



Places on the Margin

**Alternative
geographies of
modernity**



Rob Shields

THE INTERNATIONAL
LIBRARY OF SOCIOLOGY



PLACES ON THE MARGIN

INTERNATIONAL LIBRARY OF SOCIOLOGY

Founded by Karl Mannheim

Editor: John Urry

University of Lancaster

PLACES ON THE MARGIN

Alternative geographies of modernity

ROB SHIELDS

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 1991
by Routledge

Published 2013 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge

711 Third Avenue, New York, NY, 10017, USA

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 1991 Rob Shields

Typeset by LaserScript Limited, Mitcham, Surrey

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Shields, Rob, 1961–

Places on the margin. – (The international library of sociology)

I. Title II. Series

304.23

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Shields, Rob, 1961–

Places on the margin: alternative geographies of modernity/Rob Shields.

p. cm. – (International library of sociology series)

Includes bibliographical references (p.).

1. Human geography. 2. Spatial behavior. 3. Geographical perception. I. Title. II. Series: International library of

sociology.

GF95.S55 1990

304.2'3–dc20

90-8264

CIP

ISBN 13: 978-0-415-08022-4 (pbk)

FOR MY PARENTS AND FOR 'M'

This page intentionally left blank

The anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than with time. Time probably appears to us only as one of the various distributive operations that are possible for the elements that are spread out in space.

(Michael Foucault 1967, Berlin lectures)

This page intentionally left blank

CONTENTS

List of illustrations	xi
Acknowledgements	xiii

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION: PLACES ON THE MARGIN	3
<i>Margin and periphery</i>	3
<i>Early approaches: a review in the form of critique</i>	11
<i>Synopsis</i>	24
1 ALTERNATIVE GEOGRAPHIES OF MODERNITY	29
<i>Social spatialisation</i>	30
<i>The social construction of the spatial</i>	46
<i>Social spatialisations and the sense of place</i>	58

PART TWO

2 RITUAL PLEASURES OF A SEASIDE RESORT: LIMINALITY, CARNIVALESQUE, AND DIRTY WEEKENDS	73
<i>Clinic Brighton 1730–1820</i>	75
<i>The system of pleasure</i>	78
<i>Leisure spaces: liminality and carnival</i>	83
<i>Mods, Rockers and turf gangs: carnivals of violence</i>	101
<i>Dirty weekends and the carnival of sex</i>	105
3 NIAGARA FALLS: HONEYMOON CAPITAL OF THE WORLD	117
<i>Historical reaction to Niagara Falls</i>	119
<i>Tourist rituals: ‘The fashionable, the opulent and the learned congregate here’</i>	126

CONTENTS

<i>Honey lunacy: practice and image</i>	137
<i>Explanations of the Niagara Falls honeymoon</i>	139
<i>The North American geomancy of waterfalls</i>	141
<i>Liminality, rites de passage, and tourism</i>	148
<i>Conclusion</i>	155
 4 THE TRUE NORTH STRONG AND FREE	 162
<i>Images and realities</i>	164
<i>Nordicity</i>	167
<i>A brief history of Northern images</i>	172
<i>The nationalistic 'tradition' of images</i>	182
<i>Conclusion</i>	198
 5 THE NORTH–SOUTH DIVIDE IN ENGLAND	 207
<i>North and South: a literary history</i>	208
<i>The 'North' in British realist cinema</i>	215
<i>The 'North' in Coronation Street</i>	222
<i>The 'North' of England</i>	229
<i>The 'North–South Divide' rhetoric of the 1980s</i>	231
<i>Conclusion</i>	245
PART THREE	
 6 SYNTHESIS AND IMPLICATIONS	 255
<i>Synthesis</i>	256
<i>Themes of distinction-by-division and community identity</i>	260
<i>Implications</i>	265
<i>Alternative geographies of modernity: the postmodern outlook</i>	276
 BIBLIOGRAPHIES	 279
<i>Theoretical works</i>	279
<i>Brighton and the 'dirty weekend'</i>	305
<i>Niagara Falls</i>	309
<i>The True North Strong and Free</i>	314
<i>The 'North–South Divide' in England</i>	322
 Name index	 325
Subject index	328

ILLUSTRATIONS

FIGURES

2.1	Context map of Brighton	74
2.2	'Papa sees us bathe', 1856	80
2.3	Brighton seafront, c. 1890	82
2.4	'Gentlemen! Who pass the morning near the ladies' bathing machines'	83
2.5	'Plenty of ozone', comic postcard	98
2.6	'Mr Topweight', comic postcard	99
2.7	'The million', cartoon, 1920s	103
2.8	Beach fights between Mods and Rockers	105
3.1	Context map of Niagara Falls	120
3.2	<i>The Falls of Niagara</i> , 1697	123
3.3	<i>The Season at Niagara Falls Photographing Visitors</i> , 1877	129
3.4	<i>The Horse Shoe Fall, Niagara with the Tower</i> , 1837	130
3.5	<i>Their Bridal Tour at Niagara Falls</i> , 1888	142
3.6	Map of Niagara Falls and Clifton Hill	153
3.7	Mugs: souvenirs of the carnivalesque	154
4.1	Map of the extent of the Canadian 'North'	169
5.1	Map of the extent of the British 'North'	209
5.2	Realist 'grit' in <i>Saturday Night and Sunday Morning</i>	215
5.3	'That long shot of our town from that hill': the example in <i>A Kind of Loving</i>	217
5.4	<i>A Taste of Honey</i> : the landscape of industrial capital	219

TABLES

1.1	Comparison of Lefebvre's, Bourdieu's and Foucault's definitions	59
-----	--	----

ILLUSTRATIONS

3.1	Chronology of the development of Niagara Falls	136
3.2	Class coalitions and images	147
3.3	Contrasts between Niagara Falls' tourism markets	155
5.1	Graph showing mentions of key phrases in the <i>Tex</i> <i>Line</i> sample, 1985–87	235
5.2	United Kingdom regional contrasts	236

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book developed out of doctoral research at the University of Sussex made possible by a Commonwealth Scholarship. I owe a debt of gratitude to many colleagues, reviewers, and the patient audiences of numerous seminars where the theoretical groundwork of this study was staked out. Perhaps my greatest debt is to Pete Saunders, who for three years read and reread successive iterations while dealing with numerous extra advisors, puzzling ideas, and foreign theories in each chapter, slowly cajolling a comprehensible presentation. A host of other figures contributed at seminal moments whom I can never hope to thank adequately. Many, including my grandmother, Mrs Agnes Paterson, helped correct the proofs. John Urry, Mike Savage, Kevin Meetham, Myung-Rae Cho, Aya Okada, Joerge Dyrkton, James Barlow, the late Allon White, Derek Gregory, Peter Dickens, John Cosgrove, and Ed Soja provided patient counsel and wider horizons. Without the sources made available by the Brighton Central Reference Library and the Royal Pavilion Museum, Brighton; the Niagara Falls Tourism and Convention Bureau in the person of Stella Howlett and Rosanna Schincariol of Travel Lodge's 'Coral Inn' (Niagara Falls) the chapters on Brighton and on the Niagara Honeymoon would have been impossible. The Niagara Falls Library and the local Historical Society allowed me access to historical material which filled in gaps. The Department of Sociology at the University of Lancaster and the School of Urban and Regional Planning, Queen's University, who afforded me hospitality and a toehold in Canadian academia during the actual preparation of this book, richly deserve my thanks, as do my Canadian colleagues, Mireya Folch-Serra, Brian Osbourne, John Holmes, Charles Gordon and above all Marie Brisson.

RS, Lancaster, December 1989.

This page intentionally left blank

PART ONE

This page intentionally left blank

INTRODUCTION

Places on the margin

When we seek to make sense of such problematical topics as human nature, culture, society, and history, we never say precisely what we wish to say or mean precisely what we say. Our discourse always tends to slip away from our data towards the structures of consciousness with which we are trying to grasp them; or, what amounts to the same thing, the data always resist the coherency of the image which we are trying to fashion of them . . .

(Hayden White 1978, *Tropics of Discourse*, p.1)

MARGIN AND PERIPHERY

Marginal places, those towns and regions which have been 'left behind' in the modern race for progress, evoke both nostalgia and fascination. Their marginal status may come from out-of-the-way geographic locations, being the site of illicit or disdained social activities, or being the Other pole to a great cultural centre. In all cases the type of geographic marginality discussed below is a mark of being a social periphery. That is, the marginal places that are of interest are not necessarily on geographical peripheries but, first and foremost, they have been placed on the periphery of cultural systems of space in which places are ranked relative to each other. They all carry the image, and stigma, of their marginality which becomes indistinguishable from any basic empirical identity they might once have had. From this *primary* ranking of cultural status they may also end up being classified in what geographers have mapped as systems of 'centres and peripheries'. At the margins of these cultural classifications are the peripheral sites and regions which form the topic of this book. Brighton with its beach, for

example, is at the 'edge' of the British Isles, lying on the south coast. Yet its accessibility from London made it an ideal site for socially marginal activities – carnivals of desire and explosions of unrest. The Canadian North, by contrast, forms the mythic 'heartland' of Canada but remains a zone of Otherness in the spatial system of Canadian culture. The North is the complete antithesis of the urban civilisation of the southern metropolises. Thus it is that places on the margins expose the central role of 'spatialisation' to cultures and nation-states.

The example of the beach illustrates the extent of the cultural categorisation of geographic spaces and places. As opposed to being merely a topographic margin, the development of cultural marginality occurs only through a complex process of social activity and cultural work. There is a broad literature which has emerged over the last decade on cultural categorisation. In particular, the theme of binary oppositions between the High and the Low emerges as characteristic of the cultures of European civilisation. In their book *The Poetics and Politics of Transgression*, Stallybrass and White (1986) note that cultural categories of 'high and low, social and aesthetic . . . those of the physical body and geographical space, are never entirely separable.' In a process of categorisation through binary oppositions

the human body, psychic forms, geographical space and the social formation are all constructed within interrelating and dependent hierarchies of high and low The high/low opposition in each of . . . [these] four symbolic domains . . . is a fundamental basis to mechanisms of ordering and sense-making in European cultures.

(Stallybrass and White 1986:2-3)

Furthermore 'This does not necessarily militate against subtlety since "above" and "below" may be inscribed within a minutely discriminatory system of classification, but it does foster a simplifying binaryism of high and low *within which* further classification will be made' (1986:3).

To this opposition of High/Low, the parallel, geographic dualism of Central/Marginal may be aligned. The social definition of marginal places and spaces is intimately linked with the categorisation of objects, practices, ideas and modes of social interaction as belonging to the 'Low culture', the culture of marginal places

and spaces, the culture of the marginalised. In his book on *Orientalism*, the Euro-chauvinistic myths of the Middle East constructed by Europeans to bolster their own cultural status and legitimise imperial ambitions, Edward Saïd (1978) has demonstrated this simultaneous definition of the Low-Other and the categorisation of the Marginal as being at the 'edge of civilisation'.

The politics of this process of symbolic exclusion depends on a strategy of what Saïd has called 'positional superiority', one which puts the High in a whole series of possible relationships with the Low without ever losing the upper hand. This allows a series of ambivalent representations of and relationships to the Low or the Marginal. Stallybrass and White conclude that 'Repugnance and fascination are the twin poles of the process in which a *political* imperative to reject and eliminate the debasing "Low" conflicts powerfully and unpredictably with a desire for the Other' (1986:4-5).

The "Top" attempts to reject and eliminate the 'Bottom' for reasons of prestige and status, only to discover, not only that it is in some way frequently dependent upon that low-Other . . . but also that the top *includes* that low symbolically, as a primary eroticised constituent of its own fantasy life . . . It is for this reason that what is socially peripheral is so frequently *symbolically* central (like long hair in the 1960s). The low-Other is despised and denied at the level of political organisation and social being whilst it is instrumentally constitutive of the shared imaginary repertoires of the dominant culture.

(Stallybrass and White 1986:5)

This recurring pattern will be borne out in the case-histories which follow. The relation of centre and margin lies at the heart of the identity of the four cases below. The social 'Other' of the marginal and of low cultures is despised and reviled in the official discourse of dominant culture and central power while at the same time being constitutive of the imaginary and emotional repertoires of that dominant culture. But, even if this binary separation is clearly visible to the social analyst, the construction of marginality, the classification of the Low, and the exclusion of the Other are not final points of achieved stasis. In the case-histories which follow, marginality reveals its own states, a history of transformations

between being margins, near-sacred *liminal zones* of Otherness, and carnivalesque leisure spaces of ritual inversion of the dominant, authorised cultures.

Four places and regions are compared to examine the importance of place-images to the culture of modernity in North America and Britain. Through these demonstrations, a conceptual 'toolkit' will be built up, with which we should be able to discuss not only images of places and regions but also the impact of contemporary, so-called postmodern, trends in the cultural and spatial organisation of modernity. Sites are never simply locations. Rather, they are sites for someone and of something. The cultural context of images and myths adds a socially constructed level of meaning to the *genus loci*, the classics' 'unique sense of place', said to derive from the forms of the physical environment in a given site. Thus, to give a brief example, to the *genus loci* of central Rome – the seven ancient hills which formed the sites on which principal buildings were located in ancient times and which later provided the nodes which the great axes of the Baroque Rome of Pope Sixtus V would link – I propose to add the cultural identity of Rome as a great city in relation to other cultural capitals, to European cities and to the socio-geographic regions of Italy. This means fully locating it in the different emotional geographies of people as different as tourists and city dwellers, building up an image of the place through the events and activities it attracts and repels, mapping its function in language and its role as a pole in the gestalt field of Western historical culture.

As opposed to this being merely a matter of myths, each case-history builds toward a demonstration of the centrality of spatial conceptions such as place-images for daily life. These images and stereotypes, an imaginary geography of places and spaces, are shown to have social impacts which are empirically specifiable and located not only at the level of individual proxemics (as discussed in the late 1960s and 1970s—cf. Hall 1966) but also at the level of social discourses on space which (1) underpin the rhetoric of ideologues and politicians and (2) pervade and subvert even the rationalistic discourse of planning and regional development policy (e.g. Massey 1984; 1988). In particular, the collective weight of these 'discourses on space' will be linked with the symbolic creation of a sense of community (cf. Cohen 1986) and with nationalism (cf. B. Anderson 1983).

INTRODUCTION

The spatial practices and figurative images discussed in this book are evidence of much more. I plan to argue not just for empirical impacts but to demonstrate the importance of spatial concepts and categories, of which place-images and myths are only one example, for the whole way in which we go about thinking about our world in conventional terms. To use more fancy terms, the spatial has an epistemic and ontological importance – it is part and parcel of our notions of reality, truth, and causality. As an initial hypothesis, we could suggest that a ‘discourse of space’ composed of perceptions of places and regions, of the world as a ‘space’ and of our relationships with these perceptions are central to our everyday conceptions of ourselves and of reality.

Understandings and concepts of space cannot be divorced from the real fabric of how people live their lives. To do so would be like saying that culture is made up of beliefs and traditions but has no impact on how people live. Their concrete, non-discursive, practices are both informed by and go on to provoke modifications in this cultural discourse of the spatial. In Chapter One, following Michel Foucault, the administrative, guiding nature of these discursive understandings and beliefs will be argued to be the key in the transformation of purely discursive (i.e. ideational, symbolic, and linguistic) notions of space and of ‘imaginary geographies’ into empirically-specifiable everyday actions gestures of the living persons, of the crowd-practices and emotional community of affective groups, of institutional policies and political-economic arrangements, right up the scale to the ‘imaginary community’ of the territorial nation-state (B. Anderson 1983) and beyond to form geo-political alliances, rivalries, and spheres of influence. This overarching order of space, is reproduced in concrete forms and re-affirms as well as reproduces ‘discourses of space’ which constitute it. The term *social spatialisation* will be used to designate this social construction of the spatial which is a formation of both discursive and non-discursive elements, practices, and processes. Taking my cue from the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre, the spatial will be approached as a materially produced form, a ‘concrete abstraction’ like the commodity form which is both the material ground of labour and the result of the operations and inscriptions of capital on territory in the form of land values and the property regime (Lefebvre 1981; Harvey 1982). To throw this into new light, we could adopt Heideggerian termin-

logy to note that the spatial has both an *ontic* aspect as the forgotten datum of social practices and at the same moment and in those self-same practices an *ontological* aspect as that which we take for granted in the everydayness of lots, of my property and your property, of real estate signs and of the proudly-trimmed plantings in front of suburban split-level ranch-bungalows. The paradox whereby the spatial is both a socially-constructed arrangement of divisions and territories and the ontic medium of all such arrangements will be explored in the next chapter.

Such a paradox also serves as a warning that we must recognise that we build our concepts and theories from within our material, forever prisoners of our geographical and historical context. There is no still, Archimedean point outside of society and the world at which all forces might be weighed and called to order. Hence, the *aporetic* nature of any claims to 'objectivity' or freedom from context, and the 'situatedness' of social theory – society theorising itself. Yet, remembering that the spatial is more than the historically and spatially specific ontological arrangements through which we live our lives, and by paying attention to the specific technologies of manipulation and formation of everyday spatial notions and practices, we can build a base in theory from which to criticise these arrangements and to imagine other arrangements, other worlds and, even, different experiences of the lived body.

This base in theory allows a comparative stock-taking of common spatial insights which are often noted but rarely followed up. In each case-history, as often as not, what is 'discovered' in this book has already been noted elsewhere, but not taken seriously and passed over. The question becomes, what might have been concluded by these previous researchers – in history, culture studies, economics, sociology, and politics – had the centrality of the spatial to their studies been better acknowledged.

Several 'moments' in this discourse of space have been selected which allow the relative stability of old stereotypes about places and regions to be examined for change in case-histories. In Canada the ideological notion of a 'True North Strong and Free' is central to nationalist discourse and plays an important role in cementing the far-flung regions of the country into a nation, and more specifically a 'Northern Nation', wherein all share in a common cultural phantasmagoria which makes Canadians different

INTRODUCTION

from Americans and similar to Scandinavians by virtue of their association with a northern frontier (Chapter Four).

In the United Kingdom another sort of north is found encapsulated in the popular notion of a 'North-South Divide' which gains currency in political discourse from time to time. Recently, it has been revived, despite many disclaimers about its appropriateness for describing the different levels of economic activity in the 'North' and the 'South' of England. It implies that economic activity, and indeed the very routines of daily life, are fundamentally different in the two zones, the 'North' and the 'South'. The questionable ascription of a difference in type, rather than just a difference of degree by the popular media will be examined (Chapter Five).

Additionally, the case of the British seaside resort of Brighton provides a view of popular leisure pursuits on the beach, the carnivalisation of that liminal zone between land and sea (Chapter Two). The Canadian honeymoon site of Niagara Falls provides a correspondingly faded geographical icon of the sublime which has undergone a series of historical mutations under the impact of the promotional efforts of opposed local interests (Chapter Three). Diverse 'windows' into each of these 'moments' will be used to lay bare the threads of these cases. A television serial like *Coronation Street* provides one keyhole view of the British North while the diffracted pattern of images of the 'True North Strong and Free' in nationalistic rhetoric provides a view of the continuing under-development of Canadian North.

A noble line of Marxian social theorists – Adorno and Horkheimer, Marcuse, Mattelart among others – have often schizophrenically condemned in theory the mass cultures they participate in practically, preaching a 'pedagogy of displeasure' and ceding a deeper understanding of culture to more instrumental and commercial forces (Stam 1988). The case-histories below fall more into the line of analyses pioneered by Benjamin (1973a) which searches for the progressive potential in popular cultures. They draw on both statistical data (tourism surveys and regional socio-economic data) and primary historical sources such as popular literature, comic postcards, and cinema. These sources are used to paint a multi-faceted picture of not only the manner in which places have been 'labelled' but also how this has found expression and been actualised in locally-specific ways as *places-for*

this or that in crowd practice, the built environment, and in regional policy. One text to be interpreted amongst others, census and other socio-economic data are 'questioned' for the hints and correlations they give regarding the empirically-verifiable elements of social spatialisation. However, they are not used to define or delimit the spatial phenomena to the empirical or the quantifiable. This seems the only prudent approach to a complex topic which in the past has escaped the attempts of any one language to 'pin it down' for dissection (for a survey see Shields 1986).

The cases provide an empirical basis from which the language and concepts necessary to a unified theorisation of the importance of the spatial is developed in a concluding, synthetic chapter. In this, the case-specific analyses are integrated into a wider theorisation of contemporary aspects of 'spatialisation'. With this conceptual framework in place, a discussion of the debates over changing spatialisations which have arisen in the context of discussions of community, nationalism, and modernity conclude the book.

This is an exploratory work, a book of reappraisals and re-readings of the taken-for-granted, which sets out to cover a great deal of terrain and to produce a workable mapping of the cultural importance of the spatial. The objective is not to provide a new, totalising theory. A spatial problematic does not displace problematics of class, gender, or ethnicity. Rather, it relativises most of the sweeping generalisations which have been extracted from limited case studies and reintroduces us to the complexities of the interplay between the different facets of social life. Problematics such as race, class, or gender are uninteresting and contribute little when isolated from the complex web of structures and arrangements in which people cope, cooperate, and compete in everyday life.

The concern is to create a space in academic discourse for a fuller discussion of the spatial than has previously been undertaken. As such, more questions will be raised than can be answered. Nor will this book provide a neat set of indicators to further the spatial technologies of this or that planning specialism. In fact, conclusions would be premature and would be to take these four case-histories rather too seriously. The theoretical elaboration of this project on social spatialisation has deliberately been kept to the simplest sketch so as not to foreclose on the

INTRODUCTION

case-histories which follow after the theoretical chapter. It is the subject of a forthcoming book. Nonetheless, grand theory and pompous hypotheses, modern, postmodern or of any other colour seem not to have been much help in the past. The fecundity of this speculative project for others will be a measure of its success.

EARLY APPROACHES: A REVIEW IN THE FORM OF CRITIQUE

The present work advances beyond earlier approaches to the meaning of the environment which have included work in the area of human geography, environmental psychology, and semiotics. It is important to recognise, however, the legacy of this positivistic, sociologically and culturally naive 'environmental image research' of the 1960s and 1970s and the contributions from hermeneutics and semiotics, even if there is space to outline only briefly this tradition of research which is well presented in Pocock and Hudson's *Images of the Urban Environment* (1978) or Gould and White's *Mental Maps* (1974, revised 1981) and critiqued in any number of other works (Jackson and Smith 1984). The focus here will be to re-evaluate several concrete examples of how social divisions are spatialised as geographic divisions and how places become 'labelled', much like deviant individuals. Habits such as spatialising important conceptual oppositions (for example putting one thing on the right, and another thing on the left, or classifying people by the places they come from: the 'right' or the 'wrong side of the tracks') have been studied as pathologically irrational forms of behaviour but will be shown to be an essential conceptual shorthand. These prejudices amount to a form of everyday knowledge which has been trivialised and dismissed by researchers interested in more 'serious' knowledge. Nonetheless it betrays a systematic 'disposition' towards the world (cf. Foucault 1980a; 1980b; 1982) coded into the framework of common sense.

There is a long tradition of sociologists and anthropologists interested in the spatial aspects of culture and society. Durkheim and Mauss devote sections in *Primitive Classification* (1963) to the study of 'social space' and the social nature of environmental perception and orientation. They argued that the territorialisation (Deleuze and Guattari 1976) of geographic space – its transformation from undifferentiated 'natural' space into the coded topo-

graphy of 'civilised' territory – and its division into, for example, cardinal directions and areas, was culturally arbitrary and, in the case of the societies they studied, reflected social divisions (1963:10–12). The landscape is divided up in the image of its inhabitants. Giddens (1984) is only the latest in a long line that has included Sorokin (1943), Needham (1973) and Walter Benjamin (1978).

The generic term 'image' appears in connection with places in the English geographical literature as far back as the writings of Trowbridge in 1912, who commented upon some city dwellers' sense of orientation while others are 'subject to confusion as to direction when emerging from theatres [and] subways' (1912: 889). While some people appeared to have 'imaginary maps' centred upon the locations of their homes they became disoriented outside of their neighbourhood in unfamiliar areas; others appeared to have egocentric maps, seeing the city in relation to their personal position rather than the position of a particular landmark or point such as their home, and thus being less likely to become disoriented. Pocock and Hudson argue that this behavioural interest led inevitably to the study of environmental images: 'the modelling and understanding of spatial behaviour . . . a premise (tacit or explicit) of many image studies is that the environmental image underpins behaviour and forms a crucial link mediating between the environment and behaviour in that environment' (1978:9).

The behavioural focus led geographers to focus on individual perceptions and motivations using psychologicistic research methods which proved difficult to generalise from. David Lowenthal's key 1967 article signalled an attempt to develop a geographical epistemology anchored in individual experience and imagination (Lowenthal 1967:260). While social custom was included in this research, it was custom as experienced by the individual. This methodological individualism, emphasising the uniqueness and subjective nature of environmental experience, was to burden 'environmental image research' with the problem of generalising from the individual to the social universe of shared meanings (Jackson and Smith 1984:21).

Despite their congruence with each other and with the world as it is, private milieus [sic] do diverge markedly among

INTRODUCTION

people in different cultures, for individuals within a social group, and for the same person as child and as adult, at various times and places, and in sundry moods.

(Lowenthal 1967:251)

Unlike the concern of this book, most work in geography has focused on this micro-scale: the 'private milieu' of an individual. Through the 1970s and even into the 1980s, research remained firmly within the orbit of the concerns of Lowenthal's benchmark essay, the contours of its assumptions and the parameters of its aspirations remaining unchallenged. A positivistic, schematic view of individuals' environmental surroundings emerged where there are as many images of any given scene as individuals apprehending it (Lowenthal 1967:249). Egocentric images were characterised as being in continuous flux but subject to saturation and fixation as a particular scene or set of surroundings became 'taken for granted' by a person. The issue of the social construction of categories of understanding into which objects would be sorted and dubbed with a culturally-inflected identity would have to wait for phenomenologically and hermeneutically-oriented researchers. The most devastating critique targetted the behaviourist assumptions that 'mental images' could be tied directly to observed, overt behaviour which researchers assumed provided a realm of 'solid, verifiable fact' for research. Mental images are only *hypothetical constructs* whose relation to behaviour is far from being a simple, univocal, causal linkage.

Lefebvre would argue that this typically visual approach merely reinforces the dominant logic and relations of capitalism (1981:Ch.3). It arbitrarily separates the individual (who is cast as 'Subject') from his or her environmental milieu (which is recast as 'Object'). Pocock and Hudson state this assumption clearly: 'Environment is taken to refer to anything external to the perceiver which influences, or might influence the perception process. . . . Awareness or interaction with the environment is achieved primarily by the visual sense experience' (1978:19). There are immediate consequences of such an ontology. The convenient separation of subject (perceiver) and object (perceived) led to laboratory research which substituted photographs for real environments. Environments are not analogous to images. Cosgrove (1982) has argued that they are interacted with, and one might

propose an even more radical emphasis by arguing that environments are participated in, being both an object of reason and a container of the thinking subject who does not so much 'interact with the whole environment' as participate in and depend on it. There is tremendous complicity between the body and environment and the two interpenetrate each other. So, what was really being referred to by 'image' in much of this research was the memory of a scene. More rarely was it the remembrance of an experienced environment, and even then, almost no attention was given to the socially-maintained *reputation* of a place or region which will be the focus of the case-histories below. A clear distinction must be made between research into people's existential participation in their environment and research into the culturally mediated reception of *representations* of environments, places, or regions which are 'afloat in society' as 'ideas in currency'. It is this distinction which separates the present work from this positivist tradition in geography.

In the best of this research any 'mental images' of places are considered to be conditioned by the mediation and intervention of conceptual systems, normative conditioning and socialisation. This 'cultural geography' (Claval 1980), by emphasising the development of a sense of place and territorial attachment, encouraged a proliferation of research on cognitive representation (Relph 1976a). Images of particular environments or places serve both referential functions (as memory aids, or frameworks for reconstructing events) and *anticipatory* functions (serving as a guide to future encounters at or in given sites and places). 'Contrary to what is often stated, studies on representations do not focus on the particular characteristics of images, but show instead that a place is nothing by itself, but depends on other places and practices to imbue it with meaning' (Bailly 1986:83).

The most interesting of the work on environmental images, from the point of view of the present study, comes from the research directed at establishing the degree to which and the manner in which fancy, fantasy, and wishful thinking play a role in the production of images of the environment. Appleyard's research provides the example of a European engineer in Ciudad Guyana who, although having no difficulty outlining the layout of the settlement, inserted a non-existent but much hoped for railway between his steel mill in the interior and the coastal port in his

sketch map (1970a:112). Here projected plans and fantasy 'replaces observation to extend the image from the datum of the known world to *terrae incognitae*' (Allen 1976 cited in Pocock and Hudson 1978:63). Place-images take on a prescriptive nature (Pocock and Hudson 1978:62-63).¹ But this predictive ability is strictly with the cultural context of the taken for granted logic of the structure of the world or city (for example, the 'right' and 'wrong' side of the tracks in many North American railroad towns). The seventeenth-century European presumed that the Nile ran East-West, in 'symmetrical sympathy' with the known course of the Danube (Pocock and Hudson 1978:63). In this manner, new experiences of new places are aligned with past experiences and old, known verities.

Phenomenological research into people's involvement with places and the 'lifeworld' explicitly attempted to overcome the subject-object dualism and discounting of emotional meaning imposed by positivistic approaches. Relph (1976b) incorporates Heidegger's ideas of 'place', and 'dwelling' (1968a), in his outline of people's 'deep' empathy with their place of dwelling, where they feel 'at home' within an environment of 'placelessness' and alienation which emerges from the attitude of domination over the world and a concentration on control over the environment. The inter-relationship of people's lives and the place in which they are lived is exemplified by Vidal de la Blanche's *genre de vie*, 'a lifeworld rooted in a particular land [*pays*]'. In such a relationship of 'total and unselfconscious involvement... the person and place are indissociable [*sic*]' (Relph 1976a:78) becoming submerged or blurred in a continuous dialectical interchange where a person seeks to identify with and through his or her environment.

Yi-Fu Tuan has argued that this pre-reflective lifeworld of the immediate is in 'pre-intellectual' and authentic (1977). But, meaning has been widely argued to arise out of a linguistic constellation of words (Derrida 1974). If this is so, how can meaning exist prior to what certainly appears to be an 'intellectual' level of cognition? Initial, pre-reflective experience, while having sense (*sens*) is not *in se* 'meaning-full'. It is received perceptions or 'experience', but this is immediately structured as it is taken up in concepts organised through language.

The strong emphasis on the interpretative component of individual understandings of the world implicit in this humanistic

approach de-emphasises the formative and compelling nature of social surveillance and 'discipline' (cf. Michel Foucault, see pp. 38-46). Harvey denounces the phenomenology of human geography as parochial (1973:24) by arguing that it cannot comprehend the objective social forces that lead to the destruction of place. But this 'easy' critique is anticipated in Heidegger's 'phenomenology of being' which rejects the search for a priori foundations of knowledge such as 'objective social forces' for a focus on understanding human existence and experience within the context of a historically constituted social world. Van Paassen argues that the implication of such an *existential* orientation for geographers is that

the so-called 'spatial order' in fact is a societal order, which can be interpreted only as a social product resulting from the complex interplay of human perceptions, objectives and capacities, institutional rules and material conditions connected with human and physical material substances in space.

(Van Paassen 1976:333)

Human geography is therefore an appropriate area of socio-logically-informed investigation: Ley speaks of the 'personality of place' being derived from the coherence of 'intersubjective' experience: 'any habitually interacting group of people convey a character to the place they occupy which is immediately apparent to an outsider, though unquestioned and taken-for-granted by habitués' (1977:508). 'Intersubjectivity' refers to the shared character of lived experience and meaning. But as such, it presupposes that experience has common characteristics across groups of subjects despite admitting the lack of 'a single, objective world; rather there is a plurality of worlds as many as there are attitudes and intentions of man' (Relph 1970:194). This assumption, while appropriate to initial investigations, now deserves refinement through critique and empirical investigation.

How is it that such meanings come to be shared? Is it through *socialisation* to group norms and conventions of meaning? Or is it through an environmental version of *labelling* whereby a place is 'labelled' as the place for such and such activities (e.g. worship of a local deity held to be responsible for crop success). As such it might acquire something of the meanings of those activities

(harvest, the fragility of horticulture) and may stand-in as a 'symbol' of those activities. Possibly, such intersubjectively shared meanings are acquired through mundane and functional processes of behaviour and activity (a behaviourist hypothesis)? Perhaps subjective experience is incommensurable and idiosyncratic, acquiring its propositional form only by being 'forced through' the mediating and structuring grid of linguistic systems of meaning (a structural-linguistic hypothesis)?

However, geographical phenomenology has naively subscribed to an eighteenth-century view that language provides a relatively unproblematic medium for the expression of sense experience. It is only a matter of lifting the veil of 'taken-for-granted-ness', to 'see things as if for the first time.' Thus Pickles's arguments for the adoption of a pure Husserlian phenomenology in geography presuppose a unique datum of human experience which remains unestablished in his arguments, against the by now quite important weight of psychological, linguistic, and ethnographic evidence which supports the postulate of a multiplicity of different frames of reference tempered only by the *force* of normative socialisation which structures and 'frames' experience for us (see Shields 1986).

The importance of language as the medium (if not the mediator) of any intersubjective meaning moves us to a consideration of hermeneutics which will establish the background research on the transfer of meaning. Its relevance here will be to the manner by which stereotyping images of places or regions are shared and communicated between people. Hermeneutics is closely related to the humanists' interest in subjective interpretations of the meaning of spaces and places. In its modern sense, it derives from Dilthey's rejection of Husserl's bracketing of everyday experience in favour of a method of understanding the world of experience which takes account of the fact that meaning is contextually located *in* the world, not found floating around as a transcendental essence outside of experience (Dilthey 1900). No understanding can be 'pre-suppositionless' but occurs through and with the mediation of past human experience in much the same manner that one might interpret a book, understanding the meaning of the words of the text through a reflective reference to one's own experience. The meaning is thus given to the text by the reader, the author's meaning is not something that resides within the book itself, otherwise there would never be disagreement.

Places and their images are not scientific 'objects' (assuming such things exist, even in the natural sciences). Place-images, and our views of them, are produced historically, and are actively contested. There is no whole picture that can be 'filled in' since the perception and filling of a gap lead to the awareness of other gaps. The 'filling in' of gaps is itself part of a particular cultural project, which must itself be included in our cultural 'mosaic', but *its* new presence raises new questions about, for example, why we are concerned about filling in gaps anyway. And, if individual place-images or even an entire 'culture' are not objects to be described, neither are they a unified corpus of symbols and meanings that can be definitively interpreted once and for all for every person. Culture is contested, temporal, and emergent (see Clifford and Marcus 1986:18–19).

The hermeneutic concern with the meaning-laden world of purposeful beings is thus precisely a concern with the phenomenologists' 'life-world' of everyday experience (Gregory 1978b:60). But here theorisation is regarded as the generation of what Giddens calls 'meaning-frames' (1976:143) which are *necessary* conditions for any understanding. Thus, the point of view of the observer cannot be bracketed out as is attempted in phenomenology. As opposed to a phenomenological suspension of the referential framework of conscious understanding to seek a pre-conscious or intuitive level of comprehension, hermeneutics advocates the reciprocal interrogation which comes about between two equally accepted frames of reference (Gregory 1978b:60).

The interpreter is involved with but not enclosed by the life-world he [sic] is trying to understand . . . it presupposes that there is at least some common ground between the two, an arena in which the encounter can take place . . . the meaning ascribed to the one [meaning frame] constantly mediates the meaning ascribed to the other.

(Gregory 1978b:61)

This occurs through reflexive circulation between subject and object, observer and observed – what Heidegger called the 'hermeneutic circle' between the two referential meaning frames (1986b). This takes place through the media of the body (tangible experience) and language (communicated experience). A *specifi-*

INTRODUCTION

cation of discourses thus becomes essential. Who speaks? For whom and for what reasons?

This is thus much more than a matter of making carefully limited social science claims. It is thoroughly *historicist* and *self-reflexive*. In the 'Introduction' to a recent anthology, James Clifford points out that this specification of discourses can be observed as a general 'dialogical' trend in ethnographies, built up as dialogues between participants, informants and ethnographers. This leads directly to the pioneering work of Mikhail Bakhtin (1981; 1984) whose categories of dialogism, heteroglossia, and carnival suggest a method of polyvalent analyses which leads beyond dogmatic, economistic, and totalising cultural theory:

These fictions of dialogue have the effect of transforming the 'cultural' text (a ritual, an institution, a life history, or any unit of typical behaviour to be described or interpreted) into a speaking subject, who sees as well as is seen, who evades, argues, probes back . . . the proper referent of any account is not only a represented 'world'; now it is specific instances of discourse . . . [which] locates cultural interpretations in many sorts of reciprocal contexts, and it obliges writers to find diverse ways of rendering negotiated realities as multi-subjective, power-laden, and incongruent. In this view, 'culture' is always relational, an inscription of communicative processes that exist, historically, *between* subjects in relations of power

(Dwyer 1977; Tedlock 1979).

Dialogical modes are not, in principle, autobiographical; they need not lead to hyper self-consciousness or self-absorption. As Bakhtin (1981) has shown, dialogical processes proliferate in any complexly represented discursive space Many voices clamour for expression . . . monophonic authority is questioned, revealed to be characteristic of a science that has claimed to *represent* cultures.
(Clifford and Marcus 1986:14–15)

This hermeneutic mode of investigation leads to an 'active dialogue' between different constructions of reality. In making one aware of the 'preconditions built into our social practice and organisations that enable us or hinder us in understanding one

another' (Gadamer 1975:315 cited in Gregory 1978b:61) hermeneutics is a 'two-edged sword . . . cutting through illusions about life-worlds on one side and through illusions about ourselves on the other' (Gregory 1978b:61). Rather than regarding itself as the privileged, scientific method, hermeneutics is proposed as the basic mode by which people appropriate their world. Thus, it ultimately argues that it transcends the division of the natural and human sciences, the former being involved with a dialectic of theory and observation (Lefebvre 1946) and the latter with a double hermeneutic between social science theory, or people's representations of reality to themselves (one pole of the dialectic), and their world itself (the alternate pole).

The question of shared meaning thus re-emerges as a central problem which will be considered in the next chapter. How is it that 'reality' is constructed socially by and for us such that meanings and meaningful experiences the emotional affect of a place can be communicated? The work of Geertz, an anthropologist, is relevant here and provides an important bridge into European *semiology* (below) by way of its North American variant, *semiotics*. Geertz sees anthropological work as essentially a 'semiotics of society' (literally, the study of social signifying practices and meaning, but see pp. 22–24). In questioning the existence of 'culture' as an independent variable, he has focused on the methods of ethnographic observation and description, arguing that the diverse behaviour exhibited by people in social situations cannot be taken as merely data for a hypothetical cultural entity or process. In a famous line, he says, 'what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to' (1973:9). The characteristic hermeneutic circle of social science or the 'double hermeneutic', as Giddens would have it (1976:79ff.), involves both the 'entering and grasping the frame of meaning adopted by the actors themselves in the production of social life, and reconstituting these within new frames of meaning according to the analyst's technical conceptual schemes' (Jackson and Smith 1984:38).

According to Geertz's hermeneutic approach, the ethnographer's task, and by extension, the task of all those interested in the constitution of meaning, is the inscription of social discourse writing down or documenting communicative transactions. 'Ephemeral observations take on new meaning through the very