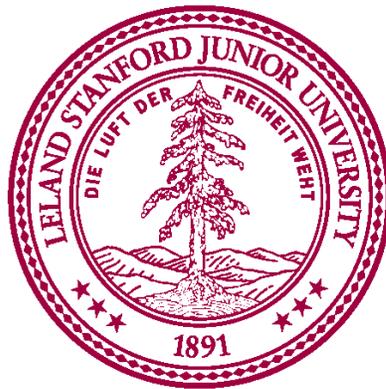


**A REBIRTH OF EXTERIORITY:
THE SOCIO-VISUAL CIRCULATION OF THE SELF
IN THE 19th CENTURY AND TODAY**

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A Master's Thesis
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INTRODUCTION

“ ‘Look how gloomy they are! Nowadays the images are livelier than the people.’ One of the marks of our world is perhaps this reversal: we live according to a generalized image-repertoire.”¹ If Roland Barthes wrote these words in the twentieth century, its truth only resonates more acutely in the digital age. Today, “flows of messages and images between networks constitute the basic thread of our social structure.”² In a society “too often occupied with the shock of the new,” as Steven Jackson would assert, there is a propensity to view this as a direct product of the explosion of digital technologies in every day life.³ Rosalind Krauss characterizes the modern day as the “post-medium condition.”⁴ The end of medium-specificity epitomizes the present moment in that the post-medium condition signals the “total saturation of cultural space by the image...[the] complete image-permeation of social and daily life.”⁵ The ubiquity of the visual in everyday life, however, predates the digital revolution; the roots of our modern relationship to visual images extend back to another technological revolution, the advent of photography.

This is a study of the contemporary photo album, an examination of practices of the personal archive and the intersection of questions of self-fashioning and gender

¹ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, 1st American pbk. ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 118.

² Karin Knorr Cetina, “From Pipes to Scopes: The Flow Architecture of Financial Markets,” *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory* 4, no. 2 (2003): 476–477.

³ Steven J. Jackson, “11 Rethinking Repair,” in *Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2014), 221–239, 226.

⁴ Rosalind E. Krauss, “*A Voyage on the North Sea*”: *Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), 32.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 56.

with social interaction in contemporary visual culture. I will show how the primary photographic practices of the mid-nineteenth-century reveal a proto-snapshot culture that prefigures that of the twentieth-century. This work will thus engage in a comparative analysis of the work of Lady Clementina Hawarden and a case study of Instagram as the archetypal twenty-first century photo album, in order to situate our practices of vernacular photography today in a broader continuum.

Practices such as Instagram are becoming rapidly and profoundly ingrained in our quotidian experience and the socialization of children and adolescents. It is crucial in a society that privileges innovation, “the dominant coding,” at the “start of the technology chain,” to not allow ourselves to become disillusioned by the ostensibly infinite potential of technologies.⁶ This is particularly salient when considering the larger mechanisms of scopic power that are being activated by such social media platforms as Instagram and are fundamentally altering our processes of self-fashioning, engendering an exteriorization of identity. Identity in the context of Instagram can be viewed as the sum of one’s experiences as documented and exhibited in visual terms; given that the entirety of one’s life experiences cannot be reduced to the content of one’s Instagram account, the content is necessarily selected and constructed to fashion a certain self-presentation of one’s life, in addition to the somatic self-presentation of oneself to the camera.

This work will reveal that there is a striking continuity of photographic personal archive practices that remain consistent, with an orientation toward identity, personal experiences, and self-representation, despite exponential technological

⁶ Jackson, “11 Rethinking Repair,” 226.

innovation.⁷ Instagram, which is not only a tool for communication but also instrumental in personal identity formation, becomes integrated into this web of superficiality in which individuals are socialized and engage in interpersonal fostering of relationships simultaneously with self-construction and presentation. I argue that the integration of photography in everyday life not only produces a socio-visual system characterized by the circulation of personal images, but also manifests panoptical pressures in the construction of subjectivities; the set of practices that develop around this human-machine relation involve phenomenological processes of self-fashioning in an internalized regulation of self-presentation as a consequence of the scopic nature of the medium.

The novelty of photography as an innovative medium of the nineteenth century has engendered a discourse about media, technology, and their implications for human-machine relations. Walter Benjamin insists that “what withers in the age of technological reproducibility of the work of art is the latter’s aura,” underscoring the loss of authenticity in technological reproduction, transitoriness, and repeatability.⁸ Benjamin also emphasizes the mechanism of displacement in technological reproduction, which places copies of the original in distant situations, noting the way that the apparatus “has made possible a highly productive use of the human being’s self-alienation... the same kind of estrangement felt before one’s appearance in the

⁷ Richard Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987), 165.

⁸ Walter Benjamin, Howard Eiland, and Michael W. Jennings, *Walter Benjamin Selected Writings*, New Ed, vol. 3, 1935–38 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 104.

mirror.”⁹ This notion is similarly taken up by Roland Barthes who emphasizes the alienating nature of photography despite the photograph always carrying “its referent with itself” and allowing for a “co-presence.”¹⁰ The photograph is “the advent of [oneself] as other: a cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity.”¹¹ According to Barthes, the repeated representation of oneself on a piece of paper for dissemination has a profound impact on one’s sense of self and identity.

Barthes identifies several key themes that are of the utmost relevance to this work, first and foremost that photography began historically as an “art of the Person,” referring to the tradition of portraiture and alluding to the relationship between human beings and photography.¹² He deems “the pose” to be the founding nature of photography, the act or orienting one’s body for display to the photographic apparatus.¹³ A central tenet of photography for Barthes is the “evidential power” of the photograph, by which the photograph is inherently anchored in the reality of the everyday.¹⁴ Barthes claims, “The Photograph is never anything but an antiphon of “Look,” “See,” “Here it is”; it points a finger at certain vis-à-vis, and cannot escape this pure deictic language.”¹⁵ The photograph thus serves as evidence, an authentication of experience rendered through visual representation. What’s more, photography undergoes a reversal in which individuals shift from photographing what

⁹ Ibid., 113.

¹⁰ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 5, 84.

¹¹ Ibid., 12.

¹² Ibid., 79.

¹³ Ibid., 78.

¹⁴ Ibid., 106.

¹⁵ Ibid., 5.

they deem important to “[decreeing] notable whatever it photographs.”¹⁶ This remains true today as observed by Ames and Naaman, who find that picture-taking is a “socially contagious activity”; the act of one person taking a picture signals the event or object as “photo-worthy” and initiates a domino-effect of picture-taking.¹⁷

Barthes also underlines the dialectic nature of photography from various angles. He notes that culture is a “contract arrived at between creators and consumers.”¹⁸ Framing photography in such economic terms, it seems to allude to Adorno’s notion of the “culture industry,” the co-construction of media and the self within a system of mass culture.¹⁹ Barthes designates photographic practices as ushering in a “regime of spectatio,” underlining the implicit, pervasive expectation that photographs are to be viewed by others.²⁰ Benjamin also introduces the idea of an inherently scopic relation of the individual to the camera, who is conscious that in standing before the apparatus, he is in reality “confronting the masses.”²¹ In this sense, in his discussion of cinema, Benjamin foreshadows a theme that pervades the lives of all individuals who engage with social media today. These notions all point to the broader idea of mediated relations. Identity is rendered two-dimensional and visual, projected for others and oneself to see. This occurs within the larger structure of a societal visual culture, and as Barthes notes, “pleasure passes through the image:

¹⁶ Ibid., 34.

¹⁷ Morgan Ames and Mor Naaman, “Why We Tag: Motivations for Annotation in Mobile and Online Media,” in *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, CHI ’07 (New York, NY, USA: ACM, 2007), 978.

¹⁸ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 28.

¹⁹ I will employ Adorno’s terminology throughout this work to refer to the broader entity of mass culture. See Theodor W. Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* (Routledge, 2005).

²⁰ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 97.

²¹ Benjamin, Eiland, and Jennings, *Walter Benjamin Selected Writings*, 3, 1935–38:113.

here is the great mutation.”²² What Barthes observes here is the idea that on an emotional and psychological level, components fundamental to human sensibility, traditionally characterized by direct experience, are now being mediated through the photograph. We will see this not only in the constitution of identity and self-presentation, but also in socialization and communication.

The visual extends to far more than theories of art and image in the context of this work. The notion of the visible self is foundational to understanding relations of power in society and how everyday practices can be structured so as to exert disciplinary pressures. Michel Foucault’s theory of the panopticon can serve as our starting point for situating the processes of scopic systems today. Foucault revolutionized the way that we think about the institutional exercise of power in his seminal work *Discipline and Punish*. He employs Bentham’s panopticon as a concrete metaphor for discipline through surveillance. The panopticon is an architecture “to permit an internal, articulated and detailed control – to render visible those who are inside it; in more general terms, an architecture that would operate to transform individuals.”²³ It is an apparatus for “observation, recording and training.”²⁴ A panopticon is thus a structure that enables control over those within the structure by virtue of making those individuals visible. The words “transform” and “train” point to the notion of disciplinary pressures, processes that cause an individual to act in a proscribed way. Individuals are maintained in subjection by virtue of being induced to “a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning

²² Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 118.

²³ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 2nd Vintage Books ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 172.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 173.

of power,” hence the main effect of the panopticon.²⁵ According to Foucault, this delineates the zenith of power, a degree of power that pervades the consciences of individuals so thoroughly so as to “render its actual exercise unnecessary.”²⁶

What we can see is that the photograph and the archive are implicated in a whole set of problematics that extend beyond their material existences as cultural objects. At the individual level, practices of vernacular photography raise the question of human-machine relations with respect to the camera. The scopic nature of the medium not only involves processes of self-fashioning but also implicates the notion of an implied other and the question of circulation and viewing. As Shawn Michelle Smith has underlined, photographic self-representation produces new subjectivities; just as for Foucault, “the panopticon becomes the emblem of systems of state surveillance that produce a newly disciplined subject...so the photographic portrait functions as the emblem (and not the end) of a new way of imagining subjectivity.”²⁷ On a societal and cultural level, we see that practices of vernacular photography can also be viewed through a Foucauldian lens of disciplinary practices that hinge on the notion of the self made visible through photography.

While the goal of this study is to gain insight into digital practices today, I take a comparative cultural history approach in order to understand the historical basis for practices today, the perennial human motivations with respect to photography, and discern what then has changed in the digital era. As Bolter and Grusin have shown, “what is new about new media is therefore also old and familiar: that they promise the

²⁵ Ibid., 201.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Shawn Michelle Smith, *American Archives: Gender, Race, and Class in Visual Culture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press,, 1999), 7.

new by remediating what has gone before.”²⁸ I thereby draw not only on communication scholarship concerned with digital practices, but also on the historiography of vernacular photography, theories of image, and feminist critique in order to elucidate a continuity of practices and articulate the implications of the documentation of lived experience through social media on larger issues of identity and self-presentation. The study of the personal archive is simultaneously a study of the relation of the self to the archive, as well as the archive as enmeshed in a web of sociality. As Gilles Deleuze posits, “Machines are social before being technical.”²⁹ In seeking to unearth the cultural practices that converged historically and set the foundations of our socio-visual culture today, two central questions compel this research. When we compare women’s photographic archives from the nineteenth century to today, what continuities persist that indicate an enduring human-machine relation to the camera, and what are the differences? Furthermore, what role does technology play in generating those differences?

My methodologies will privilege female users’ content and focus specifically on the gendered human relation to the camera. This approach is supported by the statistics that indicate that Instagram use is skewed heavily toward women, with sixty-eight percent of its users being female.³⁰ Moreover, the focus on female visual culture is inscribed in a larger historical paradigm, since the advent of photography,

²⁸ J. David Bolter, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), 270.

²⁹ Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), 31.

³⁰ Cooper Smith et al., “Here’s Why Instagram’s Demographics Are So Attractive To Brands,” *Business Insider*, accessed May 30, 2014, <http://www.businessinsider.com/instagram-demographics-2013-12>.

of personal archiving practices being traditionally associated with female activity. Since this study is interested in questions of identity construction and self-presentation, we can bear in mind the underlying assumption that external identity, or appearance, is a fundamentally female problematic. In the iconic words of Simone de Beauvoir, “On ne naît pas femme: on le devient.”³¹ The construction of identity is a particularly female problematic, especially with regards to the fashioning of external identity. It affects women in a profoundly more marked way than men from childhood onward, and is a critical part of the socialization process for women. As Sischy suggests, “from the minute they’re out of diapers, women have to deal with the world of appearances in a more inexorably pressured way than men do. That’s what makes this a subject on which women are expert witnesses: all women – not only Clementina, Lady Hawarden, and Cindy Sherman.”³² Inspired by the matter at hand, I will compare female practices of photography in the nineteenth century and the twenty-first century, examining the emergence of a socio-visual culture and the impact of these practices on identity as understood to be self-presentation.

The Original Social Media

This work will begin with an examination of photographic practices in the nineteenth century. The practice that has become a pervasive cultural norm of “posting ‘albums’ of...our edited personal lives, forging connections across a variety of social groups” has its origins, as Elizabeth Siegel underlines, in the nineteenth

³¹ “One is not born a woman, but rather becomes one.”

³² Virginia Dodier, *Clementina, Lady Hawarden: Studies from Life, 1857-1864*, 1st ed. (New York: Aperture, 1999), 114.

century.³³ The invention of photography forever altered the personal archive, giving birth to a set of interpersonal archival practices that were profoundly social and self-reflexive, catalyzed by the format of the *carte-de-visite*. The history of the *carte-de-visite* offers us a vantage point into the much broader history of a complex visual infrastructure developed during the nineteenth century. With the collective craze for the *carte-de-visite*, there emerged a dynamic practice of album-making that came to govern the domestic realm; photographic technology became immutably enmeshed in a profoundly social and personal order.

In photography's embryonic stage, photographs were still appreciated as autonomous works of art. The portrait retained cult value through the human countenance; as Walter Benjamin remarks, "In the fleeting expression of a human face, the aura beckons from early photographs for the last time."³⁴ The success of the medium in the 1850's required a new relationship of the beholder to the photograph, a relationship dependent on social valuation.³⁵ This new relationship marks a fundamental shift away from a valorization of photography in the aesthetic sense of *l'art pour l'art* toward a conceptualization of photography as a set of interpersonal practices that are profoundly social and self-reflexive, practices inseparable from the commercialization of the industry.

As the technology for making photographs developed and the first instantaneous photographs were made in the late 1860's, the term "snapshot," which

³³ Elizabeth Siegel, *Galleries of Friendship and Fame: A History of Nineteenth-Century American Photograph Albums* (New Haven: Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2010), 13.

³⁴ Benjamin, Eiland, and Jennings, *Walter Benjamin Selected Writings*, 3, 1935–38:108.

³⁵ Susan Tucker, Katherine Ott, and Patricia Buckler, eds., *The Scrapbook in American Life* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2006), 208.

was originally derived from hunting semantics, began to connote photographic meaning. As Coe and Gates illustrate, a writer in 1859 wrote of “snapping” the camera shutter, and in 1860 Sir John Herschel employed the term “snapshot” in his discussion of sequences of instantaneous photographs for motion analysis.³⁶ It is historical fact that instantaneous photography was not a practice available to the masses until the introduction of the Kodak camera in 1888, which is generally considered the inception of snapshot photography.³⁷ However, the practices that emerge surrounding photography that predate the Kodak are fundamental in establishing the set of conventions that persist to the present day, which define vernacular photography.

In the early 1850's, there were five types of photographs being produced, daguerrotypes, calotypes, ambrotypes, tintypes, and albumen paper prints made from glass negatives; the dominance of the collodion negative-albumen print was the result of the overwhelmingly lucrative success of the stereograph and the *carte-de-visite*.³⁸ Using the collodion negative-albumen print method to produce several images on a single glass plate, André Adolphe Eugène Disdéri patented the format and method for the *carte-de-visite*, a small photograph, mounted on a card approximately 2.5 by 4 inches in November 1854.³⁹ “Cartomania” was the phrase used to describe the explosively popular phenomenon that engendered the enduring practice of album-making as a perennial family artifact, signaling a domestication of photography. From

³⁶ Brian Coe and Paul Gates, *The Snapshot Photograph: The Rise of Popular Photography, 1888-1939* (London: Ash & Grant, 1977), 6.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 11–15.

³⁸ William C. Darrah, *Cartes de Visite in Nineteenth-Century Photography* (Gettysburg Pa.: W.C. Darrah, 1981), 1–2.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 1–4.

1861 to 1867, four hundred million *cartes* were sold every year in England alone. For the first time in history, the majority of society was able to acquire representations of their loved ones; before, only the elite had the privilege of making visible their genealogy.⁴⁰

The exponential growth of the *carte-de-visite* system of collecting and exchanging photographs was largely due to its seamless assimilation into the social customs that were already in place in the nineteenth century; individuals even began to leave photographs in lieu of calling cards. Young adults documented their relationships, giving “abstract networks of affection concrete form” through *cartes-de-visite*, as they navigated transitions between relationships, households, places, and identities.⁴¹ Its unparalleled success was the culmination of its affordable price and its size conducive to ease of viewing and transport, coupled with the commercial nature of the industry. Quickly a demand for not only personal portraits arose but also collectible cartes of celebrities, monuments, and landscapes, as well as a demand for a means of managing these collections, catalyzing the development of the album.⁴²

The central feature of the *carte-de-visite* phenomenon was that it stimulated, as William C. Darrah observes, a “revolution in photography and a greater intellectual revolution that placed the photographic image on par with the printed word in human communication.”⁴³ In particular, it signaled the nascent omnipresence of visual discourse in everyday life, “displacing words by pictures in the dissemination of

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Siegel, *Playing with Pictures: The Art of Victorian Photocollage*, 1st ed. (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2009), 20.

⁴¹ Tucker, Ott, and Buckler, *The Scrapbook in American Life*, 210–219.

⁴² Darrah, *Cartes de Visite in Nineteenth-Century Photography*, 4.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 1.

knowledge.”⁴⁴ As Elizabeth Siegel demonstrates in *Galleries of Friendship and Fame*, the photographic album was instrumental in blurring the private, domestic space with the commercial public sphere, being a site both of personal representation and of interpersonal relations.⁴⁵ Hence, as we will see through Hawarden’s photographs, the photograph in the nineteenth century represented much more than an autonomous aesthetic object to be viewed; the photograph was deeply enmeshed in a system characterized by the everyday, sociality and circulation, and phenomenological processes of self-fashioning.

The present work then, focuses on the work of Lady Clementina Maude Hawarden in order to elucidate a set of practices that, as we will see, establish the trajectory of vernacular photography in the modern period. In tracing the historical emergence of this unique visual culture in the nineteenth century, I will argue that it should be conceptualized as an example of a human-machine relation, a manifestation of a perennial, deeply subjective relationship between cameras and individuals. It was within these practices of photographic activity, that the foundations of snapshot photography were established - posing, assembling albums, viewing others’ albums, and so forth. These practices can only be understood as the beginning of a continuum of conventions that constitutes the foundation for the visual culture that came into being with the Kodak camera and persists to the present day. In this sense, these practices reflect society’s unchanging desires for the medium, which would come to fruition with the twentieth-century advancements in photographic technologies.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ See Siegel, *Galleries of Friendship and Fame*.

During the *cartes-de-visite* era, Lady Hawarden was an active amateur photographer, and her portraits are evocative of this visual discourse.⁴⁶ Hawarden's eight hundred photographs of her home, family, and surroundings, document her everyday lived experience, capturing in material form a culturally specific moment and milieu. Furthermore, as an amateur photographer, she transcends the archetypal nineteenth-century album practices in that she was not a patron of commercial studios assembling her own albums but rather a photographer in her own right. Her work is not only a quintessential example of nineteenth-century photography, but also exemplifies a discourse that is typically considered to have been catalyzed by the Kodak camera, a proto-snapshot discourse with a focus on the personal and domestic, as well as on the performance of identity within the broader cultural framework in which the photographs were produced.

The Birth of the Snapshot

The notion of the woman as executive archivist augmented exponentially in the twentieth-century Kodak era, with the marketing genius of "the Kodak Girl." The campaign was born from the reasoning that the Kodak camera was so easy to use that even a woman could be a snapshot photographer, and thus Eastman encouraged women to do exactly that by establishing the Kodak Girl as an American cultural icon. The Kodak Girl reflected American values; from the beginning she represented a female figure of independence, who traveled in her signature blue-striped dress and captured snapshots of the world through her own perspective. The original slogan,

⁴⁶ Dodier, *Clementina, Lady Hawarden*, 35–36.

“The World is Mine – I own a Kodak” connotes the emancipatory potential of the capacity to create one’s own visual images. Kodak particularly emphasized this photographic agency as a shift from the previous era of studio photography; the word “Kodak” even became a verb in the American vernacular, with the phrase “Kodak as you go” becoming commonplace.⁴⁷ World War One resulted in a return to more domestic, traditional values supplanting the valorization of exploration and independence that marked the origin of the Kodak Girl. Yet her new connotations remained in line with what had come to be the primary relationship between women and photography; the Kodak Girl came to represent the “caretaker of domestic memory... [encouraging] women to turn their cameras inward upon themselves” with the goal of preserving traditional values through taking pictures.⁴⁸ To appeal to female photographers, the Eastman Kodak Company introduced in the 1920’s a line of trendy cameras called the “Vanity Kodaks,” sold in five color schemes in matching cases, lined with silk; they even manufactured a case for one of their models with a matching lipstick holder, compact, and mirror.⁴⁹

In order to situate photographic practices today, it is imperative to contextualize the transition in the twentieth century to snapshot photography, which continues to characterize contemporary photography. Coe and Gates define the snapshot as a photograph taken with the camera held in hand, “simply as a record of a person, a place, or an event, one made with no artistic pretensions or commercial

⁴⁷ John P. Jacob, Alison Devine Nordstrom, and Nancy Martha West, eds., *Kodak Girl: From the Martha Cooper Collection*, 1st ed (Gottingen: Steidl, 2011), 10.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁴⁹ Coe and Gates, *The Snapshot Photograph*, 38.

considerations,” with a short, instantaneous exposure of 1/25th of a second or less.⁵⁰ The Kodak camera was first introduced in 1888, signaling the birth of snapshot photography with the innovative separation of the activity of picture-taking from the development and printing process.⁵¹ This small box form camera with an integral roll holder inaugurated the beginning of the technological advances that progressively made snapshot photography generally available, in its ease and portability, marking a complete emancipation of photography from the professional studio. The pervasive presence of the Kodak in society is made evident by contemporary references to the emerging snapshot culture; the musical comedian Corney Grain satirized the Kodak camera as “instrument of torture found in every country house. When you least expect it, you hear the dreadful click which is driving the world mad... wherever you be – on land or sea, you hear that awful click of the amateur photographer, Click! Click! Click!”⁵² The way in which snapshot photography took off in the twentieth century suggests that the technological advances of photography were simply answering an already existing need and desire of the public.⁵³

The inauguration of the snapshot era signaled a more casual aesthetic of self-presentation and an increased opportunity for narrative and expression. Snapshots were more casual, varied, and spontaneous, and allowed for a documentation of everyday events as much as of people.⁵⁴ The casual context of the snapshot elicited more candid expressions and gestures on the parts of those being photographed, by

⁵⁰ Ibid., 6, 9.

⁵¹ Ibid., 17.

⁵² Ibid., 18.

⁵³ Ibid., 13.

⁵⁴ Siegel, *Galleries of Friendship and Fame*, 158–164.

and amongst friends and family in natural settings.⁵⁵ Twentieth-century snapshots manifest enduring themes, of people, leisure, holidays, the urban scene, people at work, interiors, and events.⁵⁶ The documentary function of photography that is present in the nineteenth century is thus amplified tenfold in the snapshot era, something that will continue to present-day. As Coe and Gates note, snapshot photography was a leisure activity, and patterns of human activity remain more continuous than one would expect when juxtaposed with the material changes that take place over time.⁵⁷

An important tenet of Siegel's conclusion is that there was greater distance between the viewers of an album in the snapshot era than in the nineteenth-century album, that a pictorial past defined this era in contrast to the nineteenth-century pictorial present, with an increasing emphasis on memory.⁵⁸ Siegel also emphasizes that the snapshot era allowed for an increasing documentation of individual experience over familial experience; people began to compile their own personal album, marking an "increased potential for self-expression in album form, especially for women... constructing an identity apart from that family."⁵⁹ This rhetoric echoes recent communication scholarship on technological innovation today with respect to

⁵⁵ Coe and Gates, *The Snapshot Photograph*, 11.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 15–16.

⁵⁸ Siegel, *Galleries of Friendship and Fame*, 166.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 164–165.

its disruption of traditional family structures in its subversion of archetypal sources of control.⁶⁰

The nostalgic appeal of photography is significant in the twentieth century, with the proliferating documentation of the everyday. In addition to nostalgia, Coe and Gates underscore the subjective value of snapshots. They quote Hugo van Wadenoyen in 1947 who wrote that the photographs made by the millions of “snapshotters” in the country are but, “feeble ghosts of the occasions that have brought them forth, mildly evocative possibly to the imaginations of those immediately concerned in the events recorded, but merely fatuous and boring to the outsider.”⁶¹ Here we see again, not dissimilar from Lady Hawarden's photographs, an insistent interiority and insularity of subject matter. In contrast to Hawarden who achieved a mastery of light and composition and was a part of the amateur movement of photographers who exhibited artistry before the camera was a widely available device, the snapshot photography of the twentieth century has a strong penchant for the mundane and no prerequisite of artistic or technical skill. However, they do provide a “fascinating and evocative glimpse of the subject's environment.”⁶²

Richard Chalfen's work *Snapshot Versions of Life* sets up the discussion of snapshot photography as a communication system. He notes that as a result of developments in communication technology, “It is often said that we “swim” in floods of pictures and audio-visual messages that now dominate parts of our everyday

⁶⁰ See Mizuko Ito, "Mobile phones, Japanese youth, and the re-placement of social contact" in Rich Ling and Per E. Pedersen, *Mobile Communications: Re-Negotiation of the Social Sphere* (Springer, 2006).

⁶¹ Coe and Gates, *The Snapshot Photograph*, 14.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 11.

lives.”⁶³ The advancement of camera technologies makes us the most-photographed people in the history of humanity.⁶⁴ He frames his analysis of twentieth-century snapshots as an investigation of what people are expressing through the billions of representations we produce annually and how this visual communication system differs from analogous written communication systems such as letters and diaries.⁶⁵ Chalfen grounds his understanding of this visual communication in theory of symbolic mediation and humanity’s continued dependence on “symbolically-mediated forms” to make sense of our lives.⁶⁶

Chalfen defines snapshot photography as “home mode of communication,” a set of interpersonal practices of visual communication centered around the home, and argues that it is a social process of coproduction that establishes social norms with an influence on society.⁶⁷ He breaks down the processes of pictorial communication into distinct events: planning events, shooting events (on-camera and behind-camera), editing events or image manipulation, and exhibition events.⁶⁸ Content of home mode communication includes relationships, family, material culture, gift-giving, and social and cultural institutions, such as canonical first time events, traditions, holidays, and moments of transition. For example, the snapshot of one’s child sitting on Santa’s lap becomes institutionalized as an event to record. Wedding photos epitomize this home

⁶³ Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, 7.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 1–4.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 1–2.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 7–9.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 23–25.

mode in recording a life event, relationships, family, and gift-giving.⁶⁹ The *fil rouge* of this content is not just documenting important life moments but the snapshots become a narrative that draws attention to the fact that “life is progressing along a successful path.”⁷⁰

The constructivist nature of snapshot photography is central to understanding this practice. Just as there are many significant first-time experiences that are never (rarely) documented in snapshot photographs, medical visits, puberty, sexual experiences, childbirth, it is important to bear in mind the “norm of general happiness and lack of distress.”⁷¹ Individuals engaging in this practice construct particular views of their lives and also select the audience with whom they share this constructed representation. This selectivity occurs in the process of transforming the “real world” into a symbolic one.⁷² This is no different than the overwhelming majority of positive postings on social media today, photographic and textual. While snapshots celebrate transition and change, they represent change “in the direction of success and happiness.”⁷³ In this sense, snapshots represent norms of what life ought to be like, in that they manifest a biased and contrived view of the everyday.⁷⁴ They represent a “symbolic reality that has been tacitly agreed to and is shared by members of the same culture.”⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Ibid., 77–87.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 89.

⁷¹ Ibid., 78, 94.

⁷² Ibid., 7–10.

⁷³ Ibid., 99.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 167.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 142.

One of the most significant things that Chalfen emphasizes is in fact the dialectical coproduction of social norms through snapshot photography. The practice of taking pictures has the power to impact behavior and fuel new norms of socially and culturally appropriate behavior when cameras are in use.⁷⁶ While snapshot photography is a voluntary leisure activity, there is nonetheless a sense of obligation to engage in it.⁷⁷ Photographs become mechanisms of validation and the archive a tool for social usage, evidencing experiences, relationships, and moments of achievement; the photograph, “provides a statement of existence and an affirmation of the social self.”⁷⁸ The idea is key because it can serve as a self-validation, implying more of a personal memorializing function, or social validation, which is connotative of the interpersonal, communicative aspect of snapshot photography, which is inseparable from it. Chalfen concludes that Kodak culture fuels the exhibition of socially sanctioned behaviors and activities in conformity with cultural norms, and in playing an instrumental role in the process of socialization, it serves to maintain “ethnocentric value schemes and ideology.”⁷⁹ The archive thus becomes a repository of social power.

Instagram: an Application, a Digital Image, a Verb

While other applications and social media sites allow for photo sharing and the compilation of digital albums, Instagram is a platform created for and entirely

⁷⁶ Ibid., 10–11.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 75.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 134.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 139.

devoted to the personal assemblage of a photo collection. Launched on October 6, 2010 and named “iPhone App of the year” by Apple only a year later, the application now has 200 million active users, 20 billion photos have been shared, with an average of 60 million photos per day, and generating 1.6 billion likes.⁸⁰ Each user has a profile that they add to by uploading, filtering, and sharing new photos to the community of Instagram users. These photos uploaded sequentially by the same user constitute a sort of personal narrative. Instagram thus epitomizes the main functions of the photo album; it allows for the commemoration of important events and memories, it satisfies the social aspect of the photo album through the interactive aspect of tagging, hashtags, and “likes” within a community of users, and correlates to notions of identity in that each user’s profile is a constructed personal self-image. In so far as the content is generated by an individual, we can assume that in some way the collection is reflective of his or her identity and functions as a form of self-presentation and expression.

Digital technologies fundamentally blur Chalfen’s “home mode” with “mass mode.” While people’s uses of photography manifest a marked continuity even with the nineteenth century, the digitalization of the personal archive makes it so that personal photos have become an integral part of information and communication technologies, as Sarvas and Frohlich suggest; this, I argue, has significant implications.⁸¹ Several studies have been done with regards to personal uses of photography in the digital age, with varying emphases, including the comparison of

⁸⁰ “Instagram Press,” accessed April 30, 2014, <http://instagram.com/press/>.

⁸¹ Risto Sarvas and David M. Frohlich, *From Snapshots to Social Media - the Changing Picture of Domestic Photography* (London: Springer, 2011).

domestic photo curation in the home to teenagers’ “unsupervised” online curation, the sociality, reflexivity and embodied performances found in tourist photography, and the common functions of both traditional scrapbooks and Facebook for documenting friendship, navigating new media abundance, communicating taste, and building cultural capital.⁸² Yet another focus in scholarship has been on the social uses of personal photos, constructing personal and group memory, creating and maintaining social relationships, and self-expression and self-presentation, demonstrating how the increasing popularity of photo-blogging is the result of its ability to serve these social functions.⁸³ Van House et al. underscore the paradox between self-expression and self-presentation when self-expression occurs in these digital online formats, which necessarily involve the influencing of others’ views of oneself.

Sarvas and Frohlich approach their study *From Snapshots to Social Media* from an Science, Technology, and Society approach, tracing the core values of domestic photography, memory, communication, and identity in three distinct periods, the nineteenth-century or what they call the “portrait era,” the Kodak era, and the digital era today. They argue that the future will call for a shift in the balance of these core activities, raising issues including the ownership and privacy of content, multimedia standards, home information communication technology infrastructure, and photography with respect to younger versus older users. They define domestic

⁸² See Abigail Durrant et al., “Home Curation versus Teenage Photography: Photo Displays in the Family Home,” *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, Collocated Social Practices Surrounding Photos, 67, no. 12 (2009): 1005–23; Michael Haldrup and Jonas Larsen, “The Family Gaze,” *Tourist Studies* 3, no. 1 (2003): 23–46; Katie Day Good, “From Scrapbook to Facebook: A History of Personal Media Assemblage and Archives,” *New Media & Society* 15, no. 4 (June 1, 2013): 557–73.

⁸³ Nancy A. Van House et al., “The Social Uses of Personal Photography: Methods for Projecting Future Imaging Applications,” *University of California, Berkeley, Working Papers* 3 (2004): 2005.

photography as the constructed presentation of ourselves to the camera, through our decisions of what to record, how to frame it, and what to share, archive, or discard, noting the phenomenon of the “positive snapshot,” the projection of overwhelmingly positive images. These photos are arguably the most banal, yet their function is inextricably linked with personal memories, social bonding, and are “building blocks for constructing a socially acceptable image of us.”⁸⁴ Their claim that with digitization, photos are no longer physical, material objects, and domestic photography becomes an integral part of information and communication technologies, is key in exposing the idea of the digital as a determining factor in the nature of photographic practices today.⁸⁵

Sarvas and Frohlich note how the circulation of *cartes-de-visite* prefigures certain aspects of today’s social networking, analogizing the visual code for *cartes-de-visite* with profile pictures on Facebook. Like social networking, individuals would present themselves, their network, and the public figures they support while adhering to a prescribed visual code.⁸⁶ In twentieth-century Kodak culture, individuals began to fulfill three modes; the location for snapshots was the home, and leisure and family were the subjects.⁸⁷ They emphasize the emerging pattern of relationships and events being recorded visually rather than through language and users generating the content. Ultimately, they argue that the balance of values is shifting, with communication as the most important value of photography today (immediate sharing being prioritized

⁸⁴ Sarvas and Frohlich, *From Snapshots to Social Media - the Changing Picture of Domestic Photography*, 9.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 48.

over archiving), followed by identity and memory. They also stress that photography today is more dependent than ever on the infrastructure of commercial services.⁸⁸ As Katie Day Good notes, the “communicative superpowers” enabled by these commercial services come at a cost to users in terms of privacy and control over their online image.⁸⁹

Katie Day Good compares social media to the more traditional practice of scrapbooking, framing personal media archives as “ubiquitous and enduring cultural formations in modern mediated societies.”⁹⁰ She argues that scrapbooks and social media can be conceptualized as sites of “personal media assemblage” and “personal media archives,” a designation that highlights the social and archival dimensions of each medium. Good goes on to identify the three shared functions of these forms as documenting friendship, navigating new media abundance, communicating taste and building cultural capital. A “personal media assemblage” is defined as an individualized collection of media fragments, both user-generated and appropriated including notes, messages, photographs, and the like. A “personal media archive” is defined by Good as a personal media assemblage within a bounded setting with options for private or public display.⁹¹ Good draws attention to the societal shift towards heavier mediation with the growth of mass media industries. Even in the twentieth century, we see signs of people attempting to manage the massive flows of media in their lives as expressed by theorists such as Michel de Certeau and Guy

⁸⁸ Ibid., 180–182.

⁸⁹ Good, “From Scrapbook to Facebook,” 561.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 570.

⁹¹ Ibid., 559.

Debord.⁹² In this sense, curated personal media assemblages can be seen as “artful creations or as evidence of overreliance on or obsession with media,” thus exemplifying the tension many scholars have noted between self-expression and impression management or identity performance.⁹³

The impact of digital media at the interpersonal level has been the topic of extensive research in the field of communication, examining both the positive and negative changes that digital technologies have brought about, and their implications for the future of human interactions and the human experience. Eva Illouz in *Cold Intimacies: The Making of Emotional Capitalism* argues that the effects of digital technologies on interpersonal relationships are powerful, insisting that we must remain mindful of the social changes that are taking place at such an intimate level and the implications that these changes hold for identity and interpersonal relationships.⁹⁴ Mark Andrejevic discusses the widespread orientation toward the public sphere online and delineates the fundamental issue of this increasing orientation towards virtual communities: they fail to encompass the breadth of complexity of human interactions. These interactions “without the tangles of actually knowing people” are characterized by the fact that they lack the depth of material relationships.⁹⁵

Stephen Marche and Eric Klinenberg’s dispute on whether or not Facebook is making us lonely extends this conversation further. Klinenberg is correct in stressing

⁹² Good citing Garvey, 2004: 207-208; Tucker et al., 2006: 20 in *Ibid.*, 565.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 566, 569.

⁹⁴ Eva Illouz, *Cold Intimacies: The Making of Emotional Capitalism* (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity, 2007).

⁹⁵ Mark Andrejevic, “Watching Television Without Pity The Productivity of Online Fans,” *Television & New Media* 9, no. 1 (January 1, 2008): 24–46.

that all of these digital technologies are simply tools and platforms, whose impact depends on the user. Yet Marche's analysis identifies many of the key sociological phenomena that are arising as consequences of the ubiquitous use of digital technologies in our lives. He emphasizes that we have "broader but shallower connections" in a world of "instant and absolute communication."⁹⁶ All ultimately point to the fact that these technologies "lure us toward increasingly superficial connections."⁹⁷ As Ullman identifies too with respect to the co-evolutionary process of humans and the machine, she writes "We build the system, we live in its midst, and we are changed."⁹⁸ She acknowledges that, "the computer is not really like us. It is a projection of ourselves: that portion devoted to logic, order, rule, and clarity."⁹⁹ Technology is not capable of encompassing all of the complexities and depths of the human experience.

Communication scholars have sought to understand the effects of social media on notions of the self. The self can be separated in very basic terms into the internal sense of self and the external self that is fashioned for presentation to the world and ruled by appearance. Marche examines the way that digital technologies affect the construction and perception of identity, our engagement with others, and how in absorbing all of our friends' projected identities, we strive to determine how to construct our own digital personae.¹⁰⁰ Danah boyd highlights the ways in which digital media change the socialization process as young people while away hours

⁹⁶ Stephen Marche, "Is Facebook Making Us Lonely?," *The Atlantic*, May 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/05/is-facebook-making-us-lonely/308930/>.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ellen Ullman, *Close to the Machine: Technophilia and Its Discontents* (Macmillan, 2012), 91.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 90.

¹⁰⁰ Marche, "Is Facebook Making Us Lonely?"

browsing their social media accounts, forming ideas of the socially acceptable ways to present themselves and engage in the construction of their own digital identities.¹⁰¹

Thus as digital interfaces permeate our daily existence and are increasingly becoming our primary means of relating to one another, platforms that empty the intricacies of human interaction, the processes taking place in this realm are being emptied of their nuance as well. These scholars thereby all point to the interplay of the digital with the interpersonal, yet what they do not specifically articulate is the central role of the image in mediating these processes. If digital media are changing interpersonal relations, socialization, and the construction of identity, the role of the image cannot be neglected. Increasingly, social media are being permeated by the visual; as more and more human interactions are shifting to the digital realm, it follows that the image plays a fundamental mediating role. It is thus a relation between the self and the image, the image and society, in which the image mediates one's relation to the public sphere.

In a similar vein to Sarvas and Frohlich, I propose that memory, communication, and identity continue to constitute the primary functions of photographic practices today on social media, and that the digital era ushers in a shift in the balance of these core functions. I argue that the integration of practices of the personal archive in social media exponentially increases the self-fashioning function of the medium, revealing the paradox of supposed unbridled freedom of expression associated with the Internet and an internalized orientation toward mainstream

¹⁰¹ danah boyd, "Why Youth (heart) Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life," *MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Learning—Youth, Identity, and Digital Media Volume*, 2007, 119–42.

ideology. Social media catalyzes an exteriorization of identity; in the constant curation of one's life that social media affords, individuals construct a visual personal narrative that not only constitutes an act of self-construction in and of itself, but is also an act of self-presentation constantly subjected to an expanded audience of global peers, known and unknown. Instagram users' behaviors reveal that identity mediates the majority of the uses of the photo-sharing platform, and these practices exhibit an emergent culture of social norms that preside over users' photographic self-presentations.

In order to understand the origins of the contemporary photo album, and more specifically the practices that characterize socio-visual culture today in the digital landscape, this work is divided into two case studies. The first part of this work traces the defining photographic practices in the nineteenth century of sociality and circulation through the burgeoning *cartes-de-visite* craze and the development of album-making. I focus on the photographs of Lady Hawarden as paradigmatic of nineteenth century vernacular photography and identify key themes of the everyday, the culture industry, and gendered processes of self-fashioning in the performance of identity and the motif of the mirror. These themes will constitute my comparative framework for the nineteenth-century case study and my case study of Instagram in the following chapter. In the second part of this work, I engage in an analysis of the affordances of Instagram and the practices that characterize users' behavior on the platform, and lastly examine the thematic and aesthetic parallels between Lady Hawarden's photographs and my Instagram case study, identifying continuities and discerning the impact of the digital on these enduring practices.

THE 19th CENTURY: LADY HAWARDEN

Roland Barthes proposes:

Ordinarily, the amateur is defined as the immaturity of the artist: someone who cannot...elevate him (her)self to the mastery of a profession. But in the field of photographic practice, it is the amateur, by contrast, who is the attainment (assumption) of the professional: because it is he (she) who sticks closest to the noème of Photography.¹⁰²

Some believed in the nineteenth-century that amateur photographers, who took photos for reasons of satisfaction and divertissement, actually bolstered the development of photography into a form of high art, while the professional photographers of the time produced photographs solely for profit, driven by market ideologies.¹⁰³ The inherent connection between photography, the amateur, and the domestic, culminated in it being a medium that naturally lent itself to female practice. Krauss notes, “it is not surprising that the camera and photography have been placed within the ritualized cult of domesticity” for the photographic record “is an agent in the collective fantasy of family cohesion.”¹⁰⁴ Unsurprisingly, there were more women amateurs than professional photographers in the nineteenth-century, and women assumed forever more the role of executive archivist of the family.¹⁰⁵

Where does Hawarden then belong in this nineteenth-century visual culture? Her photographic career began at Dundrum, her husband’s family estate, which

¹⁰² Carol Armstrong, “From Clementina to Käsebier: The Photographic Attainment of the ‘Lady Amateur,’” *October* 91 (January 1, 2000): 101.

¹⁰³ Dodier, *Clementina, Lady Hawarden*, 87.

¹⁰⁴ Lindsay Smith, *The Politics of Focus: Women, Children, and Nineteenth-Century Photography* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1998), 16.

¹⁰⁵ Armstrong, “From Clementina to Käsebier,” 103.

afforded opportunities for landscape photography.¹⁰⁶ She was most active as a photographer during the years 1859 to 1864 when she composed portraits of her daughters, who comprised her primary subjects, in their South Kensington home.¹⁰⁷ Hawarden was elected to the Photographic Society of London in 1863, the most prestigious and longest-established British photographic society.¹⁰⁸ Since the beginning of photography, women had been active figures in the early commercial development of photography, producing tintypes, *cartes-de-visite*, and cabinet cards in female-owned studios.¹⁰⁹ When Hawarden began contributing in the late 1850's, there was no prevailing societal stigma that deemed it an aberration for women to partake in the art form. Female photographers were neither segregated in exhibitions nor in revues.¹¹⁰ Hawarden first exhibited her work in 1863 and again in 1864 at the Photographic Society's exhibitions; she was awarded the society's first silver medal "for the best contribution by an amateur."¹¹¹

She entitled her works "Photographic Studies" and "Studies from Life," which suggests artistic intent as these phrases were associated with art photography at the time.¹¹² The photographic journals of her day paid tribute to the merit of her work from her first exhibition through the end of her life.¹¹³ Hawarden was generally admired for "artistic knowledge and feeling in composition, posing and management

¹⁰⁶ Dodier, *Clementina, Lady Hawarden*, 14–25.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁰⁹ Jacob, Nordstrom, and West, *Kodak Girl*, 13.

¹¹⁰ Dodier, *Clementina, Lady Hawarden*, 95.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 87–88.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 44.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 11.

of focus and light and shade...tasteful selection and posing of models.” Lewis Carroll, one of her contemporaries, wrote in a diary entry on June 23, 1864, “went to the Photographic Exhibition which was very scanty and poor... The best of the life-ones were Lady Hawarden’s.”¹¹⁴

As Virginia Dodier observes, Hawarden is considered a transitional figure between the aristocratic amateurs of the 1840’s and the professional art photographers of the 1860’s. She is a second-generation amateur who came into her photographic activity during the wet-plate era.¹¹⁵ The Victoria and Albert Museum houses the majority of her work, some eight hundred photographs. Yet what is one to make of this collection? Is it a collection of art photography, amateur photography, or something else altogether? For the purposes of this study, we must consider Hawarden’s photographs as representative of a historicized culture of practices. While there is little record today of Hawarden’s album practices, barring the torn corners which suggest the photographs were kept in an album, it is important to view her photos in the context of this visual culture characterized by a myriad of profoundly social and domestic practices.¹¹⁶ Hawarden was working when the dominant professional method was the *carte-de-visite*, at the height of cartomania. The portraits she made of her family with her stereoscopic camera are evocative of the conventions of the *carte-de-visite*.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, Hawarden’s photographic activity in many ways transcends typical nineteenth-century practices in that she was

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 90–94.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 21.

¹¹⁶ Armstrong, “From Clementina to Käsebier,” 110.

¹¹⁷ Dodier, *Clementina, Lady Hawarden*, 35–36.

not a patron of commercial studios assembling albums of studio portraits but rather a photographer in her own right, exercising significantly greater agency over the archive she composed throughout her life. In this regard, her work is not only representative of nineteenth-century photography, but rather exemplifies a proto-snapshot culture.

The Female Archivist: Lady Hawarden and the Everyday

The Victorian adage of the camera being “the mirror with a memory” reflects the exceedingly personal nature of photography.¹¹⁸ Hawarden’s photographs are ruled by the personal and the introspective. Her photographs constitute, first and foremost, a record of domestic life in the Victorian era that epitomizes the shift towards a collective valorization of photography as an unprecedented means of documenting the realm of the everyday.¹¹⁹ Photography captures a moment in all of its temporal specificity, yet the technology allows for the capture of innumerable moments, so as to immortalize an entire lifetime. Andrea Henderson argues that British photography in the 1850’s and 1860’s “wedded realism,” and that Hawarden’s photographs exemplify what she calls a formalist realism.¹²⁰ As Carol Armstrong suggests, the realism of Hawarden’s photographs is in the “honest representation of physical reality.”¹²¹ The real, and the everyday, take on multiple dimensions in Hawarden’s work. As Carol Mavor points out, “Realism is real in that it depicts the details of

¹¹⁸ Smith, *The Politics of Focus*, 75.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 68.

¹²⁰ Armstrong 120

¹²¹ Armstrong, “From Clementina to Käsebier,” 142–143.

everyday life...But realism is also real in that it shows off its medium, it makes a spectacle out of its materiality.”¹²² In Hawarden’s photographs, “the real” can be understood as the everyday. Her photographs are almost exclusively of her family; she takes portraits of individuals and groups of several figures, and landscapes of the places she calls home. By involving her family in her work, the medium afforded her a way of engaging in their activities, by directing and documenting them.¹²³

At Dundrum, her photographs en plein air anticipate the definition of twentieth-century vernacular photography, manifesting the most spontaneity and candidness in their emancipation from the indoor studio context. She took photographs of the men working in the fields and stables of Dundrum. There are what appear to be candid photographs of her daughters in the fields, frolicking in nature. Even in the more posed shots, there is a tangible informality to the figures. They may be posing, and dressed for the photograph, but the act of being photographed comprises a social, family activity, reflecting the domestic customs of vernacular photography. As Dodier underlines, father and daughters appear natural, “cheerful participants in a family activity” when posing for her.¹²⁴ For Hawarden, photography was an activity to be shared with her daughters.¹²⁵

In addition, her photographic process lends itself to the capture of instantaneous moments. She used the technique of albumen prints made from wet-collodion negatives, conducive to almost instantaneous exposure times and crisp

¹²² Carol Mavor, *Becoming: The Photographs of Clementina, Viscountess Hawarden* (Durham, [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 1999), 86.

¹²³ Dodier, *Clementina, Lady Hawarden*, 12.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹²⁵ Mavor, *Becoming*, xxii.

detail. She worked with a portable stereoscopic camera for a short period, which also allowed for short exposure times and was compatible with photography indoors and outdoors.¹²⁶ Thus even in technique, Lady Hawarden exhibits a photographic activity that prefigures that of the snapshot era, in which cameras became much more widely available enabling people to record their everyday activities. In her more mature work in her home in South Kensington, she continued with this emphasis on the instantaneous, working outside, in well-lit rooms, or with materials that were light-sensitive, allowing brief exposure times. She referred to her work as “Studies from life,” implying that the photographs were neither retouched nor enlarged.¹²⁷ Although the majority of her photographs have posed models as their subjects, Hawarden encouraged her daughters to express emotion uninhibitedly through facial expression, posture, and gesture.¹²⁸

In the years 1859 to 1861, Hawarden primarily captured moments of her children around the house, playing, reading, and doing needlework.¹²⁹ She captures her daughter sitting by the window of the drawing room in one photograph, bathed in sunlight and absorbed in her reading. In another, Hawarden photographs her sleeping (or at the very least pretending to be) at her writing desk, projecting the semblance of giving in to an afternoon nap. Hawarden seems to freeze an everyday moment in the girls’ lives, one sitting at her vanity table reading, the other arranging her hair. The way in which neither face the camera and seem unaware of the apparatus reinforces

¹²⁶ Dodier, *Clementina, Lady Hawarden*, 24–25.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 40–44.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 38.

the snapshot quality of the picture and accentuates the everydayness of it. There is even the rare picture of a pet, a poodle to be exact, which is suggestive of a lighthearted, domestic shot in the context of the home. The poodle has been posed in an unnatural position propped between two chairs on the balustrade of their South Kensington home, the site of many of her photographs. The difficulty of capturing a picture of a moving animal also suggests an instantaneous snapshot.

Her photographs are thus representative of vernacular photography in the way that she documents quotidian activities, relationships, and the life stages of her family. In addition to the photographs at Dundrum in which the girls appear frequently with their father, the rest of her work documents the life stages of her children and the relationships between sisters. There are several classic portraits of the girls at young ages, capturing the essence of childhood in the same way that any mother today insists on taking portrait after portrait of her children. Hawarden documents her sixth daughter Elphinstone Agnes' youth in a portrait of the young girl's silhouette in her voluminous starched pinafore, with her bloomers just barely protruding, and her tiny boots tossed casually to the side. Using her stereoscopic camera, Hawarden photographs her young daughters Florence Elizabeth and Clementina at the window on a rainy day. Florence Elizabeth holds back the curtains, revealing puddles on the London terrace, as if to let the light stream into the room. Dodier remarks the informal staging "recalls scenes of pastoral dalliance... sur l'herbe."¹³⁰ One can imagine the activity of being photographed constituted a reprieve

¹³⁰ Ibid., 40.

from the ennui of being stuck indoors on a rainy day; the sense of languidity is palpable in the weight of Clementina's figure.

The photograph of her daughters on the balcony at their home in South Kensington forms an informal family portrait; the youngest Elphinstone Agnes holds a toy bronze owl tightly in her arms while Isabella Grace pets a dog in her lap. Clementina holds the dog's paw and the sisters, especially the older two, appear to be in communication and absorbed in an intimate exchange. In a rare mixed gender photograph, Isabella Grace is seen with her mother's cousin, Henry Brougham Loch, circa 1861, documenting not only family ties but is also especially suggestive of a "coming of age," being one of few mixed gender photographs. Isabella Grace is photographed outside on the balcony, on a precipice between the home and the cityscape, of childhood and womanhood, reinforced by her being depicted alongside a man. We see thus how in Hawarden's archive of photographs, there is documentation of her daughters' different life stages, from childhood to the brink of adulthood.

The Sociality of the Album and the Circulation of Images

Photography made possible for the first time the documentation of the present in real time. The practices of viewing and narrating that took place in the home were concerned with this newly visible social present (and past).¹³¹ The industry capitalized on the memorializing function by marketing the photograph as "an antidote to loss."¹³² It is not a coincidence as Sarvas and Frohlich underscore, that photography's

¹³¹ Siegel, *Galleries of Friendship and Fame*, 10.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 31, 85–87.

perennial roots in society hardened in tandem with industrialization, a time when traditional family structures were being dislocated; albums became “nostalgic compensators for the loss of family and the loss of the romantic rural world.”¹³³ Whether the photographs are arranged in an album or purely by the sheer nature of being taken sequentially, the medium affords the opportunity to curate one’s lived experience.

Over and above the impulse to document, to render immutable one’s ephemeral memories, albums in the 1860’s were “emphatically of the present and acted as daily reminders of the present.”¹³⁴ Photography in the nineteenth-century allowed individuals to become part of a community, through the act of being photographed and circulating images. In this way, individuals demarcated their position in society “by becoming part of a social archive.”¹³⁵ Siegel reinforces the notion that albums had several functions independent of commemoration, including genealogy, social connections, status, and self-presentation. The album served as a visual catalogue of both private and public social circles. As Patrizia Di Bello remarks, in a society obsessed with connections and status, the juxtaposition of celebrities with acquaintances provided a divertissement for viewers who would conjecture the actuality of the relationships portrayed in this visual “social game,” which blurred the lines between private and public figures.¹³⁶ Oliver Wendell Holmes also intimated that “ ‘photographic intimacy’ could be the foundation for new

¹³³ Sarvas and Frohlich, *From Snapshots to Social Media - the Changing Picture of Domestic Photography*, 42.

¹³⁴ Siegel, *Galleries of Friendship and Fame*, 146.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹³⁶ Siegel, *Playing with Pictures*, 51.

friendships,” suggesting the idea that the mere photographic representation of an individual could foster a connection and collapse the boundaries between strangers, creating a condition of perceived familiarity.¹³⁷

The sociality of the album is apparent in both its promise to provoke conversation in social gatherings as well as its implicit expectation of reciprocal interactions.¹³⁸ There was an understood culture of reciprocity and exchange in which photographs circulated and left “visible and tangible traces of social interactions.”¹³⁹ Individuals would peruse an album and then contribute his or her own photo to the collection; this interactive activity fostered connections and identification as participants became a part of each other’s “real” and visual social worlds.¹⁴⁰ Albums were at once collections to be cherished for personal value and also a means to advertise one’s social status and network. There was an inherent tension between the public and the private. The act of being photographed implied presenting oneself to several circles of people: the studio, one’s own circle, and every visitor who would eventually view the album.¹⁴¹

As Karen Knorr Cetina has noted, “our concepts of an everyday reality tend to be spatial concepts.”¹⁴² The nineteenth century marked however, as Alexander Nemerov has demonstrated, the beginning of technological, personal, and spiritual

¹³⁷ Siegel, *Galleries of Friendship and Fame*, 34.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 131.

¹³⁹ Siegel, *Playing with Pictures*, 55.

¹⁴⁰ Siegel, *Galleries of Friendship and Fame*, 113.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁴² Cetina, “From Pipes to Scopes,” 16.

dissemination, when spatial distance was conquered.¹⁴³ Photography allowed the dissemination of the self in the form of “photographic idol-emissaries.”¹⁴⁴ To begin with a concrete case, the actress Charlotte Cushman traveled with photographs of herself intended for distribution. These photographs were not mere keepsakes; they spread tiny pieces of her person to distant places, attesting to the medium’s capacity to make a person present in many places at once. In this sense, Cushman’s circulation of photographs epitomizes the anthropologist Alfred Gell’s notion of a “distributed personhood.”¹⁴⁵ Thus we see an inherent paradox between the ostensible impulse of “self-freezing” through the photograph that Nemerov identifies, and the dissemination of a multiplied self that extends beyond the bounds of the individual into an enlarged world.¹⁴⁶ What we can begin to understand is that these photographic practices exhibit what Knorr Cetina calls a “flow architecture,” involving “scopic” systems that project representations of individuals and circulate these images in a perpetual visual “flow.”¹⁴⁷

When individuals would arrive at the studio to sit for a portrait, they would coordinate their bodies in a conventionalized fashion for the camera, fixing images of themselves through light which would be materialized on metallic and glass plates. These photographs were then kept in albums displayed in the family parlor, and exchanged with family and friends through visits, correspondence, and travel. This

¹⁴³ Alexander Nemerov, *Acting in the Night*: *Macbeth and the Places of the Civil War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 17.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 21; See also Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), chapter 7.

¹⁴⁶ Nemerov, *Acting in the Night*, 29.

¹⁴⁷ See Cetina, “From Pipes to Scopes.”

socio-visual system provides a framework for building and maintaining relationships. This “constellation of technical, visual, and behavioral components” allows subjects to be disembedded in the sense that individuals can now become oriented towards one another through these photographic emissaries across time zones, shifting from communities of space to communities of time.¹⁴⁸ The scopic nature of photographs is such that they deliver much more than just windows to physically distant individuals: they deliver the realities of the subject of the photograph. As Barthes suggests, “The photograph is literally an emanation of the referent.”¹⁴⁹

The Culture Industry

The scopic element of photography is deeply intertwined with the commercial world. According to Walter Benjamin, photography cannot be disassociated from modernity, as photography constituted a new market for consumption and circulation, a market that deeply penetrated the domestic sphere. The industry capitalized on the link between women and vernacular photography, targeting women as their primary consumers.¹⁵⁰ Marketers framed the photographic album as both the most current trend and as a fundamental staple of the family, appealing to both femininity and domestic obligation, two of the most central facets of female identity in the nineteenth-century.¹⁵¹ Female consumers were thus key actors in the merging of the

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 19.

¹⁴⁹ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 80.

¹⁵⁰ Tucker, Ott, and Buckler, *The Scrapbook in American Life*, 266.

¹⁵¹ Siegel, *Galleries of Friendship and Fame*, 101.

domestic and commercial spheres with respect to photographic practices.¹⁵² As Siegel emphasizes, the market shaped the ascendancy of photography and the photographic album, but their perennial meaning was acquired in the domestic sphere.¹⁵³ Memories from this point on, would be shaped by something “deeply rooted in commodity and consumption.”¹⁵⁴ The commercial aspect produces what Siegel calls a “cookie-cutter sensibility,” which problematizes the competing impulses of individuation and standardization inherent in photographic practice.¹⁵⁵

We have therefore, a practice of image circulation that is built on the interpersonal, a practice that took shape because of its ability to fulfill the fundamental human desires to document cherished experiences and relationships, to compensate for physical distance through the cult value of the portrait, and to display one’s social network and status in material form. Photographs and albums also integrated themselves into a process of socialization, in which getting one’s photograph taken and the personal assemblage of albums constituted an opportunity for creative expression and self-fashioning.¹⁵⁶ Hawarden’s photographs are traditionally characterized as a record of domestic life, profoundly personal, self-reflexive, and expressive of female identity exploration. They were not, to be sure, commercial photographs produced in the studio for profit. However, as cultural productions, they cannot be extricated from the Adornian notion of the culture

¹⁵² Ibid., 71.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 111.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 71–72.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ For more on albums, female expression, and identity construction in the nineteenth century, see Beverly Gordon in *The Scrapbook in American Life*; Anne Higonnet, “Secluded Vision: Images of Feminine Experience in Nineteenth-Century Europe,” *Radical History Review* 1987, no. 38 (January 1, 1987): 17–36; and Elizabeth Siegel and Patrizia Di Bello in *Playing with Pictures*.

industry. Through the lens of the culture industry, photographs can be viewed as a species of commodity adapted to industrial production, with value in so far as they became integrated into social practices as commodities to be exchanged. Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote that photographs had “become social currency, the sentimental ‘green-backs’ of civilization,” reflecting attribution of social value to photographs.¹⁵⁷ Engaging in photographic practices was thus a means of self-definition within the demarcated bounds of society.

An English magazine from 1862 notes the “fantasy of being in ‘those wonderful books which everybody possesses, and strangers see you there in good society.’ ”¹⁵⁸ The photograph cannot be extricated from the phenomenological experience of seeing the other and being seen. This new form of reciprocal exhibitionism and voyeurism is evident in the expectation of display linked with the album. The nineteenth-century album was a centerpiece of the parlor, the most public space of the domestic sphere.¹⁵⁹ The expectation of display was even built into the physical design of the album; in the salon, the album stood innocuously as a bourgeois centerpiece on little rococo knobs that served as legs, a domestic “prop in social performances.”¹⁶⁰ As Marta Weiss demonstrates, the album was imbued with an element of theatricality, in which subjects performed for the camera, and in turn, the photographs were arranged in the album as a sort of narrative, like a show.

¹⁵⁷ Siegel, *Galleries of Friendship and Fame*, 15.

¹⁵⁸ Siegel, *Playing with Pictures*, 51.

¹⁵⁹ Siegel, *Galleries of Friendship and Fame*, 127.

¹⁶⁰ Siegel, *Playing with Pictures*, 46.

The result of these socio-visual practices that emerged surrounding the photograph and the album has more substantial implications than merely the social and the documentary. What we see is that the integration of photography in everyday life is that the relationship of the subject to his or her image involves complex phenomenological processes of self-fashioning, a “vague, casual” phenomenology to use Barthes’ words.¹⁶¹ What is being circulated in this scopic system then, in the words of Jean-Marie Apostolidès, is the “mediatic ego.” The “mediatic ego” refers to the self that circulates in images, that exists detached and external to one’s being. In contrast to the psychological self, which strives for a singular identity, the mediatic ego is the totality of the metamorphoses and multiplications of the numerous images that are in circulation in this scopic system. In this sense, the exterior identities of the subjects are being mediated by the culture industry. The self-fashioning element of photography is articulated in Hawarden’s photographs in their manifestation of feminine identity, their theatricality, and the recurring motif of the mirror.

Gendered Identity and Processes of Self-Fashioning

Hawarden’s photographs epitomize the “feminine visual culture” of “gendered image production” to which Siegel refers; the overwhelming majority of her work depicts female figures in the domestic sphere.¹⁶² Her photographs evoke what Armstrong refers to as an “insistent interiority,” between the recurring backdrop of the drawing room, women being represented in the archetypal domestic sphere, and

¹⁶¹ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 20.

¹⁶² Tucker, Ott, and Buckler, *The Scrapbook in American Life*, 266.

interiority in the sense of the subjects being members of Hawarden's family.¹⁶³ Staged in the drawing room, the quintessential Victorian female domain, the photographs cannot but elicit gendered connotations. Her photographs depict women seated or standing in parlors, women at mirrors, women embracing one another, and women in costume, with few exceptions.¹⁶⁴ There is an insular focus, on the domestic in opposition with the absent public sphere, and on women in almost the complete absence of men.¹⁶⁵ Lindsay Smith notes the pronounced presence of women's objects in the pictures, dressing tables, mirrors, vanity cases, and suggests that the everyday-objects acquire exceeding importance in a subtle narrative of the photograph.¹⁶⁶ Hawarden's photographs can be likened to mid-Victorian "subject pictures" of women sewing, dressing, reading, contemplating themselves in the mirror, or being absorbed in thought, with "no real subjects beyond the beauty of women and the comforts of home."¹⁶⁷ Henderson makes a similar remark, suggesting that the photographs reveal, "no essence for the artist to discover beyond appearances."¹⁶⁸ This take on the everyday sensibility of her photographs would intimate that an analysis of the photographs would not extend past a Vermeerian interpretation of the female domestic everyday.

However, as Carol Mavor claims, Hawarden's photographs require analysis from multiple perspectives as a result of the important issues they raise with respect to

¹⁶³ Armstrong, "From Clementina to Käsebier," 110.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁶⁵ Smith, *The Politics of Focus*, 38–39.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 40–41.

¹⁶⁷ Dodier, *Clementina, Lady Hawarden*, 44.

¹⁶⁸ Armstrong, "From Clementina to Käsebier," 135.

gender. For Mavor, this means a cultural-historical approach as well as psychoanalytic and feminist approach in order to examine the way in which gender, motherhood, and sexuality relate to photography's innate attachment to loss, duplication, illusion, and fetish.¹⁶⁹ Scholars have characterized these photographs by their intimate, introspective, dreamy nature; Marina Warner suggests that Hawarden "pioneered a fresh, unexpected angle of approach to her subjects, to the consciousness and spectacle of girlhood."¹⁷⁰ Similarly, Dodier posits that Hawarden, "pioneered the continent later named adolescence and mapped a new world of femininity."¹⁷¹ While the overarching aesthetic of Hawarden's photographs is the domestic everyday, we see that the underlying and central theme of feminine identity is crucial to a broader understanding of the female relationship to the visual, and photographic practices' influence on self-fashioning in society. The question of identity is most explicitly articulated in her costume tableaux; Hawarden's photographs also exhibit this theme in the conflict between interior and exterior, and the recurring motif of the mirror.

Performing Identities: The Theatrical Photograph

Barthes claimed that painting, photography, and the diorama were "all three arts of the stage."¹⁷² Lady Hawarden's costume tableaux are perhaps the most blatant example of the performance of identity in her photographs, of which staging is a

¹⁶⁹ Mavor, *Becoming*, xvii.

¹⁷⁰ Dodier, *Clementina, Lady Hawarden*, 8.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁷² Mavor, *Becoming*, 83.

predominant quality.¹⁷³ Costume tableaux were a genre of British portraiture traced back most notably to Sir Joshua Reynolds, who painted aristocratic women as mythological beauties.¹⁷⁴ Weiss notes that the practice of photographing subjects in historical, literary, or allegorical scenes “signaled a willingness to combine the seemingly truthful medium of photography with imaginary subject matter.”¹⁷⁵ Weiss underscores that the very practice evidences the “social and theatrical nature of amateur photography” in the nineteenth-century; photo sessions were social occasions in which individuals engaged in performative activities, posing for the camera and dressing up for just such *tableaux vivants*. These practices afforded individuals the chance to imagine and assume roles, with their friends and family, that ranged from the ordinary to the imaginary.¹⁷⁶

Hawarden’s daughters literally perform different identities for the camera. Hawarden’s costume tableaux have often invoked comparisons with Pre-Raphaelite paintings because of her use of costume, but as one of her contemporary photographers Rejlander remarked, “There was nothing of mysticism nor Flemish pre-Raphaelistic conceit about her work.”¹⁷⁷ Hawarden avoids “mysticism” in her elegant and idealized photographs because they “present the real itself in terms of aesthetic form.”¹⁷⁸ Even in staging imaginary scenes, Hawarden can produce multiple

¹⁷³ Smith, *The Politics of Focus*, 38.

¹⁷⁴ Dodier, *Clementina, Lady Hawarden*, 50–51.

¹⁷⁵ Siegel, *Playing with Pictures*, 38.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 38–40.

¹⁷⁷ Dodier, *Clementina, Lady Hawarden*, 96.

¹⁷⁸ Armstrong, “From Clementina to Käsebier,” 143.

realities within the confines of a single drawing room, “reality *tout court*.”¹⁷⁹ While these costume tableaux transpose the girls not only to different identities but to different eras, conveying a sentiment of nostalgia, her costume tableaux are still profoundly presentist. There is an evident “awareness that fancy and fact coexist in a photograph,” yet the photographs remain anchored in the cultural moment, in the unchanging Victorian drawing room.¹⁸⁰

The costume tableaux exhibit copious variety. Clementina poses as a shepherdess in eighteenth-century-style costume, reminiscent of the mode of Marie Antoinette. In other portraits the girls wear religious costume. As Dodier remarks, the occult held a fascination for many Victorians, and in one photograph Hawarden seems to have Clementina imbibing a fortune-teller. In another, she appears as a prophetess wearing robes and headdress. Dodier identifies an orientalist series, the girls in exotic dress and the drawing room draped in fabrics giving it a “tentlike atmosphere.” The orientalist aesthetic would very much be indicative of the temporal moment of her work in the height of the romantic period. Another photograph may have been inspired by a popular play in London in 1863, which led to the mass circulation of a *carte-de-visite* of the famous young actress Kate Bateman in the play *Leah*; the girls’ poses and costumes are evocative of this role. Another series of portraits is even more theatrical in the way in which the girls’ gestures and poses tell stories of courtship rituals, with Clementina assuming the role of the male suitor

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 144.

¹⁸⁰ Dodier, *Clementina, Lady Hawarden*, 112.

wearing breeches.¹⁸¹ They seem to act out the courtship rituals, which emphasize the restraint expected of a young woman; in each image, the suitor exhibits more expressive emotion and gesture, while Isabella Grace demonstrates restrained and distant indifference. Another photograph represents most explicitly the important courtship ritual of wooing, with the suitor serenading on his knees, showing his subjugation to the beloved. Only one image demonstrates the physical space between suitor and beloved being collapsed, evoking delicate intimacy suggestive of reciprocated affections, the suitor touching Isabella Grace's hat ever so lightly. If one recalls Freud's theory that, "children repeat everything that has made a great impression on them in real life" and "all their play is influenced by a wish to do what grown-up people do," we can understand these photographs as a process of socialization, in which the girls, by playing different roles, learn the model of propriety and social norms for their imminent adulthood.¹⁸²

The Interior versus The Exterior

If the costume tableaux constitute the most blatant projection of constructed identities, the other portraits of her daughters manifest a visual representation of the identity construction that defines adolescence, with more nuance and introspection. While Mavor's claim that Hawarden's photographs are charged with erotic and homoerotic sexuality is not of interest to my study, it is worth noting that Hawarden's

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 50–54.

¹⁸² Freud as quoted by Mavor, *Becoming*, 27.

daughters, for a majority of her photographs, are at an age of coming into sexuality.¹⁸³ This age is significant in that the height of adolescence is both the stage in which individuals undergo the most identity exploration and solidify the identity with which they enter adulthood.

As Dodier remarks, the recurring motifs of the woman-at-the window and of the mirror remind us that Hawarden's work bears elements of romanticism, inviting contemplation and reverie, and evincing a preoccupation with the self. The focus on the conflict between interior and exterior, and private and public, is also a distinctly Victorian preoccupation.¹⁸⁴ Hawarden often stages her models on a balcony or window opening out onto the cityscape, placed on a precipice between the interior and exterior. Here, she documents sisterly affection, representing the prevailing theme of relationships in vernacular photography; but moreover, her representation invites imaginative musings concerning the tension between the interior and exterior as symbolic of the precipice of adolescence, of the domestic versus the public, and of the self-conscious discovery of femininity. Lady Hawarden captures her daughter's direct gaze, who seems to assert her awareness of being photographed, of having her material presence captured for eternity. In this permanent record of her temporal being, she is immutably linked with the cultural symbols inseparable from her representation. The architecture, the location, and her dress, which reflects the height

¹⁸³ See Mavor, *Becoming*.

¹⁸⁴ Dodier, *Clementina, Lady Hawarden*, 48.

of style with the crinoline fuller at the back, brand her figure with a determined identity.¹⁸⁵

The Motif of the Mirror

The motif of mirrors is decidedly significant for situating issues of female identity and photography in this cultural moment. As Andrea Henderson observes, mirrors and mirror-images were motifs that painters in the nineteenth-century invoked to meditate on the nature of realism. Photography exponentially augmented the Victorian preoccupation with realism, uniting technical science, photology, and art in one medium, making it unsurprising that photographers were fascinated with mirrors; the mirror is a frequent motif in all Victorian photography of this period.¹⁸⁶ The “mirror with a memory” metaphor of the Victorian period captures the memorializing, archival impulse manifested by the documentation of family and the everyday, but it also invokes substantive connotations of gender. The mirror is a traditionally female object, and photographs of women contemplating themselves in mirrors naturally invoke notions of female narcissism.¹⁸⁷

The mirror also however, is indicative of the function of photography itself as a medium conducive to voyeurism and scopophilia. Armstrong reflects on the Barthesian understanding of photography’s “disregard of the ‘operator’ in favor of the ‘spectator.’”¹⁸⁸ Photography is by nature, a medium for the “spectator.” While

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 41.

¹⁸⁶ Andrea Henderson, “Magic Mirrors: Formalist Realism in Victorian Physics and Photography,” *Representations* 117, no. 1 (February 1, 2012): 120, 132.

¹⁸⁷ Mavor, *Becoming*, 101.

¹⁸⁸ Armstrong, “From Clementina to Käsebier,” 109.

arguably all art has some relation to the beholder, photography, in representing real people in real time, in a reproducible format that can be circulated, seems profoundly more penetrating. In the nineteenth century, stereoscopic images were quickly assimilated into the developing pornographic photo industry because “peering into the stereoscope was like looking through a keyhole.”¹⁸⁹ Mavor notes that Hawarden’s photographs emit a voyeuristic sensibility framed in private, feminine worlds.¹⁹⁰ Voyeurism and scopophilia typically conjure notions of an eroticized female image for a male gaze in the vein of Laura Mulvey’s feminist film criticism, yet the argument that Hawarden’s photographs are explicitly fashioned for the male gaze would be hardly persuasive.¹⁹¹ What is significant however, is the notion of photography’s inextricable relationship with a gaze.

Shawn Michelle Smith claims that photographic archives in the nineteenth-century influenced the ways in which Americans viewed themselves and others, as a model of subjectivity emerged in which outward appearances were perceived to reflect interiority. Judith Butler suggests that, “Interiority is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse, the public regulation of fantasy through the surface politics of the body.”¹⁹² Smith shows how visual technologies and visual paradigms conditioned people to construct “architectures of interiority” from external appearances, giving birth to a subjectivity mediated by various gazes. Thus the photographic practices of the nineteenth-century affirmed a distinction between the

¹⁸⁹ Mavor, *Becoming*, 111.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁹¹ Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” in *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, 1997, 438–48.

¹⁹² Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” in *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, 1997, 438–48.

self and other, and a split subjectivity between the interior and exterior, in which the latter determines one's interiority.¹⁹³ For the purposes of this study, the question is not whether or not Hawarden had artistic intent to explore questions of female identity, but rather to analyze her photographs and her practices (of her daughters, as adolescent girls posing for the camera) as inscribed in this visual culture; what I demonstrate with this approach is that Hawarden's photographs manifest phenomenological concerns for the constitution of identity through the gaze of the other, through the gaze of the apparatus, and the implications of this as a practice that inscribes itself immutably in society.

The overwhelming presence of the mirror in Hawarden's photographs compels a reevaluation of interiority. The act of peering into the reflective glass could be suggestive of meaning within; the mirror could be considered a tool for the examination of the soul. The close physical distance between the mirror and the girl gazing into it could also intimate her attachment to her own image.¹⁹⁴ As aforementioned, the mirror traditionally invokes connotations of narcissism; Armstrong views the repeated presence of the mirror as a "conflation of narcissism and tenderness, self-absorption and object-fixation that is characteristic of that gaze."¹⁹⁵ Lindsay Smith draws attention however to the fact that the mirror increases a sense of transformation of the private "female" space; the mirror offers fragmented and varied views of the subject and thus makes one "more acutely aware of the process of identification itself," and she suggests that the relationship between the

¹⁹³ See Smith, *American Archives*.

¹⁹⁴ Henderson, "Magic Mirrors," 136.

¹⁹⁵ Armstrong, "From Clementina to Käsebier," 112.

individual and mirror is something more than narcissistic or erotically voyeuristic.¹⁹⁶ In this vein, Henderson also posits that the recurring image of adolescent girls gazing into mirrors is suggestive more of a cultural commentary on women's appearance in society.¹⁹⁷

An archetypal photograph of Hawarden's body of work depicts Clementina absorbed in her own reflection, ostensibly intent on discovering something in the mirror, in the representation of her self. This photograph also invokes a complex relation between the interior and exterior world, the girl seated in the home and yet the mirror reflecting only the external landscape. The introspective scene seems to invite the beholder to contemplate along with the model, the process of self-fashioning through the lens of the female imagination. Scholars have noted that the motif of reflection is present not only in the photographs with mirrors, manifesting the romantic preoccupation with the self, but also in the romantic motif of the *doppelgänger*.¹⁹⁸ Hawarden often presents Isabella Grace and Clementina in close, physical communication giving the allusion that they are reflections of one another. Thus while Hawarden's costume tableaux evoke an explicit performance of identity, these more introspective works rather suggest a phenomenological notion of self-fashioning through identification with some other. In the photographs of self-contemplation in the mirror, this "other" is the reflection, thus an identity deeply rooted in outward appearance. In the photographs where the two sisters seem joined in "a fantasy of an empathy – a twinship," Dodier posits that the photographs explore

¹⁹⁶ Smith, *The Politics of Focus*, 42.

¹⁹⁷ Henderson, "Magic Mirrors," 136.

¹⁹⁸ Dodier, *Clementina, Lady Hawarden*, 48.

the journey from girlhood to becoming a woman through the sisters' identification with each other; yet this concept also implies a self-discovery of identity contingent on something outside the self, one's reflection, another person, or the apparatus.¹⁹⁹

While Marina Warner posits that in Hawarden's photographs we see young women who command authority over what they present and what they conceal, what Hawarden's photographs truly document, is the coming of age of her daughters in exhibition to and under the gaze of the apparatus.²⁰⁰ It is a constitution of a notion of the self contingent on one's relation to outward forces. They epitomize the dialectical tension of being both subject and object of the machine. The mirror and the reflection of the camera in the photograph of Clementina Maude underscore the phenomenological nature of photography in which "the omnipresent and impenetrable world of appearances is set up as the ideal."²⁰¹ As Henderson notes, "not only is the artist effaced in this picture, but so too is any world beyond that summed up in the photographic process itself."²⁰² The disembodiment of the photographer through her missing reflection in the mirror accentuates the ontological power of the machine. Although Hawarden worked with mirrors and windows in the majority of her works, she never appears in a reflection, "her own presence is erased."²⁰³ Clementina poses, subjected to being seen doubly, by the mirror, a perennial relic of the female sphere, and by the camera, an appendage of the culture industry.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 50.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 8.

²⁰¹ Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragment*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2002), 118.

²⁰² Henderson, "Magic Mirrors," 134.

²⁰³ Dodier, *Clementina, Lady Hawarden*, 40.

As Adorno and Horkheimer note in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, “the dominant taste derives its ideal from the advertisement, from commodified beauty.”²⁰⁴ They claim that “beauty is now whatever the camera reproduces.”²⁰⁵ The photographic industry fueled a set of codes for self-presentation, reflecting their argument that the culture industry imposes standardized behavior on the individual.²⁰⁶ Disdéri was both commended and rebuked for his influence in the changes of the practice of photography; his role in the establishment of conventions surrounding portraiture have been considered instrumental in the commercialization and standardization of poses, composition, and social norms for self-presentation. In his *Essai sur l’Art de la Photographie*, he insists on the importance that the photographer create a likeness that “penetrates the true character” of the subject. Yet as Darrah indicates, his guidance for photographers reveals a standardization of visual imagery, emphasizing certain proportions, uses of light and shadow, and stresses the importance of “a pleasing face” and a “beautiful resemblance.”²⁰⁷ The full-length pose for example was valued as a sign of status, reminiscent of the full-length portraits of the aristocracy, and also “played into positivistic beliefs by submitting the entire figure for the scrutiny and approval of the viewer.”²⁰⁸ There was an inherent understanding that character could thus be fashioned to contrive a “flattering yet still faithful likeness.”²⁰⁹ People were generally visualized, both in portraits and in albums,

²⁰⁴ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragment*, 126.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 119.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁰⁷ Darrah, *Cartes de Visite in Nineteenth-Century Photography*, 34–36.

²⁰⁸ Siegel, *Galleries of Friendship and Fame*, 20.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 42.

in sets that reinforced membership to a distinct group defined visually by common visual signs, clothes, props, accessories.²¹⁰

The commercial industry and domestic practices surrounding the panoptical artifact of the photo album hence manifested persistent tensions “between standardization and personalization, commodity and keepsake.”²¹¹ While there was an immense space for individualization in the photo album, and many factors to consider besides the explicitly commercial rhetoric, the *carte-de-visite* culture nonetheless “transformed the individual into a malleable commodity,” as Elizabeth Anne McCauley remarks.²¹² Through the lens of Thomas Mullaney’s notion of technosomatics, the practices that emerged were thus a set of somatically organized conventions.²¹³ Representations produced in this visual system were fashioned in accordance with somatic considerations. Subjects were typically seated or standing in the studios, which made use of decorative backgrounds and accessories; portraits offered the opportunity to project an identity. Posing guides in popular magazines conventionalized a discrete set of poses deemed socially acceptable and flattering for the camera.²¹⁴ If we compare a standard posing guide from Anthony’s Photographic Bulletin with Lady Hawarden’s portraits, we can identify this standardization of somatic self-presentation. Thus developed a systematization of visual discourse that came to influence, if not define, the entire domain of visual production during this time.

²¹⁰ Siegel, *Playing with Pictures*, 52.

²¹¹ Siegel, *Galleries of Friendship and Fame*, 9.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 65.

²¹³ Thomas S. Mullaney, “The Moveable Typewriter: How Chinese Typists Developed Predictive Text during the Height of Maoism,” *Technology and Culture* 53, no. 4 (2012): 777–814.

²¹⁴ Siegel, *Galleries of Friendship and Fame*, 44.

These technosomatic practices are inseparable from the production of new subjectivities that Shawn Smith identifies in which outward appearances were perceived to reflect interiority. If we consider now Hawarden's photographs, she fixed in image form innumerable representations of her daughters, and these photographs had the potential to be reproduced and circulated without bound. Each singular photograph of her daughter Clementina for example, represents not the unchangeable core of her essence, but a multitude of her selves, at different life stages, in different costumes, situations, and states of being. The scopic nature of photography implies not only that her mediatic ego, this amalgamation of representations, exists outside of her being with the potential for circulation in a system, but also that her self is being projected for observation. Visual technologies and visual paradigms thus encouraged a regulated exteriorization of identity in a visual paradigm mediated by the gazes of others.

Therefore, the socio-visual system that evolved in the nineteenth-century not only lays the foundation for the snapshot era, but also bears the characteristics that continue to define our modern relation to the photographic image today. These practices of sociality, circulation, and regulated self-presentation not only persist; they have become ubiquitous with the proliferation of digital devices, camera phones, and photo-sharing sites. Lady Hawarden's work can of course be appreciated for its autonomous artistic value as an archive of distinguished amateur photography in the Victorian period, but it can also be understood as a product of this socio-visual

culture, exemplifying a broader discourse characterized by the everyday and a construction of identity mediated by the gaze of the camera and by extension the gaze of implied viewers inherent in the medium. The focus of this paper is thus less the activities of any particular participant in this visual culture, but rather the implications of photographic practices which catalyze a “world of narcissistic expansion, the self spreading out in emissaries of...photograph.”²¹⁵ Adorno’s assertion of the culture industry’s reign of “pseudoindividuality” perhaps is only now reaching its pinnacle of fruition today as digital technologies allow for an exponential magnification of the scopoc mechanisms in this socio-visual system that defines our current period of modernity.

²¹⁵ Nemerov, *Acting in the Night*, 56.

INSTAGRAM: THE 21ST CENTURY PERSONAL ARCHIVE

As I have demonstrated, the photograph has been enmeshed in a socio-visual culture since the inception of the medium. In the nineteenth century, we have both the album as a vital centerpiece of the social drawing room and the circulation of *cartes-de-visite*. As aforementioned, Chalfen inaugurates the idea of snapshot photography as a mode of communication. He notes that the custom of sending a photograph as a Christmas card is an analog example of extending the audience of the home mode snapshot.²¹⁶ To cite Allan Sekula, “A photographic discourse is a system within which the culture harnesses photographs to various representational tasks.”²¹⁷ Scholars perpetuate the notion that visual signifiers do not have intrinsic meaning but rather attain meaning in specific social and cultural contexts.²¹⁸ Pictures, as all symbolic forms, are “polysemic” as Barthes would say; pictures communicate many things and the ultimate meaning conveyed is contingent on the beholder’s point of cultural reference.²¹⁹

A common discourse concerning analog photography is the idea that the communicative aspect of the photograph is provoked on the occasion of sharing snapshots with others, that the viewers do the narrating, not the pictures themselves.²²⁰ Not only does the digital era fundamentally blur the line between home and mass mode communication, to employ Chalfen’s terminology, but I suggest that

²¹⁶ Allan Sekula, “On the invention of photographic meaning” *Artforum* 12(5):37(1975) as quoted by Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, 82.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 120.

²¹⁸ See for instance Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*; Barthes, *Camera Lucida*.

²¹⁹ Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, 122.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 121–122.

increasingly, photos shared on social media do speak for themselves. The photos are circulated to a broader audience, removed from the physical beings who are sharing and viewing the pictures. The conveying of meaning is thus contingent on the power of the visual signs in the photograph. Roland Barthes describes this process:

in the traditional modes of illustration the image functioned as an episodic return to denotation from a principal message (the text)... now... it is not the image which comes to elucidate or 'realize' the text, but the latter which comes to sublimate, patheticize or rationalize the image.²²¹

The narration, alas, is reduced from a conversation to a shorthand caption and hashtag, occasioning an inversion in which the verbal serves as a supplement to the visual.

Even if *cartes-de-visite* in the nineteenth century were disseminated far from the photographic subject, these portraits served more as token portraits than images evocative of a personal discourse in contrast to the constant stream of visual images on social media that amalgamates into a chronological visual narrative. Moreover, let us recall Siegel's argument that twentieth-century snapshot culture privileges the documentary function of photography, the album being a more private, familial artifact, while the nineteenth-century visual culture was profoundly social and presentist. Given this framework, I propose that practices on Instagram manifest a return to a culture more akin to a nineteenth-century socio-visual culture without losing the enhanced technological capabilities from which twentieth-century snapshotters benefited. It is essential to consider the affordances of photography in

²²¹ Roland Barthes, "The Photographic Message," in *Theorizing Communication: Readings across Traditions*, 2000, 196.

the analog versus the digital age in order to identify what is distinct with respect to the digital, despite the overwhelming continuity of photographic practices.²²²

Instagram is at its core, a social media platform, making the visual inextricable from sociality and communication. Social media is in a sense, a synthesis of communication technologies with visual information. While on other social media sites photographs only comprise one aspect of the platform, Instagram was created for pictures. Its purpose was to allow people to filter their camera phone photos to enhance their visual appeal and share them with friends. A filter is “a device for transformation and mediation...[with] abilities to visually transform,” as defined by Robert Willim.²²³ However, as the co-founders of Instagram Mike Krieger and Kevin Systrom explain, it quickly became clear that just as much as the filters popularized the platform, the function that most excited users was being able to share their images on this social platform.²²⁴ Instagram users each have their own profile, on which they can upload pictures, filter them, and share them with the community of Instagram users (public) or with their personal group of followers. They can write captions to describe the photo, tag their friends who are also users on the platform, and add hashtags, cross-referencing their photo with all other photos on the platform tagged with the same hashtag. The photo then will show up in the newsfeeds of all of the user’s followers, who can then “like” the photo and/or comment on it.

²²² For a definition of the concept of affordances, see Donald A. Norman, *The Design of Everyday Things* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), chapter 1.

²²³ Robert Willim, “In and Out of Focus: The Cultural Dynamics of Mediation and Landscape,” 2012, 3.

²²⁴ Q&A with Instagram founders Mike Krieger and Kevin Systrom hosted by Jay Borenstein and CS210 at Stanford University, November 12, 2013.

In order to form my analysis of Instagram, I approached it from several angles. As a user, I am intimately familiar with the platform, the content that I post, and the content posted by the users that I follow. Secondly, I selected a handful of public accounts in the demographic of interest – young women – and examined the contents of their accounts at length in order to gain a more specific sense of the type of content, the purpose and motivation of postings, as well as general trends across users. These accounts include those of April Cross (aprilnicolecross), Kaitlyn Basnett (katybeeee), and Catherine Hoban (catherinehoban). This closer analysis confirmed many of the observations I had formed as a user over the past few years. For this case study, I will draw on observations from the subset of users I studied, but I will largely ground my analysis in the content of Catherine Hoban’s account for her content not only reflects the practices that I will detail in this chapter, but her photographic activity also exemplifies the potential of the platform in terms of expressive and artistic user-generated content through an extensive use of all of the site’s functions and capabilities.

In what way does Catherine’s account maximize the affordances of the platform? This user has over 1200 followers, which is remarkable for someone who is not a public figure. Catherine has been using Instagram since its creation, and her content demonstrates the progressive increased complexity of the platform (though tracking this parallel growth is not the focus of this work per se).²²⁵ Most significantly, she stretches the potential of the platform for artistic expression to the highest degree. Her content is genuinely creative, unique, and of artistic value. It is

²²⁵ All remarks are based on pure observation and informed speculation with regard to how CH uses the platform

clear that she not only employs the camera on her iPhone but also uses a more complex digital camera. She makes use of a variety of photo-editing software, presumably using applications on her phone but also potentially on the computer, and most of her Instagrams are not only edited but are also collages of multiple images, both self-generated and appropriated from the media, with textual overlay. What we see however, is that the practices evident in her account follow the same patterns not only of other users whose content is much more rudimentary in terms of artistic value, but also the patterns of photographic practices that I have outlined in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, her content epitomizes the societal trend catalyzed by social media of an increasing publicity of the private and the constant and instantaneous curating of everyday life. The question to bear in mind in the examination of these photographs, however, is less the instantiation of continuity with the nineteenth century, but rather to consider how the digital fundamentally affects these processes that to this day have characterized vernacular photography.

The Everyday

The theme of the everyday heavily punctuates the visual personal narrative constructed on Instagram, demonstrating a pervasive preoccupation with “the ‘extraordinary ordinariness’ of intimate ‘social worlds.’”²²⁶ As Hochman and Schwartz remark, “Every moment counts. Or at least so it seems through the eyes of social media users who take countless pictures of everything imaginable, instantly

²²⁶ Haldrup and Larsen, “The Family Gaze,” 23.

sharing them over the Internet.”²²⁷ What we see manifest on the platform is a fusion of photography with both the everyday and communication. Van Dijck describes this practice as “part of a broader cultural transformation that involves individualizing and intensification of experience.”²²⁸ This tendency is only heightened by the ease of access to photographic technologies, the near ubiquitous presence of them in everyday life, and the ease of circulation enabled by the digital.

On Instagram, we see the documentation of the most quaint everyday objects and activities. Moments are given visual value solely by virtue of being a part of one’s daily routine. Catherine shares photos of a bottle of coconut water in the grass, a close-up of paper cups of coffee, a table with her laptop, coffee and a muffin, and a homemade dinner on a coffee table in front of the TV. These photos however each serve to communicate something about her life. The coconut water expresses enthusiasm for a new product, featuring the “Pressed Juicer” label prominently. The dinner in front of the TV is to watch the Grammy’s, the laptop picture represents studying for midterms, and the close-up of the black coffee and the latté signal “top of the morning.” She uses a hashtag to qualify a picture of a cat yawning on top of a bookcase in a home, surrounded by magazines and flowers and communicate something about her life and what she is doing with her time. The hashtag “studypartna” indicates her identity as a student and the photo suggests she is studying at home at the time. A close-up picture of magnolias documents a time and

²²⁷ Nadav Hochman and Raz Schwartz, “Visualizing Instagram: Tracing Cultural Visual Rhythms,” in *Proceedings of the Workshop on Social Media Visualization (SocMedVis) in Conjunction with the Sixth International AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media (ICWSM-12)*, 2012, 6.

²²⁸ Jose van Dijck, “Digital Photography: Communication, Identity, Memory,” *Visual Communication* 7, no. 1 (February 1, 2008): 62.

place; through the caption, she indicates that this picture foreshadows the imminent arrival of spring, and that these flowers are a cherished part of her university.

Catherine also finds a way to insert herself into the images. Even in a picture meant to celebrate fall, a landscape at sunset with trees and fallen leaves, she creates a collage in which she combines this with a seemingly candid picture of herself in a garden. Another morning post depicts a breakfast of coffee and eggs with her sunglasses and phone positioned in the frame. The stylish glasses and pink bunny phone case connote a statement about her identity. The phone is the tool by which she uses the platform of Instagram, and its inclusion in the photo implies another camera. She also frequently photographs her personal clothes and accessories laid out in the manner of a fashion mock-up on a white-background (presumably her sheets). These pictures typically signal an upcoming event or packing for a trip. A recurring motif that allows the insertion of the self into these images is the inclusion of her legs in seemingly everyday photos. One image simply depicts morning coffee and breakfast in bed watching a TV show on her laptop, but the frame includes her legs adorned in American flag socks. She documents both the time of day and an activity in another post, “morning snuggle and new prints” holding coffee and clearly sitting on a bed; the frame features her legs, a cup of coffee, and some loose prints scattered on the bread and hung on the wall. Catherine posts a picture of herself to signal finding an old pair of jeans and drinking coconut water, posing on one leg on a balcony in the said jeans and holding a bottle of coconut water. What I hope is becoming perceptible is a certain qualification of time and moments through images and an orientation toward the photographic moment. Quotidian occurrences that are not ordinarily given

importance through documentation become photographic moments in this socio-visual culture.

Temporality and Instantaneity

The pervasive emphasis on the everyday is only heightened by the instantaneity afforded by the platform. In the twentieth century, advances in photographic technology allowed for the instantaneous printing of photographs, which made possible the distribution of photos during social gatherings at the time of their creation.²²⁹ The Polaroid camera brought new meaning to the documentary function of photography. Not only could people record their everyday moments with a camera, but they could also produce the images instantaneously in the social setting in which they were recorded. In the words of Sarvas and Frohlich, the Polaroid marks the moment that instantaneous images became possible, an “instant fossilization” of the present.²³⁰ Instant photography “allows both photographer and model to respond to the image as part of their interaction.”²³¹ As Nora Draper points out, changes in technology can have a fundamental impact on how content is produced and shared; for Polaroid, they maximized on the technology’s potential for fostering immediacy and sociability.²³²

²²⁹ Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, 84.

²³⁰ Nat Trotman (2002) as quoted by Sarvas and Frohlich, *From Snapshots to Social Media - the Changing Picture of Domestic Photography*, 70.

²³¹ Quote by Sylvia Woolf in Nora A. Draper, “Doing It| The Search for Winks and Nods: The Complications of Archival Research on Historical Sexual Cultures,” *International Journal of Communication* 7 (2013): 2548.

²³² *Ibid.*, 2549–2551.

The Polaroid in this sense is the Instagram of the analog era. Instagram maximizes on the instantaneity facilitated by digital technologies; Instagram allows not only for the documentation of everyday moments, but it enables the sharing of these moments instantaneously in real time. It reflects what Bolter and Grusin refer to as the “logic of hypermediacy,” or the “crowing together of images, the insistence that everything that technology can present must be presented at one time.”²³³ In this sense, Instagram is presentist technology. It is about documenting one’s lived moments and rendering these moments visual and visible in real time, in order to communicate what one is doing. It signals to the world “this is what I am doing, right now, in a particular place.” Users can even “check in” to places and add a location on their posts. Users thus both project the moments they are experiencing in real time, and consume visually moments unfolding around the world.

April’s photographs of places, landscapes, or objects largely commemorate experiences that are happening at that very moment in time, and are oriented around leisure and daily life.²³⁴ She underscores the instantaneous moment through hashtags, designating what event it represents and designating sometimes the month, the time of day, or proclaiming that it is “time for” a variety of activities such as “coffee-time” or “hammock-time.” In this sense every picture has a communicative purpose, for example a picture of cocktails is not simply a photo of drinks but rather indicates, through the caption, that she is going to see a concert. The platform is indeed so focused on the instantaneous present moment that the posting of something that one is

²³³ Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation*, 269.

²³⁴ Instagram user: aprilnicolecross

not doing can result in confusion to followers. Catherine posts a picture of a window view of snowy rooftops in Paris, misleading followers into believing she was actually posting this picture from Paris when in fact it was a picture sent to her from her aunt. A more typical incidence of this would be a post of a place to indicate one's actual presence in that place or imminent arrival; for example, she posts a picture of the landscape from the car on a drive from Los Angeles to San Francisco with the explicit caption "destination SF."

Visual Memories

This compulsive recording of the instantaneous and the everyday ultimately is inextricable from the documentary aspect of photography and the rendering of moments into visual memories. Yet the practice of documentation for the sake of memory is affected in a fundamental way by the transition to the digital, as well as the medium of memory itself. Alan Trachtenberg observes "in the old photography, the camera is an instrument of memory; in the new photography the camera itself serves as electronic repository of memory from which a past, a simulacrum of any past, can be called up and programmatically shaped."²³⁵ The digital archive is in essence an unlimited number of photos stored on one's hard drive, and yet there exists the uncertainty that they could be obsolete in the near future as technology changes rapidly and the risk of technological failure, as Sarvas and Frohlich note. They underscore the transient nature of the digital archive, in which once a photo has been

²³⁵ Citation by Alan Trachtenberg in Lisa Chandler and Debra Livingston, "Reframing the Authentic: Photography, Mobile Technologies and the Visual Language of Digital Imperfection," 2012, 11.

“viewed and commented upon, it is almost forgotten.”²³⁶ They argue that photography by younger generations on camera phones and online has little to do with building a visual history and preserving moments as memories; I will show however that on the contrary, memory is still a core function today, epitomized by the construction of a visual personal narrative. What they note that is profoundly important to consider nonetheless is that the memories that will be available are completely dependent on how we store and organize this digital data in spaces that are intrinsically commercial.²³⁷

This assertion underscores the importance of analog versus digital affordances. Walter Benjamin lamented the loss of the aura that accompanies the reproducibility of art; while photography is a reproducible medium, it was reproducible in the analog age within a limit.²³⁸ In the nineteenth century, printing a photograph was incredibly labor intensive. Whether one printed one’s own photos in a personal darkroom or through a commercial studio, it was a time-consuming and manual process. Reproducibility was thus subject to the limits of human printing power and the limits of financial constraint. Even with Kodak’s separation of the printing process from picture-taking, financial constraint was a concrete impediment to reproducibility and to printing itself. Even when massively reproducible in the twentieth century, there were still limited means for large-scale circulation.

²³⁶ Sarvas and Frohlich, *From Snapshots to Social Media - the Changing Picture of Domestic Photography*, 148.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 150.

²³⁸ For more on the logic of new media, see chapter one, “Principles of New Media” in Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (MIT Press, 2001), 27–48.

While I have shown that circulation was a characteristic element of visual culture in the nineteenth century and introduced the concepts of a “distributed personhood” and the dissemination of multiplied selves, albums themselves did not circulate and the distribution of *cartes-de-visite* in physical form through the post or from person to person was nonetheless confined by the limits of materiality. Photographs that are on view in the parlor or that are sent to acquaintances constitutes a completely different scale of distribution when compared to the digital circulation of images made possible with the institution of the Internet. The circulation of images on Instagram is thus on a massive, immaterial scale. What is remarkable is not that sharing photos online and the use of Instagram have become so ubiquitous; this is merely a modern adaptation of a continuum of practices that have characterized our relation to the camera since its inception. It is rather the very continuity of these practices in a vastly different infrastructure of social and technological conditions, which demonstrates that our modern human-machine relation with respect to photographic apparatus thus hinges on the digital nature of the visual today and its embedding in public social media platform.

If we consider the affordances of the traditional analog family album, it is a personal material object that creates a relationship between the presenter and the viewers. The small physical size of the album requires a small, contained audience, and the owner of the album plays a pivotal role in the presenting of the album, usually through a verbal narrative. In this way, the compiler of the album tends to construct it

with a specific (personal) audience in mind.²³⁹ Additionally, there is an assumption that the album-maker will be physically present and preside over the display, which presumes that the audience will be somewhat personal or at the very least people with whom the album-maker would socialize with in real life.²⁴⁰ This reinforces the connection between the traditional album, materiality, and the interpersonal relations fostered by it in a discrete physical, temporal space.²⁴¹

People continue to document their lives through photographs and assemble a personal archive on the platforms we have at our disposal. As Parikka notes, Foucault's expansion of the concept of the archive from concrete physical storage to a more abstract understanding of the archive as discourses that govern modes of thinking, acting, and expression, in many ways foreshadows our own transition to the digital archive.²⁴² In his definition of media archaeology as a methodology, Parikka touches on several important points for our conceptualization of the contemporary archive. He remarks in his discussion of "regimes of memory" that the archive is now "increasingly being rearticulated less as a place of history, memory and power, and more as a dynamic and temporal network, a software environment, and a social platform for memory."²⁴³ Parikka refers to archives today as "archives in motion" in contrast to traditional analog archives that sought to concretize moments and freeze

²³⁹ Andrew L. Walker and Rosalind Kimball Moulton, "Photo Albums: Images of Time and Reflections of Self," *Qualitative Sociology* 12, no. 2 (1989): 160.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 164.

²⁴¹ Nancy A. Van House et al., "The Social Uses of Personal Photography: Methods for Projecting Future Imaging Applications," 5.

²⁴² Jussi Parikka, *What Is Media Archaeology?* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2012), 113.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 15.

time.²⁴⁴ Thus regimes of memory are now integrated into “dynamic, changing, and processual software platforms” and archives have acquired a new function.²⁴⁵ While archives used to be solely about storing and preserving documents and memories, when integrated into information technologies they assume the new function of transmitting.²⁴⁶

The process-based archive is intrinsically disseminated and visible; the personal archive thereby becomes external. Just as Alfred Gell advances the notion of “distributed personhood,” Van Dijck reinforces a notion of distributed memory, “embedded in networked systems, pictorial memory is forever distributed, perpetually stored in the endless maze of virtual life.”²⁴⁷ The hyperbolic tone of the words “forever, perpetually, and endless” is no act of mere rhetorical coincidence; it serves to underscore the gargantuan vastness of the Internet and its unforeseeable future. Social media provides an institutionalized practice that encourages individuals to engage in the compilation of a personal archive in visual form, an age-old tradition, yet in a platform that allows for an ongoing and instantaneous proliferation of personal photographs accumulated in a single space over time and shared with an expanded network of peers. This archive is simultaneously an archive for the individual and an archive that is at all times viewable to a sweeping group of people at all times.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 120.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 17.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 123.

²⁴⁷ Dijck, “Digital Photography,” 70.

In the constant curation of one's life that social media affords, individuals construct a visual personal narrative through an ongoing documentation and sharing of images of the self and of selected experiences. This not only constitutes an act of self-construction in and of itself, but it is also an act of self-presentation within a framework that is constantly subjected to an expanded audience of global peers, known and unknown. Social media fosters a practice of ongoing and constant curation, thereby catalyzing the exposing of the private sphere and an exteriorization of identity. Instagram thus functions as a digital panopticon, in which users' digital archives are always visible and under surveillance, and users regulate their own behaviors with the consciousness that their content is constantly subject to the gaze of others. An in-depth analysis of the prominent uses of Instagram will further elucidate the nuances of this panoptic relation.

Sociality, Circulation, Communication: Tagging, Hashtags, and Captions

In the analog age, the album was first and foremost a personal archive. It existed in a society that promoted its sharing and viewing, so much so that display was an expectation built into the album. Thus while people were, as I have shown, conscious of the implied voyeur in their photographic practices, the photographs and albums themselves were nonetheless personal collections with the potential of being circulated and viewed. In this sense, the analog archive was at its core documentary with the possibility of becoming incorporated in social interactions, whereas the digital archive of Instagram, albeit constitutive of a personal narrative, is inherently

communicative and interpersonal. Every single image when posted enters the stream of digital images on the platform, to be viewed by other users.

Many scholars have demonstrated the importance of photography for social relationships. Van House et al. show that the motives for the “social uses” of personal photos are constructing personal and group memory, creating and maintaining social relationships, and of course self-expression and self-presentation. Vernacular photography is thus a form of visual communication, and is a conduit not only for the representation of social relationships, but also for the construction and maintaining of them. The popularity of photo-sharing on social media is due in part to its ability to serve the social function of vernacular photography.²⁴⁸ Van Dijck explains that photography is an instrument for peer bonding and interaction. He compares camera phone photography to old-fashioned postcard snapshots with short messages.²⁴⁹ Today, the default mode of personal photography is sharing.²⁵⁰ Chandler and Livingston note that this sharing of snapshots fosters connectedness to online friends and followers through the construction of an online identity.²⁵¹ Sarvas and Frohlich emphasize domestic photography’s role in strengthening social relationships as well. Snapshots allow for the communication of the here and now to close friends and to a wider audience. They note that camera phones allow us to illustrate messages to friends and “establish co-presence” with people who are not physically present;

²⁴⁸ Nancy A. Van House et al., “The Social Uses of Personal Photography: Methods for Projecting Future Imaging Applications,” 1–7.

²⁴⁹ Dijck, “Digital Photography,” 62.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 68.

²⁵¹ Chandler and Livingston, “Reframing the Authentic: Photography, Mobile Technologies and the Visual Language of Digital Imperfection,” 11.

photos thereby serve a utilitarian purpose in fostering a “feeling of togetherness” through immediate visual communication.²⁵²

Instagram was conceived as a photo-editing application; however, it quickly evolved into more than merely an image-manipulation application, and became a means to maintain a network through the sharing of one’s photos and the capacity to see the world of your friends in real time. It answered a pent-up demand for the visual in social networks. It was the first free filter application that truly gained momentum with a substantial following, and it quickly evolved to have an exponentially increasing focus on community and sharing. Instagram now has a central role in how the world shares and distributes visual information.²⁵³ Robert Willim describes Instagram as a “larger web of image sociality” and speaks of technologies that achieve “scopic proximity.”²⁵⁴ As Katie Day Good observes, social media render “the social experience perusable... by providing a structure and setting for users to ‘view and traverse’ their social links.”²⁵⁵ Photographic content is a crucial component to the fueling of this voyeuristic behavior.

A major component of Instagram, like many other social media platforms, is tagging. Ames and Naaman’s research demonstrates that annotation or textual tags have both personal and social purposes, which incentivizes tagging and fuels the ubiquity of the practice. Tags can be descriptive and contextualize an image for the viewer, or operate as a retrieval mechanism for one’s photographs by others in the

²⁵² Sarvas and Frohlich, *From Snapshots to Social Media - the Changing Picture of Domestic Photography*, 142.

²⁵³ Q&A with Instagram founders Mike Krieger and Kevin Systrom hosted by Jay Borenstein and CS210 at Stanford University, November 12, 2013.

²⁵⁴ Willim, “In and Out of Focus,” 4, 6.

²⁵⁵ Good, “From Scrapbook to Facebook,” 561–562.

community. They divide the dimensions for cameraphone images as social versus personal and affective versus functional. These photos are taken to be shared with friends and family, either to reify a collective experience or to share with those absent. The large audience with whom photos uploaded to social media sites tend to be shared provides the additional incentive of satisfaction derived from attention and recognition in the broader community (through comments and the liking mechanism).²⁵⁶ It is important to insist on the fact that tags usually are intended for the viewer and have little personal value; personal recollection was not found to be a primary motivation to tag but rather users tag to communicate information to others about the image and thereby about themselves. These tags can often be personal and be intended for specific known viewers, inside jokes and the like. Point-of-capture annotation further encourages additional tags. Ames and Naaman conclude that social motivations for tagging are the most significant, underscoring the immutable sociality of the photograph in vernacular practices if we recall the sociality of *cartes-de-visite* culture in the nineteenth century and the album as a facet of social gatherings in the drawing room.²⁵⁷

In addition however, Sarvas and Frohlich note the potential commercial value of tagging. This commercial endorsement can be seen in a variety of ways, from the tagging of an enterprise in a post to simply the prominent display of recognizable brands in photographs. What is more, users can create their own brands through user-generated tags. Users can promote the subject of the picture through a repeatedly used

²⁵⁶ Ames and Naaman, "Why We Tag," 971–975.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 977–980.

tag, attracting views and increasing the presence of that tag on the platform, especially when done in coordination with other users, “in order to facilitate later search and retrieval, forming, in effect, an ad-hoc, distributed photo “pool.””²⁵⁸ An example of this is at the time of sorority recruitment girls on Instagram will add the hashtag of their chapter and a hashtag urging viewers to rush their sorority to every single photo uploaded related to the organization, for example “#stanfordalphaphi #rushaphi.”²⁵⁹ User-generated tags allow for a self-branding, either by personalized hashtags or a hashtag that identifies membership to a specific group. This identification echoes nineteenth-century album practices in which individuals exposed their membership in different social groups and classes by virtue of including them in their visual social network, in other words, through the inclusion of certain people’s portraits in their photo albums.

Mobile devices thus allow for the sharing of more than just visual data; in addition to user-generated tags, individuals can add the location of the photo, the current calendar date shared, and tag the people present. Sarvas and Frohlich argue that this marks an increasing importance of nonvisual data in photos.²⁶⁰ I suggest however that in a platform such as Instagram, its popularity is derived first from the communicative power of the images as inscribed in a specific culture. Tags are merely complementary to the visual communication at hand. While the narrative element of analog photos and albums largely depended on oral description on the occasion of sharing photos with visitors in person, the constant and instantaneous

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 977.

²⁵⁹ Instagram user: katybeeee

²⁶⁰ Sarvas and Frohlich, *From Snapshots to Social Media - the Changing Picture of Domestic Photography*, 152.

posting over time accumulates into a sequence of photos with a narrative logic. Captions and hashtags thus serve as indicators that qualify the story that the photo itself evokes through cultural signifiers, activities, social status, people, attire, and place, manifested in visual form.

The Culture Industry

One of the most striking aspects of the personal narrative constructed through these personal snapshots is the integration of the commercial industry into the personal narrative. In the twentieth century, certain key behaviors emerge in popular culture, notably the norm of smiling before the camera.²⁶¹ The custom of contriving a jovial expression before the camera became common as snapshots were increasingly oriented towards leisure. Christina Kotchemidova argues that Kodak's advertising campaign in the twentieth century played an instrumental role in this, providing "a model for how subjects should look...Having saturated magazines with advertisements of smiling faces on snapshots, the industry defined the standards for a good snapshot."²⁶² The constructed nature of photography is alluded to by Bourdieu's conception "that the "natural" is a cultural ideal which must be created before it can be captured."²⁶³ As Nancy Martha West indicates, the icon of the Kodak Girl encouraged women to conceive of snapshots in a similar way to fashion, as a practice that "[enables] them to constantly remake the images that purported to represent their

²⁶¹ See Christina Kotchemidova, "Why We Say 'Cheese': Producing the Smile in Snapshot Photography," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 22, no. 1 (2005): 2–25.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁶³ Michal Raz-Russo, *The Three Graces*: *Snapshots of Twentieth-Century Women* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 4.

lives, just as clothes allowed them to constantly remake their self-image.”²⁶⁴ This trend was not only a direct product of Kodak culture but was also a result of twentieth-century consumerism.

Photography was not simply about documenting moments but rather about narrating how people lived their lives in a temporal era; the camera had the capacity to allow people to shape the representation of their lives and identities in certain ways. As Michal Raz-Russo notes, Hollywood’s “boom” coincided with photography’s ubiquity in everyday life. Snapshots thus provided a venue for people to emulate their idealized celebrities in visual media. As pillars of mass culture, the photos of celebrities that inundate society serve as models of ideal forms of self-presentation, exemplifying one manner in which mass media set the terms within which individuals define themselves through their own use of media. The culture industry’s impact on how individuals, especially women, represent themselves is non-negligible.²⁶⁵ This is also the time of the rise of the publicity headshot, as Peggy Phelan points out; the industry marketed their films through headshots of their actresses, the most famous being Marilyn Monroe’s still from “Niagara.”²⁶⁶

Catherine frequently draws on materials that she re-appropriates from mass media and creates new personalized images. She uses images of iconic celebrities like Marilyn Monroe and edits them by combining them with other images and overlaying them with text as statements of personal expression. This is reminiscent of the nineteenth-century *cartes-de-visite* collectors who would collect images of celebrities

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 5–6.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 6–11.

²⁶⁶ Peggy Phelan’s talk entitled, “Cindy Sherman: Photography and Feminist Theories of the Image?” at the Clayman Institute for Gender Research, Stanford University, March 6, 2014.

and integrate them into their own photo albums, endorsing certain public figures. It also reifies what Jenkins dubs “convergence culture” or similarly what Lawrence Lessig refers to as “remix culture,” the appropriation of existing mass media figures and manipulating for one’s own purposes.²⁶⁷ Catherine posts a picture of Lana del Rey performing live superimposed on the recognizable Coachella Festival Ferris Wheel. The hashtag “the queen” denotes her high esteem of the artist. Through this image, the user is both commemorating a moment but also endorsing a celebrity idol, reflecting a tradition already present in the nineteenth century.

In other images, the user explicitly endorses certain brands. Catherine posts a photo of a trunk show with a close-up on the clothing and appears present in the background, inserting herself into an overtly commercial post. She creates a promotional video with music and fashion clips for Coachella, marking anticipation and endorsing the event. In a post that emulates a fashion magazine mock-up, she features clothing items and advertises for a bikini company. She posts a similar photo before Coachella, taking a picture of the clothing and accessories she will bring to the event. The Coachella logo is featured prominently, and we thus see combined in one image an endorsement of a logo, a lifestyle, and an identity. In these photos, we see an overt emphasis on fashion and merchandizing through tagging in these photos as well as the prominent display of recognizable brand logos.

There is also more indirect endorsement of brands simply through pictures of the self. In a photo of Vogue magazine opened to an article on the new release of the film “The Great Gatsby,” a Starbucks coffee cup and her trendy *Isabelle Marant*

²⁶⁷ Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (NYU Press, 2006); Lawrence Lessig, *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy* (Penguin, 2008).

wedge sneaker feature prominently in the frame. In another photo of her lower body in front of a graffiti-covered garage, the majority of the frame shows her *Marc by Marc Jacobs* handbag and the same fashionable wedge sneaker. Even without explicit patronage, her personal photography and her body become sites of advertising and brand-endorsement and the personal and public spheres converge. In another image, she superimposes a landscape of Playa del Rey (filtered to have a retro tonality) on a black-and-white Chanel logo, merging brand with home, lifestyle with commercial companies. In another photograph, the frame captures a *Harper's Bazaar* magazine placed on a towel along with bottles of nail polish and her hand adorned by a ring and bracelets, with the caption “girly day with Kate and the boys.” The image is superimposed on a photo of the opened magazine. Yet again, we see this insertion of the self into the frame, as well as a merging of the everyday with the commercial, in which the commercial becomes a part of the personal narrative.

The Personal Archive: Curating a Visual Narrative

What has not yet been explicitly articulated but more broadly underlies everything discussed thus far is that the maintaining of an Instagram account constructs a visual personal narrative. As Katie Day Good points out, “the tradition of pasting together a media-based biography” that has been a part of Western society even before photography persists in the digital era.²⁶⁸ The structure of social media websites is such that it is conducive to being a site for personal narrative. On a photo-sharing social media platform like Instagram, the narrative is thus constructed through

²⁶⁸ Good, “From Scrapbook to Facebook,” 570.

visual content. Instagram profiles project a personal narrative, a fragmented visual diary. Photographs acquire meaning through being organized in a sequence, creating a narrative of one's life.²⁶⁹ The sequence in Instagram is dictated by the chronology of the day and time uploaded. Since the snapshot era, people have widely been able to "visually record their view of themselves and the passage of their lives" not only for themselves but also for presentation in an organized fashion.²⁷⁰ As Walker and Moulton underscore, the "autobiographical album" is a personal narrative not by virtue of being made up entirely of representations of the self but rather because it is filled with "images of the people, places, and things that were important to the maker."²⁷¹ Photography serves as one modern medium through which people grasp their world by producing narratives and memories in visual form, "performing photographic events actively and bodily."²⁷²

There are a significant number of posts in which pictures of the self signal a specific time of day or event in a highly constructed way. In one post, Catherine poses at night at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and captions the image "Bonne nuit les amis."²⁷³ In another, she poses outside surrounded by palm trees and uses an application to create a mirror image, in which one image is in color and the other is in black and white. She looks away, legs crossed. The caption, "it's a sun day," serves as a pun to mark the sunny weekend day. In a morning picture captioned "fancy seeing you here," she is "checked in" at "morning bliss" and drinking coffee from a mug

²⁶⁹ Nancy A. Van House et al., "The Social Uses of Personal Photography: Methods for Projecting Future Imaging Applications," 6.

²⁷⁰ Walker and Moulton, "Photo Albums," 160.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 173.

²⁷² Haldrup and Larsen, "The Family Gaze," 25.

²⁷³ Good night, friends

sitting in what appears to be a public place. The photo is clearly staged for the camera but the caption gives the semblance of a candid moment. There are several posts indicating a “day of” something, for example, a “day at the doctor’s,” or a “work day.” Yet the focus of these images has no apparent relation to the caption; both feature the user posing for the camera. In the “day at the doctor’s” photo, she poses in the middle of the street with one foot raised as if caught in a frozen moment, emulating the poses of models in the media. In the “work day” picture, she poses on a balcony in a maxi skirt, and the photo is super imposed onto a cityscape of Los Angeles. What we see is that the images on Instagram are not only highly oriented toward the self, but they are inextricable from the instantaneous communication of everyday moments. The photographic moment is thereby integrated into everyday life in a dialectic way. We not only actively record moments as they unfold, but we consciously create photographic moments for the sole purpose of picture-taking, as evidenced by the patently posed photographs on Instagram that become a part of daily activities. In another post by Catherine, she poses on her balcony in a silk robe; the lighting is suggestive of sunrise and the position of her hand alludes to drinking coffee. Again the collage of the image with a cityscape along with the lighting and time of posting indicate a temporality and place, but more importantly we see a conscious effort to curate daily life.

A significant element of the personal narrative is relationships, which feature prominently in Instagram posts. Pictures of or with loved ones, family, friends, and romantic relationships are pervasive on the platform. Catherine particularly documents her relationship with her mother. In a triptych of pictures, she and her

mother pose with an umbrella, both wearing black, marking “rainy days with ma maman.” The photo authenticates a place (checked-in at Santa Monica) and a temporal state (the rain), and serves as an affirmation of the relationship as well as a recording of an everyday moment. In another post, they pose for the camera holding hands at an exhibit, documenting a moment and their relationship. She adds a quote to the image “feel like a woman, wear a dress” and other text indicates her love for her mother. This also is evocative of the acute connection between femininity and appearance, the capacity to increase one’s sense of womanliness through an act of self-presentation. An endearing diptych is composed of two photos of Catherine posing in a black dress in a closet; the caption indicates she is “shopping” in her mother’s closet. These everyday moments point to a certain commemoration of a universal relationship between mother and daughter. This image particularly alludes to a coming of age, in which as a daughter she is at an age where she now can wear her mother’s clothes and fulfill that widespread childhood fantasy.

While the everyday features prominently on Instagram, there is also a tremendous emphasis on commemorating achievements and momentous occasions through images. Sometimes Instagram posts commemorate an accomplishment, for example getting one’s dream internship. Posts for birthdays are a pervasive trend, posting pictures at birthday parties, posting old pictures with a friend in honor of his or her birthday, and posting pictures of one’s own birthday. Photographs with friends documenting nights out together are equally common. Catherine creates a collage of multiple pictures representing many moments with friends and family during the day and night, with the quote in the middle “cheers to a liberating month.” She posts

several pictures from spring break in Cabo and Coachella, identifying the event and place clearly and documenting fun times with friends. She also compiles video clips to commemorate each event, which include music, pictures and video footage of her time in each place.

Holidays are frequently documented through posts; Catherine posts a picture of herself for Easter, and yet what is noteworthy about this post is that aside from the caption, it would bear no obvious relation to the holiday. She is clearly using the automatic shutter setting on a camera or having someone else take the photos as she poses for the camera, looking down with her body configured in a contrived manner. The image is superimposed on top of an image of a flower, representative perhaps of spring and Easter, and she places text across the entire frame. The text consists of lyrics from Lana del Rey's song "Ride." She "checks-in" at "sweet like cinnamon," which serves as another indication of self-identifying with the artist. This post however, particularly demonstrates that activity on Instagram is pervasively oriented towards the self as the primary focus that supercedes the commemoration of events. This photographic activity is thus only tangentially concerned with recording occasions and rather documents events as they relate to the self.

Image Manipulation and the Question of Aesthetic Nostalgia

A central tenet of Instagram that underlies all activity on the platform is image manipulation. In the era of photoshop, digital editing, and filters-galore, it is easy to forget that image manipulation is nothing new. The medium of photography offers us a perpetual paradox, of an ostensible photographic, realistic truth, and the

omnipresent possibility that this mediated “truth” is constructed and manipulated. The notion of a photographic truth was strongest in the nineteenth century, yet it was still contingent on subjective and mediated processes in which the image was constructed through composition, the selection of the pose and moment to photograph, and the context in which the image was presented.²⁷⁴ Moreover, photographers began manipulating images in the late 1850’s in order to circumnavigate the brutal honesty of the camera; retouching the positive print was common while retouching the negative did not take hold until 1870 as a standard practice.

While most photographers did retouching by hand, many devices were manufactured to allow the artist to retouch his or her photographs. The Getchell & Hyatt machine was a device that when attached to a sewing machine treadle was able to manually retouch photographs for “fine stippling and hatching.” Another device was the Mezzo-Tinto, which produced a soft image by placing a glass plate or thin sheet of mica between the negative and the printing paper. In the 1860’s, portraits were often delicately tinted, the skin, cheeks, eyes, lips, and hair.²⁷⁵ Professional portraiture dominated the photographic landscape of the nineteenth century, and the task of the professional photographer as Coe & Gates note, was to “record for a commercial reason, to flatter, to sell.”²⁷⁶ Even for retouching however, there was a social norm that dictated the limits of manipulation; “removing freckles, decreasing strongly-marked shadows, and very occasionally giving a little force to lights”

²⁷⁴ Chandler and Livingston, “Reframing the Authentic: Photography, Mobile Technologies and the Visual Language of Digital Imperfection,” 1–3.

²⁷⁵ Darrah, *Cartes de Visite in Nineteenth-Century Photography*, 28–29.

²⁷⁶ Coe and Gates, *The Snapshot Photograph*, 12.

comprised the extent of acceptable image manipulation.²⁷⁷ Another option available to avid nineteenth-century photograph consumers and subjects was editing done before the final photographic print was made; positive-negative photography allowed for the making of a proof, a rough print done immediately that gave the sitter agency in what form the finished photograph would assume.²⁷⁸

Image manipulation is arguably the primary function of Instagram; as Van Dijck puts it, “pictorial manipulation seems to be a default mode rather than an option.”²⁷⁹ A photo that has not undergone a manipulation in the application is a rarity, and is thus distinguished by “#nofilter” in order to accentuate the fact that the photo was so superior to begin with that it did not require any manipulation. Every photo at the very least is cropped before being posted in compliance with the square format, which imposes a specific cropped perspective on the picture, limiting what can be included in the frame from the original. There are nineteen filters built into the application that change the exposure, contrast, and tonalities of the photo. Two of these are back-and-white options. There is also a tool to increase the lighting of the photo on top of the filter, as well as a tool that blurs the top and bottom of the photo or blurs in a circular fashion, emulating the more sophisticated depth of field effects that photographers achieve with a traditional SLR. Each filter is paired with a border that users can choose to include or exclude, and users can also change the orientation of the image.

²⁷⁷ Siegel, *Galleries of Friendship and Fame*, 51.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Dijck, “Digital Photography,” 70.

These are simply the built-in manipulations of the application. There are also a cornucopia of photo-editing applications that offer even more filters, effects, frames, and options to add text on the image itself, before uploading the images to the Instagram platform. Popular and commonly used external applications are ones that allow the creation of a photo-collage such as PhotoGrid or InstaFrame, compiling multiple images within the confines of the pre-determined square format for Instagram. These applications also allow the resizing of photos within the square standard format so that one does not have to crop out any part of the image. The manifold opportunities for image manipulation reflect the manner by which the medium of photography sparks an impulse for self-expression, personalization, and individuation. Just as Victorian women sought to individuate themselves through collage and album decoration in a time when they lacked the technological agency to exercise their vision through taking their own photographs, Instagram users resort to the plethora of photo editing applications available in order to create imagery outside the confines of the Instagram platform. Personal archivists have always faced the tension of creative expression within the parameters delimited by the industry. The tools with which users are conveying their individual identities and visions are created by the commercial industry, which dictate the creative conditions of possibility for self-expression and self-presentation.

A popular discourse surrounding Instagram has focused on the aesthetic nostalgia of the filters, observing that the filters emulate the tonalities of retro photographs. The filters range from high-contrast black-and-white, to sepia-tone, to

the Polaroid aesthetic of the 1970's.²⁸⁰ There is even a filter that creates a rectangular border marked with the appearance of stains from developing chemicals. The "X-Pro II" filter references the popular 1970's processing technique in which color film was processed in chemical solutions intended for different types of film, resulting in washed out and saturated hues.²⁸¹ A lot of press has focused on this manufactured nostalgia. *The Atlantic* reviewed the application, identifying its purpose as enabling the "arting up" of mundane photos and claiming that the filters allow for different kinds of nostalgia: "in your face nostalgia" with the 1977 filter, "Ironic nostalgia" with the Nashville filter, and the Lord Kevin filter for "actual nostalgia."²⁸² The emphasis has largely been placed on the aesthetic similarity of the filters to the tonalities of real analog prints and effects, and the idea that the filters compensate for camera phone photographers' lack of photographic skill. A post on *Buzzfeed* notes that nearly forty million Instagram users filter photos every day, turning "benign images into the kinds of yellowing snapshots you can buy at flea markets for a quarter apiece" and creating a culture in which "nostalgia has become institutionalized."²⁸³ Chandler and Livingston remark that "Instagrammed photos present authentic slices of past experiences overlaid with a faux nostalgia that suggests a form of personal style and seeming distinctiveness."²⁸⁴

²⁸⁰ Willim, "In and Out of Focus," 4, 6.

²⁸¹ Chandler and Livingston, "Reframing the Authentic: Photography, Mobile Technologies and the Visual Language of Digital Imperfection," 4–10.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 11; Hochman and Schwartz, "Visualizing Instagram: Tracing Cultural Visual Rhythms," 6.

²⁸³ Amanda Petrusich, "Instagram, The Nostalgia Of Now And Reckoning The Future," *BuzzFeed*, accessed May 31, 2014, <http://www.buzzfeed.com/petrusich/instagram-the-nostalgia-of-now-and-reckoning-the>.

²⁸⁴ Chandler and Livingston, "Reframing the Authentic: Photography, Mobile Technologies and the Visual Language of Digital Imperfection," 11.

Critics of this mind tend to frame this aesthetic nostalgia as indicative of a larger cultural phenomenon, a “fetishization of the past” in which we are creating “instant nostalgia” through the aesthetics of old analog photographs.²⁸⁵ As Chandler and Livingston put it, this phenomenon is a “simulated nostalgia for a time, which many of the photographers have never experienced,” manifested by users’ applying filters to their present-day snapshots.²⁸⁶ While Instagram filters are prima facie analogous to the aesthetics of analog photographs, I would argue that Instagram practices on the whole reflect rather a fetishization of lived experience than a fetishization of past eras. We must bear in mind that while we can still appreciate a nostalgia for analog photographs, for their look and materiality, this frame of reference is quickly becoming nonexistent for young adolescents coming of age in the digital era, whose first experiences with photographs are of a digital nature.

The argument that filters offer a compensation for the “spotty craftsmanship” of the average camera phone photographer and the low quality of the image is a much more convincing conceptualization.²⁸⁷ Just as retouching became a standard practice for nineteenth-century photographers, Instagram filters can be seen as a “broadly democratizing device...intended to soften all the ugly, too-real bits, to make plainly composed images more compelling.”²⁸⁸ Thus with respect to users’ filtering of images, I argue that this practice is less a conscious emulation of retro aesthetics and

²⁸⁵ Ian Crouch, “Instagram’s Instant Nostalgia,” *The New Yorker Blogs*, April 10, 2012, http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/culture/2012/04/instagrams-instant-nostalgia.html#slide_ss_0=1.

²⁸⁶ Chandler and Livingston, “Reframing the Authentic: Photography, Mobile Technologies and the Visual Language of Digital Imperfection,” 11.

²⁸⁷ Christopher Bonanos, “Instantly Old,” *NYMag.com*, accessed May 31, 2014, <http://nymag.com/news/intelligencer/instagram-2012-4/>.

²⁸⁸ Petrusich, “Instagram, The Nostalgia Of Now And Reckoning The Future.”

rather an incredibly elementary desire to choose the filter that makes their photos as aesthetically pleasing as possible. This was the primary vision behind the creation of the application in the first place; as co-founder Kevin Systrom explains, “We set out to solve the main problem with taking pictures on a mobile phone...which is that they are often blurry or poorly composed...We fixed that.”²⁸⁹ If it is a picture of people, users opt for the filter that eliminates blemishes and redness, or makes them look tan. If it is a landscape, users opt for the filter that valorizes the scene, increases the contrast, or accentuates the color, whatever filter best enhances the visual appeal of the photograph. It must be recognized however that the terms that dictate what is the most visually appealing are set by the company and are thus relative with respect to a finite set of filtering options.

That being said, nostalgia is nevertheless strongly evident on Instagram, specifically with respect to the explosive trend of #tbt, in which users post old pictures on “Throwback Thursday.” Thus while aesthetic nostalgia is an unconscious effect of users’ retouching their photos with the platform’s filters, the practice of #tbt is unquestionably a conscious act of nostalgia. I question the overbroad statement that this is indicative of a deep-rooted culture of nostalgia for an unknown past, and consider the phenomenon rather as a manifestation of both real nostalgia for one’s personal past experiences and a desire to fill out one’s personal narrative.

Instagram is a digital platform built for uploading pictures taken with one’s camera phone. This in many ways however imposes a documentation of the instantaneous present moment. In the compilation of a visual personal archive, this

²⁸⁹ Jenna Wortham, “Instagram Rises as Social Web Embraces Photo Sharing,” *The New York Times*, June 3, 2011, sec. Technology, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/04/technology/04photosharing.html>.

limitation results in the exclusion of a significant amount of possible material. While in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries it became prevalent to document in one's photo album all of the major life stages and milestones of family members' lives, people have scores of digital images on their computers from before their iPhones, as well as printed photos from their childhoods that would not necessarily find reason for inclusion on a platform that privileges the instantaneous moment. The posting of old photos can be seen less as a manifestation of nostalgia and more as a desire to share a more comprehensive personal narrative, and include moments from one's life that came before the iPhone or simply before subscribing to Instagram. Norms such as #tbt institutionalize this and create a demarcated opportunity for the inclusion of photos from one's past.

Catherine posts many throwbacks that revolve around Paris, which reflect both past experiences as well as her personal identity. She does a throwback on a Monday of a picture of herself posing at the Eiffel Tower as part of a collage of several images from the media that represent France, Ladurée macarons, Chanel, French actresses, and she "checks-in" at "la belle vie."²⁹⁰ Some of her throwbacks are particularly constructed to convey a sense of dreamy nostalgia, while others serve to simply reflect a memory. In one picture of herself at the Louvre, she superimposes it on several layered scenic images unrelated to Paris, emphasizing pink and blue hues and adding an inspirational quote. In another Paris #tbt, she conveys a nostalgia for Paris but more importantly the photo pays homage to her relationship with her mother, a loving picture of mother and daughter posing as if to kiss on the Pont des

²⁹⁰ "The good life"

Arts in Paris, the bridge that symbolizes love by virtue of the tradition of friends, lovers, and family affixing love padlocks to its railing.

Nostalgia on Instagram can also reflect annual events and thus mark anticipation for a recurring experience. Catherine posts a #tbt of herself posing in front of the Coachella sign the year before in anticipation of the upcoming festival. She uses an application to create a mirror image of the photo, recalling the motif of reflection found in *Hawarden*. She also quotes *Alice and Wonderland* in the caption and “checks in” at “sweet like cinnamon.” What we will see in her use of text is that it serves to augment the expressiveness of her content. Not only is this an image of herself at the festival, but she also combines it with a quote from a piece of literature and creates a metaphorical place to check in. While users typically “check in” to concrete places, Catherine creates check-ins that she re-uses, that serve to represent a more metaphorical state of being, including “sweet like cinnamon” (a direct reference to Lana del Rey) and “la belle vie” (the good life).

Yet in other throwback posts, the purpose of including these old images is clearly to make a statement in the present. In an old photo of her childhood on the beach playing with a boy in the water, Catherine captions it, “#tbt to being topless in the south of France with my first boy toy #scandalous.” From the caption, we can infer that this post is evidently about being provocative in the present. Similarly, another #tbt depicts Catherine on the beach in Hawaii posing for the camera as a little girl. In the caption, she proclaims this picture as a demonstration that she has “always been a sassy little frenchy.” What we see then is that even in acts of nostalgia, of commemoration, and of the preservation of memories, there is a complete orientation

to the present moment. These so-called “nostalgic” posts are indicative of a current emotional state, reflecting a state of nostalgia for times past, or are relevant in some way to an act of self-expression or an identity-statement in the present. Therefore, despite the evident aesthetic nostalgia for analog photography enabled through the Instagram filters, practices on the platform remain oriented towards the present. Rather than a devaluing of the memorial function of photography, we see an integration of the past and of memories into the present as a significant element of the personal narrative, projected identity, and self-presentation.

Processes of Self-Fashioning

Several scholars have examined the role of photography in identity formation. Noland states, “Photographs are static images, a slice of a person’s perception at one place and one moment in time” of themselves, and they serve as tools that allow people to explore their preferences and how they view and define their world.²⁹¹ Some insist that identity formation and communication are in fact the most important functions of photography.²⁹² As Van Dijck explains, this operates not only on the level of individuals defining their identity visually by documenting their lives, but more importantly by “participating in communal photographic exchanges that mark their identity as interactive producers and consumers of culture.”²⁹³ Photographs can thus be viewed as “visual resources in the “micro-cultures” of everyday life.”²⁹⁴

²⁹¹ Carey M. Noland, “Auto-Photography as Research Practice: Identity and Self-Esteem Research,” *Journal of Research Practice* 2, no. 1 (March 2, 2006): 3–4.

²⁹² Reference to Susan Sontag and Roland Barthes in Dijck, “Digital Photography,” 58.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 63.

²⁹⁴ Citing Burnett (2004) in *Ibid.*, 68.

Van Dijck argues that the role of photography in identity construction today hinges on the increased capacity for manipulation afforded by digital technologies, which “may suit the individual’s need for continuous self-remodeling and instant communication and bonding.”²⁹⁵ Today, there exists an unprecedented potential to manipulate one’s image through unbounded experimentation.²⁹⁶ These images can be endlessly retouched and reviewed, and circulated to one’s network or to the unknown public for an ongoing dialectic sharing and reshaping of one’s public image based on feedback from others. As Van Dijck points out, digital photography merges Barthes’ four image repertoires, the mental self-image, the idealized self-image, the photographed self-image, and the public self-image.²⁹⁷

McNely has analyzed Instagram as a “crucial mediating genre in the shaping of organizational image-power.”²⁹⁸ McNely demonstrates how organizations “[uses] images to communicate vision,” and Instagram’s value as a tool for organizations to engage in a self-reflective management of public perception of the company’s identity.²⁹⁹ He argues that organizations must consciously work to achieve alignment between their internal identity, how they view themselves, and their external image or how others perceive the organization. He underscores the notion of mediation and the idea that all human experience is in fact “shaped by the tools and sign systems we use.”³⁰⁰ This conceptualization however is not exclusive to organizations. This

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 58.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 67.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 64.

²⁹⁸ Brian J. McNely, “Shaping Organizational Image-Power through Images: Case Histories of Instagram,” in *Professional Communication Conference (IPCC), 2012 IEEE International*, 2012, 1.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 2.

exercise defines the individual's relation to Instagram as well and epitomizes the way in which snapshot culture serves as a fundamental part of the socialization process and the constitution of identity.

Some have sought to emphasize photographic practices in the digital era as a democratization of the more traditional analog paradigm of family photography, suggesting that the increased access to digital cameras, camera phones, and the photo sharing and manipulation software provide youth with an unprecedented means for expression otherwise unavailable in the home.³⁰¹ Durrant, Frohlich et al. align teenage photography with the emergent cultures that have welcomed the affordances of the Internet for sharing images with expansive unknown audiences. This vein of reasoning echoes Mizuko Ito's claim that technologies, especially handheld devices, subvert traditional power structures in the home allowing for greater individuation, independence, and avenues for adolescent expression.³⁰² However, digital technologies also pose a paradox between self-expression and self-presentation. As Van House points out, "While self-expression is about giving voice to one's unique view of the world, self-presentation is about influencing others' view of oneself."³⁰³ Thus while self-expression is afforded endless possibility through digital technologies, it is inhibited by the fact that any manifestation of self-expression is simultaneously an act of self-presentation in the world of social media.

³⁰¹ Durrant et al., "Home Curation versus Teenage Photography," 1005–1015.

³⁰² Mizuko Ito, "Mobile phones, Japanese youth, and the re-placement of social contact" in Ling and Pedersen, *Mobile Communications*.

³⁰³ Nancy A. Van House et al., "The Social Uses of Personal Photography: Methods for Projecting Future Imaging Applications," 8.

Instagram manifests exceptional instances of personal expression through the visual. There are many posts of inspirational quotes and of textual overlay on top of photographs, which signal self-expression through the appropriation of quotes from others as well as an identification of the self with certain icons. However, more often than not, these posts convey expressions of emotions or states of being. Catherine posts a photograph of a rose superimposed on a fluorescent pink background sign that forms the words “she loves adventure,” projecting a statement about the self through this qualification of her identity. In another triptych, she repeats the same picture of herself three times in slightly different sizes, and the song lyrics across the image underscore this focus on the self and on expressing emotion. The caption “comme d’habitude” (as always) situates this emotion-centric expression in the everyday. In a picture of herself posing walking down the stairs that is superimposed on a background of palm trees at sunset in Los Angeles, she writes the words, “I know everything happens for a reason but sometimes I wish I knew what that reason was.” She also includes a quote from Simone de Beauvoir as the caption with the hashtag “beauvoir,” which emphasizes a valorization of the self, “She had finally decided. She chose herself.” Here, the user is clearly conveying an emotion by associating a photo of herself with a quote that suggests a coming to terms with something. The two quotes in juxtaposition seem to indicate that the Beauvoir caption is motivational whereas the quote on the picture is more reflective of a current emotional state.

A form of self-representation permeates arguably every Instagram post, either by depicting an individual’s body or by depicting some statement about someone’s identity. Catherine posts a “selfie” in her bedroom holding her cat, and surrounding

the main image she places smaller images of her room, bracelets, clothing in her closet, and flowers. These all serve to convey parts of her identity, inviting us into her private space, but the overarching theme of the image is the cat and her identification with the nickname “Cat.” We see this in another “selfie” with a friend, again holding her cat and this time the girls wear cat makeup. The background of the image is hand-drawn and reminiscent of the tradition of Victorian photo-collage. Here, Catherine is performing for the camera and projecting an identity. Thus while public image culture is nothing new and has characterized celebrities’ lives for decades, the idea of private life being rendered public is fundamentally new to the era of social media.

Just as Charlotte Cushman disseminated “photographic idol-emissaries” in the nineteenth century, so too does every Instagram user, yet the nature of these disseminated images of the self are exceedingly more personal today.³⁰⁴ Users often will post pictures in private places, for example breakfast in bed with a romantic partner or a photo taken in a bubble bath that depicts one’s bare legs. In one post, Catherine takes a “mirror selfie” wearing a towel in what appears to be the bathroom, thus exposing an intimate picture to a broader public. What’s more, the practice of “mirror selfies” invokes once more the notion of fashioning the self through the double reflection of the mirror and the apparatus. The “selfie” allows the most heightened capacity for self-regulation with respect to photography. The individual can see the reflection of his or her body as captured by the camera before snapping the shot, and fashion the body and facial expression accordingly.

³⁰⁴ Nemerov, *Acting in the Night*, 19.

The digital era ushers in a blurring of the line between the private and the public, especially for the genre of snapshot photography. As Sarvas and Frohlich suggest, digital photographic practices foster a voyeuristic culture that is shifting the boundaries of snapshots from a private appeal for friends and family to a grey area in which images are not quite at the level of public appeal but exist in a public realm.³⁰⁵ Haldrup and Larsen suggest in their analysis of family tourist photography that these vernacular snapshots reflect a feminized gaze, which semantically connotes a subversion of the traditionally oppressive male gaze.³⁰⁶ This is convincing in the context of a mother exercising her vision to create an archive of her family, but the idea of a feminized gaze becomes more problematic in the context of near ubiquitous practices in which girls all over the world are curating their lives, fully mindful that hundreds if not thousands of people can view their photos. What's more, self-presentation online is fundamentally different from self-presentation in person because "it is not a targeted 'performance', bounded in space and time, but more of an open-ended 'exhibition'."³⁰⁷ In this sense, even traditional analog photographs are more targeted than photographs circulating online because they are discrete objects that one can choose to exhibit voluntarily to selected people. This alludes to Alfred Gell's notion of "distributed personhood." As Van Dijck notes, "the self becomes the center of a virtual universe made up of informational and spatial flows."³⁰⁸ In this

³⁰⁵ See Sarvas and Frohlich, *From Snapshots to Social Media - the Changing Picture of Domestic Photography*.

³⁰⁶ Haldrup and Larsen, "The Family Gaze," 43.

³⁰⁷ Good, "From Scrapbook to Facebook," 560.

³⁰⁸ Dijck, "Digital Photography," 62.

“networked environment,” not only is the definition of memory shifted to a “distributed presence,” but self-image is defined by a distributed presence as well.³⁰⁹

The visual image as spectacle and fetish has generally been an object for male scopophilia, “the camera eye both substitutes for and works for the male gaze.”³¹⁰ Feminist scholarship in the vein of Laura Mulvey has demonstrated the oppressive mechanisms of the camera and the image that exploit women, maintaining the patriarchal paradigm through the assumption of a male spectator and catering towards the pleasure of the male gaze.³¹¹ Catharine R. Stimpson remarks, “The camera has been as vigorous as a global jet stream in circulating images of female beauty – there for the taking.”³¹² Recently, artists have sought to use representation as a means of empowerment. Whitney Chadwick suggests that every woman who “places herself in front of the lens of a camera whose shutter she controls, challenges... the complex relationship... between masculine agency and feminine passivity in Western art history.”³¹³ In this vein, self-representation is an important creative exercise in self-understanding. Frances Borzello claims that the extended self-portrait is a manifestation of the feminist revolution’s principle of the personal as political.³¹⁴

Feminist cultural theory asserts that the quest for self-representation can be a vital instrument for situating the self in the larger world, and that self-understanding

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 72.

³¹⁰ Ellen Carey, Catharine R. Stimpson, and Barbara Hershey, eds., *Reflections: Woman’s Self-Image in Contemporary Photography* (Oxford, Ohio: Miami University Art Museum, 1988), 9.

³¹¹ See Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” (1975) in Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl, *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism* (Rutgers University Press, 1997).

³¹² Carey, Stimpson, and Hershey, *Reflections*, 9.

³¹³ Liz Rideal, *Mirror Mirror: Self-Portraits by Women Artists* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2001), 9.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 31.

of identity can be discovered through the visual, through the body and its representation in a “politics of location” as Adrienne Rich would say.³¹⁵ There is a movement in art that takes a feminist stance to disrupt traditional visual power relations, and transform the image into a locus to make an empowering statement.³¹⁶ However, as Peggy Phelan remarks, there is a fine line between critiquing the status quo and simply proliferating the circulation of images in an unchanging society that fails to perceive the statement.³¹⁷ Furthermore, there is a significant difference between provocative, autonomous works of art and a practice of self-representation in everyday life that becomes part of a socialization process in mass culture.

Theories of image and self, however, invoke the elaborate mechanisms of reception that problematize the feminist interpretation of agency in self-representation. Patricia R. Zimmerman underscores the importance of analyzing images through the complex relation of social context, power, participation, use, and the subjectivity of their viewers, identifying the dichotomy between “art” images and images of more generalized production. While “art trivializes the viewer,” the mode of “generalization makes the image almost insignificant”; Zimmerman reinforces the way in which images in mass culture speak only to a standardized experience that valorizes the spectator’s experience and remains in line with conventions of form.³¹⁸ John Berger’s *Ways of Seeing* emphasizes the visual system of control and power in

³¹⁵ Carey, Stimpson, and Hershey, *Reflections*, 10.

³¹⁶ Danny Guthrie, Monte H. Gerlach, and Laurie Sieverts Snyder, eds., *Gender Construction: A Visual Inquiry into Gender and Photographic Representation: March 19-April 19, 1984, Handwerk Gallery, Itaca, New York* (Ithaca, N.Y.: The Gallery, 1984), 15.

³¹⁷ Peggy Phelan’s talk entitled, “Cindy Sherman: Photography and Feminist Theories of the Image?” at the Clayman Institute for Gender Research, Stanford University, March 6, 2014.

³¹⁸ Guthrie, Gerlach, and Snyder, *Gender Construction*, 13–14.

which the viewer is embroiled. In Barthes' words, "the link between the signifier and the signified remains if not unmotivated, at least entirely historical... signification is always developed by a given society and history."³¹⁹ Images thus generally can be understood only in the social context in which they are produced, making a feminist agenda problematic.

Robert Heineken refers to the lack of distance between the image and its subject as "residual actuality."³²⁰ The Barthesian "evidential force" of the image problematizes the notion of the self in representation. Simone de Beauvoir states that, "woman, knowing and making herself object, believes she really sees herself in the glass," employing not only a rhetoric of objectification but also alluding to the notion of a self defined by representation.³²¹ As Chadwick notes, this is disturbing in a time when we are utterly surrounded by the visual and it exerts "a growing role in constructing and mediating our relationship to the world and to the categories through which we define ourselves."³²² We live in a world in which identity is socially constructed, our perception is "endlessly mediated by reproductive technologies and multiple images," and we accept "the mediated image as providing our primary access to the world."³²³ As Susan Sontag notes, "Images are more real than anyone could have supposed."³²⁴ Beauvoir would likely add that we also accept the mediated image as our primary access to ourselves. Any single image invokes a complex set of

³¹⁹ Carey, Stimpson, and Hershey, *Reflections*, 6.

³²⁰ Guthrie, Gerlach, and Snyder, *Gender Construction*, 12.

³²¹ Rideal, *Mirror Mirror*, 9.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Ibid., 16.

³²⁴ Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York City: Macmillan, 1977), 180.

gazes, that of the artist, the camera, and the viewer, and implies a multitude of subject positions, the seer and the seen, the subject and the object. In the self-portrait, the photographer thus experiences the paradox of being “both active, creative subject – a maker of meaning – and passive object – a site of meaning – [which] can only be resolved through performing the self.”³²⁵ The self-portrait is thus intrinsically theatrical, a performance of the self.

The photographic event becomes a moment for performance; in a similar manner to Lady Hawarden’s daughters who literally performed different identities for the camera in her costume tableaux, individuals in the present day configure their bodies in socially proscribed ways. Many scholars have observed the tendency for people to “clown” for the camera, to intentionally assume a silly expression or pose in the event a camera surfaces.³²⁶ Haldrup and Larsen describe people’s behavior in front of the camera as a “[choreographing of bodies] for the photographic event, people present themselves as future memory through posing.”³²⁷ The human-machine relation is crucial to understanding the practice of vernacular photography today because before an image is disseminated into the digital world, it is created in the confrontation between the individual and the screen. As the image in social media becomes more and more ubiquitous, so too does the somatic practice of contriving one’s facial expression and body for the camera, demonstrating how profoundly technosomatic our contemporary relation is to the camera.

³²⁵ Rideal, *Mirror Mirror*, 14.

³²⁶ Coe and Gates, *The Snapshot Photograph*, 11.

³²⁷ Haldrup and Larsen

No one perhaps articulates the experience of being confronted with a camera in a more authentic way than Barthes. He writes, “Once I feel myself observed by the lens, everything changes: I constitute myself in the process of “posing.” He thus identifies the gaze of the apparatus as instrumental in initiating a process by which he constitutes his identity through somatic modifications.³²⁸ The transformative nature of the process is underlined when he explains, “I transform myself in advance into an image.”³²⁹ This demonstrates the phenomenological process by which the individual constitutes his or her identity through the gaze of the other, in this case, the gaze of the camera that transforms the living subject into a two-dimensional image. Barthes elaborates, “I lend myself to the social game, I pose, I know I am posing, I want you to know that I am posing.”³³⁰ The subject is thus fully cognizant of the performative act of posing, as is the photographer. Designating this as a “social game” accentuates the extent to which this behavior characterizes an interactive, dialectic relation.

The convergence of sociality, mass media, and the personal archive manifests what Christina Kotchemidova describes as “the tendency to emulate the advertising model [which] made snapshot photography closer to mass culture than to a creative (folk) art form.”³³¹ She draws attention to Stuart Ewen’s claim that “cultural habits are often created in relation to products; various industries help form mass habits with their educational and advertising campaigns.”³³² The emulation of mass media in personal media is a pivotal instance of disciplinary pressures in socio-visual culture.

³²⁸ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 10.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 10–11.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

³³¹ Kotchemidova, “Why We Say ‘Cheese,’” 18.

³³² *Ibid.*, 5.

Kotchemidova notes that the “transformational power of photography is in mirroring the external world by a kind of automation, which eliminates the syntactical procedures of the rational mind.”³³³ What she underscores is the particular power of the visual to subconsciously influence individuals to hold certain conceptions of self-presentation, be it through the influence of photos of celebrities or peers, with regards to clothing, behavior, posing, or facial expressions.

Posing is a common theme that characterizes virtually every image that our user posts, to the extent that choreographing one’s body for the camera is integrated into everyday life as a ubiquitous practice. The photographic moment becomes an activity in which to engage actively. In one triptych, Catherine appears in the same outfit three times in seemingly candid poses. She stands on a balcony that reappears in many photos in the account, she looks up laughing, looks down, and away into the distance tousling her hair. The triptych emphasizes an instantaneity, the idea that the camera is capturing instantaneous moments simultaneously and stitching them together. In another post she appears from behind walking down a road in Los Angeles; the image is superimposed on a floral background, ostensibly emphasizing the good weather and spring. She poses for an unknown photographer, arms in the air and one foot raised, epitomizing this orientation towards created photographic moments. The photo is “checked-in” at “la belle vie,” again situating herself not in physical places but in states of being. She posts an image documenting the Diane von Furstenberg exhibit in Los Angeles, posing for the camera like a pin-up girl in front of a pink leopard background and she superimposes the image onto a snakeskin

³³³ Ibid., 13.

background. She adds text “welcome to the party” and the caption of the post expresses inspiration gleaned from the exhibit. This image directly imbibes mass media culture, celebrating fashion and representing oneself in accordance with the codes of the industry.

With respect to the effect of this on identity, Barthes continues, “What I want, in short, is that my (mobile) image...always coincide with my (profound) “self”; but it is the contrary that must be said: “myself” never coincides with my image.”³³⁴ Thus en premier lieu, the (mobile) image does not translate to the interior self; they do not coincide. Second, Barthes insists that:

In front of the lens, I am at the same time: the one I think I am, the one I want others to think I am, the one the photographer thinks I am...I do not stop imitating myself, and because of this, each time I am (or let myself be) photographed, I invariably suffer from a sensation of inauthenticity.³³⁵

Here, we see the emerging notion of a multitude of selves that circulate in bits outside the body, selves derived from the diverse imposed norms that are self-generated for the sake of the other and generated by the other. What’s more, the idea of inauthenticity is emphasized, which underlines the notion of alienation through the reproduction of the self in image form. This alienation is thus an alienation from one’s internal self that stems from the proliferation of representations of the exterior self in image form. What I suggest is that in the institutionalization of continuous, daily practices of projecting identity and exteriorizing the self for the viewing of

³³⁴ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 12.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

unbounded others, results in an effacement of a valorization of interiority and an increasing orientation towards a self as defined by appearance.

Marche addresses the way that digital technologies affect the process of socialization, and in changing the construction and perception of identity, they change our engagement with others. He notes that the non-personalized use of Facebook, “scanning your friends’ status updates and updating the world on your own activities...or what Burke calls “passive consumption” and “broadcasting”—correlates to feelings of disconnectedness.”³³⁶ Marche analyzes the psychological effect of this “passive consumption” of social media, and how in absorbing all of our friends’ projected identities, we try to determine how to construct our own digital personae. He says, “Curating the exhibition of the self has become a 24/7 occupation.”³³⁷ This phenomenon that Marche identifies could be referred to as a culture of “regressive viewing” to reformulate for visual culture Adorno’s concept of “regressive listening” with regards to music.³³⁸

Danah boyd examines the curating of the exhibition of the self among youth and social media. Boyd identifies, like Marche, the passive consumption of social media and the “social voyeurism” that occurs as teens “turn to sites like MySpace for entertainment.”³³⁹ As youth while away hours browsing their social media accounts, they form ideas of the socially acceptable ways to present themselves and engage in the construction of their own digital identities. One of boyd’s underlining points is

³³⁶ Marche, “Is Facebook Making Us Lonely?”.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ See “On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening” in Adorno, *The Culture Industry*.

³³⁹ Boyd, “Why Youth (heart) Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life,” 10.

that in this society of networked publics and these online interactions, “the network mediates the interactions between members of the public,” reinforcing that today, there is a mediator between people in their relations, the digital platform.³⁴⁰ Boyd ultimately argues that digital media change the socialization process for youth as teens “get a sense of what types of presentations are socially appropriate; others’ profiles provide critical cues about what to present on their own profile” and learn to “read social cues and react accordingly.”³⁴¹

Eva Illouz’s work seeks to delve deeper into *how* and *what* is changing in the digital landscape. Her notion of “emotional capitalism” in which individuals evaluate others “through standards of fairness, equality, and need-satisfaction,” can be applied to personal photographs as well in the digital landscape.³⁴² Personal photographs thus become commodities that circulate representations of the self to be perused and evaluated by others. The commodification of self-representation aligns with Ullman’s belief that the machine only represents the smallest most logical part of human beings. Thus when the machine becomes the mediator and the overwhelming means of communicating and forming or maintaining relationships, the intricacy and richness of identity is emptied as the machine fails to comprise it. In Illouz’ discussion of online dating, she emphasizes the concept of a menu-driven identity, the idea that identity online is articulated in the terms made available by the platform.³⁴³ The online dating platform acts on the rational and prejudiced ideas of what one

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 8.

³⁴¹ Ibid., 10.

³⁴² Illouz, *Cold Intimacies: The Making of Emotional Capitalism*, 38.

³⁴³ See Illouz, *Cold Intimacies: The Making of Emotional Capitalism*.

believes he or she wants in a partner, that are typically driven by market ideology. She criticizes the Internet as a “disembodying technology,” and yet therein lies the paradox of a disembodying technology that propagates innumerable representations of the body.³⁴⁴

The notion of menu-driven identity and market ideology is in no way specific to dating sites, but rather is of the utmost importance in our consideration of the visual in social media. The logic of menu-driven identity is analogous to Instagram and the visual negotiation of identity that occurs in the compilation of the personal archive. One’s identity as presented on the platform is driven by terms dictated by Instagram as well as the ideology of culture industry. Research supports the fact that societal ideals of appearance in the larger cultural repertoire of visual images exert a significant unconscious influence on one’s own self-image.³⁴⁵ What’s more, filters are an instrumental component of this process, perpetuating a requisite image manipulation before sharing content. Thus manipulation and self-construction and manipulation are built-in to self-presentation in the photographic archive. The multiplied selves that circulate are thereby enhanced versions of oneself, resulting in a sense of alienation from the oneself as other in image form. This not only furthers a valorization of exteriority, but also fosters through visual mediation a culture that valorizes and becomes socialized around manipulated, enhanced versions of reality.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 75.

³⁴⁵ Lury (2002) as cited by Dijck, “Digital Photography,” 65.

This chapter has examined the manifold practices that characterize Instagram as a socio-visual platform. What we see on this platform is an insistent focus on the everyday, a compulsive fossilization of instantaneous moments into visual memories. Instagram is at its core a social platform of interactivity and circulation in a commercial space that blurs the lines between the private and the public. It provides a space in which individuals can articulate their identities in commercial terms. The structure of Instagram inherently allows for a construction of a visual personal narrative through the consistent use of the site, enabling a curating of one's everyday life. The platform's filters underscore the highly constructed nature of content generated on Instagram and the way in which self-presentation on Instagram is mediated by processes of manipulation. Ultimately, practices on Instagram manifest the tension between self-expression and self-presentation, in which identity formation becomes intertwined in a phenomenological rapport between the user who strives to construct his or her identity in a space that is constantly subject to the gazes of unknown others.

Instagram is a presentist technology that allows for the visual sharing of moments in real time with a networked public. What becomes integrated into daily practice is a qualification of lived experience through visual images and an orientation toward the photographic moment. Everyday experiences that are commonplace are now attributed importance through documentation and become photographic moments in this socio-visual culture. The result of this insistent documentation is the construction of a visual personal narrative with an unremitting focus on the self that is inserted into the images. There is an insertion of the self into the everyday as well as a

merging of this personal narrative with the commercial. The broader notion of the culture industry is evident in the way that content on Instagram is often a fusion of user-generated images and content re-appropriated from mass media, comprising a remix culture to invoke Lessig's terms. As I have shown however, these instances of infiltration of the commercial into the personal narrative are, instances of self-expression that articulate identity in the visual terms at question, be it commercial terms or any other.

Many of these practices demonstrate a marked continuity, as I have shown, with photographic practices in the nineteenth century, and yet this continuity exists in a vastly different social and technological infrastructure. What defines our contemporary socio-visual culture is thus dependent on its digital nature and the fact that it is embedded in a public social media platform. These archival practices in digital form ultimately catalyze an exteriorization of identity. In constantly curating one's life on social media, individuals construct a personal narrative that is in essence an act of self-presentation which is perpetually visible to a broader audience. Thus while this activity constitutes an exteriorization of identity through the construction of a visual narrative, it is done within a panoptic framework in which self-images are projected for observation.

Catherine's Instagram account encompasses all of these various elements in her exceptional use of the platform. Her content is unquestionably oriented towards individuated self-expression. She makes use of countless applications and software that allow her to create truly unique images that document her everyday experiences, her relationships, momentous occasions, travels, and her home. Even more than a

documentation of lived experience however, this personal narrative in every respect constitutes a construction of her identity across time that she projects to the larger world. This archive, which is an act of self-expression and identity formation, cannot be disassociated from its function as an act of self-presentation within the infrastructure of social media. All expressive artistry aside, it is evident that what is at work here is a practice that is fundamentally linked to processes of self-fashioning which are mediated by the visual in a scopic system. The pervasive technosomatic practice of posing for the camera, of orienting the body for a photographic moment and for a specific visual code of self-presentation indicate the ways in which Instagram functions as a disciplinary practice that exerts pressures of self-regulation in a visual paradigm of exteriorized identity mediated by the gazes of others.

CONCLUSION

A history of practices of vernacular photography is a history of mediation. In other words, photography mediates the relation of the self to society in a constant dialectic in which the individual engages in acts of self-expression that are reshaped in accordance with the demands of society, under the gaze of the photographic apparatus. The foundation of our modern relation to the camera has its roots in the socio-visual system that emerges in the nineteenth century. The visual personal archive and practices of circulation prefigure the snapshot era and thereby continue to define the role of the image today in our vastly different digital infrastructure. Social media manifests a perpetuation of the practices of sociality, circulation, and regulated self-presentation that came into being in the nineteenth century. What's more, digital media has ensured that these practices are now ubiquitous in everyday life and have become integral to processes of socialization and self-fashioning.

Lady Hawarden's photographs can be considered as autonomous works of art representative of the work of a distinguished amateur photographer in Victorian England; however, it is also crucial to regard her work as an instantiation of the socio-visual culture that developed in the nineteenth century. This discourse is one of mediation, in which the image becomes an obligatory inter-mediator between the individual and the public, and the individual and his or her formation of identity. Nineteenth-century visual culture is thus one in which we can see develop a convention of identity-construction mediated by the gaze of the apparatus and by extension, the gaze of implied viewers, both known and unknown.

The nineteenth century, with the advent of photography, is hence a pivotal moment in history with regards to the relation between the machine and the self; not only does the machine become a near constant pillar of everyday life, but the photograph becomes imbricated in a dialectic that becomes critical to interpersonal relations, in which sociality is mediated by the image, and more significantly perhaps, so too does one's relation with the self become ever more mediated by the visual. As I have shown, a key consequence of this is its role in engendering internalized processes of somatic regulation in self-presentation. This story then, is one of the integration of a machine into everyday life, the camera, and what people have done with this technology since its inception. While we tend to consider our photographic practices, between our constant use of camera phones and social media sites that are pervasively punctuated by the visual, as a phenomenon deeply connected to innovations in digital technology with the manifest emphasis on sharing content and the focus on the here and now, what we see in this framework of a comparison with the nineteenth century is a striking continuity.

Dahah boyd writes that while “social media is a moving landscape... the ability to navigate one's social relationships, communicate asynchronously, and search for information online is here to stay.”³⁴⁶ The characterization of social media as a “moving landscape” is spot on. New platforms with an emphasis on the visual continue to emerge, between the multi-billion dollar application Snapchat that provides a venue for interpersonal communication through ephemeral images and a new cutting edge social photobooth for hire at events called PHHHOTO that produces

³⁴⁶ Danah Boyd, *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens* (New Haven, CT, USA: Yale University Press, 2014), 27.

animated GIFS. Yet the characteristics boyd identifies as epitomizing social media and that transition from platform to platform can in fact be traced to the socio-visual culture of the nineteenth century. In the nineteenth century, the circulating media of *cartes-de-visite* and the compiling of albums fostered social relationships, photographs served as “idol-emissaries” across geographic boundaries, and individuals had a newfound access to visual information that documented specific people, cultures, times, and places, in the form of personal archives to be shared. When these practices that characterize social media in the digital era are thus transposed to visual culture, what we see is that humans have been engaging in these practices through photography for roughly one hundred and fifty years.

When *cartes-de-visite* culture and Lady Hawarden’s photographs are juxtaposed with Instagram use and content, what emerges is a parallelism of practices that indicate an immutable relation to the visual that is in fact transtemporal and transpatial. In the nineteenth century, there existed already an insular focus on the everyday and the social. Albums were artifacts to be viewed in social settings and rendered one’s circle of acquaintances visual and material, composed of photographs of friends, family, and admired celebrities. The socio-visual culture of the nineteenth century was thereby acutely anchored in the present. Photographs were objects to be exchanged, circulated, and viewed by others in real time. Albums to be sure became archives over time associated with memories, documenting families and lived experiences, but they were first and foremost at the time of their compilation archives of the present moment. *Cartes-de-visite* were distributed to one’s broader networks, a

practice which not only inaugurates a conception of interpersonal relations mediated by the visual, but also of multiplied and distributed selves.

These photographic practices, which are ostensibly so intrinsically quotidian and domestic cannot, however, be disassociated from the culture industry. In the nineteenth century, the majority of photographs produced were products of commercial studios. People's family photographs and self-portraits were created in a commercial space, which is significant in that these studios were pillars of the culture industry and driven by a market ideology. It is thus unsurprising that photography, considered as an industry more than anything else, fueled cultural and social norms that came to define the practice. Albums were created in response to the increasing popularity of photography, magazines about amateur photography and album-keeping surfaced, and most significantly, posing guides emerged that established socially prescribed ways of fashioning the body. This effectively demonstrates the link between the culture industry and these technosomatic practices that exert pressures of self-regulation on one's self-presentation to the camera.

Hawarden's photographs of her daughters manifest the key issue at hand of the dialectic self-fashioning between the self and the image that is mediated by technology. Aesthetically, Hawarden's portraits exemplify the dominant visual code of *cartes de visite* in the nineteenth century. As an amateur photographer however, she also prefigures snapshot photography with her insular focus on the everyday and the family. The portraits of her daughters are particularly evocative of the notion of a coming of age under the gaze of the apparatus and a self-reflexive negotiation of feminine identity through appearance. Her work exemplifies blatant instances of the

performance of identity as cemented in visual imagery through her costume tableaux. These portraits demonstrate how performative behavior for the camera becomes an activity in and of itself in everyday life, something we see with more subtlety through the convention of posing in her regular portraits that emulate the social norms set by the industry. These practices are in no way markedly different from those on Instagram; the camera is integrated into the socialization process of children, especially of young girls. Those engaging with these practices demonstrate the ways in which the image becomes a mediator in interpersonal relationships. The individual's multitude of selves as fixed on pieces of photo paper are disseminated to a network of acquaintances, and moreover the image becomes a mediator in one's own identity formation through an ongoing negotiation with terms defined by the social other and by the culture industry.

The practices we observe today in society on social media and more specifically on Instagram cannot be reduced to a bi-product of technology in the digital era. If one were to take a technological deterministic view, it would have to be situated in the era of the advent of photography and not in the twenty-first century. As I have demonstrated, user practices on Instagram manifest many of the primary characteristics of nineteenth-century socio-visual culture. The evolution of vernacular photography from the nineteenth century to the present day is truly a continuum that has built on what came before with each technological innovation. The Kodak culture of the twentieth century cannot be isolated from the practices of the nineteenth century that established the tradition of album-making, the insular focus on the everyday, and the roots of technosomatic self-presentation. Similarly, while Instagram

content and digital photos are aesthetically closer to twentieth-century snapshots, the practices themselves are in fact remarkably analogous to those in the nineteenth century that define human-machine relations with respect to photography.

As I have demonstrated, Instagram is a deeply presentist platform, concerned with the circulation of visual media in real time. The imagery on Instagram is oriented towards the everyday and the instantaneous, documenting lived experience and constructing a personal narrative. This archive is projected to a network of acquaintances, friends and family, and the content is thus circulated without bound in cyberspace. While the digital infrastructure of the application alters the scope of the archive today, the practices that are pervasive on the platform have their parallels in the nineteenth century. The mediation of the photograph in social interactions persists to the present as a primary activity and motivation surrounding vernacular photography. Image manipulation was established in the mid-nineteenth century as common practice, with analog techniques akin to the effects that digital filters provide. In terms of aesthetics and content, there is a marked similarity between Hawarden's portraits of her daughters and Catherine's content. Just as Hawarden repeatedly stages her portraits in the drawing room or on the balcony, so too does the same balcony and living room reappear in Catherine's Instagrams. Additionally, the emphasis on the mother-daughter relationship can be found in both women's bodies of work. We can imagine Catherine posing for her mother in some of that photos captured in the home.

Individuals in the nineteenth century experienced a similar paradox of self-expression in a paradigm of self-presentation as they posed for portraits that would

circulate in the form of *cartes-de-visite* or be included in family albums to be displayed in the drawing room. What emerges is an internalization of the gaze of the apparatus and a cultural awareness of the socially acceptable somatic practices of self-presentation that informs one's behavior in front of the camera and in turn bears implications on identity. The central questions of this work however, concern not only the similarities between the nineteenth century archive and today, but also the significant role that technology and the digital play in determining the nature of contemporary practices. Danah boyd notes that in this day and age, "teens must grapple with who can see their profile, who actually does see it, and how those who do see it will interpret it."³⁴⁷ Photography is inherently scopic; the expectation of a viewer is intrinsic to the medium. This does not change in the digital era. On the contrary, it is magnified exponentially. Social media fuels a voyeuristic culture in which "social media tools are designed to encourage people to consume streams or feeds of updates."³⁴⁸ The correlation between media and voyeurism dates back to the analog era. Jonathan Crary remarks on the nineteenth-century mode of the "observer as *flâneur*, a mobile consumer of a ceaseless succession of illusory commodity-like images."³⁴⁹ What he asserts is that in a history of vision, the observing subject was reduced to a "rudimentary...condition for the formation of an observer who would be competent to consume the vast new amounts of visual imagery and information."³⁵⁰

³⁴⁷ Ibid., 32.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 146.

³⁴⁹ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, 21.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 96.

In this environment of a constant inundation of information, danah boyd points to a crucial aspect of social media – that it is “situated within an attention economy in which technologies are built to capture and sustain the interest of users.”³⁵¹ The concept of an attention economy is vital for understanding the implications of photographic practices in the digital era. Social media operates as a system of mutual approbation; the “liking” mechanism and the interactive feedback is at the core of all activity on social media sites. By engaging in such practices, the potential for attention and validation in this landscape fuels the desire for recognition, which I argue precipitates in turn, a conforming to social norms. Therein lies the paradox, ergo, of self-expression versus self-presentation. While social media affords extensive opportunities for self-expression, this identity construction is executed within an attention economy, which exerts disciplinary pressures for self-regulation in the pursuit of positive public approbation.

As Fred Turner points out in *The Democratic Surround*, the mass media culture we inhabit today is in fact a mode of managerial power exercised through the “politics of curation.” He demonstrates that in the 1940’s and 1950’s in America, there emerged new modes of media as exemplified by Edward Steichen’s *Family of Man* exhibition, which represented both a democratic alternative to mass media in which the “surround” of arranged images could be designed to ideally create democratic feelings in individuals, but also a new mode of mediated managerial power. This mode of media, which was albeit not top down, was thus an invitation to engage with images and put one’s beliefs together, from an array of images however

³⁵¹ Boyd, *It's Complicated*, 147.

that were carefully selected. In this sense, the “politics of curation” suggest that we live our lives within a framework of curated media and terms that have been set by far away others. Fred Turner proposes that this was the beginning of our present moment as defined by digital media, of being simultaneously free but also carefully fenced in.³⁵²

In the *Family of Man* exhibit, the images served as a mirror and raise the question of what the back stage is for the imagery in which we are surrounded today. The framework of the “politics of curation” is of the utmost relevance to the practices of photography of interest here. In the nineteenth century, albums were made for the curators of the albums and their acquaintances, family, and visitors. In the twenty-first century, social media users curate their lives in images with similar motivations, and yet the magnitude of the “surround” of images, to invoke Turner’s term, is of an entirely different scale. The images are collected and posted on social media by and large for a public of known and unknown viewers, who may peruse the content at any given moment, unbeknownst to the curator of the account. While the *Family of Man* example, in which the exhibit curators select the material for the public who processes it, is analogous to mass media in the digital age, social media by contrast is significantly more dialectic because of the interpersonal nature of it.

In social media, on a platform such as Instagram, users curate their own personal narratives, which are projected to the broader network of users. Instagram users make sense of their beliefs based on the available imagery they are inundated with on the platform. Instagram users thus both curate and absorb visual media. In

³⁵² See Fred Turner, *The Democratic Surround: Multimedia and American Liberalism from World War II to the Psychedelic Sixties* (University of Chicago Press, 2013).

this sense, the “politics of curation” on Instagram compel users to dialectically form their conceptions of the socially acceptable types of content, self-presentation, and norms of cultural life based on the content of their peers. What we see is that through the act of curating that takes place on Instagram, individuals engage in performances of identity within a mode of normalization that orients behaviors towards mainstream ideology. According to Foucault, “the judges of normality are present everywhere” in such a panoptic infrastructure, in a society under the “universal reign of the normative.”³⁵³

The spectacle of Instagram is derived from users’ performances of their identities through somatic self-presentation to the camera, in addition to the careful and public curating of everyday life. Moments of lived experience become oriented towards the photographic moment, which are then added to the streaming personal narrative on social media as part of a constructed digital identity. Foucault argues in *Discipline and Punish* that “our society is one not of spectacle but of surveillance,” yet the notions of spectacle and surveillance are not so distinctly binary.³⁵⁴ In Foucault’s narrative of the history of disciplinary practice, punishment evolved in literal terms from the spectacle of public retribution to the surveillance mode of the prison. A Foucauldian approach to social media, however, cannot be thus reduced.

As Peggy Phelan suggests, the insertion of the self into the spectacle, which is so pervasive in our culture of “selfies,” signals the transition from a society of the spectacle to a society of performance. In a society in which we are all performers with

³⁵³ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 217.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

our cameras ready, there is a dangerous blurring between the self and the representational logic of art.³⁵⁵ The convergence of surveillance and spectacle has been duly noted by Jonathan Crary in *Techniques of the Observer*.³⁵⁶ In his history of the relationship between vision and the body, Crary underscores that the latin root of the word “observer” comes from “observare” meaning “to conform one’s action, to comply with,” in contrast to “spectacle,” the root meaning “to look at.”³⁵⁷ He demonstrates that an observer is “one who sees within a prescribed set of possibilities, one who is embedded in a system of conventions and limitations,” or by extension, that the subject sees within a set of cultural possibilities and fashions the self accordingly.³⁵⁸ What we see in the social media landscape is that spectacle and surveillance in fact converge. Individuals perform under a presumption of and within a framework of surveillance, and the visual representations that mediate lived experience are thus a collective spectacle of life in real time.

The insertion of the self into the personal archive is hardly subversive; it is in essence the purpose of maintaining a personal archive. Yet where the analog, material archive was to be exposed on its curator’s own terms, at specific times and to a specific audience, the digital archive transcends the bounds of such personal control. The digital archive is not only perpetually available to a vast network of viewers, but the curator must always presume surveillance. In Foucault’s words, “This turning of real lives into writing is no longer a procedure of heroization; it functions as a

³⁵⁵ Peggy Phelan’s talk entitled, “Cindy Sherman: Photography and Feminist Theories of the Image?” at the Clayman Institute for Gender Research, Stanford University, March 6, 2014.

³⁵⁶ Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, 18.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

procedure of objectification and subjection.”³⁵⁹ What Foucault underscores here is that while writing used to create a hero of the individual through the documentation of one’s life and actions, it now subjugates in the context of the panopticon where “It is no longer a monument for future memory, but a document for possible use.”³⁶⁰ If we substitute writing for a visual, archived, personal narrative, we can understand the disciplinary pressures exerted on the individual in the landscape of digital media due to its scopic nature, and the control that the individual forgoes in maintaining an archive in this commercial, perpetually visible space.

An example of this is the inclusion of celebrities in the personal archive, a practice both today and in the nineteenth century. During the *cartes-de-visite* era, there was a demand for *cartes* of celebrities, so that individuals could include admired figures in their own personal albums in a fusion of the public and private realms. It indicated not only personal preferences through the endorsing of artistic and political figures, but it also constituted an act of self-identification with that celebrity and all that the figure represents. The incorporation of mass culture into the personal archive continues on a magnified scale today. Not only are these photographic archives compiled on commercial platforms, but the culture industry is also prominently featured in personal content. Users re-appropriate images of celebrities with whom they identify, and post pictures of musicians they see in concert. Commercial places, brand-names, and recognizable clothing and accessories that are all part of the everyday make the body and the personal archive a site of self-branding in

³⁵⁹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 192.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 191.

commercial terms. Celebrity figures have always perpetuated norms of self-presentation to which individuals conform through somatic emulation. Hollywood and mass culture are one example of terms that influence how we conceptualize our identities and within which we define ourselves.

Another quintessential instance of the disciplinary pressures exerted by these practices can be found in the evolution of social norms of posing and facial expressions. As aforementioned in my discussion of Hawarden's photographs, posing guides emerged in the nineteenth century that established conventions of self-presentation. The first studio in London, founded in 1841, "adopted the locution "Say *prunes*" to help sitters form a small mouth."³⁶¹ In the twentieth century, the toothy smile evolved to be the norm of snapshot photography, and today "duck faces" and the "skinny arm" constitute norms of self-presentation in photography. What we see is that while aesthetic and somatic norms are subject to change over time, photography in everyday life consistently, across centuries, brings about social norms that determine how individuals present their bodies to the camera and what form visual representations of people assume.

Through the comparison of nineteenth century socio-visual culture to today, there is thus a perennial construction of the self through media technologies, in which visual media mediate and structure the relationships of the self to the public and private spheres. By the private sphere, I intimate both the private sphere as in one's personal network, as well as the private sphere of identity, meaning the interior self, in opposition with the exterior self that one presents to the broader public. The

³⁶¹ Kotchemidova, "Why We Say 'Cheese,'" 2-3.

personal visual archive is created at the junction of these spheres, placing identity, as understood as processes of self-fashioning in a practice of self-presentation, on a precipice of the private and the public. As Bolter and Grusin note, “we employ media as vehicles for defining both personal and cultural identity.”³⁶² It is not only a matter of defining oneself through media but also defining oneself as inscribed in a broader culture through media. What they accentuate is the idea that the self today is “networked” in that at any given time, we have multiple versions of our selves circulating in cyberspace under various forms.³⁶³ The effect of this phenomenon is perhaps best described by William James (1890), who defines the self as material, social, and spiritual; the self that is omnipresent on social media is precisely the “social self.” In James’ words, this social self constitutes the notion that “a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him and carry an image of him in their mind.”³⁶⁴ There is thus a relationship between identity, the archive, and social control. Through the personal maintaining of a visual archive whose disparate images culminate into a statement of identity over time, this construction of identity results in a continuous negotiation of defining the self first between oneself and the visual, and then through a negotiation of identity with the broader public as mediated by visual representations of the self.

The first mode of negotiation can be understood through Lacan’s psychoanalytic theory of the “mirror stage,” which purports that infants, upon discovering their reflection in the mirror, experience an identification with an

³⁶² Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation*, 232.

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 233.

anticipated other which is their selves as a unitary whole. Lacan suggests that the image is formative in this process because the image engenders the identification with the “other” in image form, which is albeit self-alienating. Through this lens, self-actualization is always a process of identification with some existing other, be it visual representations of the self, literary figures, parents, or celebrities.³⁶⁵ Future research should examine the psychoanalytic theories of identity constitution and the psychological impact of appearance and representations of self in the socialization and development of young women. The second negotiation of identity with the broader public results in an internalization of social norms, where power is transmuted into self-regulation. With the integration of the photographic machine into everyday life, there is an orientation of lived experience towards the photographic moment in a culture that demands an exteriorization of identity, as well as an internalization of social rules in the quest for social validation and evidencing in a medium that is inherently viewable to others at all times. In our continuous manipulation and use of visual media to articulate our self-image, document our lives, and project our identities to the world, the media in turn shape us. Practices of the visual on social media as manifest by Instagram thereby dictate the terms within which we define ourselves, terms comprised of cultural and social norms, and market ideology and enforced by the scopic power of the medium,

Ultimately, these practices foster an exteriorization of identity, where individuals are socialized to fabricate their identities in an ongoing negotiation with

³⁶⁵ See “The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience” in Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002).

the visual as mediated by technology and to make this vision of self public through a projection of identity in visual form. In the history of Western thought, the conception of an individualized, constituted self emerged in the Renaissance along with a nascent valorization of interiority. This only deepened across intellectual and artistic movements with an increasing focus on the human psyche. Yet in the digital age, we are on the cusp of a new human sensibility. In the words of Luce Irigaray, “The mirror... almost always serves to reduce us to a pure exteriority...It functions as a possible way to constitute screens between the other and myself...the mirror is a weapon of frozen – and polemical – distancing.”³⁶⁶ To employ the Victorian adage that dubbed the camera the “mirror with a memory,” photographic representations of the self capture this “pure exteriority” in enduring form, for oneself and for others.

Through this mechanism, photography exposes one’s private world to the public in a purely exterior form. If identity is oriented increasingly towards an exteriorization, in which individuals engage in processes of self-fashioning with phenomenological undertones, what we will see is an increasing valorization of projected identity and an effacement of interiority. Photography enables the archivization of the self; in the digital age, the self is stored in the digital archive repeatedly in different forms, manipulated, multiplied, and circulated. While the roots of our socio-visual culture can be traced back to the nineteenth-century, indicative of a certain perennial human-machine relation with respect to the visual, the ubiquity of these practices today with digital technologies signal a rebirth of exteriority that

³⁶⁶ Rideal, *Mirror Mirror*, 12.

promotes a progressive self-realization and understanding of others founded on the visible, the documented, and the public.

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