

## **Between Art and Social Science: Scenic Composition as a Methodological Device**

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**Key words:** scenic composition; associative thinking; creative writing; psychosocial research; new media; public engagement; literary analysis; street drinking, psychoanalysis

**Abstract:** The scenic composition (SC) is a methodological device enabling the synthesis and articulation of researchers' own complex experiences of events witnessed during data collection. Positioned between art and social science, it makes use of literary conventions to synthesise "experience near" accounts of data for interpretation. This article explains how the SC is composed by drawing on associative thinking and illustrates its use within a specific case study. The conceptual basis of the SC is discussed with reference to the work of LORENZER, WINNICOTT and BION. This is the first study in which four compositions, each by a different researcher, have been used to provide a multi-faceted view of a complex event, a live webcast. The compositions are presented along with researchers' reflections. Common themes and significant differences relating to life situations, histories and dispositions of the researchers emerge. The differences were expressed through choice of literary genres, which are common cultural resources. We ask what was achieved through the use of SCs compared with a thematic analysis of the webcast, and find that apart from synthesising and presentational functions, they give access to a multi-sensory range of researchers' experiences, including unconscious elements which were then available for reflexive interpretation by an interpretation panel.

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## 1. Introduction

In this article we explain the use of scenic compositions to aid a multi-faceted interpretation of a scene. The study in question investigated how live webcasting might help communities to address street drinking in Liverpool, UK<sup>1</sup>. This article is primarily methodological, the substantive findings are documented elsewhere (FROGETT, CONROY, ROY & MANLEY, 2013). In this research the scenic composition (see FROGETT & HOLLWAY, 2010; HOLLWAY & FROGETT, 2012) has for the first time been used by four different researchers working with the same data set to produce a multi-faceted view of the data. [1]

Below is a short extract of a scenic composition, by way of example—the full version appears later alongside the three others that were produced in the study and summaries of their analysis by the team as a whole. We then identify the key points to emerge from the interpretive process, and a discussion of the rationale for this method, which uses free association and creative writing. The theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of the scenic composition draw on Alfred LORENZER's (1986) conception of scenic understanding and the work of Donald WINNICOTT (1971) and Wilfred BION (1970) on the symbolic and aesthetic faculties. In mobilising the creative imaginations of members of the research team alongside a hermeneutic and thematic analysis, we position the method on the borderline between art and social science. Elements of literary analysis feature in the discussion. We show how attention to the aesthetic of the scene through the multi-faceted perspective of the research team produces an "experience near" analysis (GEERTZ, 1974), which is of value in understanding community reactions both to street drinking as a practical and moral issue, and to the "real" and "virtual" discussion forums created by the webcasts. [2]

### 1.1 Example: Opening to a scenic composition

"I walk through peeling down at heel Liverpool en route to shiny smart FACT<sup>2</sup>. Then the sensuous enveloping purple of the studio ... The body will be catered for amidst the fleshlessness of digital media. The caterers are there early with the technicians. The rest of the day is spent sunk in armchairs. Lunch is really very good—lovingly prepared by recovered drinkers proud of their 'scouseballs<sup>3</sup>', invented to make Irish stew finger food for Princess Di. I love the way they overstep their roles and butt into the discussion—they are sociable, engaged, nurturing, redeemed ..."

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1 The expertise of the inter-disciplinary team combined social sciences and humanities with the study of addictions, new media arts, and social policy. The partnership included the University of Central Lancashire (Psychosocial Research Unit) and the University of Birmingham. The Basement, a service for people in recovery from alcohol misuse supported the study by providing its contacts, networks and local knowledge. The Brink, a local alcohol free bar, provided catering and the venue for a community feedback session. The Brink is a social enterprise in the Ropewalks district of Liverpool, where 75% of those employed are in recovery from addiction.

2 The Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (FACT) is a digital arts agency in Liverpool.

3 "Scouser" is a vernacular word for a person from Liverpool—"scouseballs" were an original culinary invention of the catering company.

This extract brings together data from audio and video recordings of the webcast. The voice is personal to the writer who was guided by her experience of the scene. [3]

Below we outline the importance of this personal voice in the context of the main features of the study. In Section 2, we explain the purpose and design of the study as a whole. We then introduce Alfred LORENZER's conceptualisation of "scenic understanding" (1977, 1986), which is essential for comprehending the nature of the scenic composition, bringing this into relation with a developing practice of psychosocial research analysis in the UK which until now has drawn mainly on the British object relations tradition (Section 3). We provide an overview of our analytic procedures in five phases, in the course of which we explain how we wrote and used the scenic compositions within the study. We then return to a more systematic presentation of the selected concepts that explain these compositions and discuss the role of associative thinking in research analysis. The four compositions, each by a different researcher, are introduced followed by a commentary on their hermeneutic interpretation by the research team (Section 3.2.1 – 3.2.4). We then discuss the compositions in relation to each other (Section 3.3). In Section 4 we consider the methodological significance of the scenic composition, and in Section 5 we explain what we have gained through the use of scenic compositions, illustrating our points with the findings of the study. [4]

## 2. Purpose and Design of the Study

Street drinking in the Ropewalks District of Liverpool includes the bingeing of bar and club-goers and the daily dependent drinking of homeless alcoholics. Alcohol is a source of income, employment, profit, celebration and self-medication. It is a concern of faith-based and charitable organisations and consumes resources of the Local Authority, Health Sector, and Criminal Justice System. Despite concerns of government, police and local authorities, alcohol-related community engagement strategies are under-researched in the UK. This study created a webcast forum hosted by the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (FACT) to enable online and studio-based discussants from a range of local interest groups to debate what might be done about street drinking and to identify community-based assets which could address the problems it causes. [5]

FACT has extensive experience in live webcasting (see FROGGETT, ROY, LITTLE & WHITAKER, 2011). We ran two webcasts at FACT on the same day. In each case a studio-based audience discussed emergent issues whilst an online audience participated in the discussions by posting comments via a live feed projected onto a screen in the studio. The discussions and online contributions were moderated by a well-known local radio journalist called Robert<sup>4</sup>. One webcast addressed chronic alcoholism and the other binge drinking. The research team used the events to consider two research questions: Can new

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4 All names except those of the researchers have been changed to maintain anonymity.

media facilitate effective community engagement on a local issue? How can new media be used to address street drinking? [6]

Prior to the webcasts the research team worked with FACT and a local addiction recovery project, The Basement, to train service users in street interview skills and digital camera use. The service users conducted vox pop interviews<sup>5</sup> on street drinking with members of the public in the Ropewalks district. FACT compiled a showreel<sup>6</sup> from these interviews, which was screened at the beginning of the webcast to frame the debate and stimulate further discussion. Three researchers were studio-based and another accessed the event remotely online. The studio-based audience was identifiable (in terms of role and affiliation) and "real" (physically present) to one another while the online or "virtual" participants could maintain anonymity, and most chose to do so.



Figure 1: Live studio and Internet connection via screen [7]

A seminar for academics and professionals followed the webcasts. Other examples of new and mixed media used in a public health context were presented for comparison<sup>7</sup>. A feedback session was held at The Brink (a dry bar) some weeks later to discuss emergent findings with local stakeholders, particularly users of alcohol services. Both of these events were audio-recorded for subsequent analysis. [8]

The audio and video recordings and transcripts together provided complex data available for interpretation through three "lenses" chosen to combine cultural and social policy perspectives. Assets based policy (KRETZMANN & McKNIGHT,

5 These were short street interviews with members of the public, approached at random by a film crew in the manner of television journalism.

6 A showreel is generally a short compilation of edited video extracts for the purposes of illustrating or advertising a phenomenon or event.

7 It is beyond the scope of this article to consider the range of media discussed and they will be considered in a forthcoming article.

1993) was used to map community resources to deal with alcohol misuse. In view of Christianity's historical prominence in the British Temperance Movement, and in the evangelical roots of recovery organisations like Alcoholics Anonymous, we incorporated the perspective of Christian ethics (COOK, 2004, 2006). These lenses are not our principal concern here, although as we later describe, many of the themes that arose when the webcast was considered through them were mirrored in the third lens, which drew on the socio-cultural work of Alfred LORENZER (1986; see also REDMAN, BERESWILL & MORGENROTH, 2010; SALLING OLESON, 2012). Evolving a visually sensitive methodology from LORENZER's approach led us to further develop the "scenic composition" (see FROGGETT & HOLLWAY, 2010; HOLLWAY & FROGGETT, 2012). [9]

### 3. Scenic Understanding and Psychosocial Research Analysis

Very little of LORENZER's socio-cultural writing has been translated into English. However, within the UK there is growing interest within the field of psychosocial research<sup>8</sup> where his identification of the scenic register in literary texts has opened up new ways to approach complex data reflexively, and as a whole. FROGGETT and HOLLWAY (2010) and HOLLWAY and FROGGETT (2012) have taken the "scene" as a departure point for work with visual and observational data and have put it into dialogue with concepts and methods derived from the British Kleinian and object relations traditions.<sup>9</sup> In this article, we also draw on theories of transitional phenomena (WINNICOTT, 2005 [1971]), attention and interpretation (BION, 1970), and LANGER's (1948 [1942]) conception of the presentational symbolic, to elaborate the nature and application of the scenic composition as a method. [10]

In the socio-cultural analysis we worked with the complex succession of scenes provided by the webcasts. As researchers we had been both participants and observers of the events and the analysis progressed through a number of phases in which relatively detached or "experience distant" stances alternated with "experience near" and more syncretistic approaches to the data (EHRENZWEIG, 1967; GEERTZ, 1974; HOLLWAY, 2009). The five phases of research analysis are described below before returning to a discussion of the conceptual and theoretical basis of our procedures.

- *Phase 1: Collation of data and thematic overview.* We reviewed the video and audio recordings, identifying themes and issues raised by the webcast debates, comparing and contrasting perspectives offered by discussants, and noting their position, expertise and relation to the subject matter. A key outcome of this discussion was the identification of diverse community views and resources for the purposes of asset mapping.

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8 REDMAN et al. (2010) have published a "guided tour" of LORENZER's work for Anglophone readers.

9 LORENZER himself set a precedent for this in his one published article in English (co-authored with ORBAN, 1978), which considered the relationship between scenic understanding and WINNICOTT's (2005 [1971]) conception of "transitional phenomena".

- *Phase 2: Free associative and self-reflexive discussion.* We used this process to identify and articulate our own experiences of the events. We were conscious of the cultural significance of new media, but free associative discussion began to reveal how powerfully our use of it had influenced our perceptions, and those of other participants. It became clear how new media had impelled each of us to interact with real and virtual worlds differently according to disposition, life history and relationship to technology. Of more immediate impact on individual researchers was whether we were accessing the discussion live in the studio or participating online.

The discussion was exploratory, alert to how the webcasts played on the imagination and strikingly different to a thematic analysis in Phase 1. We followed the chains of association and ideas arising from responses to the scene, and to each other's responses. These associations were rich in sensory impressions and unconstrained by criteria of significance. We noted the imagery and feeling states that the material evoked in us.

- *Phase 3: Writing the compositions.* The free associative discussion was the precondition of the next phase, undertaken by all researchers individually, at a time of their choosing, when their minds felt uncluttered and when they were free to "muse" on the material. The instructions were that the composition should be written "as it came", that is to say "free from memory or desire" (BION, 1970, pp.30-36), without directly referring to the data or their own notes, on no more than one sheet of paper, and without initially editing or re-writing so that a personal voice could find expression. The aim was to ensure that the composition emerged from the kind of attention that BION would have described as "reverie", the precondition of which is "negative capability" (1962, 1967, 1970). Negative capability implies that the author attune him- or herself to the spontaneous quality of feeling aroused by the data rather than working purposively with it as in a conventional research analysis. The rationale for this way of approaching material is clarified further in the discussion below.
- *Phase 4: Composition discussion and interpretation by the research team.* After each researcher had written a scenic composition based on his/her experience of the webcast and read it aloud to the rest of the panel uninterrupted, the other panellists again responded associatively producing latent themes (in contrast to the overt and explicit themes of Phase 1) and reflexive interpretations (ALVESSON & SKÖLDBERG, 2000; CLARKE, 2006). The team, working as a panel (interpretation group), then followed the "Dubrovnik Interpretation Method", based on Lorenzerian hermeneutics, which considers substantive and performative dimension of utterances as a route to their scenic interpretation (HOLLWAY & VOLMERG, 2010). In this procedure we asked: What is being said? How is it being said? Why is it being said in this particular way? We also found it useful to ask: What does the piece do? This enabled us to compare the effects of compositions and brought into the frame the cultural style in which they had been written.
- *Phase 5: Comparison and triangulation of findings from different scenic compositions and other thematically analysed data sets.* We first compared the findings from the four scenic compositions taken together, noting those

aspects that were particular to the author and dimensions, which emerged in all of them, albeit expressed very differently. We then compared scenic compositions with the thematic analysis of the webcasts and expert seminar. [11]

In producing scenic compositions by different authors (rather than one as in past studies, i.e., FROGGETT & HOLLWAY, 2010; HOLLWAY & FROGGETT, 2012) it became clearer how each composition reflected both common cultural experience and the perspective and voice of its author. Furthermore, the aesthetic aspects of the compositions, anchored in a visual imagination, were thrown into relief. [12]

### 3.1 The inseparability of subjective and cultural experience

LORENZER proposed that the metaphor of a theatrical scene conveys the nature of scenic understanding. In the theatre the audience witnesses a matrix of interactions between actors in a social setting and the scene is, to an extent, understood through shared cultural resources and reference points. These may include social, political and artistic material as well as currents of unarticulated feeling that pass through the audience, reflecting unconscious social processes within and beyond the theatre. In the case of the webcasts, which also had a theatrical quality, these currents turned out to revolve around unspoken anxieties about who was included in, or excluded from, digital culture, or the resignation, despair, guilt, pleasures and excitements of street drinking. At the same time each individual within the audience, in his or her cognitive and emotional interaction with the scene brought a biographically acquired disposition to interact with it in idiosyncratic ways—for example in terms of personal history of alcohol use. [13]

LORENZER (1977, 1986<sup>10</sup>) conceptualises the conjunction of the individual and the cultural in terms of "interaction forms"—habitual patterns of interacting with the world that form in the course of socialisation. Interaction forms are revealed in a text showing how individuals unconsciously constitute themselves within, and make sense of, a cultural-symbolic order. The critical point, however, is that a scene is first apprehended as a whole—through a "scenic *gestalt*"—before any particular figure or interaction form is distinguished. LORENZER prefigures contemporary debates on embodiment by insisting that scenic experience is the primary mode of experience—the world apprehended scenically is inscribed in the body before it is "thought". Hence the scenic understanding of a live webcast has an immersive quality in which setting, bodily interaction, currents of affect and discourse present themselves "all at once" to the viewer who spontaneously, and partly unconsciously, responds through his or her interaction forms, which themselves have been culturally moulded in the course of socialisation. [14]

According to LORENZER, in order to grasp the nature of a person's scenic experience, "we must follow the path laid down by his subjective ideas and

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10 These are German texts. The translations into English used in this article follow those of the special issue dedicated to LORENZER in *Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society*, 15(3) (BERESWILL, MORGENROTH & READMAN, 2010).

fantasies about relations ... we must become attuned to his *scenic interaction forms* as these unfold before us" (1977, p.125). These, which make up the scenic composition, "lie between the 'inside' and the 'outside'" and "their interplay accounts for everything. [It] provides the basic model" (1986, pp.41-44). [15]

In developmental terms interaction forms are progressively elaborated from the "specific interaction forms", which characterise the infant's predominantly sensory-motor interaction with the environment, to the "symbolic interaction forms", which mark full entry into a linguistic and cultural order. Specific and symbolic interaction forms are therefore key to the particular patterning of the scenic *gestalt*—which is formed in interplay between apparently internal and apparently external dimensions of experience. "Inside" and "outside" are accompanied in LORENZER's text by inverted commas because they can only be heuristically conceived. It is through the "in-between" of the interaction forms that the scene is composed (LEITHÄUSER, 2012). In producing scenic compositions we were also following the observation of D.W. WINNICOTT (2005 [1971]) that it is through imaginative "play" that the "in-between" of what he terms "transitional phenomena" emerge. For WINNICOTT whose interest lay with the creative roots of symbolisation, the concern is with the creative finding of a needed form that enables a pleasurable, embodied interaction with the world to take place, thus impelling curiosity and further inquiry. [16]

The scenic compositions reveal the imaginative constructions of the researchers through writing that occupies a third position intermediate or "in-between" their personal experience and a cultural scene they all witness. The writing also reveals relational and embodied processes of interaction that contain both conscious and unconscious registers of meaning (SALLING OLESON, 2012). LORENZER does not use "scenic composition" to refer to a written artefact as we have done; for him the composition configures in the mind whenever a scene is apprehended. In our study we have simply used creative writing so that each researcher's scenic interaction "unfolds" in a form that makes it available for interpretation. [17]

The visual metaphor of the scenic draws attention to the fact that when working with verbal texts the embedded images are activated in the mind's eye. If the texts are the outcome of an associative process, as in the production of a scenic composition, the generation of imagery is rich and extensive. One of the challenges in working with such data is that when transposing it into text, the process of rendering complex multi-sensory experience in words, "thins out" the experience, or abstracts those elements that can be verbalised giving an overly discursive view, so that unconscious social and emotional processes which often present themselves through imagery become difficult to see. [18]

When the research team met to analyse the webcast, it encountered precisely this problem: a thematic analysis of the debate had revealed a range of views on the nature of street drinking and what might be done about it. It had also highlighted community assets, which, if harnessed, might achieve effective and ethical responses to the perceived harms of drinking behaviours. However, in the

thematic analysis the dramaturgical and emotional quality of the webcast was obscured: the palpable struggle among protagonists between judgement and compassion; whether or not to attend to the voices that saw alcohol "misuse" as hedonic celebration; the ambivalence of the online and studio audiences towards one another; the performances of stakeholders conscious or heedless of their position in the community; the affordances of old and new technology in relation to a sensitive subject like drinking, which aroused identification and disavowal among discussants and researchers alike. To complicate matters further, there was yet another data set to consider: the transcript from the professional/academic seminar. This had quite a different emotional and intellectual tone yet was beset by its own covert irritabilities, alliances, competitions and conflicts as well as overt differences of view among discussants. The circularity of the discussions in the research team as we sifted through the data alerted us to the fact that synthesising the material from these events while preserving the tensions and quality of feeling within them, and between ourselves, would be a very difficult task. It was partly in response to these difficulties that while working on the data in a panel we began to speak and think in "associative" mode. [19]

### **3.2 Associative thinking and research analysis**

The work of BION has been used within psychosocial studies in the UK to account for the quality of attention brought to bear on an object when it is approached with open curiosity and, as far as possible, without pre-conceptions or "without memory or desire" (BION, 1970, pp.30-36). This is a condition for working in associative mode, similar to the free association that FREUD advocated in the clinical situation as a means of accessing the patient's "involuntary ideas" (FREUD, 1991 [1900], pp.112-116). In BION's much quoted theory of thinking, allowing the object to reveal itself according to its own intrinsic properties means approaching it with "negative capability"—that is apprehending it as it presents itself in the moment, "without any irritable reaching after fact or reason" (BION, 1970, p.125). Freed from the closures of categorisation and linear reasoning, the attention is able to wander and to follow creative links as they emerge (BION, 2000 [1961]). Following such links in the associations of the panel made us aware of the *quality* of our thinking—for example how it was influenced by inherent dualisms of digital culture (on/off, real/virtual, old/new technology); also how in our study these tended to reinforce the dualism of Christian ethics (sin/redemption) so that polarised responses to alcohol consumption were over-determined. [20]

We are not positing associative thinking and negative capability as an alternative to social scientific analysis. Rather we are claiming that it has a place in the research process because it is alive to tropes, metaphors and imagery, aspects of which are outside of discourse or embedded within it in ways not immediately revealed by its overt themes. For example, the "sensuous purple of the studio" in the first scenic composition (extract above) refers not so much to the colour of the upholstery as to a haptic register of experience that is about to appear, organised through the frame of "reality" with its vernacular connotations of sensuous immediacy and the "disembodied" nature of the virtual world. The de-sensualised

languages of social policy and public health also erase sensory characteristics of the scene, which are part of participants' interaction with it. LORENZER was influenced by Susanne LANGER's (1948 [1942]) philosophy of art, and particularly by her distinction between the discursive forms of language and the presentational symbolic of art and music which concern that which cannot be spoken, or which can more easily be shown. Poetry and creative writing are rhythmically and metaphorically grounded and strongly performative and can capture the presentational symbolic. LORENZER regarded the desensualisation of language as a form of cliché in which utterances become stripped of their symbolic content and eviscerated of meaning. This is a key consideration in research that aspires to be experience near:

"... Desymbolised language signs ... remain in the conscious, where they can easily be manipulated ... In this state they are no longer capable of embodying the specific quality they originally contained and which was originally experienced. As a result, they lend themselves to behaviour that is little more than calculating and coldly rational" (1986 p.53). [21]

If scientific discourse overwhelms the aesthetic properties of the scene, it divests the researcher experience of affective vitality when it appears on the written page. The idiomatic trace of the researcher voice is obscured and ceases to be available for further examination, though it will still condition the text. A psychosocial or depth reflexivity is profoundly interested in the trace or "idiom" of the author (BOLLAS, 1989, 1992) which frequently manifests through a personalised aesthetic of expression, an "existential signature" of which s/he is unaware. It follows that the less contrived or constrained the form of the writing, the more this aesthetic and affective experience will emerge. However, it will still be expressed through cultural conventions and tropes, which render the experience communicable to others. [22]

The scenic composition draws on each author's scenic interaction forms to reveal the idiomatic expression of experience through a flow of associations which signal the cultural ideas and forms to which experiences are bound. The reflexive interpretation of the composition is undertaken by the research team working as a panel and aims to identify the scenic *gestalt*. This reveals the form and pattern of the whole and an author's disposition to encounter the scene in particular ways. [23]

It may be noted that the author of the scenic composition cited as an example at the beginning of this article had unconsciously adopted the style of a novel. We now present all four scenic compositions in edited form (for the sake of brevity), each of which was spontaneously written in a different style. In the discussion that follows we consider further the theoretical basis for the scenic composition. Finally, we ask whether our use of this device produced new thinking about the data enabling us to arrive at conclusions that would not otherwise have occurred to us. [24]

### 3.2.1 *The novel—No such thing as no data*

"I walk through peeling down-at-heel Liverpool en route to shiny smart FACT. Then the sensuous enveloping purple of the studio ... The body will be catered for amidst the fleshlessness of digital media. The caterers are there early with the technicians. The rest of the day is spent sunk in armchairs. Lunch is really very good—lovingly prepared by recovered drinkers proud of their 'scouseballs', invented to make Irish stew finger food for Princess Di. I love the way they overstep their roles and butt into the discussion—they are sociable, engaged, nurturing, redeemed ...

I feel less well cared for by the technicians—tinkering away assuredly with keys, plugs, widgets and interfaces. Maybe a bit of their über-cool will at last rub off on me. The moderator exudes old-style, avuncular dependability—a man of the world. Lillian<sup>11</sup> is there with her fetchingly low neckline, looking as if she's just come from the pub.

When did technology ever not let you down? People are not getting through on-line, and there is a frustration on the chat screen. I feel strangely disconnected from this virtual annoyance, an irritant but only mildly so. The chatters don't seem to exist in the same emotional field—we may be networked but the affect isn't flowing. I just want to ignore all this and listen to the debate, but people keep on forgetting to speak into their microphones. It is so tedious to always feel responsible. I settle back into the role of dispassionate ethnographer, scribbling studiously. There is no such thing as no data."

#### What is being said?

A brief reference to Liverpool's degraded inner city environment forms an unlikely context for the "über-cool" techno know-how of a new media organisation. The author, avowedly an old-fashioned ethnographer, identifies with the old style radio compère, though a part of her wants some digital stardust for herself. It's like going to the movies while being part of the show. The fantasy of "cool" is both attractive and repulsive. The scene is set for a series of dualisms and an inner struggle between alternatives: fleshily accommodating furnishings, the colour and feel of a womb/recalcitrant monochrome widgetry; in/out of the movie; real studio based/virtual online communities; new/old technology and corresponding mindsets of the people who use them; nurturing caterers with their scouseballs (good enough for Princess Di)/careless persecuting technicians (in the author's imagination); bodies/digits. [25]

The struggle impels action to include the online community, despite her inclination, which is to ignore them like the rest of the studio audience and stick in her comfort zone. She acts out her proper role and moral responsibility, though

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11 The names that appear in the scenic compositions are either references to real people who were present at the event (changed for the purposes of anonymity) or fictional characters that populate the imaginative spaces of the compositions. In the context of the compositions, each reference is symbolic of a thought, idea and/or feeling that finds its expression in this mode.

she finds it irksome. Eventually she loses the battle within herself and sinks with some relief into the role of dispassionate social scientific observer. [26]

#### How is it being said?

The form is of the novel. The narrative moves through context, proposition, characterisation, complication, action and resolution. There is even a moral to the tale: "no such thing as no data". The piece is self-reflexive; the narrator/protagonist is aware of the tensions in the scenario and of her own emotionally split responses. She takes an observing position but includes herself as part of the scene. [27]

For Barbara CZARNIAWSKA (1997) the form of the novel includes: personification (here, the characters take on the aspects and qualities of old and new technology and the social projections and anxieties that surround them), identification (for example with the caterers as nurturing recovered alcoholics), suspense (will it work or won't it?), unmasking quality (the moral failures of the narrator), climax (the manic intervention), catharsis (realisation of futility of action), and moral message (the consolations of the observing position, or salvation in social science). [28]

#### Why is it being said in this particular way?

The struggle that runs through the piece reflects a cultural ambivalence among the researchers who were part of the studio audience: genuine excitement and scepticism about new media technology in tension with a resentful dependence on those who know how to operate it, along with their glamorisation. [29]

The author is not clear what moral regulation applies to the online community, if any (this suspicion too is shared by the other studio-based compositions as will become clear below). They are seen as anonymous, ephemeral, lacking in bodily presence, unconstrained by the requirements of performativity, heedless of the attributions of status that attach to the studio audience, irresponsible and free to transgress or subvert, should they choose. There is a tinge of envy in this denial of their reality and eventual disavowal of responsibility for them, "they don't show evidence of commitment in the way I understand it, it doesn't seem to go with their territory". Of course they don't have a territory, that is both their loss and their gain. [30]

The motif of embodiment asserts itself through the gendered imagery, heightened by awareness of disembodiment of digital media. She is the only woman in the team; Lillian's presence is felt with her sensuality, as voice of the binge drinking generation. In the popular imagination the image of the binge drinker is feminine too, tottering on her broken taxi-to-table heels, saved by the street pastor, bearing flip-flops. [31]

A gestalt of sin and redemption emerges: struggles in and against carnal desire: food, drink, temptation. The caterers—recovered alcoholics—are quite the nicest

people there. They are on hand, their own travails behind them, to dispense salad and wisdom in equal measure. This is the redemption that eludes the rest of us, and no thanks to technology. [32]

### What does the piece do?

When the researcher read her composition aloud she collapsed into school-girlish giggles at her bossy, "school-marmy" voice, seeing that she had revealed a generational scepticism in relation to new technology and a moralism in relation to street drinking where the Christian trope of redemption seeps through. She remarked:

"... [I was] absolutely stuck in old technology and old authority structures. I fantasised that Robert and I were an infelicitous pair of grizzled elders, the father and mother of the event desperately seeking to assert some control in our own ways, at odds with one another and with a task that totally escaped us. I don't like this coupling, Robert was holding something for all of us—our own anxiety about this whole experiment." [33]

She needed a live audience to read her composition to, so that she could "see" the position that the form allowed her to adopt. Reading aloud enables one to observe self and other in relation from a third position (BRITTON, 1998). The novel gives the author the scope for this, for reflexive narrativity and self-irony. At the same time it confers a strong authorial voice. [34]

### *3.2.2 The rap poem—dark room*

"Dark room, no natural light, comfortable seats  
Cinema treat  
Window out on the world  
No, into our drunken world  
Part of a media event.

Can't wait to tell my son  
Teases me for living in a tent  
This will make him think I'm cool  
No, he'll tell me he did that at school  
Vox pop, vimeo, easy way in  
Man on the street  
Gives his opinion  
On Liverpool dominion  
Now we are live, on air  
Can't seem to feel the world  
Making sense of the words on screen.

I'm listening to people scream  
Radio Robert can't cope with live feed lodgers  
Likes the live bait in the room

I'm typing my notes on my laptop  
And thinking about when to stop  
And say something helpful  
But decide to be quiet and let the room fill  
With voices from the street  
From the people who don't like the bill  
Too soft on the drinkers  
Too hard for them to find a way out  
No place to go but down  
Down to the bottom  
Judged and convicted  
By those who want their street clean  
Street drinkers are messy and violent  
Go to the wet park and meet a pastor  
They will show you compassion and lent  
Forgiven and never forgotten  
Back to the live feed  
Lost in the technology  
How many are watching  
Observing and talking  
I don't know what they think  
Words dribbling down the screen  
Bringing their presence in  
Radio Robert is reminded  
Turns and reads  
While the room bleeds  
Auntie Ann<sup>12</sup> sits in her room  
Watching TV all day  
But she won't see this."

### What is being said?

Five themes are captured in the rap poem echoing many of those in the novel. First, the author is excited at the cinema style event. He too relishes being part of new media and gaining kudos with his son. Awareness of his own generational consciousness can only be intensified by the rap rhythms—he is an unlikely author for this genre, effectively assuming a new persona to deliver social commentary in the language of the street. The use of new media has encouraged him to adopt the position of avatar. Second, he struggles with understanding what is going on and with not "feeling" the disembodied online world out there. There seems to be a disconnection. Robert seems to prefer a live audience he can cajole and challenge to a stream of words "dribbling" down the screen. "Dribble" evokes the directionless verbal incontinence of the blogosphere. Third, should he participate or leave it to others? Is he inside or outside the event? Fourth, he relays the key judgements and censures of the webcast audience ("the police are soft on drinkers"; "there for the grace of God go I"). Then he contrasts this to the

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<sup>12</sup> Auntie Ann symbolises the reality of people excluded by media and technology, who are potentially ignored and forgotten.

role of the pastors who do offer God's grace on the path to recovery ("Go to the wet park and meet a pastor/ They will show you compassion and lent/ Forgiven and never forgotten"). Finally, he remembers Auntie Ann who is housebound. She watches TV all day but will not see any of this. Is it just for new media savvy people? [35]

#### How is it being said?

The poem flows like a rap so has an underlying youth culture feel that mirrors the digital nature of new media—it has an on-off, short burst, sound byte rhythm which is not melodious or analogue, and disrupts the narrative flow. The author switches like PC windows between feelings and circumstances and between figures in the room and significant others (Robert, Auntie Ann, his own son). In this way he playfully populates the transitional space between fantasy and reality (WINNICOTT, 2005 [1971]). He acknowledges excitement but vents his misgivings about drinkers and new media. The effect is to baffle the listener with alternatives while the relentlessness of the rhythm leads towards the final shocking image of personalised, embodied frailty and loneliness: Auntie Ann, who is out of place, out of time, and out of new media. [36]

#### Why is it being said in this way?

The researcher evokes a sensation of post-modern disconnected, media-driven images—a bit like how it felt in the studio, trying to "minimise" interference from the chat screen. There is a metaphor here for how people become isolated as we minimise or close the windows that are not useful to us. In their real lives they go on drinking, or whatever, and then rear up in a new window displaying unwanted knowledge: care home abuses, youth binge drinking and (worse) the excessive hidden home-based drinking of the middle-aged. The ambivalence of the author is reflected in the ambiguity of the piece that tries to tell a complex story in a medium that is ante- and possibly anti-narrative. The insinuation is that new media can amplify our disconnectedness and, far from supporting efforts to tackle street drinking, have the potential to suck us into a vortex of privatised consumption and social fragmentation. [37]

The author presents a degree of resistance to new media unwittingly in the form of the writing and (like the novel) in the caricature of Robert on to whom the anxieties aroused by the event are projected. It is also in the thought (shared with the would be "novelist") of trying to impress the children with our new found new media "cool". [38]

#### What is the piece doing?

The rap plays with being inside and outside the action but in a post-modern voice that surfs events and feelings, producing a collage of image and sensation. Its form imparts the feel of a new media insider. The rap conveys ideological resistance with its own anti-narrative (BOJE, 2001) which makes it hard to follow the story because the story is emerging in different places at different times and

in parallel (BOJE, 1995). We are "narrative animals" according to MacINTYRE (1981) and we struggle with decontextualised post-modern vignettes, needing a communal narrative that includes narrative identity/quest. This gives us a sense of where our practice is leading, and that it is worthwhile. The piece raises a question about whether new media can be reconciled with such a quest. Like the novel, it is ultimately pessimistic, but where the novel veers from moralism to tragic resignation, the rap ends on a note of social criticism. Paradoxically, its intentionally disjointed form provokes recognition of a possibly collective unconscious longing/resistance to connectedness (MacINTYRE, 1981). [39]

### 3.2.3 *Internet chat*

"Computer on. Am I the only one here? Confused hubbub, dark screen, shall I write something? Who's there? Ten minutes to go. This is exciting! Yes, ok, well, not much happening. But we start. We don't really know what's going on, darkness, no sound, who is moderating? Not me! Films without sound, can't control where I'm looking.

I'm struck by the 'real stuff', chronic alcoholics in recovery, thick accents, personal stories. There's Anna. The Street Pastor's a woman! ... assumed it would be a man. I was brought up Catholic. She's doomy, authentic. She buried a 24 year old girl the other day, an alcoholic. Tragedy.

There's a guy who owns a bar, I think. Long curly hair, doesn't look authentic! Bit posh. Well. Who is he? Artist? There's an angry bar-woman. Self-righteous. All the chronic alcoholics seem similar. Men. Shock horror nodding in agreement every time someone mentions cost to the tax-payer ... They pay attention to my text, message, tweet, whatever. Yikes! Lynn<sup>13</sup> has come online. I chat with Lillian, on Twitter ... Don't understand how Twitter fits into this chat, still ... My eyes and attention are flicking from the live screen thing to the chat and trying to make connections. They're being directed to us chatters. This feels better. I don't like being ignored. Sometimes feels as if I'm watching a show.

The Street Pastor talks about the flipflops: do-gooding. Chronic drinkers have a 'been there' feel that keeps me in awe. What do I know? Well, maybe about binge drinking, I suppose we've all drunk a bit too much. Cheap booze. It's immoral. Where are the police? They couldn't come because a very important person is in Liverpool today. Who the hell's that? The Queen?!"

#### What is being said?

The author relates the strangeness of being in different scenes simultaneously: alone in his room, in the online community, in the studio. He too is negotiating the real/virtual boundary—the chronic alcoholics for all their escape into inebriation immersed in a reality that is overwhelming. This is a solipsistic commentary on the author's fleeting observations and superficial feeling states, aware of what he is doing but lacking in interiority or reflexivity. Judgements are dropped in

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13 Research team leader.

casually, all having much the same weight: do-gooders, the immorality of cheap booze. He is in and out of control: looking where the camera points but free to initiate Twitter and web chats. There is a detached irreverence as he spots faces ("Yikes! Lynn has come online"), and caricatures them ("angry bar-woman"), exploiting his voyeuristic position on the outside looking in. Engagement with the themes of the studio debate is tangential. The piece also records the moment when the virtual and the real finally interact fleetingly. [40]

#### How is it being said?

These are the speaker's thoughts as they occur to him in the moment in a form of personalised dramatic monologue. There is a constant movement to and fro from his position behind his screen to the studio world, a play on being alone and being part of a public event. The style is "quizzical" or "irreverent" eliciting the reader's unwitting collusion in his ironic or sarcastic observations such as "shock horror nodding in agreement every time someone mentions the cost to the taxpayer". The caricature simplifies and "flattens" the characters so that they are recognised by the visual rather than the emotional eye. There is also a sense of the absurd, even a touch of the surreal in that the police couldn't come because of the Queen. [41]

#### Why is it is being said in this particular way?

The writer appears to relish the weaving between scenes and perspectives offered by his virtual status, which lends him a slippery liminal position. One team member seemed unable to remember whether or not this researcher had actually been in the live studio, while another could not remember having chatted with him online during the debate. The caricatures distance the writer from the studio audience, releasing humour and an uncommitted freedom of thought, tinged with irresponsibility, just as the novelist and the rapper suspected. The monologue creates the illusion of control in the face of lack of control. Voyeurism replaces the observing position, since all events are seen one-sidedly from the author's perspective. [42]

#### What is the piece doing?

The piece and the panel's responses to it vividly demonstrate the difference in affective fields between virtual and real audiences and this fuels an emerging binary between the supposed anonymity, superficiality and detachment of new media and the apparent authenticity of the real. It points to the position of avatar—a personality assumed autonomously at will rather than evolved dialogically in communication with others. The monologue evoked negative responses in other members of the team. Firstly there was concern at the apparent lack of moral regulation, or "moral economy" in the online community, by comparison with the organised debating procedures in the studio (DOURISH & SATCHELL, 2011). Secondly, it provoked a violent association in another researcher of an "academic gang bang"—a poor (even abusive) substitute for first-hand experience of helpers and people on the ground. Other associations included the image of the vortex,

with different players circling on the outer edges and reality in the centre. It also evoked the panopticon (FOUCAULT, 1991 [1975]), where a controlling power has the ability to see all without being seen. These thoughts and images allude to the monological detachment and voyeurism, and control of an unseen kind. In this way, the uneasy relationship between the virtual and the real is highlighted and further compounded when a colleague from the real (Lynn) turns up via her laptop in the virtual. [43]

### 3.2.4 Fantasy fiction: *FACT, fiction and addiction: Drink me, drink me!*

"The 8-12am to Liverpool is arriving on platform four at Manchester Oxford Road. Manchester, the home of Tory revivalism, into Liverpool, city of stark rebellion to the Tory dream, the original global city built on the slave trade. People draw lines around Liverpool from the outside and Scousers draw them twice as large from within. And are we doing this too? Have we overdrawn the lines between two groups of drinkers?

Alice in Wonderland; Radio Robert at the Mad Hatter's tea party<sup>14</sup>. What's this about? There's something subversive about Robert: warm and fatherly, but subverting the frame? What is the collective anxiety that he is acting upon? *FACT* don't know the addictions, it's outside of their comfort zone. We are playing in their space, their zone, their box. We don't know new media. Robert is a safe pair of hands, from the old world, pre-digital.

Why Alice in Wonderland? There's something or some people through the looking glass that we can't see, can't know, can't get to or understand. Their thoughts come as an unwelcome distraction. They are something we have to listen to but don't want to. The world of new media is like the Jabberwocky<sup>15</sup>. Exciting, unpredictable, a nonsense verse to the uninitiated. And like the Mad Hatter's tea party people talk in riddles: Platforms, web-clouds, information super highway, social media, new media. We just want to stay in the room with people who talk our language."

#### What is being said?

Two scenes are depicted: the train station and the web-cast, represented by images from Alice in Wonderland. The author plays with illusion and reality evoked by the new media, echoing a marketing theme in the title and introducing some of the oppositions that appear in all the compositions. Mention is made of Liverpool as the emblem of post-industrial decline and to Liverpool's historical global context and its unusual relationship to the rest of the UK. The term "scouser" appears again, adopted by locals as mark of an "othered" identity. This parallels the dualisms referencing different sorts of drinkers and the virtual and the real. The narrator questions his own associations (scenes), which shift between the real (stations) and the fantastical (Alice in Wonderland and Jabberwocky). The elegiac quality of the journey to Liverpool disintegrates into an unsettling, fearful and grotesque world of Wonderland mirrors where all is

<sup>14</sup> Reference to a scene in Lewis CARROLL's children's tale "Alice in Wonderland".

<sup>15</sup> Reference to the 1871 nonsense poem by Lewis CARROLL, famous for its invention of words and semi-intelligibility.

bewilderment, we can't trust our senses and, intoxicated by the scene, we lose our bearings. We long for the comfort of the real and people we can talk to away from the incomprehensible jabber of new media. [44]

#### How is it being said?

The author uses alliteration and repetition, enacting his own vertigo and identification with the Alice in Wonderland metaphor and mind-set. One of the panel says, "It's Ali<sup>16</sup> in Wonderland". He's called Ali and happens to be the only member of the team with very young children. The elegiac quality of the journey quickly gives way to an unsettling world. The piece plays the qualities of Alice in Wonderland—where we can't trust our senses. The themes of disorientation, loss of control are again accompanied by mistrust of technology as route to a parallel universe, comprehensible only to those in the know. [45]

#### Why is it being said in this particular way?

Fiction as used here symbolises and interprets the discomforts the author experienced in the event and the unreal fictions in this piece are nevertheless drawing upon reality and drawing us back to some of the uncomfortable realities of the event. As HOGGETT (2000, p.125) suggests, "[f]ictions are illusions which know themselves, ... devices for sense-making". The explicit reference to fact and fiction in the title puns on the name of the new media organisation (FACT) and the real-fantasy aspect of the composition gestures towards real-virtual divide in the webcast, the disorientation it produces, and diffidence towards the online community. [46]

#### What is the piece doing?

The researcher's unease in the webcast, and perhaps the desire to be elsewhere, reflect the difficulties of feeling involved with the dimension of hyper-reality and need to be in a space of reflection—the reassurance of "people who talk our language"; through this lens the event appears both "real" and "unreal". The composition evokes these double takes impelled by the doubled debate. The hyper/real dichotomy is doubly unsettling: in itself and because it breaks down. The author imparts to the reader a longing for a space in which we can all be like the street drinker at the webcast who speaks directly from personal experience: with authenticity, authority, integrity and singularity. Instead, we're pitched into in a Mad Hatter's tea party, deciphering riddles. [47]

### **3.3 The compositions in relation to each other**

Certain themes have emerged strongly, in different ways across all four compositions, and have been elicited by the experience of bringing the real and virtual debating communities together in the webcast. The differences between the compositions, and the choices of genre obliquely reveal the socio-cultural

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<sup>16</sup> This plays on the original title of the tale "*Alice* in Wonderland". Here the association is made between one of the researchers (named "Ali") and the heroine of the actual tale, "Alice".

significance of personal relations to the scene. Examples are the use of children's fiction by a researcher who is a father of young children; the adoption of a powerful authorial voice of novelist by the research team leader; the "street cred" evocation of rap by the researcher who is especially interested in the street level realities of assets based research; the rebellious tone of the internet chat by the researcher who was not able to be present in the privileged reality of the studio space; the gendered and generational positioning of the studio-based authors, but not the online author. [48]

The extrapolations below remain close to the explicit content of the compositions but also reflect the subsequent work of the research team.

1. All four authors convey the emotionally unsettling anxiety of the event, pointing to the *wider cultural anxieties generated by the tension between the digital and the real* as well as those generated by an attempt to explore our relationship to alcohol. The authors experience disorientation as they flip between, or attempt to ignore, the hyper or the real. None of the compositions comfortably inhabits both worlds. There is a distinct impression of mutual indifference or dislike between the studio and the online participants. The facilitators of the virtual and their "widgetry" talk a different language to the studio-based researchers, and are derided. Dependence on them is resented. They are seen as emotionally autistic purveyors of technological mystique who let you down, or shut you down and there is a perverse pleasure when the technology doesn't work, because it affirms some deeply held feelings about technology and because it serves to exclude the online community. The needs and excesses of the body loom large as does the anxiety of exclusion and the wish to exclude. This is a meta-theme that embraces our relations to digital culture and alcohol alike: one can lose one's bearings in both of them, both are cultural addictions, involve the creation of tribes and are ambiguously placed in relation to authenticity, stability and the work ethic.
2. It is the trope of *redemption through acceptance of "reality"* that is seen as offering the path to recovery (righteousness). Recovery is a current policy objective for addiction in the UK reflecting the neoliberal project of citizenship and exhortation to constant self-improvement and personal responsibility ("I am NOT my brother's keeper"). This chimes with a strongly moralistic tone that pervades the rap poem and the novel, which along with the fantasy fiction, return to the real after the seductions of new technology. To the extent that the fantasy fiction maintains a liminal position its moralism is weaker but it describes an uncomfortable condition. The Internet chat is suspected by the other three authors of amorality—or even immorality—in its self-regarding subversiveness. The spiritual healing of the pastors—firmly anchored in the real world of "fallen" drinkers, with their practical offering of flipflops to get them safely home, comes through as a non-judgemental street level intervention. Other services (such as the police) are notable by their absence.
3. The *implied and explicit dualisms* that pervade our views of both technology and alcohol use are legion, repetitive and scattered across all four compositions: pathology/hedonism; old technology/new technology; embodied

subjects/avatars; inside/outside; virtual/real; damned/redeemed; lost/recovered; young/old; stability/instability; familiars/aliens; drunkenness/sobriety; nurturance/neglect; judgement/acceptance. Attempts to occupy an ambivalent role or position break down and the effect is unnerving. There is comfort in familiarity and the delusions of stereotypical thinking. This represents resignation and retreat from the psychic struggle involved in holding the tensions inherent in the technologies at our disposal; and in the moral quest to negotiate a relation to the real and the virtual that maintains human communication and connectivity.<sup>17</sup>

4. The novel, rap and fantasy fiction, to a greater or lesser extent use *genre to contain the instabilities produced by the dualisms*—with partial success; the tendency to polarisation produces a palpable struggle—itself thematically evident in the composition. There is also evidence of a reflexive self-irony in each of them (the novelist's reluctant identification with Robert, the compère; the rapper's forlorn hope of technological rehabilitation in his son's eyes, the fantasy writer's longing to return to the apparently sane and familiar). The chatter, on the other hand eschews struggle and commitment, with their implication of depth and endurance, and the modernist quest to reconcile contradiction. He assumes the position of joker, surfing the stream, darting and weaving between windows. Use of this genre allows him to dance recklessly on the line between uncontained and unconstrained. [49]

#### 4. Discussion

In terms of both style and content, each of the four compositions is at first sight idiosyncratic, reflecting individual researcher idiom (BOLLAS, 1989, 1992) as well as responses particular to that time and place, though they bear on a common event. Creative writing through recognisable artistic form enabled each researcher to apprehend the experience of the others ("fictions that know themselves"). Each researcher brought background assumptions, subject specialist and disciplinary interest, knowledge, tastes and affects, biographical and dispositional resources. The compositions enabled a sense of oscillation between difference and similarity. The more similar the various views of the scene are to each other and to the scene as an object, the closer we are to what DELEUZE (2004) defined as "repetition", that is to say, the validation of the object's reality through empirical repetition. On the other hand, the greater the differences between the views, the greater the "intensity", the "pure difference" between the views and, therefore, the greater the role of the observer's personal observation, what DELEUZE called the "transcendental sensibility which apprehends it [intensity] immediately in the encounter" (p.181). [50]

The degree of difference between a scenic composition and the scene at the point where it was first witnessed is that the composition is organised through the symbolic interaction forms that arise in the author's encounter with it, and which

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17 The polarised thinking, exclusionary impulse and projective mechanisms released were in fact strongly reminiscent of Melanie KLEIN's (1997 [1957]) "paranoid schizoid" position, while the effort to maintain ambivalence and accommodate complexity reflects a "depressive" relation to reality.

are then elaborated through the writing process. The composition also expresses the "intensity" of the unperceived (because affective and/or societal-collective unconscious) elements of that original scene, which in LORENZER's (1986, p.29) words have a "yearning" quality and "press" on the scenic composition provoking and demanding recognition. The scenic *gestalt* creates a configuration of the author's sensibility. Each scenic composition is different to the scene as it was first witnessed, but each is also different to the other scenic compositions. This creates multi-faceted layers of difference reflected in the scenic compositions themselves. By comparing the scenic *gestalts* of each composition and the feeling states that underlie them we also see their commonalities. [51]

For example, each scenic composition presents various degrees of ambivalence in contrast to the assumption that "drinking is bad for you". The novelist wavers between the sin of the drink and the redemption of the recovered drinkers; the rapper doubts the authenticity of the scene and distances himself from the "messy and violent" drinkers, even though the actual scene of the webcast engages with non-violent, tidy drinkers; the fantasist prefers an escape to a fantasy world to the scene before him; the chatter is frustrated in a virtual world where he both is and isn't part of the scene. Together, the four scenic compositions reveal a complex ambivalence, where different facets of doubt and uncertainty clash with the perceived wisdom of the "reformers". Although each separate scenic composition generates its own ambivalence, the four together generate a powerful, almost overwhelming sense of shared ambivalence that speaks to the difficulty of dealing with street drinking. When the scenes were considered in discursive mode the analysis produced repetitions where each researcher's idiomatic scenic *gestalt* was suppressed in favour of an attempted objectivity. The writing of the four scenic compositions brought together the shared cultural resources that each researcher held in common with the others, so that the compositions were not only intelligible to all but also recognisable: each member of the team felt that despite the fact that choice and use of literary genre was *personalised*, the genre itself reflected experience encoded within an aesthetic form within a culture they shared. [52]

We could see the four scenic compositions as four distinct perspectives converging on a horizon (to borrow GADAMER's phrase [1989 (1960)]). It is useful to bear this metaphor in mind in a multi-faceted interpretation, because however diverse the angles from which the horizon is viewed, it belongs to the same entity. In other words this approach is consistent with a realist epistemology and with the dialogical process of data analysis adopted. However, this leaves aside the issue of unconscious socio-cultural processes and how one might detect their traces in a text. For LORENZER these are present as "provocations": unsymbolised or only partially symbolised material which is nevertheless present in scenic experience and which irritates, contradicts, and creates paradoxes and ambiguities causing the cultural analyst to move beyond its overt meaning. Only then can s/he identify the unconscious social processes such as collectively held anxieties and currents of feeling which characterise a time and place and are fully present, though unarticulated, in experience near text. Such processes become available for interpretation when the presentational symbolic dimension (as

opposed to the discursive symbolic) of the text is explored (LANGER, 1948). The presentational symbolic dimension depends on the "sphere of subjective experience, emotion, feeling, and wish, from which only *symptoms* come to us in the form of metaphysical and artistic fancies" (p.70). LORENZER (1986) suggests that in depth hermeneutic analysis of unconscious social processes embedded in these symbolic registers can be opened up. [53]

In this case it was the webcast to which we responded in the compositions as a scenic event, which offered a set of "provocations". Our responses in terms of culturally shared tropes and genres were mutually intelligible despite idiomatic differences in content and style. We do not offer an exhaustive analysis of them. Each of the many dualisms, discomforts and contradictions we have already identified leads us in the direction of social and emotional processes, which are partly available to consciousness and partly disavowed. Reviewing the material in the panel, the provocations came at us thick and fast which is why we felt bombarded—this recalls what BION (1962, 1970) identified as "beta elements": undigested bits of sensation and information which are resistant to the mental activity of thought. Making them available to experience and rendering them thinkable (exercising "alpha function" in BION's terms) requires the "metabolising" activity of a container. The originary container/contained relationship is that of a loving mother to an infant where she imparts emotionally to the child the sense that beta elements can be transformed and the anxiety they generate can be moderated. As the containing function is internalised, the capacity to experience develops into adulthood. For WINNICOTT (2005 [1971]) this originary containment allows for the development of "transitional phenomena" in the infant. This engenders a feeling of trust that allows children to play and is later elaborated into the organisation of aesthetic forms which contain the transitional phenomena of cultural life: "There is a direct development from transitional phenomena to playing, and from playing to shared playing, and from this to cultural experiences" (p.51). In reaching for the scenic composition we were accessing just such an aesthetic container to cope with the sensation of being bombarded with meaningless data. Through the use of fictions as "devices for sense-making", and "illusions that know themselves" synthesising capacity and self-reflexive capacity could return (HOGGETT, 2000, p.125). [54]

The element that we had not anticipated—and which would not have been evident if we had relied on a single composition—was the extent to which each researcher unconsciously "chose" a genre to give expression to a series of cultural tropes. The Internet chat reflects the author's on-line status and adopts informality, colloquialisms and loose structure that reflects the conversational, yet oddly solipsistic tone of the blogosphere. We cannot offer a full explanation (in the absence of further biographical analysis) as to why the other authors wrote in the genre they did. However, it is clear that when faced with the need to distil impressions that were disparate, elusive, and anxiety provoking, the literary genres enhanced the containing aspect of the compositions, thus rendering experience inter-subjectively communicable. This allowed us to articulate a relationship to a socio-cultural context. Moreover the genres selected were to a greater or lesser extent all in the lyric mode, which ABBOTT (2007) describes as

emotionally engaged and of the present time and place. Narrative, where the present is a moment of passage between past and future, and is imbued with quest, was weakly present in the novel. The rap retained a loose sense of narrative progression but was mainly expressive of repetitive rhythm and imagery. The fantasy fiction conveyed a sense of timelessness, and the internet chat of directionless conversational chit chat. It may be that the associative process of the scenic composition favours the emergence of a lyric sensibility, based on immediate impression and emotion, over the structured, temporally organised directionality of narrative. This would conform with FREUD's descriptions of free association where he describes how emerging "involuntary ideas" change into "visual and acoustic images" and his comparison of this process with that of poetic creation (FREUD, 1991 [1900], pp.176-77).<sup>18</sup> [55]

Each piece picked up the provocations of the webcast and transformed them into a presentational symbolic with a strongly performative dimension, enacted through the inconsistencies of narrative and lyric style. Also, each researcher attempted to balance descriptive or "factual" material with a more performative creativity that contains the emotional, less conscious aspects of the pieces. By combining these two motivations, we ended up with hybrid pieces, where the researcher's conscious voice attempts to get heard along with the other less rational voices:

"I'm struck by the 'real' stuff, chronic alcoholics in recovery, thick accents, personal stories. There's Anna. The Street Pastor's a woman! Assumed it would be a man. I was brought up as a Catholic. She's doomy, authentic. She buried a 24 year old girl the other day, an alcoholic. Tragedy." [56]

This extract contains a provocation in the form of a paradoxical combination: the consciously executed reflection on the scene, called the "'real' stuff" is immediately followed by the author's irrational, performative voices. This is similar to what DERRIDA described as "an essential instability" (1991, p.207). In DERRIDA's analysis of a poem that is also a philosophical text (Francis PONGE's "Fable"), he demonstrates how the instability of genres contributes to the invention of the work and particularly to unlikely couplings within it. DERRIDA was concerned with synchronic and diachronic dimensions of irony and allegory respectively (ibid.). In our compositions, the synchronic quality of expressions linked to the moment are lyrical insofar as they refer to feeling states and images in the here and now (ABBOTT, 2007). With the exception of the Internet chat the compositions are pervaded by an ironic self-reflexivity. This contrasts with the diachronic narrative dimension of images or associations that exist in past memory (such as nostalgia for the comforts of technologies and languages we understand). [57]

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18 To take a classical perspective on the narrative: PROPP and other Russian formalists conceived it as an art form that reflects the ideological and ethical message of its time. PROPP (1928) and others (e.g. BAKHTIN & MEDVEDEV, 1978 [1928]) were aware of the literary form (and not only the content) providing an insight into the ideological horizon reflected in the piece. So instead of a standard hermeneutical understanding we see a deeper structure of discourse and rhythm pervading lives.

## 5. What Did We Gain by Use of Scenic Compositions?

Associative thinking and communicating is the basis of psychoanalytical practice and has recently been highlighted by LONG and HARNEY (2013) as being the basis for a growing body of work that is interested in the "associative unconscious" (pp.3-22). Within a research context it can happen informally in hermeneutic interpretation panels where trains of thought and imagery are allowed to develop which depart from a text and offer commentary whose relation to the text informs the emergent interpretation. For example, this occurs in panels which operate with the highly structured protocols of the biographical narrative interpretive method (WENGRAF, 2001) as well as the Dubrovnik method (HOLLWAY & VOLMERG, 2010) referred to earlier in this article. The scenic composition is a development, which essentially makes available for secondary interpretation something that is otherwise a nebulous process that can go unremarked. The scenic composition makes these trains of thought available for interpretation by turning them into writing and transforming them through imagery, cultural genres and tropes. The composition reveals how researcher experience and cultural convention come together in a third object with distinctive aesthetic properties—an aesthetic third (FROGGETT & TRUSTRAM, forthcoming; FROGGETT, FARRIER, POURSANIDOU & HACKING, 2011) reflected in its distinctive sensory, emotional and cognitive effect. Apprehending the nature of this "third," expressed in its presentational symbolic quality, plays an essential role in the scenic understanding of the composition and the data out of which it has emerged. It is the aesthetic of the piece—transmitted through a selection of culturally intelligible forms—which gives access to the embodied and emotional responses of those who write, and read and share them. The scenic compositions thus allow researchers to deploy a full range of capacities in working with data, while making their operations that take place "in-between" the data and the final analysis visible. It also allows for the synthesis of complex data<sup>19</sup> and performs an important presentational role, ensuring that the vitality of the experience is not overwhelmed and stripped of meaning by the often clichéd, desensualised language of social science. [58]

In order to limit the length of this article we have not described in full the outcome of the thematic analysis of the webcasts but we have indicated that it contained a series of views, some practical and policy related, some ethical and philosophical, articulated during the course of the debate. To a limited degree our observation of the debate allowed us to register indifference and strength of feeling, as well as omissions and what discussants thought of as most important in asset mapping. The range of the discussion did allow us to map community assets and resources to tackle street drinking, as well as providing insight into social

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19 The scenic composition synthesizes by bringing to bear the syncretistic capacity of the author. This point is expanded in FROGGETT and HOLLWAY (2010) who refer to a distinction between the analytic and syncretistic modes of perception, developed by Anton EHRENZWEIG (1967) to account for how the hidden structure of art is apprehended. Furthermore, the scenic composition, being partly the result of a form of free association, may demonstrate traits of what FREUD called "condensation" (1991 [1900], pp.383-413), that is to say, the packing of many meanings into single words or images, making the scenic composition unusually rich compared to its length. This is why the analysis and interpretation of the scenic composition is so much longer than the composition itself.

attitudes and conflicts. We can only do justice to this in a separate article. The webcasts and other new media employed allowed us to see some of the potentials and obstacles to using new media in the way we had tried to do. It also aided the identification of new assets such as the moral economy of new media and cultures of celebration, all of which could have been missed with a pure social science approach. [59]

By giving access to the sensory, embodied, emotional registers of experience through the performative aspects of the events, and a psychosocial research reflexivity, the scenic compositions enabled us to enrich our conclusions. These identified the ways in which the webcast debates and the researchers' own perspectives on them were conditioned by an interaction between personal biography and disposition, the affordances of old and new media and a moral stance inflected at every turn by polarised reactions to both new media and alcohol consumption. The use of four scenic compositions allowed us to see and triangulate the intersecting themes within them and the commonalities and paradoxes between them. [60]

In the light of our intention to discover whether the format of the live webcast could usefully create a new forum for community interaction on an issue of local concern, this was important. It showed how the potentials and limitations of the media used were to be found in the unacknowledged quality of thought, and in the currents of feeling it contained, as much as in its explicit content. How such events can best be moderated between on-line and studio audiences would bear further exploration if mixed media events combining traditional and digital debating forums are to be used together. [61]

The quality of thought referred to was all the more visible because of the scenic properties of the compositions which allowed their authors to bring the scene alive for the reader using shared cultural conventions which nevertheless retained the personal imprint or idiom of the authors/researchers. The use of four compositions together achieved something that a single composition could not possibly have done—they revealed the value of multiple expressions of affect to demonstrate a complex knowledge, which is often shared but can rarely be made explicit. They demonstrate the value of combining arts-based and social scientific perspectives when working with imagery, affect and researcher imagination. This is especially effective in the understanding of complex data sets. [62]

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