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Mobiles Facing Death: Affective Witnessing and the Intimate Companionship of Devices

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From disasters to celebrations, camera phone practices play a key role in the abundance of shared images globally.[1] According to some studies, those who have taken a photo *only* with their camera phone make up 90% of the world's population.[2] As social media increasingly merges with mobile media apps, the role of visuality and camera phones is magnified. Visual social media cultures progressively document and share events in what has been defined as a datafication of our lives.[3] Datafication raises profound ethical questions about the status of human agency and the sanctity of the life of such data. These questions are amplified in death and dying.

Photography has always had a complicated relationship with death. For Roland Barthes, it is the punctum of the photograph that not only "pricks our skin" but also *bruises* us with an affective texture that haunts.[4] This is amplified in the case of visual mobile media—especially selfies—whereby digital data is entangled within lives, deaths and after-lives in new ways that are both networked and yet to be fully understood. Mobile media can be understood as tools for and of digital intimate publics. As such, these media can be used to explore the ways in which individuals envision their ethical entanglements in the lives of others by means of the 'selfie', or self-generated media.

This paper focuses on how mobile devices, through the broadcasting of troubling material, can simultaneously lead to misrecognition of the self (Wendt 2014) alongside an often-public evidentiary experience of trauma and grief. How do our images haunt and get reappropriated posthumously?[5] Within this process, emergent genres such as 'selfies at funeral' and 'selfies-as-eulogies'alongside the live broadcasting of tragic events signal dynamic relations between intimacy, mobile media, etiquette, affective witnessing and memorialization.[6]

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In the use of mobile media, the companionship of mobile devices in users' most desperate hours comes into focus. Mobile media in crisis situations generate affective responses and uses. In a state of heightened affect, the individual becomes vulnerable in a multitude of ways (physically, emotionally, materially). This vulnerability leads one to consider the ethical dimensions surrounding how and when mobile media, mainly via troubled images, are produced and possibly distributed.

To demonstrate these phenomena, we will draw from mobile media examples emerging from two mass-casualty events that highlight the power of the mobile to not only remind us that media has always been social, but that mobile media is challenging how the social is constituted by the political and the personal, and the ethical mediation between both. Both events highlight the personal use of mobile media when a tragedy occurs. In particular, the material shared on social media sites (such as YouTube, Facebook and SnapChat) about these two specific events created forms of what Penelope Papailias calls 'affective witnessing'.[7] That is, the ways in which the circulation of mediated images of trauma takes on new forms of powerful affective practices that haunt the user, the viewer and the device. The ethical, psychological, moral and existential challenges that this new kind of witnessing poses will be explored.

The power of mobile visuality and the selfie affect:

In a mobile-mediated context,'affect'is being understood as what Sara Ahmed defines as a 'sticky residual'.[8] In disasters and mass traumas we are reminded of the powerful social, cultural, political and affective role of the camera phone as a lens into contemporary visual culture. In disasters such as Tokyo's earthquake, tsunami and Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011 (known as 3/11), as well as many others since then, it is the quotidian do-it-yourself (DIY) realism of mobile media images by citizens that galvanize the global public through their affective, aesthetics of trauma.[9] For example, the 3/11 images had a palpable effect and affect upon the world. This affective labor was the result of millions of viewers consuming the images and videos produced of the events. The heightened consumption of these data by those outside of the event usually peaks while the tragedy is unfolding and in the hours, days and weeks following. An assemblage of first person, immersive accounts, alongside attempts to document and piece together details related to the unfolding of the events while also engaging in the memorialization or marking of the losses is all managed now through mobile and social media and the use of mobile devices (Papailias, 2016).[10] This 'affective witnessing'[11] entailed by mobile visuality—whereby graphic images of events are shared in publicly and intimate ways—often originate from a persistent and dominant mobile media trope: the 'selfie' and in the most tragic cases often the selfies of the soon-to-be deceased.

For Senft and Baym the selfie is both an object and subject of, and for, affect. They define the selfie as both a 'photographic object that initiates the transmission of human feeling' and as 'apractice—a gesture that can send different messages to different individuals.[12] The term'selfie' is often used in common vernacular to represent those photos that highlight the individual taking the photo – typically with a forward facing camera, aimed at the user. For the purposes of this paper we are extending the notion of the selfie to include videos recorded through a user'sownmobiledevice (often where the person taking the video is not visible). This extension of the selfie represents how this trope is evolving to include a sense of 'being there' or presence for the viewer. Selfies are not just about representing the self but also about extending the self to include viewers of the media. Thanks to the proliferation of live broadcasting and viral videos, users can now employ the video capabilities of their phones to communicate experience

and affect. While at times selfies are often staged, produced, edited and filtered before sharing, there are instances of 'selfies' that are impulsive and in the moment without consideration for the impact of what is being viewed nor the impact of such images on the viewer, often in an effort to capture a moment in time and perhaps to capture the raw and real (or unreal).

The 'affective witnessing' enabled by mobile digital technology unbounded by space and time and enacted through social media does carry within it a capacity to reanimate an ethics not only of sentiment but of sentimentality. Take, for example, the retro aesthetics of Instagram that suggest a remediation and nostalgia for analogue-looking images—what Nathan Jurgenson calls a yearning 'nostalgia for the present'.[13] The entanglement of the analog with the digital creates particular relationships to time, and therefore memory and the memorialization of place.[14] This is magnified in the case of mobile visuality to capture the most profoundly troubling of images – those that record the moments at the tragic and traumatic end of a life.

Mobiles facing death

According to Amanda du Preez, selfies that witness death can be understood as 'sublime'. For du Preez, three categories constitute 'sublime selfies'—'selfies unknowingly taken *before* death, selfies *of* death where the taker's death is almost witnessed and selfies *with* death where the taker stands by while someone else dies'.[15] Expanding upon du Preez's death selfie categories, this chapter discusses the role of selfies taken during two mass casualty events whereby users presciently acknowledge death facing them and deploy mobile media to serve as companion in final moments, or as an anticipatory mobile-generated eulogy and witness. The tragic selfie is to be seen as a raw remembrance that implies a powerful, viscerally sentimental response that is at once affective *and* ethical. That she was taken too soon; that he should not have died like that; that they did not deserve this death. The intentionality of these selfies is in recognition of the recipient and in the carefully scripted consideration for it being viewed after death. It is also used as evidence, as first-hand knowledge of what happened and it is expected to survive beyond the event and even beyond the life of the selfie-taker.

The ritualistic aspects of the production of mobile media indicates how integral they have become to the different depths in passages of life, death and after-life. In particular, as the digital becomes increasingly imbricated in the processes of death and dying, they in turn re-attune our understandings of those experiences. Expanding upon du Preez's death selfie categories, this chapter discusses the role of mass selfies taken during a mass casualty event whereby users have forewarned knowledge that death is immediate. They deploy mobile media to conduct a selfie-as-eulogy and/or to continuously record the event as it is occurring so that photographic evidence becomes a part of the experience. Our analysis will focus on two events: the sinking of the South Korean MV Sewol ferry (known as 'Sewol') on 16th April 2014 in which 246 school children drowned, and the mass shooting in Las Vegas, United States of America, on the 1 October 2017.

These two events were chosen because of the ready access the public had to mobile media posted on social media and the intention of these users to broadcast their experiences. The source of these data resulted from a focus on examples that were widely distributed and discussed online and through mainstream media sources. The rawness of camera phone imagery, as mementos, often for young lives unlived, becomes fuel in the palpable grief felt worldwide from mass casualty events. Here the mobile is unmistakably embedded within the emotional texture of everyday life that makes possible new ways to understand death.[16]

South Korean MV Sewol ferry sinking

In the sinking of the South Korean MV Sewol ferry (known as 'Sewol') on 16 April 2014 in which 246 school children drowned, it was the found mobile phones of the deceased that contained damning camera phone footage of procedures gone wrong. With some of the movies taken by children as young as eight years old, camera phone footage in the form of selfies showed terrifying scenes of people panicking and procedures gone awry. These selfie movies were not about narcissism as obsessive self-love or pathology[17] but about the numbness and misrecognition that trauma can bring with it[18].

As soon as the ferry capsized on 16 April 2014, multiple mobile phones were on hand capturing the sheer terror of the events unfolding. After the overloaded ferry sunk, killing over 300 passengers by either drowning or hyperthermia, it was the mobile media footage that friends and family cradled in their disbelief. YouTube began to fill with hundreds of User Created Content (UCC) videos, consolidating public grief, magnifying anger and focussing the outcry. Many of the 246 high-school children who died filmed it via selfies. Some left eulogies of themselves for their family and friends. Others, who believed they would survive, mocked the severity of the situation with mundane selfies gestures like the peace fingers while others cried uncontrollably.

While a few of these stories were documented and disseminated in global press by being translated from Hangul into English, dozens of stories of mobile media memorialization processes remained un-translated and were shared only across vernacular, Korean sites. While much of the literature around bereavement and online memorials focuses upon the loss and experiences of the mourner, the Sewol disaster provided examples of the role of mobile media—especially camera phones—in memorialization by the soon to be deceased.[19] The quotidian, intimate, and yet public dimension of mobile media undoubtedly created a different affect for and of grief. This is about an affective witnessing that bruises like Barthes's notion of punctum. But unlike physical bruises, these emotional bruises live under the skin, pricking the body with searing grief.

The selfie-as-eulogies that haunted the internet after the disaster served to bring a particular texture of the intimate into the public. They documented procedures gone awry. The ferry had been overloaded and when it started to sink, evacuation processes were not followed. The selfies created multiple forms of affective witnessing—providing fuel for angry bereaving families to seek revenge. The families and nation went after the boat company CEO, chasing him until he committed suicide.

Then came the second accomplice in the crime—the government. The government had blundered badly by telling waiting families that their children were safe when they were actually dead or dying. As far as the public were concerned the government had children's blood on their hands. The government lost public trust and arguably the Sewol disaster contributed to the downfall of the Park Geun-hye government which endured various scandals including the impeachment vote in 2016. Outside the assembly hall of impeachment vote, YooKyeong-keun, the committee head of the Sewol Families for Truth and a Safer Society, said'We have realized that truth (concerning the Sewol accident) may never come to light as long as the Park administration is in charge'[20].

The Sewol case quickly moved from familial grief of the *personal* to a form of *intimate public politics*. The Sewol disaster highlights the need for recalibrating the role of digital intimate publics and affective witnessing can play. The idea that forms of intimacy might be generated in contexts that are at the same time public is not new.

The Sewol disaster and its hundreds of selfies-as-eulogies signified a relational bond—a *cultural intimacy* and *digital intimate public*—specific to Korean culture. Here the Korean concept of *Jeong* is significant as one of the most "endearing and evocative" words of which there is no English equivalent. As Luke Kim notes,

> *Koreans consider jeong an essential element in human life, promoting the depth and richness of personal relations… In times of social upheaval… jeong is the only binding and stabilizing force in human relationships. Without jeong, life would be emotionally barren and person would feel isolated and disconnect from others.*[21]

This cultural intimacy informs the particular history of camera phones and selfies (*sel-ca*) in Korea. Dong-Hoo Lee conducted some of the first studies in camera phone studies in the early 2000s. Lee noted the important role camera phones played in giving women more control over their representation and its context. They also provided a vehicle for some amateurs to move into professional photography. Lee highlighted how camera phone practices amplify cultural norms while also allowing for subversion. The rise of the Korean version of the selfie—the *selca*—was a key part of the emergent phenomenon.[22]

The role of the camera phone in strengthening a sense of *jeong* is part of why genres like selfies were taken up in such an accelerated manner in South Korea. In addition, South Korean mobile brand innovation by companies such as SK and LG meant that many camera phones were far more powerful in resolution and quality than other brands from different countries.[23] For Lee, 'mobile snapshot' practices renegotiate public and private boundaries through their infusion of intimacy into the texture of the affect. As Lee notes, 'from private photo-taking practices in public places to online disclosure of camera phone pictures, private/public boundaries are no longer firmly fixed'.[24]

In the Sewol disaster, many families were receiving messages and videos from their children unaware that these fragments would be last moments captured of their children's lives. Here the role of co-presence, so fundamental to the rise of mobile media cultures[25], allowed mobile media to traverse simultaneously the intimate and public, the mortal and immortal took new dimensions. While many YouTube clips remixed the deceased mobile footage to consolidate grief globally, it also signified a relational bond—a cultural intimacy—specific to Korean culture. The feeling of *jeong,* along with the national symbol of the oppressive *Han,* is palpable in and through the tragic events and memorialization of the disaster.[26]

Jeong binds the various selfies to multiple forms of *affective witnessing* and *digital intimate publics* that move across macro and micro contexts. The mobile footage taken during the disaster still leaves a raw affect, in that it captures the pain, confusion and terror of the victims *as they face their death*. The role of mobile media to capture this liminal stage is a testament to its specific digital intimate public and affective witnessing affordances. Mobile media spectres haunt the dynamism of digital intimate publics, in and through moments of life, death and afterlife.

One of the most tragic instances was from the high-school girl Park Ye-seul who filmed the disaster at 9.40am (the disaster was first reported at 8.40am). Ye-seul and her friends documented the disaster as it happened through selfie videos. In the videos we see typical selfie performativity—peace symbol with fingers by smiling girls—juxtaposed with other passengers crying with terror.

The video conversation, which can be found on YouTube, consists of a conversation between Ye-seul and her fellow passengers as well as her co-present parents. She talks of how scared the

other passengers are while begging, 'Please rescue us'. They talk about the increasing tilt of the boat. Then there is an official announcement '*Please double check your life jacket whether it was tightened well or not. Please check and tighten it again.*' Ye-seul says to her videoing phone (as if her parents are inside it), 'Oh we're going to be diving into the water', followed by 'Mum, I am so sorry. Sorry Dad! We will be okay! See you alive'.

Her father recovered the camera phone footage after her death. He dried it out and replaced the SIM card. In the phone were videos she had filmed before she died. For her father, the daughter's phone was not just a vessel for channelling a re-enactment of his daughter's last moments alive, but in doing so it afforded him the ability to move back in time and space to be 'present' with her during her last moments. Digitally affective witnessing entails an extension of the ethical dimensions implied by mobile devices beyond mundane concerns for privacy. In cases such as the Sewol, they are a crucial medium of witnessing, a vital channel for final communication, and a last link between the living and the dead.

Here the power of the phone and its affective intimate affordances cannot be underestimated.[27] We also see that Ye-seul's selfies are far from a vehicle for narcissism. Selfies are, in alignment with Wendt's argument, about a numbness and misrecognition of the event.[28] They become part of the process of memorialization for her family and friends, while haunted by the spectres of *jeong*.

Here the selfies left by Ye-seul operate as residues—capturing moments immediately prior to death in ways that allow them to live on for the loved ones left behind. But these residuals are not just for those that are intimate to the deceased; they areconnecting to broader intimate publics through their affective texture. These selfies epitomize affective witnessing, but they also embody 'selfie citizenship'. They resonate with multiple publics in ways that are intimate and yet also political. The networked potential of the mobile phone activates the punctum, enabling an overlappingof how we understand the relationship between the personal and political. These selfie residuals suggest new liminal spaces between how images inhabit lives, deaths and after-lives that exceed Barthes's punctum in ways we are only beginning to map.

The Las Vegas, Nevada (US) Route 91 Harvest Festival shooting

On Sunday 1 October 2017, 64-year-old, Stephen Paddock was booked into a 'high roller' complimentary suite atop the *Mandalay Bay* hotel on the Las Vegas Strip. His room overlooked the fairgrounds where a large country music festival called the 'Route 91 Harvest' festival was taking place. Through his window, on the 32nd floor of the hotel, at 10:05 PM (PST),Paddock was able to fire 1,100 rounds into the crowd of approximately 22,000 people.[29]

As a result, 58 people were killed and 851 people were injured; making this event the deadliest mass shooting in U.S. history at the time.[30] Many eyewitness accounts of the shooting emerged soon after shooting took place. The majority of these accounts were captured on people's mobile phones. This footage was often then posted to social media, or used by mainstream media sources to highlight their reporting. The often-unauthorized use of videos captured by mobile media users is no longer viewed as unusual and limited discussion related to the ethics of such use have taken place. To piece together the event and to use in criminal investigation—often beyond the user's awareness—law enforcement and first responders also used this mobile footage. The motivation behind grabbing one's mobile device to bear witness to a tragic event is complicated, affect-laden and not purely based on the intention to archive evidence or to serve journalistic ends.

The Las Vegas shooting began during the last performance of the festival by country music star, Jason Aldean. Many of the concertgoers were filming his performance with their mobile devices when the shooting began. The festival had been going on all day prior to the shooting and concert goers had been using their phones to record performances, take pictures and to share their experiences with remote others. In the early videos of the shooting, you see the confusion and then chaos that ensues as people begin to realize that a festival fairground was being turned into a war zone. The audio of the rapid firing of the bullets makes it difficult to discern in the moment what the source of the sound was. The sound of rapid fire was loud enough to permeate the whole crowd and to be heard above the amplification of sound of the music concert. This sound is what is consistent across the videos.

In the majority of videos posted online, you often do not see the person holding the phone. The perspective of the film is similar to police body camera footage. Most of the videos start out aimed at the stage and, again, as the sounds of rapid fire begin the perspective of the camera does not change. The viewer can assume that from this perspective, the person taking the video wanted it to be viewed from their perspective, as presumably witnessed by them. The mobile device becomes an extension of the person using it and the device companions the user during the event. In the recorded videos, the user does not address whomever might be viewing the video but there must be an expectation that it will be viewed by others or at least kept for review by the user. This perspective, as though the viewer of the video was at the concert, allows for the viewer to have an immersive experience—a kind of virtual reality experience where the viewer may feel as though they were also there in person. The *New York Times* explicitly used selfie videos to 'draw the most complete picture to date' of what happened and to make the viewer feel as though they were at the concert[31].

In the footage taken by one audience member, he is positioned several yards away from the stage with his camera focused on the stage from a wide angle as the shooting begins. This is evidence that his footage began with the intention of capturing the experience of the concert. Even after the shooting began, the user's camera does not move from the stage for the first four seconds, he then starts to slowly pan up and down, without zoom, assuming probably, like others, that the sound could be fireworks marking the end of the festival.

The mobile phone users' actions were further evidenced by the fact that seven seconds after the shooting began he aimed the camera above the stage and slightly towards the sky as though his camera is searching for a firework display. Sixteen seconds in, the music stops and there is an eerie silence. In the background you can hear someone behind the mobile device, perhaps the user himself say to someone: 'Uh, oh, that's not good at all.' And some overlapping voice says: 'That's gunshots. That's gunshots.' Then there is another disembodied female voice saying, 'Oh my God, they're shooting', and then another female voice layered over hers saying, 'Get down, get down, stay down'.

Twenty-six seconds after the last audible shots ring out, the viewer hears the female voice who said: 'Get down' tell them to: 'Let's go, move out—get your backpack' and for a few seconds the video becomes blurred and jumbled, yet still rolling. We hear the mobile phone user say, 'Let's go'. Ten seconds after he starts to move in the direction of the Mandalay Bay Hotel, the rapid fire starts up again.

The video becomes frenetic and the viewer is left with only audio evidence of the suffering of those nearby. We hear a female voice say: 'Guys let's go this way'. Shots are being fired as we hear a male voice say: 'Down, down, down'. We hear a woman's scream and then another male voice say: 'Behind the stands, the stands'. Due to the erratic nature of the camera movement, it

could be assumed that the user did not stop recording, but in all the chaos, the phone appears to be held in the hand of the user and no longer attended to as a cameraphone. We hear frantic directives to not push as more of the crowd looks for a way out or a place to hide. The video ends with cries of 'Don't push! Don't push! Stop!'

Most of the selfies were posted by survivors of the shooting, yet their videos often depicted the deaths or injuries of those around them. In many of the clips where you can see the videographer, he or she either stares silently into the camera or speaks to the camera in ways to reassure family members, or to bring remote others into the scene. Mobile users also imagine their devices as companions in that there are examples of users, who are alone, continue to video the scene and ask questions to an invisible companion such as: 'why are there people laying on the ground?'

A Snapchat user posted a clip from the front of the stage. The banner across the mobile screen says: 'gun shots'. In the background we hear the gunshots and someone that we can assume to be the owner of this accountis behind the camera—we are seeing her view of the scene. The bright house lights on the stage are up and the whole field is illuminated as the shots ring out. Most people are crouched on the ground with their heads down. When there is a pause in the gunfire some people start to stand up. The user films people hopping the security fences in both directions and the shooting starts again. At this point, the Snapchat user turns the camera on herself, gunshots ringing out in the background and she says:

> *This is bullshit. (She turns camera around again and says) Everybody has officially booked it [left the scene] or they are on the ground. (She pans to an empty stage) Security is out [gone]. (Gunfire rings out) Shit just got real kids.*

On YouTube, a user recorded SnapChats by location of the Las Vegas shooting and the hours following it. In the 31:38 minutes of footage, over 70 'snaps' were captured from the location and surrounding areas of the shooting. Many of the clips featured Jason Aldean's performance before the shooting began. There were a few compelling clips from those fleeing and seeking refuge during the shooting. One Snapchat user, a mother, films herself while hiding in the stands, she says: 'Hey Ashley and Lauren, I love you and I don't know if Mama's going to get out of here'.

Videos posted to Snapchat in the hours following the shooting were mainly from people who were staying either in the hotel where the shooter was located, or adjacent hotels that had a view of the room from where he started shooting. For example, one clip had a banner across it that read, 'Yo, the window the dude shot from was right there', while steadying the camera on the smashed hotel room window from where shots were fired. There were also clips from Las Vegas residents who responded to the tragedy by driving around and filming the scene and other key locations like United Blood Services (UBS) in Henderson, Nevada, where people stood in line for over six hours to donate blood to the injured in hospital.

The selfies that survivors posted to social media indicated to themselves and to others what they endured and were able to escape from. For example, one survivor posted a selfie to her Instagram account of her legs covered in scratches and cuts, still wearing her cowboy boots. Her inscription read:

> *We're home. Ran, crawled and hid. Lucky to be alive. The bleachers saved our lives. Do not wish this upon anyone. I've never. Ever been through anything like this. I am so thankful to be alive. Thank you to everyone for calls and texts.*

Social media presence was also felt from the loved ones left behind. Immediate fundraising pages to cover the cost of funeral expenses were posted. Mainstream media combed social media pages for information about the 58 victims and their families. The instant memorialization of their Facebook pages indicated the rapid interplay between losing one's life in real time and it being represented almost synchronously on one's device.

Discussion

The intentions of such first-person recording and broadcastingof tragic events are multiple. Taken in a shock of a critical moment, the ethics of such productions is often not considered fully. Morality surrounding the taking and using of images from tragic events often relates to how closely the participant identifies with the event.[32] For those most closely identified with the event, the immediate broadcasting of tragedy is about an affirmation of one's own individual and communal identity.[33] For those more socially distant, consumption of these media can be met with irreverence and rudeness. The emotional impact or sentiment surrounding consumption of these images is correlated closely with socio-cultural identity.[34] Access to these images via social and mobile media means that this impact will be uneven in that some consumers will feel highly identified with the images and some will not. This unevenness and ambiguity can then cause additional emotional and ethical issues as social media allows for impressions of such imagery to be known, shared and manipulated while, at the same time, control of the spreadability of such images becomes elusive. Rituals related to grief and loss are remediated and interrupted by the use of media in this way.[35] The generation of an intimate publics surrounding personal tragedy requires ethical guidance in instances when such media can have a lasting impact on viewers and those impacted by the tragedy both directly and indirectly. The generation and use of such material also needs to be understood through multiple socio-cultural lenses.Building upon the work of Lauren Berlant[36], Larissa Hjorth and Michael Arnold[37] proposed a recalibrated notion of digital and contesting intimate publics in the context of the Asia-Pacific region. Social mobile media is part of the multiple seams that bind and unbind the *personal* to the *political*, the *intimate* to the *public*. Mobile devices are vessels *for* and *of* our intimacies and emotions, shaping and being shaped by affective bonds. While intimacy has always been mediated—if not by media, then by language, gestures and memory—we can see particular manifestations of continuities and discontinuities in and around mobile media practices.

The afterlives of the tragic selfies taken at these incidents ensured that the mobile devices on which they were recorded and stored took on a new and strangely bifurcated ethical identity of their own—as both a 'witness' for the general public, mainstream news media, law enforcement and the grieving families of the deceased and injured, but also as 'repositories' forhighly affective memorials and commemorations that quickly spread via mobile and social media and consolidated global public outcry. While the selfie of late has been given much attention, it is important to understand that the phenomenon has uneven genealogies that are informed by a culture's relationship between mobile media, locality and intimacy.[38] The 'first person' perspective selfie video may also be a vehicle for 'the sublime' where where the relationship between the signifier and the signified breaks down and becomes unknown.[39] The viewer's experience with the sublime is often interrupted by the unpredictable nature of how the user moves the device and what the user wants (or does not want) the viewer to see.

There is a crucial ethical mediation accomplished by affective witnessing through the use of mobile media. The images captured work to humanize and personalize mass events of dehumanization and depersonalization. The mobile device has been able to assume a kind of

agency that mediates between the realm of personal affect and political action by galvanising and mobilising the former in protest and campaigns for justice. This mediation lies at the heart of what Adi Kunstman has called 'selfie citizenship'[40]. In this, the mobile device itself becomes an extension of the self and a mechanism through which it can at once serve as a lifeline and as a portal for the extension of one's presence and influence beyond death.

The common and ordinary use of the mobile device (i.e. broadcasting live or recording video of a live event to share with friends and followers) becomes extraordinary when used in the same way to capture tragedy as it is occurring. There is an uncanny experience of seeing moments of chaos and death captured on video and in photos. Hearing the confusion and irrationality of trauma can now be readily archived and shared. These moments are the ones that are usually suppressed after a traumatic event and characterized by the misrecognition of faulty memory and trauma-impacted brains. So what happens to us when we can now hear and see everything? Now is the time for a robust debate concerning the ethics of producing and sharing such content. But does the fact that there seems to be an automaticity surrounding the recording of events and an immediacy for the public's demand of such first-person accounts indicate that these media have some inherent benefit?

In moments of tragedy, mobile devices can be understood as tools *for* and *of* digital intimate publics that both extends earlier rituals surrounding grief and losswhile also allowing for new ways in which to understand death and to mark it. In particular, the selfie, or self-directed video footage, is, as what Brooke Wendt calls, a site for misrecognition as well as a vehicle for understanding the textures of tragedy, trauma and horror through affective witnessing.[41] As presented in this paper, we see the ethical implications of the selfie in both case studies; to not only remind us that media has always been *social,* but that mobile media is challenging how the social is constituted by the political and the personal.[42]

In this phenomenon we need to rethink how intimacy is being recalibrated in public contexts.[43] For Michael Herzfeld, we need to consider what he calls 'cultural intimacy'—that is, where the 'intimate seeps into the public spheres that have themselves been magnified by the technologies of mass mediation'.[44] Complicating matters further, the speed with which these media are consumed may limit the scope within which ethical considerations can be fully comprehended. In this light, we might understand the selfie as an ethical act —a complex vehicle for *digital intimate publics* and new *cultural intimacies*. As viewers of these searingly personal images, we are also called upon to react not only affectively, but ethically by thinking through the 'life' of data as we move increasingly into a space haunted by spectres both digital and analog.

The existence of raw footage from mass trauma events on public social media implies an urgent ethical imperative that has taken a variety of forms. In Korea, it manifested in an excoriating public campaign for retribution and justice. In the United States, footage from the shooting was used to support conspiracy theories and end time prophecies. In both, social media has been used to collectively and publicly grieve, to make meaning out of tragedy and to respond to our own fears and uncertainties.

Affective witnessing through the use of mobile media is now taking on a certain ritual of its own. It is no longer unusual to broadcast live from the scene of a tragedy to connect with loved ones and to 'share' this experience with others. It is also not uncommon to show support and solidarity through the use of hashtags; the most typical ones (at least from a Western perspective) are #prayfor_____ and #_____Strong. This appears to be another mechanism for drawing a wide audience into the tragic personal event. However, the ritualistic

aspects of these responses after any mass casualty event may generate a sense that these sentiments are inauthentic and devoid of true empathy and ethical consideration.

Prior to broadcast, many of the mobile videos we discussed were generated in the space between device and user. This space may have been experienced as intimate and personal. And yet, much of the default positionality for camera phone recordings is to share them. In this way, events being captured by the camera phone are often framed by the user considering potential imagined audiences. In the case of the Sewol disaster, young people spoke to the phone as if it contained all their intimates—a repository and dissemination device *for* and *of* intimacy.

The device itself may have served an important psychological purpose in the moment that would then be reconfigured in the circulation of the media produced by the device. Mobile media devices at times become repositories of intimate knowledges of the user. As constant companion and witness to life's most impactful moments, mobile devices become extensions of our emotional worlds and eventual eulogies. The rawness of coming face-to-face with death is captured in these selfies. The unflinching nature of the video itself makes it all the more raw and real. As mobile media become an integral part of everyday human rituals, so too do they reflect different ethical dimensions opened up the passages of life and death and digital after-life. In both scenes highlighted here, an event that the participants were once enjoying becomes a site of tragedy—does this yield then a sense of the sublime—extreme emotional highs met by devastating lows? Does the taker imagine some reward for producing these selfies?In these chaotic moments, it is evidenced that the mobile media users are not thinking about the ethical aspects of what they are doing. In essence, they are attempting to bring more people into their experience, a decision not readily understood beyond the human need for connection, reassurance and recognition of an event that is difficult to comprehend. Consumption and redistribution of these images also occur without consideration of consequence. The ease with which things are shared via social media makes this content difficult to regulate.Future research needs to focus on how important these broadcasts may be to the users' survival when facing death. In addition, scholars should focus on the ways in which these practices may enhance prosocial behaviour and resiliency.

In particular, as the digital becomes increasingly imbricated in the processes of death and dying, they in turn re-attune our understandings of those experiences, serving as the punctum reminding us of our own and our shared fragility. By doing so, the ethical imperatives enabled by digitally affective witnessing require of us a new sensitivity both to the troubled images we view, and to how these devices enable us to perceive the overlap between the personal and political. The impact of this witnessing must hit close loved ones the hardest. The disoriented misrecognition of self by most users in these videos can be disturbing and difficult to watch. Viewers of these videos may be critical of why people use their phones in this way in their most desperate hours. They may be confused by how composed the individuals seem to be or by how out of control and frantic they are despite their ability to hold on to their phones and their ability to keep recording. These faces and circumstances are unusual and unsettling to the public. These imperatives need to embrace a multidimensional perspective on the generation, distribution and consumption of such images. These perspectives need to be considered in simultaneous conjunction as we can be at once creating, sharing and viewing the objectionable while also at some level embracing the understanding that our mobiles may be facing us at our moment of death.

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