“I suspect such applications will be accepted and enjoyed as long as playing along with the simulated emotional engagement they offer does not present serious hazards.”

This comment is a strange one as it seems to assume that people cannot become emotionally attached to inanimate objects. Ironically, the same people will espouse the importance of links to the past and continuity, speaking about their heirlooms or their grandmother's wedding ring et cetera, all whilst disavowing Any emotional attachment to the object. Just because something is artificial, does not mean that the emotions that it engenders are simulated or false.

“I remain committed to an approach in which computational devices are seen as environments complementing and supporting our abilities rather than seeking to emulate them.”

And yet ironically, we have created Virtual Reality which is expressly designed to emulate real world environments. This attempt to simulate the real world in an artificial environment is not new. Humans have been creating stories, plays etc. that will exist within a space that is not real. A theatre is not a place where the real world exists: it is a window into another world that is mediated by others. Books are even more powerful because the space it occupies is entirely within the confines of your own mind.

“The Library didn’t only contain magical books, the ones which are chained to their shelves and are very dangerous. It also contained perfectly ordinary books, printed on commonplace paper in mundane ink. It would be a mistake to think that they weren’t also dangerous, just because reading them didn’t make fireworks go off in the sky. Reading them sometimes did the more dangerous trick of making fireworks go off in the privacy of the reader’s brain.” (Pratchett, 1994)

If anyone has read his Discworld series, and at least 70 million people have, then it would appear that Pratchett has a point.

I am confused as to why Gaver chose to use horoscopes in his study. The language used in these is often broad and is specifically designed to be open to interpretation in order to fit the experiences of the reader. Like Nostradamus’ texts, it is very easy to retroactively refit the dialogue to events that have already passed, so the experience becomes highly subjective and the ‘belief’ that the horoscope is accurate becomes a reinforcement loop.

“Moreover, the complexity of the underlying technology used to implement the system… and the evident care put into their design only exacerbated this impression.”

I think that this shows that the design of technology to be appealing is actually an important part of the process. It was interesting to see that the second group were far less invested in using the system and giving the research team the results that they were hoping for simply because they did not like the design of the second version. This is something that designers still struggle to tackle; one only needs to look at Nintendo's now infamous Powerglove to see that this is something that still bedevils designers today. The user needs to be willing to engage with the objects voluntarily, and although Gaver gives a very negative view as to the arrival of the graphical user interface to software, it is far more accessible and usable than the old DOS cursor.

“…they perceived the system as related to a variety of surveillance and monitoring systems that they disliked both personally and for their cultural and political implications.”

There is a level of justification the group who were using this hardware were concerned about surveillance. As we now know, PDA that are in the home and in our hardware constantly listen, monitor, and surveil our every utterance. The fact that this document is being written via dictation rather than typing shows that we are becoming increasingly comfortable with the idea of speaking to a machine and not considering that it is listening even when we are not talking. It is ironic that though Gaver was attempting to gain data on a person’s emotional state (and failing), companies such as Google, Facebook, Amazon etc. now use our browsing and search information in order to better tailor third party products to our personal preferences: preferences that are often emotionally driven.

Debord, G., 1994. *The Society of the Spectacle.* New York: Zone Books.

Pratchett, T., 1994. *Soul Music.* London: Gollancz.

“In a consumer society, social life is not about living, but about having; the spectacle uses the image to convey what people need and must have. Consequently, social life moves further, leaving a state of "having" and proceeding into a state of "appearing"; namely the appearance of the image.” (Debord, 1994)