

Assignment 2: Cultural Geography

Discuss why the way we think about places and imagine them to be is important in constructing our understanding of places. Use the attached article, 'Imagine there's a heaven...' The Observer, Sunday January 14th 2007, and draw on its discussion of Liverpool to illustrate your answer.

This essay will first discuss the types imagery used in Steven Bayley's article, such as images, language, architecture, poetry and art. I will furthermore explore how and why other types of imagery used to foster regeneration process of the city of Liverpool and finally asses the importance of imagery in our understanding of places.

Since its establishment, Liverpool has been a thriving and ever transforming place driven by its historical and contemporary ongoing events from its humble early stages in the slave trade to the current regeneration and economic development schemes which have attempted to rebrand the city and continue to present ongoing challenges and celebrations. Further contemporary challenges have been presented by bad or good publicity and negative or positive place imagery, all of which influence social modifications. Lowenthal, p 2006, emphasises, that their coverage in various arms of the media is of paramount importance since they construct social and spatial imaginations of places. The city has experienced complex and changing social, political and economical history resulting from powerful images of the city and its people emanating from both inside and outside boundaries.

In the article Steven Bayley portrays and questions the nature of life in the city Liverpool. He hails the city for its great and inspiring architecture and its people but also at the same time he expresses the ugly side of a declining city plagued by dereliction and decay. This article demonstrates the power of imagery in fostering one's understanding of places and ultimately how human interaction with local environment illustrates Steven Bayley's personal thoughts and views of Liverpool and his understanding of other places. All which are based on his deep attachment and passion for a place which he grew up in and still calls it home even though he has moved out of it. This article provides not only a detailed history and future of Liverpool as a growing major 21st century metropolis. More importantly, illustrates how his environment has shaped his perceptions. He sees modern Liverpool as a sordid, proud, magnificent and constantly transforming world that evokes mixed

feelings. He describes it as being, "beautiful and ugly, proud and wanton, impressive and dismaying, romantic and crass..." These views are presented through the article with use of various literary techniques, innovative use of images, language and poetic form to convey the image of Liverpool he had known growing up in the city and the one he sees coming back on a visit from his new place of residence, London.

Author uses metaphors in some parts of the article to emphasise his descriptions and ultimately makes the destruction, decay and success of Liverpool more apparent. "Liverpool has its own comedian, but it is not always a happy place". The sound pattern embedded in his poetry demonstrates the sheer extent of the misery brought about by the earlier decline of the city and its later success brought about by the regeneration of the metropolitan. In which he marvels the city of night mares has become a city of dreams.

Stephen uses various methods of portraying his views of the modern city of Liverpool and its people through the eyes of the persona. "...my neighbour on the train a modern Liverpool man, lap topped and black berried, said into his phone...yeah, it's a movable feast, but a feast of marshmallows". This is an innovative way that he uses poetic form, language and imagery to convey his views.

He also uses questions and answer combined with a metaphor to illustrate some of his points. In this case he imposes and explicitly tries to draw readers' attention to his view of Liverpool as a place of outstanding buildings and famous architects. "What made one arrangement of bricks, stone, steel and glass good and another bad? Design". Posing questions and providing an answer is not only a way of catching readers' attention but it serves a purpose of inviting and encouraging the reader to share and agree with his thoughts.

The reader is also drawn into Stephen's thoughts and feelings through vivid imagery. The article contains a lot of imagery and metaphors of describing his views of Liverpool people and other people from other cities. He purposely compares the cities and implies that the people from Liverpool are much more respectable and reputable than everyone else probably because that is his hometown. He notes, "Salford lads, Manchester boys, but Liverpool gentlemen...but soon gentlemen become scallies, and Liverpool's decline was faster than its rise". The highlight of this quote is an image of the city after its decline, and the idea that an invasion of foreigners such as the Irish brought about dirt, pollution and

chaos to the society. Stephen provokes an image of lawlessness and depression, “Hitler is reputed to have lived here...”

Stephen thinks of Liverpool as one of the greatest cities which has undergone considerable transformations but has managed to redevelop and become one of the successful cities in the world. He manages in his article to create a powerful portrait of Liverpool as a successful metropolis with not only marvellous architecture and infrastructure but also a thriving city of resilient and innovative people. Modern Liverpool citizens live meaningful and fulfilling lives. He employs the use of innovative literary techniques like metaphors, personification and remarks and questions. He is innovative because he presents meaning through form and structure. We understand modern Liverpool through knowledge of the history and culture of the city through someone who grew up and lived in the city from its prosperous times up to when it was, “... media shorthand for urban misery”.

The humanistic approach aimed to establish differences in the world, focusing on the individual having their own characteristics. Geographers who believe in this view look at the individual as someone who is constantly interacting with both individuals and their surrounding environment. By looking at this complex interaction the geographers aim to illustrate the significance between humans and the landscape in which they are situated, and the connection that exists between their surroundings and their reactions. This humanism is part of a critique of spatial science and its objectives, which focus on creative and imaginative approaches for understanding individuals. In 1961 D Lowenthal argued that geographers must link individual perspectives to the broader understanding of place.

Yi – Fu Tuan, who spent his life researching and examining how humans fashioned personal and cultural realities and how these realities, reflected our collective and personal ideas. Tuan in his studies focused on environmental imagination, in an attempt to identify how geographical phenomena can reveal the quality of human awareness. The environment Tuan believed played a major role in provoking the diverse reactions of people and their surroundings. Tuan then followed on with his argument by saying that a personal and lasting appreciation of landscape came about when mixed with the memory of human incidents or when aesthetic pleasure is combined with scientific curiosity as an awareness of the past is important in creating the love of place, usually at a local level. Tuan saw place as the joining between the senses of position in society and the senses of identity to your homeland that arises from living in and

associating yourself with it. Tuan states that 'place' does not have a geographical scale or map reference associated with it, he sees place as areas in which people find themselves in, and who within these spaces live and interpret their surroundings. Although place is an important aspect in his thinking it must be noted that it does not just arise of its own accord, but instead from 'fields of care'. The idea of fields of care was illustrated in geographical works by humanistic geographers e.g. Agnew, who refined ideas about space and observed the meaning of place, Agnew identified three major elements of place. The locale i.e. the setting, the location i.e. the geographical location which encompasses the settings and the sense of place i.e. the feeling associated with the area. Tuan's definition associates place with two primary factors, the position held in the society in which you live and the spatial location in which you identify yourself with in that society, but these two elements can and do overlap. Tuan observed that one's social position in society comes first before the location. Marjorie Grene who suggested that the primary meaning of place was one's position in society rather than one's location in space accepted Tuan's view. Tuan held a strong belief that human patterns and processes cannot be determined by geometric logic and those spatial logics of location theory and analysis do not adequately account for human interaction, making place much more valuable than just your situation on a map. When Tuan wrote he proposed that the key to the meaning of place lies in the materialization people use when describing it, people talk of the spirit, personality and sense of place with each person placing a different meaning of the above mentioned words. 'Spirit' signifies the feelings and views held by an individual over a specific place, making that place special and sacred to the individual e.g. people regard the home in which they live a sacred place, hence the hurt and upset that occurs when it is broken into as the act is seen as an invasion of that space. Tuan believes that the personality held by a place is due to a contribution to lots of different and unique factors, he sees personality having two important aspects. One of awe and affection e.g. the Grand Canyon which commands respect and brings about the feeling of awe and illustrates power and meaning to the eye. Places that evoke affection on the other hand can be anything; it all depends on the individual looking at the place. Tuan also suggests that the places that are pleasing to the eye i.e. public symbols tend to have the ability to draw instant attention, whereas fields of care are inconspicuous only holding meaning to a particular individual or set of individuals, evoking affection.

Steyaert, 2003.

Images of cities have performative and discursive features p215

City images circulate and recirculate on the stage of global city management. They are translated into local practices and local images that are happily adopted, creatively imitated and energetically redistributed. P215

The importance of city images are not their constant construction and reconstruction, but their use and the use of city images are in the hands of others. P215

It is not when city images are powerful that they are used and distributed: it is when city images are used and distributed that they become powerful. The quality of a city image its underlying discourse is thus a consequence, not a cause, of collective actions of many actors p215

Emerging urban entrepreneurship could also imply past-modern efforts of manipulating perceived images of inframinds of cities and would become a complementary strategy to managing city infrastructure.

Miller, M

Argues that places are being eroded by the impact of capitalist development p5

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There can be no single identity for a place, since various social groups will be differently located....these groups will read these relations in different ways so promote different interpretations according to their social positions...

For example conflict Liverpool developments agencies aim to promote the city as a place of excellence, fine architecture and leading universities with a strategy based around the of Maritime City, debates about how the city can capitalise its connection with famous celebrities such as Beatles using music to sell and develop place became increasingly pertinent as city image worsened following economic slump and growing interest in pop culture and Beatles memorabilia following death of John Lennon.

Through sounds, images, events and artefacts the Beatles have thus been used to represent and symbolise Liverpool, influencing the ways in which people think about and imagine the city, distinguishing it from other places and associating it with particular meanings, values and sentiments.

Cities such as Glastonbury is another example of a city which has capitalised on music's social, sensual, symbolic and economic role in representing essence, spirit and soul of its place. City has managed to attract world attention with the annual musical events which have gained world credibility and has fostered the image of Glastonbury as a legendary place which stages the best social events which attract one of the largest crowds and social events. Schwarz, p95, 2003 explains, "music influences people's experiences of places....songs can be theorised about, textualised, or read; they are also heard and felt, and music has a peculiar ability to effect or articulate mood, atmosphere, emotion and consequently to trigger the imagination.

P14

Groups that enjoy hegemony in the exercise of power relations are best positioned to promote their interpretations of place. These groups construct their linear histories in the form of a relentless narrative blazing self-justifying glory, in the present

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City managers in the increasingly global and networked world find themselves in competition with city managers of other cities...in the wake of globalisation cities are formulating progressive strategies and images of their cities as part of place promotion....city image is an important product of city management since it functions as legitimization of how a city is perceived by its citizens, inward investors, tourists..

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It is easier and less costly for a city to engage in local entrepreneurs to invest in new buildings and infrastructure , attract competent managers and workers and construct new industrial city than it will be to grab hold of old industries and to expand or convert old industrial site. This he suggests is because older industries posses more problems such as job insecurities and losses

p213 New ways of maximising productivity and effectiveness is the construction and use of images ...city managers go to the extent of accepting and constructing fragmented, fictitious, and fleeting images of their beloved city as long as these images enable the cities to grow and enable inward investment..

Ward, V. S

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Glasgow is an example of a city which challenged preconceptions and made the most of their year in the media spotlight following selection in as city of culture it invested more money in regeneration and cultural industries, by 1990 there was a new concert hall, extensive cleaning and lighting, total spend on the year was 53.1 million compared to an annual 18 million, by end of 1980 investment was successful in attracting tourism, pace of business investment increased creating more jobs

Staging sporting spectacles is widely used in most cities as sports events have a popular dimension that makes them relatively easy to justify locally. Also they are a form of local leisure enjoyment as well, can give local entrepreneurialism a broader political base and greatly strengthen citizens' commitment to their city

The biggest world sport event is the Olympic Games, competition to stage the event is intense....games bring handsome profits and enhance the image of the host city throughout the world

The House of commons Committee, "The prospects of the legacy that Games bring are important...will make the UK a world-leading sporting nation; regenerate East London, inspire a new generation of young people to take part in physical activities and make Olympic Park a blue print for sustainable living and demonstrate the country as a welcoming, creative and inclusive place to live in, visit and invest in

Schwarz, D et al

When the Beatles became famous so too did Liverpool

The Beatles are advocated as a useful tool in improving the city image and developing local economy, packaging the city on the backs of the Beatles

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