Back seeks to introduce the voices of emerging scholars in conversations that revolve around life narrative research and practice, as well as promote engaged and critical readership of these topics among a wider audience. These three reviews by new scholars Samantha Balzer, Richard Moran, and Sarah McRae are the first sns reviews to appear in *esc,* and do so on the initiative of Orly Lael Netzer and Meredith Snyder, sns contacts for Canada and the Americas.

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Anna Poletti and Julie Rak, editors. *Identity Technologies: Constructing the Self Online.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014. 286 pp. $34.95.

The collected essays in *Identity Technologies* provide not only a timely examination of contemporary digital identity practice but serve as "an experiment in interdisciplinary dialogue" (Poletti and Rak 3). Contributors come from diverse academic backgrounds including (but not limited to) auto/biography and new media studies, borrowing theories and methodologies from each other's fields as means of interrogating the potentially limiting assumptions of their respective areas of expertise. The volume's commitments are largely concerned with interdisciplinarity: to demonstrate how auto/biography studies' recent troubling of notions of subjectivity and concern with how the "self" is produced through representation (5) could nuance work from new media studies and to indicate how auto/biography studies might benefit from imitating the work of new media theorists in their study of "non-narrative forms of identity work" (7), which could rectify auto/biography studies' previous tendency to focus on those digital genres that most resemble offline autobiographical genres (for example, text-heavy blogs their predecessors online diaries). Recurring concerns in this collection include the situatedness of digital identity within "offline" geographical, economic, and racialized contexts; how the "affordances" of digital interfaces influence the kinds of writing—and by extension, the kinds of "selves"—that are produced; and how the formation online identity is inextricable from digital community and the technologies that enable and direct communities' formation.

Contributors demonstrate how attention to the offline contexts of digital identity work can add nuance to analyses of how online sociality fits into subject formation overall, an approach that poses productive challenges for auto/biography studies as a field heavy in the text-centric approaches familiar to English departments. Several authors in this work (Kennedy, Cover, Nakamura, Gray) contend that, where possible, scholarship should consider the offline contexts of digital identity construction. Online and offline selves are not separate entities; rather, they are continuous, mutually influential, and involve many of the same self-fashioning practices insofar as both online and offline performances operate in response to the "ongoing cultural demand that we process our selves and our actions into coherence, intelligibility, and recognizability" (Cover 56). The authors in this collection criticize the tendency in scholarship to focus on the novelty of the technologies themselves, a tendency that promotes the misconception that communication technologies are producers of effects, rather than "cultural elements of the complexity of human interactions" (Gray 171).

Authors in this volume set a precedent for how to read closely in online environments, a practice that must take into consideration the various contexts and contingencies that contribute to online identity performance. The concept of "affordances," which is key to this collection, refers to those properties (overt and covert) of a digital interface that determine how it will be used and, consequently, the kinds of identities that will be enacted using a particular social platform in the context of computerized environments. Essays in *Identity Technologies* (notably those by Gregg, Morrison, Rivard, and McNeill) are nuanced by an awareness of how the tools and functions built into the platforms we use impact the character of our self-disclosure, and therefore shape the selves we create. This concept is most explicitly referred to in Aimée Morrison's study of the history of the Facebook status in its various iterations over time, analyzing how subtle changes in how the empty field coaxes information affects the kind of updates and narratives that are registered.

This volume contains several essays about digital communities (Gray, Banner, Micalizzi, Bouclin, Kennedy). One insight that emerges is that digital identity develops in relation to digital community in ways that are continuous with offline communities: we find that identity in the context of digital communities is a result of both "interior process" and "relationships that contribute to the creation of an interwoven fabric of ontological stories" (Micalizzi 218). However, authors are cognizant that digital communities come with affordances and interest specific to their platforms, and which move subjectivities in often new directions, as we see with Banner's examination of how online self-monitoring communities (often health-focused) have the effect of "making the subject informatic" (198).

The collection features fourteen essays and reflections, which are categorized by theme under four headings: "Foundations," "Identity Affordances," "Mediated Communities," and "Reflections." Some of the entries are reprints of key essays related to digital identity: Helen Kennedy's work on anonymity (and lack thereof) in personal home pages, Mary L. Gray's study of how digital resources influence rural LGBTQ youth, and Lisa Nakamura's "Cyberrace."

Many of the essays employ case studies where the objects analyzed tend to be either digital platforms or groups of users on those platforms (or both). In addition to entries on online identity performance in general (Nakamura) and on social-networking sites (Cover), many of the essays are case studies. Topics include personal home pages created as part of a women's distance-learning course (Kennedy), "Spousebusting" surveillance technologies (Gregg), Facebook (Morisson), national memory/history archives (Rivard), "six-word memoir" microblogging community (McNeill), lifelogging and health-tracking technologies (Banner), perinatal death mourning forum communities (Micalizzi), a Montreal-based platform created for and by the city's homeless community (Bouclin). Smith and Watson's "Digital Toolkit" and Poletti and Rak's introduction both balance a summary of the current state of the study of digital identity with predictions and suggestions for future directions. The future also looms large in the collection's concluding reflections by Philippe Lejeune and Lauren Berlant, who discuss the future of auto/biography studies, autobiography in general, and new directions for academic research and how it is disseminated.

The collection reflects a recent turn in auto/biography studies that is also evident in a 2015 special edition of *Biography,* titled *Online Lives 2.0.* Both collections of essays use case studies and interdisciplinary methods, and the editors of *Online Lives 2.0* propose that scholars in auto/biography studies have much to gain by "drawing on the qualitative and quantitative work of our colleagues in other disciplines" (McNeil and Zuern xxxix). Although the individual contributions to *Identity Technologies* will no doubt be useful for scholars interested in the specific cases they describe, the book as a whole provides a sense of future directions in interdisciplinary scholarship in digital identity. In addition to Smith and Watson's exhaustive "digital toolkit," which features topics and questions that could facilitate productive discussion in the interdisciplinary study of online identity, the rest of the essays collected in this volume will likely stimulate future scholarship in this field through their function as examples of the

kinds of theoretical frameworks and methodologies that can illuminate digital identity work.

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Work Cited

McNeill, Laurie, and John David Zuern. "Online Lives 2.0: Introduction." *Online Lives 2.0.* Eds. Laurie McNeill and John David Zuern. Special issue of *Biography* 38.2 (Spring 2015): v–xlvi.

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Claudia Malacrida. *A Special Hell: Institutional Life in Alberta's Eugenic Years.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015. 302 pp. $32.95.

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A Special Hell is an important contribution to scholarship on eugenics that both supplements and extends our understanding of the broad spectrum of eugenics in Canada. Malacrida's primary interest is in what she calls "a passive form of eugenics," namely the "lifelong internment of 'mental defectives'" (4) at the Michener Centre, a provincially-run institution located outside of Red Deer, Alberta. Although described by the province as a centre for "the residential care and training of mentally defective Albertans" (3), Malacrida's analysis leads her to conclude that Michener is more akin to a "gulag" (30) or prison than a care facility. Founded in 1923 as the Provincial Training School, at its peak in 1970 the Centre housed upwards of twenty-three hundred inmates. It is no surprise, Malacrida argues, that the 1920s and 1970s are important in the history of the Michener Centre as well as Alberta's Sexual Sterilization Act, enacted in 1928 and repealed in 1972. *A Special Hell* expands our understanding of eugenics beyond sterilization alone, reminding readers that institutionalization is both driven by eugenic logic and itself a form of eugenic programming.

The text also decentres sterilization as *the* eugenic practice in twentieth-century Canada: although medical experimentation and sterilization appear in Malacrida's study, they are not the focal point until chapters 8 and 9. Such an organizational choice reinforces Malacrida's argument that institutionalization and the dehumanization that accompanies it were important preconditions for Alberta's Sexual Sterilization Act. Malacrida notes that social reformers lobbied heavily for eugenic sterilization because