What is the relationship between contemporary digital media and contemporary society? Is it possible to affirm that digital media are without sin and exist purely in a complex socio-political and economic context within which the users bring with them their ethical and cultural complexities? This issue, through a range of scholarly writings, analyzes the problems of ethics and sin within contemporary digital media frameworks.

WITHOUT SIN
FREEDOM AND TABOO IN DIGITAL MEDIA

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Without Sin: Freedom and Taboo in Digital Media

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Leonardo Electronic Almanac
Volume 19 Issue 4

NSA: No Speaking Aloud, Anonymous, 2013.

Post-Society:
Data Capture and Erasure
One Click at a Time

"Oh, in the name of God! Now I know what it feels like to be God!"

Frankenstein (1931)

They must have felt like gods at the NSA when they discovered that they were able to spy on anyone. What feels ridiculous to someone that works with digital media is the level of ignorance that people continue to have about how much everyone else knows or can know about 'you.' If only people were willing to pay someone, or to spend a bit of time searching through digital data services themselves,they would discover a range of services that have started to commercialize collective data: bought and sold through a range of semi-public businesses and almost privatized governmental agencies. Public records of infractions and crimes are available for 'you' to know what 'your' neighbor has been up to.These deals, if not outright illegal, are characterized by unsolved ethical issues since they are a 'selling' of state documents that were never supposed to be so easily accessible to a global audience.

Concurrently as I write this introduction, I read that the maddened Angela Merkel is profoundly shocked that her mobile phone has been tapped into – this is naive at best but also deeply concerning: since to not understand what has happened politically and technologically in the 21st century one must have been living on the moon.Perhaps it is an act or a pantomimestagedfor the benefit of those 'common' people that need to continue living with the strong

belief or faith that their lives are in good hands, that of the state.

Nevertheless it speaks of a 'madness' of the politician as a category. A madness characterized by an alienation from the rest of society that takes the form of isolation. This isolation is, in Foucauldian terms, none other than the enforcement of a voluntary seclusion in the prison and the mad house.

The prisons within which the military, corporate, financial and political worlds have shut themselves in speak increasingly of paranoia and fear. As such the voluntary prison within which they have sought refuge speaks more and more the confused language that one may have imagined to hear from the *Stultifera Navis*.

Paranoia, narcissism and omnipotence, all belong to the delirium of the sociopaths, [1] who push towards the horizon, following the trajectory set by the 'deranged minds.'

It is for the other world that the madman sets sail in his fools' boat; it is from the other world that he comes when he disembarks. [2]

This otherworldliness – this being an alien from another world – has increasingly become the characteristic of contemporary political discourse, which, detached from the reality of the 'majority' of people, feeds into the godlike complex. Foolishness and lunacy reinforce this perspective, creating a rationale that drives the

Stultifera Navis towards its destiny inexorably, bringing all others with them.

Having segregated themselves in a prison of their own doing, the politicians look at all others as being part of a large mad house. It is from the upper deck of a gilded prison that politicians stir the masses in the lower decks into a frenzy of fear and obedience.

Why should it be in this discourse, whose forms we have seen to be so faithful to the rules of reason, that we find all those signs which will most manifestly declare the very absence of reason? [3]

Discourses, and in particular political discourses, no longer mask the reality of madness and with it the feeling of having become omnipotent talks of human madness in its attempt to acquire the impossible: that of being not just godlike, but God.

As omnipotent and omniscient gods the NSA should allow the state to 'see.'The reality is that the 'hands' of the state are no longer functional and have been substituted with prostheses wirelessly controlled by the sociopaths of globalized corporations. Theamputation of the hands happenedwhile the state itself was merrily looking somewhere else, tooblissfullybusy counting the money that was flowing through neo-capitalistic financial dreams of renewed prosperity and Napoleonic grandeur.

The madness is also in the discourse about data, deprived of ethical concerns and rootedwithinperceptions of both post-democracy and post-state.So much so that we could speak of a post-data society, within which the current post-societal existence is the consequence of profound changes and alterations to an ideal way of living that technology – as its greatest sin – still presents as participatory and horizontal but not as plutocratic and hierarchical.

In order to discuss the present post-societal condition, one would need first to analyze the cultural disregard that people have, or perhaps have acquired, for their personal data and the increasing lack of participation in the alteration of the frameworks set for post-data.

This disregard for personal data is part of cultural forms of concession and contracting that are determined and shaped not by rights but through the mass loss of a few rights in exchange for a) participation in a product as early adopters (Google), b) for design status and appearance (Apple), c) social conventions and entertainment (Facebook) and (Twitter).

Big data offers an insight into the problem of big losses if a catastrophe, accidental or intentional, should ever strike big databases. The right of ownership of the 'real object' that existed in the data-cloudwill become the new arena of post-data conflict. In this context of loss, if the crisis of the big banks has demonstrated anything, citizens will bear the brunt of the losses that will be spread iniquitously through 'everyone else.'

The problem is therefore characterized by multiple levels of complexity that can overall be referred to as a general problem of ethics.Of data, interpreted asthe ethical collection and usage of massive amounts of data. Also the ethical issues of post-data and their technologies has to be linked to a psychological understanding of the role that individuals play within society, both singularly and collectively through the use of media that engender new behavioral social systems through the access and usage of big data as sources of information.

Both Prof. Johnny Golding and Prof. Richard Gere present in this collection of essays two perspectives that, by looking at taboos and the sinful nature of technology, demand from the reader a reflection on

the role that ethics plays or no longer plays within contemporary mediated societies.

Concepts of technological neutrality as well as economic neutrality have become enforced taboos when the experiential understanding is that tools that possess a degree of danger should be handled with a modicum of self-control and restraint.

The merging of economic and technological neutrality has generated corporate giants that have acquired a global stronghold on people's digital data. In the construction of arguments in favor or against a modicum of control for these economic and technological giants,the state and its political representatives have thus far considered it convenient not to side with the libertarian argument, since the control was being exercised on the citizen; a category to which politicians and corporate tycoons and other plutocrats and higher managers believe they do not belong to or want to be reduced to.

The problem is then not so much that the German citizens, or the rest of the world, were spied on. The taboo that has been infringed is that Angela Merkel, a head of state, was spied on. This implies an unwillingly democratic reduction from the NSA of all heads of state to 'normal citizens.' The disruption and the violated taboo is that all people are data in a horizontal structure that does not admit hierarchical distinctions and discriminations. In this sense perhaps digital data are violating the last taboo: anyone can be spied upon, creating a truly democratic society of surveillance.

The construction of digital data is such that there is not a normal, a superior, a better or a worse, but everything and everyone is reduced to data. That includes Angela Merkel and any other head of state. Suddenly the process of spying represents a welcome reduction to a basic common denominator: there is no

difference between a German head of state or a blue collar worker; the NSA can spy on both and digital data are collected on both.

If anything was achieved by the NSA it was an egalitarian treatment of all of those who can be spied upon: a horizontal democratic system of spying that does not fear class, political status or money. This is perhaps the best enactment of American egalitarianism: we spy upon all equally and fully with no discrimination based on race, religion, social status, political affiliation or sexual orientation.

But the term spying does not quite manifest the profound level of Panopticon within which we happen to have chosen to live, by giving up and squandering inherited democratic liberties one right at a time, through one agreement at a time, with one click at a time.

These are some of the contemporary issues that this new LEA volume addresses, presenting a series of writings and perspectives from a variety of scholarly fields.

This LEA volume is the result of a collaboration with Dr. Donna Leishman and presents a varied number of perspectives on the infringement of taboos within contemporary digital media.

This issue features a new logo on its cover, that of New York University, Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development.

My thanks to Prof. Robert Rowe, Professor of Music and Music Education; Associate Dean of Research and Doctoral Studies at NYU, for his work in establishing this collaboration with LEA.

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Lanfranco Aceti
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*Director, Kasa Gallery*

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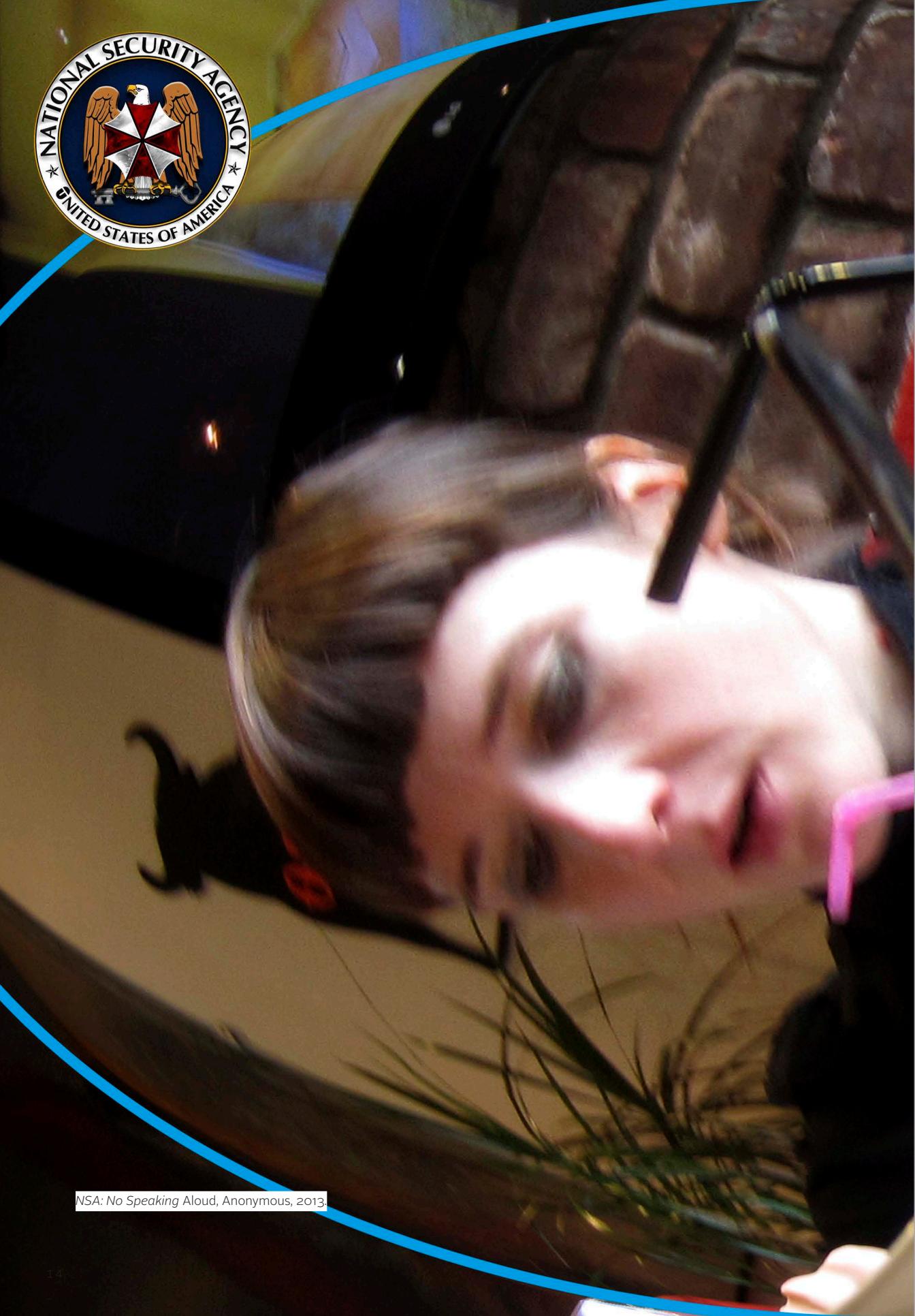
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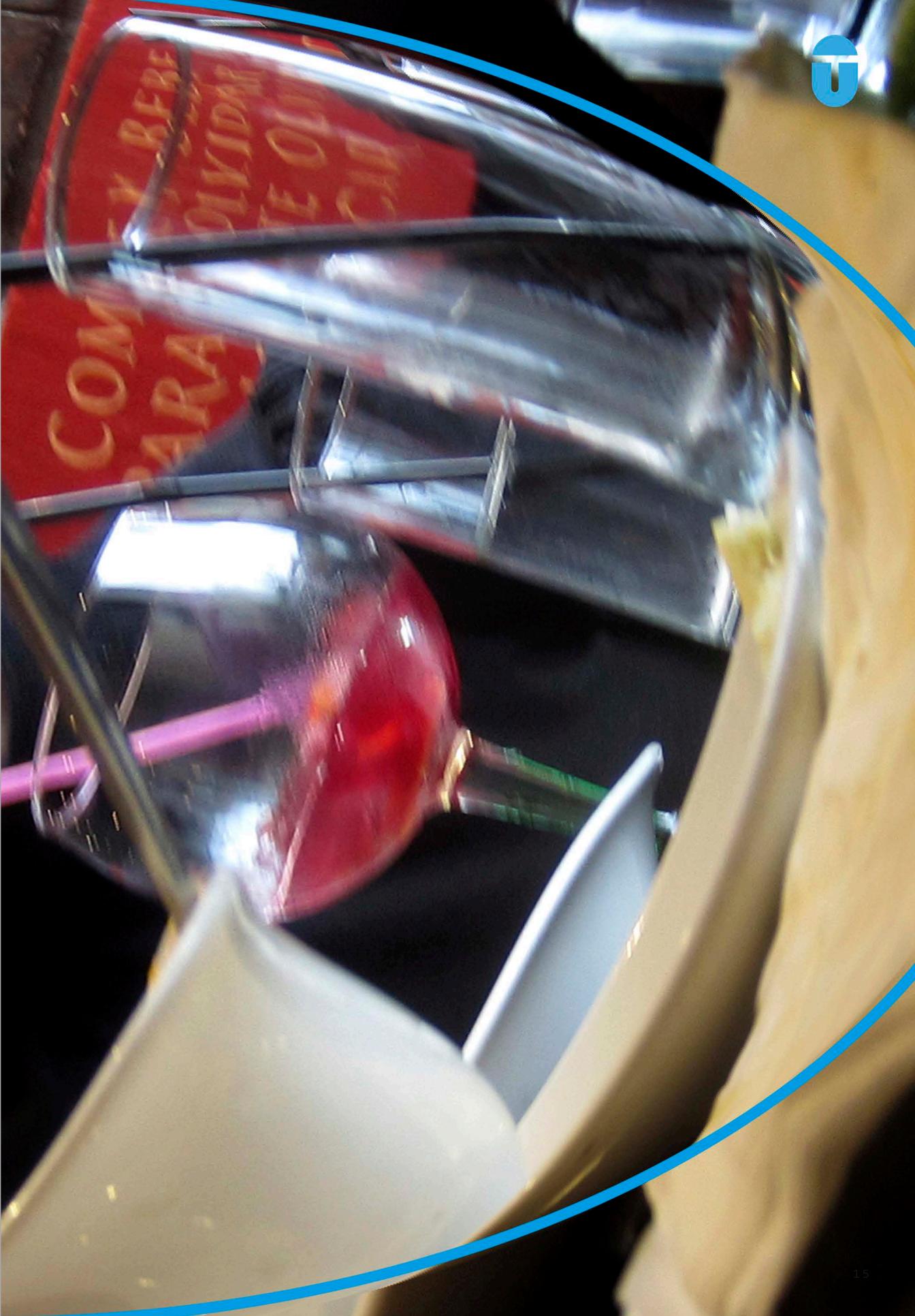
Without Sin: Freedom and Taboo in Digital Media

INTRODUCTION

"Without Sin: Freedom and Taboo in Digital Media" is both the title of this special edition and the title of a panel that was held at ISEA 2011. The goal of the panel was to explore the disinhibited mind's ability to exercise freedom, act on desires and explore the taboo whilst also surveying the boarder question of the moral economy of human activity and how this is translates (or not) within digital media. The original panelists (some of whom have contributed to the this edition) helped to further delineate additional issues surrounding identity, ethics, human socialization and the need to better capture/understand/perceive how we are being affected by our technologies (for good or bad).

In the call for participation, I offered the view that contemporary social technologies are continuously changing our practical reality, a reality where human experience and technical artifacts have become beyond intertwined, but for many interwoven, inseparable – if this were to be true then type of cognizance (legal and personal) do we need to develop? Implied in this call is the need for both a better awareness and jurisdiction of these emergent issues. Whilst this edition is not (and could not be) a unified survey of human activity and digital media; the final edition contains 17 multidisciplinary papers spanning Law, Curation, Pedagogy, Choreography, Art History, Political Science, Creative Practice and Critical Theory – the volume attempts to illustrate the complexity of the situation and if possible the kinship between pertinent disciplines.

Human relationships are rich and they're messy and they're demanding. And we clean them up with technology. Texting, email, posting, all of these things let us present the self, as we want to be. We get to edit, and that means we get to delete, and that means we get to retouch, the face, the voice, the flesh, the body – not too little, not too much, just right. [1]

Sherry Turkle's current hypothesis is that technology has introduced mechanisms that bypass traditional concepts of both community and identity indeed that we are facing (and some of us are struggling with) an array of reconceptualizations. Zygmunt Bauman in his essay "From Pilgrim to Tourist – or a Short History of Identity" suggests that:

One thinks of identity whenever one is not sure if where one belongs; that is, one is not sure how to place oneself among the evident variety if behavioral styles and patterns, and how to make sure that people would accept this placement as right and proper, so that both sides would know how to go on in each other's presence. 'Identity' is the name given to the escape sought from that uncertainty. [2]

Our 'post-social' context where increased communication, travel and migration bought about by technological advances has only multiplied Bauman's conditions of uncertainty. Whilst there may be aesthetic tropes within social media, there is no universally accepted authority within contemporary culture nor is there an easy mutual acceptance of what is 'right and proper' after all we could be engaging in different iterations of "backward presence" or "forward presence" [3] whilst interacting with human and non-human alike (see Simone O'Callaghan's contribution: "Seductive Technologies and Inadvertent Voyeurs" for a further exploration of presence and intimacy).

Editing such a broad set of responses required an editorial approach that both allowed full expansion of each paper's discourse whilst looking for interconnections (and oppositions) in attempt to distil some commonalties. This was achieved by mentally placing citation, speculation and proposition between one another. Spilling the 'meaning' of the individual contributions into proximate conceptual spaces inhabited by other papers and looking for issues that overlapped or resonated allowed me formulate a sense of what might become future pertinent themes, and what now follows below are the notes from this process.

What Social Contract?

Hereby it is manifest that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war as is of every man against every man. (Thomas Hobbes in chapter XIII of the *Leviathan* [4])

Deborah Swack's "FEELTRACE and the Emotions (after Charles Darwin)," Johnny Golding's "Ana-Materialism & The Pineal Eye: Becoming Mouth-Breast" and Kriss Ravetto's "Anonymous Social As Political" argue that our perception of political authority is somewhere between shaky towards becoming erased altogether. Whilst the original 17th century rational for sublimating to a political authority – i.e. we'd default back to a war like state in the absence of a binding social contract – seems like a overwrought fear, the capacity for repugnant anti-social behavior as a consequence of no longer being in awe of any common power is real and increasingly impactful. [5] Problematically the notion of a government that has been created by individuals to protect themselves from one another sadly seems hopelessly incongruent in today's increasingly skeptical context. Co-joined to the dissipation of perceptible political entities – the power dynamics of being 'good' rather than 'bad' and or 'sinful' appears to be one of most flimsy of our prior social borders. The new reality that allows us to transgress and explore our tastes and predictions from a remote and often depersonalized position feels safer (i.e. with less personal accountability) a scenario that is a further exacerbated space vacated by the historic role of the church as a civic authority. Mikhail Pushkin in his paper "Do we need morality anymore?" explores the online moral value system and how this ties into the deleterious effect of the sensationalism in traditional mass media. He suggests that the absence of restrictive online social structure means the very consciousness of sin and guilt has now changed and potentially so has our capability of experiencing the emotions tied to guilt. [6] Sandra Wilson and Lila Gomez in their paper "The Premediation of Identity Management in Art & Design – New Model Cyborgs – Organic & Digital" concur stating that "the line dividing taboos from desires is often blurred, and a taboo can quickly flip into a desire, if the conditions under which that interaction take place change."

The Free?

The issue of freedom seems to be where much of the debate continues – between what constitutes false liberty and real freedoms. Unique in their own approach Golding's and Pushkin's papers challenge the premise that is implied in this edition's title – that 'Freedom and Taboo' even have a place at all in our contemporary existence as our established codes of morality (and ethics) have been radically reconfigured. This stance made me recall Hobbes's first treaty where he argued that "commodious living" (i.e. morality, politics, society), are purely conventional and that moral terms are not objective states of affairs but are reflections of tastes and preferences – indeed within another of his key concepts (i.e. the "State of Nature") 'anything goes' as nothing is immoral and or unjust. [6] It would 'appear' that we are freer from traditional institutional controls whilst at the same time one could argue that the borders of contiguous social forms (i.e.

procedures, networks, our relationship to objects and things) seem to have dissipated alongside our capacity to perceive them. The problematic lack of an established conventional commodious living such as Bauman's idea that something is 'right and proper' is under challenge by the individualized complexity thrown up from our disinhibited minds, which can result in benign or toxic or 'other' behaviors depending on our personality's variables. [7] Ravetto describes how Anonymous consciously inhabits such an 'other' space:

> *Anonymous demonstrates how the common cannot take on an ethical or coherent political message. It can only produce a heterogeneity of spontaneous actions, contradictory messages, and embrace its contradictions, its act of vigilante justice as much as its dark, racist, sexist, homophobic and predatory qualities.*

Perception

Traditionally good cognition of identity/society/relationships (networks and procedures) was achieved through a mix of social conditioning and astute mindfulness. On the other hand at present the dissipation of contiguous social forms has problematized the whole process creating multiple social situations (new and prior) and rather than a semi-stable situation (to reflect upon) we are faced with a digital deluge of unverifiable information. Perception and memory comes up in David R. Burns's paper "Media, Memory, and Representation in the Digital Age: Rebirth" where he looks at the problematic role of digital mediation in his personal experience of the 9/11. He recalls the discombobulating feeling of being: "part of the digital media being internationally broadcast across the world." Burns seeks to highlight the media's influence over an individual's constructed memories. From a different perspective Charlie Gere reminds us of the prominence (and shortcomings) of our ocular-centric perspective in his discussion of "Alterity, Pornography,

and the Divine" and cites Martin Jay's essay "Scopic Regimes of Modernity" [8] which in turn explores a variety of significant core concepts of modernity where vision and knowledge meet and influence one another. Gere/Jay's line of references resurrect for the reader Michel Foucault's notion of the "Panopticon" (where surveillance is diffused as a principle of social organization), [9] Guy DeDord's *The Society of the Spectacle* i.e. "All that once was directly lived has become mere representation") [10] and Richard Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (published in 1979). [11] The latter gave form to an enduringly relevant question: are we overly reliant on a representational theory of perception? And how does this intersect with the risks associated with solipsistic introjection within non face-to-face online interactions? The ethics of 'looking' and data collection is also a feature of Deborah Burns's paper "Differential Surveillance of Students: Surveillance/Sousveillance Art as Opportunities for Reform" in which Burns asks questions of the higher education system and its complicity in the further erosion of student privacy. Burn's interest in accountability bridges us back to Foucault's idea of panoptic diffusion:

> *He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection* [12]

In panoptic diffusion the knowingness of the subject is key – as we move towards naturalization of surveillance and data capture through mass digitization such power relationships change. This is a concern mirrored by Eric Schmidt Google's Executive Chairman when considering the reach of our digital footprints: "I don't believe society understands what happens when everything is available, knowable and recorded

by everyone all the time." [13] Smita Kheria's "Copyright and Digital Art practice: The 'Schizophrenic' Position of the Digital Artist" and Alana Kushnir's "When Curating Meets Piracy: Rehashing the History of Unauthorised Exhibition-Making" explore accountability and power relationships in different loci whilst looking at the mitigation of creative appropriation and reuse. It is clear that in this area serious reconfigurations have occurred and that new paradigms of acceptability (often counter to the legal reality) are at play.

Bauman's belief that "One thinks of identity whenever one is not sure if where one belongs" [14] maybe a clue into why social media have become such an integral part of modern society. It is after all an activity that privileges 'looking' and objectifying without the recipient's direct engagement – a new power relationship quite displaced from traditional (identity affirming) social interactions. In this context of social media over dependency it may be timely to reconsider Guy-Ernest Debord's 'thesis 30':

> *The externality of the spectacle in relation to the active man appears in the fact that his own gestures are no longer his but those of another who represents them to him. This is why the spectator feels at home nowhere, because the spectacle is everywhere.* [15]

Underneath these issues of perception / presence / identity / is a change or at least a blurring in our political (and personal) agency. Don Ritter's paper "Content Osmosis and the Political Economy of Social Media" functions as a reminder of the historical precedents and continued subterfuges that occur in mediated feelings of empowerment. Whilst Brigit Bachler in her paper "Like Reality" presents to the reader that "besides reality television formats, social networking sites such as Facebook have successfully delivered a new form of watching each other, in a seemingly safe

setting, on a screen at home" and that "the appeal of the real becomes the promise of access to the reality of manipulation." [16] The notion of better access to the 'untruth' of things also appears in Ravetto's paper "Anonymous: Social as Political" where she argues that "secrecy and openness are in fact aporias." What is unclear is that, as society maintains its voyeuristic bent and the spectacle is being conflated into the banality of social media, are we becoming occluded from meaningful developmental human interactions? If so, we are to re-create a sense of agency in a process challenged (or already transformed) by clever implicit back-end data gathering [17] and an unknown/undeclared use our data's mined 'self.' Then, and only then, dissociative anonymity may become one strategy that allows us to be more independent; to be willed enough to see the world from our own distinctive needs whilst devising our own extensions to the long genealogy of moral concepts.

Somewhere / Someplace

Perpetual evolution and sustained emergence is one of the other interconnecting threads found within the edition. Many of the authors recognize a requirement for fluidity as a reaction to the pace of change. Geographer David Harvey uses the term "space-time compression" to refer to "processes that . . . revolutionize the objective qualities of space and time." [18] Indeed there seems to be consensus in the edition that we are 'in' an accelerated existence and a concomitant dissolution of traditional spatial co-ordinates – Swack cites Joanna Zylinska's 'human being' to a perpetual "human becoming" [19] whilst Golding in her paper reminds us that Hobbes also asserted that "[f]or seeing life is but a motion of Limbs" [20] and that motion, comes from motion and is inextricably linked to the development and right of the individual. But Golding expands this changing of state further and argues where repetition (and loop) exist so does a different experience:

The usual culprits of time and space (or time as distinct from space and vice versa), along with identity, meaning, Existenz, Being, reconfigure via a relational morphogenesis of velocity, mass, and intensity. This is an immanent surface cohesion, the compelling into a 'this' or a 'here' or a 'now,' a space-time terrain, a collapse and rearticulation of the tick-tick-ticking of distance, movement, speed, born through the repetitive but relative enfolding of otherness, symmetry and diversion.

Golding's is a bewildering proposition requiring a frame of mind traditionally fostered by theoretical physicists but one that may aptly summarize the nature of the quandary. The authors contributing to this edition all exist in their own ways in a post-digital environment, anthropologist Lucy Suchman describes this environment as being "the view from nowhere, detached intimacy, and located accountability." [21] Wilson and Gomez further offer a possible coping strategy by exploring the usefulness of Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin's "pre-mediation" as a means to externalize a host of fears and reduce negative emotions in the face of uncertainty. The imperative to create some strategies to make sense of some of these pressing issues is something that I explore in my own contribution in which I offer the new term *Precarious Design* – as a category of contemporary practice that is emerging from the design community. Precarious Design encompasses a set of practices that by expressing current and near future scenarios are well positioned to probe deeper and tease out important underlying societal assumptions to attain understanding or control in our context of sustained cultural and technological change.

Embodiment

In theory our deterritorialized and changed relationship with our materiality provides a new context in which a disinhibited mind could better act on desires and explore the taboo. Ken Hollings's paper "THERE MUST BE SOMETHING WRONG WITH THIS, SALLY... Faults, lapses and imperfections in the sex life of machines" – presents a compelling survey of the early origin of when humans began to objectify and try live through our machines starting with disembodiment of voice as self that arose from the recording of sound via the Edison phonograph in 1876. Golding and Swack mull over the implications of the digital on embodiment and what it means now to be 'human' as we veer away from biological truth and associated moral values towards something else. Sue Hawksley's "Dancing on the Head of a Sin: touch, dance and taboo" reminds us of our sensorial basis in which:

Touch is generally the least shared, or acknowledged, and the most taboo of the senses. Haptic and touch-screen technologies are becoming ubiquitous, but although this makes touch more commonly experienced or shared, it is often reframed through the virtual, while inter-personal touch still tends to remain sexualized, militarized or medicalized (in most Western cultures at least).

Within her paper Hawksley provides an argument (and example) on how the mediation of one taboo – dance – through another – touch – could mitigate the perceived moral dangers and usual frames of social responsibility. Swack raises bioethical questions about the future nature of life for humans and "the embodiment and containment of the self and its symbiotic integration and enhancement with technology and machines." Whilst Wilson and Gomez's go on to discuss *Bioprescence* by Shiho Fukuhara and Georg Tremmel – a project that provocatively "creates Human DNA trees by transcoding the essence of a human being within the DNA of a tree in order to create 'Living Memorials' or 'Transgenic Tombstones'" [22] – as an example of a manifest situation that still yields a (rare) feeling of transgression into the taboo.

CONCLUSION

In the interstices of this edition there are some questions/observations that remain somewhat unanswered and others that are nascent in their formation. They are listed below as a last comment and as a gateway to further considerations.

Does freedom from traditional hierarchy equate to empowerment when structures and social boundaries are also massively variable and dispersed and are pervasive to the point of incomprehension/invalidation? Or is there some salve to be found in Foucault's line that "'Power is everywhere' and 'comes from everywhere' so in this sense is neither an agency nor a structure," [23] thus nothing is actually being 'lost' in our current context? And is it possible that power has always resided within the individual and we only need to readjust to this autonomy?

Conventional political power (and their panoptic strategies) seem to be stalling, as efforts to resist and subvert deep-seated and long-held governmental secrecy over military/intelligence activities have gained increased momentum while their once privileged data joins in the leaky soft membrane that is the ethics of sharing digitally stored information.

Through dissociative strategies like online anonymity comes power re-balance, potentially giving the individual better recourse to contest unjust actions/laws but what happens when we have no meaningful social contract to direct our civility? Its seems pertinent to explore if we may be in need of a new social contract that reconnects or reconfigures the idea of accountability – indeed it was interesting to see the contrast between Suchman's observed 'lack of accountability' and the Anonymous collective agenda of holding (often political or corporate) hypocrites 'accountable' through punitive measures such as Denial-of-Service attacks.

Regarding de-contextualization of the image / identity – there seems to be something worth bracing oneself against in the free-fall of taxonomies, how we see, how we relate, how we perceive, how we understand that even the surface of things has changed and could still be changing. There is no longer a floating signifier but potentially an abandoned sign in a cloud of dissipating (or endlessly shifting) signification. Where once:

The judges of normality are present everywhere. We are in the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the 'social-worker'-judge; it is on them that the universal reign of the normative is based; and each individual, wherever he may find himself, subjects to it his body, his gestures, his behaviour, his aptitudes, his achievements. [24]

There now is no culturally specific normal in the diffuse digital-physical continuum, which makes the materiality and durability of truth very tenuous indeed; a scenario that judges-teaches-social workers are having some difficulty in addressing and responding to in a timely manner, an activity that the theoretically speculative and methodologically informed research as contained within this edition can hopefully help them with.

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.   As perhaps Friedrich Nietzsche would argue... He has previously described "orgies of feelings" that are directly linked to our capacity to feel sin and guilt. "To wrench the human soul from its moorings, to immerse it in terrors, ice, flames, and raptures to such an extent that it is liberated from all petty displeasure, gloom, and depression as by a flash of lightning" Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals,* trans. Horace Samuel (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), 139.

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7. Consequential subsets within a disinhibited mind are dis-sociative anonymity (you don't know me) and dissociative imagination (its just a game), which can lead to benign actions such as random acts of kindness or being more affectionate or potentially toxic (exploring more violent assertive sides of ones nature) and 'other' behaviors.

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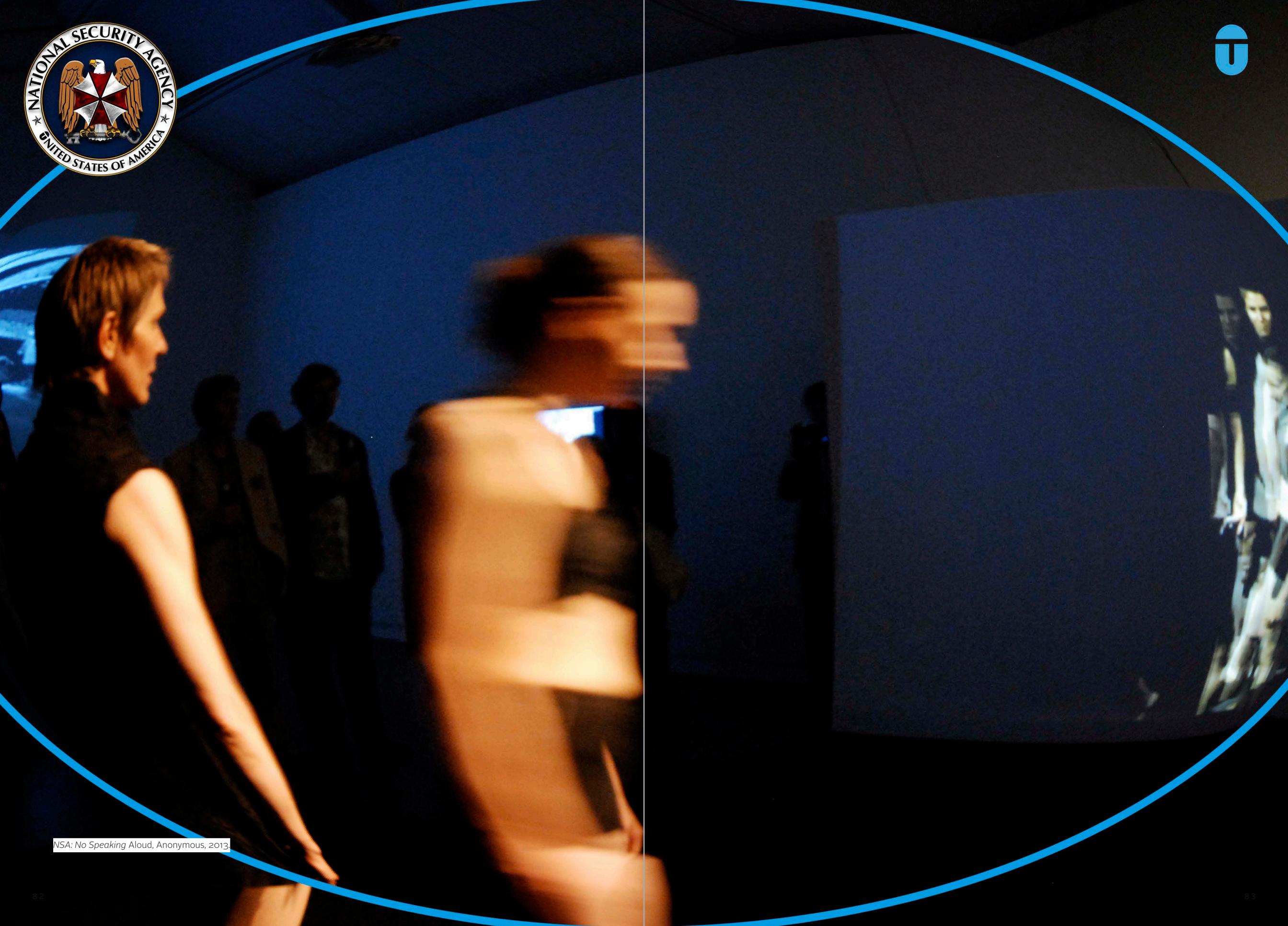
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Dancing on the Head of a Sin: Touch, Dance and Taboo

by

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INTRODUCTION

Do you dance? I put this to the taxi-driver taking me from my University campus where I work as a Senior Lecturer in Dance, to the train station. He had asked me whether dance a good thing to learn, to which I replied that I thought so, and that it is certainly a good thing to do. Did he dance? His reply caught me off-guard; something along the lines of life being too brief to waste time on dancing; one should focus on the important things like making a living and caring for the family. Further, dancing makes you wear short clothing, go to nightclubs, look at women inappropriately and cheat on your wife. No, he said, he does not dance.

I was left at the station reconsidering how to approach this article. I had been intending to discuss *haptic_dance*, a dance work performed by touch, in relation to taboos on touching. It had not occurred to me that dance could also present a form of treacherous moral quicksand so feared by the gentleman driving the taxi. With this conversation in mind, this paper will begin by describing the aims, practical and theoretical framework of *haptic_dance*, the creative process and the performance outcomes. It will then

A B S T R A C T

This paper will outline the practice and performance of haptic_dance *(2011) and discuss the ethical issues raised and the challenges presented to dance's ontology by this work.* haptic_dance *is a dance work received by touch, choreographed and performed by Sue Hawksley for an audience of one. It aims to make tangible some impression of a dance, and through focusing attention on this aspect of the sensorium, to enhance the audience's experience of kinaesthetic empathy. The use of touch to deliver and/or communicate dance is a novel and little explored choreographic approach. Within Western traditions, while social dances are often shared kinaesthetic/ kinetic experiences, theatre dance performances are generally engaged visually and from a distance. The concept of touching the audience in order to deliver the dance raises interesting issues concerning professional and ethical codes of practice. Touch is generally the least shared, or acknowledged, and the most taboo of the senses. Haptic and touch-screen technologies are becoming ubiquitous, but although this makes touch more commonly experienced or shared, it is often reframed through the virtual, while inter-personal touch still tends to remain sexualized, militarized or medicalized (in most Western cultures at least).* haptic_dance *employs what could be seen as the simplest of mediating tools – the hands. However, the somatic senses are complex, involving the proprioceptive, vestibular and visceral systems, not limited to any specific organ but involving the whole organism. In* haptic_dance *I encountered the complexities of delivery and interpretation of inter-personal touch, and the limitations encountered by touching on a taboo. Does the haptic engagement with dance – a medium in which touch is nowadays often accepted (in social dances, tango, or contact improvisation for example) – make it easier for the work to transcend taboos, or does it add to the complexity? Dance has been prohibited in some European societies since medieval times, and still is in certain cultures. Another key issue this work raises is* where *the dance is located. Some audience members felt that it was in or around them, others felt that it was in me as the dancer, or in the danced material from which the touch version derives. This question of where the dance is significant in considering whether, how and why the use of haptic mediation technologies within this or another choreographic context can make touch more broachable.*

discuss issues raised in relation to touch, including the surprising challenges to dance's ontology revealed by the work, and review this in relation to notions of dance as a taboo act. Finally it will consider whether the mediation of one taboo – dance – through an-other – touch – might mitigate the perceived moral dangers, and whether the use of digital technology to mediate the dance or touch suggests distance, and therefore freedom, from the usual frames of social responsibility for acts deemed taboo?

HAPTIC_DANCE

haptic_dance is a tactual dance performance for an audience of one. [1] The idea for a dance work received by touch emerges from a synthesis of my two main areas of interest and modes of practice – contemporary dance and bodywork – and a concern to address notions of kinaesthetic empathy in watching dance. Bodywork practitioner Ida Rolf's dictum suggested that; "seeing is touch at a distance." [2] I began by inverting this proposal, and asking whether dance-by-touch might constitute seeing close-up. Dance is generally a highly kinaesthetic/kinetic experience for those engaged in it, but within the traditions of Western Theatre Dance the audience's experience is primarily visual, and the architecture and economy of many Western theatre buildings contribute to distance between performers and viewers. *haptic_dance* aims to bring the audience 'closer' by making tangible some impression of the dancer's phenomenal experience of dancing. A longer-term aim is that this choreographic research will inform the development of a technologically mediated haptic interface.

CHOREOGRAPHIC PROCESS

The creative process explores the relationship between danced material and the touched performance, and the audience's apprehension and interpretation of this. The danced material is a short solo, composed using a choreographic device of 'mapping' or 'reinhabiting' a remembered place, in this case a house I know well from my childhood. One outcome of this method is that the structure, phrasing and form of movement phrases follow unpredictable patterns determined by the topology of the location. I did not want the audience to try and predict the sequence based on their prior knowledge of dance forms, nor based on musical cues (I deliberately used no music). [3] The phenomenal feeling of dancing this material is then analysed and 'translated' into touch markers to be impressed upon

the body of the audience. [4] The intention of the work is to convey something of the subjective *feeling* of what happens, not to describe *what* happens. Working with dancers Hannah Seignior and Freya Jeffs, I adopted a highly subjective approach to the process of analysis and translation between dance and touch. We physically executed movements or phrases, focusing attention towards the kinaesthetic experience, and then selected what seemed the most pertinent elements of the phrase to report on. We explored touches that might give an *impression* of our feeling of dancing those elements. We regularly exchanged roles of dancing the material and giving and receiving touches, until we came to agreement about solutions that seemed to best convey common experiences of dancing this material. The touch was kept as minimal as possible and in general aimed to use only one point of contact, to reduce the possibility that the receiver experience the contact as either manipulative or as a massage. Because of the impossibility of describing or transmitting all of the multiple simultaneous sensations that occur at any moment of movement, a large amount of information about the dance material is not translated. The timing of the touches was difficult to determine. Each touch seems to demand a timing of its own, independent of the original danced phrase. When a touch is left to linger, new and different sensations may grow out of it. [5] An attempt to deliver a real-time mapping of the touches to match the timing of the danced material resulted in what one participant described as "being poked." New information arrives too rapidly and the receiver quickly experiences sensory overload. In the end, *haptic_dance* takes about twice as long as the danced solo. The position of the receiver also impacts on their reception of the material. Lying evokes connotations of massage and encourages over-passivity on the part of the receiver. It also obscures surfaces of the body from contact, so that the giver has to manipulate the receiver in order to access those surfaces, thereby introducing move-

ments that do not refer to the source dance material. If they stand to receive, participants are more engaged but many then perceived the touch as an invitation to actively participate as a mover. Sitting offers the most straightforward transposition of a theatrical situation, and helps the receiver to feel safe if they close their eyes or relax. I used a round stool, again for the reason of not obscuring one surface of the body with a chairback.

Pilot trials were conducted over several weeks during April – June 2011. Participants were given an information sheet and consent form, which clarified that the focus of the touch is choreographic, not therapeutic, and that the exchange is between performer and audience, not between therapist and client. I recommended that, while I consider the touch used to be

safe, respectful, non-threatening and non-ambiguous, should any physical or psychological reason contraindicate them receiving the work they should not take part, or could ask to stop at any point. [6] In the initial trials participants could choose to stand or be seated, and to close the eyes or keep them open. I kept the guidelines as open ended as possible, giving minimal instruction so as to avoid prejudicing responses, which were very varied. Some participants passively received the touch, some gently yielded or moved minimally, while others interpreted it as directive and an invitation to move, responding by actively dancing away from me. These participants appropriated the dance as *theirs* to the point that I became the respondent. The event became a shared dance improvisation.

Figure 1. *haptic_dance,* 2011, Sue Hawksley. The artist is receiving and responding to directive touch, in rehearsal at Dance Base Edinburgh, 2010. Photo by Maria Falconer. © Maria Falconer, 2010. Used with permission.
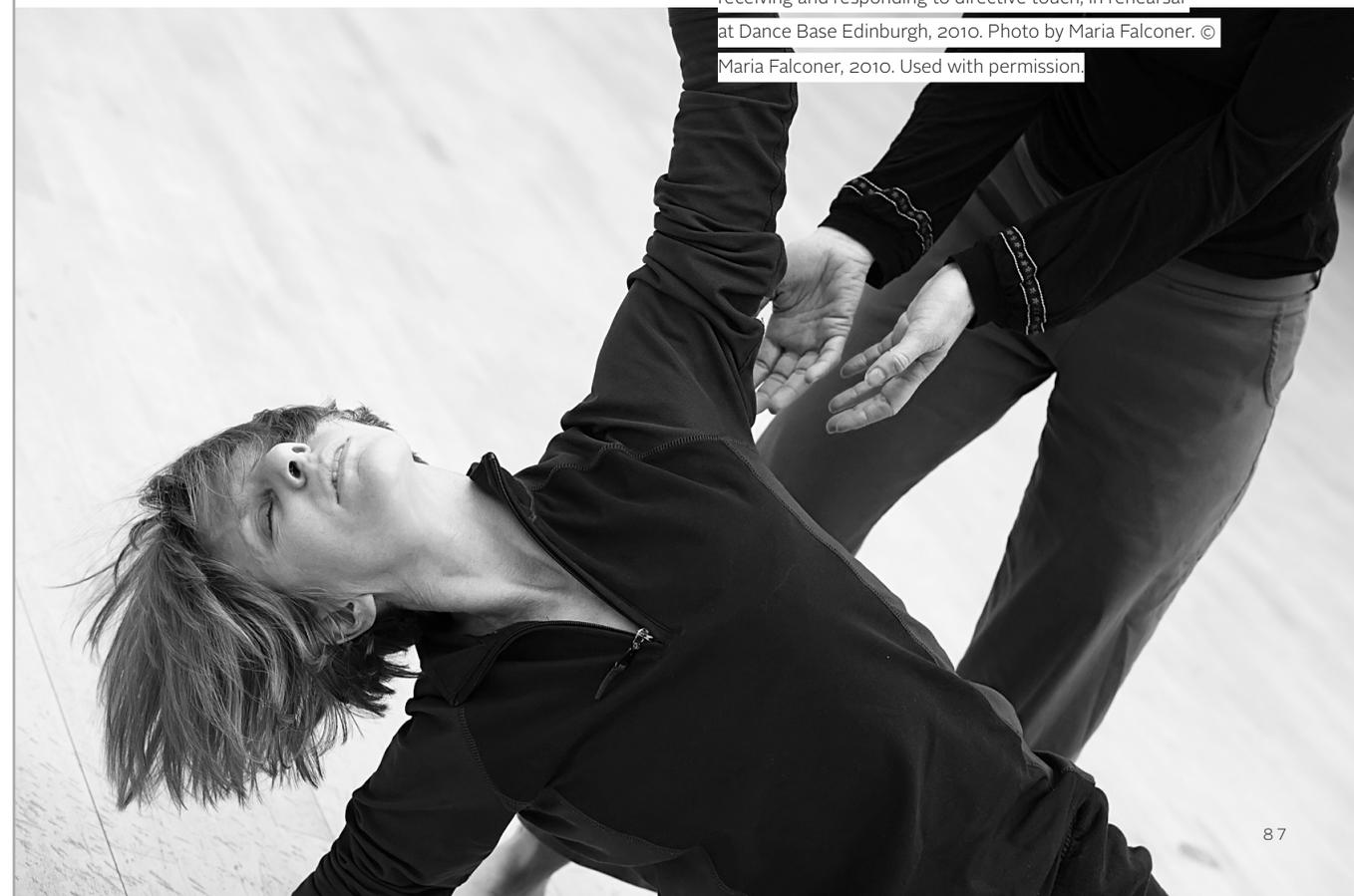
Figure 2. *haptic_dance,* 2011, Sue Hawksley, Freya Jeffs and Sue Hawksley, in rehearsal at the Workroom, Glasgow, 2011. Photo by Roddy Simpson. © Roddy Simpson, 2011. Used with permission.

This was creatively interesting, but changed the composition of my choreographed material and shifted the focus of the study. I therefore amended the information sheet for future participants, delineating the roles of audience and performer more explicitly, and removed the option to stand. This established a clearer social context for the performance and placed the audience in a position more akin to being seated in a theatre. This in turn helped to define more conventional roles and responsibilities for performer and audience. Audiences rarely get up on to the stage and join in unsolicited (and when audience participation *is* called for, are often reluctant to do so).

Following the pilot trials, *haptic_dance* was performed at the *Embodied Values: the Senses in Motion* seminar in Edinburgh, July 2011 [7] and the Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh, May 2012. [8] After receiving the touch version audience members were asked to make any expression they wished. Several of them moved, using small internally focused movements as if 'returning to themselves' or exploring the vestigial sensations left by the touches. Some chose to draw, write, or speak about their experience.

Comments included –

"I was experiencing .. what you were doing but it was making me want to move in a certain way that I wouldn't necessarily .. and I'm actually feeling like you! It's really strange! You did something like this, and I felt, I thought, I'm Sue! I'm actually Sue!"

"It felt like I was a sort of marionette being created, moulded – not quite moulded, sort of carved-out – and the movements were like T'ai Chi energy, almost like you'd been given life .. I wasn't being forced to do things I didn't want to, just that I could feel the difference slight touches would put my body in a different place, just like a little thing on a marionette can make a big movement. It was more like that, but it was like I naturally did that, that's what I wanted to do and it didn't take much to do it. But it wasn't me doing it. It was an external thing. So I guess more of an emergent movement, you-and-me, rather than you making me do something."

"It was almost like the dance energy was also moving through me even though I was sitting very still."

"It felt like it was like, I don't know, it became a language, as if it were like morse, like a code .. It was

very strange, a bit of almost anticipation, what part is going to be next? Is there an order? Basically trying to understand the code."

WHERE THE DANCE IS

After they had received the *haptic_dance*, I asked all participants whether they had felt any sense of a dance, and if so, *where* the dance was for them. Responses included;

"The dance for me was in your body."

"It was in me. My body's response to what you were doing was the dance."

"Well it was not exactly just your dance, it was also my dance, which means that it's rather immersive."

"I sensed it to be between what was going on, what was happening; it was between."

"It felt like I was part of the dance. Even though I wasn't by my own volition dancing, I did feel like I was on a stage within a dance."

"It was just flowing around me and moving me around. So I was part of it as well."

"It was definitely in me, and it was definitely in you, so it was sitting in the space between us."

"It was in my body, although I know it could be somewhere else as well."

Any text leads to a multiplicity of possible readings, but the haptic is a complex sense and it is difficult to anticipate reception of a touch-text. Touch may be experienced as directive or indicative and the impulse

to respond may be immediate, or come to awareness gradually. Touch brings to awareness the multi-layered nature of selfhood, and the constantly changing possibilities and choices of where to focus attention. The point of contact between giver and receiver is the site of a fluid transfusion of interpretation, a syncopation of agency. The variations in responses to the question of where the dance is reveal a need to determine fixed points in order to get some kind of purchase in this volatile terrain. It is necessary to negotiate degrees of agency – the extent to which either of the two people involved in *haptic_dance* offer the resistance that creates the fixed point. If the receiver actively continues from the touch into their own new movement, then they may no longer be in a position to receive the next impulse according to the patterns and connections of the intended choreographic score. The social context for the work needed to be more clearly established, defining more conventional roles and responsibilities for performer and audience. This also helps clarify what the touches are for, and reduces the possibility of their being misconstrued.

TOUCH – DANCE – TABOO

The concept of touching the audience in order to deliver a dance raises interesting issues concerning professional and ethical codes of practice. The haptic senses are complex, involving the whole organism through the proprioceptive, kinaesthetic, vestibular and visceral systems; "a singular sense that corresponds to no single organ." [9] Touch is generally the least shared or acknowledged and the most prohibited of the senses, certainly in most Western cultures, often tending to be either sexualised, militarised or medicalised. Therapeutic touch within western body therapies and psychotherapies often functions as an adjunct to verbal therapy, to reassure, to greet, ground, console, reorient or prevent harm. However three

forms of touch – sexual, hostile and punishing – are deemed inappropriate, unethical and in some US states, illegal. [10] For *haptic_dance*, part of my choreographic process was informed by my work as a bodywork and massage therapist, and involved careful consideration of the quality and quantity of the touch material to ensure it would be safe, respectful, non-threatening and non-ambiguous for the audience.

Freud's work in psychotherapy [11] and Frazer's anthropological studies [12] position taboo in modern society as products of culture, with multiple functions including to protect powerful or important figures, safeguard the weak or poor, and prevent spread of infection. The touch of kings, priests, prophets and shamans can bless, invest and magically heal, while that of peasants, paupers and the dissolute can contaminate, corrupt or violate – the caste of Untouchables persists in India still today. Contemporary issues around touch are largely based on Puritanical views, perpetuated through the Victorian era and into the 20th century, when parenting expert John Watson set the agenda by advocating a hands-off approach. He cautioned parents against spoiling their children; "Never hug and kiss them. Never let them sit on your lap. If you must, kiss them on the head when they say goodnight. Shake hands with them in the morning." [13] Mothers' diaries from the time suggest that such advice instilled lasting guilt for those who could not help but cuddle and comfort their infants. Psychologists John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth conducted studies after World War II to develop theories of attachment and separation, which in turn informed Harry Harlow's ethically dubious but influential experiments with rhesus monkeys carried out in the 1950s. These experiments established the importance of touch and physical contact in infant development. One, often cited in the literature on touch, had newborn monkeys separated from their mothers and given two surrogate 'mothers' – one of soft cloth which produced no milk, the other made of steel which provided milk. The babies tended

to spend most time huddled up to the soft 'mothers' and only visited the metal one when desperately hungry. [14] Donna Haraway discusses these experiments in her article *Primate experiments: Harry Harlow and the Technology of Love*, in which she considers how the extraordinary designs of some of his experiments – total isolation in the 'pit of despair,' for example, and the use of the 'rape-rack' for breeding 'evil mothers' and 'motherless monkey mothers' – may offer more insights into the minds of torturers than the functions of touch. [15] The hostile and punishing uses of touch applied to these non-human subjects, and further distanced from human experience by the use of technologies of mediation, are prohibited in most human societies. The proliferation of haptic and touch-screen technologies contributes to a continued reframing of the sense of touch through the virtual, augmenting the potential for taboo-busting behaviours towards avatars. An indulgence of inappropriate, unethical and illegal forms of touch may work against the cultivation of the care and respect in inter-personal touch, which is already awkward for many in Western societies. Western men in particular are still socialised against gentler forms of touch, with a resulting difficulty of differentiation between sensual and sexual touch. This was evident in a dance project with Motionhouse Dance Company for male prisoners in HMP Dovegate, using the dance form of Contact Improvisation (CI). [16]

Working as a consultant on the project, dance artist Sara Houston notes:

If Contact is perceived as an intimate dance, it is easy to equate the tactile system with a sensuality that has sexual connotations. This idea is particularly prevalent in cultures – such as those with a North American or European Protestant heritage – where lingering touch of body parts between two people is seen as crossing the barrier of formal behaviour. [17]

Touchdown Dance Company, founded by Steve Paxton and Anne Kilcoyne, includes sighted and visually impaired people, and specialises in using touch and sensory feedback techniques. Their workshops also often employ Contact Improvisation, and they equally acknowledge the need to establish and maintain a distinction between sensual and sexual touch.

In their article *On the Braille on the Body,* discussing the work of Touchdown, Paxton and Kilcoyne note:

We need to put aside the commercial notion of the human being as a slave to sex urges and simply acknowledge sex as one of the basic common urges which is not relevant in this situation [i.e. falling and catching in a dance] – in much the same way that it is not useful on the bus. [18]

Within Western moral theology, an overarching view is that dance itself is morally neutral and only becomes a sin under certain conditions, whether watching or performing dances. Historically, the more general attitude in the Christian west seems to be one of enduring suspicion, which dance historian Alessandro Arcangeli suggests is "rooted in the clerico-monastic disapproval of the body and the world." [19] The context of theological discussion, Arcangeli suggests, was often focused on mixed gender dances and fears of transgression of sexual morality. The resulting prohibitions form a schizoid set of contrary arguments. As early as the thirteenth century entries on dance were standardised in the *summae*, often preached through moral *exempla*, and disseminated more widely from the late fifteenth century through printing. Late-medieval exemplum, using the fight against dance in a war against paganism, gave warnings of dire consequences of dancing, such as stories of storms, plagues and bridges collapsing.

Arcangeli relates a story in an early 15th century Franciscan collection from Northern Italy offering moral

exempla for the dangers of dancing, in which the punishment displays a perverse conflation of taboo on touch and prohibition of dance:

A lady, repenting of her fondness for dancing, is ordered by her confessor to lay out the corpse of the first person who dies in the parish. This happens to be a dissolute girl, who often used to go around the town dancing. While stripping her body, the penitent woman discovers that it is consumed by leprosy. [20]

Dance scholar Ann Wagner [21] charts some of the contrasting views toward dance in Europe and America. In the humanist tradition of 15th century Italy, the study of dance was formalised as a courtly art and lent moral authority by the introduction of the dancing master and manual. Dance's dangers were thus contained, in contrast to the sinful and absurd activity of commoners and the lower classes. By the 16th century, the predominant views ranged from the International Calvinist's forbidding of dance or any other amusement, to explicit tolerance from the Lutheran Church, while the Catholic Church was divided between supporters of puritanical strictness, and those adopting a more liberal stand. Sir Tomas Elyot, Catholic advisor to Henry VIII, proposed in the early 16th century that young men be taught the virtue of prudence by learning to dance, while by the 1570s John Mombrooke, Protestant minister under Elizabeth I was proclaiming that "dancing is the vilest vice of all!" [22] In dance manuals of the Catholic canon Thoinot Arbeau, or the Italian dancing master Fabritio Caroso, good behaviour and good dancing were linked. These manuals were aimed at literate people with time to study, which, Wagner notes, indicates that social rank was a key factor above religion or nationality in their engagement with dance practice. Within Jesuit colleges in the 17th century, theatre and ballet contributed to the education of whole person. What was good for health, poise,
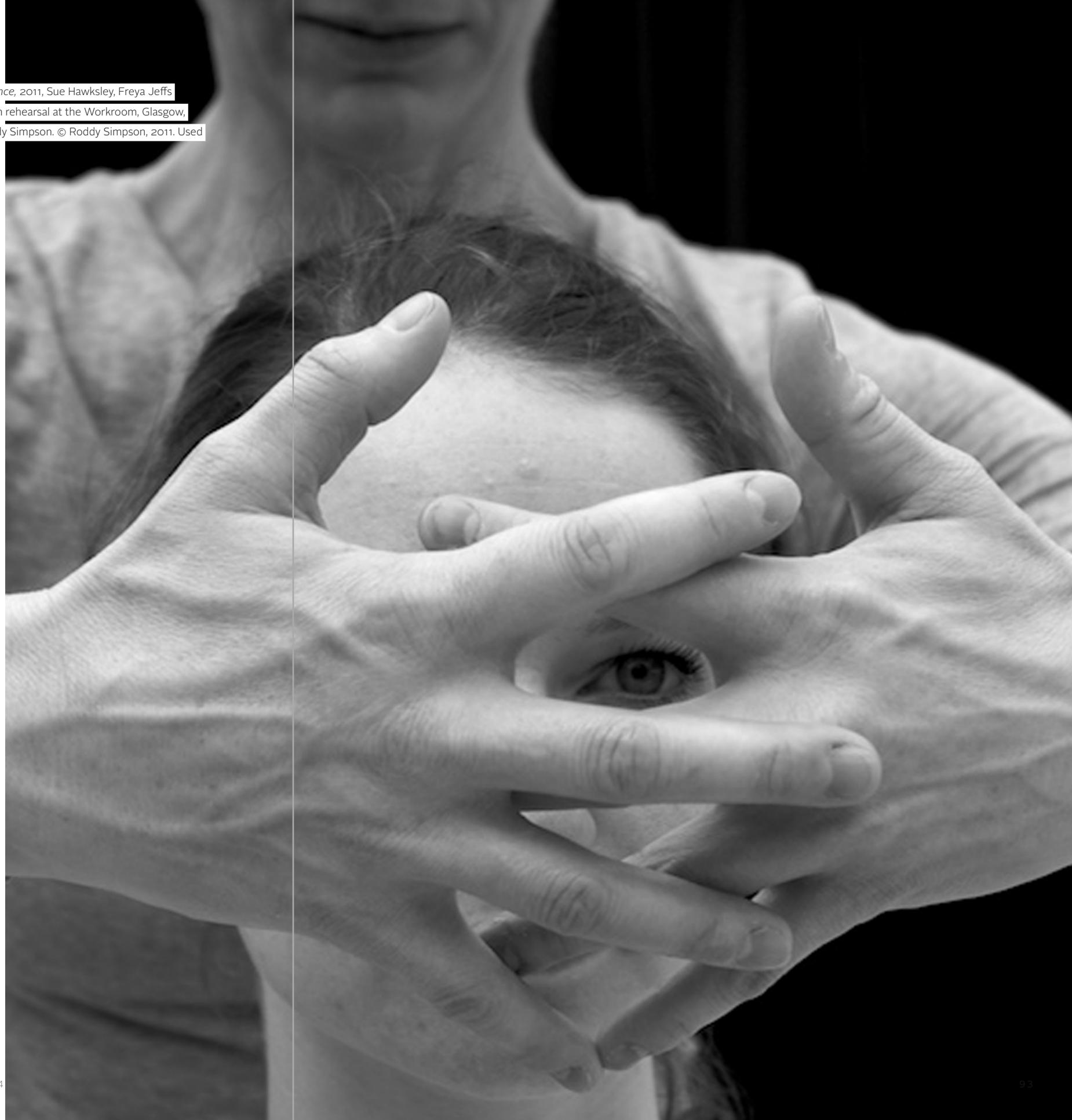
gesture and speech was good for a god. American fundamentalists were not always so generous; preachers such as William Bell Riley and Billy Sunday make sweeping statements against the 'modern dance.' As recently as 1996, Baylor University in Waco, Texas, the largest Baptist University in the United States, lifted a 150-year ban on dancing but "promised to keep a tight lid on 'lewd or provocative gyrations.'" [23]

As with other taboo, class and gender distinctions are bound up in and exploited to maintain the prohibitions on dance, echoing Freud's evaluation in *Totem and Taboo,* that "taboo is not a neurosis but a social creation ... a product of culture." [24] The dance-music halls of the mid-late 19th century such as the Alhambra and Empire in London were renowned for their ballets and their prostitutes; dancer and whore were often considered to be synonymous. At the turn of the 20th century, Loïe Fuller's pioneering technologically mediated dance performances were all the more impressive because she was working at the time of the Temperance movement, when "women in performance were suspect, viewed as illicit." [25] The Viennese Waltz was one of a number of dances to scandalise European society, being a dance in which partners hold close and tight in a similar manner to popular and peasant dances. Knowles [26] argues that transcending the contact taboo in the waltz and other partner dances ultimately contributed to social reform.

TOUCH – DANCE – MEDIATION

When I began work on *haptic_dance*, I considered using technological interfaces to mediate the dance and touch. Body suits have been developed within biomedical, therapeutic, gaming and artistic contexts. Vests simulating the impacts of punches, kicks and bullets are becoming a standard part of PC gamers' equipment, and offer emotional immersion to movie

viewers. Paul Lemmens, who developed a vest for Philips states; "We want people to feel Bruce Lee's anxiety about whether he will get out alive." [27] Cute Circuit's *Hug Shirt* delivers hugs to the receiver through actuators embedded in the shirt. [28] For the work *cbyerSM* (1993) artists Stahl Stenslie and Kirk Woolford built a full body, tele-tactile communication system. In Stenslie's *inter_skin* project (1994) participants wear a more advanced sensoric outfit that both transmits and receives multi sensoric stimuli; "By touching my own body I transmit the same touch to my recipient." [29]

In another work *Psychoplastics* Stenslie asks; "How does it feel to become someone else? From the inside?" [30] To experience this work, users wear a vibrotactile bodysuit and binaural sound system, which "imprints stories about corporeal ecstasy." This work quite literally pushes at the boundaries of the distinction between sensual and sexual touch.

In dance works such as *Ring*, *Love University* and *Secret Service*, choreographer Felix Ruckert uses touch as the choreographic material for performances, which explore provocation, domination, sensuality and pain.

Secret Service is grounded in practices of BDSM. At the first level the audience:

> are moved around, stretched out on the floor, lifted up, pushed around a bit, striked [sic], caressed and touched in very different ways, according to how and what they physically communicate to us. We try to read their body language .. Everything is fine as long as it is safe .. [The second level] demands a lot of trust. As a preparation, the guests are not just blindfolded but also stripped to their underwear and cuffed. Inside we give them a rather soft introduction to D/S situations, Bondage, clothspins [sic], whips and more. [31]

In Ruckert's work, the audience members are placed in a position of exposure and vulnerability; there is a negotiation of trust and testing of boundaries. Art historian Jennifer Fisher (2006) outlines a number of other tangible acts and touch performances, which provocatively challenge individual and societal boundaries around touch. [32] For example, in Valie Export's *Tapp und Tastino* (1968) the audience touches her breasts inside the mini-proscenium of a cardboard 'bra-theatre.' Mierle Laderman Ukeles' *Touch Sanitation* (1979-80) uses touch as social commentary, through the artist shaking hands with New York's sanitation workers. In Marina Abramovic & Ulay's *Imponderabilia* (1977) the audience must squeeze between their two naked bodies to enter a room.

Less overtly provocative, but still testing interpersonal boundaries and means to mediate them, *the puppet* (2005) by kondition pluriel is an interactive performance work in which the audience can activate touch-sensors distributed within a multi-sensory installation environment and on the costumes of the performers. The invitation to touch the performers' bodies generates a relationship between the spectators and the dancers, which "fluctuates between dialogue, confrontation, collaboration, domination and play." [33] When the company were researching the work, one difficulty they encountered was the audiences' reluctance to touch the dancers raising the question; "In what state of mind must the performers place themselves to encourage the spectators to enter into relation with them?"

Susan Kozel performed within Paul Sermon's interactive work, *Telematic Dreaming* in which she and a single audience member occupy identical beds in remote spaces. Above each is a video camera and projector, and the virtual image of the occupant of one bed is projected beside the other. Kozel's improvised choreography involved a physical shaping of her real body to meet the movement and contact of the virtual partner. In this work, the touch is delivered to and by the audience, but from and to virtual bodies. Kozel's experience was that once people became familiar with the situation, their reluctance to cross the social boundaries that inhibit touch sometimes shifted toward quite dramatic transgressions. People interacted with her virtual image in increasingly intimate ways, at first tender, then more sexually extreme or even abusive. "Someone took out a knife ... Someone elbowed me in the stomach and I doubled over." [34] On another occasion; "Two men in leather jackets jumped my image on the bed. One attacked my head and the other my pelvic area." [35] The absence of Kozel's physical body, or a perceived invitation to relax the societal rules around touch because of its mediation, may have contributed to these audience members feeling empowered to transcend taboos and act out fantasy scenarios. The haptic senses do not readily lend themselves to singularity of experience or interpretation, and while technological mediation may alter this, in examples such as this it does not (yet) seem to simplify it. The reframing through digital mediation of the sense of touch and of the invitation to dance, seems to suggest for some a distancing from the usual frames of social responsibility (re)presented by the cultural codes of taboo.

CONCLUSIONS

In *haptic_dance,* by employing what seemed the most analog of 'digital' mediation tools – the hands – I encountered the complexities of delivery and interpretation of interpersonal touch. The research into work using digital mediation highlights how altered individual and social experience potentially mitigates or invites transcendence of societal codes and taboos.

The aim of *haptic_dance* is to bring the audience closer by making tangible some impression of the dancer's phenomenal experience of dancing. The composition of the dance was informed by ethical codes of therapeutic touch, but crafted with artistic intent – the contract is of performer/audience, not therapist/client. The care I took in forming and performing the touch dance was to focus on what I feel is of value in dance and touch, rather than acquiescing to suspicions and fears that may fuel opposition or prohibition. Touch is the first of our senses to develop and the most vital; dance in its many forms is universal and most opponents attempt to debase it without acknowledging or experiencing the embodied knowledges derived from its practice. The mediation of dance through touch in *haptic_dance* seems to generate ambiguity about where the dance is – some audience members felt that it was in or around themselves, others felt that it was in me as the dancer, or in the danced material from which the touch version derives. This finding is significant in informing how and why, within this or another choreographic context, haptic mediation technologies may engage with dance. It also presents a challenge to dance's ontology, and a problem to dance's opponents. This could prove useful to anyone concerned about transgressing moral censures on dancing. It is harder to ban something if it cannot be found. If my taxi driver won't dance, perhaps this will persuade him to *haptic_dance*? ∎

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1. *haptic_dance* was created as part of my practice-led research for a Ph.D. in Dance at the University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh College of Art.

2. Eli Thompson, "Bodyreading: Seeing is Touch at a Distance," in *AMTA MA Newsletter* 27, no.1 (2009): 10.

3. In an experiment that *was* designed to test people's capacity to recognise a dance haptically, Sommer Gentry and Roderick Murray-Smith (2003) used codified dance vocabulary from Swing dance, which was transferred to the receiver as haptic information through a PHANToM haptic device. The dance material that participants were attempting to decode consisted of four previously known moves, which were sequenced unpredictably and were synchronised to music. Participants held the PHANToM device and followed its lead. The researchers demonstrated that the follower could decode aspects of a leader's moves from haptic cues. However they also recognised the difficulty of unpacking the extent to which participants' prior knowledge of the movements or the music influenced their responses. Sommer Gentry and Roderick Murray-Smith, "Haptic dancing: human performance at haptic decoding with a vocabulary," in *IEEE International Conference on Systems Man and Cybernetics* 4, 3432-3437 (Washington, D.C.: IEEE 2003).

4. I use the term translation in a fairly quotidian sense. It was a nametag we used in rehearsals to indicate a creative process that involved analysis, interpretation, mediation and reporting of the subjective experience through the media of dance, touch and the body. These media are often attributed with linguistic properties – the language of dance, the language of touch, body language, bodystories, etc. – implying that they fulfill at least some of the requirements of language, such as to hold symbolic value or convey meaning, and therefore lend themselves to translation, if translation involves determining, re-expressing and conveying meaning. Bruno Latour suggests that translation involves "displacement, drift, invention, mediation, the creation of a link that did not exist before." In a performance work such as *haptic_dance*, meaning is highly fluid. Part of the invention of translation here is to address expectations that the media be meaning making or meaning-carrying. Bruno Latour, "On Technical Mediation – Philosophy, Sociology, Genealogy," in *Common Knowledge* 3, no.2 (1994): 32.

5. The skin's neural wiring and the way the brain perceives touch can create such phenomenon as the 'cutaneous rabbit illusion' discovered by Frank Geldard and Carl Sherrick, in which rapid taps are delivered first near the wrist then near the elbow. This creates a series of phantom impressions between the points, and the sensation of the taps moving up the arm like a rabbit hopping. Frank Geldard and Carl Sherrick, "The Cutaneous 'Rabbit': A Perceptual Illusion," *Science* 178, no. 4057 (1972): 178-9.

6. Participants for the pilot trials were not required to be experienced in dance, although many of the people who responded to my call were dancers or bodyworkers and therefore accustomed to touch and movement. In later performances I had audience members ranging in age from 12-65 years, some with no prior experience of dance or massage, who reported that the performance was profoundly affecting.

7. "Embodied Values: the Senses in Motion Seminar" series, IASH, University of Edinburgh, July 1, 2011, http://www.iash.ed.ac.uk/Sawyer/Archive.html (accessed December 12, 2012).

8. Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh as part of the *Unoccupied* exhibition, one of three collaborative exhibitions by Postgraduate students from Edinburgh College of Art and the University of Edinburgh, May 12-18, 2012.

9. Mark Paterson, *The Sense of Touch: Haptics, Affects and Technologies* (Oxford & New York: Berg Publishers: 2007), 1.

10. Olaf Zur and Nola Nordmarken, *To Touch or Not To Touch: Exploring the Myth of Prohibition On Touch In Psychotherapy And Counseling,* Zur Institute, (2011), http://www.zurinstitute.com/touchintherapy.html (accessed December 12, 2012).

11. Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances between the psychic lives of savages and neurotics*, trans. A. Brill (New York: Moffat, Yard and Company: 1918).

12. James Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1998).

13. John Watson *The Psychological Care of The Infant* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1924), cited in Olaf Zur and Nola Nordmarken, (2011).

14. Zur and Nordmarken, *To Touch or Not To Touch: Exploring the Myth of Prohibition On Touch In Psychotherapy And Counseling* (2011).

15. Donna Haraway, "Primate Experiments: Harry Harlow and the Technology of Love," in *The Book of Touch*, ed. C. Classen, (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2005): 134-142.

16. This dance form initiated in the 1970s by Steve Paxton provides a framework for improvised dance duets investigating of weight, communication and touch, based on physical communication through rolling points of contact and explorations of momentum and gravity.

17. Sara Houston, "The Touch 'Taboo' and the Art of Contact: An Exploration of Contact Improvisation for Prisoners," in *Research in Dance Education* 10, no.2 (2009): 105.

18. Steve Paxton and Anne Kilcoyne, "On the Braille in the Body: an Account of the Touchdown Dance Integrated Workshops with the Visually Impaired and the Sighted," in *Dance Research* 6, no.1 (1993): 25.

19. Alessandro Arcangeli, "Dance under Trial: The Moral Debate 1200-1600," in *Dance Research* 12, no.2 (1994): 149.

20. Alessandro Arcangeli, "Dance and Punishment," in *Dance Research* 10, no.2 (1992): 33, 30-42.

21. Ann Wagner, *Adversaries of Dance: from the Puritans to the Present*, (University of Illinois Press, 1997),

22. Ibid., 19.

23. Tim Cornwell, "Baptists Rejig Dance Ruling," *Times Higher Education*, April 5, 1996) http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storyCode=93137&sectioncode=26 (accessed December 12, 2012).

24. Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, trans. A. Brill (New York: Moffat, Yard and Company: 1918), 118.

25. Linda Tomko, "Considering Causation & Conditions of Possibility," in *Rethinking Dance History*, ed. Alexandra Carter, 85 (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge: 2004).

26. Mark Knowles, *The Wicked Waltz and Other Scandalous Dances: Outrage at Couple Dancing in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries*, (Jefferson NC: McFarland & Co., 2009).

27. Lemmens in Willie Jones, "Jacket Lets You Feel the Movies," *IEEE Spectrum magazine*, (March 2009), http://spectrum.ieee.org/biomedical/devices/jacket-lets-you-feel-the-movies (accessed December 12, 2012)

28. Cute circuit, *The Hug Shirt,* http://cutecircuit.com/hug-shirt/ (accessed December 12, 2012)

29. Stahl Stenslie, official Web Site, (2011), http://www.stenslie.net/ (accessed July 25, 2011).

30. The Psychoplastics Project, official website (2010) http://psychoplastics.wordpress.com/ (accessed July 25, 2011).

31. Felix Ruckert, "On Dance and BDSM – an interview with Felix Ruckert," (2005), http://www.felixruckert.de/_On-Dance.html (accessed March14, 2012)

32. Jennifer Fisher, "Tangible Acts: Touch Performances," in *The Senses in Performance,* ed. Sally Banes and André Lepecki, (London: Routledge, 2006): 166-178.

33. kondition pluriel, official website, http://www.konditionpluriel.org/ (accessed December 12, 2012)

34. Susan Kozel, *Closer: Performance, Technologies, Phenomenology*, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press: 2008), 97.

35. Ibid., 98.

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Arte
Architettura
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Teatro
Archivio Storico

MoCC
Museum of Contemporary Cuts

The MoCC Pavilion