

TECHNOLOGIES OF THE SELF

NEW DEPARTURES IN SELF-INSCRIPTION



UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK, 2-3 SEPTEMBER 2011

Organisers:

Patrick Crowley (French, UCC)

Kerstin Fest (German, UCC)

Rachel MagShamhráin (German, UCC)

Laura Rascaroli (Italian/Film Studies, UCC)

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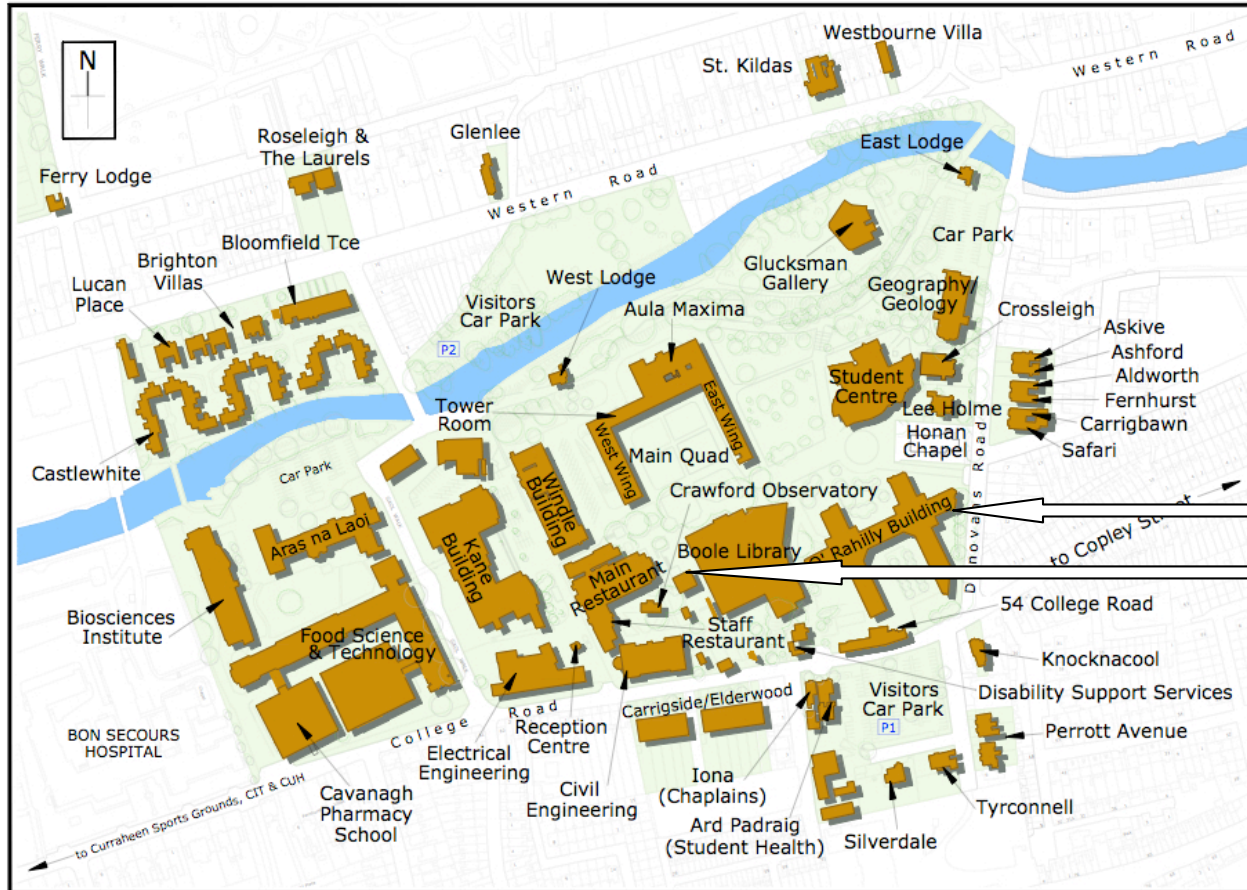
Film Studies at UCC

School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures, UCC



<http://www.ucc.ie/en/german/events/selfinscription/>

The conference will take place on central campus, in the O’Rahilly Building and Boole Basement:



O’Rahilly Building (ORB)

Boole Basement

FRIDAY 2 SEPTEMBER

13.00-14.00	Registration	ORB, 1 st Floor, Social Area		
14.00-16.00	PANELS 1 & 2	ORB 1.01 and 1.23		
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16.00-16.15	Coffee Break	ORB, 1 st Floor, Social Area		
16.15-17.00	Conference welcome & performance Prof Graham Allen (UCC): <i>Holes in a Life</i>	ORB, 1 st Floor, Social Area		
17.00-19.00	HEINZ EMIGHOLZ’S EVENT	Boole 4		
Screening of: THE BASIS OF MAKE-UP III (1996-2004, 26 minutes), MISCELLANEA I (1988-2001, 20 minutes), SULLIVAN’S BANKS (1993-2000, 36 minutes), followed by round table with: Stefano Baschiera (QUB), Gary Boyd (UCC), Heinz Emigholz, Laura Rascaroli (UCC-Chair)				
19.00-20.00	Reception	Boole Basement		
20.30	Conference dinner	Annie’s Bar & Restaurant		

SATURDAY 3 SEPTEMBER

9.00-9.30	Additional Registration	ORB, 1 st Floor, Social Area
9.30-11.30	PANELS 3 & 4	ORB 1.01 and 1.23
<p>Panel 3 Chair: Dr Laura Rascaroli (UCC) Room: 1.01</p> <p>Silvio Carta (Birmingham): Sensory self-inscription in ethnographic filmmaking and the inadequacy of the technologies of written language: David MacDougall's <i>Tempus de Baristas</i> (1993)</p> <p>Papagena Robbins (Concordia University, Montreal): Suburban Ghost Story: The Gothic Trope as Critical Commentary to Pre-feminist Self-writing Practices</p> <p>Claire Boyle (Edinburgh): Technologies of Self, Cinema and Self-Invention in Agnès Varda's <i>Les Plages d'Agnès</i></p> <p>Susan Aasman (University of Groningen): From avant-garde to popular culture: The significance of ordinary life</p>		<p>Panel 4 Chair: Dr Patrick Crowley (UCC) Room: 1.23</p> <p>Miloudah Louh (University College Cork): "And 'mid this tumult ... ancestral voices": Polyvocal self-inscription in Assia Djebar's <i>L'amour, la fantasia</i> and <i>Vaste est la prison</i></p> <p>Theresa Sauter (Queensland University of Technology): Virtual parrhesia: The role of free speech and online social networking sites in the political uprisings in the Middle East</p> <p>Gunnthorunn Gudmundsdottir (University of Iceland): "The Right to be Forgotten": Narrating the self in the digital age</p>
11.30-12.00	Coffee Break	ORB, 1 st Floor, Social Area
12.00-13.00	KEYNOTE	ORB 2.12
<p>Chair: Dr Mary Noonan (UCC) Professor Patricia Ticineto Clough (City University of New York) <i>My Mother's Scream</i></p>		
13.00-14.30	Lunch	ORB, 1 st Floor, Social Area

14.30-15.30	PANELS 5 & 6	ORB 1.01 and 1.23
<p>Panel 5 Chair: Dr Danijela Kulezic-Wilson (UCC) Room: 1.01</p> <p>Julia Weber (Freie Universität Berlin): Transcending the Self through the Other. Marina Abramović's Performance <i>The Artist is Present</i> (MoMA 2010) Robert Kilroy (Trinity College Dublin): Facebook: Inscribing Self in Other, Word in Image</p>		<p>Panel 6 Chair: Dr Mark Chu (UCC) Room: 1.23</p> <p>Elizabeth Jones (University of Leicester) Autofiction: Catch-all Neologism or New Theoretical Paradigm? Maria Walsh (Chelsea College of Art & Design): Searching for the Real in Automated Self-Presentation</p>
15.30-16.00	Coffee Break	ORB, 1 st Floor, Social Area
16.00-17.30	PANELS 7 & 8	ORB 1.01 and 1.23
<p>Panel 7 Chair: Dr Patrick Crowley (UCC) Room: 1.01</p> <p>Elise Hugueny-Léger (St Andrews): Autofiction and technology: broadcasting the self in contemporary French literature Maïté Snauwaert (Université d'Alberta): Late style in Roland Barthes and Philippe Forest's Works: Autobiography and Veridicality after Lejeune Tom Smith (Penn State Abington): The End of Autobiography, The Opening of Self-Representation</p>		<p>Panel 8 Chair: Dr Kerstin Fest (UCC) Room: 1.23</p> <p>Wayne Stables (Trinity College Dublin) Nothing to declare: Thoughts on Kafka's Diaries Robert Leucht (University of Zurich): (Re)Writing the Self: The Autobiographies of Walter Abish in Context</p>
17.30	Concluding remarks	ORB, 1 st Floor, Social Area

ABSTRACTS

PANEL 1:

Fabien Arribert-Narce (Kent/Paris III Sorbonne Nouvelle): *French Photobiography in the Era of Digital Technology*

In this paper, I will explore the new photobiographical trends and strategies that have appeared in France in the first decade of the Twenty-first century. I will focus in particular on the theoretical and aesthetic issues raised by the use of digital images by an increasing number of autobiographers, and will therefore examine the influence of online blogs, social networks and other contemporary media on life writing and the literary representation of the self. In the first part of this paper, I will circumscribe the aesthetic specificity of digital photobiographies – works characterised by an autobiographical design and in which photos play a major role, be they simply mentioned, described, or actually reproduced. I will compare a sample of works by several trail-blazing contemporary artists such as François Bon and Louise Merzeau with landmark ‘analog’ photobiographies (by Roland Barthes, Hervé Guibert, Christian Boltanski and Sophie Calle) to determine what has been gained (and lost) with the use of digital technology. In Merzeau and Bon’s hybrid artworks, the digital image prompts new forms of narrative and innovative ways of archiving the self that considerably challenge Philippe Lejeune’s authoritative definition of autobiography: ‘a retrospective narrative in prose that a real person makes of his own existence when he emphasizes his individual life, especially the story of his personality’ (1989: 4). Indeed, these authors do not present a retrospective and coherent view on their past existences, but seek on the contrary to make their readers/spectators interact with the innumerable personal data that constitute their archives. By doing so, they discard the belief in a permanent, coherent and linear identity, and expose their lives in a sort of permanent present (extrospectively, and always from the point of view of the present). One of the challenges they therefore have to face is to establish a hierarchy between the digital photos representing them and to find a mode of enunciation allowing them to preserve a form of *singularity* despite the standardised representation of the self enhanced by digital technology. Finally, I will determine how digital photobiographies may foster a new conception of personal identity, detached from psychological (not to say psychoanalytical) considerations and characterised by a sense of fragmentation and virtuality. Indeed, digital photography, which converts its object into a numeric form unlike the analog image – described as a direct (chemical) ‘emanation of the real’ by Barthes (1981: 80) –, tends to present a discontinuous and evanescent image of the self. What new dynamics of self-revelation and exposure have then appeared in twenty-first century digital photobiographies?

Annelies van Noortwijk (Groningen): *The making of the Metamodern Self*

This paper will consider the evolution of autobiographical discourse in the last decade(s) drawing upon avant-garde forms of first person documentaries such as *Tarnation* by Jonathan Couette, and *Los Rubios (The Blonds)* by Albertina Carri (both released in 2003). They will be

studied in the context of the contemporary art theory that conceives art as a specific instance of human semiotic cognition focused on imaginative self-consciousness (Barend van Heusden 2010). According to this perspective, the evolution of art, and in a broader perspective that of human culture in general, has to be considered in intimate relation—or maybe even symbiotic relation—with the evolution of the human mind. Art, as a form of cultural cognition, is always reflexive, or, in other words a form of metacognition (Merlin Donald, Dennis Dutton, Barend van Heusden). The exponential growth of self-inscription is an extremely interesting phenomenon to be studied in the context of the evolution of contemporary culture. A phenomenon that is undoubtedly related with the huge technical developments of the last decades. I do, however, think it's a simplification to consider those as the only explanation of this development which in my view has to be considered in relation from the transition from a postmodern culture to a metamodern (or post-postmodern) one. The technical, medial and digital developments are but an integral part of this far more complex process; that of that of a cumulative semiotic evolution of culture as described by Merlin Donald. In my perspective, after exploring essences of truth during the whole period of modernity, of which postmodernity was just a final phase (precisely by putting the premises of modernity into question) there is now an increased attention for the process of assignment of meaning; we are aware of the relativity of essences of truth. Consequently the focus in the arts has shifted to the construction of an as interesting, responsible or/and beautiful representation as possible of the process of assignment of meaning. Another logical consequence of this new awareness is the turn to the real and the subject as important strategies to address today's main topics; that of 'memory', 'identity' and 'trauma'. It's also with this shift of paradigm that the intrusion of the artistic discourse to not traditional forms of art, like the documentary should be understood. A clear trend in contemporary documentary is that of first person filming, a widespread phenomenon now but already introduced some fifty years ago in avant-garde (documentary) filmmakers like Stan Brakhage, Jonas Mekas, Andy Warhol and Ed van der Elsken. Drawing upon recent avant-garde forms of autobiographical documentaries from the perspective as outlined above, it will be argued that renewed forms of self-inscription can be described in terms of the making of a *metamodern self*; an understanding, or rather, a construction of selfhood and identity categories that return to notions of the modern self transforming them by incorporating the critical lessons of postmodernity.

Federica Villa (Turin) & Martina Panelli (Udine): *I am still alive*. Self Archive, Time-Lapse Portrait, Images Souvenir

On Kawara is a conceptual artist who began his work in January 1966 by producing *Date Paintings*: each day the artist prepares a wooden panel, painting the current date in white on a monochrome background. Finally each date painting was given a title and put into a handmade cardboard box together with a newspaper or a press cutting from that day's press. If he happened not to finish it by midnight, the painting was destroyed because it had not been completed on that day. Starting from On Kawara's work, this paper focuses on the phenomenology of *time lapse self-portrait* in new media's scenario. As we can observe in our daily experience, countless deposits of materials and subjective waste are left behind like imprints, like digital trails of the self in an endless desire for new experiential dimensions through the media (Social Network

profiles, blogs, photogalleries, time lapse portraits, chronologies, bookmarks, playlists). These self-designative gestures encompass a very particular ostensive will. It is a form of willingness that produces strongly adrift “souvenir images”, towards an impersonal condition. The echolalia of these subjective writings, which is a repetitive duress of ostensive gestures, produces atlases of memory images which, very much alike souvenirs, become things, objects, fragments of material. In a metonymic exercise, they provide an infinite set of different and similar pieces, *denaturalized clones*, object-images of the original self-portrayal event, which reify and redefine a living and durable experience. In order to analyse case studies between conceptual art and contemporary practices of writing the Self, we will follow a path moving around four thematic knots (the date, the number, the series, the souvenir) that seem important for a renovation of the understanding of temporality (thought of also in terms of longevity and adjournability) of these peculiar self-portrayal forms.

PANEL 2:

Teresa Pepe (Oslo): *Autofiction on the screen: Self-representation of an Egyptian ‘spinster’ in a literary Blog*

In this paper the blog *Yawmiyyāt ‘Ānis* written by the Egyptian ‘Abīr Sulaymān is conceived as a form of autofiction. In fact, two aspects of online writing are of great importance for Egyptian bloggers. First, literary blogging has given the possibility to Egyptian young people to share their innermost feelings and daily frustration without having to fear identification and humiliation due to their relative anonymity. Secondly, the computer operates as a projective device that allows users to discover and create different versions of themselves (Sorapure, 2003). Thus, blog writing facilitates autobiographic writing but at the same time turns daily life into fiction. The analysis of ‘Abīr Sulaymān’s blog aims to show how the computer has an impact on the way diaries are written. On a structural level, I will highlight the presence of distinct literary features that are enhanced by the medium: the use of visual/audio components, the interaction with readers, and the presence of links. All these elements are essential for the understanding of ‘Abīr’s self-representation. As for the genre classification, I will show how ‘Abīr uses the autofictional status of her diary to talk about unspoken subjects in Egypt and to involve her readers in a challenging game of interpretations regarding the hybrid status of the blog. The study reveals that ‘Abīr’s self-representation in her blog aims to change the common beliefs regarding over-thirty *years old* unmarried women in Egypt. Also, linking fictional stories to her narrative I is a way to claim that sexual harassment, intimidation, rejection on the base of one’s marital status affects every Egyptian woman on a daily basis, disregarding their economic, intellectual and social status.

Rosemary Hepworth (Cambridge): *Intermedia Avatars: Self-Representation Across Media*

This paper borrows the figure of the avatar from digital environments such as Second Life and locates it in the self-representational narratives of women writers and artists across non-digital media technologies. The avatar, I suggest, is an invaluable tool for theorising the politics of

identity and self-representation across a wide range of media including printed and filmic narratives. Fundamental to the configuration of the avatar (both as a textual figure and a critical tool), is its reliance upon, and exploitation of, its narrative medium. This cannot be separated from the process of self-representation. The avatar insists upon the processes of inscription and mediation as an integral part of self-knowledge. This emphasis on mediation reminds us that processes of self-representation are not simple recordings of self; they are enquiries into the formations and iterations of that self. It is my view that the avatar, whilst only named as such in these online social environments, has actually been in existence for many years in self-representational narratives that wittingly or unwittingly challenge generic conventions, or seek to interrogate the mediation of the self and the terms of that self's subjectivity. This paper, then, intends to claim the avatar as a comparative figure through which we can overcome obstacles of media specificity in order to analyse and evaluate self-representational narratives in a range of media forms.

Gabriella Calchi-Novati (Trinity College Dublin): *'You Have to Be Somebody Before You Can Share Yourself'. Facebook: Performatives of Self-Expression or Biopolitics of Control?*

Philosopher and computer scientist Jaron Lanier has been one of the major pioneers and sustainers of the "democratically" interactive and user-generated technology of the web 2.0. Lanier, however, in 2010 published *You Are Not a Gadget. A Manifesto*, a text in which he expressed his doubts about the concrete democratic potential of such a technology of the self, claiming that 'you have to be somebody before you can share yourself', for 'persons' have become 'rarities' in the twenty-first century 'lifeless world of pure information' where 'the widespread practice of fragmentary, impersonal communication has demeaned interpersonal interactions'. Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben seems to respond to Lanier's claims when he succinctly states that 'the historical experience of our time is that of an original participation [...] that has no appropriation to accomplish, a sending that has no message, a destiny that does not originate in any foundation.' When we juxtapose Lanier's and Agamben's claims what surfaces is that we have moved beyond the era of Baudrillard's simulacra –in which we had doubles of something missing but still somehow existing. What, on the contrary, we are experiencing right now is a constant sending vacant of content: a performance that paradoxically does not have anything to perform and yet keeps being performed. But who are the agents of such a performance? By offering a conceptual dialogue between Agamben's theories and Ariel Schulman's film *Catfish* (2010) in this paper I will attempt to tackle the issues outlined above by firstly proposing a critical approach to Facebook's potentiality of being a technology of the self in the strict sense, a technology through which human beings could actually share themselves. I will then articulate how the vir(tu)al self-inscriptions that populate Facebook could be interpreted as innocuous "performatives of selfexpression" while at the same time being an eerie collective-expression of the contemporary biopolitics of control. I will conclude by advancing that Facebook's self-inscriptions could be seen as tangible proof that on-line freedom of expression is not only a hollow concept, but also one of the main features of contemporary democracy, of what Wendy Brown aptly calls 'empty signifier'.

Caitríona Ní Dhúill (Durham): *The Lives of Others: Biography as Critical Perspective on Self-Inscription*

The paper engages biography in the service of a critical scrutiny of the terms 'life writing' and 'self inscription'. This may seem counter-intuitive, given that these terms have evolved out of a critique of conventional autobiographical and biographical forms. The spread of life writing both as a literary, cultural and therapeutic practice and as an object of study has involved a throwing open of autobiography, a recasting of the generic expectations associated with what it means to narrate one's life, and a radical diversification of the kinds of lives that are narrated. Deconstruction of the historically established forms of autobiography, confession, and memoir, and their recasting in terms of autofiction, autoethnography, autopathography, personal criticism and self-inscription, has gone hand in hand with democratisation and pluralisation, or so it would seem. While the various forms of life writing stage the narrating self in different ways, this narrating self remains the source, the driver, and in some sense the goal of the meaning-making activity of the text. This is reflected, for instance, in Arthur Frank's umbrella term 'self-stories', which, he maintains, are always also 'self-other stories'. Frank's formulation expresses not only the narratological position that all narrative is a communicative act, but also the chiasmic relationship of self and other elucidated by the phenomenological perspective. Self narrates to other; self becomes other to itself in the act of narration; self becomes other through and as a result of narration; other becomes other through the intersubjective encounter staged by the narration. Against this background, the paper poses a number of questions, the first of which is deliberately naïve, namely: what happens if the life which I narrate is not my own but someone else's? Second: when confronted with the dramatic expansion and diversification of life writing and other self-inscriptional practices in the digital age, might the Boswellian metier – with all its pitfalls – offer us a way to (re-)ask: whose life? and who is writing? Third: to what extent has the opening up of life writing incurred a closing out of biography, or, to cast the problem even more provocatively, does the proliferation of self-narratives leave room for narratives about the lives of others? Especially when these others are only indirectly available to us, mediated through material but disembodied life traces, for the very simple reason that they are dead?

PANEL 3:

Silvio Carta (Birmingham): *Sensory self-inscription in ethnographic filmmaking and the inadequacy of the technologies of written language: David MacDougall's *Tempus de Baristas* (1993)*

This paper examines how practice and technology of ethnographic filmmaking in David MacDougall's *Tempus de Baristas* participate in the construction of an embodied visual analysis in which the filmmaker's self is encoded in the materials of film. *Tempus* is an exploration of the socio-cultural context of three Sardinian herders, but it is also an experimental form of self-inscription that derives from the psychological and corporeal engagement of the self behind the camera with the world of three articulate men. The embodiment of the filmmaker's gaze is

inextricable from the medium of film. MacDougall's corporeal self is deeply implicated in the process of filming. The paper suggests that the filmmaking practices used in *Tempus* represent a new departure in self-inscription, one in which the self of the author, as a way of seeing, is extended and generalised into the selves of the people being filmed. Its peculiarity lies in the fact that the filmmaker's self become fully conscious only after the event of filming through a process of reflection that resembles sensory memory. In terms of theoretical discontinuities, *Tempus* is the prototype of a potentially subversive approach. It raises the issue concerning parity amongst modes of expression and the problem of the relationship between the visual and the written: Can all knowledge be represented by and conveyed through words? In what sense does the knowledge produced through writing differ from the evocative and emotional power of imagery? The paper concludes that film carries the imprint of the filmmaker's self and its relationships with the complexities of an open interaction, but it also conveys a residue of physicality that resists verbal translation. It functions as a form of nonverbal and visual self-inscription that requires the acknowledgment of domains of experience that often elude written expression.

Papagena Robbins (Concordia University, Montreal): *Suburban Ghost Story: The Gothic Trope as Critical Commentary to Pre-feminist Self-writing Practices*

Must Read After My Death (Morgan Dews, 2009) is a unique hybrid of the autoethnography, a non-fictional subgenre, and the American Gothic tale, a fictional subgenre. At issue in *Must Read* is the "ideal" American family, compromised by the damning confessional audio recordings that Allis, mother, wife, and self-aware woman, maintained from 1961-1970, which have then been juxtaposed over home movies and photographs of the "happy" family by her grandson some 30+ years later. The primary symptom of the corrupted American Dream that *Must Read* illuminates is that of a female subject attempting to realize herself through self-writing (audio recording, in this case) within the context of powerful and oppressive technologies of the self, maintained primarily through the American psychoanalytical discourse of the time. The focus of this presentation will be on what the introduction of Gothic tropes into auto/biographical composition may reveal about who may be excluded from speaking with an "authentic" non-fiction voice. According to Feminist literary scholar Leigh Gilmore, the conventions of autobiographical works have grown up around particular (white, male, heterosexual, able-bodied) subjectivities that could be considered stable, whole and self-possessed within the dominant cultural frameworks of the "civilized" world, and aim to produce heroic subjects. Allis stages the disabling effects of attempting to think, to speak and to write oneself as a woman in an extremely polarized, gendered culture. She is a compromised historical agent. Allis cannot assume the proper role of "author" within her text or speech. The destabilized authorship Allis exhibits throughout the film can be compared with the highly subjective Gothic narrator figure in ways that suggest an opposition to the typical whole, heroic, essentially male, subjectivities of autobiographical practices of the time. Bolstered by image and sound juxtapositions, as well as music, all of which suggest numerous other Gothic tropes, a critique of the accessibility of the autobiographical form emerges from this particular hybrid structuring of the cinematic text.

Claire Boyle (Edinburgh): *Technologies of Self, Cinema and Self-Invention in Agnès Varda's Les Plages d'Agnès*

The advent of digital film-making technologies makes professional quality available at reduced cost, opening up possibilities for autobiographical film-making. Film can now more readily become a technology of the self: a tool for self-inscription. But what sorts of self-inscription are enabled by the specific qualities of film and cinema as technologies of the self? Michel Foucault defines 'technologies of the self' as 'specific techniques that humans use to understand themselves' ('Technologies of the Self', p. 18). This paper will explore the question of what kinds of self-understanding cinema makes available to the self through a consideration of the personal cinema of Agnès Varda. It will focus chiefly on *Les Plages d'Agnès* (described in promotional material as a 'ludic autobiodocumentary'), referring also to *Jacquot de Nantes*, Varda's filmic alloportrait of her late husband, and her short film *Ydessa, les ours et etc.* *Les Plages d'Agnès* offers not only an exploration of the self, but an exploration of filmic technologies of the self. An alertness to what Foucault would call the *techne* of film-making is evident throughout. Varda's sensitivity to the techniques and tools used in her cinematic self-portrait is, I shall argue, just one of the aspects of *Les Plages d'Agnès* that we could call Foucauldian. For Foucault, technologies of the self are transformative, forward-looking, contributing to a process of self-actualisation. I shall argue that Varda's film shares this creative emphasis, its self-conscious attention to the *mise-en-scène* of the self allowing for the self to be invented with the camera, not re-created for it. Rejecting documentary approaches designed to "capture" a pre-existing self, Varda's innovations illustrate how cinema's technologies (in the Foucauldian sense) enable the self to be fantasised, re-imagined in and through film. Just as in much post-modern French literary autobiography and autofiction, the self emerges as fragmentary, elusive, provisional.

Susan Aasman (University of Groningen): *From avant-garde to popular culture: The significance of ordinary life*

In his magnum opus *Sources of the Self. The making of the modern identity* (1989), Charles Taylor traces the history of "the self" and describes the emerging significance of ordinary life in western art. He locates this growing "cultivation of the self" in a strong drive for self-realization, self-fulfillment and self-expression and shows how this desire became embedded in various practices. Taylor admits he has some difficulty defining these practices, because they are "something extremely vague and general: more or less any stable configuration of shared activity, whose shape is defined by a certain pattern of dos and don'ts." Over time they may have changed, diverged and converged and then reinforced each other; and there certainly were strains and oppositions between practices and the ideas they vehicled: "but they have held to constitute a common space of understanding in which our current ideas of the self and the good have grown". In my presentation I will explore if, and how, Taylors concept of "common space" can be applied to describe and explain the current massive appetite for self-inscription on YouTube as part of a project that already started in the sixties. It was then that avant-garde film makers like Jonas Mekas and Stan Brakhage heralded not only an intensely personal view on life, they also introduced the camera into the domestic sphere as a place that promised

autonomy and authenticity, thus exploring filmmaking as a more artisanal practice. In a way, the avant-garde mode appropriated the amateur mode, claiming a common space for both traditions. In his essay “In defense of the amateur”, Brakhage explained this shared space: “[I] have come to be called a ‘professional,’ an ‘artist’ and an ‘amateur.’ Of those three terms — ‘amateur’ — is the one I am truly most honored by. (...) It is because an amateur is one who really lives his life — not one who simply ‘performs his duty.’” And there were other voices as well: in 1968, Sol Worth predicted a future “where symbolic forms created by one inhabitant are instantaneously available to all other inhabitants.” Even though this project has probably been more alive as idea and ideal, I think it can be fruitful to link the aspirations of the amateur and the avant-garde in its continuous demands for autonomy, authenticity and subjectivity, in its allowance or even celebration of low-grade aesthetics. Drawing on a number of current and more historical cases of this once utopian ideal, I will map out this common space of self-inscription by tracing the dos and don'ts, the strains and oppositions of what Taylor described as “the affirmation of ordinary life”.

PANEL 4:

Miloudah Louh (University College Cork): “And 'mid this tumult ... ancestral voices”: Polyvocal self-inscription in Assia Djébar's *L'amour, la fantasia* and *Vaste est la prison*

My paper will examine two works by the Francophone writer Assia Djébar, *L'Amour, la fantasia* (1985) and *Vaste est la prison* (1995). Using as a theoretical framework Lejeune's definition of the autobiography, I shall analyse how the three elements inscribed in the word “autobiography” are invalidated in Djébar's autobiographical writing. a. bios – According to Lejeune, an autobiography should be a retrospective narrative about the life of an individual. In AD the temporal span covered by the anamnesia cannot be confined to one lifetime and the act of remembering one's past is intertwined with the remembering of one's people's past. The autobiographer has to be an historiographer whose duty is to exhume the voices of the dispossessed. Unveiling one's past brings back the « founding violence » (R.Girard) by which the coloniser imposed his rule and language. b. autos – Because of her traditional Muslim upbringing and the clear hiatus between the private and the public spheres in Islamic culture, writing about oneself with the view of being published, writing from the traditionally enclosed female space exposes one to anathema. AD shuns the singular ‘I’ that is at the heart of Lejeune's definition in favour of a polyphonic narrative voice, with the “murmur” of her female forebears as a subtext to her own French text. c. graphein – Various forms of writing are included in Djébar's books: love letters, postcards, military reports, historical texts. Nevertheless, writing about oneself in the language of the former adversary amounts to a performative contradiction because of the perennial disjunction between the idiom used and the remembrance of the ancestors whose culture was solely oral. Djébar repeatedly questions the suitability of the act of writing as an attempt to render the texture of those non-Francophone voices.

Theresa Sauter (Queensland University of Technology): *Virtual parrhesia: The role of free speech and online social networking sites in the political uprisings in the Middle East*

Social networking sites (SNSs) represent new means for modern subjects to express and reveal themselves and thus publicise their views and opinions. In the context of the political uprisings in the Middle East in late 2010-2011, Facebook, Twitter and blogs became vital means for subjects to speak out freely. In this way the ancient Greek political practice of *parrhesia* – an initially political practice of speaking the truth in the public sphere (Foucault, 2010) – has re-emerged in a virtualised and massified form through the use of SNSs. Using Foucault's studies on *parrhesia* (2001; 2010) I suggest that this practice of truthful free speech is still relevant today and has become even more powerful and effective through its transmission via SNSs. First, by virtualising the practice, SNSs have enabled *parrhesia* to become massified, so that a much greater part of the population is able to voice their opinions in public. Second, SNSs have enabled communication to be globalised, amplifying the reach of truthful free speech. Third, they have increased the speed at which *parrhesia* can be disseminated and the number of people it is able to reach. In this way, the internet has become a new virtual public sphere within which modern subjects are able to work on their relations of self to self and to others, and can, in a Foucaultian sense, exercise freedom. I shall use the recent political uprisings in the Middle East and the role online technologies play(ed) in their progression as examples of the way in which modern individuals are able to employ SNSs as means to express themselves, disseminate their opinions and speak out in a political context in order to achieve liberation and change.

Gunnthorunn Gudmundsdottir (University of Iceland): *"The Right to be Forgotten": Narrating the self in the digital age*

New technologies of expression pose different challenges to the politics and performance of memory to those of traditional textual representation. On-line self expression is proliferating in many different forms across the internet, which raises questions about memory and forgetting, privacy and intimacy. Viktor Mayer-Schönberger in his 2009 book *Delete: The Virtue of Forgetting in the Digital Age* claims: "Since the beginning of time, for us humans, forgetting has been the norm and remembering the exception. Because of digital technology and global networks, however, this balance has shifted. Today, with the help of widespread technology, forgetting has become the exception, and remembering the default" (p. 2). The EU is now preparing guidelines for websites such as Facebook, to allow users to delete their profile completely from all servers if they so wish. The question we face is how we fight for our right to be forgotten in the age of total recall. This paper will explore the different types of narrative of the self created in third generation web pages, how daily self expression impacts on our sense of self and our narratives of self and past history. The paper will address the complex issues raised by on-line self expression to questions of memory and forgetting, privacy and intimacy, in the age of digital technology.

PANEL 5:

Julia Weber (Freie Universität Berlin): *Transcending the Self through the Other. Marina Abramović's Performance The Artist is Present (MoMA 2010)*

In her performance "The Artist is Present" at the Museum of Modern Art last spring, the Serbian "grandmother" of performance art (as Abramović jokingly calls herself) sat for 736 hours and 30 minutes immobile at a table in total silence. The exhibition visitors were invited to sit opposite her one at a time for as long as they wished during the museum's opening hours. As visitors queued to sit facing the artist, the surrounding crowd could also watch these silent encounters between the artist and her audience. Abramović's performances have always been concerned with the participation of the spectator. Having become famous for her works of self-mutilation and self-destruction in the 60s and 70s, the artist has repeatedly exposed herself to her audience while experimenting with the boundaries of her Self (e.g. in "House with Ocean View", "Art must be beautiful, Artists must be beautiful"). In my paper I propose to analyze the almost non-mediated "encounter" between the artist and the audience in her MoMA performance, an encounter that by many participants/spectators has been described as an "intense," or even "shamanistic" or "religious" experience (see Danto 2010). I argue that Abramović developed a conscious, carefully chosen design to allow for simple and direct interaction between her audience and herself by drawing on spiritual practices of self-transcendence, particularly those from eastern religious traditions. The goal of my paper is to depict the employed methods and to analyze the sensations of "deep encounter" and "presence" they evoked in herself and the audience. Abramović, I argue, not only seeks for her own mind to transcend limits of the body, she also wants this state of transcendence to be witnessed by the audience. This creates a complex play between observation and interaction, exchange and examination, that allows this experimentation with self-transcendence to be witnessed. It is the apparently simple (yet highly construed) form of interaction with the other, renouncing the use of any new media technology, that I would like to discuss as a new "technology of the Self."

Robert Kilroy (Trinity College Dublin): *Facebook: Inscribing Self in Other, Word in Image*

In his recently published book *The Information: A History, a Theory, a Flood* (March, 2011) James Gleick traces the history of information from its origins in the cuneiform script to today's digital age by focusing on a gradual shift in human communication from meaning to empty message (information). In her 2010 paper entitled 'The Real Internet' Jodi Dean examines technological network information from the perspective of a similar shift in communicative exchange by re-visiting Slavoj Žižek's theorization of new media in terms of the decline in 'symbolic efficiency' and the gradual closure of the boundary between self and Other. Žižek identifies the internet's transformation of the boundaries of selfhood with the loss of what Lacan refers to as the 'performative dimension of language'. For Lacan, the system of language requires an illusory point beyond the field of vision to foreclose the chain of signifiers by stabilizing the sliding of meaning. Speech, the

performative appeal to this imaginary agency, is the primary mode through which the subject inscribes itself as a symbolic identity within a regulated circuit of desire. The modern shift in the parameters of the concept of selfhood brings about a concomitant transformation in the subject's mode of performative self inscription: from inscription in terms of an imaginary *identity* (Deity, Monarch) to inscription in terms of a sublime *object* (commodity fetishism, transcendental categories of Reason). This paper will attempt to trace the continuities of self-inscription by locating the avant-garde's endeavour to invert the logic of the sublime object within the frame of a word/image relation. Ultimately, this will allow for a Lacanian reading of Facebook in the following terms: as a shift in the mode of performative self inscription which closes the gap between word and Image, self and Other, thereby eliding the impossible nature of human desire.

PANEL 6:

Elizabeth Jones (University of Leicester): *Autofiction: Catch-all Neologism or New Theoretical Paradigm?*

The term 'autofiction' was coined by Serge Doubrovsky in 1977 and has since passed into widespread critical usage. Relating to the ambiguous and yet highly fertile space between fiction and fact, the appellation is now widely used to denote literary, filmic and new media texts whose generic status cannot be slotted neatly into either category of fiction or autobiography. Hailed variously as little more than a cynical rebranding of the autobiographical novel, as a wily means of evading legal responsibility for libellous writings, or, contradictorily, as a genuine literary innovation, the phenomenon has certainly been one of the most high profile developments within life writing in recent decades. This paper will attempt to look beneath the polemic in order to investigate what function the notion of autofiction might serve within the field of narratives of self. Drawing upon early theorisations of the term by Serge Doubrovsky and Philippe Lejeune, as well as very recent contributions to the debate by Philippe Gasparini and Vincent Colonna, the various conflicting arguments will be examined. It will be suggested that for the concept of autofiction to achieve either short-term meaning or long-term survival, greater conceptual precision is required. Moreover, setting autofiction in its wider context, it will be argued that the topic sheds light on the very notion of genre in the current age: what happens to a monstrous generic formulation (John Ireland) when it becomes banal and over-used? Does the unthinking adoption of this term merely reflect insufficiently rigorous theorisation or does it reflect an agency-stripping process of recuperation by the literary mainstream? This paper will seek to answer these questions with particular reference to the work of Serge Doubrovsky and Chloe Delaume.

Maria Walsh (Chelsea College of Art & Design): *Searching for the Real in Automated Self-Presentation*

James Coupe's online project *Today, too, I experienced something I hope to understand in a few days time* seems to operate between the modalities of Western capitalist disciplinary societies and societies of control. The final artwork comprises of three elements, which engage with and operate within the readymade data banks of information and images that circulate in virtual space. The first element is a series of

video portraits of volunteers, some shot by Coupe in Seattle where he is based, the rest shot in Barrow, using poses and actions loosely based on Danish experimental filmmaker Jorgen Leth's 1967 film *The Perfect Human*, Coupe's title being a line from the film. The videos are uploaded to a database where a programme automatically edits them in the style of Leth's film. The second element of the work uses text from status profiles submitted by Facebook users based in Barrow who voluntarily signed up on Facebook to participate in Coupe's project. A software application automatically matches the Facebook profiles with the demographic of the video portraits, the Facebook profile texts serving as subtitles to the portraits, e.g. Male 22 refers to a portrait of a fresh-faced grinning young man whose subtitle reads 'I am a bomb terrorist'. The final component of the project involves software that searches YouTube for videos that link to code words in the subtitles, the final works being shown on YouTube as split screen videos, the video portrait on one screen, its paired YouTube video on the other. The question I want to address in this paper is whether his video portraits express something 'real' about their protagonists, which is Coupe's claim, or whether they are of the same ilk as the informational machines that track our movements and channel our desires in societies of control.

PANEL 7:

Elise Hugueny-Léger (St Andrews): *Autofiction and technology: broadcasting the self in contemporary French literature*

Since Doubrovsky first coined the term 'autofiction' in *Fils*, the French literary scene has witnessed the rise of this literary sub-genre, with the publication of many texts in which autobiographical details are inserted within a fictional frame. This has coincided with the emergence of new, mainly digital, forms of self-inscription (blogs, tweets, on-line diaries) making *l'écriture de soi* an everyday, democratic practice. But autofictional texts also use new media and insert them in the more traditional written form, revealing novel ways of thinking and broadcasting the self. From the use of photography in *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*, works by (amongst others) Christine Angot, Camille Laurens, Sophie Calle, Eric Chevillard and Frederic Beigbeder all emphasise the role played by technology in the transformation of autobiographical practices in French literature. In these works, the use of new media and technology (photography, cinema, texting, blogging, advertising, reality television) not only contributes to defining autofiction, it also corresponds to a need for each writer to find their own, specific voice in order to re-write, or re-live, personal experience and share it with readers in a 'contemporary', accessible language. This paper will seek to examine this merging of media and voices in various autofictional works and to assess its effect on the inscription and participation of readers in the text. By doing so, it will also trace elements of (dis)continuity between these *collages* and Lejeune's theorisation of autobiography.

Maïté Snauwaert (Université d'Alberta): *Late style in Roland Barthes and Philippe Forest's Works: Autobiography and Veridicality after Lejeune*

In his effort to at once conceptualize and embody a new "*roman du je*" (novel of the self) after the devastating loss of his only daughter, Philippe Forest is explicitly in line of Roland Barthes' late attempt at a continuum between writing and living in front of loss in what became *Journal du deuil* (2009). Forest's model of a personal novel also draws, however, from another, non-Western cultural tradition: that of the Japanese *watakushi-shôsetsu*, this first-person novel whose author is the protagonist and in which life and literature are not opposed. Also, both Barthes and Forest are literary writers of a late vocation: academic thinkers whose tragic experience of grief has made necessary for them to write in a new form. Forest's first novel in 1997 (*L'enfant éternel*), all of his work since, both critical (his essays series at Cécile Defaut éditeur, Allaphbed I-V, 2005-2010) and literary, draw on his daughter's death to reflect on literature, while Barthes' first attempt at the diary (journal), a form he had always considered suspicious, follows the loss of his mother while being contemporary, if not directly coordinated to *La Préparation du roman* (2003). For these writers, grieving is not a time to overcome, but the inauguration of a new state of being that leads them to rethink the very notion of life, now seen from its end. Reading them together, and drawing on Edward W. Said's study of art in the face of death to come, *On Late Style* (2006), I will suggest that the new living-writing nexus these authors have come to experiment designs a late subject somehow contrary to the movement forward of the world (*à contretemps*), and calls for a new paradigm after the exclusive occupation, for the last thirty-five years, of Lejeune's autobiography theory in the critical field of French life-writing.

Tom Smith (Penn State Abington): *The End of Autobiography, The Opening of Self-Representation*

This paper will argue that, as a genre, autobiography is finished. If, as the CFP for the conference says, "*Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* [...] signaled the end of the classical Enlightenment subject of autobiography," then the literary form mediating that subject has lost its reason for being. Continued instances after 1975 of the Lejeunian "[r]etrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular, the story of his personality" are vestigial, echoes of a literary form having served its purpose in Western culture. I will further argue that so-called "autobiographical" expression, vibrantly alive in many media, deserves an appropriate name. Even before the appearance of the self-expressively visual in graphic novels and digitized media, using the term "autobiographical" to name works that do not fit Lejeune's definition was problematic since it implied that autobiography was the standard against which diaries, letters, journals, and women's relational autobiographical works were measured. If, however, we understand "autobiography" to have a historically circumscribed meaning and existence from about 1790 through about 1975, then self-representative works varying from Lejeune's definition are better understood in their own terms, without the stigma of appearing to be variants of an ideal form. "Self-inscription" as an overarching term for such works arguably connotes the act of writing, a process unsuited to works in visual media. I propose "self-representation" as a descriptor broad enough to include writing, graphics, and digitized imagery. "Self-representation" preserves the quality of

self-description necessary to differentiate our objects of study from others, while also freeing them from an unnecessary attachment to the medium of writing and a literary form rooted in Romantic self-expression and the nineteenth-century paradigm of history as a master explanatory trope for all things geological, biological, cultural, and individual.

PANEL 8:

Wayne Stables (Trinity College Dublin): *Nothing to declare: Thoughts on Kafka's Diaries*

This paper finds its departure in the claim that the difficulty of declaring nothing – the problem of the *relation* between nothing and something – is not only a presiding concern of Kafka's diaries but is intimately bound to the complex enactment of self-representation to be found therein. It attempts, by way of an indirect approach, to show what is at stake in the demand to declare nothing through a consideration of Hegel, and then relates this to the task faced by the intrepid reader of those diaries, who cannot follow that “nothing” by writing with it, against it, around it or about it and yet follow it s/he somehow must. This is a nothing that, in Kafka's words, marks a “phantom state”: a present moment that permits no translation into other terms (since every endeavour to do so amounts to a surreptitious disavowal) but nevertheless continuously solicits further declarations. Why, then, take that relation as the object of writing? And why does Kafka compulsively try to represent it? At once promising a future integration of an unbearable present, where what is written *now* might yet be redeemed through a later reading, and blocking any such retroactive transformation of loss into gain, Kafka's diaries are beset and driven by an object which cannot bring itself to expression. I will suggest it doubles as the untimely condition of exegesis. This is a criticism that can neither expiate nothing from its self-understanding nor arrive at that some-thing which would bring its compulsion to declare to a conclusion – an understanding of reading that, perhaps in the end, will mirror the fracture or dividing line between auto and bios of which it desires to write and speak.

Robert Leucht (University of Zurich): *(Re)Writing the Self: The Autobiographies of Walter Abish in Context*

The American writer Walter Abish (*1931), whose best known and most controversial novel *How German Is It. Wie Deutsch Ist Es* (1980) has been awarded the PEN-Faulkner-Award in 1980, has published a highly complex autobiographical work, which remains largely unexplored. This body of work consists of four autobiographical essays (published between 1977-1985), a memoir (2004), and an autobiographical collage (1990). Taken all together, these aesthetically heterogeneous pieces can be described as *a repeated attempt to write and re-write the self*. Abish's ongoing experimentation with writing and re-writing his life, however, is particularly challenging, for his biography is that of a refugee. Expelled by the National Socialists from his native Vienna in 1938, Abish arrived in the US only in 1956, after living in Italy, France, Shanghai, Israel and England. In this presentation, I would like to explore especially the aesthetical shifts in the development of Abish's self-writings:

using contrasting samples from three different autobiographical pieces, I will show in a close reading how his autobiographies openly reject the idea of a coherent self in favour of a fragmented self. I will argue that in this regard Abish's work is very much indebted to French theorists/writers such as Roland Barthes (*Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*, 1975) and Alain Robbe-Grillet (*Neuer Roman und Autobiographie*, 1987), who, in their theoretical as well as their literary writings, emphatically expose the inconsistencies of the 'I'. Abish's repeated endeavours to re-write the self not only share insights of French radical autobiographical concepts, but also anticipate forms of self-expression that became more common through the technological innovations of the last decade. It can be argued that possibilities of re-inventing one's self, formerly restricted to the field of the avant-garde, became more common through the potentials of the internet. Going beyond these contexts, I will finally ask how much re-invention of the self we are able/willing to consume considering the aforementioned historical background of war and expulsion. What is the function of autobiographical self-dispersion in the context of catastrophe? Based on theoretical reflections by literary scholar Geoffrey Hartman I will discuss the precarious relation between autobiographical experimentation and historical accuracy.