

11

X-RECEPTION

Re-mediating Trans- Feminist and Queer Performance Art

T.L. Cowan

What does it mean to move performance art, its archives, and repertoires—in this case the archives and repertoires of Trans- Feminist and Queer (TFQ) performance art—from a small stage with a limited, friendly, mostly insider audience to online platforms that offer a far wider audience?¹ What are the possible consequences of these translocations and remediations, and what do these questions have to do with scholarly activities in the digital humanities?

In order to think through these questions I begin, perhaps anachronistically, with H.R. Jauss's *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, particularly his influential essay "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory."² I consider Jauss's conceptions of historically contingent reception aesthetics, how audiences make meaning based on previous experience with like or unlike works, and how they create meaning through what Jauss calls a "horizon of expectation."³ I extend Jauss's reception aesthetics to my study of TFQ performance art and digital humanities as a means of understanding how horizons of expectation and reception aesthetics of expressive culture change over time. I am particularly interested in how such practices and possibilities change based on historical context, platform scale, and culture (potential size, character, values, and reception behaviors of a platform's audience), and how digital humanities practices of the trans- and re-mediation (cross-platform transfer) of performance art materials, are, ultimately, experiments in what I shall call "X-reception." This builds upon Beth Coleman's paradigm-shifting framing of "X-reality" as "a continuum of exchanges between virtual and real spaces" and as an "extension of agency."⁴ Echoing Irit Rogoff's call, a theory of X-reception urges both performance studies scholars and digital humanists to think with humility and criticality; that is, to inhabit the conditions and contexts of offline and online research environments.⁵ I shall argue that X-reception theory helps us to conceptualize the responsibilities, research ethics, accountabilities, and managed risk that need to become part of how we understand, express, and evaluate rigor as practiced at the intersection of digital humanities and performance studies.

TFQ Cabaret

In the first instance, a clarification is necessary about the subject matter of this chapter, the archives and repertoires of TFQ performance art. In this case, I am considering one of the great and centrally important forms of TFQ performance art: the small-scale, very local, grassroots, satirical variety show known as the cabaret. TFQ scenes are those driven by, and oriented

centrally toward, an ever-shifting intersectional trans- feminist and queer aesthetic, politics, and ethics that rejects the aesthetic, political, and economic supremacy of “Pride” capitalism. Instead, TFQ scenes tend to occur in small and inexpensive spaces and to feature sets of short performances of five to fifteen minutes across genre and form (dance, spoken word, music, drag, installation, visual art, sound art, stand-up, sketch or improv comedy, video art, film, and much more) that explicitly work against forms of supremacy in contemporary culture. This may target, for example, forms of racism and misogynoir,⁶ transphobia and transmisogyny, sexism, fat phobia and lezbophobia, ongoing settler and neo-colonial violence, extractive capitalism, or discrimination through other lived experiences of poverty, migration and immigration, disability, and mental illness. Significantly, while this list of oppressive realities is what TFQ performance often responds to, it is as much about creating and reveling in joy as it is about exposing the existence of pain. That is, TFQ cabaret performance is as much about fashioning meaningful spaces in which participants can take risks with each other, as it is about the danger of being exposed to an unfriendly world. It is, most centrally, about intimacy, and the ways that performers and audiences (and most performers are also audience members) create a provisional kind of trust in whatever configuration they find themselves. It is almost always the job of the MC to bring the audience and the performers together and to create the imaginative, speculative-pragmatic, fantastical, transformed, and transformative space in which the cabaret takes place.

Because of its usually small anticipated and cultivated audience (rarely more than a few hundred people at one show and often less than one hundred), TFQ cabarets and other performance happenings tend to take place in multipurpose spaces: community centers and bookstores, small, low-tech stage spaces in galleries, living rooms, basements, and sex-shops, as well as schools, cafeterias, strip clubs, gymnasiums, banquet halls, and queer bars (if any exist) but often as the early show or on a weeknight.⁷ Usually the organizers of the event will attempt a surface transformation of the space in order to create a room conducive for a show—with makeshift sound and stage equipment, a bar, some snacks, curtains, decorations, tables and chairs, and a hacked together projection rig. TFQ cabaret happens where it can, when it can, how it can. It is necessarily, and has always been, mobile. And with this mobility comes a whole range of skills, warnings, and labors that cabaret organizers, producers, curators, performers, and audiences have come to understand.

In addition to the kinds of performers and performances that tend to be highlighted and researched as the central figures of a TFQ cabaret, the element that really makes or breaks a show is the audience and its capacity to fabulate along with the MC and the performers, to do the work of creating a shared space of intimacy and risk. If an audience does not understand and appreciate the codes of the show, refuses to produce an enthusiastically raucous dynamic, or cannot be trusted with the performers, aesthetics, ethics, politics, and erotics of the show, then the cabaret not only flops, but also becomes a potential site of harm.

This chapter attends to the importance of building infrastructures of and for TFQ cabarets across platforms in order to host the cabaret’s mobility, and the conditions of vulnerability and risk that emerge for trans- feminist and queer performers and audiences with each new physical and online venue. While much digital humanities design and scholarship works toward building template-driven platforms to increase end-user accessibility, the kinds of online spaces that might work best for repositories of TFQ live performance, especially of cabaret, will require a versatile approach that allows the people whose materials are collected within an archive, repository, or online exhibition to customize accessibility (who can access the materials), longevity (how long the materials are available), and description (metadata and context) functions.

Networked Research Scenarios

Moving performance materials online creates the potential for entirely new audiences and modes of reception. Online platforms for hosting and circulating performance materials are increasingly familiar sites of digital humanities and performance studies inquiry in the mutually informing processes of research-creation and research-reception. Online archives, collections, exhibitions, publications, and repositories housed institutionally or on DIY sites hosted by CMS applications like WordPress or Omeka, and semi-institutional sites housed by university- or library-funded initiatives like SCALAR are what Michelle Moravec calls “digital archival environments.”⁸ The process of digital creation requires researchers to experiment with how to remediate performance materials across platforms and how to responsibly account for, and attend to, potentially massively different levels of access, opportunity, and risk. The latter arise as the performance-circulation shifts from small-scale performance scenarios, with infrastructures of intimate reception, to the scenario of potentially open-access online platforms.

Accepting that “digital archival environments are here to stay,” Moravec argues that “we must shift the focus from debates over their appropriateness or the utility of them to discussion of how our research practices require rethinking in light of them.”⁹ In particular, she notes that we need to focus on “human relationships and experiences that are mediated by these environments.”¹⁰ In building and using digital environments, she asks researchers to ask themselves questions including:

- “What consent has been given by individuals who are visible in a digital archival environment and what controls exist to mitigate that exposure?”¹¹
- Who labored, and under what conditions, to create materials in a digital archival environment?¹²
- What are the “absences, both those created technologically, as well as those that flow from decisions about content and context in a given digital archival environment?”¹³

Because TFQ cabaret and its reception are structured by relationships (both long-standing and temporary intimacies), the remediation of its performance requires attention as to how those intimacies (and the nature of the intimacy) shift across media.

Performance research is increasingly invested in, and reliant on, digitized networked performance archives which are often remediated multiple times (i.e. from a performance to a video file stored on a cassette or DVD perhaps screened by one or two people at a time, to a digital video uploaded and made available to a potentially infinite audience). Rather than rendering the remediation process invisible, we need to engage with what modes of reception each step of the remediation process enables and disables. Sarah Bay-Cheng, Jennifer Parker-Starbuck, and David Saltz contend that “[c]riticism of performance across digital domains and subsumed within media networks require new forms of criticism and modes of scholarship that can account for a dynamic, changing, and increasingly collaborative field” of performance studies and creation.¹⁴ They argue that we need a “multidimensional approach to the field of media-performance intersections that can attend not only to the individual instances of performance, but also respond to the changing dynamics of media, technology and performance.”¹⁵ The digital archival environment is central to these changing dynamics. Indeed, as Gabriella Giannachi, Nick Kaye, and Michael Shanks note in *Archaeologies of Presence*, “new strategies for documentation [. . .] have increasingly come to emphasize the reader or viewer’s relationship with that which remains over the reconstruction of past events or the transparency of one medium, context and time to another.”¹⁶ Rather than focus purely on a “live performance/documentation”

binary, performance studies scholars are creating methods that attend to the multiply mediated and networked experiences of both and to the “processes by which a performance constitutes, mediates, and is mediated by networks of digital exchange and to trace our own engagement within those networks.”¹⁷ The hybrid disciplinary space of digital humanities–performance studies offers a challenging ethico–methodological site for the kinds of entangled thinking and experimentation that we need as more and more performance materials (especially those from minoritized scenes) are captured for online circulation.

In my mind, the leaders in the field of online reception theory, praxis, and the protection of sensitive cultural heritage materials are the collaborators involved the Content Management System (CMS) Mukurtu¹⁸ and the research site Local Contexts,¹⁹ namely, Warumungu community members, the Penobscot Nation, the Passamaquoddy Nation and other research partners working with project directors Kimberly Christen and Jane Anderson. Mukurtu and Local Contexts are designed to facilitate critical engagements with the ways that Indigenous cultural heritage materials have historically been collected by colonial institutions and how they have been placed online by these institutions, generally on open-access sites. The Mukurtu CMS is largely predicated on thinking about audience and, according to cultural protocols, about which (inside-community and/or outside-community) audiences should or should not have access to the materials in their collections. The Traditional Knowledge (TK) Labels is a system that continues to be shaped by the co-researchers and developers of these projects in order to provide context for the materials that are being circulated online. The description is worth quoting in full:

The TK Labels are a tool for Indigenous communities to add existing local protocols for access and use to recorded cultural heritage that is digitally circulating outside community contexts. The TK Labels offer an educative and informational strategy to help non-community users of this cultural heritage understand its importance and significance to the communities from where it derives and continues to have meaning. TK Labeling is designed to identify and clarify which material has community-specific restrictions regarding access and use. This is especially with respect to sacred and/or ceremonial material, material that has gender restrictions, seasonal conditions of use and/or materials specifically designed for outreach purposes. The TK Labels also can be used to add information that might be considered “missing,” including the name of the community who remains the creator or cultural custodian of the material, and how to contact the relevant family, clan or community to arrange appropriate permissions.²⁰

Ultimately, the Mukurtu and Local Contexts projects and the TK Labels system are motivated by an anti-colonial belief that not all people should have access to the materials of cultures that are not their own, and that people should know the cultural protocols of the material they are being given access to; it is a fundamental rejection of extractive and possessive colonial principles and practices, as well as a challenge to online, open-access principles and practices. In her chapter “Relationships, Not Records: Digital Heritage and the Ethics of Sharing Indigenous Knowledge Online,” Christen explains the ETHICS guidelines that shape the working relationships between university-based researchers and researcher-participants from beyond the university. Christen writes that “[t]aken together, these steps comprise an ETHICS (Engage, Talk, Help, Invest, Create, Support) for archival practices. Choosing to follow this path will not guarantee success, but ETHICS does set a framework for respectful digital archiving projects that create not just records, but relationships.”²¹ It is centrally important for digital humanists and performance studies scholars to follow the lead of the knowledge and practices emerging from Indigenous

digital archival environments and the activities that produce and sustain them. My goal here in theorizing the unpredictability of online reception using the framework of X-reception—as an ethical methodology for TFQ (and other) online archival, repository, and exhibition projects—is to emphasize why we need to think, act, build, and maintain research-driven online environments with care for the pasts, presents, and futures of the people, knowledge, and relationships that have produced the materials that have become our research artifacts.

Reception/X-Reality/X-Reception/X[∞]-Reception

In this section I offer the example of TFQ cabaret performance events as a way into thinking about how reception—offline and online—hinges on the experiences of the performers and audiences, and their relationships with each other. Drawing on Jauss's theory of the "horizon of expectations," we can imagine that the reception the work receives from an intended TFQ cabaret audience "in the historical moment of its appearance" is produced through that audience's "pre-understanding of the genre, from the forms and themes of already familiar works."²² In Jauss's terms, reception "comes to light at the intersections of diachrony and synchrony," the intersection of its historical moment and the audience's pre-understanding or familiarity with the genre; reception is historically contingent, shaped in a present moment by the "constant and variable factors" of past and future experiences that build an audience's understanding of a genre.²³

Conventionally, the "horizon of expectations" has been understood as an axis, with the synchronic moment as a vertical "slice" through a long diachrony of chronological time. What happens when we introduce the virtual dimension into this horizon of expectations? Beth Coleman's theory of X-reality as the simultaneous "interlacing of virtual and real experiences" helps us to answer this question.²⁴ Coleman takes "the x of X-reality to stand for an x-factor or variable, as it would in an equation."²⁵ In positing an X-reality, Coleman "advocate[s] for multidirectional and multivalent understanding of the nature of pervasive media."²⁶ I shall use the term "X-Reception" to refer to a reception practice that traverses online, virtual, or augmented critically restored documentation, ephemera, and other "remains" and the live performance they index.²⁷ I propose the term "X[∞]-Reception" to emphasize Coleman's attention to the multidirectional and multivalent nature of X-reality. For a theory of reception, X[∞] attends to how the infinite variables of context, intimacy, and reception shift and collapse in the virtual dimension. The online condition of endless possibilities needs to be anticipated and accounted for both in the process of platform design and development and in the responsible maintenance once the platform goes "live." While the factor of infinite variables is already present in Coleman's theory, I propose that the infinity sign of X[∞]-Reception urges us to ethical action. This is the ethical attention to the infinite variables of reception (and circulation) opened by bringing performance materials—especially minoritized materials—online.

Cabaret's Context: Horizons of Gay Expectations

Small-world cabarets are networks: each performer brings five to ten friends, and friends of friends.²⁸ If there are ten artists, you can expect fifty to one hundred people to attend a show, plus whoever comes because they know the work of one or more of the performers, are a fan of the cabaret series or the regular at bar or other place the show is taking place, have a crush on or want to hook up with someone else who is going, or found the event through a listserv, newsletter, looking through free weekly event listings, social media event postings, a poster on the street or in a café, and are looking for TFQ events. Cabaret functions as a reception network

as each audience member is potentially seeing the work of nine artists (everyone who is not their friend) for the first time.²⁹ In all likelihood, these friends are familiar with most or all of the performers, but there are plenty of cabarets in which the audience friends of one performer do not very much like the work of another. While each performer brings an *integral audience*, there may be the odd accidental audience situation from time to time. But, importantly, this is within the reception context of mixed and overlapping integral audiences, and the reception context is influenced by the ethics, affects, and behaviors of the majority integral audience.

An online archive or publication venue for cabaret performance brings a different sort of reception context, even if the initial reach is still to an insider audience. If each person posts their piece or exhibit to a social media site like Facebook or Twitter, that means the whole site is exposed to at least—and this is a modest number—fifty “friends” or “followers” (plus re-postings). The reception variables become infinite and multiply mediated, not only for the material that was posted, but for all other material on the site as well. Each performer and performance becomes vulnerable to the connections of the largest and most heterogeneous friend or follower. This is obvious social media and network theory. But it is worth stating here, as we consider what it means to build online, open-access TFQ performance archives.

Jauss notes that a new work (or, in this case, a new performance):

does not present itself as something absolutely new in an informational vacuum, but predisposes its audience to a very specific kind of reception, by announcements, overt and covert signals, familiar characteristics, or implicit allusions. It awakens memories of that which was already [seen], brings the [audience] to a specific emotional attitude, and with its beginning arouses expectations for the ‘middle and end,’ which can then be maintained intact or altered, reoriented, or even fulfilled ironically in the course of the reading according to the specific rules of the genre or type of [performance].³⁰

The performer can only predispose her audience if she anticipates who that audience will be and what their horizon of expectations will be: “the interpretive reception of a [performance] always presupposes the context of experience of aesthetic perception.”³¹ Furthermore, Jauss explains that “the question of the subjectivity of the interpretation and of the taste of different [audiences] can be asked meaningfully only when one has first clarified which transsubjective horizon of understanding conditions the influence of the [performance].”³² This is the classic entanglement of reception: The performer must know her audience in order to offer context-appropriate cues for interpretation. Interpretive reception is always habituated by the contextual knowledges of the audience and this shapes their aesthetic perception. We can only gauge how different audience members interpret or receive a performance once we know the horizon of aesthetic understandings that shaped the performance (i.e. what is the performer’s reference set for the reception cues she gives to the audience?).

When we think of “onlining” (i.e. placing performance materials online), what do we do with the creation-reception context just described? How do we work toward “X-reality design that purposefully exploits the experience of intersecting levels of information, engagement, and agency”?³³ In particular, how do we contend with the fact that the imagined (and actual) audience for most TFQ performances are those in the know? In Jauss’s terms, these audiences are predisposed; and, in Richard Schechner’s terms this is the integral audience—“people who know each other, are involved with each other, support each other,” whose information, engagement, and agency is intimately tied to the performer’s.³⁴ Importantly, TFQ performance is often not only produced for its predisposed and supportive audience, but also only exists within a performance scene conditioned by the assumed or assured absence of hostile (or even indifferent)

audiences. It is not only who is in the room, but also who is not (allowed) in the room that permits the kind of work that happens on TFQ stages.

Architectures of Collapse

The general rule in the digital humanities has been to use the affordances of digital technologies to circulate materials once “hidden” and to bring them into the open-access light for all to see and know. The digital humanities hope, as Jennifer Guiliano and Carolyn Hietman argue in their essay “Difficult Heritage and the Complexities of Indigenous Data,” has been for the ways that public-facing projects bring context and critique to colonial sources. However, they note that

[c]oncerns about reproducing colonialized collections are heightened when the historical record is digital. Digital assets, including digital archives, exposed via the web are subject to endless and unanticipated refraction or what anthropologist Michael Wesch has called the endless remix. While images and documents may be carefully contextualized within a given web-based project domain, those images and documents are susceptible to infinite and unanticipated refraction . . . the endless internet remix and or misuse.³⁵

This possibility (and expectation) of endless remix contributes to what scholars of digital culture call “context collapse.” Writing about teens and social media in her book *It’s Complicated*, danah boyd states that “a context collapse occurs when people are forced to grapple simultaneously with otherwise unrelated social contexts that are rooted in different norms and seemingly demand different social responses.”³⁶ Jenny L. Davis and Nathan Jurgenson make a potentially important distinction about the point of collapse: Context collusion is the process whereby social actors *intentionally* collapse, blur, and flatten contexts, especially using various social media. However, the instance that, perhaps rightfully, garners more attention is context collisions, in which different social environments unintentionally and unexpectedly come crashing into each other.³⁷ Sarah L. Buglass et al. note that context collapse and online vulnerability are linked, with vulnerability increasing with network size and network heterogeneity, meaning that the larger the network and the more diverse it is in terms of mingling individuals and groups from different social spheres, particularly those of different life stages (i.e. family, classmates from elementary, high school, college friends, current friends) and environments (i.e. colleagues, party friends), the more vulnerable the individual is to risk of harassment and/or attack.³⁸

Research on context collapse and the complex experiences of, and exposure to, online vulnerability and violence tend to focus on social media networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (and earlier studies on Friendster, etc.) I want to suggest that, while social networking platforms are arguably different from the digital humanities projects undertaken by research teams—speculative and realized online scholarly archives, collections, repositories, publications, etc.—we nonetheless have much to learn from social media scholars and much to account for in terms of the ways that heterogenous and diverse audiences (those whom we seek out and promise to our grant agencies in order to reach audiences beyond the university) function.

Michael Wesch notes that putting yourself (or someone else) on YouTube means entering into a performance-reception media environment comprising

an infinite number of contexts collapsing upon one another into that single moment of recording. The images, actions, and words captured by the lens at any moment can

be transported to anywhere on the planet and preserved (the performer must assume) for all time. The little glass lens becomes the gateway to a black hole sucking all of time and space—virtually all possible contexts—in on itself.³⁹

Social media scholarship has largely elided the question of the intentional YouTube performance, versus the *unintentional* performance video posted with or without permission of the performers. Wesch writes about students and other Youtubers who are actively, agentially performing on “the biggest and the smallest stage—the most public space in the world.”⁴⁰ It is, however, centrally important for performance studies, media studies, and social media scholars to consider the case of those millions of performance videos that are recorded by someone with a phone or a handheld camera who then post to the same reception situation of “virtually all possible contexts.” While arguably the audience for a digital humanities open-access archive may not initially have the same built-in audience as a YouTube video, putting anything online means that it has the same *potential* audience.

What are our responsibilities to anticipate and be accountable for the vulnerabilities (and opportunities) of X^∞ -reception for the people whose materials we collect and circulate online? For many years digital humanities projects were understood *de facto* as necessarily “open access,” and many such projects predicate their scholarly significance and knowledge-mobilization plans on their increased capacities to initiate and sustain the very conditions of context collapse that have social media scholars issuing a warning signal. Returning to boyd’s study of teens online, “intended audience matters, regardless of the actual audience”;⁴¹ thus when we think of designing performance studies archival environments in the digital humanities, it becomes our responsibility to design for intended and potential actual audiences (X^∞ -audiences).

Most scholarship on context collapse has focused on the experiences of social media users, but when we take into consideration the massive potential collapse of performance contexts in open access online archives, it becomes necessary to consider the ethical responsibilities of the creators and managers of these sites. Unlike social media where users have some agency and awareness of what is happening in their feeds and can drive the content that they post and respond to, performers whose materials make up performance archives do not have a similar level of control. As “stewards”⁴² of the materials in our digital archival environments, we have to consider X^∞ -reception factors in our sustainability plans.

I see at least three salient points to note for the digital humanities. The first is that context collapse (the convergence of heterogeneous audiences) is a scenario that, while it may positively democratize information, also puts people at risk. This is something for us to be attentive to as we fall for and into open-access collections of minoritized materials. The second is that, while we may not be building the next Twitter or Facebook, the materials that we post in our online archives, repositories, exhibitions, and so on, very well may circulate through these network and social media platforms; thus, whatever circulation and refraction is true for materials posted on these platforms, is potentially also true for scholarly, archival and other open access research platforms. The third is that online archives run by scholars or scholarly institutions are not self-driven social media sites in which the account holder signs up, logs in and monitors their own social media traffic, retweeting, reposting and comment threads. The duty of monitoring, of paying attention to how materials on our scholarly sites are being used, arguably becomes the job of the researchers and archivists who built the site and who have solicited materials. Thus, insofar as we can learn from the scholarship about context collapse in social media scenarios, we need to come up with our own reception-action theories and ethico-methodologies for dealing with the technologies we build in the interests of science, the humanities, and the arts. As we engineer new ways for new audiences to experience new and old materials, we need methods

that ethically manage the risks we create for the people whose materials we circulate, and for the heritage integrity of those materials themselves.

What is appropriate for one social sphere is not appropriate in another. TFQ people know this extremely well. In fact, TFQ performance spaces are highly context-specific aesthetic-political-social-sexual spheres; they are networks with their own internal logics, values, and norms. This makes the risks involved with the potential context collapses initiated by an online archive, collection, exhibition, publication, or other form of remediation and cross-platform transfer very real.

In this chapter I have proposed a theory of X^∞ -reception that operates as an ethico-methodology for the digital humanities, especially for the creation, study, and use of online archives, repositories, exhibitions, collections, and publications of materials emerging from small-world, subcultural, minoritized, and/or marginalized grassroots performance events. This theory of reception is based not only on an historical understanding of the genres and forms of TFQ performance, but also on the centrality of intimacy and relationships in the reception of TFQ performance.

My theory of reception and proposed methods for online platform research and creation are predicated upon a need to be attentive to uneven distributions of vulnerability (to attack) based on oppressive relations of power and reception-action based on ideological norms and social values that are antithetical to the existence, let alone the joyful thriving, of trans-feminist, and queer people and our worlds. In *Updating to Remain the Same*, Wendy Hui Kyong Chun asks, “How can we understand publicity not in terms of a need for safety and protection, which is neither safe nor protecting, but rather the fight for a space in which one can be vulnerable and not attacked?” I believe that a praxis of X^∞ -reception is both the fight for these spaces of vulnerability free from attack; it is also, the fight that we know so well, when TFQ materials get into the hands of those who will use our work against us.⁴³ The thing about creating TFQ work in a phobic world is that *the mere fact* of people making the work—without even getting on stage or bringing the cabaret to the street—is enough to shock and arouse the hateful speech and actions of a very large portion of the world. That is, the form of the performance may not be new to an experienced TFQ audience, but the “explicit [TFQ] body in performance”⁴⁴ might be shockingly new when seen online as proof that trans-feminist and queer people, exist, create, and thrive. What does it mean to move TFQ utopian performatives which “in their doings, make palpable an affective vision of how the world might be better,” to the X^∞ -reception venue of the internet?⁴⁵ Remediating performances that take place in the utopian spaces of TFQ nightlife makes them accessible to both the utopian *and* dystopian realities of the internet. It’s great to bring life-affirming TFQ materials to those who need them and do not otherwise have access. But what happens if your online archive becomes a site of transgender or queer bashing, baiting, trolling, or doxxing?

In all likelihood, a small online archive of materials about TFQ cabaret may in practice have an audience very similar in size and character to its inaugural audience. But there is the possibility of something very different happening, an eventuality in which all the bad things that the paranoid perspective tells us to think about occur: reprints, screenshots, and other image and content captures recirculating in or through anti-TFQ sites, feeds or threads, instrumentalized either for the purpose of causing harm or for LOLs (the two are often not unrelated).

The ethical responsibilities toward the works and artists that we re-mediate and re-circulate in our exhibits, publications, and archives cannot end at copyright, permission, and take-down policies. A failed aesthetic reception framework in a TFQ performance scenario is frequently informed by androcentrism, homophobia, fat phobia, ableism, transphobia and transmisogyny,

misogynoir, misogyny, racism, and white supremacy. The fear—beyond the very real fear of online and physical violence and harassment—is that the restrictions we face on virtual platforms perversely make their way to brick and mortar performance platforms either through cultural censorship, renewed attacks on TFQ artists by funding agencies, and/or through self-censorship in what artists will and will not do on stage, anticipating what will and will not be programmable on a virtual platform.

Notes

1. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).
2. Hans Robert Jauss, “Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory,” in *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 3–45.
3. *Ibid.*, 22.
4. B. Coleman, *Hello Avatar: Rise of the Networked Generation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), 3–4.
5. Irit Rogoff, “‘Smuggling’—An Embodied Criticality,” *Eitpcp.net*, 2006, www.curatorial.net/resources/Rogoff_Smuggling.pdf. Accessed January 13, 2019.
6. Moya Bailey, “They Aren’t Talking about Me . . .,” www.crunkfeministcollective.com/2010/03/14/they-arent-talking-about-me/. Accessed March 15, 2010.
7. For a discussion of how and why queer women’s nightlife is often relegated to weeknights, see Islandia, “Looking back at Lesbifesteras and Burlesquimeras: Queer Women Searching for Space in Mid-2000’s Mexico City,” *The Helix: Queer Performance Network*, <http://helixqpn.org/post/159981257402/looking-back-atlesbifesteras-and-burlesquimeras>. Accessed April 25, 2017.
8. Michelle Moravec, “Feminist Research Practices and Digital Archives,” *Australian Feminist Studies* 32, no. 91–92 (April 2017): 187.
9. *Ibid.*, 196.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*, 195.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*, 195–96.
14. Sarah Bay-Cheng, Jennifer Parker-Starbuck, and David Z. Saltz, *Performance and Media: Taxonomies for a Changing Field* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015), 8.
15. *Ibid.*, 8–9.
16. Gabriella Giannachi, Nick Kaye, and Michael Shanks, “Introduction: Archaeologies of Presence,” in *Archaeologies of Presence: Art, Performance and the Persistence of Being*, ed. Gabriella Giannachi, Nick Kaye, and Michael Shanks (London: Routledge, 2012), 8.
17. Sarah Bay-Cheng, “Theater Is Media: Some Principles for a Digital Historiography of Performance,” *Theater* 42, no. 2 (May 2012): 40.
18. See Mukurtu’s work at <http://mukurtu.org/>. Accessed June 3, 2019.
19. See the Local Context site here, <http://localcontexts.org/>. Accessed June 3, 2019.
20. See <http://localcontexts.org/tk-labels/>. Accessed June 3, 2019.
21. Kimberly Christen, “Relationships, Not Records: Digital Heritage and the Ethics of Sharing Indigenous Knowledge Online,” in *The Routledge Companion to Media Studies and Digital Humanities*, ed. Jentery Sayers (Abingdon: Routledge Handbooks Online, 2018), 411, <https://www-routledgehandbooks-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/doi/10.4324/9781315730479>. Accessed April 21, 2019.
22. Jauss, “Literary History,” 22.
23. *Ibid.*, 37–38.
24. Coleman, *Hello Avatar*, 19.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*
27. Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (London: Routledge, 2011).
28. I discuss cabaret as a “small-world” phenomenon in my essay “The Internet of Bawdies: Transmedial Drag and the Onlining of Trans-Feminist and Queer Performance Archives, a Workshop Essay,” *First Monday* 23, no. 4 (July 2018). <https://doi.org/10.5210/firstmonday.v23i7.9256>. Accessed January 28, 2020.

29. I discuss this cabaret reception phenomenon in my chapter "'I Remember . . . I Was Wearing Leather Pants': Archiving the Repertoire of Feminist Cabaret in Canada," in *Basements, Attics, Closets and Cyberspace: Explorations in Canadian Women's Archives*, eds. Linda Morra and Jessica Schagerl (Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2012).
30. Jauss, "Literary History," 23.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Coleman, *Hello Avatar*, 147.
34. Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 220.
35. Jennifer Guiliano and Carolyn Heitman, "Difficult Heritage and the Complexities of Indigenous Data," *Journal of Cultural Analytics* (August 2019). <https://culturalanalytics.org/article/11041-difficult-heritage-and-the-complexities-of-indigenous-data>, accessed January 28, 2020; Michael Wesch, "An Anthropological Introduction to YouTube," *You Tube* [online]. Accessed October 15, 2009.
36. danah boyd, *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 31.
37. Jenny L. Davis and Nathan Jurgenson, "Context Collapse: Theorizing Context Collisions and Collisions," *Information, Communication & Society* 17, no. 4 (March 2014): 480.
38. Sarah L. Buglass, Jens F. Binder, Lucy R. Betts, and Jean D.M. Underwood, "When 'Friends' Collide: Social Heterogeneity and User Vulnerability on Social Network Sites," *Computers in Human Behavior* 54 (January 2016): 5–6.
39. Michael Wesch, "YouTube and You: Experiences of Self-Awareness in the Context Collapse of the Recording Webcam," *Explorations in Media Ecology* 8, no. 2 (January 2009): 23.
40. Ibid., 22.
41. boyd, *It's Complicated*, 30.
42. Christen, "Relationships, Not Records," 405.
43. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016), 158.
44. Rebecca Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2013).
45. Jill Dolan, *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 6.

Bibliography

- Bailey, Moya. "They Aren't Talking About Me . . ." March 15, 2010. Accessed February 3, 2019. www.crunkfeministcollective.com/2010/03/14/they-arent-talking-about-me/.
- boyd, danah. *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.
- Bay-Cheng, Sarah. "Theater Is Media: Some Principles for a Digital Historiography of Performance." *Theater* 42, no. 2 (May 2012): 27–41.
- Bay-Cheng, Sarah, Jennifer Parker-Starbuck, and David Z. Saltz. *Performance and Media: Taxonomies for a Changing Field*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015.
- Buglass, Sarah L., Jens F. Binder, Lucy R. Betts, and Jean D. M. Underwood. "When 'Friends' Collide: Social Heterogeneity and User Vulnerability on Social Network Sites." *Computers in Human Behavior* 54 (January 2016): 62–72.
- Christen, Kimberly. "Relationships, Not Records: Digital Heritage and the Ethics of Sharing Indigenous Knowledge Online." In *The Routledge Companion to Media Studies and Digital Humanities*, edited by Jentery Sayers, 403–12. Abingdon: Routledge Handbooks Online, 2018. Accessed April 21, 2019. <https://www-routledgehandbooks-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/doi/10.4324/9781315730479>.
- Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong. *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016.
- Coleman, B. *Hello Avatar: Rise of the Networked Generation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011.
- Cowan, T. L. "'I Remember . . . I Was Wearing Leather Pants': Archiving the Repertoire of Feminist Cabaret in Canada." In *Basements, Attics, Closets and Cyberspace: Explorations in Canadian Women's Archives*, edited by Linda Morra and Jessica Schagerl, 65–86. Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2012.
- . "The Internet of Bawdies: Transmedial Drag and the Onlining of Trans-Feminist and Queer Performance Archives, a Workshop Essay." *First Monday*, 23, no. 7. (July 2018). <https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/9256> doi:10.5210/fm.v23i7.9256. Accessed February 28, 2020.

- Davis, Jenny L., and Nathan Jurgenson. "Context Collapse: Theorizing Context Collusions and Collisions." *Information, Communication & Society* 17, no. 4 (March 2014): 476–85.
- Dolan, Jill. *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005.
- Giannachi, Gabriella, Nick Kaye, and Michael Shanks. "Introduction: Archaeologies of Presence." In *Archaeologies of Presence: Art, Performance and the Persistence of Being*, edited by Gabriella Giannachi, Nick Kaye, and Michael Shanks, 1–25. London: Routledge, 2012.
- Guiliano, Jennifer, and Carolyn Heitman. "Difficult Heritage and the Complexities of Indigenous Data." *Journal of Cultural Analytics* (August 2019).
- Islandia. "Looking back at Lesbifesteras and Burlesquimeras: Queer Women Searching for Space in Mid-2000's Mexico City." *The Helix Queer Performance Network*. April 25, 2017. Accessed April 27, 2017. <http://helixqpn.org/post/159981257402/looking-back-atlesbifesteras-and-burlesquimeras>.
- Jauss, Hans Robert. "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory." In *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*. Translated by Timothy Bahti, 3–45. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982.
- Moravec, Michelle. "Feminist Research Practices and Digital Archives." *Australian Feminist Studies* 32, no. 91–92 (April 2017): 186–201.
- Rogoff, Irit. "'Smuggling'—An Embodied Criticality." *Eipcp.net*. 2006. Accessed January 13, 2019. <http://eipcp.net/dlfiles/rogoff-smuggling>
- Schechner, Richard. *Performance Theory*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Schneider, Rebecca. *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*. London: Routledge, 2011.
- Wesch, Michael. "YouTube and You: Experiences of Self-Awareness in the Context Collapse of the Recording Webcam." *Explorations in Media Ecology* 8, no. 2 (January 2009): 19–34.