

The Enjoyment of Space: The university campus in students' narratives and photography

Introduction

The view that a sense of belonging in an educational setting enhances learning has gained ground in educational literature (see Sagan 2008; Temple, 2007; Temple and Barnett, 2007). With that in mind, I invited undergraduate students from various programmes at the University of East London to take part in a¹ study that would explore belonging at the university's Docklands Campus. Students who agreed to participate, twenty five in total, were asked to take photographs on their mobiles of places that made them feel at home, and, upon their return, discuss five of them in a short interview. Prior to the task, I introduced the terms 'belonging' and 'feeling at home' and gave the students a brief outline of the hypothesis I wished to explore.

Most students spoke with enthusiasm about the places they had photographed but hardly endorsed the idea of feeling 'at home' at university. How could one feel at home at a place associated with deadlines and pressure? 'Home' means relaxation, sofa, television, or, in the case of most mature students, a different set of responsibilities. And what did belonging have to do with getting a degree? At the end of the interviews, however, several students spontaneously declared that they had very much enjoyed the experience of taking the photographs and talking about them. They commented enthusiastically that they had never looked at the campus *that way*, or noted that, although they did not quite know what to expect at first, they had enjoyed the experience of taking a look at their own routines and at being 'there', at the campus. Others, not knowing what to make of the experiment, asked me, with some hesitation, if the information they had given me was what I wanted.

As the hypothesis of belonging was not being confirmed, I began to rethink the significance of space for the students. Something was beginning to emerge: evidence of an enjoyment of space which was intersecting with the ordinary uses of the campus but remained quite distinct from it and emerged as a response – not to say reaction – to the idea of 'belonging', as I will explain below. This led me to look at the pictures with the 'sound off' (Kingsbury, 2010) and at the interview data 'awry' (Proudfoot, 2010), drawing on Lacanian psychoanalysis. Lacanians accept that meaning does not reside exclusively in what the speaking subject intentionally expresses through words. Meaning is also communicated through what is *not said*, circumvented, avoided or left out of an intended message. They therefore suggest that as researchers we should be mindful of what exceeds intentional

¹ This research was funded by the UEL Small Grants Programme (2011-12). For the design of this research I drew on Dr Olivia Sagan's study of the uses of space by arts students at the University of the Arts, London. I wish to thank Raymond Campbell (PhD candidate), who conducted some of the interviews for the present study.

communication. Lacanians also accept that space is not merely the background of individuals' actions; space does things *for* individuals. It is therefore an 'outside' in direct communication with the 'inside' (subject, unconscious). For that reason, practices of space can 'mean' alongside and often instead of words, and constitute an invaluable body of evidence when it comes to understanding individual or collective behaviour. Lacanian psychoanalysis therefore invites us to look at both words and images *differently*.

In this paper I discuss the enjoyment of space in a Lacanian framework. I argue that the enjoyment of space in the university setting appears as 'additional' or 'other' to the main purpose of education, which is the acquisition of knowledge and a degree. While this purpose is achieved over a long period of time – usually three years – the enjoyment of space is more immediate and organised in daily or quasi-daily cycles involving repetition of movements and regular habits that often go unnoticed. 'Unnoticed', however, does not mean 'meaningless'. These 'unnoticed' trajectories can be gleaned when interview and photographic data are examined *differently*, through the lens of the drive. The notion of the drive is introduced below. As it is one of the most complex Lacanian notions, its introduction is preceded by a brief account of the three order of existence, the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real. The drive belongs to the latter. Apart from drawing on the notion of the drive, this paper is organised around the relationship between the outside-space and the inside-subject. This relationship is known as 'extimacy' (see Evans, 1996: 160) and is also introduced below.

The theoretical section is followed by a data presentation section labelled 'the spatial organisation of enjoyment',

, a term I borrow from Psychoanalytic Cultural Geography. However, my understanding of the spatial organisation of enjoyment and the use of the drive are different from those proposed in Cultural Geography. My understanding of the drive, for instance, encompasses the notion of montage, which is particularly relevant to photography, and the notion of the 'new subject', which is developed by Lacan in the *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1986) and accounts for the effects an understanding of the trajectory of the drive has on the speaking subject. Thus, unlike cultural geographers who posit aspects of the Real/drive as a pre-requisite for the exploration of space, I also focus on what happens when students become aware of the very trajectory they perform and subsequently discuss in my presence.

A partial topography of the Docklands Campus

'Situated in a stunning waterfront setting' as the official UEL website announces, the Docklands Campus is a 2000 development across the canal from the City airport runway.

The majority of students and staff arrive by the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) which, like the canal, forms the other notional boundary of the campus. Walking from the DLR towards the campus, one has East Building to their left and West Building to the right, separated by a square. The two buildings, which house lecture and seminar rooms and offices, are mainly used by social sciences students. The library is situated behind the West Building and has a canal view. A row of accommodation blocks, known as 'the drums' due to their cylindrical design, is situated in front of the above buildings. Other buildings on the campus, such as the Arts building, the Knowledge Dock adjacent to the library and the new Sports Dock are not mentioned by the students.

The Lacanian topology of subjectivity and its relation to space

a. the Real and the drive

In this section I begin by offering a very general outline of the three Lacanian orders of existence (Evans, 1996: 58), the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real. As Evans points out (1996: 131), Lacan was keen on emphasising that existence occurs on all three orders and that the three are structurally related. However, their clinical and theoretical separation create the necessary perspective for understanding the composite nature of experience. For the present paper, the introduction of the Symbolic and the Imaginary are necessary for appreciating the role of the Real and its components.

The Symbolic order is generally understood to encompass the following: the order of language, which implies mediation and representation; of the Law, which refers to the hierarchical, designated and organised relations in which we are placed as subjects; of ideology, moral principles and values; of culture and society. The Symbolic order arises with the child's entry into language and its separation from the mother. It therefore entails a symbolic acceptance of the 'Father' as a representative of that order and an assumption of one's position in the world, in a nexus of pre-existing social, cultural and familiar relations. At the same time, the Symbolic is directly related to the unconscious, the repressed and inaccessible to consciousness part of our existence. ... Thus, the Symbolic is characterised by a double alterity and often referred to as the big 'Other': both the essential alterity (otherness) of the subject as unknown to itself (unconscious), and the otherness of mediated/represented reality (see Evans, 1996: 133; Bowie, 1991: 88-121). In practical terms the Symbolic encompasses the face value and significance of our activities. The decision to attend university, for instance, relates to one's position in society and culture, involves ideological and cultural motives, requires rational planning and setting of goals but also corresponds to the subject's history, needs and desires which might not be immediately justified by the social parameters of one's existence.

The Imaginary is generally understood as the order of vision and images. It is also the order of responding to these images via process of identification. Wanting to be like others, for instance, copying their manners or trying to doing what they do, could be located in this

order. Falling in love or the investment of others with emotion also belong to the Imaginary. Lacan locates the Freudian ego – a cluster of organised and relatively inflexible ideas about the self – on the order of the Imaginary and often considers the latter as an obstacle to accessing the truth of the unconscious (see Evans, 1996: 82-3). Yet the function of the Imaginary is no less important for existence than that of the Symbolic: imagine a world with no influences from external images or from others, no passionate pursuit of goals, nothing to ‘capture our imagination’.

The Real is the order of the unrepresented, that which resists symbolization and remains repressed or unassimilable, outside language and consciousness (Evans, 1999:160). Unrepresented does not mean ‘lost’ but entails the possibility of ‘returning’ (e.g. return of the repressed) or surfacing in some manner. In very simple terms, the Real is important for this disruptive power. The notion has found wide application in various fields, from art and literature to politics and the critique of ideology. The Real is therefore not a mere repository of traumatic events and repressed desires but a potential source of significant insight into experiences, practices, motivations, beliefs and actions. There also is another, more literal sense to the term Real: it refers to the simple, naked materiality of the external world (Evans, 1996:159-160). We will examine its dual status below.

At the same time, components of the Real, such as the drive and the object *a*, partake of the Symbolic order. A quick theoretical detour into the intimate relationship between the Symbolic and the Real is necessary at this point as it concerns the notion of *jouissance*, the enjoyment which has origins in the Real and which, as I will explain, is implicitly served by the drive and *the object a* in the Symbolic. Lacan’s argument is that the child’s entry into the Symbolic and Language come about as a ‘mixed blessing’. On the one hand, it introduces the ability to represent one’s desires in language and achieve their satisfaction; on the other, it entails the loss of a more immediate form of satisfaction known as *jouissance*. *Jouissance* refers to the baby’s close relation to the maternal body, the latter representing the first object to be lost and henceforth to be designated as *object a*. Although this obscure archaeology of lost objects might appear exaggerated, Lacan considers it absolutely vital when conveying the idea that the Symbolic order (Other) is never complete, autonomous, closed or impenetrable. Something from the Real can always challenge it. At the same time, he is also keen on demonstrating that social, cultural and ideological phenomena have their routes in psychic reality.

It is for similar reasons that the notion of the drive requires attention. The drive harks back to the Freudian notion of the death drive and the philosophical opposition of life and death. However the drive that interests us is a force; imagine it as irreducible and constant psychic energy. The drive is ‘plugged’ into the Symbolic order and receives satisfaction via symbolic objects and activities. However, it has its own object, the object *a* which, as we already know, can never attain because it is a lost object. The Lacanian drive therefore resembles a detour, a looping trajectory around a missing object. Lacan locates enjoyment (*jouissance*)

in this pretty pointless looping motion, and again, recognises its significance for the potential subversion of the Symbolic. Lacanians systematically drawn on the notion of the drive in order to explain a wider range of phenomena; for instance, why people or communities persist in practices that may appear meaningless or incompatible with their expressed aims and intentions, or, why they commit acts which appear to be unmotivated, detrimental to them or totally devoid of pleasure. What I wish to highlight at this point is the idea that an apparently superficial task can reveal another source of pleasure and motivation that are not properly evaluated or even valued from a Symbolic perspective alone. To put it rather bluntly, an educational system oriented towards success rates does not seem to make room for the value and enjoyment stemming from everyday experience. Yet there is definitely *something else* arising when the lens of academic success is cast aside. Can we ignore it? Should we ignore it? The present paper does the very least: points to ways in which interview data might be interpreted as an instance of its palpable existence.

b. The drive and of notions extimacy in Cultural Geography

I continue this theoretical introduction by clarifying the proposition that space and spatial practices are intimately linked to subjectivity and the Real via the notion of extimacy. Although the proposition that space and inner world interact seems fairly straightforward and even self-evident, it is 'innovative' in at least two senses. First, it challenges the opacity of the 'inner' world by proposing that what is often not fully known to the speaking subject itself – unrepresented – can be conveyed by simple spatial practices. At the same time, it challenges the common (mis)conception that the thinking-reflexive agent is in command of external reality and space. Later we will try to think a different approach to reflexivity and the points at which it is aided by other aspects of the psychic process.

Kingsbury (2007) shows how ordinary everyday practices can express 'inner' subjectivity. He discusses the case of 'Support the Troops' magnets often displayed by residents of mid-American states in support of the war in Iraq. The practise, he notes, illustrates the *overdetermined* and *dynamic nature of space*. The magnets support a constellation of psychic pleasures and defences, including the exhibitionist thrill of displaying while driving one's political beliefs, receiving narcissistic gratification for seeing one's convictions 'summed up' in the form of a car magnet, and warding off of the anxiety of doing something different or even critiquing the war (Kingsbury, 2007:245). Thus, Kingsbury concludes, the ribbon magnets do not simply stand in for people's support and beliefs; rather, people support and believe *through* the medium of the ribbon magnets. Subjectivity, therefore, does not take place only when an *agent* is actively doing something, but rather when another thing (person or object) is doing it *for* the agent (Kingsbury, 2007:247). In that sense, it is not conscious intentions but *the spatial organisation of enjoyment* that 'speaks' subjectivity itself.

The close relationship between the 'inside' and the 'outside' described above is known as *extimacy*. Extimacy (*extimité*) is Lacan's neologism derived by joining 'exteriority' and 'intimacy', and pointing at how psychoanalysis problematizes the opposition between the inside and the outside (Evans, 1996: 58-9), drawing on the notion of the Real both as unassimilable and as simple, naked materiality of the external world.

The spatial organisation of subjectivity and the Real can offer new insights into research questions and can have important methodological implications. Consider the case reported by Proudfoot and the difficulties he encountered when researching the national pride of Canadians of Italian extraction during the 2006 World Cup. Proudfoot reports being confronted with incomprehension, silence and even hostility from his interviewees when asking direct questions about their national allegiance or about their preference for watching matches at the cafés of the Italian quarter in Vancouver: 'People are cautious and resistant when they have to signify their enjoyment in interviews' (2010: 515), he notes. At the same time, he observed the abundance of non-discursive (Real) elements in the scene: the elation, the shouting, the chanting, and even the tears that overcame one man who tried to articulate his feelings after an Italian victory (Proudfoot, 2010: 511). Proudfoot also found that while fans were unlikely to account for how and why they enjoy football as Italians, they were eager to talk at length about the teams, their style of play and their tactics, 'in short how *they organised their enjoyment* in relation to sport' (2010: 515, emphasis added). He therefore started *looking awry*, situating the object of research (nationality and national pride) at the periphery of his questions, focusing instead on the organisation of enjoyment. Regarding the methodological importance of such a procedure he adds: 'What psychoanalysis can teach us methodologically is that *looking and speaking awry* are key to capturing the extra-discursive dimension of enjoyment in interviews. Questions about enjoyment must necessarily *focus on ritual rather than attempt to directly confront the Thing [object a]* – that is the fulcrum of the subject's real enjoyment – in this case, the nation' (Proudfoot, 2010: 515, emphasis added).

I found Proudfoot's experience akin to mine and remember a similar sense of bemusement at the students' resistance to engage with the idea of 'place'. The spatial organisation I develop below draws on this research but incorporates photography and substantial interviews and does not preclude a reflexive component that is missing from Proudfoot's account. My emphasis on the trajectory of the drive means that I also pay attention to the interviewee's own chance of grasping the trajectory of enjoyment and the importance of their itineraries as *other* to the main goals of education.

The circular trajectory of the drive, enjoyment, the *object a* and their function are further illustrated by Kingsbury through the example of the pool bar in a Caribbean resort. Kingsbury (2010) shows how enjoyment arises out of ordinary interaction. Hotel staff at the pool bar perform their duties with eagerness: they engage the customers in short conversation, joke, move to the rhythm of the music and improvise lines, offering 'more

than' the drinks or food verbally demanded by the customers. The customers are drawn in the allure of the inter-space (2010: 525) created by the staff's improvisations, the solicited gazes, the sounds, the rhythms and the patterns surrounding the service. Thus, places like the pool bar become spatial hotspots of enjoyment (2010: 527) where the *object a* (the elusive supplement to the standard holiday pleasure) emerges in an elliptical, extra-discursive way. Kingsbury reports that he was able to conceptualise the spatial organisation of enjoyment when he looked at the pool bar scene 'with the sound off', noticing its repetitive and 'aimless' regularity. The researcher comments: 'Any activity has the potential to turn into the gyre of the drive, insofar as the activity brings to the fore the extent to which people can achieve satisfaction by not achieving their aim: by not finding an empty chair, by waiting and waiting for that magical number to be called out' (2010: 529) – deriving enjoyment, we might add, by taking their eyes off a designated goal and the rational strategies underlying its systematic pursuit.

While I draw on insights developed in earlier research, my approach departs from those quoted above. The theoretical context for this departure is supplied by Lacan and concerns two further aspects of the drive that are relevant to my argument. In the *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1986: 169) Lacan refers to the drive as *montage*. By way of illustration, he gives the example of a surrealist picture, the elements of which produce just another surrealist picture when rearranged. I argue that the students' photographs can be seen as such a surrealist assemblage when looked at from the point of view of the drive: as snapshots of the *Real* which challenge the speaking subject to consider the multiple overtones and the reverberations of space that always exceed the attempt to impose order to and rationalize the visual material. It seems to me that pictures, like a montage, can be assembled in a different order and always and still tell a story. This 'arbitrary' rearrangement, I speculate, could be part of enjoyment.

Also in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1986), Lacan explains that the drive achieves satisfaction as partial drive via different zones of the body, the eyes being one of them. The satisfaction of the relevant drive, the scopic drive, consists not only in 'seeing' but also in 'being seen' and attempting to produce the 'gaze' under which the subject finds itself. Lacan sums up the tripartite trajectory of the drive drawing on Freud's use of the grammatical terms active, passive and middle voice: to see, to be seen and to give oneself to be seen. With this last movement, notes Lacan, *a new subject appears* (1986: 178, emphasis added). The subject is 'new' because it is not caught in the exchange of seeing and being seen alone, that is, in the imaginary dialectic of the gaze. With the completion of the trajectory and the third move one encounters what it possibly means to reveal oneself to one's own and the other's gaze, perceiving oneself as subject. Proudfoot wonders: 'what would the faces of these fans suggest if you could occupy the position of the screen and *gaze back* at their anguished faces?' (2010: 513) – in other words, what would enjoyment *look like* to the subject itself? This of course is an unanswerable question, since *jouissance* does not have a representation. But photography as a mode of capturing space and

enjoyment might provide an alternative perspective for making *that* look appear at the margins, along with its ontological significance. I have argued elsewhere (Voela, 2013) that this self-scopic attempt invites the subject to fathom its position in a complex scene, not as a superior overlooking eye/I but as just another element. Here I want to propose that contemplating photographs of places that are significant to the speaking subject but ultimately marked by its absence (no one figures in the pictures they have taken) allows the interviewees to 'play' with the drive, to experience enjoyment but also explore its margins and ultimately contemplate the un-told aspect of 'being' and 'not being' there, in the university environment.

The spatial organisation of enjoyment in photographic data and interviews

Below I trace the spatial organisation of the students' enjoyment at the university campus. I look for patterns and extra-discursive inscriptions of enjoyment as they appear in photographs and interviews. I also look for the moments of contemplative 'understanding' that emerge in the process. As I said above, I consider the photographic excursion to resemble the trajectory of the drive, an 'aimless' de-tour around a familiar territory, a full turn the 'goal' of which lies beyond the primary aims of education. This full turn is completed at least twice: first, as the students go around the campus taking photographs; second when they revisit some of these photographs in the interview. The double loop chimes with other trajectories evoked in their absence: countless daily routines inscribed in their presence/absence in the visual evidence.

Based on the photographs and the interviews, I have devised a system of *points of spatial orientation* around the campus, further divided into *points of reference*, such as the library and the main buildings, and *points of passage*, such as the entrance/exist to the campus and the canal walkway. I envisage the campus as a bounded and clearly defined space, a scene which contains and holds the student experience, and by extension, their enjoyment. Students attempt to make sense both of the parts of the scene and of the scene as a whole, only to come up with the inevitable question of their own presence and absence. This, I argue below, suggests the ontological significance of the entire experience: something (Real) appearing between photography and the narrative; between notional space and real space; between (re)visting a familiar landscape and having to account for its significance. The extimacy of space, its overdetermined and dynamic nature, is therefore revealed while looking awry at the everyday and the ordinary, allowing this something else to appear, beyond the Imaginary and the Symbolic.

1. Points of Imaginary reference: the library, the bookshop, the classroom

The students' comments on space vary from attempts to offer rational, 'clever' or 'original' explanations about the photographs, to reminiscing about good moments, to free-

associating, to being genuinely surprised by their own responses and trying to associate the campus to other places and new challenges. The university is simultaneously personal and public, a place to stay for a while but also of transition and passing. Whatever its precise identity, participants had little difficulty in locating the places required. In K's words: 'I knew immediately where to go'.

Not surprising perhaps the library, the bookshop and the lecture theatres – all associated with knowledge as the primary purpose of being at university – appear regularly in the photographic evidence. While some students include such places as 'the obvious choice' and offer no further comments, others comment on the comfort of returning to them regularly:

E: Even if I don't need any books, I just go to the library and have a mooch around.

This 'return' for no reason, belies the significance of the 'empty' gesture and is a good example of extimacy: the regular re-turn to the library might be understood as organising and supporting the student identity, holding in its domain the disposition to and the promise of knowledge. The library building does not impart knowledge but going there affords the pleasure of locating and seeking knowledge, of actively pursuing one's dream.

Other places are invested with Imaginary significance. One student shows me a picture of the campus bookshop adding that this was the place where she met a person she had prayed for, a good friend with whom to share the educational experience. In this example the almost magical (Imaginary) fulfilment of a wish coexists with the emergence of the *object a* in a chance encounter. Chance (tyche), Fink explains, is re-finding an object known to the subject only in its attribute of goodness (1997:93). Here the regular routine of visiting the bookshop results in an encounter. It allows the elusive goodness of the *object a* to appear with/in its course and in the form of the suitable fellow student. In both cases, I want to argue, the inscription of space into the desire and the goals of the speaking subject is significant not only because of its regularity but because it yields extra pleasure, affords a view of the tyche and organises itself in a repetition.

2. Watching others go by: shifts between the Imaginary and the Real

Watching others 'go by' in spaces like the café, the atrium and the square is an essential and stable component of the spatial organisation of enjoyment. Communal spaces support an exchange of gazes as a way of getting to see what others do and doing like them. Mature and non-traditional students often seek (visual) reassurance that they are 'doing the right thing' and 'behave like students'. Watching others and observing their manners offers that reassurance.

In some cases watching meshes with the desire to apply one's growing knowledge and powers of observation on to others. The Imaginary position of the surveying eye is assumed in that case:

M: Studying Psychosocial you become so much more observant, you become so much more analytic in....a nice way... Studying human behaviour, the reaction, the look on their face, and trying to image what they are thinking... I wonder what this person is thinking, I wonder how they are.

Before long, however, the gaze re-turns upon the student herself:

M: So it [looking at people] makes me see that it's okay to look at *yourself* in different ways, to question yourself a little bit.

The desire to know what lies beneath the surface (face) reveals more than the Imaginary correspondence with the other. It hints at an elusive object: the precious object (object a) of education yet to be mastered, a wisdom that could bypass inscrutable faces and superficial impressions. But what is more important is what emerges when the imaginary 'penetrating' gaze is re-turned upon the student herself, when one realises that it is *herself* that she needs to look at differently. At such moments we are reminded of Lacan's third move of the drive, the return upon the self of that elusive gaze which disengages the subject from the Imaginary capitulation with the other. At that point, ... the disruptive influence of the Real emerges with the student's own inability to continue assuming the mastery of the all-knowing subject. Also, at that moment one learns – and enjoys – something important: by re-turning gaze and knowledge upon oneself, one begins to look at the whole world awry.

3. Points of passage: *that* bench – encounters with the Real?

There is a place at the campus which students cherish and claim as 'their own': a bench with a view to the water and the airstrip on the other side of the canal. This is a place where students obviously go to relax and spend a quiet moment. In the context of the spatial structure of enjoyment, however, this place acquires additional significance as is shown in the examples below. In dealing with these examples, one needs to remember the layout of the specific locus: when seated at the bench one has their back to the campus with a view to the canal, the airstrip of City Airport and the City skyscrapers at the far right end of the landscape.

Students return regularly to the benches:

D: Now, there's a good place, to sit, look afar, and bring yourself back to [yourself]'.

Notice the slight semantic peculiarity in the above sentence: how does looking afar make one come back to their self? What kind of trajectory joins the far and the near, the internal and the external? Extimacy perhaps takes over when semantics falter.

For another student the significance of the bench is hard to articulate:

K: The bench... that one, um... exactly outside the library... it's kind of opposite the spot that I would go to... near the... where.. what I call the come together again...

this is almost, kind of, Freudian...kind of... uh, um... reminiscent to the Freudian chair.

Notice the factual error in the above excerpt; one would speak of Freud's couch, not chair. Minutes later, the student provides further associations on the word 'chair':

The places... I used them as, uh... do you know when you have, um... the naughty corner for certain areas and the child associates the things bad with that place and when they are bad, they associate it with that place... so I kind of associate good things with those places... so when I go there, I know that I will receive energy... I receive rejuvenation... I'll receive those good things that I need that I'm missing right now.

Reward and punishment, chair and sofa, good place and bad, isolation and participation in the academic life: the bench resonates with the Real, the un-express thoughts which surface as errors and the pieces of (psychoanalytic) knowledge which join forces with the very modern 'obligation' to examine the self regularly and give an account. These procedures are never accomplished or fully expressed. Yet going back *there* regularly, sitting at *that* bench arguably does all the above for the subject: space does things for the subject.

In another case, the solitude of the spot suggests something more 'actual' than other activities:

S: So it's not so much about watching other people, it's just about sitting there and reflecting on my own thoughts I would say... and watching the river... watching the world but in... an actual sense... marvelling at the technology [refers to the airplanes]... or marvelling at the water.

Lacan (1986) designates the Real and the *object a* as an excess of meaning, a 'more than' beyond symbolic meaning. This might be what 'watching in *an actual sense*' alludes to. At the same time, the place, the water and the cityscape evoke an opaque mirror, a surface which does not return a gaze or an image; an endless slow flow towards other places; a linear, ineluctable movement, different from the looping trajectory of coming back to the same place in the containing familiarity of the campus; a dividing line between the students and the affluent Other, the customers of the business airport on the other side of the canal.

Some places, like the bench at the waterfront, stand out for their evocative multiplicity. They seem to operate as crisis heterotopias (see Foucault, 2000), *other* places which confound the speaking subject and to which only a profound, inarticulate bond can be avowed. They are places of passage and return, gravitational points at which the speaking subject encounters the limits of symbolic identity as well as the imaginary anticipation of a

better life. Being there, seeking solitude, turning one's back to the campus and facing the world, resonate with the very materiality of the locus but never quite fully coincide with it. In that sense, regularly re-turning to *that place* can be understood as part of a ritual of trying to find an answer to 'how am I doing right now?' It does not yield concrete answers but at least 'structures' anxiety and allays fears. It is bound to the extimacy of space and forms part of the trajectory of the scopic activity at the very point at which it loops upon the subject itself. In a similar manner, the tour of the campus and the photographic task chimes with it, recalling for the subjects the same excess of meaning that lurks behind this everyday activity and every structured and purposeful activity in general.

4. **Points of passage: full turn and the deferral of satisfaction**

The final set of examples concerns another regularity; the full turn of arrival to and departure from the campus. This is the occasion that yields the most obvious sense of enjoyment, along with a celebratory assertion of being there, making it every day and considering the regular repetition of the routine as an affirmation of one's perseverance. Crossing the bridge to UEL therefore is important, whether it is remembered as the symbolic first crossing into Higher Education, or the repetition of a routine activity.

This can be briefly illustrated in a comment from a mature student who does not have time to savour university life at leisure and for whom passing from the same points sums up the day's good work:

P: The bridge leading to DLR... Yes, I've done my work, you know, I've come to uni, I've achieved something, so, you know, I am going home now, this is a weight off your shoulders.

While the ultimate goal (degree achieved at the end of three years) is deferred, satisfaction is achieved by the trajectory of the day's work, the full, successful passage, the very fact of having reached the end/beginning of a short journey. This, I argue, is another example of the trajectory of the drive which attains satisfaction by not achieving its symbolic goal. In that sense, 'insignificant' material points of entry/exit signpost a clear picture of enjoyment which exceeds the 'academic' achievement but is just as important as the latter.

Methodological, ontological and ideological implications of the enjoyment of space

In the previous section I gave an overview of the organisation of spatial enjoyment as it emerges from the students' photographs and interviews. I argued that it can be represented as a trajectory or detour signposted with points of reference and points of passage, all of which illustrate the extimate relationship of subjectivity and space and the enjoyment of space which allows the Real to shine through the symbolic and imaginary functions of education. I further argued that space 'does' things for the students, both as a concrete

scene which contains and structures the educational experience and as another scene which exceeds it. Below I make some methodological and theoretical suggestions, starting with the use of photography in psychoanalytic research.

As noted in the introduction, in social sciences photography is mainly interpreted with reference to the reflexive subject. At the same time, photo-elicitation is becoming increasingly popular because it promises 'more': more of the speaking subject; more of its voice; more autonomy to the interviewees (see Bijoux and Meyers, 2006). We might want to pause and think: what is this 'more' that is being sought? And does not 'more', in that context, reveal the researcher's own desire to appropriate the other's enjoyment?

In the present research, photography was not used in order to affirm the presence of a reflexive subject or to reveal their pleasure (see Del Busso, 2011) or even to confirm a research hypothesis. Its 'use' emerged from the evidence of the spatial organisation of enjoyment. We can account for the *ontological* significance of this activity by returning to the properties of the drive. As discussed in the theoretical section, the drive is comparable to a surrealist montage (Lacan, 1986: 169). The photographic task resembles the *montage* of the drive: whichever way one arranges the pictures they make sense. Their meaning does not depend on a linear order, much in the same way as the students' enjoyment of space does not depend on visiting all the places at all times.

At the same time, photographs and interviews cut into one another. Students vary the length of their comments and the frequency of flicking from one picture to the next, sometimes coming back to one, sometimes skipping others, having taken *more* pictures than directed. It can therefore be argued that an account of space comprising photographs and narratives is itself a montage activity, an active assemblage structured around a drive-like repetition: taking the photographs and coming back to them. What do students indicate with that experience? I would suggest that the process reveals an inclination to looking away. In the end, it was not the researcher that found out how to look away, it was the students that 'learned' first and showed her the way. Yet 'learning' is hardly the right word as the drive cannot be 'educated'. It invites us to look at the *sense* (of space) that supports and ex-sists beyond *meaning*, causality and interpretation.

Lacan draws attention to the fact that the drive does not have a socially valid goal. If the goal and meaning of education are found in the Symbolic or the field of the Other, that is, in the importance of knowledge and the face value of a degree, then the enjoyment of space must be understood as radically in-different to those values. Verhaeghe shows how the drive undermines symbolic meaning when noting that from the point of view of the drive the opposites 'life' and 'death' are reduced to an arbitrary allotment of names in culture (2001: 93). By the same token, ordinary spatial relations appear subverted when looked at and spoken away. In the students' examples points of passage, like the bridge to the train platform and the bench by the canal, which are not related to the 'proper' functions of the institutional space, emerge as important. Again, what begins to emerge is a different

approach to making sense of the place which defies salient points of reference. Whether one attempts to take a panoptic view of the campus or keeps coming back to a particular locus at regular intervals, the enjoyment of space is found in the regularity of the movement, in the very circularity of the trajectory of the drive. And certainly it is the failure to see and get everything under the scope of a panoptic gaze that allows for the implicit emergence of an *object a*, an elusive 'centre' around which the trajectory is inscribed. Thus, when all is said and done, neither the activity of looking nor the acquired academic knowledge can penetrate the surfaces of others; enjoyment is therefore found in the simple repetition of the activity. In that sense, students always re-find the pleasure of looking awry.

There is, however, a further implication in the enjoyment of space which is related to 'being there'. Drawing on the tri-partite movement of the drive (to see, to be seen, to give oneself to be seen), Lacan notes that with the completion of the movement a new subject appears (1986:178). As noted in the theory section, this concerns the subject that dis-engages itself from the mirror-imaginary capitulation of the other and freely gives itself to the scopic gaze. This property of the drive, I argue, is conceptually very close to the reflexive subject of Sociology but also distinct from it, in the contemplation of the ontological importance of *presence and absence* which photography supports and inspires. It tends towards the limits of self-presence and the meaning of absence. University life is about 'being there'. At the same time, the pictures also capture 'absence' from the *scene* (I am not there, I am behind the lens, I am not included in this landscape). Together the two moves engender the realisation that the scene (the ensemble, the composite image of the chosen photographs and, by extension, university space) holds *me* in its gaze as much as I hold 'it' in my gaze. This change of perspective, this anamorphosis (Lacan, 1986: 83) contains the subject. As Evans notes, topology is structure (Evans, 1996: 208); it reworks rather than rethinks the Cartesian subject: *I am thinking where I am not, therefore I am where I am not thinking* (Lacan in Kingsbury 2007: 253). Failure to notice, to grasp the conditions of the subject's implication in its own world, is a failure of critical thought.

A final comment about the critical validity of the notion of the Real needs to be added at this point. The Lacanian notions of enjoyment and the drive form part of the critique of ideology and of the subject's mode of attachment to the Other. According to Lacan, the Other is open and inconsistent. In an attempt to form a stable identity the subject veils the knowledge of this openness/inconsistency. In analysis the subject must accept it along with the fact that one's being is not fully justified by the big Other (see Žižek, 1994: 113). In the psychoanalytic critique of ideology the notion of the subject's relation to the Other leads to two complementary approaches: the former focuses on the deconstruction and symptomatic reading of ideology; the latter aims at exposing '*the kernel of enjoyment*', the mode of jouissance prefigured by a specific ideology and emerging in subjects' phantasies (see Žižek, 1994: 125). Along the lines of revealing the kernel of enjoyment I would suggest that the enjoyment of the university space, the encounter with presence and absence and *being there* go beyond the commodity on offer, beyond the promise of constantly updated

knowledge and of constantly improving surroundings. This piece of research therefore is not about providing more benches for solitary contemplation, or new cafeterias for more gazing at others. It is not about enhancing 'the student experience' either. It may be more helpful to think about it as *just* inviting students to consider another source of enjoyment, apart from the deferred enjoyment of getting *that* degree at the end of the three year. Moreover, Lacanian topology amounts to 'the mobilization of a new spatial imaginary' (Kingsbury, 2007: 251). In that sense, it might perhaps be useful to think about the shape of the current *educational spatial imaginary* in general and consider what it says about education today. The eagerness of UEL students to engage with the task and the advent of new technologies (mobiles) which makes photography easy (see Harrison, 2005) indicates that we should explore it further.

From a productive, utilitarian perspective the enjoyment of space is useless. Yet Baudrillard (2001: 44) shows how the useless is the bit of the *real* that resists commodification and assimilation is an elastic Symbolic order which can contain, assimilate and obliterate difference. In Lacanian terms, the activity of photographing and talking about space – uselessness and real – exposes the kernel of enjoyment and reveals to the students a morsel of truth (jouissance) alienated in the Other, the education system of which I am part. So when the students assert 'I am here' they are perhaps reclaiming that enjoyment for themselves, claiming it back from both my immediate intentions and the anxiety of a future investment in themselves as holders of a degree. *I am here* therefore means: I enjoy my very presence, I reclaim the excess of my own Symbolic and Imaginary desire.

References

Bank, M. (2001). *Visual Methods in Social Research*, London: Sage Press.

Baudrillard, J. ([1999]2001), *The Impossible Exchange*, London: Verso Press.

Bijoux, D. and Meyers, J. (2006), Interviews, solicited diaries and photography: 'new' ways of accessing everyday experiences of place', in *Graduate Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies*, 4(1), pp. 44-64.

Copjec, J. (2002). *Imagine There's No Woman: Ethics and Sublimation*. Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Del Busso, L. (2011), Using photographs to explore the embodiment of pleasure in everyday life, in Reavy, P. (ed), *Visual Methods in Psychology: Using and Interpreting Images in Qualitative Research*, London: Psychology Press.

Evans, D. (1996), *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, London: Routledge.

Fink, Bruce (1997), *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Foucault, M. (2000) Different Spaces, in *Aesthetics: The Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, vol 2*. London: Penguin Press.

Gauntlett, D and Holzwarth, P. (2006), Creative and visual methods for exploring identities, in *Visual Studies*, vol 21(1), pp. 82-91.

Harrison, B. (2005), Snap happy: toward a sociology of 'everyday' photography, in Pole, C. (ed) *Seeing is Believing: Visual Methods in Social Research*, London: Elsevier.

Kingsbury, P. (2010) Locating the melody of the drives, *The Professional Geographer* 62(4): 519-533.

Kingsbury, P. (2007) The extimacy of space, *Social and Cultural Geography* 8(2): 235-258.

Lacan, J. (1986). *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. London: Penguin Press.

Moore, G., Croxford, B., Adams, M., Refaee, M., Cox, T., and Sharples, S. (2008), The photo-survey research method: capturing life in the city, in *Visual Studies*, vol 23(1), pp. 50-62.

Pink, S. (2011), Amateur photographic practice, collective rep-representation and the constitution of place, in *Visual Studies*, vol 26(2), pp. 92-101.

Proudfoot, J. (2010) Interviewing enjoyment, or the limits of discourse, *The Professional Geographer* 62(4): 507-518.

Sagan, O. (2008). Playgrounds, studios and hiding places: emotional exchange in creative learning spaces, in *Unspoken Interactions: Exploring the unspoken dimension of learning and teaching in creative subjects*. N. Austerlitz. London, CLTAD.

Temple, P. (2007). *Learning Spaces for the 21st Century*. Higher Education Academy.

Temple, P. and Barnett, R. (2007) Higher education space: future directions. *Planning for Higher Education* 36, 5-15.

Tinkler, P. (2013), *Using Photographs in Social and Historical Research*, London: Sage Press.

Tinkler, S. (2008), A fragmented picture: reflections on the photographic practices of young people, in *Visual Studies*, vol 23(3), pp. 255-266.

Verhaeghe, P. (2001). *Beyond Gender, From Subject to Drive*. New York: Other Press.

Voela, A. (2013), Catastrophe Survived? The Failure of the Tragic in Moira Buffini's 'Welcome to Thebes', in *Somatechnics*, vol 3(1), pp. 133-148.

Žižek, S. (1997), *The Plague of Fantasies*. London: Verso Press.

Žižek, S. (1994), *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, London: Verso Press.