

## **Nancy Mauro**

### **- Paper title**

embodiment & \*nix modus operandi

### **- Abstract**

My central thread in this text is the use of the Linux computer operating system and its relationship to embodiment. Since bodies and machines are often seen in opposition, I suggest that they are better perceived complementary in nature rather than antagonistic. For people who have never worked with command line computing on a standard \*nix machine, - especially for people who are already conditioned to point and click methods cultivated by Graphical User Interfaces - this involves sensitising

procedures for the operation of code as a series of interrelated programmes. I will discuss how using the command line interface may be seen to possibly co-constitute one another in everyday life, operating as fields of embodied reflection. I propose that body, like any organism, is a protean reality in constant flux and in this sense I'd like to consider the OS tools from GNU/Linux5 community along the same vein as Martin Hardie who reads 'Unix as consistent with more philosophical descriptions of thinking or of living life itself'.6 Indeed the spreading development and use of Linux operating systems and free software7 has political implications, as Allen Sondheim (1999) writes 'linux is, if not art, at least fashion, wearable, at problematic variance with capital (punk for example), useful for intruders, the mouth and tongue for some'. There is no doubt that information feudalism affects not only information society and subsequent issues of ownership, privacy, sharing. Just as an overabundance of patents and agreements attempt to strip humanity of all civil freedoms; what plants to grow and use, what seeds to cultivate, and to an extent engaging with molecular living matter is being restricted.

In light of Merleau Ponty's method of phenomenological description and dealing with experiences in raw reality, I choose to write this paper in a personal register, because general divides between practice, theory and the self-referential, replicates harmful objectifying, and empirical models.9 I'll also acknowledge my own corporeal complicity in the way in which I view the subject, as Kathy Acker so aptly stated 'Politics don't disappear they take place inside my body (Brennan, 1994: 244)', \_political\_ for me always comes through the personal. This perspective has more authority, because it's experiential. A critique I have is that a large majority of people who contribute to the discourse about \*nix, and biotechnologies have a desire to produce totalising accounts without any regard to cultural difference. Following this I consider if Linux tools can instigate, as well as create, represent and respond to intuitive working methods for a broader community - outside the field of free software developers and end-users and not as a way of living or being separate. I also will propose that engagement in thought, as in any repeated action where the body is fore grounded, the regular use of technology both hardware and software, has material effects on who we are, on our sense of self. I focus upon the everyday intercorporeal and sociological aspect of user rather than the cybernetic debate. My basic premise is, if we consider that genuine and meaningful communication with other humans is a necessary and gratifying part of life, as computers begin to take the centre stage of many of our daily lives, I emphasise we may want to be aware of the consequences of the decisions that we are (perhaps not) making, in our choice of OS as communication apparatus.

### **- Biography**

I use technology to gain new understandings of time, place and space. The shifting of embodiment contradictions, possibilities and migration of identity, is a dominant theme. Linda Dement describes my work as 'a generative collision of net technology, riot grrl, dance, open source programming, feminism, vaudeville and the concerns of the psyche, her work weaves together transcendent practices of many kinds while feeding from the rot and beauty of contemporary daily life'. Filter Magazine #59. 2004.

A long term researcher in experiential anatomy, physiology & kinesiology at Institute of Somatic Movement Studies. From 2001-4 she was an artist participant at DasArts, and at Waag society for New and old Media

making dance and theatre, coming into contact with performance software. Her work was recently featured in "art& d: research and Development in Art" v2/Nai publishers: Rotterdam, 'Connected : Live Art' Waag Society Catalogue, and in dance journal "Writings on Dance" #23 vibrant bodies/ complex systems.

She currently an associated researcher at Institute for Networked Cultures [INC], developer for the annual women FLOSS lab /etc, eclectic tech carnival and about to complete her Master of Art Media Design at the Pete Zwart Institute.

**- Institutional affiliation or group**

GCA GenderChanger Academy

<http://genderchangers.org>

/etc eclectic tech carnival

<http://eclectictechcarnival.org>

sisterO

<http://sistero.sysx.org>

**- Area of discussion**

Facing impact: society and biotechnologies

- freedom of choice

- awareness and critical instruments