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# Approaching/departure: effacement, erasure and 'undoing' the fear of crime

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## Abstract

This paper contributes to contemporary debates about the geographies of gendered fear of crime by examining the way in which a group of young women negotiate fear of crime in public space by creating affective distance between themselves and the approaching menace of fear. These distances are presented here as lacunae that young women construct in order to promote feelings of safety in public spaces. Bringing Sara Ahmed's work on the circulation of affect and Jacques Derrida's notion of erasure (or *sous-rature*) into a dialogue with each other, and building on a Heideggerian phenomenological understanding of fear as dynamic, this paper argues that constructing lacunae enables young women to undo the approach of signifiers of fear in public space, which in turn enables them to contest dominant discourses of the gendered nature of fear of crime. Such erasure also has implications for the politics of safe-keeping. This paper complicates conventional understandings of safe-keeping by highlighting how, in the pursuit of safety, erasures based on classed, raced, or gendered 'othering' manifest themselves and it highlights the importance, not only of attending to silences and absences used to promote feelings of safety, but also to the politics of these in the pursuit of safe-keeping.

## Keywords

fear of crime, lacuna, phenomenology, public space, safety, *sous-rature*

## The approach and departure of fearsomeness

That which is detrimental, as something that threatens us, is not yet within striking distance but it is coming close . . . As it draws close this 'it can and yet it may not' becomes aggravated. We say, 'it is fearsome' . . . What is detrimental as coming close carries with it the patent possibility that it may stay away or pass us by; but instead of lessening or extinguishing our fearing, this enhances it.<sup>1</sup>

Fear does not involve the defence of borders that already exist; rather fear makes those borders, by establishing objects from which the subject, in fearing, can stand apart.<sup>2</sup>

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Visceral, corporeal, social, emotional: affective expressions of fear play out, not only at a psychic or embodied level, but also in the organization and reproduction of everyday social life. In this paper, focus is given to women's fear of crime in public spaces and in particular how this specific form of fear – circulating affectively – is undone by safe-keeping techniques of erasure and effacement. Fear of crime is an important social phenomenon<sup>3</sup> and is present in many of the ways in which sense is made (or refused) of place; the spatialization, mobility and embodiment of fear, articulated above by Heidegger and Ahmed, indicates how affective expressions of fear carve up public spaces and the experiences of human bodies, and selves, within them. Whether in discussions of night time leisure spaces,<sup>4</sup> queer public space<sup>5</sup> or urban woodland spaces,<sup>6</sup> women's experiences of public space as fearsome are well documented, as are attempts to make these spaces safer.<sup>7</sup> The gendered quality of fear of crime dominates these debates. Feminist criminologists and spatial theorists have contested the common collocation of fearfulness and femininity (and fear-someness with masculinity)<sup>8</sup> and have posited that popular discourses circulated about fear of crime (such as those critiqued by Elizabeth Stanko and Carol Brooks Gardner) are strategies mobilized to control and delimit women's place in public space through the cultivation of affective fear and the threat of latent menace.

After all, fear is not everything. Fearlessness or, alternatively, an outright refusal of the possibility of fear, is also an affective expression that emerges in public space and that can alter the way in which people and places subjectively become known.<sup>9</sup> In this discussion I contribute to these feminist debates by examining some of the ways in which affects of fearfulness in the face of the threat of crime are undone. The oscillation between doing and undoing, presencing and effacing – which I argue can be understood as actively constructed lacunae – is crucial to this analysis of the ways in which some young women negotiate public spaces. These lacunae work in a couplet; on the one hand through effacement, or the making absent the presence of fear; and on the other, taking from the work on signifiers of difference developed by Jacques Derrida,<sup>10</sup> through *sous-rature* or the making present of an absence of fearsome signifiers. Both of these work together to undo fear of crime in public space.

The analysis offered here is intended as an intervention in the feminist literature on fear of crime in public spaces and the attendant discussions of safe-keeping practices.<sup>11</sup> The paper addresses the social control and constraint of young women's use of public space and, in particular, the adoption, negotiation and failure of safe-keeping practices that involve the discursive construction of dangerous or fearsome places.<sup>12</sup> Whilst acknowledging that women's fear of crime is often related to home or 'private' domestic spaces, this paper focuses only on fear of crime in public; out of the home.<sup>13</sup> Furthering research that challenges the essentialization of women as always-already fearful and victimized when it comes to fear of crime,<sup>14</sup> this paper also offers a critical interrogation of the classed, sexed, and racialized politics of mobilizing fear – particularly of the 'other' – in everyday public spaces. Just as they appear in many existing fear of crime discussions, the 'public spaces' considered in this paper are non-domestic, material spaces, which may include private but quasi-public spaces such as shopping malls, car parks and so on, but exclude digital and virtual spaces. These are, for the purpose of this discussion, spaces outside of the home that must be negotiated in the every day, and that are, as Doreen Massey observes, 'the product of social relations which are conflicting and unequal'.<sup>15</sup> In this respect, attention is given to how fear and fear-avoidance practices are articulated in relation to implicitly (effaced and erased) as well as explicitly racist, sexist and classist constructions of the other's body, in these quotidian spaces. This broad understanding of material public space enables analysis of a wide set of situations in which young women negotiate the approach and departure of fearsome affect. The placefulness of public space is salient here, and following Cresswell's reading of Agnew; places are spaces with 'meaningful

location'.<sup>16</sup> The 'meaning' of such place is fluid and mobile; it is contingent. It is this precarity that renders some places viscerally meaningful with affective fear, at certain times of the day, or of the year, or of the life course, and not others. Such 'meaning', or 'knowledge', when understood as constituted affectively relies on the conjunction and disjuncture of certain human and non-human bodies in certain spaces and places.

One of the significant concerns of this paper, then, is to add a conceptualization of the complex intersection of gendered oppression and class and racial privilege to the feminist literature on fear of crime in public spaces. In order to do this, I begin by outlining how space, place and lacunae appear in this analysis. I then go on to illustrate how phenomenological accounts of the circulation of affect can be modulated by a Derridean reading of lacunae. Subsequently, having indicated methodologically how absent presences and present absences could be analysed, I draw on interview data and 'emotion maps' of young, middle-class women living in the South East of the United Kingdom. As my analysis of interview-data will demonstrate, erasing to make safe through lacunae challenges essentialist constructions of gender and fear of crime,<sup>17</sup> but also highlights that safe-keeping can be a pernicious practice. The arguments offered here problematize safe-keeping strategies as they illuminate them.

## From closeness to distance

The meaningfulness of place emerges through the approach and departure of affect. In order to conceptualize the expressions and negotiation of these affects we can turn to Heidegger's account, that is then developed by Ahmed, of the approach and passing of menace. Where places, times, experiences, memories, dreams, or nostalgias connect on affective surfaces – on human and non-human bodies, signs, or objects capable of acquiring affective qualities – they can be understood as becoming affectively 'stuck' together.<sup>18</sup> These 'sticky' connections contribute to understanding and orientation about and around place, enabling the human body to form attachments and detachments to places and specific public spaces dependent on the 'knowledges' that its affective experiences express.<sup>19</sup> Following Ahmed, the connotation of 'closeness' in that which is 'sticky' highlights the importance of embodied proximity for knowledges about place to circulate. It also asks the question of what happens when embodied connections with place are 'unsticky' – when rather than closeness, it is absence, distance or effacement that composes part of the ways in which public spaces become known.

Here it is the close or approaching affect that is of interest when considering the spatiality of fear in public space. 'An approach', from the French 'approche', evokes not only movement and eventual passing of affect around a particular event, but also of proximity and of propinquity (*il est proche/ mon proche* – he is near/ important, or similar to me).<sup>20</sup> Thinking fear of crime in this way allows us to see the contingent and intimate relationship between place and sentiment; fear that is '-proche' becomes close, and may pass, but in doing so, implicates an affective as well as spatial intimacy with the fearsome approach that renders place meaningful. But being 'close' or 'proche' to an event implies being distant from another. Similarly, being distanced from an event – whether affectively or geographically – implies being both unproximate and unpropinquous from it.<sup>21</sup>

The event that is being considered here is the approach of dread, menace or fearsome affect, marked by particular signifiers (whether they are, for instance, places, people, sensibilities, or knowledges), which might then be countered by the construction of a lacuna, or gap, in how places are known. Lacunae may be constructed in various ways: through speech acts, or absences therein or thereof, or through spatial imaginations of gaps and absences. Reading this specific sort of safe-keeping as constructed lacunae builds on existing phenomenological accounts of

place by demonstrating how the spatiality of absence works to alter how public spaces become meaningful as fearful, or how other detrimental affects, approach and depart. It is this active distancing of the self – the interior, as opposed to exterior and bodily – from the event through effacement and erasure that I explore here. I contend that through these discursive and non-discursive *disarticulations* of fearful affect, the role of absence, silence, or what is left out in how place becomes known shows us how distance, like closeness, how stickiness like unstickiness, also constitute meaning.

## On lacunae

Lacunae, then, evoke a different sort of space. From the Latin for ‘hole’ or ‘pit’, but also the stem of ‘lake’, a lacuna is a gap or a space that is capable of containing ‘something’. The lacuna sometimes appears in Freudian<sup>22</sup> accounts of lack, or of repression, and perhaps more interestingly, in the way that the unconsciously-situated subject is constituted through distancing from the Thing or ‘other’.<sup>23</sup> In the *Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan explores the unnameable thing – ‘*das Ding*’ – in relation to the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real. Crucially tied to the Real, which, for Lacan, is a rupture or permeation of the organization of socio-cultural-spatial life – and which, importantly, is absolutely present – the Thing, is ‘a stain of the Real, that lacks determinate existence and eludes straightforward interpretation’.<sup>24</sup> For Lacan, the Thing is ‘not’; it is ‘characterised by its absence, its strangeness’ and, as opposed to a nameable ‘affair’ or matter, is vague and relational, ‘of something that is always a certain distance from the “Thing” and through which the “Self” (the Imaginary and the Symbolic) is conceptualised’.<sup>25</sup> Kingsbury’s analysis of the affective expressions of television spectators of the World Cup in Vancouver, Canada, for instance, demonstrates the tangible way in which this Lacanian absence can be brought to bear on an analysis of ‘quotidian space’.<sup>26</sup>

Concern with lack, absence and ‘not’, has an established intellectual genealogy.<sup>27</sup> I am borrowing the idea of distancing from a (real or imagined) approaching harmful ‘Thing’ from a Lacanian understanding of the work that a lacuna might do; work that is regulated and expressed in part through the proximity of the Symbolic ‘other’ and its distance to, or from, the Self. Certainly, Ahmed’s account of how affects circulate and how love and hatred, for instance, can be mobilized to heighten difference between self and other draws, to some extent, on psychoanalytic accounts of symbolic difference. My focus on the affective in order to understand the geographies of fear, is indebted, in part, to such a theorization of lack and absence<sup>28</sup> that could, in part, account for the ways in which young women in this study made use of gaps in order to promote safe-keeping. However, the analysis that I offer here, departs from these psychoanalytical frames, and turns on a different ontological mode. The lacunae that I argue are created here, are actively constructed, rather than emergent from an originary schism of an *a priori* model based on the Symbolic, the Imaginary, the unconscious or *jouissance* and understanding the lacunae as ‘active’ is crucial to the suggestion that it is a safe-keeping *practice*. The lacuna is not a neutral gap. It works instead to distance the self from one or other detrimental affective events and to propel it into a direction where menace might be attenuated. This means that lacunae – understood as active spaces – are *produced* in order to foster a sense of safety and well-being in public space by creating distance from – or erasure of – the approach of fearsome affect. Lacunae here, therefore, are always socially, affectively, spatially constructed and are never always-already subsisting.

In this context it is useful to understand the expression of affect as occurring phenomenologically, that is to say, spatially, placefully, intercorporeally. The phenomenological dimensions of

distance, approach, absence and presence not only situate the expression of affect within place but also allow us to see how affect, productively and actively manifested, can alter the phenomenological experience of occupying public space. One critique of phenomenology itself, as it is articulated by Heidegger, is that it can be apolitical,<sup>29</sup> and this is why a queer phenomenological approach as conceptualized by Ahmed helps us to understand how affects might marginalize, exclude, empower and so on. Part of my analysis here, then, complicates a Lacanian-esque conception of a lacuna and a Heideggerian expression of the circulation of affect, moving towards understanding lacunae as politically potent in their effacement and erasure of the approach of the fearsome 'other'.

To understand the spatiality of fear of crime in public space, I suggest that Derrida and Ahmed might constructively be brought together. As Ahmed might suggest, if a fearsome human or non-human body becomes fearsome, it is because of the circulation of affect in an economy between signifiers in a relation of difference. Derrida suggests that this fearsomeness is an always-already absent presence – *sous-rature* – it is a conjunction of fear and difference from other signifiers (for instance, as I demonstrate later, a black or a poor body/signifier always relying on a series of deferred meanings – an endless chain of difference from other signifiers). To *sous-rature* is, according to Spivak, 'to write a word, cross it out, and then print both the word and the deletion'.<sup>30</sup> The word is inadequate, so it is crossed out, but it is necessary so it remains legible. Its absence is presented. Lacunae then become analytical strategies to mark presence not only through absenting, or effacing the approach of fearsome human or non-human body (active, present absencing, undoing Ahmedian proximity), *but also* in the *sous-rature*-ing of the conditions and its fearsomeness in the first place, through Derridean absent presenting. Such acts of erasure and effacement, when enacted in the pursuits of safe-keeping, clearly have detrimental implications themselves when enacted against the body of the gendered, classed or raced 'other'. I argue that the lacunae analysed here work in two ways; on the one hand they occur through effacing the approaching menace – removing it, or banishing it, or *absencing its presence* – and on the other, through Derridean *sous-rature*; by erasing the very possibility of the approaching menace at all – filling the potential fearsome approach with erasure and *presenting its absence*.

Alongside the effacing lacuna, whose emptiness can only be perceived by what surrounds it like a stencil (making present the absence), *sous-rature* occurs in its negation (in an absence of presence). Ahmed and Derrida both draw on Heidegger to theorize this erasure. However, as Spivak tells us, whereas for Heidegger erasure points to an 'inarticulateable presence' (something is there), for Derrida erasure is 'always-already absent presence, of the lack at the origin that is the condition of thought and experience' (nothing is there).<sup>31</sup> Distinguishing this *sous-rature* from a Heideggerian deletion Derrida notes that *sous-rature*:

is not the disappearance of origin . . . it means that the origin did not even disappear, that it was never constituted except reciprocally by a non-origin . . . it thus becomes the origin of the origin . . . if all begins with trace [*sous-rature*] there is above all no originary trace.<sup>32</sup>

There is thus no originary, for Derrida; nothing beyond the absent presence.<sup>33</sup> The erasure does not only mark that which is beyond the realm of articulation as Heidegger suggests, it marks, quite simply, the absence of any originary presence at all. So the 'black body', or the body of the 'chav',<sup>34</sup> is not subsisting; it does not exist *a priori* with its own essence of blackness or of subcultural class, but emerges in connection with the approach of a fearsome 'othering' affect.<sup>35</sup> This is therefore the double absence evidenced in these safe-keeping techniques; firstly the lacuna to stop the approach of the fearsome body and secondly the absence of the presence of fearsome bodies *in their own right*. This kind of analysis transforms and extends Derrida's concept of erasure by showing how

it can be used to mark phenomenological lacunae as well as absence of referentiality. It also modifies Ahmed's queer phenomenology by showing how double absencing can take place in order to delay or direct an approaching fearsome human or non-human body.<sup>36</sup> Construction of these lacunae thus become emergent and referential, marking differences as they are themselves marked by difference, harbouring the capacity to emerge in a multiplicity of different ways.

## Mapping the gaps

Looking at lacunae is not necessarily a straightforward task. Examining gaps and absences, effacements and the manifestation of *sous-rature* necessitates an analytical approach that interrogates the discourses, understood in a Foucauldian sense, that emerge through interviews to reveal the genealogies of how place is known.<sup>37</sup>

In order to examine safe-keeping, in 2009 I conducted a qualitative piece of research with 45 young women aged 17 from a range of ethnicities (though the majority identified as white British) who were predominantly, though not exclusively, from middle-class socio-economic backgrounds living in the South East of England. As young women, all participants were socially and culturally more peripheral in terms of their age and their gender, but occupied a dominant positionality in terms of their ethnicity and their socio-cultural background. Understanding the complexity of the intersect of these subject positions, in relation to these young women's experiences of fear of crime in public space and notably of 'others' in these spaces, is crucial in order to advance this analysis of the politics of safe-keeping.

The sample was spread across a rural,<sup>38</sup> a suburban<sup>39</sup> and a metropolitan<sup>40</sup> site. These sites were chosen for analysis because of their proximity to each other and because of their demographic diversity; the wealthy, predominantly white rural site, the medium-wealthy, highly ethnically diverse suburban site and the fragmented very wealthy (in parts) and very poor (in parts) urban site reflect a heterogeneity of public spaces in which young women who participated in this research might have had experience of fear of crime. Recruited from three schools, the participants were invited to discuss with me their experiences, feelings and impressions of, and about, areas of public space near where they lived (including, for instance, streets, parks, other green spaces, as well as semi-private spaces such as shopping malls, cinema complexes or pubs and bars) that they used frequently, and with which they had some sort of affective relationship. They were also asked to represent these impressions on maps of the area by annotating the maps with pictures and words. All participants who expressed interest in participating in the research were interviewed. This non-probability self-selecting sample of 17-year-old women is likely to be biased towards those participants with some form of opinion, or experience of, fear of crime, which might affect how fear of crime was spoken about. In order to combat this bias, I ensured that the discussion in interviews was framed as one about fear of crime in amongst other themes about relationships with public space (such as, for instance, work, leisure, affect and memory). This strategy opened the field of discussion for those participants who had no experience of fear of crime and enabled the complexity of the ways in which sense is made of public space to be interrogated more widely than only by fearful women. Participants annotated maps with colours, which they used to try to reflect the sentiments, knowledge, experiences and affective expressions they had in those places. Whilst these maps were being annotated, they described the areas in question. Once annotated, the interview moved on to broader discussions of fear, safety and feelings of belonging or not in place.

Given the eventual focus on gaps and absences that I make use of in this paper, it is worth establishing how the data presented here, as artefacts, preserve the gaps that I analyse. Proponents of narrative methods of analysis highlight that in order to make sense of the way that people may

experience the world around them, it is necessary to look beyond the 'talk' of interview talk (what people say), towards an analysis of the 'layers of meaning' that emerge in the way in which they say it.<sup>41</sup> Certainly, an analytical method that recognizes that meaning is constituted by both the possibilities of interactive talk which reflects our understanding of the world around us and by the constraints of 'social norms, values and relations of power' which permeate talk but that nonetheless convey subtle and ambiguous impressions of social life, resonates strongly with the discursive analytical method I have employed here.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, in their analysis of the way in which gendered fear of crime is spoken about, Sandberg and Tollefsen demonstrate how narrative analysis can reveal the effect of intersectional power relations (of gender, class and race) on how fear of crime is thought.<sup>43</sup> Elsewhere, in her study of silence amongst Latina teenagers, Melissa Hyams's analysis of her participants' refusals to speak, treats silence as a material object of analysis and looks for the meaning that the object of silence – as a heavy entity within an interview – might be trying to convey.<sup>44</sup> Here, in order to examine discursively how silence, absence and gaps operate as safe-keeping devices, a discursive analytical framework was adopted.

Prior to this analysis, all interviews were transcribed verbatim by the author. Efforts were made, as far as possible, to reflect the lacunae that are constructed by the participants in the transcription. If in transcription speech was inaudible, I indicate this in square brackets too (e.g. [inaudible]); where a gap is accompanied by a gesture or facial expression to illustrate a non-verbal communication this is also indicated in square brackets; where there is a pause in the conversation (a trailing off or self-interruption, for instance) I indicate this with an ellipsis without square brackets (e.g. '...'). Thus, the data appearing in written form here are presented as closely as possible to how the words were spoken in the context of preparing these as texts for discourse analysis.<sup>45</sup> A focus on the unspoken as well as the spoken, the material, the spatial and the figurative enables analysis of the various operations, constructions and uses of the lacunae. Indeed, this analytical strategy – examining the discursive alongside the non-discursive – enables an interrogation of the implicit social and political presuppositions invoked in talk. Looking at the power dynamics that are expressed outside of what is spoken, complicates approaches that only take at face value the words spoken by participants. This becomes particularly salient when examining the experiences and impressions of participants with complex relationships to and with power, as is the case here where young women's positionalities are so variously marked. In this case, the participants have some privilege – certainly some class privilege, at least – but they are also marginalized in other ways; by 'race', by gender, by age, for instance. Understanding how these intricate power relationships play out in the relationships that young women might have with public space necessitates looking beyond what is merely spoken, towards what is unspoken, affective or visceral. Indeed, to interrogate only the spoken at the expense of the unspoken, in the service of 'giving a voice' to these participants only works analytically if the participants are subjugated subjects who need *this* voice. The complexity of the negotiations that these participants routinely make with expressions of power and positionality suggest that this is not simply the case. To neglect what is unspoken in favour of the spoken fails to attend to power structures that participants may be invested in holding on to, as well as those that they may be invested in upturning; something that I demonstrate towards the end of this paper.

In this analysis, firstly I look at linguistic gaps that create lacunae, then I turn to linguistic expressions that undo the potency of fearful events, I then examine lacunae that, in part, erase the self to forge spatial well-being before lastly suggesting how spatially imagined lacunae undo the approach of the menace of fear of crime, all the while outlining how politically a lacuna is not an unproblematic construct, and why safe-keeping is not benign.



## Safety and the *sous-rature*

The lacuna is a tool through which feelings of safety in the face of the approach of fearsome affect, are promoted. Where places have become 'sticky' with affective menace, lacunae that erase and that efface in order to 'make-safe' the fearful feminine body, are perceivable, as these comments by Lola<sup>46</sup> and Rula demonstrate:

- Lola:* About two years ago in town, someone asked me for the time, and um, they took my purse. But luckily it didn't bother me ... it had nothing in it 'cause it was my 'holiday' purse, so it had nothing in it.
- Interviewer:* So you had your purse in your hand?
- Lola:* Yeah, I went like that [shows gesture of holding her arm up] and he was like [shows gesture of snatching the air] ... yeah, but it didn't bother me 'cause there's nothing in it.
- Interviewer:* It's horrible for you to lose your purse.
- Lola:* I was like 'Oh ok', so that's why I don't really like going to town anymore.
- Interviewer:* Where did it happen?
- Lola:* Outside [department store in town centre] so it's quite visible. It wasn't like anywhere no-one was. It was quite 'witnessable' but it didn't upset me. It's like well, if it had a bank card or something important I would have been upset, but it wasn't so...
- Interviewer:* Was that in the middle of the day?
- Lola:* Yeah, on a Saturday so ... but it didn't bother me. (Lola, Rural site)

Here, Lola identified a place on her map where her purse had been stolen. In this discussion, she repeated four times that the incident where her purse was stolen 'didn't bother' her, yet at the same time was the reason why she did not 'like going to town anymore'. How might we account for the apparent discrepancy between Lola's assertion of not being upset by having her purse stolen and her realization that this was the reason she didn't like going into town anymore? Where is safe-keeping in this discussion? How might the construction of a lacuna through this speech act work to *sous-rature* the fearsome event *per se*? I suggest that lacunae are being constructed here in a number of ways through this speech, and what is effaced by this speech, in order to establish security in the face of fearsome events.

Firstly, Lola's apparent lack of concern about the theft of her purse could be said to work discursively as a strategy through which she creates distance (or absences the presence of fear) between her awareness of herself in the place and the potentially detrimental approach of affective fear that emerges from this speech. She then uses the 'it didn't bother me' refrain to *sous-rature* the very possibility of fear becoming expressed at all in relation to her memory or experience of this event. By suggesting in general that she was not concerned about the event, Lola effaces any fear that she may have felt, but it is by repeating that 'it didn't bother' her, that she erases the very possibility that it *had* bothered her. The effacement and the erasure therefore work in a dyad, here.

It is also possible to suggest that the lacunae that are evidenced here demonstrate a mastery of self-expression and self-control in the context of an interview. Lola may be diminishing the importance of this event on her spatial subjectivity in order to manage a particular performance of self in front of me, an interviewing stranger. The effacement and then *sous-rature* here remains one constructed strategically to diminish the presentation of the importance of the event on her spatial subjectivity, but one that is forged for my benefit, as well as for hers as we both become aware of the absent presence and present absence that Lola has created.

Similarly, at the end of this extract, Lola explains that the act occurred ‘On a Saturday, so ...’. Here, I suggest a particularly significant act of effacing and *sous-rature*-ing is occurring. The purse was stolen on a Saturday in the middle of the day, in a busy and well-lit place. It was not ‘where no-one was’ and was ‘witnessable’. Dominant discourses about how to stay safe are known as ‘common sense’,<sup>47</sup> and here it is obvious to Lola that she had done all that she should have done to stay safe in this public space, within these known safe-keeping tactics. She had adhered to normative safe-keeping imperatives about not being alone in public space and about remaining visible, *and yet* her purse was still stolen. The end of the phrase ‘on a Saturday, so ...’ we can suggest might have been ‘it shouldn’t have happened’, or ‘I didn’t expect it’, or something that conveys how disorientating the ‘truth’ of this event, against a background of adhering to dominant safety strategies, might have been to Lola. Rather than accept that despite her compliance with dominant discourses about safe-keeping in public space she was nonetheless robbed, she does not utter the observation that reflects this incongruity. The truth of the failure of safety discourses to keep her safe remains unspoken. It is instead punctuated by this gap. The presence of the meaning is absenced – effaced – and her absence of understanding is presented or *sous-ratured* by the silence. Lola ‘should’ have been safe, and yet she was not. The event did not tally with her usual knowledge of how safety is made in public space, so, in an attempt perhaps to render more coherent the event, lacunae are constructed to ‘undo’ the truth of the fearsome event and of the failure of conventional safety strategies.

The different ways in which to read the lacunae constructed here are a feature of a phenomenologically-inclined analysis that accommodates the unfixed and indeterminate of circulating affect. We can interpret these acts of silencing and of refusal of the expression of detrimental affect as a strategy deployed to undo the harm that this menacing act had on Lola’s sense of well-being in this public space. This is particularly significant as a strategy when we consider Lola’s positionality and the gendered implications of the approach and departure of the menace here. Lola’s purse was stolen, we are told, by a man or a boy (or at least an unspecified ‘he’). Recalling, for instance, Hollander’s<sup>48</sup> or Day’s<sup>49</sup> discussions of the gendered nature of fear of crime that discursively limits women’s unfettered access to public space, the latency of masculine threat that saturates public space and that is cultivated by the circulation of affects of fear is evidenced here. Lola’s experience of crime might well recall this discourse. The construction of lacunae that efface and erase serves perhaps to resist this and to undo the discursive ‘truth’ of gendered fear of crime. It becomes a necessary part of how Lola discursively, materially, affectively negotiated this approaching, departing and haunting menace.

Elsewhere, another participant, Rula, could also be said to have deployed a similar distancing tactic in recalling how she was attacked on her return home from school. Her account also illustrates the symbiotic (literally, co-existent) operation of effacement and erasure:

One time, at night, there was a time when I got vaguely mugged, like, right near my house, which was really weird. (Rula, Urban Site)

Describing the ‘mugging’ in the passive language of ‘vague’ and ‘weird’ suggests the construction of interesting lacunae here. It is certainly possible that Rula experienced this crime passively – as a vague event – however, as she went on to explain:

[It was] round about there-ish [on the map]. On one of those side roads. Like, I was walking home from the station, and it was me and my sister, so that was just really scary because it is obviously somewhere so close to home that you feel really safe so that’s sort of made me rethink the sort of safety of the area. (Rula, Urban Site)

Rula began by framing the event in ambivalent language, suggesting it was unexceptional, or 'vague'. However, when she developed the story, the ordinariness of the journey and its proximity to her home brought her body in close and 'sticky' contact with an approaching affect and made her feel 'really scared', which caused her to 'rethink' the safety of the area. Perhaps by describing the mugging as 'vague' and 'weird', Rula was trying to silence the fear that she went on to express at the end of the story. As with Lola above, this could be thought of as a tool to promote a sense of spatial confidence in the face of a fearsome event that haunts.

On the other hand, another way of thinking about the linguistic lacuna here is precisely in the way in which it is spoken as a 'vague' or 'weird' affect that was later expressed as 'scaredness'. It could be that the event was 'weird' because it ran counter to Rula's previous experiences of the area near to her home as a safe space. The place thus not only became weird, but also scary, or perhaps scary because it was so weird, suggesting a gap between her previous and present knowledge of the meaning of the place near her home. Her use of the word 'vaguely' here might also be to do with dominant discourses about muggings: that a 'real' mugging is 'really violent'. The 'vague' mugging might indicate a gap (or lacuna) between her experience here and dominant discourses about crime and street violence. Like Lola above, Rula might struggle to live with fear and to make sense of dominant fear and safety discourses, a struggle that the lacuna helps to appease. Beyond this, it could be that the mugging *was* experienced by Rula as violent, fearsome, awful, but again, to undo the impact of this on her spatial subjectivity, she deploys 'vagueness' to distance her self from the detriment of this event. The approach of detrimental affect is doubly undone: firstly, by effacing the effect of the mugging; secondly, by *sous-rature*-ing the potentiality of mugging itself. 'Mugging' is not the 'right' word to describe the event that occurred to Rula, but she cannot express herself better with another one. Its affective expression is indeterminate, so therefore, she uses the word and *sous-ratures* it with 'vague' to moderate its expression.

For Lola and for Rula, these lacunae enable them to understand and create new knowledge about their experiences of crimes committed against them by putting distance between the event and their expressions of their spatial well-being and enabling them perhaps to feel safer in places where they had felt fear. The *sous-rature* here distances Rula and Lola from the approach of fearsome affects by refusing its very presence, and what is being concealed by this presence-which-is-being-absenced is that which is marked by signifiers of difference and, thus, fearsomeness: the approach of the mugger or the thief. As Heidegger has suggested, 'that which is detrimental' is fearsome in its approach in the fact that as it comes close it might pass and leave us unaffected, or it might affect us detrimentally; it harbours the potential to become many things to us and, through this indeterminate potential, fosters in us an enhanced 'fearsomeness' as it approaches and passes by. By refusing to concede to them even the verbal space to impact on their spatial subjectivities, these lacunae could be said to have been created strategically to diminish the harm that fear causes to their sense of self and to challenge the discursive traditional gendered ideology that situates women detrimentally compared to men, in public spaces.

## Fear and the approach of the 'other'

Whilst these lacunae were potentially spatially liberating tools for Rula and Lola, an understanding of fear as an affect that galvanizes likeness whilst excluding difference through approaching and departing menace, illustrates some of the exclusionary potentials of the lacuna. Signifiers of difference are, after all, cut, in part, along lines of classed, raced, gendered 'othering' as this account of Allegra's encounter with 'chavs' on the street demonstrates:

- Allegra:* One time I was waiting for my friend, and this big group of chavs came along and they started to walk towards me, so I walked across the road and they followed me and scared the life out of me. I was like ‘Oh my gosh!’ panicking but ...
- Interviewer:* Did they say anything to you?
- Allegra:* Yeah they were sort of shouting odd things to me and whistling and that but ... intimidated in a way. (Allegra, Suburban Area)

Physically evoking the spectre of fear or approaching detriment, the ‘chavs’ here embody the approaching, and passing, threat. As has been identified in a breadth of research on classed othering, the ‘chav’ is a social construct, or spectre, who is always negatively presented in discourse and is always pejoratively classed.<sup>50</sup> This begins to demonstrate an insidious level at which the lacuna works: the obfuscation – or erasure – of difference. Recalling Ahmed’s observations about fear and the work that fear does to carve up social life along lines of exclusion and belonging, it is important to bear in mind that there is a significant discussion to be had about the politics of forging security and belonging at another body’s expense, which points to some of the broader critiques that can be levelled at the politics of safe-keeping in public space.<sup>51</sup>

Indeed, here, as a middle-class young woman, Allegra’s positionality and difference from the approaching ‘chavs’, and her attendant affective expressions of dread, casts as ‘other’ these people along, classed, potentially ‘raced’, gendered or sexed lines. She mobilizes this ‘othering’ in order to distance the body of her potentially-fearful self from the body of the potentially-fearsome other by absencing the presence of her self.<sup>52</sup> We do not know whether the ‘chavs’ in this extract are male or female, but we might be able to read the whistling here as an act of sexual harassment experienced by Allegra as a menace to her vulnerable femininity.<sup>53</sup> This is evidenced in the ellipses at the end of Allegra’s comments. She says that the ‘chavs’ were ‘whistling and that but ... intimidated in a way’. The missing words here – ‘[I was] intimidated in a way’ – are illustrative of the way in which Allegra manoeuvred her fear of the ‘chav’ through the construction of lacunae that efface and that *sous-rature*. By omitting the articulation of the ‘I’, Allegra’s account has the effect of diminishing the impact of this encounter on her sense of spatial security. By figuratively extracting her self – her ‘I’ – from the encounter, this expression of fearful affect in the face of fearsome ‘chavs’ is articulated by disconnecting her presence from the encounter that she describes. In order to protect herself from supposed menace of the ‘chavs’, Allegra effaces herself from the encounter. She is clearly present, but absences herself in order to undo the effect of the expression of fear. Such a move works not only to establish her positional difference from the approaching menace of the ‘chav’ based on class, but also to reinforce the subordinated gendered experience that some women have with public space, where they are not discursively accepted and where they do not discursively belong. Without the referentiality of connection with difference, these ‘chav’ bodies lose their integrity *per se* and can only ever become ‘chav’ selves. They lose their subjectivity. The lacuna thus operates, once again, in two ways: it absences the presence (effaces) of Allegra in her encounter with the ‘chavs’ and presences the absence (*sous-ratures*) the spatial subjectivity, or the ability to occupy space unfettered by exclusions of classed or gendered difference, of both Allegra (who now can only ever be un-present in this event) and the ‘chavs’ (who now can only ever be ‘chavs’ in this event). The lacunae, thus, work in part to destabilize the unequal classed relationship between Allegra and the ‘chavs’ in this particular public space. By entrenching exclusionary discourses in her lacunic account of the event, Allegra managed to negotiate the approach and the departure of menacing ‘chavs’ on grounds that sustain her relative class privilege in the face of their relative classed disempowerment.<sup>54</sup> Foregrounding her classed positionality by extracting her self from the event, in the service of maintaining her sense of safety, the problems that appear

when we interrogate the role that silences and absences play in safe-keeping practices start to become apparent.

### Mapping the erased the 'other'

This problematic facet of safe-keeping becomes more pronounced in the ways in which some lacunae appear in the knowledge and memory of material spaces on maps and how these, in part, perpetuate safe-keeping through distancing the 'other'. When analysed as artefacts that indicate the traces of how place is thought, emotion maps enable an analysis of the pre-sentimental of place that begins to expose how place is 'known', perhaps as a hunch or inarticulateable sensibility.<sup>55</sup> It is through marking on maps emotions, sentiments, feelings, and so on, that phantom places are invoked, that material spaces disappear, and that participants become lost in lacunae in the pursuit of safety.

In their accounts of one place about which particular fear was expressed – referred to here as 'Wardhood' – most participants discovered that they had relatively little topological knowledge of this place, despite claiming some affective knowledge it:

- Hermione:* In town? Wardhood. I wouldn't go down there. Although I don't really know [it] that well either to be honest. (Hermione, Rural site)
- Heidi:* I have forgotten what it's called. Um ... what's that place called? Um ... I can't remember ...
- Interviewer:* What's it got in it?
- Heidi:* It's near the train station
- Interviewer:* Oh right. Wardhood?
- Heidi:* Yeah 'cause I have been there once before and it was quite scary. (Heidi, Rural site)
- Joy:* If I could find Wardhood [on the map], that's where I don't go. I can't see it on here, so shall I just write it on? (Joy, Rural site)

Through analysing Joy's, Heidi's and Hermione's account of Wardhood, it is possible to suggest that it exists on a pre-sentimental periphery maintained through the construction of lacunae. Importantly, throughout these accounts there is an implicit 'raced' and classed othering as Wardhood is an area within the suburban site with a much higher concentration of ethnic minority groups than elsewhere in the site (75% of the population are from a black and minority ethnic background),<sup>56</sup> and according to the 2007 Indices of Deprivation Report of the Departments of Local Government and Communities, is amongst the top 10 per cent most deprived wards in England, in contrast to the middle-class positionalities of the majority of the responding participants who live around this ward. This difference will become salient when interrogating the politics of safe-keeping through erasure:

- Vera:* I never really go there [Wardhood], and it's like different community as well ... [pause] ... like, in the people.
- Interviewer:* In what way is it different?
- Vera:* Like, racially different and I know that sounds kind of racist, but I am scared, but yeah sometimes it makes you feel intimidated, like if there's a large group of Asian people, if I am on my own, then it's scary. (Vera, Suburban area)

Wardhood is thus figured in Vera's affective expression through a particularly racialized lens. She makes explicit the link between Wardhood as a place with a high density of ethnic minority people and the fact that she is 'scared'. Indeed, she 'never really goes there' because it is 'racially different'. By talking about Wardhood as a place to which she seldom goes, but also as a specifically racialized space, Vera materially effaces her self from the locale of the 'raced' 'other', in the same way that Allegra linguistically does, above. Vera's response about Wardhood was typical of the responses espoused about this place by other participants. When understood as lacunae that operate in a specific public space, which is constructed within a particular racialized imaginary, we can begin to see some of the problems with constructing a lacuna in order to foster spatial well-being. Situated indeterminately on the margins of these young women's spatial subjectivities, Wardhood is a spectre of fear and of potential menace. An apparently difficult place to like, Wardhood was difficult to identify on the map and became markable by a spatially-imagined lacuna, where this lacuna held at a distance the place and the approaching affective fears that constructed its meaning.

Joy's response, for instance, to being unable to find Wardhood on the map was to 'just write it on'. By physically marking Wardhood at the periphery of the map – by distancing the fearsomeness of the place from her self – she delineates the ontological borders that indicate the presence of the constructed lacuna where, indeed, presence is absenced. In order to reduce its perceived detrimental impact on her well-being, to alter the meaning of Wardhood as a potentially fearsome space, and to increase her sense of safety about her home town, Joy could be said to have constructed a spatially-imagined lacuna that both obliterates the very presence of Wardhood (the present absence, *something is there*) and effaces its capacity to exist at all in her imaginary (the absent presence, *nothing is there*). It thus becomes ethereal. Here, in the act of drawing onto the map a place that was both present *and* absent at the social, affective and material reality of Joy's sense of place, we see the spatial manifestation of a dialogue between Derridean *sous-rature* and Ahmedian affective economies. Joy knows that she does not like Wardhood, but alters the potency of this potential dislike by turning away from it, by losing it, or forgetting it on the map. Wardhood only becomes relevant here insofar as it is replaced by Joy's lacuna; whilst discursively and non-discursively absent, Wardhood remained ambiguously present in the way in which she made sense of place. By affectively and effectively effacing and '*sous-rature-ing*' Wardhood from the way in which they made sense of place, this site remains haunted by its very presence – full of signifiers of classed, and 'raced' othering and fear – which must then be made absent or erased in order to preserve well-being and a sense of security. Pushed to the backs of their minds, Wardhood was constructed through lacunae as a peripheral, ethereal site, neither wholly illusory nor wholly physicalized within the spatial imaginarieness of the participants. The lacunae may promote a sense of safety here because the signifiers of difference are effaced and erased (and indeed become salient here insofar as they are erasable by the *sous-rature*), but this highlights how politically problematic it may be to seek safety in this spatially, affectively obliterating way.

And this is why the political importance that fear plays in the way that young women use public space must be taken seriously. In these discussions, young women express fear of Wardhood, which they believe inhibits their movement through it. They avoid it (and efface themselves from it) but, as Vera's account demonstrates, this is also a fear based on, in this instance, racist othering. This is debilitating for the young women who fear *and* – in Vera's case – for othered 'Asian people' who are feared. Where these young women articulated their fear in dialogue with racist constructions of the anonymous black body, and when they mobilize 'othering' discourses to justify their fear *and* their fear-avoidance practices, the operation of lacunae in safe-keeping are potentially deeply troubling. It is by examining the operation of lacunae, however, that we may seriously

interrogate the politics of safe-keeping. Such an undertaking is imperative if we are to further understandings of the geographies of fear of crime and how spaces become meaningful through negotiation of this fear.

## Conclusion: the politics of lacunae

In this paper, I have suggested that an Ahmedian queer phenomenological account of circuits of affect and a Derridean approach to erasure, both inflected with a Heideggerian understanding of how fears work, enable us to understand: initially, how places and people become fearsome (how the circulation of affect makes these human and non-human bodies 'sticky' with fearsome meaning); and then, how fear of crime can be undone through making absent a fearsome presence (effacement) and making present an erased absence (*sous-rature*), which prevents that fearsome human or non-human body from establishing presence in the first place, and in these cases, contest essentialized notions of gendered (feminine) fearfulness.

Crucially, this discussion is also interlaced with a critical perspective on safe-keeping practices. To contest feminine fearfulness and to erase and to efface is to obliterate and to deny presence – yes – to fear, but also to human and non-human bodies whose fearsomeness is marked through signifiers and signs of difference within an affective circuit that makes them meaningful (I have used the examples of the black body, for instance, and the body of the 'chav').

When geographic considerations of fear of crime are understood as being mediated through lacunae in this way, we become better placed to understand how public space becomes meaningful, how this meaning alters, and how power imbalances saturate public spaces.<sup>57</sup> Lacunae are intrinsic to the (re/de)construction of the meaningfulness of place. The accounts given here – from Lola's lacunae of silence to Joy's lacuna that 'loses' the abject Wardhood – demonstrate the very tangible impact that this presented absence, or absenced presence has on our knowledge of fear of crime and its spatialization.

Thinking the construction of meaningful places like this opens up new ways of understanding the constitution of subjectivity in space and of perceiving intersecting positional anxieties. Heidegger's articulation of how affects move around place, how they approach and pass 'us', and how 'we' thus come to fathom the meaning of place through the passing of these circuits highlights not only the importance of the proximity of affect to the human and non-human body,<sup>58</sup> but also of attending to the 'who' of who 'we' and 'they' are. The lacuna help us understand how distance, absence, denials, or forgettings, as well as exclusions, are used to make sense of place, to contest dominant discourses about gendered safe-keeping and to undo the menace of approaching fear.

It remains difficult to have discussions about how safe-keeping becomes exclusionary when safety, security and spatial well-being themselves have become such important contemporary preoccupations in neo-liberalized and risk-adverse post-industrialist contexts.<sup>59</sup> Analysis of this act of *sous-rature*-ing, however, as an active practice that points to the 'always already absent presence' does do some of this deconstructive work. It addresses itself precisely to how an approaching fearsome body becomes marked as fearsome in the first place. Analysing *sous-rature* allows this marking of the marking of fearsomeness to be seen as a politicized, unstable and insecure practice that temporarily attempts to stabilize meaning in a context of forever differed referentiality and through this stabilized meaning, to exclude.

As long as lacunae exist and erase, they enable the negotiation of an approaching affective expression that might otherwise be threatening, but looking at how this works reveals some potentially uncomfortable insights into how crime is feared in the first place. This is why we must bear in mind that, more broadly, safe-keeping strategies in public space, such as those discussed

by, amongst others, Valentine, Day and Day et al. are not benign.<sup>60</sup> By looking at the gap in the way in which spaces are spoken about – by looking at the lacunae – we are able to see, not only what event these gaps might be trying to replace, through the *sous-rature*, not only the way these work to mediate expressions of affect in spaces that otherwise become ‘sticky’ with menace, through effacement, but also what exercises of exclusionary power might be at work through the construction of these lacunae, and what harm safe-keeping might do to the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ in public space.

We have seen how these absences can erase as they emancipate. Lacunae work to undo the menace for the young women here, but this analysis of the presence of the lacuna also opens up questions of power, exploring *who* is occluded by the lacuna that is constructed and why this changes the meaning of place.<sup>61</sup> Yet, the forging of lacunae – making places ‘unstick’ from fear – can also open up resistant potentialities as the young women who reject dominant discourses of gendered fear and safety through lacunae might themselves demonstrate. This ambiguity must not be overlooked. What is clear is that lacunae are neither solely ‘good’ nor ‘bad’ strategies through which to undo fear of crime. They are, however, easily neglected but crucially important means through which to seek safety and to make sense of place and the politics of place. As Chantal Mouffe reminds us:

[I]nstead of trying to erase the traces of power and exclusion, democratic politics requires that they be brought to the fore, making them visible so that they can enter the terrain of contestation.<sup>62</sup>

Interrogating ‘what thing is there’ and ‘what thing is not there’ through analysis of lacunae enables a scrutiny of the different, complex power relations that saturate public spaces. It tells us about how public space is fathomed and fear of crime approached, at an intimate level. It also tells us what exclusions ‘safe’ spaces might be predicated upon. All of this renders us then better placed to understand and critique what is being ‘undone’ in the ‘undoing’ of fear of crime in public.

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## Notes

- 1 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (London: SCM Press, 1962), p. 180.
- 2 Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), p. 389.
- 3 See, for instance, the extended discussions on the problem of fear of crime in Jason Ditton and Stephen Farrall’s compendia of debates *Fear of Crime* (Dartmouth: Ashgate, 2000) and Murray Lee and Stephen Farrall, *Fear of Crime: Critical Voices in an Age of Anxiety* (Abingdon: Routledge-Cavendish, 1999).
- 4 Sheila Scraton and Beccy Watson, ‘Gendered Cities: Women and Public Leisure-Space in the “Postmodern City”’, *Leisure Studies*, 17(2), 1998, pp. 123–37.
- 5 Sally Munt, ‘The Lesbian Flâneur’, in David Bell and Gill Valentine (eds), *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexuality* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995), pp. 114–26; Beverly Skeggs, ‘Matter Out of Place: Visibility and Sexualities in Leisure Studies’, *Leisure Studies*, 18, 1998, pp. 213–32.



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- 8 See Jo Goodey, ‘Boys Don’t Cry: Masculinity, Fear of Crime and Fearlessness’, *British Journal of Criminology*, 37(3), 1997, pp.401–18; Kristen Day, ‘Constructing Masculinity and Women’s Fear in Public Space in Irvine, California’, *Gender, Place and Culture*, 8(2), 2001, pp. 109–27; Kristen Day, Cheryl Stump and Daisy Carreon, ‘Confrontation and Loss of Control: Masculinity and Men’s Fear in Public Space’, *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 23, 2003, pp. 311–22; Sarah E.H. Moore and Simon Breeze, ‘Spaces of Male Fear: The Sexual Politics of Being Watched’, *British Journal of Criminology*, 52(6), 2012, pp. 1172–91.
- 9 Hille Koskela, “‘Bold Walk and Breakings’”: Women’s Spatial Confidence Versus Fear of Violence’, *Gender, Place and Culture*, 4(3), 1997, pp. 301–19; Ruth Panelli, Anna Kraak and Jo Little, ‘Claiming Space and Community: Rural Women’s Strategies for Living With and Beyond Fear’, *Geoforum*, 36, 2004, pp. 495–508.
- 10 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1976).
- 11 Gill Valentine, ‘The Geography of Women’s Fear’, *Area*, 21, 1989, pp. 385–90, see also: Gill Valentine, ‘Images of Danger: Women’s Sources of Information about the Spatial Distribution of Male Violence’, *Area*, 24, 1992, pp. 22–9; Rachel Pain, ‘Space, Sexual Violence and Social Control: Integrating Geographical and Feminist Analyses of Women’s Fear of Crime’, *Progress in Human Geography*, 15(4), 1991, pp. 415–31; Rachel Pain, ‘Social Geographies of Women’s Fear of Crime’, *Transactions of The Institute of British Geographers*, 22(2), 1997, pp. 231–44; Rachel Pain, ‘Place, Social Relations and the Fear of Crime: A Review’, *Progress in Human Geography*, 24(3), 2000, pp. 365–87; Jocelyn Hollander, ‘Vulnerability and Dangerousness: The Construction of Gender through Conversations About Violence’, *Gender and Society*, 15(1), 2001, pp. 83–109; and Setha Low, ‘Urban Fear: Building the Fortress City’, *City and Society*, 2008, pp. 53–71, to name only a few.
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- 13 See Carolyn Whitzman, ‘Stuck at the Front Door: Gender, Fear of Crime and the Challenge of Creating Safer Space’, *Environment and Planning A*, 29, 2007, pp. 2715–32.
- 14 For instance, Koskela, ‘Bold Walk and Breakings’.
- 15 Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: SAGE, 2005), p. 152.
- 16 Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p. 6; John Agnew, *The United States in the World Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
- 17 Day, ‘Constructing Masculinity’; Day et al., ‘Confrontation and Loss of Control’; Pain, ‘Social Geographies’; Hollander, ‘Vulnerability and Dangerousness’.
- 18 Sara Ahmed, ‘Collective Feeling: Or, The Impressions Left by Others’, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 21(2), 2004, pp. 25–42,
- 19 Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Object, Others* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 62.
- 20 An interesting axis of comparison here is the relationship between similitude/purity and otherness/pollution as conceptualized by Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London and New York: Routledge, 1966) and then developed by Julia Kriteva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981) and David Sibley, *Geographies of Exclusion: Society and Difference in the West* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995). Pollution is not the focus of this paper but considering the relationship between fear, risk, selfhood, pollution and safety through lacunae suggests the broader usefulness of this conceptual tool.
- 21 Of course, as many transnational literatures of affective ties note, we can be non-proximate but propinquous (Aysem R. Senyurekli and Daniel F. Detzner, ‘International Relationship in a Transnational

- Context: The Case of Turkish Families', *Family Relations*, 57, 2008, pp. 457–67; D. Massey, 'Geographies of Responsibility', *Geografiska Annaler, Series B, Human Geography*, 86[1], 2004, pp. 5–18), but this form of closeness across distance is not under consideration here.
- 22 Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth Press, 1964).
- 23 Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar: Book VII The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960* (London: Routledge, 1992 [1986]).
- 24 Paul Kingsbury, 'The World Cup and the National Thing on Commercial Drive, Vancouver', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 29, 2011, p. 717.
- 25 Lacan, *The Seminar*, p. 63.
- 26 Kingsbury, 'The World Cup', p. 721.
- 27 See, for instance, Martin Heidegger, *The Question of Being* (College and University Press Services, 1958).
- 28 Sara Ahmed, 'Home and Away: Narratives of Migration and Estrangement', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 2(3), 1999, pp. 329–47; and Ahmed, 'Collective Feeling' (though Ahmed, examines this through Freud rather than Lacan).
- 29 Take, for instance, the otherwise elegant work of David Seamon, who offers phenomenological accounts of social relations in public space as occurring as 'place ballets' ('Body-Subject, Time-Space Routines and Place-Ballets', in A. Buttner and D. Seamon [eds], *The Human Experience of Space and Place* [London: Croom, 1980], pp. 148–66); that is to say, for Seamon it is people's habitual spatiotemporal movements through *spaces* that forge their meanings as *places*. A public space whose meaning is composed through the 'place ballet' displays 'irreducible crux of people's life-situations which remains when all "non-essentials" . . . are stripped bare' (p. 149). The place ballet therefore refers to what is essential. The problem with this phenomenological framing of how places become meaningful is that this does not attend to the exclusions that will also emerge in public space – who is excluded, marginalized, or harmed by such a meaning composed through such a ballet? A critical phenomenology, such as that developed by Ahmed, helps to politicize the phenomenology of place.
- 30 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Translator's Preface', in Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. xiv.
- 31 Spivak, *Of Grammatology*, p. xvii.
- 32 Spivak, *Of Grammatology*, p. xvii and Jacques Derrida *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976 [1967]), p. 61.
- 33 In his essay, *The Question of Being*, Heidegger considers the metaphysical limits of Being (*Dasein*, or there-being/Being-in-the-world) by exploring the possibilities of *sous-rature*, or *Überqueren* (meaning to cross over, to traverse) to 'demand a transformed relationship to the essence of language' (pp. 70–1), Heidegger tries to transcend the originary command of Being through deletion; however, in so doing, *Dasein* becomes the originary – the 'master word' – the 'transcendental signified' for Derrida (Spivak, *Of Grammatology*, p. xvi). The problem that Derrida identifies in Heidegger's project and tries to transform in his own, is the contestation between a deleted *Dasein* being always-already-Being (the 'Being' being originary), and what Derrida describes here, the 'always-already absent presence', which has no origin but is the continual process of deferral – the endless play of signification, which is ontologically distinct from, but indebted to, both a Heideggerian phenomenology and a Lacanian account of originary loss of the primordial m/Other.
- 34 A particularly British term, defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as slang for describing 'a young person of a type characterized by brash and loutish behaviour and the wearing of designer-style clothes (esp. sportswear); usually with connotations of a low social status'.
- 35 See, for instance, Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin: White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1952); Imogen Tyler, 'Chav Mum, Chav Scum', *Feminist Media Studies*, 8(1), 2008, pp. 17–34.
- 36 Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Object, Others* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006).
- 37 See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Part I: The Will to Knowledge* (London: Penguin, 1978) and Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', *Critical Inquiry*, 8(4), 1982, pp. 777–95.

- 38 Population 4171, rural village, predominantly older population ‘generally affluent, with large numbers employed in professional, managerial and technical occupations, and many residents with degree level qualifications’ (Office of National Statistics [ONS], Census of England and Wales, ONS, Newport, 2011), high employment rate, low percentage of residents from minority ethnic backgrounds (80% White British according to 2001 Census [ONS, Census of England and Wales, ONS, Newport, 2001]).
- 39 Population 79,000, small town, younger population than in the rural site, mostly working in education, social work and retail, a reasonably wealthy town, this site has nonetheless higher than average unemployment levels. It is also much more ethnically diverse than the rural site with 28% of the population from ethnic minority background, including Wardhood, which, as the discussion in the second part of this paper demonstrates, is both amongst the poorest wards in the UK and is composed of a majority (76%) black and ethnic minority population, which, in the context of being a fearsome site, has implications for the othering inherent in these safe-keeping imperatives.
- 40 A borough of London, UK, this area has a population of 300,000 and has pockets of above average wealth and above average poverty with only 31% owner occupied properties in the borough. Sixty-three per cent of the population are White British (ONS, Census of England and Wales, ONS, Newport, 2011), with a predominantly young population (30% between 30 and 40 years old), (ONS, Census of England and Wales, ONS, Newport, 2011).
- 41 Janine L. Wiles, Mark W. Rosenberg and Robin A. Kearns, ‘Narrative Analysis as a Strategy for Understanding Interview Talk in Geographic Research’, *Area*, 37(1), 2005, p. 90.
- 42 Wiles et al., ‘Narrative Analysis’, pp. 90–1.
- 43 Linda Sandberg and Aina Tollefsen, ‘Talking about Fear of Violence in Public Space: Female and Male Narratives about Threatening Situations in Umea, Sweden’, *Social and Cultural Geography*, 11(1), 2010, pp. 1–15.
- 44 Melissa Hyams, ‘Hearing Girls’ Silences: Thoughts on the Politics and Practices of a Feminist Method of Group Discussion’, *Gender, Place and Culture*, 11(1), 2004, pp. 105–19.
- 45 I recognize one critique that can be levelled at this research is in the possibility that these analyses of silences and gaps are over-determined. I also recognize that my presence within the discussions with participants might well have affected the expression of silence and gaps, dependent, for instance, on the intersubjective dynamic between us or on other contextual influences on the interview. Following Linda Finlay (“‘Outing” the Researcher: The Provenance, Process and Practice of Reflexivity”, *Qualitative Health Research*, 12[5], 2002, pp. 531–45), I have tried as far as possible to give reflexive accounts of lacunae and to recognize my potential influence on their expression in my analyses by situating my presence as far as possible in the presentation of the data (Claire Dwyer, ‘Veiled Meanings: Young British Muslim Women and the Negotiation of Difference’, *Gender, Place and Culture*, 6[1], 1999, p. 7). Given the qualitative nature of this study, the salience of lacunae emerged in the discursive analysis conducted. I hope that the analysis I offer to support these claims demonstrates this.
- 46 All names of people and places have been anonymized.
- 47 Valentine, ‘Images of Danger’; Koskela, ‘Bold Walk and Breaking’; Elizabeth Stanko, ‘Safety Talk: Conceptualising Women’s Risk Assessment as a “Technology of the Soul”’, *Theoretical Criminology*, 1(4), 1997, pp. 479–99; Hille Koskela, “‘Gendered Exclusions”: Women’s Fear of Violence and Changing Relations to Space’, *Geografiska Annaler*, 81(B2), 1999, pp. 111–24; Hollander, ‘Vulnerability and Dangerousness’.
- 48 Hollander, ‘Vulnerability and Dangerousness’.
- 49 Day, ‘Constructing Masculinity and Women’s Fear’.
- 50 See for instance, Skeggs, ‘Matter Out of Place’; Stephanie Lawler, ‘Disgusted Subjects: The Making of Middle-class Identities’, *The Sociological Review*, 53(3), 2005, pp. 429–46; Anoop Nayak, ‘Displaced Masculinities: Chavs, Youth and Class in the Post-Industrial City’, *Sociology*, 40, 2006, pp. 813–30; Keith Hayward and Majid Yar, ‘The “Chav” Phenomenon: Consumption, Media and the Construction of a New Underclass’, *Crime, Media, Culture*, 2(1), 2006, pp. 9–28; Tyler, ‘Chav Mum, Chav Scum’.
- 51 Massey, *For Space*, pp. 152–3.

- 52 Ahmed, 'Home and Away'; Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*; Sara Ahmed, 'Affective Economies', *Social Text* 79, 22(2), 2004, pp. 117–39.
- 53 See, for instance: Ahmed, 'Home and Away'; Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*; Ahmed, 'Affective Economies'.
- 54 See, for instance: Elizabeth Stanko, *Everyday Violence: How Women and Men Experience Sexual and Physical Danger* (London: Pandora, 1990); Carol Brooks Gardner, *Passing By: Gender and Public Harassment* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).
- 55 Massey, *For Space*, p. 153.
- 56 See David Pinder, 'Subverting Cartography: The Situationists and Maps of the City', *Environment and Planning A*, 28, 1996, pp. 405–27; David Bell, 'Fantasy Island/Panic Subway', *Landscape Research*, 17(2), 1992, pp. 72–3.
- 57 ONS, Census of England and Wales, ONS, Newport, 2011.
- 58 Massey, *For Space*.
- 59 Heidegger, *Being and Time*.
- 60 Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (London: SAGE, 1992 [1986]).
- 61 Valentine, 'The Geography of Women's Fear'; Day, 'Constructing Masculinity and Women's Fear in Public Space in Irvine, California', Day et al., 'Confrontation and Loss of Control: Masculinity and Men's Fear in Public Space'.
- 62 See also Sibley, *Geographies of Exclusion*; Ahmed, 'Affective Economies'; Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*; Beckett and Herbert, 'Dealing with Disorder'.
- 63 Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (London: Verso, 1993), p. 149.

### Author biography

Alexandra Fanghanel works on critical approaches to fear of crime, belonging and exclusion and public space. Other research interests include gender, sexualities and sexual practices in public spaces.