

**SELF-WRITING  
IN THE AGE OF THE INTERNET:  
A NOVEL AND EXEGESIS**

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## Abstract

This thesis consists of a creative work in the form of a novel titled *The Golden Age of Autobiography*, and an exegesis titled ‘The Playful Panopticon: Self-Writing in the Age of the Internet’.

In combination, these works address how online platforms function as technologies of selfhood. In particular, the central questions addressed by both creative and critical components are: what are we aiming to achieve by documenting our lives online, how has this changed over time, and what forms might online self-documentation realistically take in the future?

‘The Playful Panopticon’ takes the form of a chronological study of three decades of self-writing practices – and scholarly approaches to those practices – in online spaces from the mid-1980s to the present. The focal point of this exegesis revolves around the tension between ‘truth’ and subjectivity in online spaces, and how successive attempts to resolve this tension have resulted in the emergence of social networking services like Facebook as dominant environments for producing, reading and disseminating ‘everyday autobiographies’.

By synthesising the work of multiple generations of scholars and examining recent trends in online self-writing, ‘The Playful Panopticon’ expands on the work produced by Sherry Turkle and danah boyd to offer new insight into how online spaces enable the production of ‘digital memoir’.

*The Golden Age of Autobiography* continues the lines of inquiry opened in the exegetical component, but extrapolates to explore the implications of possible future trends in online self-documentation. In particular, the novel examines the emergence of lifelogging technologies designed to further automate the collection and dissemination of data about the self. Told from the perspective of JJ Bungard, a boy who has spent the majority of his life consuming his father’s networked recordings, the novel raises questions about how emerging recording technologies will be utilised by individuals to construct and share the ostensibly exhaustive, ‘authentic’ and ‘objective’ narratives of their lives.

Structured in the form of a bildungsroman, the novel explores three generations of the Bungard family: the protagonist, the viewer of a recorded life; his father, a lifelogger; and the protagonist’s grandfather, the creator of the lifelogging platform through which the father’s memories are shared. The relationship between these characters is designed to encourage the reader to

reflect on the conflicting desires of those who construct and utilise digital technologies of selfhood.

## Thesis Declaration

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