Coalescing the Mirror and the Screen
Consuming the 'Self' Online

Yasmin Ibrahim

Queen Mary, University of London

Abstract;

While humanity has always found means to represent itself through material artefacts, the digital age and its attendant screen culture offer interesting ways to ubiquitously capture and to produce the self as a digital artefact online for personal and public consumption. The non-stop capture of ourselves and our specular double are distinctive to digital living where the self can be objectified and consumed relentlessly, and where others can partake in consuming us. This chapter argues that the self remains a primal subject of interest online sustaining our 'mirror moment' of self-discovery and recognition. Our fascination with the self is elevated further through our social and historical valorisation of the screen, which has over time stood for public spectacle and voyeurism. The screen, once the preserve of newsmakers, the celebrity or the morbid, has been disaggregated into a theatre for the consumption of the self. This ubiquitous consumption of the screen is premised through the concepts of the mirror and the screen in Chapter.

Introduction

The commodification of the self online for private and public consumption is a distinct element of our digital lives today. The ability to ubiquitously capture ourselves through the convergence of technologies means that the self has become a resonant subject (and object) as well as a site of production and consumption in the digital age. The presentation of the self online and the modes of representation where we consciously seek to affirm our presence on the screen is what is characterised here as self-curation. Self-curation is embedded into a duality of the everyday and equally in imagining oneself through different life experiences and backdrops, where imagination and fantasy are entwined with the ordinary and the perfunctory. Self-curation is then anchored through the politics and aesthetics of the digital architecture where selfhood is performed and amenable for consumption (both for the self and others).

Self-curation cannot be solely premised through the idea of narcissism alone. It certainly acknowledges a certain fascination with the self and its enactment and presence online

(Ibrahim 2011). In the process it reveals our intimate bind with technology, and in tandem technology's ability to extend our sense of self through an array of strategies and modes including the online image economies which image sharing social media platforms are part of. The performative elements enabled through the digital screen culture, and its back-end operations imagined through a tangled web of metrics and algorithms that turn human interactions into data, capture the frailties in performing our identities online in equal measure. Undeniably, these transactions can create new forms of social capital and attendant vulnerabilities. One may argue that in the new media economy, the self commodified relentlessly through a process of non-stop capture facilitated through the convergence of mobile telephony, imaging and publishing technologies loses what Walter Benjamin (1995) terms as 'aura'. Or perhaps the representation of the self through technologically-mediated platforms illuminates its loss of authenticity in configuring the self in the digital platforms. The transcendence of the physical or corporeal body into a digital environment means something is lost in this technological resurrection from the physical to the digital state. While the loss of aura and authenticity as well as the ability of the digital world to transform human attributes are valid concerns, the commodification of the self is a vital component of our online transactions today. The replication of the self and its en masse dissemination is premised on building social capital in the virtual platforms. As such, it is less concerned with the loss of aura or the distortion of the corporeal body, but premises the politics of self-representation through a primal fascination with the self and a wider economy of validation enabled through a public gaze.

Our primal fascination with the self is further sustained through our historical and social pre-occupation with the screen. The screen, symbolic of a certain grandeur and communal spectacle, occupies a space of cultural resonance for societies. The screen historically imagined through the romance of celluloid and distanced from the confines of domesticity belonged to the land of fantasy and the unattainable. Manifested through the cinema, theatre, television, gaming devices, computer, mobile phone, etc., the screen has become endlessly re-invented and re-inscribed into our ordinary lives in the modern age. With the advent of broadcasting, the screen negotiated the domesticity of the home and over time it confronted the body as the site of location with the advent of mobile telephony and mobile technologies. The screen came to embody a more intimate domain once personalised and embedded onto the corporeal body. This domestication and more significantly the corporealisation of the screen was an important moment in the realm of communication technologies for it posited a realisation that we could project ourselves onto spaces where these once belonged to significant others. The self no longer needed to consume the screen from the outside as it could now be inserted inside and equally be consumed through the screen. Henceforth both the mirror and the screen became autoscopic devices in consuming the self.

The notion of commodification of the self and the complicit nature of self objectification invariably invites controversy on the transformation of the self as a form of transacted commodity online. In terms of the capitalist critique of the internet, it reinforces the violence of the capitalist agenda on the internet which seeks to monetise all forms of creative and artistic endeavours. Nothing remains sacred, and the objectification of the self symbolises the

ultimate exploitation of the human spirit while presenting a false economy of empowerment and projecting the screen as a democratic enterprise for one and all. Criticisms from the left about the new media environment include producing new forms of meaning and value for producers and advertisers and the exploitation of consumer creativity (See Bonsu & Darmody 2008, 365; Terranova 2000) implicating the self at the heart of value creation in the digital economy. The exploitation of immaterial labour through user engagements, including the production of the self as a material artefact, means that the self is directly entwined with this economy of value creation and exploitation. The commodification of the self is co-opted into new forms of consumerism. The violence of capitalist exploitation means the self becomes a transacted commodity online but as part of a complicit and compliant act where our fascination with the self becomes part of this endeavour to recast ourselves as content and commodity (Ibrahim 2008a). It's not just our pets that are fodder for virtual content creation, but so is the self.

The curation of the self and the constant projection of the self online and its objectification also underpin a caution against an obsession with the self in modernity. Our primordial fascination with the self is seen as a fatal flaw in the human condition as evidenced in the tragic tale of Narcissus. Martin Davies (1989, 265) writing about Narcissus' unrequited love for a reflection of himself, the delusion of infatuation and his obsession with his solipsistic passion, observes that the myth of Narcissus is subversive for European culture. It implies that self-knowledge is the outcome of 'strange madness,' culminating in the tragedy which then revokes the radical and archaic inspiration to know oneself (Davies 1989, 265). While Narcissus exposes the quest for uniqueness and the motivations for particularity, he also ultimately reflects the potential for self-destruction in self love, presenting a cautionary and enduring legacy for humanity. The notion of us relentlessly consuming ourselves in the virtual environment invokes the instability of our obsession with consuming ourselves online. In acknowledging this cardinal flaw in the human condition, we are then tacitly aware of the dangers of self-love and its potential for destruction. Destruction and exploitation come in various guises in the digital economy. What has been less evident in our discussions about UGC has been the exploitation of this intrinsic flaw in the human condition and capitalist modes of production in engaging this trait. Capital's recognition and exploitation of our fascination with the self paints a vulnerable image of humanity in the digital age. Nevertheless, it would be too limiting to view self-curation solely as an exploitative enterprise geared mainly through market forces, as it would deny the therapeutic gains which emerge through self-expression and community validation. It is suffice to note that capital's opportunistic alliance with self-fetishisation has not been adequately explored in existing literature.

New media platforms particularly social media sites which allow us to create profiles, curate our identities, archive our personal memories and to post our daily thoughts and images on image sharing platforms perform as technologies of self where these provides new opportunities for identity creation and self-objectification. As Zizi Papacharissi (2011: 304-305) observes, 'online social networks constitute sites of self-presentation and identity

negotiation, traversing private and public spaces while connecting us to multiple audiences' where a networked self becomes conceivable. There has been a proliferation of scholarship which has interrogated the construction and reconstruction of self in the digital realm and its ubiquitous interactions with technology where the screen becomes banalized and part of the everyday (See Turkle 1995; Lev Manovich 2001; Bolter and Grusin 2000). As such the self is constantly imagined with and through new media technologies such as the screen, imbricating it with the politics of identity creation. Lev Manovich (2001: 94) argues that the society of the spectacle has given rise to the 'society of the screen' making it omnipresent and a banal object of everyday life. Laura Robinson (2007) in probing the cyber self quantifies it as a fluid entity straddling embodiment in the physical world and immateriality in the virtual sphere. Sherry Turkle (1995: 180) deems the internet as a social laboratory for re-fashioning the self and this being a distinct element of postmodern life. As new media spaces become a platform for playing out our personal and cultural identities we become both subjects and objects (Bolter and Grusin 2000: 232). Agnès Rocamora (2011) in her discussion of blogs as a space for identity construction and the representation of femininity explores the screen as a mirror to examine women as specular objects online. She opines like mirrors, 'new technologies have enabled, digital screens to look at oneself' (Rocamora 2011:416).

In reviewing our insatiable appetite to consume ourselves through the metaphors of the mirror and screen, this chapter locates the significance of the self in the new media economy where we ubiquitously engage with technology; where there are numerous opportunities to create and curate the self through social media and user-generated content whether it be blogs, social networking sites or image and video sharing platforms. The mirror and the screen possessing reflective and projective qualities provide a conceptual lens to understand the politics of self aestheticisation and the ubiquitous phenomenon of curating ourselves online. The chapter draws on the importance of the mirror phase of self-recognition in human development and equally it examines the valorisation and socialisation of the screen over time as an intimate object embedded onto the corporeal body in the digital age. It argues that modern society has a primordial relationship with both the mirror and screen and in the digital age these play an integral role in politics of self construction.

Self and Presence Online

The metaphysical questions about whether we really exist and discussions about consciousness through the separation of mind and body has saturated philosophical enquiry. The existence and expression of sentiments and emotions is another means by which we have studied consciousness and existence of human presence. The subjective feeling of existence within a given environment is often termed as presence or telepresence, where it is mediated

through technology (See Heeter 1992; Sheridan 1992; Steuer 1992). With reference to virtual reality, the notion of existence is quite central, where it premises on a relationship between one's psychological and physical domains (Minsky, 1980). Others such as Martin Heidegger (1962) and psychologist J.J. Gibson (1986) propound existence as being tied to our normal everyday physical environment. For J.J. Gibson, perceiving the environment then entails perceiving the self, where the two are reciprocally entwined. For example, when we walk through the environment, we perceive objects and events, and simultaneously, we perceive our own position and motion in relation to them. (Bahrick et al. 1996, 191). From a Heideggerian perspective, the concept of 'enframement' captures technology as something external to the human being, yet generative from its capacities, though not part of its body and substance. The questioning of technology then becomes a pressing matter for its ability to order the world in new ways which tamper with man's authentic sense of being, thus signalling an imminent crisis for European modernity in the industrial age and hereafter. Technology in postmodern discourses veers beyond an external reality, where the body can be reordered and re-presented through technology. The conceptualisations of the posthuman and the cyborg are then part of this imagination, where technology infiltrates the body and mind through its pervasiveness and ubiquity (Pasek 2014).

The discourse of the virtual world further complicates the idea of existence. In sociological discussions, when we speak about the online world and offline world, it's quite easy to assume these are separate and bounded spheres of life. But the reality of technologically-mediated living is that online and offline worlds are increasingly enmeshed. They are not distinct spheres in themselves but we widely accept that our negotiations, communications and transactions online can require us to review our sense of identity, and in acknowledge a digital presence online through the traces we leave there. Whether these be images, semantic words, emoticons or profiles, our digital manifestations contribute towards creating a digital identity. Others may call it a digital footprint. The terminology being less consequential than the recognition that we acknowledge the existence of presence in the digital world and this presence can be mediated both by our offline norms and equally through new norms that emerge through our negotiations with technology and the architecture of the internet (Ibrahim 2011; 2012).

The sense of self and identity creation then become an intrinsic part of our digital presence. In some senses, the notion of the Cartesian duality or the separation of the mind and body is enacted through our disembodied presence online. This disembodied materiality online produces a consciousness of our existence in the virtual world, signalling a transcendence from the physical to the virtual world. An existence where we can watch ourselves, consume our digital presence and be aware of others watching us. The screen where we watch ourselves is just as destabilising as the mirror in which we first observe our physical embodiment. The mirror as a material artefact has a long mythical and instrumental function in human history. Beyond its role in theories of self-recognition and awareness, the mirror in its ability to depict reflection is equally the basis of endless mythical narratives in human history. Mirrors are seen as providing more than mere reflections, casting souls and spirits

and being endowed with the potential power to trap them in superstitious folklores (Rochat & Zahavi 2011).

Philippe Rochat and Dan Zahavi (2011) in writing about the 'uncanny mirror and mirror self-experience' contend that the unsettling experience of mirrors, particularly mirror self-experience, appears to prevail across cultures, and is viewed as universal. The mirror and the human condition have an inexplicable bind. The mirror evokes a phantasmagoric illusion of oneself where one is always fascinated and unsettled by one's imagery. Psychologically, however, they are objects of perpetual fascination mainly because of their ability to provide us with reflected images of ourselves (Rochat & Zahavi 2011). According to Bahrick et al. (1996: 189) when a child recognises herself in the mirror for the first time, there is a certain mix of curiosity, excitement and equally anxiety about consuming the 'mirror self'. The self is probably the first and one of the most important sources of stimulation the infant encounters.

There are diametrically differing views about how the infant perceives the self from the start. One argues that infants are able to perceive a differentiated self from the beginning, comprising of an integrated knowledge about many aspects (See Gibson 1986; Bahrick 1995; Bahrick et al. 1996, 190). The self then perceives itself as a unique entity with a particular visual appearance and physical attributes, and this sense of differentiation develops over time. This is in contrast to the traditional adualistic notion that the infant gradually distinguishes between self and its environment over time (See Mahler & Furer 1968; Piaget 1954). Jacques Lacan (2006) discusses the mirror phase as a point where the infant becomes aware of being a separate subject from other beings as it sees itself in a mirror and recognises that the mirror image is a reflection of itself. Despite the divergent strands, in psychoanalytical theory the mirror phase is a salient element of self development. Mirror self-recognition became a primary construct in the development of the self in early research and provided the conceptual basis of self-understanding (Bahrick et al. 1996, 191).

Merleau-Ponty (1964) concurs that self-recognition through the mirror symbolises a troubled form of self-knowledge. The mirror remains a metaphor for the dawning moment when the self can be objectified and alienated from the flesh, giving the child a visual presentation of its own body that is very different from what it can obtain by itself (Merleau-Ponty 1964, 125). The mirror then provides the possibility to understand the body as a distinctly delineated object, permitting the child to see herself as seen by others. This precise moment is also the realisation that one is that image afforded by the mirror (Rochat & Zahavi 2011).

For Lacan, this is the moment of transcendence where the reality of the live person shifts to the fictitious or imaginary self, as the mirror image has crafted an image torn from one's real self, instilling both an alienation and objectification of the self. An exterior or objectified self emerges through the mirror. Consequently, others through the act of consumption of this object will tear the self away from its immediate inwardness much more surely than will the mirror (Merleau-Ponty 1964, 136). The mirror capture of the self is also a moment of realisation that the real self has an exterior dimension that can be witnessed by others

(Merleau-Ponty 1964, 129, 140). The moment of mirror self-recognition is an unsettling experience, projecting the self into an intersubjective space where 'I am exposed and visible to others,' and as such this interstitial moment reinforces the alienation of the self and the uncanny and enigmatic quality of the specular double (Rochat & Zahavi 2011, 6). Jane Gallup (1982) in reading Lacan, observes that the mirror stage marks the coming of the ego and therefore of narcissism proper. Narcissism is love of an image of self, and the demand for the image of the self is achieved for the first time in the mirror stage.

The virtual environment sustains and elongates that 'mirror moment,' where we are entrapped by our fascination with ourselves. The digital platforms not only provide this moment of self-recognition and awareness online, but combine it with the potency of the screen. The screen in our modern civilisation is a place where we consume as a public; where the notion of important events and celebrities are showcased. The screen is both the space of dreams and representation of the real. Our connection to the mirror precedes the screen, but the screen stands for reality and escape, equally extending an invitation into simulated worlds and immersive environments where the sense of self can be re-mediated and where the body can be reassembled through technology.

Prior to the internet, the screen understood through the televisual platforms of broadcasting and cinema signified the world of another. The screen stood for public displays, spectacle, forms of vicarious mobility and consumption as evident in the earlier writings on the television. Raymond Williams's (1974) notion of 'mobile privatisation' captured this ability to transcend time and space through the televisual sphere, where the mind could be transported through moving image even while static on the couch. The television socialised the modern world and audiences into according an importance to the screen. Mobile technologies, hand-held devices and home computing broke away from communal consumption to the privatisation of the screen. The convergence of technologies into mobile telephony further enabled the screen to be a theatre for the singular individual.

This democratisation of the screen as a people's platform of expression, activism and voyeurism in the internet age speaks about 'intimatisation' of technology and the 'spectacularisation of the self'. This bodily embedding of technology through personal gadgets such as mobile devices means technology is not external or enframed through the environment as propounded by Heidegger, but becomes an extension of our sensory system as Nicholas Negroponte (1995) envisioned, where the 'right cufflink could communicate with left cufflink'. The human body is then flooded with an impossible richness of information, to a degree far beyond the ability of its perceptual apparatus and nervous system to receive and sort (cf. Massumi 1995). The privatisation of the screen enables the recasting of the self as a performing entity within this landscape of content overload, conveyed through the screen and the embedding of the technologies through the corporeal body. Sherry Turkle (2005) conceives the notion of the self on the computer screen as a 'second self,' which stresses the relationship between the self and the machine, situating the computer as an intimate mind machine. Turkle dislodges the myth that the self has to be a unitary singular entity, but rather one that could be re-conceived and duplicated through the screen.

The privatisation of the screen, pleasure, and leisure reconfigured time and space, where consumption was no longer privileged solely through broadcasting schedules or communal consumption en masse. The internet re-positioned discourses of domestication of technology in a similar vein as the 'walkman' when it was first introduced into the market place. As a portable technology embedded to the corporeal body it became an extension of the self. Increasingly mobile technologies have targeted the body as sites of embedding, performing new types of subjectivity and relationship with technology, where the latter has the power to extend memory, and cognitive and sensory perceptions. This corporealisation of technology where the bodily senses are extended through technology, signified a reconfiguration of our relationship with technology and equally our notions of shared time, space and sense of community compared to mass broadcasting.

Prior to the internet, and with the advent of imaging technologies such as the portable camera, the self may be imaged and consumed in photographs or home movies, but a screen where the self can be projected and consumed by near and distant others heralds a different form of consciousness. Inserting ourselves in between the happenings of the world and celebrity life, the self is permitted to exist within this thrust of public attention, forming its own audience economy through the architecture of the web. This is an important moment for humanity and for the self; for it is a moment where the 'mirror and screen coalesce' - a moment where the self is consumed and aestheticized through self and equally by others but through a screen culture.

In Laura Mulvey's (1975) notion of the 'gaze,' power relations and sexual politics were encoded, creating a dichotomy between the subject and the object in the politics of the screen. With self-representation online, Jill Walker (2005) contends there is a further coalescing of the object and the subject. Walker concludes that our contemporary fascination with reflections and shadows is an expression of our new found subjectivity as individuals able to represent ourselves rather than simply succumb to the generalisations of mass media (Walker 2005, 184). The public projection of the self is an elemental aspect of digital living – where the recognition of our presence in the digital platforms requires us to perform for others, to disclose, to exhibit and to equally assuage our sense of aesthetics, identity and our perceptions of morality. This phenomenon of 'self-curation' involves a complex interplay with the architecture of the web and through the intimate embedding of technologies on our corporeal body while premising our primal fascination with the self. This impression management through the everyday where the presence of the self is recast through the screen becomes a vital part of digital living.

The illusion of the mirror stage has been emphasised by Lacan, where it symbolises the belief in a projected image introducing a misrecognition and fiction in the representation of the specular self (See Gallup 1982). The unified assemblage of the body in front of the mirror is a decisive moment of misrecognition. Similarly, the virtual space is also about morphological distortion. As Anne Pasek (2014) points out, virtual screen consumption is not a seamless replication of the body. She asserts that technology distorts the body in the transcendence from the physical to the virtual world. When we normalise the self in the virtual, there is

danger of not being critical about the critiques of mediated self-perception. Pasek (2014) concurs that seeing oneself is a destabilizing affair as 'looking at ourselves through technology also seems to run the risk of cyborgic transformation-of bodies made alien or broken through the inorganic logic of visual media' (Pasek 2014). Pasek (2014) argues that embodied experiences can be understood as continuously incomplete, enactive, and contingent upon technological supports and extensions to the body's sensory world. She nevertheless argues that instead of viewing this as a form of domination or dehumanisation, it should be understood as a technology of perceptual introspection. The self in the digital age, in comparison to the mirror stage of affording a unified vision of the body, becomes re-morphed through its digital transcendence.

The Virtual as Mirror and Screen

Both the mirror and the screen are equally charged with the illusory and distortionist qualities. The mirror like the screen enables the possibilities for envisioning another paradigm of reality. In tandem with this, the imagination of another world is often rife in studies of child psychology but equally in human beings invention of religion. The imagined world is often a world of possibilities; of morality; of just order and equally an inversion of these. The child's world, typified through Lewis Carroll's 'Alice in Wonderland' narratives, inverts the reality of the mortal human world where wild and wonderful things can happen limited only by one's imagination. The rules of the physical world simply do not apply. Cyberspace consumed through the screen in many ways captures this urge to create another world through a hyper reality. Self-curation in the digital world then offers endless possibilities to re-invent oneself or to extend ones' sense of self.

Our early conceptions of the virtual world imagined it as unadulterated terrain freed from the impositions of the real world where liberty, freedom and enterprise can flourish without capitalist pursuits or the governance of nation-states. It acquired the discourse of the moral alternative, but one that could be readily available while we lived out our mortal lives, unlike the afterlife. The birth of the internet marked a moment of unfettered imagination and possibilities. William Gibson (1993) calls cyberspace a 'consensual hallucination', while Joyce McDougall (1986) terms it the 'psychic theatre,' where the more primitive instincts and desires could be enacted. The self and the re-birthing of the self were equally imagined in these possibilities. With the virtual space we could reinvent identities or equally relinquish these if we so pleased with pseudo-identities or even anonymity in the online world. Self and our real identities could be uncoupled and this was deemed as liberating in the initial discourses of the internet. Unlike the afterlife imagined in religious belief systems, in the virtual world you can be present as data and as content even after death, possessing an ineradicable quality defying time and space and equally the mortality of the physical world.

The advent of social networking sites (SNS) fused online and offline identities where these were discussed as bounded spheres prior to it. Equally, the conscious effort to create and

communicate identities has been much discussed with the advent of social networking sites. The creation of a profile culture and the need to sustain identities through our everyday life activities and our ability to comment on the world and others through platforms like Twitter, Flickr, Youtube or Instagram constitute our endeavours to be in the world. Other image platforms and the convergence of technologies also allowed us to communicate relentlessly through the image. Hogan (2010, 377) argues that self-presentation can be split into performances, which take place in synchronous "situations," and artefacts, which take place in asynchronous 'exhibitions'. Social media, on the other hand, frequently employs exhibitions, such as lists of status updates and sets of photos, alongside situational activities, such as chatting. A key difference in exhibitions is the virtual "curator" that manages and redistributes this digital content. Social Networking Sites through their emphasis on profile creation and communication through social networks and friendships inscribed both the screen and the mirror into these transactions.

The self can be transformed into the 'selfie,' where mobile technologies allow us to photograph ourselves without elaborate paraphernalia and with the click of a button. The self becomes an object we can aestheticize, consume and curate online. The manufacture of the self and its presentation to others has been enmeshed into a reciprocal sociality where it becomes part of gift-giving and communicating presence online. Self-curation is also invariably tied to a wider economy of community validation, followers and popularity of hashtags and downloads. Consumption and validation by a wider community are elements which shape the ways in which we curate ourselves. The aestheticisation of the our daily lives and our need to share it with others through the selfie means that the self is narrated through its ordinariness (See Ibrahim 2015). This banal imaging of our everyday enables us to manufacture and consume ourselves on the screen, ascribing a narrative and the potential to imagine and consume ourselves both through our notions of reality and beyond.

If the virtual space unleashed an imaginary world for the modern civilisation, it is also a space which signifies an insatiable appetite for content. With the economy relying on user-generated content (UGC) to produce artefacts and commentaries, to contribute to knowledge, to offer reviews and to share experiences, the sense of self as contributing to a wider world became a productive component of the new media economy. The contribution one makes through one's vantage point or view points, sense of aesthetics or the offering of oneself to public consumption asserts the salience of the self to the digital economy. The proliferation of UGC and the ability to document ourselves as selfies and to publish our experiences non-stop made the 'self' an object of enquiry and a subject of the digital economy providing immaterial labour while appropriating agency and empowerment from self-expression and exhibition. Our primal fascination with the self plays to the agenda of capital working to accumulate content and traffic that could be stripped from the human or its corporeal counterpart. Capital recognises the flaws in the human condition and our propensity towards indulging the self.

The self is then not beyond exploitation in this economy but self-curation or the conscious decision to preserve and exhibit one's presence online asserts forms of agency despite the

internet's tendency to create a data trail and extract data from the transactions we leave online. Gallup (1982, 120) argues that the mirror stage is a turning point. After this, the subject's relation to himself is always mediated through a totalising image which has come from outside (Gallup 1982, 120). But this totalising quality becomes fragmented on the screen when the self is disambiguated through bits and bytes. If the mirror presented an image which alienated and abstracted from the flesh of the real body, the internet morphed the body into data sets which could personalise the body while crafting the transactions of the self as part of a big data economy. Negroponte's premonition of the body overloaded with information and data also envisaged a reality of humans being turned into data extrapolated from their disembodied presence. The internet consumed through the screen disambiguates the human form, pressing it through its data algorithms and archives, decontextualized from its meanings and imagery (Ibrahim 2008b). The human form becomes the palimpsest for small and big data and in the process it reveals our ongoing love affair with both the screen and the mirror.

Conclusion

This chapter employs the concepts of the mirror and screen to discuss the complexities of self-curation in the digital economy. The mirror and the screen have a long-established relationship with humanity and society. The moment of self-recognition is an important milestone in human development and is a seismic moment, symbolic of reproduction of the corporeal body as a whole. The screen, on other hand, is associated with the unattainable, where bigger life events happen. The convergence of the technologies has enabled the self to become commodified and represented inside the screen and become part of the screen, enabling us to watch ourselves. The coalescing of the mirror and screen is a potent moment, for it evokes our primal love and fascination with the self while unleashing the self within the digital economy where it is amenable to wider processes of consumption and re-aggregation into commercial pursuits. Here it can be re-morphed into data and stripped of its corporeality to be re-absorbed into the digital terrain. Our primordial relationship with the mirror and screen provide a lens to understand both our vulnerabilities and our insatiable need to consume ourselves in the digital economy.

References

Bahrick, Lorraine E. 1995. "Intermodal origins of self-perception." In *The self in infancy: Theory and research*, edited by Philippe Rochat, 349-373. Amsterdam: North-Holland-Elsevier Science.

Bahrick, Lorraine E., Moss, Lisa, & Faidl, Christine. 1996. "Development of Visual Self-recognition in Infancy." *Ecological Psychology* 8(3): 189-208.

Bolter, David J. and Grusin, Richard A. 2000. *Remediation: Understanding New Media.* Boston, MA: MIT Press.

Bonsu, Samuel K., & Darmody, Aron. 2008. "Co-creating Second Life: Market-Consumer Cooperation in Contemporary Economy." *Journal of Macromarketing* 24(4): 355-368.

Davies, Martin L. 1989. "History as Narcissism." *Journal of European Studies* 19(4): 265-291.

Gallup, Gordon G. 1982. "Self-awareness and the emergence of mind in primates." *American Journal of Primatology* 2(3), 237–248.

Gibson, James J. 1950. *The perception of the visual world.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Gibson, James J. 1986. *The ecological approach to visual perception*. Hillsda1e, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. (Original work published 1979).

Gibson, William. 1993. Neuromancer. London: Harper.

Heidegger, Martin. 1962. *Being and time.* Translated by John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson. San Francisco: Harper Collins. (Original work published 1927).

Heidegger, Martin. 1977. "The Question Concerning Technology." *In The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, 3-33 Garland Publishers, New York.

Heeter, C. 1992. "Being there: The subjective experience of presence." In *Presence, Teleoperators, and Virtual Environments* 1: 262–271.

Hogan, Bernie. 2010. "The Presentation of Self in the Age of Social Media: Distinguishing Performances and Exhibitions Online." *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society* 30(6): 377 –386

Ibrahim, Yasmin. 2015. "Instagramming life: banal imaging and the poetics of the everyday." *Journal of Media Practice* 16(1): 42-54.

Ibrahim**,** Yasmin. 2008a. "The New Risk Communities: Social Networking Sites and Risk." *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics* 4(2): 245-253.

Ibrahim, Yasmin. 2008b. "The Co-opted Body and Counter-Surveillance: The Body as Data and Surveillance." *International Journal of the Humanities* 5(12): 1-8.

Ibrahim, Yasmin. 2009. "Social Networking Sites (SNS) and the 'Narcissistic Turn'." In *Collaborative Technologies and Applications for Interactive Information Design: Emerging Trends in User Experiences: Emerging Trends in User Experiences*, 82.

Ibrahim, Yasmin. 2011. "The non-stop "capture": the politics of looking in postmodernity." *The Poster* 1(2): 167-185.

Ibrahim, Yasmin. 2012. "The Politics of Watching: Visuality and the New Media Economy." *International Journal of E-Politics (IJEP)* 3(1): 1-11.

Lacan, Jacques. 1998. *The Seminar Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. Edited by Jacques-Alain Miller. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Lacan, Jacques. 2006. *Ecrits*. New York: Norton.

McDougall, Joyce. 1986. *Theatres of the Mind: Illusion and Truth in the Psychoanalytic Stage*. London: Free Association Books.

Mahler, Margaret S., and Furer, Manuel. 1968. *On human symbiosis and the vicissitudes of individuation.* New York: International University Press.

Manovich, Lev. 2001. *The Language of New Media*. Boston, MA: MIT Press.

Massumi, Brian. 1995. "Interface and Active Space. Human-Machine Design."
From *Proceedings of the Sixth International Symposium on Electronic Art.* Montreal.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1964. "The child's relations with others." In *The primacy of perception*, edited by Maurice Meleau-Ponty, 96-155. Translated by William Cobb. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

Minsky, Marvin. 1980. "Telepresence." *Omni, June*: 45–51.

Mulvey, Laura. 1975. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Screen* 16 (3): 6-18.

Negroponte, Nicholas. 1995. *Being Digital*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Papacharissi, Zizi. 2011. "Conclusion: A Networked Self." In *A Networked Society*, edited by Zizi Papacharissi, 304-318, New York: Routledge.

Pasek, Anne. 2014. "Seeing yourself strangely: Media mirroring in Takehito Etani's The Third Eye Project." *Metaverse Creativity* 4(2): 121-138.

Piaget, Jean. 1954. *The construction of reality in the child*. New York: Basic Books.

Robinson, Laura. 2007. "The Cyberself: the Selfing Project Goes Online, Symbolic Interaction in the Digital age". *New Media Society*, 9; 93-110

Rocamora, Agnès. 2011. "Personal Fashion Blogs: Screens and Mirrors in Digital Self-portraits" *Fashion Theory*, 15(4): 407-424.

Rochat, Philippe and Zahavi, Dan. 2011. "The uncanny mirror: A re-framing of mirror self-experience." *Consciousness and cognition* 20.2: 204-213.

Sheridan, Thomas B. 1992. "Musings on telepresence and virtual presence." *Presence, Teleoperators, and Virtual Environments* 1: 120–125.

Steuer, Jonathan. 1992. "Defining virtual reality: Dimensions in determining telepresence." *Journal of Communication* 42(4): 73–93.

Terranova, Tiziana. 2000. "Free Labour: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy." *Social Text* 18 (2): 33-58.

Turkle, Sherry. 2005. *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit and Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet.* London, UK: MIT Press.

Walker, Jill. 2005. "Mirrors and Shadows: The Digital Aestheticisation of Oneself". In *the proceedings of Digital Arts and Culture*: 184-190.

Walter, Benjamin. 1995. The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin, 1990–1940. Translated by Manfred R. Jacobson and Evelyn M.Jacobson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Williams, Raymond. 1974. *Television: Technology and Cultural Form.* London, Fontana.