

# **The Body and the City**

Psychoanalysis, space and subjectivity

**Steve Pile**

## THE BODY AND THE CITY

Over the last century, psychoanalysis has transformed the ways in which we think about our relationship to others. The idea that our dreams or our slips of the tongue might mean something important has become common-sense. Psychoanalytic concepts and methods, such as the unconscious and dream analysis, have been taken up by almost all of the human and social sciences. Geographers, however, have been more circumspect. There have been brief encounters, but they have eventually parted company.

Dramatic changes in social, cultural and political theory over the last decade have opened up new spaces for a reinvigorated human geography. One such space encourages a dialogue between psychoanalysis and cultural geography – after all, they share an interest. Geographers over the last fifty years have been intrigued by the *terrae incognitae* of the hearts and minds of people. This book reinterprets the ways in which geographers have explored people's mental maps, uncovered people's deepest feelings about places, and mapped human agency. Whatever philosophies and methods they have used, it is usually argued that there is a 'dialectic' between the individual and external world.

*The Body and the City* uses psychoanalytic concepts to reconceptualise the dialectics between the subject, society and space. It does not simply apply psychoanalysis to geography, or read psychoanalysis for its geography. A new cartography of the subject is outlined, drawing on the work of not only Henri Lefebvre, Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, but also of critical theorists more widely, including feminists. The body and the city are shown to be sites of intense significance, where a psychoanalysis of space can be elaborated, using a variety of examples from North America and Europe. From this perspective, any critical social theory must reconsider the place of psychodynamics.

**Steve Pile** is Lecturer in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Open University and Research Associate at the Centre for Freudian Analysis and Research. He is editor, with Michael Keith, of *Place and the Politics of Identity*, and, with Nigel Thrift, of *Mapping the Subject*.



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*psychoanalysis, space and  
subjectivity*

**STEVE PILE**



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## P R E F A C E

The original proposal for this book was submitted in April 1990 and claimed that the final manuscript, then titled 'Space for desire', would be delivered in summer 1992. So, I have had some time to think about the cover (never mind the contents) for *The Body and the City*. I collected many postcards, but none seemed quite right. About this time last year, though, I went to an exhibition at the Saatchi Gallery in London. My new colleagues at the Open University were being (and stayed) exceptionally sympathetic to, and supportive of, my wish to write this book, and – although I had been telling Tristan Palmer (the editor at Routledge, whose tolerance and patience cannot go without thanks) for years that it was almost done – it now seemed possible that I would actually finish it. So, I was wandering around the gallery and generally enjoying the collection, but with half a mind on a possible cover photograph, when I came across Roger Mayne's 'Man and Shop Window, Rue de Reaumur, Paris'.

As I looked at the photograph, my first reaction was to wonder whether the mannequins in the shop window were in fact real people. Then it crossed my mind that this photograph might be a set up (where actors play dummies so that the sly or shocked reactions of passers-by can be caught forever), along the lines of Robert Doisneau's *Un Regard Oblique* series. I stepped closer to the photograph, but I still could not work out whether the bodies were people or mannequins. Perhaps this image was much more like the work of Helmut Newton. Either way, it dawned on me that I could be scrutinising a voyeuristic or titillating photograph of naked women (and one man). I felt embarrassed and ashamed. I was still intrigued by the image's ambiguity, but also increasingly uncomfortable with, and disturbed by, my first reaction. Partly, then, it is this moment of (my) fantasy, curiosity, ambivalence and embarrassment that makes this an appropriate image for the cover.

There are other (probably better) reasons. There seems to be, here, a story about power (or at least freedom). The man walking the streets is unaware, either of the photographer, or of the bodies in the shop window. He seems free, in this space, to ignore the world around: power also resides in the taken-for-granted, in the freedom not to be aware of the world around – power does not just reside in the surveillance of, and overt control over, the world. The image unblinkingly depicts both these moments of power.



Meanwhile, the mannequins tell of the stripping of the body down to idealised parts, of the role of the part-body in commodification, of the display of commodities through the lens of the shop window, and of the commodification of the streets. Furthermore, this is a City scene, the photograph shouts PARIS, while the street, the shop windows, the pavement, the parked car, the business man, the mannequins become the frozen elements of a specifically urban story: commerce, commodities, circulation, signs, writing on the walls, across organised and unruly space. Moreover, the graffiti tags and the fly-poster, on the shop-front shutter, mark the transmission of other signs – perhaps this is the subversive assertion of alternative identities, or maybe something more prosaic. The image shows that the City traffics in bodies, meanings and modalities of power.

In this image, there are bodies in a city, so at this level this is an ‘obvious’ choice for the cover. However, the most important factor was the moment of ambiguity and ambivalence, the simultaneous fixity and fluidity in the scene. I could not make out the bodies in the shop window. While other elements were apparently obvious, these seem to be opposing things: Mannequins or People? Then, again, they were also the same thing: Models. The meaning of the picture shifted around these fixed and fluid co-ordinates. As a result, the scene, the City, became different things: an immutable site of dead signs, or a living part of everyday life, or the vital place of an erotic urban unconscious, or the abstract space of unyielding capitalist social relations? Whatever, the Models (Mannequins, People) are ‘fantastic’, points of capture for (my) fantasy, (my) desire and (my) power. For me, Mannequins or People, these fixed bodies oscillated between meanings – never settling down into a cosy ‘truth’. I was constantly located, dislocated and relocated by the tensions between my senses, thoughts and feelings about the scene. And none of this took place in the abstract – me ‘versus’ the image – there are other spatialities: the friend I went with (who doesn’t get on with this photograph), the gallery, North London, the book, and so on.

Maybe you felt or thought something like this when you saw the cover of *The Body and the City* – I have shown the picture to others and they (men and women) have reacted in different ways: some thought that the bodies might be ‘dummies’, others felt they were ‘actors’, and a few seemed to think it was all too obvious. More recently, I showed the image to someone who reacted by saying that I couldn’t use this on the cover, that it was another laddish image, that she was sick of seeing heterosexual men’s desire, that she didn’t want to have my desires or fantasies imposed on her, and that using this image was a sign of my control, my power. I was deeply upset: first, because I don’t want to make women angry, and especially not her; and, second, because I once again felt ashamed by my first impressions – I should have felt angry too. We are – as friends – still discussing this image and the questions it foregrounds, and forecloses, about the body, meaning and power relations, but this exchange emphasises that what is at stake in power-laden sexualised and gendered ‘ways of seeing’ is the status of the female body. This is not a new point, but questions remain on the specific ways that regimes of

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the body and the spaces of subjectivity intertwine. Lines of desire, disgust and power radiate out both from the bodies in the photograph and from the eyes of the viewer, building intricate patterns of meaning, identity and power relations, across space and through space. And it is at this point that it is possible to suggest that a simultaneously geographical and psychoanalytic imagination will say something significant about the body and the city.

*Steve Pile (London and Milton Keynes)*  
*September 1995*

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## INTRODUCTION





**INTRODUCTION**  
**the unknown spaces of the mind**

BANNER HEADLINE, *Daily Mail*, 22 SEPTEMBER 1995

## **EURO COURT'S** **GIPSY SHOCK**

It looks like the *Daily Mail* has been hit by lightning today. First paragraph:

### **A SHOCK European ruling threatens to throw Britain's planning laws into chaos**

(front page).

Is this a familiar Euroscare along the lines of 'they' want to ban 'our' sausages or Babycham or the like? It is a good front page for a patriotic (and xenophobic) tabloid like the *Daily Mail*: hundreds of thousands of middle Englanders are quaking in their boots at the thought of what might follow. There is a threat to the state and good order from a familiar menace: the European Court of Human Rights. Worse, for them, is to follow. Next paragraph, the *Mail* has a prophecy: 'It could mean gipsies being allowed to park their caravans virtually anywhere they choose, even in rural beauty spots where houses would never be allowed.'

On page 2, the newspaper of the year 'exposes' the issues. The case was brought to the Court by Mrs June Buckley after she was refused planning permission by her local council. The *Daily Mail* decides to side with 'the public interest', rather than the 'slight' right of Mrs Buckley to her lifestyle. To support its case, the *Mail* turns to Kathleen Crandall, South Cambridgeshire council's legal and housing director, to find out what she thinks. She finds caravans 'intrusive' and they 'deface' the landscape. She warns, 'if this [judgement] goes against us, it would mean everywhere is affected'.

Back to the front page. Apparently, it's an 'alarming prospect' and, allegedly, it has 'provoked fury' amongst (unnamed) Tory MPs. The *Daily Mail* alleges that the ruling by the Court of Human Rights states that 'laws requiring planning permission violate gipsy rights to "a traditional life-style"'. Although nothing has been finalised, this decision is a 'bombshell' which has led to calls from many (undisclosed) quarters to 'pull out' of the European Court. Sir Ivan Lawrence, QC, is quoted as saying that this is one more example of 'interference in our sovereign democratic nation'. It gets worse. Five column inches into the 'shocking' front page story: 'Furious Whitehall officials fear the case could also open the door to thousands of non-gipsies putting mobile homes in fields and gardens for their parents or children.' The *Daily Mail* is spurred to make its own comment (on page 8). Once more, it complains, Britain has faced 'foreign judges in an alien court' and 'lost'. It may seem like 'small beer', but this 'judgement' could lead to 'a flood of people' putting 'their caravans anywhere they like'. The rhetoric builds to a climax:

It may be time to change our polite, gentlemanly approach. Bad enough that we regularly have to submit to that other European Court ... But when we also feel obliged to swallow the most crass decisions of the entirely separate Court of Human Rights, the limit has been reached ... the Government should insist on judgement in the proper place. Before the British courts.

(*Daily Mail*, 22 September, page 8)

Meanwhile on page 5, the newspaper of the year carries another gloomy story. It is a '**Tale of two families**', called 'the Smiths' and 'the Monks'. The two families are on opposite sides of a dispute between a private estate and an estate currently under construction by a housing association. The two estates, apparently, are 'a stone's throw apart'. The owners of the private houses anticipate that the value of their homes will decline by at least 10 per cent when their new neighbours move in. They have a solution to this 'problem': they want the council to build a wall between the two estates! The fearless *Daily Mail* has sought the human story behind this conflict, as the 'wives go to war': Tina Smith has led the campaign for 'segregation', while Tina Monk is amongst the 63 potential tenants. The women have already been in doorstep confrontation, which – the *Daily Mail* sounds disappointed to find – was tense, but peaceful.<sup>1</sup>

There isn't really a full page story here, but the newspaper of the year pads it out with some interesting comparisons. The Smith husband earns £18,000 a year, while the Monk family have an annual income of £10,500 – neither are particularly rich, nor especially poor. Money is tight for both families. Hardly grounds for the 'fear' that appears to have been provoked by these

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1 Suspiciously, this only took place the day before publication: surely it is not possible that the *Mail* set the 'confrontation' up?

allegedly 'undesirable poor'. The real problem, for Tina Smith, seems to be that families like the Monks, who have eight children and 'may have more babies', will be moving into the nearby estate. It is the presence of 'poor' children, within 'a stone's throw', which is actually going to be undesirable. In the end, Tina Smith says that she isn't 'a snob', all she wants is to 'protect the value of my property' (which her husband works all hours to pay for), while Tina Monk thinks that 'all this fuss is silly'; she concludes that 'if they want to put up a wall, that's their business'.

These two stories are of quite different orders,<sup>2</sup> but they help illustrate what is at stake in juxtaposing a geographical and a psychoanalytic imagination. At one level, these stories are easy to interpret: the first tells of racism (the 'English Gent' versus 'Johnny Foreigner'), while the second is about the tension between middle-class and working-class interests (the Smiths versus the Monks). So far, neither geography nor psychoanalysis is essential to these interpretations. On the other hand, these stories tell of border disputes and of the 'shock', 'fear' and 'fury' that the transgression of borders provokes. These are stories about the intertwining of territories and feelings, about demonised others, and about senses of self and space. It is clear to me that these situations cannot be fully understood without a geographical and a psychoanalytic appreciation of the 'psycho-spatial' dynamics. Let me briefly tease out some ideas, which I think will introduce the substantive concerns of this book.

The European ruling that people can set up homes on their own property ought to be something the *Daily Mail* supports (they have in the past relished campaigns against the 'little Hitlers' in 'loony left' councils). Nevertheless, it is a 'shock', a shock which has two sources. The first is the clash between the space of the sovereign British nation-state and the space of the European Union and its analogues. The battle lines of this 'invisible' territorial dispute are familiar: 'we' are polite and gentlemanly, 'they' are alien, foreign, out of touch and wield arbitrary power over 'us', to which 'they' have no right. The grounds of this dispute are inherently, and obviously, spatial as well as social. The second source of the shock is just as obvious, but also less so. The banner headline screams 'GIPSY'. Invidious and disingenuous racism is used to prop up and invigorate xenophobia. Gypsies rarely own the property they live on, and they live and work predominantly in urban areas,<sup>3</sup> and are therefore almost wholly excluded, first, from the recommended judgement and, second, from the alleged potential for the despoliation of rural beauty sites.

There is more to this story, though: not only does the narrative produce, mix and circulate racist signifiers, it also infuses them with the intemperate feelings of never named people. Whether these feelings exist or not is

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2 Indeed, neither are 'stories' since the European Court of Human Rights has not made a decision, while the new estate has not been built yet. They are more fantasy than 'fact', more hysteria than investigative journalism, which I think adds all the more to the case for a psychoanalytic reading.

3 See the Introduction to Part II, pp. 88-91.



irrelevant, the newspaper of the year makes it appear as if these violations of space (by Europeans, by gypsies) are personally felt as violations of the self. Civil servants, lawyers, Tory MPs 'fear': they are 'furious', threatened, alarmed, and so on. The *Mail* generates an economy of subjectivity and space which is then sold to the reader by alleging that these incursions into the nation, across borders, into the body could happen 'anywhere', as metaphors like 'bombshell', 'open the door', 'a flood of people' anticipate the disintegration of life as the reader knows it. The *Daily Mail* emphasises and circulates feelings at an unconscious, as well as conscious, level. In this story, the geographical and the psychoanalytic are ever present.

Meanwhile, the idea of the wall between 'the Smiths' and 'the Monks' makes concrete both the significance of border disputes and the sense of violation of self which comes with the wrong people turning up in the wrong place. The wall is an armour against the other – it is meant to shore up those feelings of 'fear' and 'disgust': a hard, high, fixed, impermeable boundary on a space which is both urban and bodily. The wall is not yet real, but it is very real: a focus and sign of the exasperation of a group of people. It cements associations between their situation and with Berlin, and maybe Northern Ireland, with other states of terror. Yet, from afar, this terror seems to have no substance – not only do housing association tenants commonly own a proportion of their property, but they also need to convince the housing association of the security of their income. They are not the poorest of the poor, nor are they some kind of unruly underclass. Yet it is to these apparently irrational connotations – mobilised through the idea that these families have 'eight children', living only 'a stone's throw' away – that 'the Smiths' are responding. The reality of this dispute is clearly about the definition and control over class borders, but there are emotional investments here which go way beyond the cash price of a house.

What is at stake here is an appreciation of the intricate and dynamic ways in which narratives of space and self intertwine. These stories are about the ways in which people gain a sense of who they are, the ways in which space helps tell people their place in the world, and the different places that people are meant to be in the world. So, in the newspaper articles, there are underlying senses of people having a 'proper place' and of people who are 'out of place'. These are simultaneously geographical and psychoanalytic tales, so in this book I have attempted to write a dialogue between, and within, both discourses. I should set the scene for this narrative, first, by providing a thumbnail sketch of psychoanalysis and, then, by thinking about geography and the mind.

#### THE TERRAE INCOGNITAE OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

Historically, psychoanalysis is the term given to a system of thought, which was created by Sigmund Freud. Born in 1856, Freud was the son of a moderately successful Jewish wool merchant, living in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Originally, Freud trained as a medical doctor, with the

ambition of alleviating suffering. In 1886, Freud travelled to Paris to study neurology with Jean-Martin Charcot. This experience led Freud to consider the problem of hysteria: hysterics had bodily symptoms, such as paralysis or lumps in the throat, for which no anatomical cause could be found and which disappeared when the hysteric was hypnotised.<sup>4</sup> Freud's initial attempts to cure hysteria and the subsequent failure of his cure, despite some ostensible success,<sup>5</sup> led him over many years to propose a new system of thought: psychoanalysis. Freud came to believe that the patient's internal psychic conflict was being symbolically expressed in bodily symptoms – this understanding of the mind and the body remain at the centre of psychoanalysis. Indeed, the existence of an unconscious, the vicissitudes of desire, the secret life of things (for example, phallus-shaped) and the slippages of meaning, and the hiding and inadvertent expression of innermost feelings are often implicit in our common-sense understandings of ourselves. However, Freud's writings are still controversial and there is nothing in psychoanalysis that is generally accepted.<sup>6</sup> Most importantly, there has been a tremendous amount of speculation about the realm of the unconscious and the so-called sexual instincts.

Arguably, the most fundamental concern of psychoanalysis is with the existence of a dynamic unconscious. It is by revealing the forces operating in the unconscious that human behaviour (individual and/or group) can be understood. Crudely, the unconscious is an area of psychological functioning that is not accessible to the subject, but which nevertheless has a motivating influence on their everyday lives: their thoughts, feelings and actions. However, the structure and content of the unconscious are a matter of some considerable debate.<sup>7</sup> For most analysts, however, the unconscious is made up of the residues of infantile experiences and the representatives of the person's (particularly sexual) drives. Although there is considerable disagreement about how children develop increasingly intricate and dynamic psychological structures, the experiences of early childhood are generally accepted to be critical. Basically, it is argued that the child develops defences against painful experiences, mainly by keeping them away from consciousness and, commonly, by hiding them in the unconscious: this is called repression.

The effect of repression is to produce an internal splitting of the mind into a conscious and an unconscious. The unconscious is not static, but has its own dynamics. Most importantly, while the unconscious does not determine what goes on in the mind, it continually seeks to find expression by fighting a kind of guerrilla war with the conscious: this is most vividly experienced

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4 Much can be made from the fact that these hysterics were predominantly women.

5 The patient's symptoms disappeared under hypnotic suggestion, only to reappear in another form later.

6 From the perspective of social theory, introductions to psychoanalysis can be found in Bocock, 1976; Frosh, 1987; Craib, 1989 and Elliott, 1992, 1994.

7 Compare, for example, Irigaray, 1974 or Zizek, 1989.

in dreams. It is the unconscious that is responsible for producing feelings, thoughts and actions, which cannot be readily explained by the person experiencing them. Freud's conception of the unconscious means that consciousness cannot form the basis for understanding human behaviour and experience. People's choices are motivated and constrained by forces that lie outside their control or easy access.

Moreover, Freud provides a developmental account of the psyche that simultaneously reveals the ways in which people give meaning to their world (of people, events and things) and receive meaning from that world, where they act according to the interactions between these worlds, and where people are resourceful and devious in the ways that they deal with, and express, the pleasures and pains that they live through. Other important aspects of Freud's work include a theory of dreams and a methodology for interpreting this and other psychic phenomena (such as the infamous Freudian slip), a theory of instincts, and other models of the mind.<sup>8</sup> Working through the inconsistencies, problems and unacceptable aspects of Freud's thinking has meant that psychoanalysis has developed many lively schools of thought – varying from ego psychology to Lacanian psychoanalysis, from Jungian psychology to feminist reinterpretations of psychoanalytic precepts.

There is another side to this heated debate: Freud's ideas have been shown to have an implicit moral scheme, which has rightly attracted much criticism and anger. Foucault and Irigaray see psychoanalysis itself as a form of repression, as a micro or macro tactic of power (see Foucault, 1961, 1966; Irigaray, 1974, 1977). Meanwhile, certain feminists have argued that psychotherapy replicates the situation of father–daughter rape (Ward, 1984). From a Marxist perspective, Timpanaro (1976) argues that psychoanalysis is incapable of seeing beyond the ideological level to class interests, while others have argued that it systematically disguises social structures, depersonalises the individual and privatises distress (Brooks, 1973). From this perspective, psychoanalysis is a bourgeois discipline, through which the bourgeoisie confirm their decadence and moral bankruptcy. In this sense, psychoanalysts act as capitalism's psychic first-aiders. Psychoanalytic discourse, then, is highly contested – both within its borders and from outside. So, any attempt to read the relationship between the subject, space and the social using psychoanalysis must be wary that the letter could be a bomb. And, any encounter between a geographical and a psychoanalytic imagination must be partial and selective (neither discourse is free of corrupt connotations).

More hopefully, much contemporary psychoanalysis is far less concerned with Freud's endeavour to provide a scientific and/or universal account of the human psyche, than to account for the personal meanings that people produce for themselves as they struggle to cope with, and make sense of, the

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8 A summary of Freud's life and work can be found in Gay, 1988 and Wollheim, 1991 (but see also Ricoeur, 1970). On Freud's topologies of the mind, see Chapter 4 below.

painful realities of everyday life. Partly because of its internal disputes and partly despite them, psychoanalysis suggests both sensitive clinical (therapeutic) practices and insightful interpretations of the relationships between people, other people and their worlds. Furthermore, psychoanalysis and geography share an interest: it has long been a concern of geographers to discover the *terrae incognitae* of people's hearts and minds. Initially, this exploration involved a discussion of the geographical imagination. A brief description of two articles shows just how important notions of fantasy, desire, the body and psychological development were to some geographers. Despite crossing psychoanalytic concerns, however, psychoanalysis played only a supporting role in these explorations.

**TERRAE INCOGNITAE: 'THE HEARTS AND MINDS  
OF MEN'**

In 1947, J. K. Wright boldly stated that there were no more lands left for geographers to go out to explore. Although he believed that nowhere on earth had not already been trampled over by somebody, he also argued that even 'if there is no *terra incognita* today in an absolute sense, so also no *terra* is absolutely *cognita*' (page 4). While the geographer has no place left to explore or chart, there is still much to do. He (for his is a specifically masculine imagination) must concentrate on a region and explore the boundless obscurities that lie within it: 'the unknown stimulates the imagination to conjure up mental images of what to look for within it, and the more there is found, the more the imagination suggests for further search' (page 4). The need for some kind of geographical knowledge was, he presumed, 'universal among men', though 'its acquisition, in turn, is conditioned by the complex interplay of cultural and psychological factors' (page 14). It is this relationship between the universal need for geographical knowledge and the complex interplay of cultural and psychological factors that will eventually preoccupy Wright – and many other geographers in the ensuing years.

There is at the heart of Wright's geographical imagination a mythic sense of awe and a sense of male heroism: the geographer's desire is likened to Odysseus's desire to hear the Siren's call.<sup>9</sup> For Wright, this calling is unique to each individual, and demands a philosophy of geography which is sensitive to the perspective of each individual. Intriguingly, Wright comments:

A great deal had been written and more said about the nature of geography; far less about the nature of geographers. Could we subject a few representative colleagues to a geographical psychoanalysis, I feel sure that it would often disclose the geographical libido as consisting

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<sup>9</sup> See Gillian Rose's analysis of the gendering of these kinds of metaphors (1993, Chapter 5).

fully as much in aesthetic sensitivity to the impressions of mountains, desert, or city as in an intellectual desire to solve objectively the problems that such environments present.

(Wright, 1947: 9)

Wright psychoanalyses the libido (or sexual energy)<sup>10</sup> of geographers and discovers that it has two sides: it is both an aesthetic sensitivity and an intellectual desire to solve problems. The universal nature of geography consists in a double appreciation, first, of the beauty of the landscape or cityscape and, second, of the need to solve problems. The geographical libido lies at the heart of his desire to extend geography into new *terrae incognitae*: on the one hand, the not fully *terrae incognitae* of the external world of mountains, deserts and cities; and, on the other, the undiscovered *terrae incognitae* of the internal world of desire, fear, fascination, illusion, error, greed, prejudice, partiality, intuition and imagination. Wright closes his paper with this stirring conclusion: 'the most fascinating *terrae incognitae* of all are those that lie within the minds and hearts of men' (Wright, 1947: 15).

It is exactly here, over a decade later, that David Lowenthal opens his discussion of 'geography, experience and imagination' (1961). Unlike Wright, he is not interested in psychoanalysing geographers' libido. On the other hand, he is open to psychoanalytic findings where they support his case that people's hearts and minds contain the most fascinating *terrae incognitae* of all (Lowenthal, 1961: 241). Lowenthal's paper is a wide and erudite exploration of the ways in which people experience and imagine space and time. Lowenthal draws on anthropological evidence to back his assertion that there is a physical realm, which is common to all people who experience it, even though that world can be symbolised in many different ways. This external world is not just a world of co-existing facts, it is also profoundly spatial.

Lowenthal begins by analysing the ways in which individuals understand their external worlds. Although understanding is basically universal, he finds significant limitations to some people's spatial abilities: 'The most fundamental attributes of our shared view of the world are confined, moreover, to sane, hale, sentient adults. Idiots cannot suitably conceive space, time, or causality. Psychotics distinguish poorly between themselves and the outside world' (Lowenthal, 1961: 244). There are wildly differing world-views; claustrophobics do not experience the world in the same way to mystics, for example, while the mad, children, and the unfit cannot adequately conceive space, time and causality. Like Wright, Lowenthal makes an analytical distinction between the internal world and the external world. To back up

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10 In 1905, Freud suggested that libido was a physical sexual energy, which was 'invariably and necessarily' masculine in nature (pages 138–140 and 141). The presumption that libido is masculine *and* male underlies and underpins Wright's analysis. However, Freud refused to correlate the categories of sex ('male' and 'female') with gender ('masculine' and 'feminine') (see 1905: 141–144).

this assertion, Lowenthal draws on the work of psychoanalysts. Here, he uses the work of Money-Kyrle on 'the world of the unconscious and the world of common sense' as evidence. Lowenthal cites the effects of illness and injury on both perception and cognition, referring to the work of Fenichel on 'the psychoanalytic theory of neurosis' (and various other papers from mainstream psychology). Moreover, Lowenthal suggests that 'to see the world more or less as others see it, one must above all grow up; the very young, like the very ill, are unable to discern adequately what is themselves and what is not' (ibid.: 244).

The fundamental attributes of the universal need for geographical knowledge are connected to being grown-up, healthy and normal. It seems that the interest, here, is not in the hearts and minds of 'men', but in being sure that geography is a sane, hale and adult world-view. This issue of a grown-up world-view leads Lowenthal to Jean Piaget's discussion of the psychological development of children. Lowenthal asserts this: 'unable to organize objects in space, to envisage places out of sight, or to generalize from perceptual experience, young children are especially poor geographers' (ibid.: 245).

The point of these examples is to stress that personal concerns are unique, but that they are also learnt. Lowenthal once again cites the psychoanalytic literature on the child in its maturational environment, drawing on the work of Erik Erikson (1950). We are all the captives of our own personal histories. Moreover, this is not just confined to childhood. So, Lowenthal also uses the work of Kevin Lynch (1960) to suggest that people employ different landscape features as points of reference. Importantly, Lynch also demonstrated the personal elements of personal geographies: 'all information is inspired, edited and distorted by feeling' (Lowenthal, 1961: 257). Though these are in some senses uniquely personal geographies, there are also regularities shared by groups: 'territoriality – the ownership, division, and evaluation of space – also differs from group to group' (ibid.: 253). And this is organised through language, which organises the world, just as it organises the words which seemingly describe the world. Thus, Lowenthal cites Friedrich Waismann as saying that

'by growing up in a certain language, by thinking in its semantic and syntactical grooves, we acquire a certain more or less uniform outlook on the world ... Language shapes and fashions the frame in which experience is set, and different languages achieve this in different ways.'

(Waismann, 1950–1; cited by Lowenthal, 1961: 255)

On the theme of the limits to spatial abilities, Lowenthal notes that there are differences between the ways in which men and women perceive the environment, noting that, according to Witkin (1959), 'strong-minded men are better at telling which way is up than women, neurotics, and children' (page 256). He also notes that the ordering of gendered language is not so clear cut: the sun is masculine in French, but feminine in German; the moon is masculine in German, but feminine in French. Culture orders what Nature

provides. Into this melting pot, and along the lines of culture and language, Lowenthal adds evidence derived from Margaret Mead to describe the perceptual imagination of so-called primitive peoples. On this evidence, he believes that just as children grow up and become better and better geographers, so do civilisations: 'The shared world view is also transient ... every generation finds new facts and invents new concepts to deal with them' (Lowenthal, 1961: 243).

Significantly, when the world-views are analysed by Lowenthal, a series of inferior geographers are located: children, the mad, the superstitious, primitives and women. In these at least racist and misogynist terms, the past of an adult, rational male and Western geography is to be found in its others, but not in itself. Geography has left behind its more primitive, childlike, feminised world-views forever: after all, Lowenthal reminds us, as Heraclitus said, you can't step into the same river twice.

Lowenthal is quick to point out that (all) people's world-views are partial – and they are (all) centred on people's (shared) experience of their bodies. Nevertheless, the suspicion remains that some people are more partial than others. Moreover, partiality is measured against the standard of natural human interests, such that 'purpose apart, physical and biological circumstances restrict human perception' (page 246). But Lowenthal now shifts the discussion of these circumstances onto the terrain of a generalised body. Thus, everybody's body has particular capacities: for example, they see light in a particular spectrum, and sense heat in specific ways. Again the psychological and philosophical literature are cited to establish his case that human bodies are real limits to people's perception. The question lingers as to how certain differences are to be explained if personal geographies are personal and the body is a universal norm. Having placed people at the centre of their world, and having located them in their limited fragile bodies, Lowenthal is in a position to suggest that people create personal geographies, which are 'separate personal worlds of experience, learning, and imagination [which] necessarily underlie any universe of discourse' (page 248).

People do not just exist in their own little worlds, however, they learn a shared picture of the world. Indeed, a sense of a solid shared world and a stable sense of ourselves within that world is seen to be essential for our psychic and physical survival – once more drawing on the psychoanalytic work of Money-Kyrle (1956: 96). These secure personal geographies are localised and restricted, while it is the shared public geographies which transcend objective reality. Nevertheless, each of the infinite number of private geographies includes elements that are not found in the shared world-view, partly because this general world-view is the result of the consensual universe of discourse. While the communal world-view includes the hopes and fears of a culture, 'fantasy plays a more prominent role in any private milieu than in the general geography. Every aspect of the public image is conscious and communicable, whereas many of our private impressions are inchoate, diffuse, irrational, and can hardly be formulated even to ourselves' (Lowenthal, 1961: 249).

So far, Lowenthal has built up a series of analytical divisions: between personal and general geographies, between children's and adult's geographies, between the irrational and the rational, between strong-minded men and women, between the real world and the world of fantasy, between the unconscious and the conscious, between the mad and the sane. These pairings are a series of bi-polar opposites: they only make sense in relation to one another and they only make sense if they are quite unlike each other. Thus, diffuse personal geographies are quite unlike communicable public images: the upsetting thing, for this view, is that 'fantasy' cannot be confined to one side of the fence or the other – what, for example, of religion? An irrational shared fantasy? In order to maintain the dualistic analysis, rational shared public images have to be cleansed of superstition, while individuals must remain resolutely dreamy:<sup>11</sup> 'Hell and the garden of Eden may have vanished from most of our mental maps, but imagination, distortion, and ignorance still embroider our private landscapes' (page 249).

As society grows up, it loses its superstitions, even while individuals still cling to their irrational worlds.<sup>12</sup> Unsurprisingly perhaps, Lowenthal finds evidence for the irrationality of an individual's mental maps in psychoanalytic concerns, such as dreams (from Money-Kyrle, 1960: 171). Indeed, Lowenthal begins to build quite a complex relationship between the mind, geographical elements such as landscape and the outside world, which is always fictional in some senses. From this perspective, 'What people perceive always pertains to the shared "real" world; even the landscapes of dreams come from actual scenes recently viewed or recalled from memory, consciously or otherwise, however much they may be distorted or transformed' (Lowenthal, 1961: 249).

While society may be more and more grown up and rational, the world which people inhabit is still a world of dreams. Waking 'Reality' cannot shake off its Dreams. Moreover, the 'real' world is a sequence of memories, and dreams, conscious or otherwise. Lowenthal uses the work of psychoanalysts such as Fisher (1956), Knapp (1956) and Fisher and Paul (1959) to suggest that dreams, images and perception are linked in the mind, though not through a simple one-to-one correspondence. What Lowenthal implies is that there is an area beyond conscious thought which also conditions people's view of reality, but that it does so in a distorted way. In psychoanalytic terms, this is the unconscious, but Lowenthal does not pursue this understanding of mental life.

Under psychoanalytic pressure, the dichotomies have broken down: dreams inspire the 'real' world, while unconscious processes underlie the personal, the social and the spatial. Furthermore, fantasy is simultaneously social, spatial and personal. From here, Lowenthal could not only disrupt all his analytical bi-polar opposites, but also use psychoanalysis to suggest (a)

11 On dualistic thinking in human geography, see G. Rose, 1993: 66–78.

12 This attitude to religion is somewhat reminiscent of Freud's (1927).



why there is such an investment in them, (b) how they serve to define, maintain and reproduce relationships between self and other, (c) what the qualities of the relationships between the dualisms are, and most importantly (d) what might lie beyond them. He could, from here, traffic in geography and psychoanalysis. Instead, he turns to notions derived from Kurt Koffka's gestalt psychology (as would many others, see Chapter 2 below). From this perspective, 'essential perception of the world, in short, embraces every way of looking at it: conscious and unconscious, blurred and distinct, objective and subjective, inadvertent and deliberate, literal and schematic' (Lowenthal, 1961: 251).

Lowenthal has re-established the analytical grid of bi-polar opposites. The point of his argument is, however, to establish the importance of each individual's mental maps, that is their perception and cognition of the world. Gestalt psychology offers a set of parameters that can be used to understand the way the mind builds up spatial patterns which reflect the physical world. In this way, he hopes to set a new agenda for geography, where geographers would explore the *terrae incognitae* of the simultaneously real, experiential and imaginary, and profoundly personal, world. The individual's personal geography is indispensable, for Lowenthal, because it lies at the intersection of their image of the environment, their perception of the world, the general world-view and their life history. Following the work of Boulding (1956) and Money-Kyrle (1960), Lowenthal argues that,

every image and idea about the world is compounded, then, of personal experience, learning, imagination, and memory. The places that we live in, those we visit and travel through, the worlds we read about and see in works of art, and the realms of imagination and fantasy each contribute to our images of nature and man.

(Lowenthal, 1961: 260)

And these images and ideas about the world, Lowenthal argues, are profoundly connected to people's behaviour, which lies at the intersection of personal geographies and the general world-view; in this way, the human world is unified by people's judgements about aesthetics and beauty and the rational judgements of culture.<sup>13</sup> In putting the individual at the centre of geographical concerns, Lowenthal was challenging some dominant figures in Geography. For example, in an influential paper on historical geography, Carl Ortwin Sauer stated that 'human geography ... unlike psychology and history, is a science that has nothing to do with individuals but only with human institutions, or cultures' (Sauer, 1941: 7). Nevertheless, Sauer concluded that, as geographers,

we deal not with Culture, but with cultures, except in so far as we

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13 This reminds me both of Wright's geographer's libido which has an aesthetic sensitivity and a problem-solving side (see above) and of G. Rose's suggestion that masculinity in geography exhibits an aesthetic and a social-scientific side (1993: 10). See also footnote 10 above.

delude ourselves into thinking the world over in our own image. In this great inquiry into cultural experiences, behaviors, and drives, the geographer should have a significant role. He alone has been seriously interested in what has been called the filling of the space of the earth with the wishes of man, or the cultural landscape.

(Sauer, 1941: 24)

Lowenthal's work marks the beginning of a sustained inquiry by geographers into the relationship between the psychology of the individual (against Sauer's advice), their perception of the external world and their behaviour in that perceived world. This paper, as Sauer's before, contains hints of what might be achieved by a psychoanalytically-informed exploration of the *terrae incognitae* of people's hearts and minds. Sauer talks of drives and wishes filling the space of the earth (a male geographer's libido), while Lowenthal speaks of fantasy and dreams constituting the world. Both are interested in the relationship between the individual and culture.

It is Lowenthal, however, who recognises the importance of childhood development, of the body, of personal histories – and of personal geographies. Nevertheless, there are – as with Freudian psychoanalysis – undisclosed value systems which any geography of experience and imagination would have to step over. For me, Lowenthal's paper raises significant issues, not least of which is the role of fantasy in everyday life, but he does not develop the implications of presuming an unconscious life. For this reason, the *terrae incognitae* of the unconscious remains just beyond the horizon, and the possibility of elucidating a 'psychoanalysis of space' or a 'psychodynamics of place' is foreclosed. I want to open up this possibility, especially with respect to the relationship between the subject, society and space – in the body and in the city.

#### THE TERRAE INCOGNITAE OF THE BODY AND THE CITY

In order to set up a dialogue between geography and psychoanalysis, I have first tried to outline the ways in which the relationship between the subject, society and space have been understood, first by geographers and later by Freud and Lacan. I have not tried to review the enormous literatures involved, nor have I wanted to simply repeat people's arguments. Instead, I have developed my arguments out of the work discussed. In this sense, at least, this book is a thesis. Nevertheless, I have tried to make it possible to read the parts separately and to ensure that the chapters make sense on their own. Parts II and III have their own introductions, so I will say only a little about them here, but I should say something about Part I.

Lowenthal's article, described above, is a remarkable piece for another reason: it mixes two strands of thinking about 'personal geographies' that were later to become competing approaches to human geography. Evidence is used from psychology, psychoanalysis, anthropology, gestalt psychology,

and phenomenology to weave an elaborate story about the relationship between geography, experience and the imagination. Many geographers, at this time, were becoming increasingly doubtful about the ability of the then dominant spatial sciences to explain spatial patterns. They, like Lowenthal, searched for alternative models of 'man'. This story is told in the first chapter of Part I, 'Environment, behaviour, mind'. Although behavioural geography initially succeeded in establishing, as Lowenthal wanted, the importance of considering the personal geographies, or mental maps, of individuals, it became clear that it too suffered from flaws.

Reactions against behavioural geography came from two sources: humanistic and radical geographers. They posited their own senses of what people are like, how they relate to the world, and how they (can) behave in the world. The development of these positions is charted in Chapter 3, 'Geographies of human agency'. Commonly, when the story of these developments is told in geography, people tend to stress the difference between the approaches. While acknowledging that their philosophies and methodologies are not compatible, I argue that they share a commitment to place 'man' at the centre of 'his' world. More than this, behavioural, humanistic and radical geographers seem to have drawn the same conclusion about that place. Whatever way they choose to express it, there is apparently a 'dialectic' between the individual and the external world.

The rest of this book is an attempt to specify, and tease out, what this 'dialectic' might be like – from a psychoanalytic and geographical perspective. Part II discusses ways in which Freud and Lacan understood the relationship not just between the individual, their internal world and their external world, but also between meaning, identity and power. In the conclusion to Part II, I stage a dialogue between Freud, Lacan and Lefebvre to articulate a framework through which it is possible to reconceptualise the relationship between the subject, society and space. Two sites are identified in this analysis which are seen as having particular significance, theoretically, empirically and politically: the body and the city. Part III illustrates some of the ways in which it might be possible to 'psychoanalyse' space or interpret the psychodynamics of place. It seems to me that this exercise will have no pay off unless the implications for critical theory are also addressed. So, in conclusion, I look to the writings of Fredric Jameson and Frantz Fanon to sketch out the politics of placing the subject.

**Part I**

**GEOGRAPHIES OF THE SUBJECT**



