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 **Abstract**

How do emotions move and how do emotions move us? How are feelings and recognitions distributed socio-materially? Based on a multi-site ethnographic study of a romantic correspondence system, this article explores the themes of love, privacy, identity and public displays. Informed by ethnomethodology and actor-network theory its investigations into these informal affairs are somewhat unusual in that much of the research carried out by those bodies of work concentrates on institutional settings such as laboratories, offices and courtrooms. In common with ethnomethodology it attempts to re-specify some topics of interest in the social sciences and humanities; in this case, documents and practices of writing and reading those documents. A key element of the approach taken is restoring to reading and writing their situated nature as observable, knowable, distributed community practices. Re-specifying topics for the social sciences involves the detailed description of several situated ways in which the romantic correspondence system is used. Detailing the translations, transformations and transportations of documents as 'quasi-objects' through several orderings, the article suggests that documents have no essential meaning and that making them meaningful is part of the work of those settings.

Keywords:

Actor-network Theory; Documents; Ethnomethodology; Informal Interaction; Memory; Reading; Recognition; Social Practice; Writing

 **Introduction**

604. It is easy to have a false picture of the processes called "recognising"; as if recognizing always consisted in comparing two impressions with one another. It is as if I carried a picture of an object with me and used it to perform an identification of an object as represented by the picture. Our memory seems to us to be the agent of such a comparison, by preserving a picture of what has been seen before, or by allowing us to look into the past (as if down a spy-glass). ([Wittgenstein 1953: 157](#))

1.1

Couples in love are often asked to describe how they first met one another, whether through

friends, through their workplace, at a party, across a crowded room, or perhaps they bumped into one another in a bookshop. They may well mention where they were, by what 'chance' they happened to be there, what the other person was wearing, the remembered details of their first few sentences and so on. Their stories make sense retrospectively since they are framed by the events that followed their first encounter, which turned that first encounter into an encounter to be remembered. One can also conjecture with some certainty that they will have swapped their first impressions of one another during their courtship and the story of their first meeting will have been told (with variations) several times to other people than themselves. Their stories may play on themes of inevitability or of contingency, that it was meant to be or that it might not have been at all. In this article we are going to focus on a period when a brief encounter is still a brief encounter and has not yet turned into a romance or a rejection or a loss. By looking at the procedures of one person to get the other person to recognise their brief encounter through a short description submitted on the back of a postcard we hope to learn from their vernacular skills about more abstract topics of interest such as identity, recognition and writing.^[1] Such an investigation still perhaps sounds a little romantic, so let us be clearer about this, we are going to visit the landscape of an unusual variant of the lonely hearts sections of magazines, called **I saw you**.

1.2

Having introduced in the previous paragraphs some of the reasons why this article might interest a very general readership, we will make our claim to address the interests of a more specific disciplinary readership, those with an interest in sociology, human geography, cultural studies and information studies. In the apparently mundane world of 'brief encounters', romantic notes and small ads, we shall find some of their key topics; texts, content, contexts, paper and electronic documents.

1.3

Navigational metaphors are the stock in trade of systems designers and informatics researchers with an interest in the 'social browsing' of electronic documents ([Munro et al, 1999](#)). In treating a magazine column as a landscape with contours that shape and are shaped by literary practices, we take up some of the traditional concerns of those whose prime interests are literary genre ([Swales, 1990](#)), technology, or their combining in hypertext ([Landow, 1992](#), [Dillon 1994](#)). But we have more than metaphorical journeys to follow, since we intend to locate the practices of reading and writing texts in 'real' places, the traditional concern of human geographers and sociologists ([Goffman, 1963](#), [Law and Hetherington, 1999](#)). By showing how the intelligibility of reading and writing texts mutually elaborates the intelligibility of place, and how writers and readers skilfully use noticeable features of their co- presence and sociability to 'encrypt' public messages for their construed audience, we hope to address the growing interests in place and mobility of those working in hybrid fields like Computer Supported Cooperative Work and Science and Technology Studies ([Suchman, 1999](#)).

1.4

Our investigation can be placed in the small field of ethnographies of documents ([Harper 1998](#)) which, with a few notable exceptions ([Barton & Hamilton 1998](#); [Besnier 1995](#); [Jaffe 1999](#); [Evergeti \(2000\)](#)), has tended to be dominated by research on formal organizations.^[2] In ethnographically investigating the 'paper trails' ([Cussins 1992](#); [Lynch 1999](#)) of the 'recognising' & 'identifying' being played out in I saw you ([see Part 1. below](#)) we are going to explicate how one text may be several, and we are going to do this less by a close reading of a piece of writing than by following such 'texts in flight' as they moves across several scenes of reading and writing ([Garfinkel, 1967](#)). A text as ([Doel, 1999](#)) puts it, that is (s)played out by geography and cannot

ever be immobilised or embedded in a context. By refusing to make a-priori assumptions about texts as representations we will stand by Derrida's oft quoted maxim that there is no essential meaning outside the text, and by refusing to treat the text as containing content we will reverse that maxim to remind ourselves that there is nothing inside the text either. These may seem like lofty statements but they are practical problems which riddle writing, mobilising, editing, distributing and reading a personal ad.

1.5

Deconstruction is all too often treated as a highly specialised academic activity, even though the absence of an original meaning or singular context which provide for a text's intelligibility, are exactly the ongoing problems which beset the writers and readers of most kinds of ordinary texts.^[3] To add to our reconsiderations of texts, content and contexts, we are further going to re-examine some of the mis-conceptions surrounding shifts between paper and electronic technologies of writing. Much of the promotional and aggrandising claims made about electronic information and communication technologies are premised on an opposition between writing-with-paper and writing-with-electronic-documents.^[4] Explicit and implicit links in and between texts; links such as footnotes, endnotes, references to other pieces of writing, diagrams, contents pages, indexes etc.; inspired some of the earliest incarnations of hypertext (e.g. [Nelson, 1987](#)). Ironically, the charm of the click-able hyperlink is that it allows us to forget all the less explicit potential (but not clickable) links that many texts are made up of ([Have, 1999](#); [McHoul, 1996](#)). Older arguments from semiotics and intertextuality remind us that that links, clickable or not, are part of the 'developing organisation of our work of reading' ([Livingston, 1995: 9](#)). Even an apparently unlinked paper document is also made up of a rhizomatic proliferation of links, and unless we work out which to follow and which to ignore then its meaning is in constant danger of being lost ([Deleuze, 1988](#)). Indeed what if writing is only a header for a rich diversity of activities which are only very vaguely described as writing and thus not only or wisely divisible, as they so frequently are, into electronic and paper writing ([Smith, 1990](#); [Livingston, 1995](#); [McHoul & Roe, 1996](#))? It is a truism that electronic writing has not created a paperless office indeed quite the reverse, and precisely because there is no constitutive gap between one or the other, and the attempt to act as if there is can create all kinds of trouble to readers and writers. Bruno [Latour's \(1994, 1996, 1998\)](#) radical use of semiotics transports writings and readings to and from texts and examines how in each translation there is an element of reformation and deformation.

1.6

Our particular stake in the following analysis is to explicate a frustrating problem which has been posed for us as part of our ethnographic input into the design of a Living Memory system which builds upon the 'real-world' characteristics of communities in order to promote new forms of interactivity that augment members' capacity to capture, share and explore their 'working memory' or 'community knowledge'.^[5] The 'real-world' that we have been looking at is a city neighbourhood, its local organisations, its gathering places (i.e. cafes, pubs, libraries, churches, schools, shops and sport & leisure centres), its practices and its inhabitants.^[6] At our research project's conceptual stage, one definition of a Living Memory system's future shape was as a variety of networked flat-screen electronic interfaces offering access to a shared reservoir of 'private' and 'public' information. To shift computing artifacts from domestic settings into more public informal places the flat- screens were to be merged into the background fabric of a city neighbourhood: in its streets, shops, cafes, libraries etc.^[7] However the planned widespread availability of interfaces in the form of electronic notice-boards and various other over-lookable screens came with an attending problem. This problem is, briefly put, how private messages can be

viewed in public places so that the senders and receivers of those messages can retain their privacy and personal security whilst nevertheless allowing those messages to be publicly available.

1.7

From an information systems design perspective, it appeared commonsensical that this public/private dichotomy represented a critical design issue, requiring some advanced technical solutions such as key-based encryption, special kinds of viewing screens, security I.D.s, passwords and so on. However as ethnographers supporting designers we wanted to see how this public/private dichotomy and any attendant troubles were played out in everyday life. The 'personal pages' of local media provided a source of apparently similar troubles for its community of readers and writers.^[8] As part of making their 'brief encounter' publicly viewable in an **I saw you**, writers had to identify themselves via writing and attempt to make their 'brief encounter' recognisable to their lost 'you' whilst avoiding losing the privacy and emotion of their message. So they had to make a public declaration of romantic interest that remained private (enough).

1.8

One of the difficulties that we faced in finding previous social research on writing postcards let alone letters is the marginalisation of the letter, and even more so, the postcard ([Jaffe, 1999](#)). An exception is Derrida's remarkable meditation on and via postcards ([Derrida, 1987](#)). Derrida constantly draws attention to the postcard's qualities as an 'open letter' which is readable as it passes through the system that supports it, but its message will only be decrypted when it reaches its destination. Even on reaching its destination Derrida reminds us that such a letter will remain more or less indecipherable (i.e. was 'wish you were here' serious, romantic or a joke? And how might such a reading be decided?). These looming problems of the open-ness of any text are precisely the difficulties that a writer of an **I saw you** struggles with. Etiquette guides for sending e-mail are now peppered with reminders of the possibility of that jokes, irony and capitalisation can be the source of misunderstandings and that great care should be taken by writers and readers of e-mail ([Collin 1995](#)). Indeed the explosive growth of letter writing and reading as e-mail has triggered the initiation of a multitude of research initiatives ([Buckner & Gillham 2000](#)), though many of these seem to treat e-mail as if were not an extension of letter-writing and other forms of correspondence, and also as if e-mail is a homogenous activity ([Janney 1996](#)) or merely a 'channel' ([Westmyer et al. 1998](#)). Our investigation of **I saw you**, which is after all an extremely localised, 'slow' and seemingly 'primitive' system of correspondence, will uncover the rich diversity of activities occurring as part and parcel of its ongoing production.

◆ A Short Note on our Methodology

2.1

In our investigation of writing in motion we have been carrying out what has been called variously ethnography of documents ([Harper, 1998](#)), multi-site ethnography ([Marcus, 1995](#)), and mobile ethnography ([Hine, 2000](#)) in that we are not restricting ourselves to one field site with well-defined borders. We followed the movements of our texts of interest as they connected up several sites. Our locality is the locality of **I saw you** members ([see Part 1](#)). Beyond this loose maxim to follow the actors and see how they connect or fail to connect with one another, in the words of Lynch and Bogen:

'We characterize this work as empirical, but not empiricist. While we have little use for social-science methods that use the management of data sets to supplant the commonsense understandings of social affairs, we nonetheless see a point in making a

painstaking effort to come to terms with the details of the audiovisual record...'(Lynch and Bogen, 1996: 9)

2.2

Lynch and Bogen were examining the historically and politically weighty matters of the Iran-Contra court hearings and the truth-finding struggle over interpretively flexible official records whereas we will be examining the lighter matters of the person-finding struggle of documents that attempt to recover an informal event. Despite our contrasting settings the policies of our investigations remain common as does the desire to show how documents are composed in and of particular places. For Lynch and Bogen, a courtroom; for us, cafes and bars but also newsagents, cinemas and an editors' office.

2.3

Our formal fieldwork period extended over about 6 months during which we gathered somewhat more details on the history of **I saw you** and how it is currently run, than most ordinary users of its system might be expected to be aware of. We interviewed the editors of the magazine, chased up newspaper stories involving **I saw you**, watched a romantic comedy on television, based on an **I saw you** being received by the 'wrong addressee.'

2.4

Further we grilled friends and acquaintances for their thoughts on and stories of **I saw you**. Most significantly though we simply participated in our phenomenon of interest as other readers and writers might be expected to do. This meant reading the columns where the **I saw yous** were published once a fortnight and hanging around in a selection of the venues that are mentioned in the **I saw you** column. In a sense the rest of this article is a description of our research methodology since we worked out what to do with **I saw you** by the same means that anyone else might, and it is those means that we wish to explicate.

◆ Part 1: Finding a Lost Love via some Documentary Identity Work

3.1

It is a familiar beginning: two strangers meet briefly in the city and find each other attractive. One of them wants to meet again but it is too late, the face-to-face encounter is over, no names or terms of address were exchanged, and so the other is lost to them. One possible method for finding the person they are looking for is to write an **I saw you** and submit it to 'City Events'.^[9] 'City Events' magazine is a fortnightly arts and entertainment guide, much like London's 'Time Out', which has a mix of reviews, interviews, listings, advertising and small ads.

3.2

A first description of **I saw you** is that it is a space in the small ads where readers get to submit short messages for free which always begin **I saw you**, and then, typically, a potentially romantic message follows, which is based on the premise that one person 'saw' another person and that they noticed that person, further that they never managed to provide for the opportunity to see that person again, and now they are declaring their noticing in this magazine section with the concomitant provision of a PO box number for a response to be addressed to. Each **I saw you** has a stated maximum limit of thirty words for the submitter to write (though this limit seems to be broken fairly regularly) and the majority are submitted in purpose-built postboxes (see Figure 1).^[10]





Figure 1: Postbox, postcard holder, advert, talking point, designer artefact (*click to enlarge*)

3.3

What we have then in our, so far, general explanation of **I saw you** is a possible situation wherein the **I** of **I saw you** has 'seen' someone who they wish to position as the **you**.^[11] That even being 'seen' by a stranger is a potential object of sexual or identity concern has been well researched by social interactionists ([Goffman, 1956; 1963, p83-88; Travers 1998](#)) and ethnomethodologists ([Sudnow, 1972](#)). Seeing and being seen by other unidentified persons (and also by acquaintances) in public places is dealt with as a matter of immediate concern, in that a person returns a look that a stranger is giving them, or if a stranger's gaze persists they may challenge, ignore or encourage such looking. Glancing in the street or in cafes and bars and other public places has been investigated through commonplace and unusual instances of it ([Cavan, 1973; Livingstone, 1987; Goffman 1963, p124-148](#)). Our general explication is that the **I** begins under the auspices that there was a mutual prolonged noticing (or a brief encounter) otherwise their likelihood of identifying-in-writing the **you** let alone attracting a response-in-writing is, to put it mildly, somewhat weak. Their task, having decided to compose an **I Saw You**, we might think as Wittgenstein suggested in our opening quote, is to write a short accurate report which pictures their encounter with the **you** thereby allowing the **you** to know that they are the ones being addressed in this particular **I saw you**. They will know because their picture matches the encounter, and then when they will recall who the **I** is, they will be able to decide whether they wish to respond to the message they have been sent.

3.4

To learn about the actual procedures used for making an **I** and a **You** recognisable and how they might be successfully used by an **I saw you** writer, let us look at an instance taken from the pages of *City Events*. We have selected this as a good instance for our explication because it features the use of a place name and poetic expressivity whose importance will become clearer as our analysis proceeds.

First Play:

I saw you in the City Café - you wore NHS frames & a headscarf, I had a George Michael beard. I love you. Box Z/737/4

3.5

Beginning our analysis with the use of a placename - why does the writer use 'City Café' in their very first phrase? It seems obvious: 'City Café' is where the encounter occurred. Yet not all entries in the **I saw you** section do use a specific location (see below & [Figure 2](#)). 'City Café' is one possible way of starting to narrow down the population of possible **you** in the 2 cities. The selected addressees are now only the **you** who have been to the *City Café*, by formulating a place the writer is formulating persons (on places specifying members, see [Schegloff 1972; Laurier 2001](#)). An unmarked additional selection that has been made by the **I** is: only the **you** that have been at

that place recently. The omission of a date in an **I saw you** is a significant omission that is read as thus 'current' for the column. As a fortnightly column, current is within the last fortnight. Dates from several months before are marked (i.e. *'I saw you 15th September Holly Golightly girl sitting on the steps of the Gateway theatre'*) though they are also marked even when current in order to narrow down the possible addressees in combination with a locational formulation (i.e. *'I saw you (Gary?) serving me in Gap Glasgow. I was your last customer Friday 1st October. Get in touch'* (see [Figure 2](#)).

3.6

In **Play 1** we have then two short descriptions given of what the **I** figures are noticeable features of both the **I** and the **You**: *NHS framed glasses, a headscarf and a George Michael Beard*. The restrictions of the magazine only provide for short descriptions of course, and so we might say, that such a brief description is part and parcel of following those rules. Except we would suggest that much more is accomplished in the work of using *'a George Michael Beard'*: there is of course the growing and grooming of a beard in the first place as part of fashioning an appearance which may provide resources for later performances; such as meeting other people with beards at parties ([Goffman 1963, p131](#)), being to quickly describe and identify oneself (like wearing a white rose when collecting a stranger from a train ([Finkelstein, 1991](#))). Beyond the fact of having a bearded face, the selection of *'a George Michael Beard'* as a phrase to include in an **I saw you** does further work. The most obvious of which is, as we have hinted already, an attempt to identify the **I**, for the purposes of establishing the **you** as well. Identifying these two characters is so much easier by using their co-occurrence, in that there may be quite a few George Michael Bearded (GMB) men in the City Café at various times, yet there are far fewer meetings of GMB men and NHS glasses women.

3.7

For its players **I saw you** is not a 'closed game' - if ever there could be such a thing - its rules, tactics and strategies can be understood through its similarities and differences from other games. To use another vocabulary, **I saw you** borrows from and is understood through its relations to other 'genres'. In *City Events*, **I saw you** follows on directly from the lonely hearts (or soulmates or dating column etc.), and so the pre-existing genre of lonely hearts columns provides some clues and some conventions as to how an **I saw you** can be written (and read, since every writer is also a reader). In the lonely hearts column identifying oneself as having a *'a George Michael Beard'* will start to make some indications both of what its writer looks like, but also what they and their community of readers may take to be a mutually agreed upon, relevant identification of someone, from features made available as appearance. (We can imagine an irrelevant identification quite easily - 'one-nosed' - though it may then be a reference to something that was said by **I** or **you** at the time). In contrast to *City Events* magazine's British norms, writing in a lonely hearts column in Istanbul, for instance, that someone had *'a George Michael Beard'*; the feature worth paying attention to would probably not be the beard since they are much more common in Istanbul. It is emulating George Michael which is the more identifying feature of the person's fashioned appearance.

3.8

In the word-restricted formats of small ads in general, brevity is explicitly part of the rules, indeed, the poetics of the form almost require skills akin to those of writing a poetic object ([Livingston, 1995](#)). As we read the **I saw you** we shift from a description like that a police officer might make of two people - *'one suspect wearing scarf & NHS glasses and the other possessing a beard in the style of George Michael'* - to, with a sudden leap, *'I love you'*. Why this jump from a

description strangers would offer, to a declaration of love? As [Livingstone \(1995\)](#) points out for poetry many of its procedures involve disrupting the predictable sequential pattern of a text's reading. The placing of '*I love you*' as the next part, after its surprise for the reader, can then be taken as a poetic assembling of this **I saw you**. An attempt to avoid 'objective description' of the brief encounter since the **I saw you** is also making a kind of romantic gesture. There is humour too: '*I love you*' is going too far to be serious - as saying '*I love you*' to a newly met person, no matter how desirable. Indeed the pairing of 'NHS Glasses' as potentially unattractive features (as against 'beautiful blue eyes') with '*I love you*' encourages a reading of the submission as joking.

3.9

Another reason for such jokery, allusiveness and poetry is that there may be other people who are either party to the drafting of the **I saw you**, party to the events it describes, or party to its reading and reception. For the **I** the possibility of being recognised and embarrassed remains a concern, since not only can it cause them to suffer but may also be the death of their attempt to create some kind of intimacy with the **you**.^[12] Given that, as readers of **Play 1 and 2**, we could not identify the parties to the events every so briefly written in the **I saw you**, then one part of the game has been successfully achieved: they are to some extent 'open' private messages in a public place. Trying to get these private messages through to the correct recipient **you** via the publicly available space which is the **I saw you** section is indeed exactly the kind of activity which we noted in our introduction that our project was interested in.

3.10

Making hidden meanings with open letters is eased by the '*Rosebud*' phenomena. In Orson Welles' renowned film '*Citizen Kane*', Kane's last words are '*Rosebud*', and much of the film's suspense is derived from the search as to what or who '*Rosebud*' refers. As it turns out, we finally discover at the end of the film that *Rosebud* was the name of Kane's snow-sledge when he was a child, which further explains why he also was holding in his dying grasp a paperweight with a snowy scene inside. By the end of the film we have built up the kind of acquaintance via 'shared knowings' ([Manning, 1992](#)) or perhaps even 'living memories' with Kane that we can make sense of his initially somewhat obscure dying utterance. Unfortunately for the **I** and the **you** in this instance they hardly know each other so have not acquired the kind of collection of intimate 'catchphrases', 'memories' and 'nicknames' which family, friends and lovers co-produce over time. Once again we return to the use of '*I love you*' here as building up the sense of these columns as texts where people with minimal intimate knowledge of one another make declarations.

3.11

Why are people submitting to and reading the **I saw you** column at all? Why bother? To begin to answer these questions, it is, at the very least, inspected by the people that write submissions to it, and possibly by other potential **you** who figure they have had a romantic encounter of the kind which might merit someone writing such a notice. We might want to add, to the list of interested readers, people who are not sure whether they might have been noticed by someone else and not noticed that they were noticed, and that indeed the self-esteem to be gained from such an event will be all the greater since they are thus in that moment a more noticeable person than the other. Not only are we willing to confess to reading the section for just such reasons, as well as for the purposes of a research project, but several informants including the editors of *City Events* confessed to just such a motivation for reading. And as we will detail in our analysis later, there are yet more possible readings and motivations for reading at work than those just mentioned here. Before we shift on to examining some of the other uses made of **I saw you** let us consider how for its earnest submitters it is a way of avoiding rejection in a public place. If two people notice or flirt

with one another in a cafe or bar or in the street the next step would be for one of them to make a move. A forward move that opens them up to the possibility of having their amorous advance rejected (and what's more with witnesses). Equally any such first move by one person has its unforced acceptance undermined by the 'preference for agreement' ([Sacks 1992](#)) whereby invitations are hard to straightforwardly decline.

3.12

A distinction can be made when trying to make a brief encounter felicitous and free between persuading the other to go out with you and finding out whether the other person wants to go out with you. And **I saw you** has little force as persuasion since it can be easily declined without either losing face (since it is also very easy to miss). A response to an **I saw you** (which is also a very rare thing according to the magazine's editors) is thus an unforced show of mutual interest and indeed awareness of the brief encounter as a brief encounter. We can go so far as to state that the event becomes recognised and understood to be that through this second part of the **I saw you** adjacency pair ([Sacks 1992](#)). Without the reciprocity of perspective the I may recognise that they saw the **you** but the **you** did not see them.



Figure 2: Column Arranged Scannable Documents (*click to enlarge*)

3.13

From looking at Figure 2 we can shift further from an isolated text to read **I saw you** as part of a contexture ([Lynch 1993](#)) and can make a first observation of the translations that occur to an **I saw you** in flight: it has moved from being a singular piece of writing as we displayed it in **Play 1** which is how it appears while being written by the **I** to now appearing for the possible **you** in roughly ordered columns of small ads. To find a possibly relevant **I saw you** at this point in the sequence of events a technique of looking is required, in combination with the 'gestalt texture' ([Livingston, 1995:12](#)) of columns, which might be characterised as very similar to the scan a reader uses when dealing with, for instance, searching for a second-hand gas cooker amongst the small ads. Particular words or phrases are scanned for, if it is a gas cooker, then 'gas' is the kind of word which might be scanned for, 'electric' ads will be skipped over. Once this word is spotted then, either the advert may be ringed and thereby 'collected' with a pen till a whole bunch have been collected at which point a closer reading is made to compare the gas cookers that are on offer. Intriguingly **I saw you** lacks quite such straightforward words to glance and select. For a reader it is also highly unlikely that a dozen **I saw you**s will be for them, or maybe even one. A comparable word to 'gas' is perhaps 'City Café' yet there are significant differences. And the outcomes of looking for themselves as a **you** for a reader are quite different, we might equate the reading practice we have outlined above as close in kind to winning a lottery, since the odds of being a **you** are heavily stacked against a reader of the column, unless they choose to play the game in a different way. We will now describe some of these other plays.

◆ Part 2: Faking it up and Sorting them out.

4.1

City Events have been running **I saw you** for several years but it only gained its current double

page spread during 1998, up until then its submissions only filled around half a page. From 1998 onwards the editors have had more submissions than required to fill 2 pages of the magazine (which is now the standard display for **I saw you**.) Submissions rose as the way of mailing them changed: initially they could only be submitted via the postal service and e-mail, and latterly *City Events* set up its own **I saw you** postcard, postbox and collection system. There are 9 venues in each of the 2 cities which have been fitted with an **I saw you** postbox and a stock of **I saw you** postcards, which are stored in a transparent rack directly below the postbox. With a matching metallic silver finish and slightly 'kitsch' logo (see [Figure 1](#)), the cards and postbox make themselves fairly visible in their venues, though they are generally located in passing places near the entrance, or toilets, or other passageways of venues, where, although most customers pass by them they are not in the view of a fixed audience (i.e. in amongst the seating area in a bar or beside the screen in a cinema). They make use, in other words, of the architecture of the building to provide for being seen by numerous passers-by whilst also allowing that someone can pick up or deposit a postcard without it having to be a heavily witnessed and more embarrassing event than need be (see [Figure 3a&b](#) & [Figure 6](#)). These features are elements of **I saw you** available to its writers and readers, though ones that may be ignored by an off-site 'textual' or 'content' analysis of the *City Events* section. And they are of import in ways beyond allowing for discretion in submitting a postcard since they also create a paper trail ([Cussins 1992](#); [Lynch, 1999](#)) which might or might not be called advertising, and which are leading a reading to the **I saw you** section in *City Events*. They are different from advertising in that they also provide for further interactions - a card can be collected, a card can be put back in the rack after being examined, or it can be filled in and posted. Around these **I saw you** sites people can easily converse about their appearance and begin conversations as to whether they would ever actually send an **I saw you**. The combination of seeing **I saw you** and being able to submit a response might be fruitfully compared with web-pages which contain a 'mailto' link, indeed many web- page's use a mailbox as an icon to suggest just such a pairing.

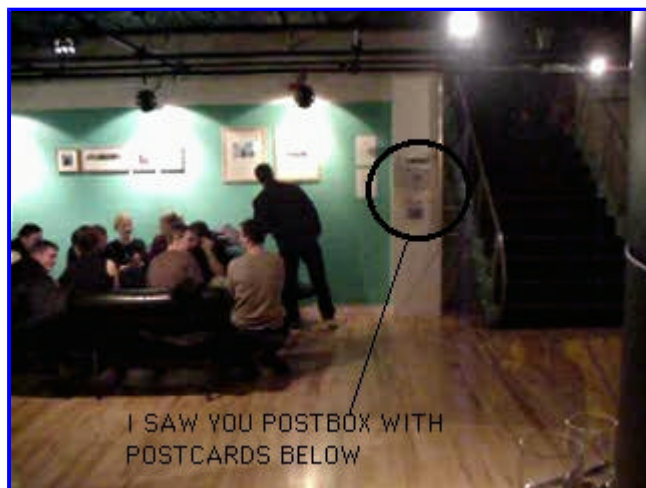
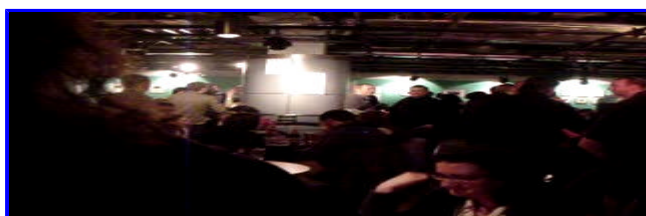


Figure 3a: Short animated clip of **I Saw You** zone in theatre bar on a Saturday night (*Click to play*)



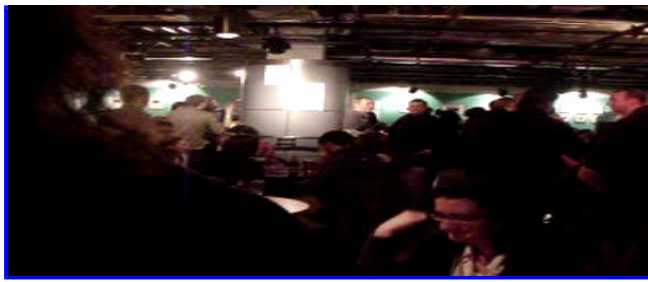


Figure 3b: Animated view in opposite direction (*Click to play*).

4.2

Over the year that we have been collecting material on **I saw you** there was one occasion when whilst out with friends at a venue which had an **I saw you** postbox and cards that an **I saw you** card was written (see [Third Play](#)).^[13] This was not at my (Eric Laurier) instigation, although I did at other times get a class of students to play a shortened time-scale version of **I-Saw-You-Game** as a kind of ethnomethodological classroom lesson.

Second Play:

I saw you glamorous Hungarian; since then I can't stop dreaming of you. It's love! I want my champagne back. Nicole. Box No Z/654/32

4.3

Unlike the first play, I was able to observe the pre-writing and writing of this card. Whilst out drinking at an *I saw you* venue, the friends that I was with had been having a lengthy conversation about a recent Stanley Kubrick film, and in particular one of its opening scenes which involved the female lead character's attempted seduction by a 'suave' Hungarian. Several things were going on in the conversation, the significant part being that the film was being heavily and amusingly criticised for its portrayal of a seduction scene. In particular the Hungarian's technique of taking the lead female's glass of champagne and drinking it dry whilst staring intently into her eyes. At a later stage in the evening we were flicking through *City Events* magazine planning further films to go and see. One of the members of our group decided to read aloud some **I saw you's** from the back of the magazine to work-up some possible jokes. In this mood, the conversation then moved on to planning and making a further joke by drafting a fake postcard. As was described in the previous section, the already submitted **I Saw You's** were used as a guide for the writing and 'faking' of this **I Saw You**.

4.4

As the group searched for an amusing subject for their postcard they returned to their own conversations from earlier about the film. This was then used as the 'encryption' technique for the postcard. Each line was said aloud, and several wordings were tried out aloud before the sentence to be written down was agreed on. And the saying out loud provided an occasion for imitations of the actor's Hungarian accent in the film, several ripostes to his chat-up lines (i.e. '*give me my fucking champagne back*' said angrily, and a lot of laughter). For the reader of this article, why the third play should be involved in the production of any amusement at all may be something of a mystery. 'Well you had to be there at the time'. And this phrase should be taken in relation to the *Rosebud* phenomenon we noted earlier; since joking is a situated activity, and in this case the third play's key situation was much more likely its scene of writing activity than any later part in its flight. Indeed I was the only one who showed a great deal of interest in actually checking to see whether

our 'fake' **I saw you** was published. Although whilst drafting the **I saw you** we did wonder whether our joke might be recognised by other readers as a reference to the film and someone might 'get the joke' and respond to it. We decided this was unlikely since a response from someone not party to any **I saw you** event (in this case a joke rather than a brief encounter) was not really part of how we considered **I saw you** to work. In this way of wondering aloud about how **I saw you** worked we also then questioned whether to use a real address on the 'fake' postcard. The member of the group that took charge of the pen and postcard, and carried out the translation of out loud phrases to the writing, agreed to be taken as the 'author' of the postcard, and thus the **I** also, to test out whether we might get a response, even though we thought it highly unlikely, and it was her address that was submitted as author of the **I saw you** even if she was not the **I**. Authorship for submission was part of the accountability of *City Events* and how they had constructed **I saw you**, as a collection of documents with non-clickable, intermediated and anonymous links for mailing back to. As our group discussed we came to agree upon the understanding that we would make our document accountable, with a genuine name and address, on the premise that a response was unlikely so therefore the 'person with the pen' was not going to be held responsible in that way, and that since our joke was not malicious nor likely to get us into trouble there was no need to fake a name and address as well.

4.5

In this story we can start to re-cast how treating the **I saw you** as we did in Part 1 was simply one possible way of playing the **I saw you** game, making a fake **I saw you** is another engaging possibility. Indeed **Play 1** could well be a fake since we were not able to witness their production by the very nature of the **I saw you** system that we are investigating.^[14] Making a fake is just one possible gloss on what was happening during **Play 2**, and one that is perhaps at its strongest when told post hoc when the occasion is over. In our version of what happened we tried to bring out how much more was going on than faking alone, since at the very least, some commentary on a film was being folded into the joke, as were some lessons in sexual demeanour work. The writing that emerged at the end of the occasion contained only a trace of the occasion from which it emerged and recollecting the occasion was not part of that writing's purpose, in contrast to **Play 1**. This was made all the more apparent to me (Eric Laurier) when after an early draft of this article was read by the 'person with the pen' she confessed that while, as far as the group were concerned, she was just writing down a shared joke, she had adapted the phrasing to include a 'hidden message' for her lover who was not present when the card was written. She thought it unlikely he would find the message, comparing it to a 'message in a bottle'. She built their private potentially shared reading from their having seen the Kubrick film as a memorable moment in their relationship. It was one of the few films they had seen together and to add to the film-as-event's memorability they had disagreed about its quality. During their disagreement her lover had in the film's defense said that he identified with the 'glamorous Hungarian' and a certain other phrase used in the **I saw you** was one that had appeared early in their correspondence and was often repeated in further e-mails. That the 'person with the pen' ended up having her name and address used for the fake postcard was thus not quite the unmotivated act that the group had taken it to be. Messages can be encrypted even when friends are witnesses if they are not able to detect that encrypting is what is happening, and what better camouflage than the action already being seen as encrypting.

4.6

There are other mediators involved who are relatively under-rated because they are not at the obvious scene of writing but are nevertheless part and parcel in a non-obvious way of making sure an **I saw you** stays in flight and has a chance of reaching other readers. Following the document's route from its individual or collective, genuine or fake drafting, we will shift, as the **I saw you** does,

to the scene with which we began Part 2, the postbox. It has, as Latour ([Latour, 1992](#); [Latour, 1994](#); [Latour, 1999](#)) has explicated for variously hinges, speed bumps, walls and fences some useful social actions folded into it. It guards the postcards and hides them from public inspection once they are posted until they are collected, in that no one except a keyholder can open the postbox. By the construction of its slot it will only accept roughly postcard-sized objects and not allow hands inside. A contractual agreement over privacy and publication which might have been written on paper and signed by a submitter of an **I saw you** alongside a representative of *City Events* is shifted spatially, temporally and materially into the form of a postbox which then stands in for and is part of the staff of *City Events*.

4.7

After being collected from the stewardship of the postbox an **I saw you** becomes an item of a different kind for the distribution company which delivers the *City Events* magazine and empties its postboxes. Although an **I saw you** is an open letter ([Derrida, 1987](#)), its open-ness is of minor significance as it becomes a different kind of object while it is being collected from its postbox amongst several other cards, at that point it fits into the distribution companies activities, to be added to a postbag, carried out to a van, added to a pile of other bags, driven across the city and directed to the appropriate collection point at the *City Events* offices. Once there the postcard goes through a further transformation:

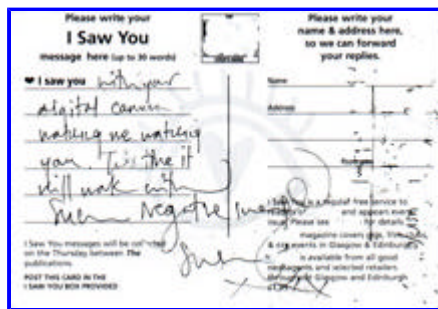


Figure 4: Reading handwriting as showing someone's hand (*Click to enlarge*)

4.8

At *City Events* one day a fortnight is set aside by one of the editors and their secretary to sort through the **I saw you**s. They have a pile of cards often in excess of a hundred on their desks which require sequences of scanned-reading, sorting, accepting, discarding, closer-reading, selecting and typing. An **I saw you** is at this point inserted into the office of *City Events* workflow, where issues of speed, efficiency, interpretation, etc. in transforming postcard **I saw you**s into columnar **I saw you**s take hold. Addresses have to be recorded in a different file from **I saw you** 'messages', and assigned a PO Box Number. The **I saw you** becomes a document to be 'edited'. As we have noted above some kinds of editing cannot be done on these items, such as the correction of all spelling errors since spelling errors may be meaningful parts of the 'encrypting' of the postcards. More significantly the editors are faced with diverse handwritings which provide for further difficulties since their legibility is non-standardised in comparison to typewriting (see [Figure 4](#)). However writers of **I saw you** are not blind to these problems and assist by the use of underlining for emphasis or quotation marks for marking out deliberately mis-spelt names or unusual spellings. Equally an **I saw you** does not allow, in its one-day turnaround, for cross-checking with authors via verbal questions about meaning or proof-reading, and such back-tracking and verification of authorship and 'intention' are clearly not practicable for small ads and their submitters. Those kinds of workflows are part of the organisation of journalism, novel-writing and of course the publication of academic articles. Elements of the work of editing

have already been delegated to the postcards themselves which by their size, division and lining (see [Figure 4](#)) enforce word-limits on submissions. In this way the editors extend their reach via the postcards, whilst providing resources for those who will write on the postcards (for comparable analyses of medical records in the work of diagnosis, distribution of action etc. (see [Berg, 1996](#))).

4.9

Let us now consider briefly some good reasons for having 'badly' handwritten postcards rather than some form of typed electronic submission. As we just noted, the editors extend their organising via the postcards, handwriting in its irregularity may seem to be just a problem in the editing process since it slows down the reading and translation of postcards into columnar ads. Or it would be were it not that handwriting assists in the selection of submissions since 'faking' postcards is a matter of concern for the *City Events* editors (though not quite in the way suggested by the faking going on in **Play 2**).

4.10

A pattern that the editors try to detect through looking at the handwriting ([Figure 4](#)) is multiple submissions by one author, rather than that an **I saw you** might not be a genuine **I** having seen a genuine **you**. Part of their strategy is to make sure that each **I saw you** has been written by a different author, and not one 'mad' submitter who wishes to have thirty pieces published (there are actually significant rational reasons for multiple submission which we will move on to in a moment). Individual handwriting though certainly not impossible to forge is nevertheless difficult to do so, and while typing from handwriting, the editors keep watch for multiple postcards in the same hand. Particularly postcards mentioning the same place, such as 'the *City Café*'. Why this should be so is because it is vulnerable to attempts by venues such as the *City Café* to use it illegitimately for advertising. The editors in their role as competent regulators of and organisers of the small ads, as part of their ongoing commitment to their readership as well as to the advertisers, spend some time making sure that the boundaries between critical review, advertising, promotion and reader's submissions are visible and intelligible to their writers and readers. There are strips of sponsorship advertising which run alongside submissions but they are clearly marked (see [Figure 2](#)).

4.11

The practice of using place names to narrow down the range of possible '**you**s implicates editors, and venue owners and workers as go-betweens in the **I**'s hoped-for liaisons. In an obvious (though often hidden) way, the latter provide the material infrastructure for '**I Saw You**' postcards to be supplied, and sustain the 'ambience' for **I**'s to encounter each other in the first place. Here we need once again to spell out a little more clearly how a collection of columnarised **I saw you**s can be performed via another situated action.

4.12

One of the unanticipated by-products of **I saw you** is that the uses of place names for the reasons spelt out in Part 1, can be roughly counted and assembled during a 'scan' of the **I saw you** section as indicators as to where the good-places-to-go are in the 2 cities for the purposes of being noticed. We can go further since the 'paper trail' leads not only from those places to the scanning of columns of *City Events* magazines but back to those places, since a reader of the **I saw you** column can now know that by attending those places they are indicating a greater open-ness to flirtation and the initiation of chatting-up routines ([Cavan, 1973](#)). In other words these places are, by one possible characterisation, the popular 'singles' bars and cafes of the 2 cities. Yet this characterisation is inappropriate since as is apparent from what we are describing, the cues are more subtle since they are definitely not direct advertising of those places as 'singles' bars. Also

from the **I saw you** that are submitted in association with certain venues, a reader starts to form an impression of the clientele that visit those venues. For instance the use of quotations in French from an arthouse film in association with a cinema begins to give clues as to what categories of potential romantic partners a reader might find there.

4.13

Thus the editors of *City Events* are well aware that **I saw you** is scanned and read as a kind of recommendation system by some of their readers. They seek to guard against its exploitation by venues, some of whom are pursuing 'that sector of the market' and are as aware of this local production of informal knowledge as are the editors. Playing the **I saw you** game can be, for the venue owners, a way of sneaking, via numerous 'fake' postcards mentioning the name of their bar or café, advertising into a place where a certain clientele can be targeted, but where advertising will not be seen and critically interpreted by readers as advertising.

4.14

So the practice of using place names to narrow down the possible **you's** provides a pay-off for our go- betweens. Firstly for editors and owners of the magazine, to whom **I Saw You** provides a form of surreptitious advertising in the kinds of place where editors imagine that their target readers have romantic encounters. Similarly, venue owners are guaranteed some implicit recommendations, made by their customers to others with noticeably similar attributes. The coincidence of these imagined reciprocities and lived out reciprocal actions can be seen as a community of practice ([Wenger, 1998](#)), located in those places where members negotiate the meaning of **I saw you** cards.

◆ Part 3: Testing Love via the 'I Saw You' Method.

5.1

It may seem that we have exhaustively described the workings of our phenomenon and we may well have exhausted the reader of this article in our seemingly obsessive devotion to the detail of all that happens through an **I saw you**. The point of tiresomely tugging out so many threads of the spaces of **I saw you** is to show their procedural logics and incarnate reflexivity and related inseparability from the contexts which gain and give sense to. Along the long way of following **I saw you** we have pointed toward some features which demonstrate the transformation, stabilisation, categorising and sorting work that documents require during their transportation around an orderly and seemingly straightforward 'system'.^[15] An **I saw you** document is not the same thing as it moves from one place to the next, it requires different kinds of ordering, categorising and organising work along the way, and it is always moving, faster or slower than other things in motion and every once in a while it connects emotionally (see, also [Jaffe 1999, p136](#)). Our two previous parts looked at what might we call the 'first' use of an **I saw you** for an attempted description of a brief encounter by the **I** toward a response from the **you** the **I** was looking for, and then various ways that such an avowed use was open to tactical disguises and other ends which seemingly had very little to do with the romantic sense of the **I saw you** system. Many of the features of the 'first' use of an **I saw you** implied a minimal quantity of shared 'private' mind/language, tied to a maximum word limit of 30 words, whether the game was being played genuinely, ironically, collaboratively, commercially etc. Our **Third Play** will devote attention to two people, a 'couple' with an implied 'private' mind/language writing and reading **I saw you** ([Coulter, 1991](#)). By private we do not mean 'in the head' of one person but rather the attempt to assemble phrases which index events, moments, jokes and declarations that are private to people in love. Gathering a codex of intimacies which shows to the lovers that they know one another in a special

sense.

5.2

The vignette from our fieldwork is based on a story told by an 'informant' on learning that I (Eric Laurier) was doing research on **I saw you**.

Third Play

Vignette:

Late on a Friday night a group of five friends were out drinking in a bar in the city that had an **I saw you** postbox and postcards. Slightly wild with alcohol they decided to amuse themselves filling in **I saw you** postcards and posting them in the postbox. Of the five, two had been in a loving relationship for about 4 months. As each of the party took turns, they were urged on by the others to do something outrageous. So one wrote a card about a guy who had tried to chat her up while she was ordering drinks 'just to see what would happen'. Another made up a card which was about nobody at all but made everyone else laugh by its mockery of the form of normal **I saw you**. When it came to the couple, one of them decided to take the game seriously, she hid her postcard while writing it so that no one else could see it, though they could see she was writing one. Then allowing everyone, including her boyfriend, to witness; she posted the postcard in the box. When she came back, she was asked what she wrote, and refused to disclose what it was and simply said that they would have to wait and see. When the couple went home at night, he again asked her what she wrote. She refused to tell him, saying only that it would be a surprise. He waited three weeks until *City Events* came out with their **I saw you**, not all of their submission had been published since some of them had included a fair selection of censorable statements and others were basically illegible. Having bought a copy of the magazine, he scanned the columns of **I saw you** looking for his name, or one of their nicknames for each other but could not see anything obvious. Flummoxed he read each **I saw you** word by word until he found about four entries that he thought were possibilities. He wondered whether his girlfriend's **I saw you** had maybe not been published after all. With no way of discerning which was the actual **I saw you** he started to plan ways of not giving away the fact that he had not been able to identify an intimate message from his loved one in the columns of the magazine.

5.3

In this vignette the couple have brought out a further feature of the display of private messages in a public place. Methods of 'hiding in the light' also provide for a show of love via their encryptions ([Hebdige, 1988](#)). Their **I saw you** had no simple clues like: venue names, nicknames, a heard phrase, an order of Nachos. We as the non-addressed of their **I saw you** can still read their secret message and as part of that reading realise that it almost certainly is addressed to someone even though it does not solicit more from us than a sense perhaps of indifference or curiosity as to what joke, sexual practice or catchphrase, this '*Rosebud*' type phrase might refer to for its **I** and **you**. Our reading is perhaps parcelled up with the reading of an academic type article ([Smith, 1990](#)) and as a reading of this kind we are even less likely read as the you in the vignette did. We have to realise he was not reading in the particular mode which is learned by academics for 'critically' reading an article or paper, thesis or book, which, although involved, leans toward an ironic reading. ^[16] He was reading the **I saw you** in a similar way to that in which we might read a love

letter (or of course an **I saw you** should we be unlucky or lucky enough to find ourselves there), with butterflies in our stomachs; that kind of receptivity and engagement. Not that this reading is more emotional than an academic reading, the two reading modes are rather in different registers and their registering of an **I saw you** provides yet more enactments.

5.4

If we step backwards in to the vignette and consider the trail which leads to this way of reading we have several witnessable events which sequence the lovely apprehensiveness of such a reading. The first of which involves not only the couple but also other significant witnesses whose gaze adds to the significance and 'public' trial of doing an **I saw you** (see [Figure 5](#) and [Figure 6](#)). Witnesses who may also ask at a later stage whether he successfully found her message in amongst all the other **I saw you**s . Who may or may not have been able to read what she wrote or who may have been told by her what she wrote.



Figure 5: Witnessably writing an **I saw you** (*Click to play*)

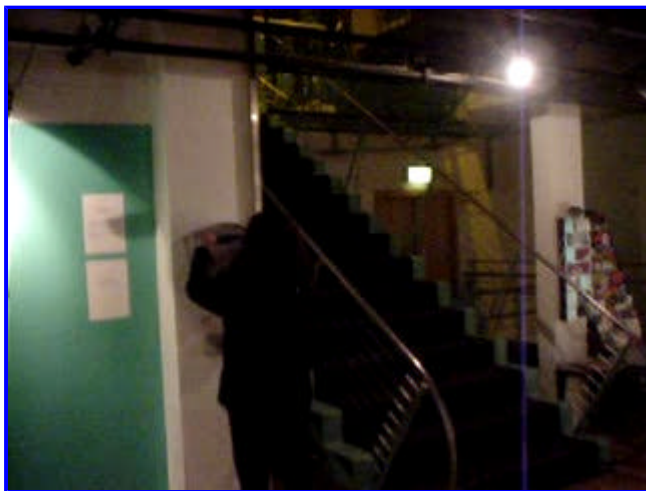


Figure 6: Witnessably posting an **I saw you** (*Click to play*)

5.5

If we then jump to the end of the vignette, one of the places that is all too easy to ignore, just as might ignore the postbox (whether we are involved in the design of an electronic network or as general researchers of social and cultural worlds) is the magazine rack (see [Figure 7](#)). It certainly seems an unlikely site in a route toward a couple playing a game of love. Yet for the boyfriend as for other readers of **I saw you**s before trying to find the **I saw you**, even before finding the small ads section in *City Events* magazine, the magazine itself has to be found in a place that sells such items. As he said, he felt butterflies in his stomach on seeing the magazine on the shelf.

5.6

Not all of the places that stock *City Events* keep it amongst other magazines as in [Figure 7](#), for

some, like cinemas and art galleries, it may be one of the only magazines kept there. Picking up *City Events* is not solely about 'finding'; its display is in its placing on magazine racks or at the receptions of art galleries and cinemas. It is in this way that it is a known source of what is going on and where is good to go, and is taken as such a central source of information about the 2 cities (as we very quickly suggested in Part 1). It is by its appearance on a magazine rack that is also taken to be trustworthy, and also assessable in terms of its style and topics or indeed 'content' by its proximity to other magazines on a magazine rack (i.e. men's magazines are gathered in part of one shelf and computer magazines on a different shelf).



Figure 7: A non-deceptive magazine rack (*Click to enlarge*)

5.7

For the boyfriend in the vignette, the trouble is, even after successfully completing all the mundane, if anticipatory, steps toward finding the **I saw you** section, and thereby being resolutely sure that he was looking at the trusted, public, current issue of *City Events* magazine, and doubly sure by seeing the familiar logo and format of **I saw you**, he was not able to be certain which **I saw you** was addressed to him.

5.8

In *City Events* magazine he was deprived of her handwriting as a clue or even the wine stain that had been left on the card. Suddenly sad, he then began to wonder how much she really knew him or he really knew her since at least 4 of the messages seemed plausible, they were still just strangers like any other people sending an **I saw you**. Just before phoning her on his mobile, he rehearsed one possible way out of this dilemma: it was just a game they were playing after all...

5.9

In part this vignette shows how practices of reading and writing can shift time frames of emotion, such that a local order should not be treated as always founded on face-to-face in a Cartesian space ([McHoul, 1996](#)). It may be face-to-magazine or indeed very little facework in a traditional sense, may be going on at all, though if we were to witness the boyfriend reading *City Events*, he would without a doubt be observably concentrating on what he was reading. Further the vignette raises the matter of how some more work will be required to decrypt the **I saw you** columns, when and if the boyfriend raises the issue of the **I saw you** and that this will place the **I saw you** that was written in a different light again. This work will be required in part because of the lack of an author's name for each article, since as ([Berg, 1996](#)) details for documents in a clinical setting even highly abbreviated remarks on a record can be understood through reference to who wrote a short note. So for the boyfriend, were he be able to find his partner's name attached to an **I saw you** then he would begin to unpack what followed on the basis of the 'privately' shared mind of their partnership. Of course that is not quite the point the point of the game they were playing.

◆ Concluding Remarks

6.1

We have sought to learn a little about recognising an encounter and finding who the **I** and the **you** were, to learn a little more about the situated accomplishments of writing and reading and recognition from a 'primitive example' ([Lynch, 1993:300](#)). We replaced human feelings in amongst the various artefacts, actions and actors which co-constitute a particular gang of instances of a feeling becoming mutual. By following a (sometimes) presencing text in flight we have shown how love is shot through with work, not just for some members who might be considered its **I** and its **you**, but is constituted through the work of others in other places (i.e editors of magazines), and that their attempts, accomplishments and anxieties do not fly above the ordinary observable things (such as 'George Michael beards', magazine racks or handwriting) since those are the very things through and in which they are distributed.

6.2

From the lives of the documents we have followed, we have shown how they are transformed and that their meaningfulness is not guaranteed either by an essence identifiable as either their contents or their context. Their meaningfulness is reliant on a series of orderings, which they are constitutive of and in their ordering even as they are stabilised for practical purposes, they are constantly becoming something else. Making sense of documents in terms of working out to what event, to what author, to what reader, to what kind of site they refer is indeed the 'real time' game to which many readers devote themselves through various methods such as going to bars, flirting with strangers, buying magazines and scanning columns of text (which have already been ordered through an editorial process).

6.3

We are observing something quite incredible occurring within **I Saw You's**, we are witnesses to attempts by a person to describe (in a mere 30 words) what another person would recognise as a scene they were involved in with no ordinary indexical method for addressing that person (i.e. by looking at them, pointing at them, using their phone number, e-mail address or paper postal address). We are also witness to them trying to create a sense of presence in their pointing away from the scene that will create a 'frisson', a 'glimmer' of recognition of not just the appropriate person but 'a renewal, on the spot' of their brief encounter ([Latour 1998](#)). We are also witness in the last vignette to one of thousands of tests to which people in love put themselves.

6.4

Two final points we would like to make arise from the concerns of our research project (Living Memory) with social memory or collective remembering ([Bannon & Kuutti 1996](#); [Bowker 2000](#); [Middleton & Edwards 1990](#)). Firstly, our loose usage of the term 'encryption' to refer to the literary methods used to bring off a mutual re-cognition of private events in public. We do not claim by the use of this term that these methods can be extended to any and all public communication, or to other media as a formalised or technical means of encryption. Our claim is more in keeping with the study of 'genre repertoire' ([Orlikowski and Yates 1994](#)), that is that the evolution and extensibility of such methods is a matter worth investigating.

6.5

Secondly, an **I saw you** has a relatively short 'life' as a document, it is relatively ephemeral, though as we have pointed out some of the most poetic **I saw you's** are selected by the editors for re-printing, at which point as documents they are selected out via the work of editing for yet another different kind of reading as 'exemplary' **I saw you's**. For most of these documents the column is relevant only in its own present tense, which is part and parcel of the publishing cycle of

the magazine. Old **I saw you**s are forgotten for good reasons. Their addressivity is not eternal, the **I** and the **you** of each submission change, emotions shift and displace themselves. Very few of these romantic requests are responded to and when the next edition of the magazine comes out they quickly enter the collective process of forgetting.

◆ Notes

¹In paying such a visit we are performing Sack's gloss, for a full explanation see ([Garfinkel, 1992](#)) and ([Sacks, 1972](#))

²For an argument along these lines about commodification of personhood see ([Wernick, 1991](#))

³An outstanding rendering of Oliver North as an accomplished deconstructor of text and meaning during his famous trial over the Arms to Iraq scandal is given in ([Lynch, 1996](#))

⁴Some of the key critiques of the subordinating opposition between paper and electronic documents have come from the workplace studies of Computer Supported Co-operative Work (CSCW), in particular ([Harper, 1998](#); [Mambrey & Robinson, 1997](#); [Suchman, 1987](#))

⁵Note 'real-world' is surrounded by quotation marks to indicate our suspicion of a term which seems to imply a mundane world as domain which is separate from non-real virtual worlds or cyberspace(s) as domains. However 'real world' in the design of information and communication technologies has been used as a marker for a useful corrective to the often overly mentalist, abstract and fantastical versions of shared spaces used by designers and engineers.

⁶Having used the possessive pronoun 'its' several times in the preceding sentence, we would want to warn the reader off making any a- priori assumptions about a city neighbourhood as a pre-existing, superordinate region. For the practical purposes of research project agreement between designers, ethnographers & engineers a fairly arbitrary UK postal code area and parish division were used.

⁷There are necessarily a multitude of definitions of a Living Memory system since as a prototype design and engineering project it has to hold together the interests of interaction designers, concept designers, multi-agent system engineers, information management scientists, computer software coders and their non-human counterparts software agents, database structures, transmitters, fibre-optic cabling, European Commission funding programmes, industrial funding etc. For a more detailed set of definitions (which may take the reader several days or weeks to gain an adequate grasp of) the project's deliverables can be visited at <http://www.??>, for a shorter summary see [Whyte et al \(forthcoming\)](#)

⁸Labelling the readers, writers and editors of a dating column as a community may seem like inappropriate use of the term 'community,' not though if we consider the varied work done on virtual communities ([Buckner, 1999](#)), communities of practice ([Wenger, 1998](#)), anthropology of reading ([Livingston, 1995](#)) and ethnography of television watching ([Morley, 1992](#)).

⁹'*City Events*' is not the actual name of the publication, all PO box numbers in the quotes from **I saw you** have also been changed. Changing names and other identifies as we are doing here is

indeed one example of managing privacy in publication. It is not foolproof, nor is any particular method of encryption which also must make itself accountable in various ways.

¹⁰For Living Memory the distributed presence of these many interfaces for **I Saw You** in informal gathering places provided an interesting equivalent for a possible electronic submission point for an electronic postcard. They are an additional mediator for **I Saw You** which takes its point of connection right to the present/place of so many 'brief encounters.'

¹¹ We are treating **I Saw You** as a language game from which we can learn about our topics of interest in the way that has been outlined as an antiscepticist reading of Wittgenstein's comments on 'rule following' ([Bogen, 1999](#); [Lynch, 1992](#); [Wittgenstein, 1953](#)).

¹² T. Lawson & Anna Claybourne reporting in *The Scotsman* newspaper, Tuesday 16th May 2000, p3 on a romance that bloomed from an **I Saw You** provide a wonderful example of how other intermediaries (i.e. James Thin (a placename), a member of staff, a photocopier and 'the tea room wall') can help a you be found. It also signals how using a locational formulation involving a workplace can be particularly successful (pointed out by '*City Events*' editors) since there a team of decoders at work yet it then also increases the risk of the sender and addressee being liable to exposure, embarrassment and public rejection. The ad read:

"I Saw You working in James Thin. South Bridge. Friday 2/2/96. 7.30pm. You tall(ish), long brown hair. 3rd year Economics. I interrupted your phone call, bought some books, chatted but left without asking for your number. My mistake. Box No u/273/9"

It might well have been a forlorn attempt: Ms Leslie was unaware of the **I Saw You** column. Her friends, however, were not: they recognised the girl in the advert and took action. The trainee accountant, now 23, said:

"I walked into the shop one night and somebody had spotted the ad, blown it up, and pinned it on the tea-room wall." "I was flattered and a little scared. I was worried it may be someone weird who might start following me home. All boys I told said, no, don't go near him. But all my female friends said that they wished it had happened to them."

¹³The mis-spelling of glamorous has been preserved both in *City Events* and in quoting again in the article since such mis-spellings are often, though not always, part of the poetics, recognisability and addressivity of writing a submission, similar to the use of nicknames or 'a George Michael beard.'

¹⁴A further lesson from the 'faking' of 'Nicole', easily detectable though its fakery is, is whether the 'fluidity' of identity that is associated with internet chat rooms and e-mail correspondences is somehow restricted to those computer mediated communications.

¹⁵As [Latour \(1998\)](#) puts it these are the de-formations necessary to make in-formation. An **I Saw You** through de-forming for in-forming goes some way to being rendered an 'immutable mobile', though we can offer it as a case which escapes Latour's bi-polar opposition of the utter nowness of 'I Love You' as their condition is neither quite immutable, all that mobile nor have they achieved quite the condition of felicity of a loving couple saying 'I love you'.

¹⁶In tune with the ironic manner of quoting or referring to the 'beliefs' of ordinary people, or the 'folk' ([Slack, 1998](#); [De Certeau, 1984](#)).

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