanges of the blog; they occur within the blogger. Thus, the effect— or utility—of blogging is affect. If, following Negri's (2006) imperative, we need to find a power within life that is not reduced to flesh and blood, then affect is that power. Further, if there is such as thing as the blogging revolution, then it exists on the mircoscale. The blogging revolution is the production of a subjectivity that produces affect through the communing and sharing of everyday life. Affect is a kind of biopolitical power within everyday life.

The effects of the blog exist in the social relations that have developed as a result of the blog's use and uptake, and not only in the presence of the software itself. Despite the popularity of the self-reflective blog, it has been largely framed as a leisure pursuit. The literature written on the social field of the blog has focused on: social movements (Kahn and Keller, 2004, 2005), the dissemination of political information (Hewitt, 2005; Sullivan, 2002 Kline and Burstein, 2005; O'Brien, 2004; Davis, 2005; Baoill, 2004), and ways of approaching the blog as a virtual community (Miller and Shepard, 2004; Gumbrecht, 2004; Scheidt and Wright, 2004; Blanchard, 2004; Wei, 2004; Efimova, Hendrick and Anjewieden, 2005; Nardi, Schiano and Gumbrecht, 2004; Blood, 2002a, 2002b, 2004). The media and pundits latched onto the blog as a revolutionary tool and as the new bearer of democracy. The Howard Dean campaign, for example became the cause that brought the blog into political existence, at least in North America. Hobby and leisure blogs, such as *The Julie/Julia Project*, have revitalized the notion of virtual community. Community, in this case, is the measure of the blog's success. However, the emotional sense of blogging has been downplayed and affect has been ignored or articulated as a need to socialize.

The Potential of Affect

The kind of production that occurs within online communities and larger networks of self-reflective bloggers is self-directed. It is a kind of biopolitical labor, which was introduced in the second chapter as a 'labor of love' or production motivated by a self-directed desire. This kind of biopolitical labor can be understood as an affective labor since it "produces or manipulates affects" (Hardt & Negri, 2005, p.108). For Hardt and Negri (2005), "biopolitical labor creates not only material goods, but also

relationships and ultimately social life itself" (p. 109). The social realm of the bloggers is a biopolitic that is self-directed, and as such is divorced from the state. Neither the state nor commercial interests can legislate affect, though—as illustrated by the presence of advertisements in the blogroll—they do exists alongside of one another.

The affects that are produced through the results of affective labor are outside of the state and they are outside the commercial. As Brian Massumi (2002) argues:

> Positively, the State can help induce the emergence of smoothly patterned social functioning in State-friendly forms, for example, through civil marriage, profamily policy, and health and welfare measures (Foucault's biopower). But caring cannot be legislated. Effective expressions of the positivity of belonging elude the State (p. 82-83).

Affects are incurred in excess of systems of power—the government and industry—that can absorb them and capitalize on them. To suggest that they are in excess is to suggest that they cannot be fully captured. The affect produced remains within the social realm. Affect is a kind of biopolitical power that exists within everyday life. Biopolitical production, for Hardt and Negri (2005) is "always *excessive* with respect to the respect to the value that capital can extract from it because capital can never capture all of life (p. 146).

In order to approach the role of the blog in a politics for the everyday, the social field must first be reinscribed as an equal component of politics. For Hardt and Negri (2005) "Democracy is a matter not only of formal structures and relations but also of social contents, how we relate together and how we produce together" (p. 93-43). Biopolitical production—unlike biopower, which imposes order from above society—is a part of society. Affect as a biopolitical power should not be confused with the

Foucaultian notion of biopower. Biopower is state directed, where biopolitcs are self-directed. Biopolitical production is not limited to waged labor, but is inclusive of all creative work (Hardt & Negri, 2005, p. 105) and produces not only goods, but also relationships and social life (Hardt & Negri, 2005, p. 108). Falling within the distinction of biopolitical production is affective labor. Affective labor is biopolitcal production because involves producing affects, relationships and cooperation among families and communities. Thus, it directly produces social relations and forms of life. The efforts undertaken to create, maintain, disseminate information and socialize via the self-reflective blog exemplify this categorization of affective labor.

Like this project, which focuses on a field of power to create subjective positions, Hardt and Negri's (2005) work on the multitude examines social movements based on subjectivity. The functioning of the multitude is unlike that of the movements and political interests based on identity politics that act together "based on what they have in common" (p. 86). Hardt and Negri offer the example of class as site of identification. One's class identity is determined by their struggle, classes are a collectivity that struggle in common. This experience is typically exemplified by a writer or poet whose "articulation becomes a point of solidarity for those who revolt against exploitation" (Hardt & Negri, 2005, p.106). Like Sontag's (1966) exemplary sufferer or the people who came together to support Howard Dean, identification with a cause and the experience of hardship unifies individuals. However, the politics of the multitude are driven not only for the struggle against misery and poverty, but also by a profound desire for democracy (Hardt & Negri, 2005, p. 67). The blog may be a democratizing media, but what its users have in common is the desire to congregate online, a desire that

implicitly leads to affective communication. As a disparate unity, the bloggers produce a space used for affective communication.

The model of the multitude is particularly useful in reference to the social formations created by blogger relationships. The multitude is a way to conceptualize a different kind of social subject. It is a social subject unlike the mass or the people. The multitude cannot be reduced to a single identity; it cannot be reduced to categories such as gender, sexual orientation, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, way of life, etc. Its differences remain distinct and different. It expresses the desire for a world of equality and freedom: an inclusive global democracy. It is, as Hardt and Negri (2005) describe, "the challenge" of the multitude to remain internally different, and yet to communicate and act in common (p. xiv). The interconnected and disjunctive blogger to blogger social relationships has often been referred to as the blogosphere. The blogosphere like the multitude can maintain and support competing discourses and yet remain interconnected.

The people who, to take an alternate example, voluntarily worked toward the creation of social software and maintained online communities, such as the WELL, participated in a form of affective labor. In *Multitude* (2005) the production of the common is understood as being the result of the affective labor, a labor of love or a labor out of a desire to communicate, an otherwise immaterial labor. In *Time for Revolution* (2005), Negri likewise identifies the relationship between biopolitical production and the common: "If constitutive *praxis* proceeds through a common language and biopolitical *praxis* of the common, it is within this movement that we live and construct the common at the same time as we construct being" (p.200). The social constructs the practical and, conversely, the practical constructs the social. It is within this mutual relationship of

praxis that not only the potentials of the construction of social and political become evident, but that they are already existing and already functioning.

The struggle for democracy is common to the multitude and the participation in an open network is common to bloggers. Unlike the multitude's biopolitical imperative to achieve an inclusive and democratic society, the imperative of the blogger is less weighty. The self-reflective ritual of the blogger is not inscribed by a political biopolitics, blogging is a form of the care of the self. Nevertheless, this choice is political in its consequence. It is an effort, a labor, which induces social relationships.

The formations of relationships between blogs, and thus between bloggers and their audiences, are social networks that depend on the deployment of an online subject position. In other words, like the multitude, the blog is also a product that is in turn productive; affective relationships are the product of self-reflective production. The individual blog page is the product of the blogger's creative efforts to articulate their lived experience, the story of their personality, and any other information they wish to convey. The individual blog page has the potential for beginning discussions in its comments section or to be critiqued in the body of another blog: it is a catalyst for communication.

The bloggers involved in self-reflective blogging are unified by their practice— even if they are not directly communicating with each other. Self-reflective bloggers, like all bloggers, are actively participating to create and maintain a dialogic/communicative social space. The world, perhaps, cannot be lifted by the virtual interactions of the blogger. However, the interactions of bloggers remain a 'creative

force' they have tapped in, so to speak, to a power that exists within everyday life. Affect is their power.

Affect as an excess cannot be utilized for exchange or capitalized on. The intensity felt by bloggers when interacting online can be infringed upon, but it cannot be stopped. It is not necessary that the whole of cyberspace act and get on together in the same way. A unified theory of praxis on the web is impossible; the commercial, political and communal realms of cyberspace have and will continue to exist alongside of one another influencing and even conflicting each other. This work has simply attempted to identify an instance—however fleeting—in which affective production has manifested successfully.

Conclusion

In the balance of structure and style, format and content, lies the functionality of the self-reflective blog. The conventions of the practice create a sense of the personal and intimate, and the software is apt to facilitate communities. This results in virtual communities based on commonality: the experience of everyday life. The quantity of ordinary people choosing to partake in this practice and disclose information about themselves signals that the blog is not simply important as an emergent form of online communication. The popular uptake of the blog and its success has less to do with function than it does with the desire to commune with others. This thesis has asked not what draws individuals to the blog, but what drives individuals to use a tool to share information about themselves. It determines that the blog is neither an emergent technology to bring democracy or an imposing form to re-organize current structures, but a conduit that is neither revolutionary, nor original, but serves to maintain affective relationships between individuals. The production of affective relationships is a kind of biopolitical power that exists in everyday life.

Efforts made to blog—like the efforts made to interact online in other CMCs—are a kind of biopolitical labor. The genealogy highlighted the continuity of self-constitutive practices between the virtual and non-virtual, and the affective labor undertaken to produce social relationships; it uncovered the utility of various economies of self-constitution or subject production. Subjectification is undertaken in order to produce affective relationships.

Further Research

The work set out here could be further elaborated with reference to Deleuze and Guattari's (1995) theorization on the control society. Within the Deleuzeo-Guattarian theorization of the control society and the corresponding shift in exchange, if what matters is access to information, then in what ways is the blogging subject complicit in further subjecting themselves to control? More specifically, if it has been set out here that the blogging subject contributes to biopolitical labor, then conversely, how has this same power simultaneously subjected them to control? Under this rubric how does affect function as a kind of autonomy? This further research should not only be conducted with reference to the self-reflective blog, but with reference other social networking platforms—including previous protocols. A re-reading of the socio-political development of computer-mediated communicative platforms in light of the intersections between Massumi, Negri, and, Deleuze and Guattari to understand the changing implications of subject deployment could also be conducted.

The present cultural moment is unique in comparison to the history of computer-mediated communication specifically because there are so many social networking tools that not only exist, but also are flourishing alongside of one another. It should be noted that all of these increased in popularity after the introduction and height of the blog's popularity. These social networking tools include: Friendster, MySpace, Facebook, Bebo, Flickr and YouTube. These tools—each variations on a theme—are specialized, yet they tend to overlap in both function and use. MySpace, initially intended to as a way for bands to connect with listeners, allows its users to add a blog to their profile. Facebook allows for its users to add music to their profile, write notes, and upload

widgets which link to other platforms and websites that the user frequents. While the

blog could be eulogized as being the first among these social softwares, it is not, as the

genealogy indicates, the first social software.

At a recent Facebook camp in Toronto, a jubilant Dave Morin, senior platform

manager of Facebook, exclaimed; "There is a revolution happening, and I'm glad to be a

part of it" (2008). Morin, extolling the virtues of the popular social utility, did not speak

to what changes Facebook had made to online communication, nor did he elaborate on

how this revolution was taking place. Revolution, at least within spheres of public

relations and media representation, is among the latest buzzwords. Coupled with web 2.0

and viral marketing this rhetoric adds a fresh life to the interactions and production that

has been taking place online since the late 1970s. If there is a revolution happening, then

that revolution has been slow to uptake, and it nevertheless remains within the parameters

of everyday life.

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