

Selfies, Surveillance and the Voluntary Panopticon

piero scaruffi

for the ATOMIC walk of May 2015
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The Portrait

- The portrait: to project virtues and power for future generations
- The self-portrait: an oddity, vanity





TIME

NEWSFEED SOCIETY

Teenager Reportedly Tried to Kill Himself Because He Wasn't Satisfied With the Quality of His Selfies

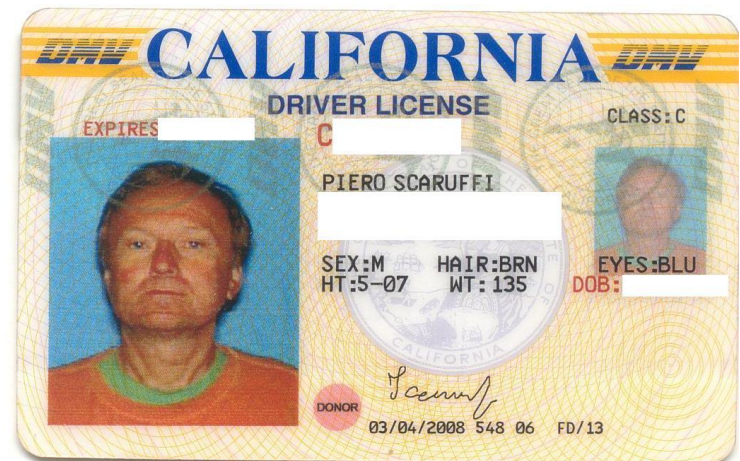
Samantha Grossman @sam_grossman

March 24, 2014



Public identity: the art of standardizing poses

- Government-issued identity: a “surveillance” photo, that must be easy to identify, i.e. facial expressions must conform in order to facilitate the job of face-recognition machines
- The goal: universal and standardized measurement and decoding by software algorithms



Social photo: the art of posing

- Smiling for the camera is a learned convention



Agit-prop selfies

- “Photography is power” (Susan Sontag, “On Photography”, 1973)
- Making a statement by altering one’s public image



Lynda Benglis, 1974

The Selfie: Constructing the Self

- Most platforms (social networking sites, chat sites, dating sites, etc) ask you to create a “profile” which includes a photo of you
- Social etiquette in cyberspace requires a visual presentation of identity
- The selfie helps construct your persona even before they hear what you have to say or meet you in person
- The individual plays an active role in the way that images represent her life





- The Quantified Self movement: using self-tracking to improve one's life

MIT Tech
Review (2011)



FT Magazine

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June 10, 2011 5:19 pm

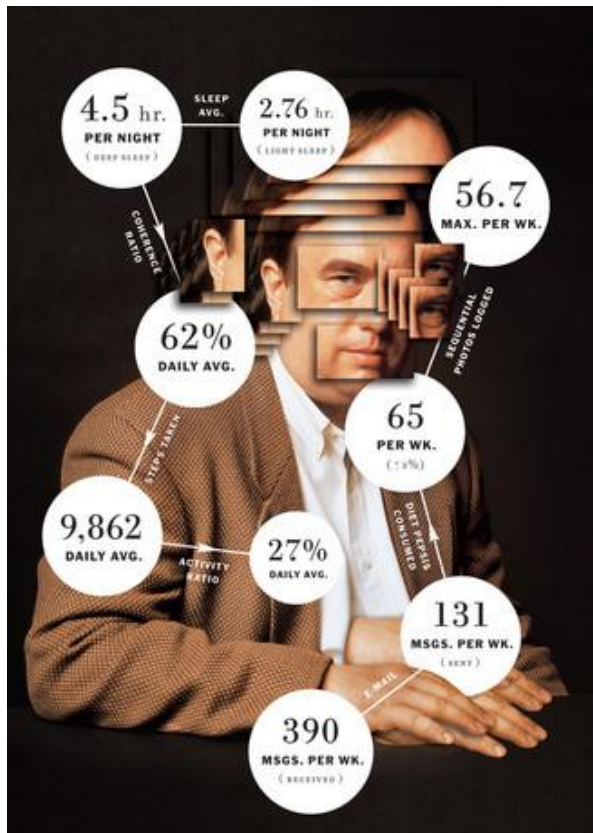
Invasion of the body hackers

By April Dembosky

You are just a number

Can you become healthier and happier by logging every snore, step and mood swing? We record a Californian obsession catching on here

Tim Chester Published: 11 August 2013



Vanity Fair (2013)

Sunday Times (2013)



WE GLADLY FEAST ON THOSE WHO WOULD SUBDUE US
SIC GORGIAMUS ALLOS SUBJECTATOS NUNC

THE CALIFORNIAN IDEOLOGY

By Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron ,

**Featured in Mute Vol 1,
No. 3 - CODE**

- The “Californian Ideology”: capitalism, collectivism, and technological determinism

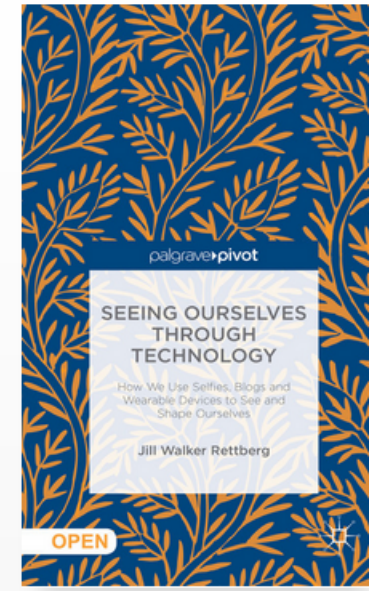
Seeing Ourselves Through Technology

How We Use Selfies, Blogs and Wearable Devices to See and Shape Ourselves

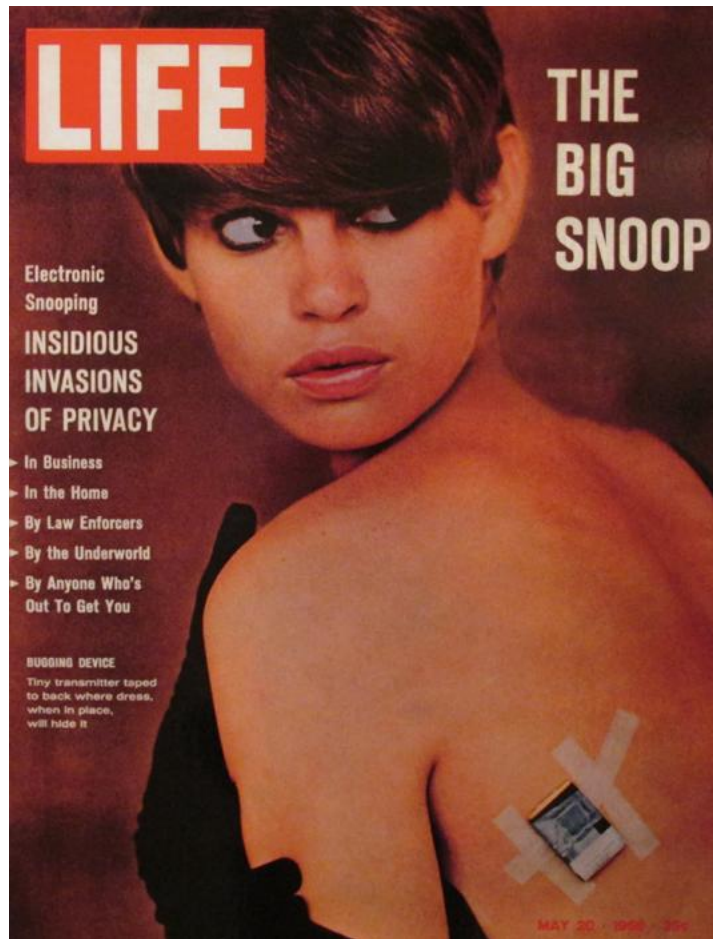
[Jill Walker Rettberg](#)

OPEN

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Publisher	Palgrave Pivot



- “The audience for our self-representations is no longer, as a few decades ago, ourselves and each other. Our audience today includes machines.
- The machines ... send the results on to marketers, employers, insurers or governments.
- We don’t think too much about our machine audiences. We are too busy learning more about ourselves and each other by taking selfies...”



- Concerns about surveillance predate the Web by many decades...
- *“Insidious invasions of privacy”: in business, in the home, by law enforcement, by the underworld, by anyone who’s out to get you”*

Who's Watching Whom? A Study of Interactive Technology and Surveillance

Lee Humphreys*

Article first published online: 4 AUG 2011

DOI: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.2011.01570.x

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Issue



Journal of Communication

Volume 61, Issue 4, pages
575–595, August 2011

- “*People willingly participate in the monitoring of their own behavior*” because of perceived benefits
- The “voluntary panopticon”
- After all, you have to tell your doctor everything about your health if you want an accurate diagnosis of your symptoms, and you have to tell your tax accountant everything about your finances if you want a favorable tax return

Henry A. Giroux | Totalitarian Paranoia in the Post-Orwellian Surveillance State

Monday, 10 February 2014 09:15

By Henry A Giroux, Truthout | Op-Ed

- *“The right to privacy has succumbed to the seductions of a narcissistic culture and casino capitalism's unending necessity to turn every relationship into an act of commerce”*
- *“The surveillance and security state is one that not only listens, watches and gathers massive amounts of information ... but also acculturates the public into accepting the intrusion of surveillance technologies”.*
- *“...a social order in which surveillance becomes self-generated... through a machinery of consumption... Such bits then move from the sphere of entertainment to the deadly serious and integrated spheres of capital accumulation and policing”.*

America's Surveillance Net

There is a revolution afoot—one that is being carried out by the government against the fundamental law of the land.

Jonathan Schell June 19, 2013 | This article appeared in the July 8-15, 2013 edition of *The Nation*.

- *“Today, alongside each one of us, there exists a second, electronic self, created in part by us, in part by others. This other self has become de facto public property, owned chiefly by immense data-crunching corporations, which use it for commercial purposes. Now government is reaching its hand into those corporations for its own purposes, creating a brand-new domain of the state-corporate complex.”*
- Popular meme “You don't browse the Internet. The Internet browses you.”



Sousveillance: Inventing and Using Wearable Computing Devices for Data Collection in Surveillance Environments*

Steve Mann¹, Jason Nolan² and Barry Wellman³

- It is not surveillance but “coveillance” (participatory surveillance)

Coveillance is an old idea

- Michel Foucault: “Visibility is a trap” (“Discipline and Punish”, 1977)
- Gilles Deleuze: an individual is constructed as a “dividual”, an endlessly divisible representation of a person as data, which becomes a tool to control the individual (“Postscript on the Societies of Control” 1992)
- Popular meme “You don't browse the Internet. The Internet browses you.”





Different spaces: Exploring Facebook as heterotopia
by Robin Rymarczuk and Maarten Derksen

- *“Users of social media platforms constantly have each other under coveillance*
- *This process of networked coveillance is intrinsic to the way social media function”*
- *“Facebook's general function is that of offering a general heterotopic medium*
- *Whereas Facebook is attractive to many primarily as a social networking tool, it is repulsive to some as a site, a heterotopia.”*

From:
Architecture /Mouvement/ Continuité
October, 1984;
("Des Espace Autres," March 1967
Translated from the French by Jay Miskowiec)



Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias

MICHEL FOUCAULT

- A heterotopia: a space that disrupts the continuity and normality of common everyday places.
- Unlike utopias, which are unattainable and inherently unreal, heterotopias are real spaces
- Heterotopias are “*counter–sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted*”
- Movie theaters, cemeteries, ships, brothels, Disneyland
- Every culture in the world creates heterotopias

Sherman Young

Of Cyber Spaces: The Internet & Heterotopias

[Respond To This Article](#)

Volume 1 | Issue 4 | Nov, 1998

- *“Cyberspace should not be thought of as a single space. Whilst the network is a kind of malleable, expandable, linked unity, the actual social spaces that result from its amorphous being are many in number and vary in both quantity and quality... from sex-based chat-rooms to commodified digital libraries and embrace almost every spatial possibility in between. Thus, not only can cyberspace as a whole be considered a heterotopia, but within cyberspace itself there must exist heterotopias”.*

The real nature of social networking

- Facebook is not a social networking tool but an archive of the user's life.
- It belongs to the category of museums, not to the category of salons.
- Facebook's key feature is the "timeline" (2012) that rewinds your entire life in a multimedia format that no existing museum can match, and potentially with an infinite amount of personal details because of the links to other people's timelines.
- Facebook's timeline automatically generates a record of your life, an extended multimedia multidimensional browseable editable self.



The real nature of social networking

- It is doubly a self: because you created it, bit by bit, and because you can reedit it at any time, thus changing your own historical self.
- If you broke up with that boyfriend, you can remove all the pictures of him, or even any trace of all the trips that you took with him and of all the parties that you two attended together.
- Facebook allows you to retroactively construct your own persona
- Facebook's Timeline can be used as a time machine that allows you to change your own past and, by creating a new persona, to alter your future.

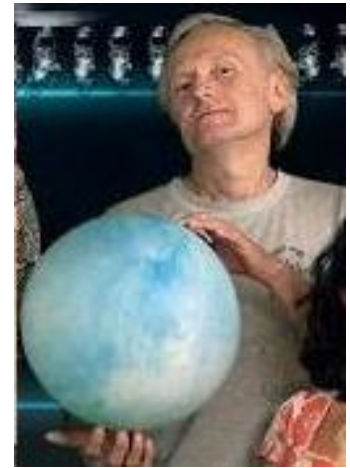


Life on automatic: Facebook's archival subject
by Liam Mitchell

- *“As an archive of a user’s activities that is, in its ideal form, automatically updated, Timeline (and associated Facebook services) is symptomatic of a technological understanding of the world common to many companies in Silicon Valley.*
- *Facebook’s archival subjectivity indicates a societal change in the pre–understanding of things in general.*
- *Facebook ... helps its users present cleaner, better curated versions of themselves, ”*

Beating the system?

- The “selfie” is a very malleable object
- One can take a selfie in a million different ways (unlike government id photos that must comply with strict rules)
- A selfie usually violates the principles of government-issued ids: weird facial expressions, weird camera angles, weird positions, weird hand gestures, make you “unmeasurable“
- Filters can alter a selfie at will, even changing the time and location



An instrument of rebellion?

- Selfies mark the democratization of face image producing, distribution and cataloging
- The selfie as the weapon of choice for a movement against surveillance and standardized metrics?

Seeing Ourselves Through Technology

How We Use Selfies, Blogs and Wearable Devices to See and Shape Ourselves

[Jill Walker Rettberg](#)

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The Future of Selfies

- The future: facial recognition algorithms will create your persona, a more objective persona than you create by censoring which bits of your life's history are public



Yahoo

photos

flickr

After Backlash Over Upgrade, Flickr Considers Letting Users Opt-Out Of Auto-Tagging

Posted May 12, 2015 by [Sarah Perez \(@sarahintampa\)](#)

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The Surveillance State

- 2013: Edward Snowden leaks to the media the clandestine mass electronic surveillance PRISM program operated by the NSA





Surveillance & Society

Editorial

Big Data Surveillance: Introduction

Mark Andrejevic

University of Queensland, Australia.
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- *“One of the less publicized facts about the deployment of surveillance and military drones is that in addition to weapons, cameras, and other sensors, they are equipped with a device called an “Air Handler” that can capture all available wireless data traffic in the area.*
- *The drone then comes to represent a double-image of surveillance: both the familiar “legacy” version of targeted, purposeful spying and the emerging model of ubiquitous, opportunistic data capture.”*

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Spying on Democracy
Government Surveillance, Corporate Power, and
Resistance
[Heidi Boghosian](#)

Foreword by Lewis Lapham

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- *The omniscient state "in George Orwell's 1984 ... is represented by a two-way television set installed in each home. In our own modern adaptation, it is symbolized by the location-tracking cell phones we willingly carry in our pockets and the microchip-embedded clothes we wear on our bodies."*

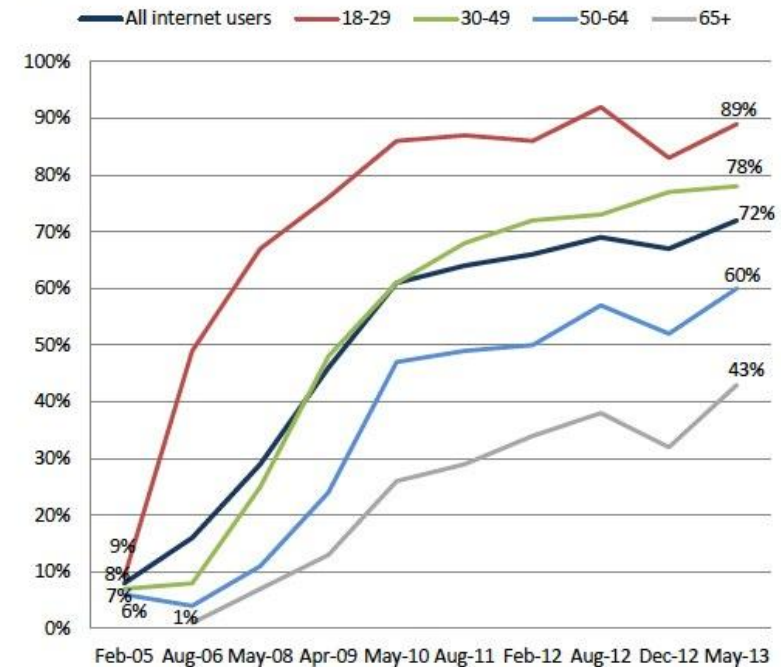
Class blog for Prof. Portwood-Stacer'

WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT SURVEILLANCE

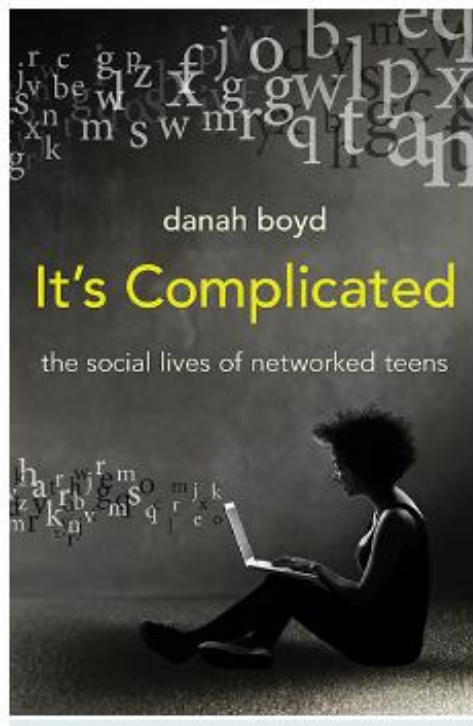
- “*Surveillance creates an asymmetrical power relationship*”

Social networking site use by age group, 2005-2012

% of internet users in each age group who use social networking sites



Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project tracking surveys 2005-2013. Spring Tracking Survey, April 17 – May 19, 2013. N=1,895 adult internet users ages 18+. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones. The margin of error for results based on all internet users is +/- 2.5 percentage points.



It's Complicated

The Social Lives of Networked Teens

danah boyd

REVIEWS

PREVIEW

CONTENTS



- *Increasing importance of educating young people in media literacy*
- *“In a networked world, in which fewer intermediaries control the flow of information and more information is flowing, the ability to critically question information or media narratives is increasingly important”*

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See Me Like I Do: A Forum on Selfies

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