

Shooting People: Sociological Reflections on *nice to see you* :)
Yiannis Papadakis, Social Anthropologist, University of Cyprus

When the performer (and choreographer), Evie Demetriou, appears on stage looking sexy, flirty and alluring (or is it her avatar? her facebook image perhaps? her projected internet persona?), holding a futuristic-looking device, between a camera and a gun, we are taken right back to one of the earliest models of the camera: the French astronomer Pierre-Jules-Cesar Jansenn's *revolver photographique* used in 1874 to take a sequence of photos. The predatory nature of *shooting people*, or *taking* someone's photo has been noted by many commentators. The internet, especially social sites that bring people *in touch*, enhances the possibility of finding and using photographs of people to an unimaginable degree, as the ending of the dance performance *nice to see you* :) suggests. The audience laughs, sometimes nervously, as they are engaged in this interactive piece by unwillingly having their photograph taken and projected on the screen. The person that was just shot soon participates in a frenzy of shooting as unwitting actor in a western sequence with his or her face replacing that of the original actor. The risks of internet exposure are just beginning to be visible. What will happen to the first generation of internet users whose lives, dreams, thoughts, images and fantasies are now available to anyone, remains to be seen.

One pressing question that this performance asks is what compels people to be so exposed. Western society appears to have moved from one where privacy was one of the most fundamental human rights and a founding principle, to one where public exposure is now almost a demand. Do you exist if you are not on Facebook? Do you exist even if you are on Facebook but do not often update it and engage with others through it? Do teenagers today really have a choice, to be or not to be on the net? Ben Elton's novel *Blind Faith*, explores a world in the near future where people have to live with two-way screens in their homes that show what others do and show others what they do. Those who try to have private moments are hunted down as criminals. *What do you have to hide?* is the question asked to those refusing to totally expose themselves. A refusal to expose yourself is *a priori* regarded as suspicious.

The performer also suggests a possible answer to the need for exposure. 'I need to be touched, I love to be touched.... Personal contact, however, is an issue.' And which is the way to get in touch nowadays? She describes her internet dating with a handsome guy, one with a brain she notes only to discover in the end that he is a woman. Her reaction is immediate: 'I just deleted him'. The opposing forces of 'liquid modernity' have been noted by sociologist Zygmunt Bauman: how one yearns for relationships and contact, while at the same time constant mobility means that one also is always ready to leave and commitment is a major fear. Quality is thus replaced by quantity, he argues, through constant mobile messaging or internet encounters where one can easily cut off communication, should the need arise.

Yet, as the protagonist also suggests, internet encounters may also offer novel ways of experiencing human contact, and of exploring identity. She was charmed by the personality of the person she flirted with (real or 'constructed' is not here important), rather than physical appearance alone. 'Am I a lesbian?' she ponders, after she has realised that the person she had fallen in love with was a woman. It is such predicaments of the brave new virtual world that *nice to see you* :) evokes and explores.

