

restricting the activities of minorities in the countryside (see Chapter 6). The transgressions of folk devils are a symptom of this power. While there are some examples of unfettered expressions of difference, others are a product of exclusionary practices, or difference is recast as deviance in the process of exclusion.

27. Davis, *op. cit.*
28. *ibid.*, pp. 104–105.
29. *ibid.*, p. 106.
30. New Age Travellers are a diverse group of semi-nomadic people, primarily of urban origin and given a common identity by their rejection of mainstream aspirations and a search for autonomy in a rural setting. Richard Lowe and William Shaw, *Travellers: Voices of the New Age nomads*, Fourth Estate, London, 1993, is a useful ethnographic study.
31. In this account, I draw on Simon Watney, *Policing Desire: Pornography, AIDS and the media*, Methuen, London, 1987.
32. *ibid.*, p. 40.
33. *ibid.*, pp. 40–41.
34. Cited by Susan Smith, 'Crime and the structure of social relations', *Transactions, Institute of British Geographers*, NS, 9 (4), 1984, 427–442.
35. *ibid.*
36. David Kunzle, 'World Upside Down: the iconography of a European broadsheet type', in Barbara Babcock (ed.), *The Reversible World: Symbolic inversion in art and society*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1978, pp. 39–94.
37. I am grateful to Philip Jones of the School of Geography, Hull University, for this information.
38. Natalie Davis, 'Women on top: symbolic sexual inversion and political disorder in early modern Europe', in Babcock, *op. cit.*, pp. 147–190.
39. Peter Stallybrass and Allen White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, Methuen, London, 1986, p. 20.
40. For an analysis, see Peter Jackson, 'Street life: the politics of Carnival', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 6, 1988, 213–227.
41. I discuss this legislation in relation to 'others' in the English countryside in Chapter 6.
42. Jean-Pierre Liégeois, *Gypsies: An illustrated history*, Al Saqi Books, London, 1986.

MAPPING THE PURE AND THE DEFILED

There is a history of imaginary geographies which cast minorities, 'imperfect' people, and a list of others who are seen to pose a threat to the dominant group in society as polluting bodies or folk devils who are then located 'elsewhere'. This 'elsewhere' might be nowhere, as when genocide or the moral transformation of a minority like prostitutes are advocated, or it might be some spatial periphery, like the edge of the world or the edge of the city. In constructing these geographies, the imagery discussed in Chapter 2 is drawn on to characterize both people and places, reflecting the desire of those who feel threatened to distance themselves from defiled people and defiled places. Thus, values associated with conformity or authoritarianism are expressed in maps which relegate others to places distant from the locales of the dominant majority. Images of others in the mind, in literature and other media may, however, inform practice such as the isolation of Gypsies on local authority sites in Britain or the exclusion of children from adult spaces. There may be important connections between these fantasies and the exercise of power. I will trace some of these ideas about the constitution of social space according to which some groups or peoples are deemed not to belong over a long historical time period in order to demonstrate their persistence. Portrayals of minorities as defiling and threatening have for long been used to order society internally and to demarcate the boundaries of society, beyond which lie those who do not belong. To demonstrate this point, I will make references both to political discourse in a number of historical periods and to some fictional narratives which mirror social practice. One informs the other.

The expansion of European empires and the development of the capitalist world economy required fitting dependent territories and dependent peoples into the cosmic order of the dominant powers. Beyond the spatial limits of



Plate 4.1 The 'Plinian' races – discrepant others beyond the edge of the civilized world
(from Sebastian Munster's *Cosmographie*, Basic, 1550)

civilization, there were untamed people and untamed nature to be incorporated into the imperial system. Attitudes to people on these peripheries were ambivalent, however. While they were regarded with disgust or fear if they violated the space of the colonizers, they were also idealized and romanticized. Thus, Friedman notes that the ancient Greeks and Romans, like mediaeval European powers, saw themselves at the centre of the civilized world, and in their ordering of cultures and societies, the farther a group was from the centre the greater was its 'vice'.¹ Some cultural difference may have been tolerated but if, as Constance Perin suggests, another people's culture were considered to be too discrepant, it would be considered deviant, a 'vice', and generally judged in negative terms. Thus, on a global scale, a spatial and cultural boundary was drawn between civilization and various uncivilized, deviant 'others'. Again citing Friedman, Perin makes the interesting point that Aristotle's conception of the mean or average was effectively a moral judgement about levels of civilization. Being close to it was a mark of virtue but departure from the mean signalled vice. Thus, deviation in the statistical sense was also moral deviance and a device for conceptualizing the boundaries of society.²

This conception of civil society was echoed in mediaeval and early modern European cosmographies, which borrowed heavily from classical Greek sources. Thus, the 'edge' of civilization was marked by the presence of grotesque peoples, as, for example, in Sebastian Munster's *Cosmographie* (Plate 4.1). These people are not entirely different from the messengers of civilization in physical appearance, but they are 'imperfect' – physically deformed and/or black and at one with nature, in other words, not quite human by civilized, white European standards. This sort of characterization, as Stallybrass and White have observed, betrayed fears of being less than perfect on the part of the civilized. They suggest that the grotesque was not only the 'other' of the defining group or self but also 'a boundary phenomenon of hybridization or inmixing, in which self and other become enmeshed in an inclusive, heterogeneous, dangerously unstable zone'.³ In other words, those threatening people beyond the boundary represent the features of human existence from which the civilized have distanced themselves – close contact with nature, dirt, excrement, overt sexuality – but these same characteristics are exaggerated in portrayals of the uncivilized, which employ negative images of smell, colour and physical form. The world map, with civilization in the centre and the grotesque adorning the periphery, then expressed this desire for a literal distancing from the 'other'. More generally, space was used to establish a hierarchy which distinguished the civilized European from uncivilized native peoples. Thus, Mason describes paintings of Brazilian Indians by Eckhout, a seventeenth-century Dutch artist, in the following terms:

Eckhout orders the Indians in accordance with a scheme that is centred on European canons. The wild dance and the (ethnographically inaccurate) portrayal of the 'Tapuya' as cannibals situate them on the outer ring of wildness. The more 'civilised' Tupi Indians occupy an intermediary position, marked for example by the fact that the Tupi man bears a European knife, and that the landscape behind the Tupi woman contains rows of cultivated palms and a colonial house. The 'civilised' Europeans come . . . in the centre as the most attractive and refined people.⁴

Although this kind of differentiation is dependent on disgust, the very features which are reviled are also desired because they represent those features of the civilized self which are repressed. Defiled peoples and places offer excitement.

Thus, in the early period of European exploration and the emergence of capitalist economies, there was an evident fascination with non-European cultures, but there were both moral and economic arguments for representing



these cultures as less than human, a part of nature, or monstrous. The moral case is explained by Friedman:

if the races were signs from God, the question then arose, what were they meant to signify? This problem lent itself particularly well to the exegetical techniques so familiar to us in bestiaries, spiritual encyclopaedias, and other homiletic works of the later middle ages. It produced a number of *moral* interpretations of the races that made them figures for various virtues and vices. The end result was a heightened treatment of alien peoples in didactic literature, exaggerating their unusual qualities so as to bring out their 'monstrousness' in both the older and the newer senses (the older sense being 'a disarrangement in the familiar order of existence').⁵

Perin suggests that the maps which expressed this cosmic order became a source of moral authority, comparable in importance to early Christian and classical authorities. This moral authority is evident in the Ortelius world atlas *Theatrum orbis terrarum*. On the title page, four female figures represent Europe, Asia, Africa and America.

A sonnet by Gérard du Vivier explained the symbolism of the four figures. The lines dealing with America dwell on cannibalism, savagery and infinite treasure. To the map of Europe Ortelius appended a note proclaiming Europe's historic mission of world conquest, in the process of fulfilment by Spain and Portugal... Ortelius declared that the inhabitants of Europe had always surpassed all other peoples in intelligence and physical dexterity. These qualities naturally qualified the European to govern other parts of the world.⁶

The economic argument for monstrous representations, opposed to the perfection of white Europeans, was to ease the way for genocide in newly discovered territories, where, as Wallerstein has suggested, physical resources like gold were valued above a sustainable supply of labour by the colonizing powers during the early phase of capitalist development.⁷ It could be argued that elements of the monstrous tradition have continued into the twentieth century in capitalist states, for example, myths about cannibalism among colonized peoples. 'Under the glaze of centuries of civilization are unexamined, if not mediaeval meanings and symbols which maintain and sustain our frightened apprehension of difference.'⁸

In mediaeval Europe, there is some evidence that the socio-spatial structure of the city also expressed a wish to erect boundaries to protect civil society from the defiled, even though some writers, notably Lewis Mumford,⁹ have idealized mediaeval cities as socially integrated collectivities. My evidence comes from Geremek,¹⁰ whose account of the social topography of Paris suggests that the bourgeoisie were scandalized by the behaviour of deviant

groups and attempted to control their distribution. In particular, prostitution, although legal, was spatially regulated and 'red-light' districts were contested spaces, frequently objected to by respectable citizens.

The basic principle of mediaeval regulation was to designate certain areas to prostitution either inside or outside the walls and limit vice strictly to them. The aim of this sort of social hygiene was to locate these places well away from the burghers or seigneurial residences.

(p. 87)

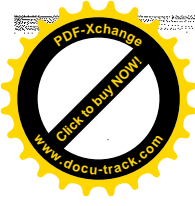
Some of the language of exclusion appears in Geremek's concluding comment on prostitution in the city, although it is not entirely clear in the following passage whether the terms are his or are taken from documentary sources:

In spite of the ambiguities of mediaeval attitudes to prostitution, in spite of the elements of integration into the town that we have been able to show, in spite, finally, of the tolerance demonstrated in these matters by the law, the whole world inevitably declined towards marginality. As we have progressed along the 'streets of shame' of mediaeval Paris, among the 'shops of sin', we have constantly come up against people whose way of life, if not their moral code, place them outside the structures of society.

(p. 87)

On Geremek's evidence, stereotypes of people and place were not as clearly articulated as they were in the capitalist city of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries partly because distancing, in a physical sense, was not easily accomplished in the compact and crowded mediaeval city. This was not for want of trying. Markus describes the city gates as a 'purifying filter', where strangers under arrest would be confined to prevent them contaminating civil society.¹¹ It is unlikely that this filter was effective, however, and inside the city the defiled were associated with a particular street or house rather than a district. However, some of the documents described by Geremek give a sense of bourgeois disgust at poverty, criminality and prostitution and at the places with which these conditions and activities were associated.

In the modern period in Europe, the language of defilement is more readily identifiable, as are the spaces to which are assigned those who belong and those who are excluded. By the eighteenth century, socio-spatial separation was becoming characteristic of large cities, like London, Dublin or Philadelphia, and boundary maintenance became a concern of the rich, who were anxious to protect themselves from disease and moral pollution. This is suggested somewhat obliquely in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, which can be read as a critique of western European society in the eighteenth century, using metaphors of purity and defilement. Swift creates a series of landscapes in which Gulliver is



either polluting or is trying to protect himself from the threat of pollution. Drawing on Mary Douglas's work, Hinnant suggests that 'In every voyage undertaken by Gulliver, the impure is what escapes categories or threatens their existence: the unclean is the anomalous, the ambiguous or the monstrous.'¹² Thus, Lilliput is a highly ordered society with strong rules of exclusion where Gulliver, differing not only in size but also in behaviour, is polluting. Because he is a source of defilement here, Gulliver is consigned to a polluted space, the Temple:

At the place where the carriage stood, there stood an ancient Temple esteemed to be the largest in the whole Kingdom, which having been polluted some years before by an unnatural Murder, was according to the zeal of these People, looked upon as Prophane, and therefore had to be applied to common Uses and all Ornaments and Furniture carried away.

Notwithstanding the defilement of this space, because the pollution taboos in Lilliput were so strong, Gulliver was unclean and anomalous even here. As Hinnant observes:

Among the Lilliputians, ethical pollution is measured in physical terms; their prohibition against bodily discharges extends even to structures which, like the temple, are no longer regarded as holy. Accepting this prohibition, Gulliver resolves henceforth to perform his natural functions as far beyond the precincts of the building as possible.

(p. 18)

Consciousness of pollution in Lilliput is heightened by the geometry of the landscape. In particular, the metropolis, Mildendo, had a highly ordered design with strong internal boundaries and the populace was excluded from the centre – a sacred space, the home of the emperor. As in the European Baroque city on which Mildendo was probably modelled, geometry expresses power: the representation of the masses as polluting is a means of exercising control.

In Gulliver's second voyage to Brobdingnag, there is a reversal. Attitudes to social mixing are very relaxed and pollution taboos are not in evidence. Significantly, Hinnant recognizes (p. 31) that 'there is a total disregard for geometric figures', and this is symptomatic of the Brobdingnagians' integrated rather than segmented view of society. One telling feature of their socio-spatial organization is that, rather than maintaining hospitals for the incarceration of the old and diseased and others who are marginal or residual in Brobdingnagian society, 'They are willing to grant their beggars the liberty to roam freely through the streets of Lorbrulgrud.' The reversal in world-view represented by Brobdingnag in relation to Lilliput has interesting consequences for Gulliver.

In Lilliput, he is polluting because he is unable to conform, but in Brobdingnag, where, understandably, he fears for his survival because of his diminutive stature, Gulliver becomes preoccupied with boundaries. Hinnant (p. 33) notes that his reaction to Brobdingnagian society is 'visceral, embodied in the nausea he feels at the sight of promiscuous maids and beggars'. Thus, he insists on the separation of basic social categories – male and female, healthy and diseased, rich and poor – because mixing and non-conformity, like expressions of sexuality outside conventional bounds, create anxiety. Hinnant suggests that this concern for boundaries is essential if Gulliver is to survive

in a country where he is subject to the predations of all but the most innocuous creatures. [The prohibitions] . . . seek to accomplish on the cultural plane what Gulliver inevitably fails to achieve on the plane of nature: to construct a shield that will protect him from threats of intrusion and destruction.

There is an interesting parallel in this with the small group on the margins of industrialized societies, like Gypsy communities, for whom pollution taboos and a concern with boundaries relate to the problem of cultural survival. *Gulliver's Travels*, however, can be seen more generally as a commentary on social tensions and power relations in a developing urban society as they are expressed in the language of defilement.

The poor as a source of pollution and moral danger were clearly identified in contemporary accounts of the nineteenth-century capitalist city. As socio-spatial segregation became yet more pronounced, the distance between the affluent and the poor ensured the persistence of stereotyped conceptions of the other. Social and spatial distancing contributed to the labelling of areas of poverty as deviant and threatening, a lack of knowledge being reflected in myths about working-class living conditions and behaviour. Dyos and Reeder convey nicely the kind of language which was used to describe working-class and bourgeois environments in a comment on class divisions in London: 'the undrained clay beneath the slums oozed with cesspits and sweated with fever; the gravelly heights of the suburbs were dotted with springs and bloomed with health'.¹³ This expression of the class divide in terms of topography and health was crucial. The poor, down there on the swampy clays, were living in their own excrement and were subject to contagious diseases like cholera. The middle classes, up there on the suburban heights, were free from disease and uncontaminated by sewage, but threatened by the poor and their diseases. In one sense, the quotation identifies a serious public health problem which reflected rapid urbanization without provision of adequate services. In another

sense, however, it is a comment on different standards of morality.¹⁴ The poor were not only living in appalling physical circumstances but were, from a bourgeois perspective, *depraved*. Thus, as Stallybrass and White comment on the urban reformer Chadwick's attitude to the poor: '[He] connects slums to sewage, sewage to disease, and disease to moral degradation.' Their degradation was connected in Chadwick's view with their lack of control over desire: 'short-lived, improvident, reckless and intemperate, with an habitual avidity for sensual gratifications'. They continue:

Like most of the sanitary reformers, Chadwick traces the metonymic associations (between the poor and animals, between the slum dweller and sewage) . . . But the metonymic associations, which trace the social articulation of depravity, are constantly elided with and displaced by a metaphorical language in which filth stands for the slum dweller: the poor are pigs.¹⁵

The significance of excrement in this account is that its stands for residual people and residual places. The middle classes have been able to distance themselves from their own residues, but in the poor they see bodily residues, animals closely associated with residual matter, and residual places coming together and threatening their own categorical scheme under which the pure and the defiled are distinguished. The separations which the middle classes have achieved in the suburb contrast with the mixing of people and polluting matter in the slum. This then becomes a judgement on the poor. The class boundary marked out in residential segregation echoes the recurrent theme: 'Evil . . . is embodied in excrement'.¹⁶

Similar moral judgements surface in some of Charles Booth's descriptions of London at the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁷ While he demonstrates considerable sympathy for the working class, Booth still recognizes a residual population which puts itself beyond civil society through its behaviour and material circumstances – this group, an 'internal colonial other', is identified by black shading in his maps of social class. Thus, in a comment on Whitechapel in the East End of London, he contends that:

There is a large class who must be regarded as outcasts, for whom the policy of sanitary regulation, of inspection, even of harrying, seems to be the only resource, and who must be regarded, in the mass, as hopeless subjects of reform.

However, Booth recognized that things were getting better. Thus,

In spite of the wretched beings who sleep each night on the doorsteps in Commercial Street, and the worse figures which parade its pavements; in spite of the hells of Dorset Street, and the

low life and foul language of the courts; in spite of the poverty and drunkenness, domestic uncleanness, ignorance and apathy, that still prevail – things are surely making for the better in Whitechapel and St. George's.

(pp. 64–65)

He adds that 'Such scenes of unmitigated savagery as old inhabitants have witnessed are unknown now.' Booth's social geography was a moralizing geography which linked the poor with dirt and deviant behaviour and defined particular residual spaces, both enclaves and exclaves. Typical of the latter was Notting Dale in north-west London, tellingly referred to as 'The Piggeries' and populated by Irish migrant labourers and Gypsies, among others. Documents like Booth's created powerful negative images which conditioned the response of the urban reformers. Physical cleaning, separating the poor from their residues, was to be accompanied by 'moral cleansing' or purification because 'moral filth was as much a concern as physical'.¹⁸ Similarly, Corbin suggests that in Paris in the mid-nineteenth century 'The reformers nursed the plan of evacuating both sewage and vagrants, the stench of rubbish and social infection all at the same time.'¹⁹

Nineteenth-century schemes to reshape the city could thus be seen as a process of purification, designed to exclude groups variously identified as polluting – the poor in general, the residual working class, racial minorities, prostitutes, and so on. This was particularly true of grand designs like that prepared by Haussmann for Paris. One of Haussmann's objectives, according to Knaebel,²⁰ was to make central Paris fit for the bourgeoisie by creating elegant spaces which distanced them from the poor and enhanced property values:

In Haussmann's eyes . . . there was a city to be embellished in those places where the bourgeois gave himself to the enjoyment of perception, where nothing must offend the senses – which implied the expulsion of the dirty, the poor, the unclean, the malodorous – and the 'non-city' [those who did not belong because they were not seen to be a part of civil society].

Ivan Illich also uses an olfactory metaphor to describe state interventions in the capitalist city in the nineteenth century, making a similar point to Knaebel about the distinction between the pure bourgeois and the defiled proletarian:

The effort to deodorize utopian city space should be seen as an aspect of the architectural effort to clear city space for the construction of a modern capital. It can be interpreted as the repression of smelly persons who unite their separate auras to create a smelly crowd of common folk. Their common aura must be dissolved to make way, to make space for, a new city through

which clearly delineated individuals can circulate with unlimited freedom. For the nose, a city without aura is literally a 'Nowhere', a u-topia.²¹

These particular mappings of nineteenth-century urban society are not solely imaginery. There were chronic problems of sanitation, waste disposal and associated illnesses which urban reformers were intent on solving and, as progress made in methods of waste disposal weakened the association between the poor and excrement, so the bourgeois metaphors seemed less appropriate. Corbin suggests a number of stages in the separation of the pure self and the defiled other, a separation which was projected onto society and served to reinforce cleavages between social groups. The first separation was class based. Once the bourgeoisie developed a sense of self which excluded bodily residues, they could recognize their difference from the smelly working class:

Once all the smells of excreta had been got rid of, the personal odors of perspiration, which revealed the inner identity of the 'I', came to the fore... the bourgeois showed that he was increasingly sensitive to olfactory contact with the disturbing messages of intimate life.²²

The abhorrence of excrement became an abhorrence of the poor, who represented what the bourgeoisie had left behind. Public health policies dealt with the problem of the putrid masses and cleaning up the poor would also help to instil ideas of discipline and order amongst them. Public health schemes brought with them regulations and were thus a means of social control. Thus, as Markus notes, the use of water in nineteenth-century European societies had a clear class dimension:

The apparently universal images of water on which Illich meditates – based on drinking, washing of bodies and clothes, germination, sport and health – became instruments for control in the baths, wash-houses and laundries for the poor... but metaphors for regeneration and visible ratification of superior status in the spas dedicated to the drinking of and bathing in mineral waters, and other elite baths.²³

However, once the indigenous poor had been sanitized, Corbin argues, the same notions of dirt and disease could be used to construct images of immigrants, so defilement entered the language of racism.

I doubt whether there is a neat historical sequence here, but modern social geographies, that is, media and other popular representations of place rather than academic geographies, do suggest that spatial categories like 'the inner city' and some social categories, like Gypsies, are represented in similar language to that used to exclude the poor from bourgeois space in the

nineteenth century. One crucial difference is that large sections of the working class are now more conscious of their own purified identity. In modern western societies, defilement is usually suggested in more muted tones than was the case in the nineteenth century. Material improvements in housing, water supply and sewage disposal have literally cleaned up the city, but I would agree with Corbin that places associated with ethnic and racial minorities, like the inner city, are still tainted and perceived as polluting in racist discourse, and place-related phobias are similarly evident in response to other minorities, like gays and the homeless.

Class-based geographies of defilement were still evident in the first half of the twentieth century, however, particularly where working people threatened the sanctity of middle-class preserves. Thus, middle-class commentaries on the countryside in Britain until the 1950s expressed concern about disorder, litter, advertising, and so on, associated with developments which were perceived to be catering for the working class, like roadside cafés and some housing developments. Plotlands, as working-class creations, were considered particularly abhorrent. Hardy and Ward cite one critic of Peacehaven, a plotland development in Sussex dating from the 1920s, who referred to 'the poison [beginning] at Peacehaven', and this kind of judgement was linked explicitly to class – 'the danger of proletarianism is near'.²⁴ Similarly, the architect Raymond Unwin, writing in 1929, averred that 'it is pathetic to see how often the exodus of those who find life in the modern town no longer tolerable destroys those very real amenities which they go forth to seek'.²⁵ Establishment figures like the Cambridge geographer, J. A. Steers, made very strong statements about working-class housing in the countryside, making it clear that it was considered to be a form of pollution. Steers described Canvey Island, on the south Essex coast, as 'an abomination... a town of shacks and rubbish... It caters for a particular class of people and, short of total destruction and a new start, little if anything can be done'.²⁶ Vocal objectors to spontaneous housing development in the countryside, like Unwin and Steers, had an important influence in shaping the legislation which formed the basis of town and country planning in England and Wales after 1945, and the power given to local authorities to control or eradicate 'disorderly development' under the 1948 Town and Country Planning Act contributed to the exclusion of working people from middle class space, particularly in areas of extensive plotland development, like Sussex and Essex. The rhetoric had an important bearing on practice, although the language of pollution was translated into less emotive terms, like non-conforming use.²⁷

The same class prejudices of the period can be projected onto space in less explicit ways, for example, in the view of London contained in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922). This work is interesting not because it had any influence on policy, which would have been highly unlikely, but because, in conveying an elitist view of society, it also makes use of the language of defilement to describe socio-spatial relations. In *The Waste Land*, defilement occurs in the form of litter, corpses, fog – the residues which invade the social world of the bourgeoisie and disintegrate class boundaries. Discarded objects which were, according to Eliot, evidence of working-class recreation, intruded on bourgeois space. It was working-class pleasure and sexuality, in particular, which Eliot represented as sources of pollution, demonstrating exactly the same reaction as Unwin and Steers to the presence of the working class in rural England. These urban wastes threatened the stability and dominance of Eliot's class. Ellman argues that *The Waste Land* is essentially a poem about abjection, urban waste, both human and material, signalling the poet's anxieties.²⁸ However, the wastes are clearly working-class residues and, as she suggests, the filth which Eliot maps out in London insinuates defilement within.

MODERN MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS

Urban society, as it is currently projected in literature, film and television commercials, provides further visions of purity and pollution where the polluting are more likely to be social, and often spatially marginal minorities, like the gays, prostitutes and homeless mapped by Winchester and White.²⁹ Media representations are mostly fictional, imaginary constructions, but they draw on the same stereotyped images of people and places which surface in social conflicts involving mainstream communities and 'deviant' minorities. The media, particularly television, are also important because they comprise a major source of images for the representation of others, remotely consumed and requiring no engagement with the people they characterize as different. They are thus more likely to be received uncritically.

One graphic and probably not grossly exaggerated depiction of the pure and the defiled in the city is Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver*. This is a stark cinematic portrayal of prostitution in New York City, expressed largely in metaphors of defilement. The main character, Travis Bickle, expresses strong feelings of disgust and desire in relation to women. Thus, he is fascinated by pornography,

but as he cruises the streets in the red-light districts in his taxi, he sees only 'filth'. His commentary on the city is all about dirt and the need to purify the spaces populated by prostitutes and the sexually deviant.

Travis writes in his diary:

May 10th . . . Thank God for the rain which has helped to wash away the garbage and trash from the sidewalks . . . All the animals come out at night – whores, skunk pussies, buggers, queens, fairies, dopers, junkies; sick, venal; some day, a real rain will come and wash all this scum off the streets.

And, similarly, when asked by a presidential hopeful, Palantine, for his view on what is wrong with the country, Travis volunteers this about New York City:

You should clean up this city here because this city here is like an open sewer, it's full of filth and scum and sometimes I can hardly take it. Whoever becomes the president should just really clean it up, you know what I mean. Sometimes I go out and I smell it. I get headaches, it's so bad, you know, they just like never go away, you know. It seems like the president should just clean up the whole mess here, should just flush it down the fucking toilet.

Against this background of defilement, Betsy, the woman Travis idolizes, personifies purity: 'She was wearing a white dress; she appeared like an angel out of this filthy mess; she is alone, they cannot touch her.' His own anxieties about dirt dominate the film, so when Iris, a child prostitute he hopes to save from the streets, suggests that she might go to a commune in Vermont, Travis feels uncomfortable. He says that places like that are dirty and he couldn't go to a place like that. His final purifying act is to destroy the pimps with extreme violence and this act of purification, notwithstanding the violence, makes him a local hero. While *Taxi Driver* is a film about a personal obsession, it could also be seen as a moral geography which has a wider currency. Consider, for example, a comment by a member of a right-wing gang in east Berlin:

Swen enthuses about the way a section of the Nationale Alternative [a neo-Nazi organization] brought 'order' to the railway station in Lichtenberg – another district of east Berlin. 'It used to be full of Romanians, drunks and tramps. Now they've cleaned everything away.'

(*Guardian*, 27 September 1991)

Similarly, in a letter to the *New York Post*, a resident of the East Village laments the decline of her neighbourhood:

Our cars and apartments are being burglarized by the street peddlers who sell their stolen bounty on Second Avenue and the adjoining streets; St. Mark's Place has become a haven for



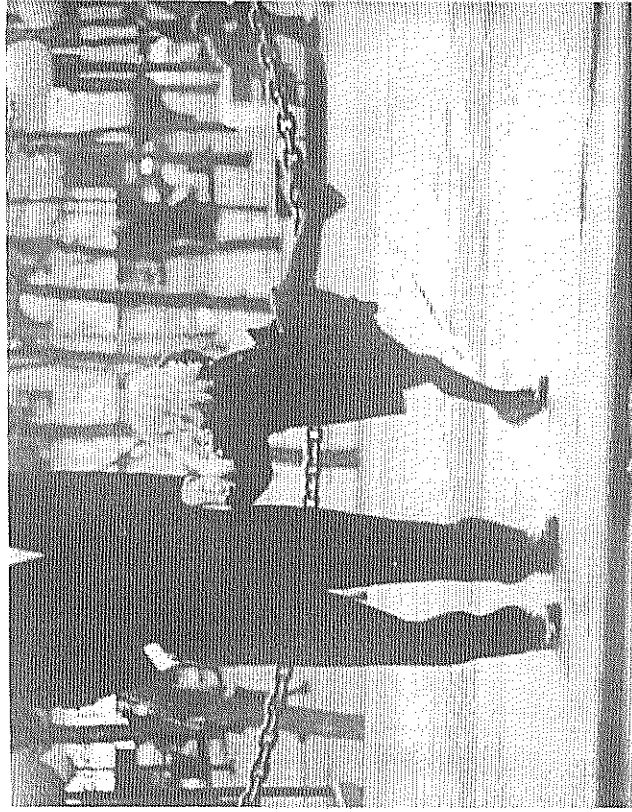


Plate 4.2 'God bless the child'. The vulnerable child, a symbol of purity in a defiled city (from a Volkswagen television commercial, BMP DDB Needham. Photo: Charlotte Hicks)

pimps, prostitutes, drug dealers, head shops selling drug paraphernalia and assault weapons, illegal immigrants and a sundry collection of other undesirables. A neighborhood that was once the hub of multi-culturalism and neighborly pride has, over the past 20 years, become a cesspool of vermin.

(New York Post, 21 September 1994)

Travis, the young fascist and the resident of a deteriorating East Village express in strong terms attitudes towards people and place which are deeply embedded in western societies, although in liberal discourse they are conveyed with greater subtlety. These vivid social maps of the city are also used for navigational purposes by banks, insurance companies, the police and the social services, but their spatial demarcations become visible only through practices such as the withdrawal of financial services from 'high-risk' localities.

Subtlety is evident in some modern advertising which, while presenting more restrained comment on the 'other' than *Taxi Driver*, still presents urban society in oppositional terms, stressing the virtues of the pure by setting it against images of pollution. The purpose of this is to suggest the possibility of



Plate 4.3 The homeless as shadows, a residue in the urban landscape (copyright © 1990 Fleetway Editions Ltd)

achieving a comforting state of purity through consumption, a point which I will develop in the next chapter. For the moment, I want to demonstrate how television commercials and the modern media generally have used either city landscapes or urban sub-cultures to make distinctions between a positively valued inside and a threatening exterior world.

Some car commercials have made particular use of images of threat and danger to convey the idea of the car as a protective capsule which insulates the owner from the hazards of an outside world populated by various 'others'. One example is a Volkswagen commercial which made use of a young child (Plate 4.2) to symbolize purity in the defiled environment of New York City.³⁰ The commercial implies that the car will transport her securely through the city, to the safety of the suburbs or a commissioned apartment building. The city's street people – homeless, mentally ill, drug addicts – are represented as remote but threatening, part of another world viewed from the safety of the Volkswagen. This image of a threatening but invisible 'other' appears similarly in Jonathan Raban's *Hunting Mr. Heartbreak*.³¹ Raban was mistaken for a street person when deviantly sitting on a fire hydrant in Manhattan:

It was interesting to feel oneself being willed into non-existence by total strangers. I'd never felt the force of such frank contempt and all because I was sitting on a fire hydrant. Every one of those guys wanted to see me wiped out. I was a virus, a bad smell, a dirty smear that needed cleaning up.



The comic strip *The Shadows* presents a view of the future North American city in the same terms (Plate 4.3). In this case, the homeless have been totally dehumanized. They exist only as a residue.

Other geographies have been suggested in detergent commercials where, predictably, purification through cleaning, attaining a state of whiteness and virtue, is a continuing theme. The morality of cleanliness tends not to be so explicit as it was, for example, in the Health and Cleanliness Council's posters illustrated in Chapter 2, but the virtue of cleanliness can be suggested through associations of people and places. Thus, in a new, concentrated Persil commercial (1991), children are depicted as a part of 'the wild', untamed nature, which is their natural habitat but one which renders them uncivilized. Mother (Plate 4.4a) wonders how the children get so dirty at school. The children are then shown in an imaginary sequence tearing through the wilderness (Plate 4.4b), but with the boys doing more adventurous things than the girl. Their place in nature is confirmed by dirty clothes, face paint and headresses (Plate 4.4c). The suggestion of an American Indian stereotype is interesting because this also locates the minority in nature rather than as a part of society. The children, however, are returned to society, cleaned and cared for by mother, with the help of Persil (Plate 4.4d), but civilization appears to be but a veneer as they set out again into the wilderness – for a geography lesson (Plate 4.4e). The children are portrayed as 'naturally' wild but it is clear that Persil is a civilizing influence, a necessary commodity in the suburban home, contributing to the creation of a purified environment in which children behave according to standards set by adults. The family home is the setting for a struggle against dirt and natural wildness. Consumption is encouraged by suggesting the undesirability of the soiled and polluted.

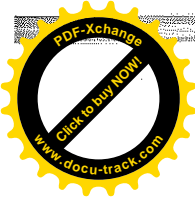
It is interesting to compare the representation of the child in the city in the Volkswagen commercial with these images of childhood conveyed by the Persil commercial. In the first, the child is pure and the city, or rather some of the stereotyped inhabitants of the city, constitute a threat to this purity. In the second, the children are defiled through their association with nature and purified by the civilizing influences of mother, home and detergent. Children can be simultaneously pure and defiled. Nature, likewise, can provide images of purity, often in contrast to the defiled city, or, as wilderness, it can be associated with people – children, indigenous minorities, and so on – in order to represent them as less than civilized and in need of purification.³² These shifts in the use of images demonstrate the contradictions and ambiguities which characterize stereotypes and the complex associations of people and

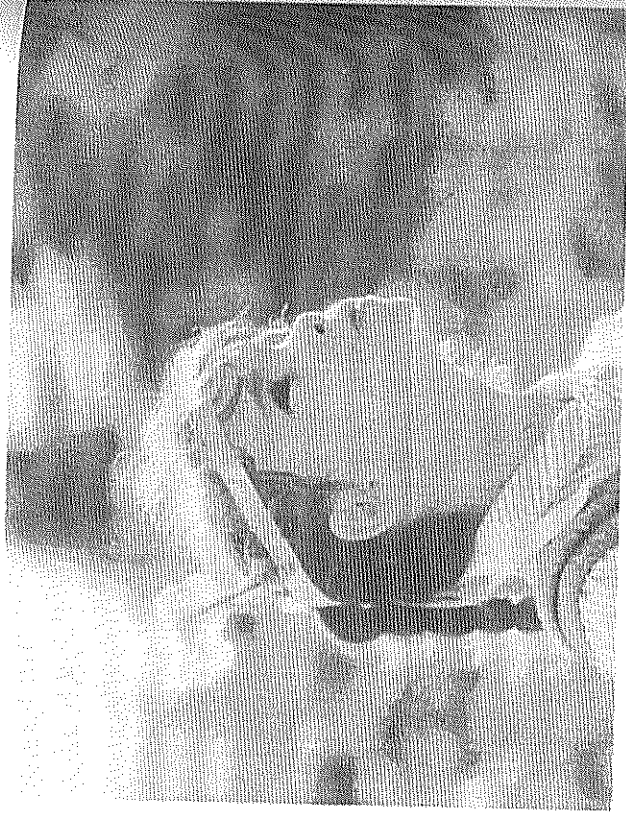


(a)



(b)

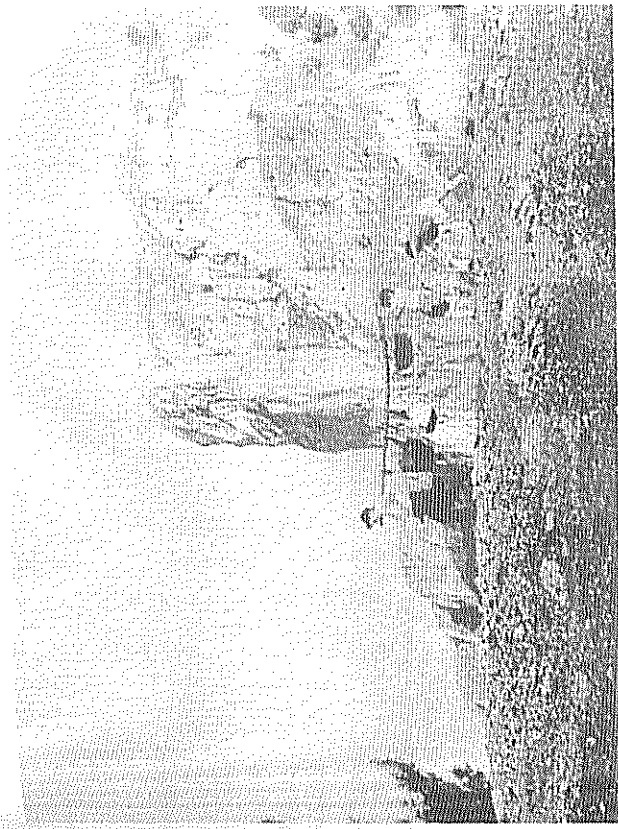




(c)



(d)



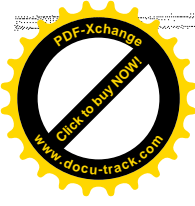
(e)

Plates 4.4a-e (from top to bottom) The association of children with the 'wild' and the civilizing role of detergent, mother and home (Persil television commercial, copyright © J. Walter Thompson Company Ltd)

places which are used to map the spaces of the same and the other.

It could be argued that my selective use of media representations of purity and defilement exaggerates the extent to which this opposition figures in modern discourses. Historical accounts of the problem, particularly those of Corbin and Stallybrass and White, indicate that in social terms a concern with pollution has narrowed its focus to become a concern about racialized or non-conforming minorities rather than reflecting a bourgeois anxiety about the unwashed masses, most of whom have become a part of the purified majority. However, it may be that material progress and increased regulation of space by the state and private capital have contributed to a heightened consciousness of purity and defilement with a consequent increase in exclusionary pressures affecting, for example, children as well as conspicuously non-conforming minorities. There does not appear to be any consistent progression, no marginalization of dirt *en route* to a state of blissful shining whiteness.

Finally, I want to suggest how such imaginary geographies translate into



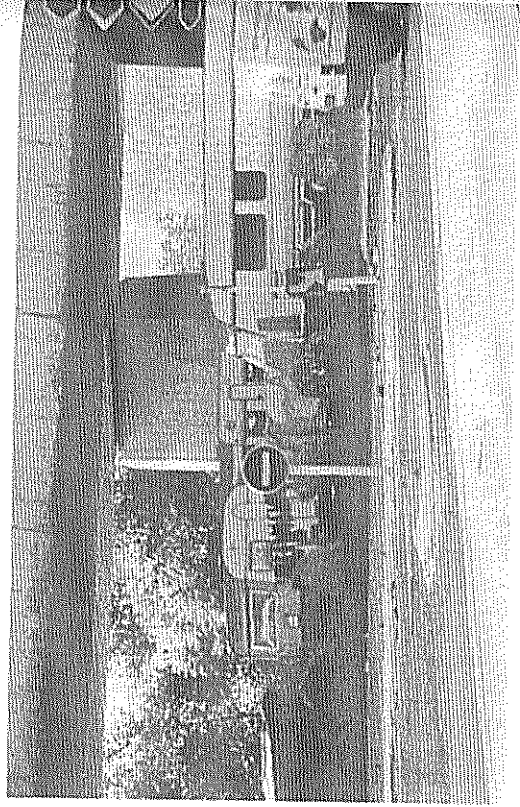


Plate 4.5 A residual population in a residual space – Gypsies camped under a motorway in Arles, south of France, 1990 (photo: author)

practice. The kinds of representations described here in literature and the visual media confirm stereotypes of people and places and inform attitudes to others. These attitudes assume significance in community conflicts and in the day-to-day routines of control. This is evident, for example, in the case of European Gypsies, to whom opposition is expressed in a consistent and highly predictable form. Here, the problem is that Gypsies' dependence on the residues of the dominant society, scrap metal in particular, and their need to occupy marginal spaces, like derelict land in cities, in order to avoid the control agencies and retain some degree of autonomy, confirm a popular association between Gypsies and dirt. The fact that Gypsies have strong pollution taboos and high standards of cleanliness, where there are adequate facilities for keeping their trailers or houses clean, is irrelevant. Because of their frequent association with residues and residual spaces, the perception of many *gaujies* (non-Gypsies) is that Gypsies are dirty. Consequently, the fear of 'polluting Gypsies' leads to attempts by the dominant society to consign them to residual spaces where the stereotypical associations are confirmed.³³ This is illustrated by Plate 4.5, where a group of French Gypsy families are camped in a marginal urban space, surrounded by rubble, relegated to an environment where ethnic identity and dirt are connected in a negative stereotype. The representation of social categories either side of a boundary defined by notions of purity and

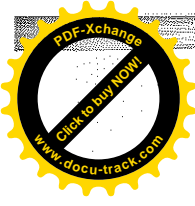
defilement and the mapping of this boundary onto particular places are not solely a question of fantasy. They translate into exclusionary practice.

CONCLUSION

The idea of society assumes some cohesion and conformity which create, and are threatened by, difference, although what constitutes a threatening difference has varied considerably over time and space. Nation-states may or may not claim to accommodate diversity but at the local level social and cultural mixing is frequently resisted. What I have suggested in this chapter is that there are enduring images of 'other' people and 'other' places which are combined in the construction of geographies of belonging and exclusion, from the global to the local. Historically, at least within European capitalist societies, it is evident that the boundary of 'society' has shifted, embracing more of the population, with the class divide in particular becoming more elusive as a boundary marker. The imagery of defilement, which locates people on the margins or in residual spaces and social categories, is now more likely to be applied to 'imperfect people', to use Constance Perin's term – a list of 'others' including the mentally disabled, the homeless, prostitutes, and some racialized minorities. Clearly, the labels which signal rejection are challenged and there is always the hope that, through political action, the humanity of the rejected will be recognized and the images of defilement discarded. There is no clear picture of progress, however. Feelings of insecurity about territory, status and power where material rewards are unevenly distributed and continually shifting over space encourage boundary erection and the rejection of threatening difference. The nature of that difference varies, but the imagery employed in the construction of geographies of exclusion is remarkably constant.

NOTES

1. John Friedland, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1981, p. 35 (cited by Constance Perin, *Belonging in America*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, Wis., 1988).
2. Perin, *op. cit.*, pp. 146–151. It is interesting to note the later quality of statistical science as a moralizing discipline. Particularly in the work of the nineteenth-century statistician Francis



- Galton, ranking procedures were used to provide a supposedly objective account of racial difference. His classifications were spurious and racist, a clear case of 'moralizing differences, to use Constance Perin's term. See C. Blacker, *Eugenics: Galton and after*, Duckworth, London, 1952, on Galton.
3. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, Methuen, London, 1986, p. 193.
 4. Peter Mason, *Deconstructing America: Representations of the other*, Routledge, London, 1990, pp. 21–22.
 5. Friedman, op. cit., p. 109.
 6. Benjamin Keen, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, N.J., 1971, p. 156.
 7. Immanuel Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism*, Verso, London, 1983.
 8. Perin, op. cit., p. 174.
 9. Lewis Mumford, *The City in History*, Secker and Warburg, London, 1961.
 10. Bronislaw Geremek, *The Margins of Society in late-Medieval Paris*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987.
 11. Thomas Markus, *Buildings and Power: Freedom and control in the origin of modern building types*, Routledge, London, 1993, p. 118.
 12. Charles Hinnant, *Purity and Defilement in Gulliver's Travels*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1987.
 13. Stallybrass and White, op. cit., pp. 127–128.
 14. Felix Driver, 'Moral geographies: social science and the urban environment in mid-nineteenth century England', *Transactions, Institute of British Geographers*, NS, 13 (4), 1988, 275–287.
 15. Stallybrass and White, op. cit., p. 131.
 16. Perin, op. cit., p. 178.
 17. Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the London Poor*, 3rd Series, Religious Influences, Macmillan, London, 1902.
 18. Driver, op. cit.
 19. Alain Corbin, *The Fragrant and the Foul: Odor and the French social imagination*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1986.
 20. Cited by Corbin, *ibid.*, p. 268n.
 21. Ivan Illich, *H₂O and the Waters of Forgetfulness*, Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, Dallas, 1984, p. 53.
 22. Corbin, op. cit., p. 143.
 23. Markus, op. cit., p. 146.
 24. Dennis Hardy and Colin Ward, *Arcadia for All: The legacy of a makeshift landscape*, Mansell, London, 1984.
 25. Raymond Unwin, Greater London Regional Planning Committee, 1929, p. 27.
 26. Hardy and Ward, op. cit., p. 120.
 27. Le Corbusier had a similar modernist vision according to which small-scale, 'disordered' development was a form of pollution.

His plan for the redevelopment of the Right Bank in Paris (1925) showed that he did not care for people, for their bustle, traffic and markets. He proposed to replace the genial disorder of Rue de Rivoli, Les Halles and the Faubourg St. Honoré with a grid of cruciform tower-blocks. He argued: 'Imagine all this junk, which

has until now lain spread out over the soil like a dry crust, cleaned off and carted away and replaced by immense crystals of glass.'

(Centipede, *Guardian*, 18 March 1993)

28. Maud Ellman, 'Eliot's abjection', in J. Fletcher and A. Benjamin (eds), *Abjection, Melancholia and Love: The work of Julia Kristeva*, Routledge, London, 1990, pp. 178–200.
29. Hilary Winchester and Paul White, 'The location of marginalized groups in the inner city', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 6, 1988, 37–54.
30. The use of the child, particularly white girls, as a symbol of purity but, ambiguously, as a sexualized, defiled, object is discussed by Sander Gilman, *Sexuality: An illustrated history*, Wiley, Chichester, 1989, pp. 271–273, and by Rex and Wendy Saimton Rogers, *Stories of Childhood: Shifting agendas of child concern*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hemel Hempstead, 1992, pp. 181–187.
- In Graham Ovenden's *Victorian Children*, Academy Editions, London, 1971, photographic portrayals of the pure and defiled (child prostitutes) are juxtaposed rather starkly. In modern representations of the child, in advertising, for example, purity generally seems to be emphasized in order to underline the need for protection from a dangerous social and physical environment, as the Volkswagen commercial implies.
31. Jonathan Raban, *Hunting Mr. Heartbreak*, Collins Harvill, London, 1990.
32. The deceit involved in representing nature as pure is suggested by John Law and John Whittaker in a discussion of the depiction of sacred (pure) and profane (polluted) landscapes in literature on the acid rain problem:

nature is simplified and it is represented as pure. This is not so easy, for those who actually venture into the wilderness know that it is full of biting flies, carcasses, dead trees and land-slips, and they also know that power lines, roads and quarries abound. The pictures have thus been carefully selected and framed, for the production of a sacred representation of nature requires a technology of purification.

(John Law and John Whittaker, 'On the art of representation: notes on the politics of visualisation', in Gordon Fyfe and John Law (eds), *Picturing Power: Visual depictions and social relations*, Sociological Review Monograph 35, Routledge, London, 1988, p. 173)
33. David Sibley, 'Outsiders in society and space', in Kay Anderson and Fay Gale (eds), *Inventing Places: Studies in cultural geography*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1992, pp. 107–122.

