Desire/disgust: mapping the moral contours of heterosexuality

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Abstract: Recent studies of sexuality and space have done much to demonstrate that 'everyday' space is experienced as aggressively heterosexual by lesbians and gay males. In this review essay, I aim to extend this analysis by examining the (limited) body of work which has explored how heterosexuality has served to create (and justify) other forms of oppression and confinement in western cities. Specifically, this essay examines how heterosexuality has been theorized within and beyond geography, exploring the contention that the 'performance' of particular oedipal identities is central to the normalization of heterosexuality. This idea is scrutinized through an overview of the geographies of 'moral' and 'immoral' heterosexual identities which serves to demonstrate how heterosexuality is territorialized in the city, albeit in an often complex and contradictory manner. Invoking geographic theories of morality, identity and difference, the article concludes that a fuller and more nuanced understanding of hetero-sexuality needs to be developed in order to understand the role of space in shaping social relations of all kinds.

Key words: heterosexuality, moral geography, sexuality, space.

I Introduction

Although traditionally regarded as 'squeamish' about sexual matters (McNee, 1984), recent research by geographers has begun to demonstrate that space is inevitably sexed in a variety of complex ways, placing issues of sex and sexuality firmly on the geo-graphical agenda. As such, there is now a substantial body of critical geographic scholarship which has indicated that space is fundamentally shaped by the dynamics of human sexuality, reflecting the ways in which sex is represented, perceived and understood (Knopp, 1995: 149). These arguments have been most forcibly made in research by geographers on the experiences of lesbians, gays and bisexuals which have collectively suggested that 'everyday' spaces are often experienced by such groups as aggressively heterosexual (Adler and Brenner, 1992; Bell, 1992; Valentine, 1993; Namaste, 1996). Hence, while displays of heterosexual affection, friendship and desire

are regarded as acceptable or 'normal' in most spaces, it has been noted that homosexuals are often forced to deny or disguise their sexual orientation except in specific (and often marginal) spaces because of fears of homophobic abuse and intolerance. Simultaneously, it has been recognized that the appropriation and transgression of heterosexual spaces may be a potent means for lesbians, gays and bisexuals to destabilize and undermine processes of homophobic oppression, adopting a variety of tactics in order to challenge the dominant production of space as 'straight' (Geltmaker, 1992; Brown, 1995). The establishment of queer spaces, frequently referred to as gay or lesbian 'ghettos', is recognized to play a fundamental role in this process, with such sites often acting as bases for the social, economic and cultural reproduction of gay male and lesbian communities (Valentine, 1993; Hindle, 1994; Forrest, 1995).

While not denying the continuing relevance and value of geographers' engagement with such issues, particularly the growing interest in queer theory, in this context I want to set this aside to focus on the (admittedly more limited) body of geographical work which has attempted to theorize, map and critique heterosexuality itself. As the dominant form of sexuality in late modern society, it is clear that what Smart (1996) has referred to as 'hegemonic, normative heterosexuality' underpins a wide variety of social relations and institutions – including marriage, family and parenthood – in a profoundly important manner. None the less, as several commentators have been keen to stress (e.g., Knopp, 1995; Lebrun, 1998), most geographers writing on sexuality and space seem content to conceptualize space as either 'gay' or 'straight', ignoring the complex way in which heterosexual spaces are themselves variously sexualized or desexualized by different people at different times. On this basis, Bell and Valentine (1995: 12) claim that little appears to be known about heterosexual geographies, implying there has been a serious lack of attention given to the vagaries and vulgarities of heterosexuality as compared with the (by now) sizeable literature on homosexual geographies. As they acknowledge, this lacuna is dangerous, for without a focus on the fractured articulation of heterosexual love, romance and desire, geographers risk presenting an overly sanitized and ordered conception of sociospatial relations which excludes many of the central desires and disgusts which infuse all people's lives (not just those of homosexually identified men and women). After all, as Valentine (1993: 397) argues, everyday interactions do not occur between asexual individuals, but between people with sexual identities and labels, in sexualized locations.

Yet even if few geographers have explicitly addressed how heterosexual identities are spatially constructed and negotiated, such concerns have been implicitly explored by a number of geographers, particularly those researching geographies of gender. For example, several explorations of the feminine as a constructed 'other', a dominant research theme in feminist geography, have paid close attention to issues of sexuality. Notably, the work of Bondi (1992; 1997; 1998) on gentrification, urban symbolism and the construction of public space has consistently emphasized the impossibility of trying to separate the construction of gender identities from issues of sex and sexuality. In her view, expunging concepts of sexuality from understandings of gender relations can only lead to an impoverished comprehension of women's lives in the city:

> While the expressed intention of the sex/gender distinction widely adopted in feminist urban studies has been to exclude questions of biological sex to make the point that gender divisions are socially constructed, one of the effects has been to exclude questions of sex in the sense of sexuality and sexual practice . . . Thus, despite

the feminist claim that the 'personal is political', and despite the feminist critique of a public/private dichotomy . . . we have largely avoided matters regarded as personal or private (Bondi, 1997: 5).

Hence, by defining gender in a disembodied and de-eroticized manner, and treating sex as a biological rather than cultural practice, Bondi accuses many feminist geographers of overlooking the crucial (yet complex) manner in which sex and gender identities are connected. As such, her work (alongside that of Grosz, 1992; Cream, 1995; Duncan, 1996; *et al.*) has begun to demonstrate that an understanding of the dynamics of hetero-sexuality is fundamental to interpreting women's place in society, with the performance of particular sexual roles (and the imaging thereof) informing broader notions of women's ability to use and shape space. Hence, while the mapping between gender and sexual identities is far from straightforward, by considering the way in which sexuality enters the body consciousness, the manner in which certain sexual acts provoke anxiety, and the way hegemonic society seeks to regulate sexuality, Bondi argues that the complex and dynamic construction of the feminine 'other' might be more fully com-prehended.

   Equally, with respect to the construction of masculinity, geographers have begun to note that heterosexuality plays a key role in shaping masculine ideals, with the imagining of men as reasoned, rational and modern intimately connected with male desires to conquer, subdue and suppress the 'natural' sexuality of women (Rose, 1993; Seidler, 1995). As with dominant constructions of femininity, this construction is specific to historical time and place, being subject to contestation, reworking and reaffirmation in the realms of cultural politics (Pile, 1994; Jackson *et al.*, 1999). For example, the com-modification of homosocial identity and the emergence of the 'New Man' phenomenon in the 1980s suggested the possibility of postpatriarchal heterosexual identities (Mort, 1996), yet as Jackson (1991: 210) pointed out, these forms of masculinity could still be accommodated within existing patterns of sexual oppression and did not signal a major challenge to a heterosexual order that celebrated the wielding of male sexual power. Although infused with contradiction, the recent scripting of contemporary British mas-culinities around a 'New Lad' identity which celebrates sexual prowess demonstrates the resilience of these patterns, which, as geographers have begun to point out, are also played out differently in different settings (Jackson *et al.*, 1999). Indeed, the worlds of work, consumption and leisure are often saturated with heterosexual images and behaviours in a manner that celebrates a predatory and oppressive masculinity, with sites such as pubs, offices, clubs and sports stadia all implicated in the 'heterosexual-ization' of the male body (see, for example, McDowell, 1995; Epstien, 1996; Massey, 1996).

   Such observations on the shifting contours of gender identity begin to suggest that any exploration of the connections between gender and sexuality necessitates a geo-graphical interpretation, as far from being a unified and monolithic system, heterosex-ualities (like homosexualities) are obviously manifest in a variety of different displays of emotion and intimacy which are inscribed in a variety of different landscapes. It is therefore apparent that different spaces may be sexualized or desexualized through human experiences of anonymity, loneliness, anxiety, voyeurism, exhibitionism, fear, motion, tactility and so on (cf. Knopp, 1995). This coding of spaces in sexual terms is particularly evident in the conceptualization of particular areas as erotic, a notion that perhaps demonstrates the contradictory desires and disgusts which underpin the logic

of heterosexuality. Thus, as we move through space, our meetings with strangers evoke responses – the glance, the gaze, the practised indifference – which are contingent on the sexualized nature of the surroundings. To take an everyday (or everynight) example, sexual attraction and desire is often acted upon in the intensely sensuous surroundings of a club, but usually repressed and ignored in the spaces of the supermarket (though even this setting may become sexually charged on occasions).

   Yet to conclude simply that exploring the geographies of heterosexuality involves a (literal or metaphorical) mapping of how space is sexualized ignores the complex and contradictory way heterosexuality intertwines with processes such as sexism, racism and ageism to empower or oppress different social identities in different ways. In this sense, I want to argue here that heterosexuality cannot simply be regarded as an explanatory variable to be appended to geographical analyses to account for those slippery aspects of social life which cannot be explained away with reference to (for example) gender, class or race relations; rather, it is central to the construction and reproduction of alterity and difference which is played out through 'corporalities and space' (Blum and Nast, 1996) – or, as Pile (1996) prefers, the spaces of 'the body and the city'.

   Therefore, in this remainder of this essay I want draw on a variety of recent research from within and beyond geography on heterosexual identities to explore how a consideration of heterosexuality may be brought to bear on the interpretation of western urban landscapes. In doing so, I particularly want to focus on how particular expressions of heterosexuality are constructed as moral or immoral in particular spatial and temporal contexts, with the boundary between what is considered as 'normal' and what is regarded as 'perverted' being struggled over in a variety of sites (which, importantly, also exist as visual *sights*). However, given the different definitions and theorizations of heterosexuality which are evident in this literature, I want to begin by exploring the nature of heterosexuality, a social construction often rendered invisible by its very ubiquity.

II   Theorizing heterosexuality: performance and (dis)location

While sexuality is widely acknowledged as a basic narrative through which identity is forged (alongside class, age, race, religion, gender and so on), its importance as a marker of identity and difference has proved highly contested and sometimes divisive, a source of often intense debate in geographic and feminist discourse. For example, as noted above, many feminist geographers have traditionally adopted a perspective where questions of sexuality have been subsumed by discussions about how gender roles are produced (and reproduced) through a system of gender relations whereby men and women are designated specific roles which are not necessarily connected to their sexual role. As such, while gender roles are often depicted as being based on acknowledged biological differences (i.e., the idea of women as being responsible for childcare because of their ability to give birth), much feminist writing has sought to argue that this definition of women's role is not *natural*, but socially and culturally constructed in a way that perpetuates women's oppression and subordination (Bondi, 1997). The concept of patriarchy has thus been invoked and reworked by geographers to describe the process whereby masculine values dominate feminine in contemporary

society, with Walby (1990), for example, identifying six spheres in which this dominance is reproduced, including the spheres of work, domestic reproduction, leisure, politics, violence and sexuality. In this sense, many feminist understandings of gender role continue to be based on an implicit understanding that heterosexual relations, in which women's bodies are imagined (and commodified) as the passive objects (receptacles) of male desire, are an integral part of patriarchal processes (Woodward, 1997).

It is the writing of 'second-wave' feminists such as Oakley (1972) and Rubin (1975) on topics such as pornography, sexual exploitation and prostitution that has often been acknowledged as crucial in alerting feminist geographers as to the particular importance of heterosexuality in women's oppression (Bristow, 1997). However, this writing has itself been subject to criticism because of its tendency to present heterosexuality as exempt from the need to change – the implication being that it was patriarchy, not heterosexuality, that was the primary cause of women's social *and* sexual subordination (Richardson, 1996a). In this sense, heterosexual identities were still represented as natural, the product of the anatomically sexed body (whether male or female), while gender identities were seen as signifying the meanings attributed to the sexed body (whether masculine or feminine). This distinction between sex and gender lead to the understanding that male bodies were the basis of masculinity and female bodies the basis of femininity, constructing an established binary heterosexual order 'on which the cultural edifice of gender is built' (Bristow, 1997: 212). Male sexual power thus became depicted as part of the process by which women's gender roles were constructed, with feminine subordination seen as inevitably resulting from sexual subordination.

More recently, however, many feminist geographers have drawn on poststructural theories of difference, including the provocative writings of Irigaray (1977), Rich (1980), Dworkin (1983) and Sedgwick (1993), in an attempt to destabilize this (simplistic) distinction of sex/gender. Challenging the notion of heterosexuality as 'normal', such writing insists that heterosexuality, like patriarchy, is not a natural product of a biological urge to reproduce, but is *socially produced* and maintained. For example, influenced by nascent queer theory, Rich (1980) forcibly argued that the effort which had been devoted by sexologists into 'explaining' homosexuality was misplaced – in her view, it was not homosexuality that needed explaining, but heterosexuality. For Rich, heterosexuality thus constituted a compulsory fiction which perpetuated ideas that women were innately sexually orientated only towards men, a fiction maintained, she argued, through state practices which rewarded heterosexuals while rendering gays and lesbians invisible. Although traditionally explained with reference to biological imperatives, the dominance of heterosexuality was depicted by Rich as the product of its institutionalization in a variety of social practices, rituals and laws in a way that naturalized heterosex and foreclosed other avenues of sexual expression. Both Valentine (1993) and Nast (1998) have therefore invoked Rich's concept of 'compulsory heterosexuality' to capture the sense in which social norms impel all people, not just women, to accept confining and oppressive sexual identities.

Accounts such as Rich's problematize simple, essentialist notions that (hetero)sexuality is simply an innate drive that is expressed (or repressed). Similar ideas, albeit expressed in very different fashion, can also be found in Foucault's controversial plotting of the history of sexuality and corporeality which suggests that terms like homosexuality and heterosexuality have meanings which are contingent on their

historicity and spatiality (see especially Foucault, 1984). As such, Foucault's imagining of modern forms of heterosexuality as representing a diffuse, spatialized network of power sustained through 'practices of the self' has been cited as being important for appreciating how sexuality is regulated through proscription (control) *and* prescription (enticement) – entailing ideas of 'what you shouldn't and what you should' do (Jackson and Scott, 1996). While Foucault's writings on sexuality have rarely been accepted uncritically by feminists – and, indeed, have often been attacked for their 'gender-blindness' (e.g., Diamond and Quinby, 1988; Haraway, 1991; Fraser, 1997) – his work has been acknowledged to have encouraged a more nuanced understanding of the complex and contradictory construction of sexual identities, which have been increasingly seen as being connected to notions of power in its most general and diffuse sense (Giddens, 1992; Jackson and Scott, 1996). Sexuality, from a Foucauldian perspective, thus serves as dense transfer point for the operation of power, yet represents a distinctly productive relation, one that creates resistance in the same moment it exerts force. For some, these ideas began to explain why most women adopt heterosexual identities which also oppress them, with *both* men and women seen as being 'caught up' in modes of self-production and self-surveillance, perpetuating discourses that state how we must experience and enjoy our bodies (Grosz, 1994).

Notions of discursive practice and power have also been central to the work of Judith Butler (1990; 1993), whose stimulating and incisive writings have recently proved extremely influential for those seeking to rethink the connections between sexual and gender identity (e.g., Smart, 1996; Bondi, 1997), as well as geographers seeking to explore the maintenance of spatialized order (e.g., Bell *et al.*, 1994; Valentine, 1996). Focusing on the performitivity and citationality of gender, Butler has sought to interrupt any neat mimetic correspondence between sexuality, biology and corporeality, or, for that matter, insides and outsides (Cream, 1995). Arguing that both sex and gender are regulatory fictions, maintained through repeated and stylized performance, Butler (1990: 115) seeks to *denaturalize* what she refers to as the 'heterosexual matrix' – 'that grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders and desires are naturalized'. In doing so, she stresses that the apparent coherence of heterosex, where the binary structure of gender finds its complement in opposite-sex attraction, is the product of the discursive-chaining of gender to sexuality (Woodward, 1997), a linkage that can be broken, Butler argues, through queer parody of heterosexual performance.

Although not without its critics (e.g., Hood-Williams and Harrison, 1998), Butler's framework has done much to popularize the idea of gender as performative, with the correspondence between the sexed body and gender identity portrayed as a regulatory fiction that is maintained through phallocratic and patriarchal discourse (Cream, 1995). This radical reworking of the sex/gender problematic has resulted in the understanding that the anatomically sexed body is itself socially constructed, and that although sex and gender are inevitably (and empirically) related, they may be analytically distinct (Richardson, 1996b). In geography and elsewhere, the simultaneous importance *and* impossibility of appreciating sex and gender as separate systems has been manifest in attempts to understand how patriarchy and heterosexuality are linked in 'heteropatriarchal' sociosexual power relations which reflect and reproduce male dominance, with heterosexuality broadly identified as 'the apparent fixity of reproductive gender roles whereby mothering and fathering are construed as the only representational modes for sexual activity as well as the ultimate goal of the sexual relation' (Blum and Nast, 1996:

560). Thus, as Valentine (1993) has argued, heterosexuality is 'naturalized' through the definition of 'monogamous procreative sex' (involving penetration by the penis) as the quintessential sex act, a performance that links masculinity to activity and femininity to passivity.

Yet if, as Blum and Nast (1996) note, heterosexuality has succeeded in de-eroticizing the sexual relation precisely because sexuality is subordinated to a 'higher' purpose (i.e., procreation), there are none the less many other forms of heterosex that are imbued with erotic values. Indeed, drawing on the work of Rubin (1989) it might be argued that the anomalies from 'normal, natural, healthy, holy' heterosex of the married, monogamous, reproductive kind are regarded as both erotic (arousing sexual desire) and grotesque (arousing disgust) (cf. Pile, 1996: 176–83). This simultaneous recuperation (commodification) and exclusion (condemnation) of 'scary' sexualities and practices – such as lesbianism, fetishism, homosexuality, prostitution, masturbation, voyeurism and sado-masochism – points to the complex way in which patriarchy and heterosexuality intertwine, as it is often those relations that involve women's sexual gratification independent of procreation that are constructed as the 'worst' forms of sexuality (as opposed to male promiscuity, for example). Furthermore, as Rubin (1989: 14) contends, while 'good' sex acts are imbued with emotional complexity and reciprocity, sex acts 'on the bad side of the line are considered utterly repulsive and devoid of all emotional nuance'.

In this sense, while it is impossible to define sexualities by rigidly classifying the type of sex acts which individuals indulge in, Rubin suggests that the imagining of certain acts as *morally* acceptable or unacceptable is crucial in defining heteronormality (cf. Valentine, 1993: 239). In situating particular acts (and thus individuals) as immoral, and thus on the 'margins' of acceptability, the 'centre' is defined, usually around ideals of family life, the assumption of heterosexual orientation and a related gender identity (i.e., mother and father). Issues of morality are, as Rubin recognizes, never far away when sex is discussed, serving to naturalize the idea that sex must involve a *meaningful* material and emotional exchange based on procreative sexual intercourse, branding those who indulge in different forms of heterosex as immoral and deviant (or 'perverted'). For example, focusing on discourses surrounding HIV/AIDS, Richardson (1996b: 169) talks of 'queer' heterosexuality to distinguish between heterosexual norms of procreative sex and forms of sexual practice which might include promiscuous sex or anal and oral intercourse, with deviant heterosexuality potentially including what are commonly regarded as 'homosexual' acts. Conversely, individuals who fail to conform to heterosexual expectations by remaining celibate or living alone may also be described as possessing 'queer' heterosexual identities, being subject to moral disapproval and condemnation because of their apparent inability to have a sexual relationship (Jeffreys, 1986).

Rubin's sketching of the moral contours of sexuality, while somewhat simplistic in terms of presenting a hierarchy rather than a *continuum* of acceptable and anomalous sexual practices, thus allows us to explore the way that a variety of sexual identities – whether designated as heterosexual or homosexual – are imbued with moral values which encourage and normalize *oedipalization* – the creation of the idealized heterosexual nuclear family (Nast and Wilson, 1996). This interpretation both concurs, and takes issue, with psychoanalytical accounts of sexual development (such as proposed by Freud, Lacan or Klein) which argue, in different ways, that the maintenance of this

nuclear triad depends on the repression of desire for the mother by the male child, who, in time, displaces desire on to a mother substitute (see especially Kirby, 1996; Pile, 1996). Such essentialist accounts may, however, as Butler (1990) has argued, overshadow the variability of symbolic orders across time and space, and, as such, merely constitute another of the scripts through which a complacent phallocentric heterosexuality is normalized – a point obliquely made in Deleuze and Guattari's (1984) *Anti-Oedipus.* Yet the ubiquitous nature of phallogocentric discourse in late capitalist society (Gibson-Graham, 1997: 311) reminds us that sexualities are constituted in relation to a number of different discourses – including those of capital and the phallus.

III   Heterosexual orders and moral geographies

Clearly, then, the relationship between sexuality and other socially constructed markers of identification (such as gender) has been the subject of much debate, with obvious tensions existing between (and *within*) different accounts of the production of sexualities. In the light of such debates, ideas about neatly integrated and stable heterosexual identities seem to fall apart as sexualities become reimagined as the product of complex and fractured performances. None the less, examining the *morality* of heterosexual performance appears to offer a useful point of departure in exploring how heterosexuality is naturalized in (and through) space, with the term 'moral geographies' having emerged in recent years to describe empirical research into those aspects of sociospatial ordering which 'invite a moral reading' (Smith, 1997: 587). Indeed, an increasing body of geographical research has investigated the judgements people make on an everyday basis about what type of peoples, behaviours and embodied practices are acceptable in which settings (e.g., Driver, 1988; Matless, 1994; Ogborn and Philo, 1994; Valentine, 1996; Hughes, 1997). Although there have been few geographic studies which have explicitly focused on sexual morality *per se*, Nast (1998: 192) has focused on the connections between sexuality and nationality to argue that the institutionalization of moral values varies significantly across national boundaries with particular forms of oedipalization being encouraged in different social and spatial contexts according to the imperatives of different state-capitalisms and modes of accumulation. This moral sanctioning of what forms of heterosexual performance are desirable, is, as she notes, normalized through repetition and maintained through various regulatory regimes which are charged with maintaining this performance, with social and legal codes of conduct often disciplining those who transgress moral order (see also Duncan, 1994). This assertion is certainly evident in recent debates surrounding citizenship in the urban west, which have tended to focus on whether particular groups or individuals conform to dominant (and inevitably *national*) constructions of sexual morality with politicians and policy-makers seeking to redefine their civil and welfare rights in the process.

   Sexuality, as Weeks (1995: 4) eloquently argues, may therefore be considered as the magnetic core that lies 'at the heart of the political and cultural agenda', the subject of apparently endless controversies and conflicts. Discussing the parameters of recent social policy debates in the UK, for example, Carabine (1996) highlights the importance of sexuality in defining what is acceptable social behaviour, citing pregnancy, AIDS/HIV, child sex abuse, promiscuity, birth control and pornography as having

particular significance in debates about state policy. More widely, debates about surrogacy, embryology and the age of consent continue to raise key questions about what is 'natural' as western politicians fall back on ideas of biological essentialism to resolve the tension between individual freedoms and collective obligations. The ways these national conflicts between different moralities, ideologies and values are mediated by the press in a lurid and sensationalist manner often lead to 'moral panics'. Although the concept of a moral panic is a disputed one (cf. Rubin, 1989; Goode and Ben-Yehouda, 1994), I am using this term here to refer to those intensely symbolic and periodic battles which *require* individuals to acknowledge and question their own morality. It is arguably in the midst of such moral panics that the normative contours of society are (re)defined:

> In times of social crisis, when centres and peripheries will not hold, collective and individual anxiety and the rise of politics of difference become especially significant . . . When borders are crossed, disturbed or contested, and so become a threat to order, the boundaries around territory, nation, ethnicity, race, gender, sex, class and erotic practice are trotted out and vigorously disciplined. (Hooper, 1992: 55).

Thus, in these period of moral panic, deeply ingrained ideas about sexual morality may be invoked by the press in order reassert the moral order of the state. Frequently, as with the moral panic surround the transmission of HIV/AIDS, this process is based on the discursive deployment of fear as the press plays on popular fears concerning the 'danger' of sexuality cut loose from its traditional moorings in marriage and the family (see Knopp, 1997). As Weeks (1995: 18) contends, these moral panics thus constitute a central part of the history of sexuality, a history which inevitably tells of the institutionalization of a heterosexual norm and the marginalization of the sexually perverse.

The idea that the state requires these periodic moral panics to reassert its right to power reiterates the view that notions of heterosexual morality are central to the production and reproduction of the state (Sennett, 1994). Few geographers, however, have sought to explore how sexually morality is constructed through specific state programmes, structures and legislation designed to confine and repress particular expressions of sexuality (though see Bell, 1995). Sex education, for example, remains an important but undertheorized site of moral pedagogy through which ethical codes are constructed, maintained and contested. On occasion, as with the controversy surrounding teaching about homosexuality in the UK (where Clause 28 forbade the promotion of homosexual values), sex education has become a key battleground where the moral contours of society are staked out and redefined. Quoting from Department of Education guidelines which claim that 'pupils should be helped to appreciate the benefits of stable and family life and the responsibilities of parenthood', Reiss (1995: 379) argues that the institutionalization of monogamous heteronormality as constituting the most healthy and morally wholesome expression of sexuality is clearly evident in the educational resources used for teaching about sexual health issues and reproduction. Within these texts, images of male–female penis–vagina intercourse are used to explain reproductive processes, but rarely accompanied by discussions of sexual pleasures which might derive from other forms of penetrative and nonpenetrative sex. Indeed, images presented rarely deviate from a 'straight' representation of the sexual act in which the woman adopts the subordinate 'missionary' position, and many feminists have drawn attention to the lack of attention given to the female orgasm in sex education materials (Dworkin, 1983).

Yet as the preceding discussion has highlighted, the moral terrain of heterosexuality is not simply shaped by a dominative power of control, but by a more complex spatiality of power, desire and disgust which *encourages* people to adopt (and *perform*) specific oedipalized sexual identities. As Elder (1998) testifies, this process of hetero-sexualization is evident in spaces ranging from the bedroom to the nation, with oedipal relationships made to appear natural on a variety of interdependent scales. Many of these spatial inscriptions are only obvious to those who do not conform to these norms; for example, the constant barrage of images of heteronormativity in glossy magazines, in film and on television, where the smiling, happy nucleated family has been used to sell everything from health care insurance to stock cubes; the sight of the happy male–female couple holding hands and kissing in public (as opposed to the unusual sight of public homosexual affection); the design of heterosexual family housing. No matter where one looks, it seems, one can see oedipalized sociospatial patternings at work (Nast, 1998). However, and following recent work in geography exploring the dynamic construction of difference (Sibley, 1995; Pile, 1996), it is also important to stress that the creation and recreation of heteronormality relies on the construction of spatialized boundaries which distinguish between moral and immoral forms of hetero-sexuality. By this I simply mean that the boundaries between oedipal and nonoedipal sexual identities are drawn through relations of power which are again evident at varied scales. As such, the distinctions between mind–body, self–other, home–abroad, foreign–familiar, moral–immoral may all be drawn in different spaces at different times in order to desexify heterosexuality, rendering it normal, natural, innocent and unre-markable (Bristow, 1997; Nast, 1998).

In the remainder of this essay, however, I wish to consider these ideas by examining how heterosexual identities may be mapped solely at one specific scale – that of the city. This focus is very deliberate, for, as Grosz (1992: 244–45) argues, the city is, above all else, the hyper-real environment that provides the context and co-ordinates for most contemporary western living, supplying the order and organization that automatically links otherwise unrelated sexualized bodies (see also Sennett, 1994). From such a perspective, urban sexual geography – in the sense not just of simple location, but where sexual identities are deemed appropriately to belong – appears as crucial to any understanding of heterosexual relations. As such, I want tentatively to explore how the spatiality of the city reflects and reproduces wider notions of sexual morality, con-tributing to the naturalization of heterosexual norms in the process. To these ends, I have divided the remainder of this article into two sections, one considering how 'immoral' sites serve to denigrate and exclude anomalous or nonnormative heterosex-ual performances and the other discussing how 'moral' spaces work materially and symbolically to reproduce heterosexuality. Of course, the limitations of such a distinction will become immediately apparent, as the meaning of both 'immoral' and 'moral' spaces is always contested, fought over and in a state of becoming, a point I will return to in the conclusion where I attempt to assess the implications of this work for human geography as a whole.

IV   Immoral landscapes: spaces of prostitution, pornography and perversion

In classical sociology, it is has frequently been the city as a whole that has been implicated in a geography of sexual immorality, as opposed to the *gemeinschaft* rurality which ostensibly celebrates sexual conservatism, stability and normality (Hughes, 1997; Watkins, 1997; but see also Bell and Valentine, 1996). Beyond this superficial reading of urban heterosexualities, however, specific sites or districts of the city have often been singled out as centres of sexual immorality and depravity. Indeed, this idea was made explicit in many of the Chicago school's urban ethnographies which explored the characteristic types of social organization which existed in many inner-city areas where the population appeared to subscribe to standards of personal and sexual morality that contrasted with those of more stable and settled residents in the outer city. As such, the identification of certain districts as vice areas became a notable feature of many of the urban models associated with the Chicago sociologists (including Burgess' infamous zonal model) while less celebrated figures such as Reckless (1926) and Reitman (1939) offered thick descriptions of the social and cultural character of the commercial sex industry in these areas. Here, theoretical perspectives derived from human ecology seemed to offer a suitable explanation as to why vice was prevalent in such areas, with the poor environmental conditions of inner-city slum districts depicted as breeding grounds for immorality and criminality of all types. Beyond the pioneering work of this group, however, few geographers made any attempt to examine the geographies of 'deviant' heterosexualities until Symanski's (1981) *The immoral landscape* (but see Armstrong, 1980). Although this volume focused primarily on the geographies of prostitution in the urban west (especially in US cities), it also discussed the location of sex shops, sado-masochist clubs, strip joints and other sites associated with nonnormative, nonprocreative heterosexualities. In seeking to explain the congruence between sites of erotic entertainment and areas of economic marginalization (such as inner-city locations), Symanski rejected simple ecological analysis to argue that, as an activity at variance with the prevailing moral order, erotic entertainment was only found in areas where it was 'tolerated' by the city authorities.

   Although Symanski's work suggested intriguing possibilities for interrogating the geographies of immoral heterosex, his work appeared to generate little enthusiasm amongst geographers for exploring sites associated with the sex industry; while in some quarters it was received with hostility for presenting a distinctly masculine and disembodied reading of these sites (Rubin, 1976). Only more recently, it appears, have geographers (unknowingly) reengaged with Symanski's ideas by exploring how the geography of sex clubs and sex shops mirrors wider notions of morality and social order as they are played out in specific spatial and temporal contexts. For example, in his incisive exploration of the sexual morality of 1950s London, Mort (1998) has demonstrated how measures designed to bring 'deviant' sexual practices into greater visibility relied on a mapping of the capital that transformed the familiar landmarks of Soho and Leicester Square into spaces of desire and disgust. Indeed, this strategy of mapping was part of what Mort (1998: 890) termed a 'classic Foucauldian' exercise of power whereby irregular sexualities were visualized, documented and discursively produced. Nead (1997: 661) has similarly traced the importance of particular sites of the city in shaping the 'moral transactions' between self and space in her description of the obscene displays of Holywell Street, Westminster, a thoroughfare regarded in the nineteenth

century 'as a precarious monument to Elizabethan England and a deserving sacrifice to the modernizing Victorian metropolis'. On a more abstract level, Lange (1997) has offered a historical overview of how social and legal regulation has intersected to shape the moral geography of pornography, noting that the World Wide Web has become a key space in which this form of regulation is expressed, albeit often in a muted form.

One theme that remains largely implicit in such writing, however, is the idea that sites of erotic and obscene display, whether in the city or in the virtual realm of the Internet, are spaces of *confinement* which serve to separate immoral heterosexual subjects from respectable forms of heterosexuality. As such, the notion of social and spatial exclusion appears apposite in exploring the geographies of sexual immorality, with Sibley's (1995) engagement with psychoanalytical theory offering new insights into how the partitioning of social space symbolizes the division between self and 'other' (see also Pile, 1996; Wilton, 1998). According to Sibley, the spatial exclusion of the disordered 'other', maintained through boundary erection, is a logical outcome of the deep-seated urge to purify the self, and a fundamental means of controlling those who do not conform to dominant norms and practices. Here Sibley draws on Kristeva's notion of the abject to suggest that preoedipal separation anxieties over the loss of the maternal impel individuals to maintain the integrity of the body and the self by expelling defiling and polluting matter. Abjection thus marks the boundary between pure and polluted, and Sibley consequently suggests that urges to prevent boundary violation and the defilement of self inevitably feed on stereotypical images of repulsion which become mapped on to particular social groups through moral and aesthetic discourse. The potential for abjection is thus present when spatial, as well as social orders, are called into question; anxiety to maintain purity of self is heightened when people or actions are deemed 'out of place'. Furthermore, as Sibley has demonstrated, this spatialization of difference is represented not only in the discursive realm, but also in the *visual*. For example, that 'othering' frequently rests on 'obscene' corporal images suggests that the body acts as a major signifier in the social imagination beyond sites where 'otherness' is encountered.

In many senses, Sibley's work provides a useful signpost for exploring the geography of immoral heterosex, implying that the marginal location of sex shops, clubs and bars is indicative of the anxiety which the presence of such facilities provokes amongst many urban dwellers. As Knopp (1997) argues, albeit in the context of homosexuality, discourses surrounding anomalous sexualities often create and exploit deeply held fears of the places where these sexual behaviours are imagined primarily to occur, constructing a 'nefarious geography' of massage parlours, sex dungeons and peep shows. Seen to disturb the social order of specific communities, these facilities tend to be distanced from the wealthier, whiter and more politically articulate residential neighbourhoods and clustered in less affluent areas where, over time, their proximity may provoke a reconceptualization of the abject (which is no longer distanced or excluded). As Lederer (1980) demonstrates, attempts to exclude erotic businesses from certain areas may involve unlikely alliances, as when radical feminist groups campaigned with Christian fundamentalist groups to remove sex shops from San Francisco's pornography district. A more recent example of how the presence of heterosexual immorality may provoke exclusionary actions can be found in New York where Mayor Giuliani has sought to eliminate commercial sex establishments and businesses from Manhattan, especially Times Square (where the Disney Corporation's efforts to reinvent

the area as a site of 'family' entertainment was seen as incompatible with its existing status as a site of 'adult' entertainment). At Giuliani's request, New York City Council approved amendments to their Zoning Resolution in October 1995 designed to 'guide the future use of the City's land by encouraging the development of desirable residential, commercial and manufacturing areas with appropriate groupings of compatible and related uses and thus to promote and to protect public health, safety and general welfare' (cited in *The New York Times*, 23 February 1998). In effect, this resolution will mean that legal sex businesses will be forced to close. The new law defines an 'adult establishment' as any business which has a 'substantial portion of its stock-in-trade' in 'materials which are characterized by an emphasis upon the depiction or description of specified sexual activities or specified anatomical areas'. In this instance, such establishments are characterized as 'objectionable nonconforming uses which are detrimental to the character of the districts in which [they] are located'. Specifically dictating that adult establishments should 'be located at least 500 feet from a church, a school [or] a Residence District', this law stands as a remarkable attempt by legislators to reaffirm sociospatial order by seeking to maintain distance between 'obscene' (non-normative) and moral expressions of heterosexuality (*The New York Times*, 23 February 1998).

As yet, geographers have largely failed to explore the potential of combining social and psychoanalytical theories to examine such immoral, exclusionary heterosexual landscapes, although Sommers (1998: 289) has recently sought to conceptualize Vancouver's skid-row as a space of abjection where the figure of the derelict symbolizes masculine failure and the deteriorating landscape casts a grim shadow over the ideal of 'professional, suburban-dwelling family man'. Although making no reference to heterosexuality *per se*, his analysis does begin to suggest how those men who are not in monogamous, procreative heterosexual relations mark out the edge of a danger zone between immoral and respectable identities, defining norms of heterosexual order in the process. Lukinbeal and Aitken (1998) touch on similar issues of masculine, hetero-sexual identities in their psychoanalytical account of the films *My own private Idaho* and *Drugstore cowboy*, films that allude to the way that 'injured' or failed masculine hetero-sexuality can be healed through travel (see also Nast, 1998: 198). When men are rejected sexually, it seems, they may seek to reinscribe their masculine heterosexuality by adopting a romantic notion of the free-spirit 'on the road', escaping what appear as the shackles of idealised family life – a notion developed in Cresswell's (1993) distinctive-ly geographical reading of Keruoac's *On the road*. On a more prosaic level, Jackson *et al.* (1999) have begun to draw out the complex ambiguities of masculine sexual identity by showing how some men draw on lifestyle magazines (particularly the controversial *Loaded*) to seek legitimation for an attitude that equates masculinity with 'sexual prowess' and strips heterosexuality of emotional nuance. The consumption of such magazines is of course complex, and Jackson *et al.* question the distinction between these magazines and pornography when they reveal how many men are embarrassed to be seen buying them; like the kerb-crawler who buys sex, or men who seek gratifi-cation in pornography, it seems that the consumption of 'titillating' literature is viewed as an immoral but 'natural' form of compensation for masculine sexual failure (but see Hardy, 1998, on the alternative morality of pornography within long-term heterosexual relationships).

However, as Bell and Valentine (1995) acknowledge, geographic writing on illicit

heterosexualities in the urban west has largely focused the spatial distribution of *female* sex work and the consequences of spatial confinement for women employed in the sex industry. Recognized as a central figure in the social and sexual imagination, the prostitute has always played an important symbolic role in the definition of moral standards and, by 'choosing' to sell sexual services outside the ordered institutions of the family and the home, has come to represent a threat to heterosexual norms. Pile (1996: 180) thus describes the female body of the street prostitute as representing 'an intensifying grid' conveying 'ambivalent male desires and fears', highlighting the widespread (male) fascination with those women who reject monogamous heterosexuality in favour of an ephemeral, fugitive and contingent sexuality commonly regarded as the prerogative of the (flâneurial) male (see also Nord, 1992; Howell, 1998). In the nineteenth-century city, for example, the male flâneur's seeming mastery of the city's lesser streets and thoroughfares found its parallel in the resourcefulness of the female street-walker who, for commentators like Baudelaire at least, was emblematic of a woman in revolt against polite society (Benjamin, 1973). Pile (1996) thus suggests that both flâneur and prostitute constituted marginal figures by being essentially 'out of place' in a society where the bourgeois home was supposed to act as a container of female sexuality and the streets bore the imprint of a modern moral order. As such, Walkowitz (1992) has argued that the street prostitute potentially bought the bourgeois suburban population in contact with the slums, and became symbolic of the threats of urban living, metaphorically allied with refuse, crime, drunkenness and diseases like typhus and cholera.

The transgression of the prostitute into the spaces of polite society, then as now, thus prompts sometimes oppressive and punitive forms of legislation designed to keep this performance of immoral sexuality 'in its place' (Hubbard, 1997). Over time, different regulatory frameworks (for example, forms of corporal discipline) have been employed to maintain the distinction between notions of 'respectable' feminine sexuality and the illicit sexuality sold by the prostitute, and there is now a sizeable literature exploring how this has impacted on patterns of sex work in a variety of contexts (Shumsky and Springer, 1981; Ashworth *et al.*, 1988; Larsen, 1992; Benson and Matthews, 1995; Hart, 1995; Hubbard, 1999; Brewis and Linstead, 2000). According to Duncan (1996: 140), in some places these regulatory frameworks serve to hide prostitutes from public view and thus privatize many of the 'aesthetically and morally offensive physical, psychological and medical and social problems' surrounding prostitution; in others 'they force prostitutes onto the street where they can be subject to the surveillance and segregating practices of the police' (as well as violence from punters). In postwar Britain, for example, vice squads have principally aimed to control sex work so that it does not interfere with 'the right of the normal, decent citizen to go about the streets without affront to their sense of decency' (Wolfenden Report, 1957), and the isolation and confinement of prostitutes in the 'dark' and dangerous spaces of British inner cities appear a potent means by which the authorities seek to distance disorderly, dangerous prostitution from sites of moral sexual expression. As I have argued elsewhere (Hubbard, 1998), the material and metaphorical placement of prostitutes in this liminal landscape of danger and display has served to cement the association between heterosexual immorality and violence, with the social marginalization of prostitutes, not only in moral discourse, but also geographically in 'streets of shame', representing an important symbolic and rhetorical means for isolating urban

problems in the midst of an otherwise (heterosexually) ordered city (see also Nord, 1992).

Again, ideas of abjection based on the desire to maintain the boundaries of self begin to suggest why the regulation and control of prostitution are fundamental to the construction of heterosexuality. Kirby (1996), for instance, contends that heterosexuality is centred on an ambivalent structure of male fears and fantasies, with public women (like prostitutes) who adopt a predatory sexual role being incorporated into circuits of sexual desire, depicted as simultaneously grotesque (other) and erotic (a figure of masculine libidinal desire). However, to suggest that the regulation of female prostitution is simply enacted by heterosexual men in the interests of other heterosexual men glosses over the way heterosexuality is constructed and negotiated in different contexts according to local geometries of power. For example, examining aggressive community protests against street prostitution in a number of British 'red-light' districts, notably Balsall Heath (Birmingham, England), I began to question how notions of heterosexual morality intersect with understandings of appropriate gender, age and (particularly) racial identity (Hubbard, 1998). In the case of Balsall Heath, community protesters took to the streets in an attempt to displace street prostitutes and kerb-crawlers from 'their' neighbourhood, adopting aggressive picketing tactics designed to disrupt sex workers and their clients, and although the local press initially referred to the protesters as 'vigilantes', gradual police recognition of these protests resulted in their redesignation as an official Street Watch campaign. The composition of this group was in many senses remarkable, as although the majority of protesters were males from the local south Asian community, for whom prostitution represented a challenge to the tenets of ascetic Islamic morality, there were also large numbers of local women from other ethnic backgrounds who articulated a similar sense of anxiety about the presence of sexual immorality on 'their' streets (Hubbard, 1998). As such, these exclusionary actions targeted both female prostitutes and their male clients, with both being subject to forms of intimidation including psychological and physical violence. As in Namaste's (1996) geographical interpretation of 'genderbashing', this example suggests that perceived transgressions of acceptable heterosexual performance are capable of provoking often extreme measures designed to reassert sexual and spatial order.

While attempts by residential groups to redefine the moral geography of the city have prompted some prostitutes to move to other districts (or even other towns), geographical research has generally highlighted how the confinement of prostitutes in marginal sites has impacted negatively on their health and safety (Hubbard, 1997; Speights-Binet, 1998). Simultaneously, however, geographical interpretations of sites of sex work have also hinted at their ability to act as a base from which notions of heteronormality may be resisted and challenged (Hart, 1995; Brewis and Linstead, 2000). The work of Law (1997), in particular, has emphasized that spaces associated with prostitution are sites where different sexual moralities are negotiated and constructed as both clients and prostitutes seek to locate their oppositional roles through intersections of power and difference. Far from being spaces of male mastery and domination where women's bodies are commodified and consumed, sites of commercial sex work may be spaces where prostitutes resist the voyeuristic gaze through performances that undermine any scripting of heterosexuality around notions of masculine power and feminine lack. In making this point, Law refers to Butler's notion of heterosexual performativity to stress that, while they may be deeply aware of their status as objects of male desire, many

prostitutes emphasize their 'femininity' through performance to problematize easy understandings of their immoral status. Thus, while prostitutes and other heterosexual deviants have historically been denigrated and confined, it also needs to be noted these groups are always capable of exceeding their sociospatial confinements to undermine the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence (see also Nast and Pile, 1998). Here then there are important and obvious connections to be forged with writing on the performance of 'queer' identities (e.g., Bell *et al.*, 1994; Lewis and Pile, 1996; Johnston, 1997) which has collectively argued that dissident sexual identities (like the 'gay skinhead' and the 'lipstick lesbian') may successfully parody and oppose the hetero-sexual construction and coding of space.

V   Moral landscapes: playing happy families

Compared with the literature on geographies of nonnormative heterosexualities, there is currently a dearth of writing on the spatial articulation of 'moral' heterosexuality, the principal exceptions being in discussions of workplaces and housing, respectively. Beyond this, however, there appears to be little overt consideration of how moral het-erosexual performances are naturalized in a variety of 'everyday' social settings, either 'public' or 'private'. In some respects, this omission is unsurprising; as the ubiquity and taken-for-granted nature of heterosexuality means that, for the majority of researchers, it is difficult to identify how specific sites like schools, churches, supermarkets, parks, beaches (and so on) act as settings for heteronormal performance, heterosexualizing male and female bodies in the process. Indeed, it is the work of 'queer' theorists that has done most to expose the heteronormality of these settings by stressing how gay and lesbian identities are constrained in public spaces where heterosexuality is naturalized and inscribed through repeated performance (Valentine, 1993). Most heterosexual geographers, it appears, live largely in ignorance of how sociospatial practices encourage them to adopt oedipal identities and bodies. Of course, this is not to condemn such geographers for their lack of interest in heteronormality; rather it seems to indicate the difficulty which all heteronormal populations have when considering their own lives, which they see as 'de-sexed' (see also Johnston, 1997). From this mainstream perspective, sexuality is something that is seen to impact on people other than heteronormal – they are the deviations that need explaining – with 'normal' het-erosexuality seeming unworthy of investigation. As such, parallels may be drawn between the study of normative heterosexuality and the study of ethnic identities, where white geographers have singularly failed to subject 'whiteness' to historical or geographical scrutiny (Bonnett, 1997).

   None the less, the importance of heterosexuality has not escaped the notice of some recent geographical commentaries which have noted that urban spaces are imbued with moral values that encourage and naturalize heteronormitivity. Indeed, although many geographic readings of the city interpret the spaces of the office, the pub and the factory as masculine and shops, schools and suburbs as feminine (with Doel and Clarke, 1998: 14, arguing the 'still waters' of everyday suburban life are feminized through a gendered code of sexual passivity and lack that contrasts with sites of 'phallic stability and sexual power'), this analysis is being subject to sustained critique by a number of theorists intent on demonstrating how heterosexual identities are played out

in spaces traditionally conceptualized as either 'male' or 'female'. For example, Lebrun (1998) considers how behaviour in bars involves both men and women submitting to dominant (aggressive/passive) heterosexual roles, while Hall (1989) adapts insights from queer theory to contend that office spaces are one of the key sites where hetero-sexual bodies are made intelligible through performances and rituals which range from encounters over the office photocopier to the dreaded Christmas party. Writing from the perspective of a lesbian woman, Hall is able to expose the way these rituals are played out in a way that anticipates and celebrates heteronormality, a point also stressed in Dellinger and Williams' (1997) analysis of appearance rules in workplaces, where forms of clothing, make-up, hair and bodily adornment serve to heterosexualize male and female bodies (see also McDowell, 1995). While Epstien (1996) suggests that workspaces are also sites where predatory masculine sexuality is 'accepted' in the form of flirting, innuendo and sexual harassment, this is of course subject to forms of regulation, with most employees tied to terms of employment that make clear the consequences of 'lewd' actions. Massey's (1996) reading of how hi-tech industries thrive on particular notions of masculine competition offers another take on how heterosexuality serves to oppress; in this case, it is the male 'breadwinners' who set out to prove their masculinity through a Protestant work ethic that they perceive as compensating for the lack of emotional effort they expend in sustaining relations with their heterosexual partners (see also Seidler, 1995: 188).

However, it is within the literature on housing that perhaps the most far-reaching consideration of geographies of heterosexuality is to be found. As Sophie Watson (1986: 9–11) has noted, housing in the urban west has traditionally been financed and allocated around assumptions that the 'normal' household consists of the nuclear family unit, and those who do not conform to an ideal of family life find themselves marginalized in both public and private housing markets. While Somerville (1994: 334) has subsequently argued that the definition of the nuclear family is one that extends to include households consisting of one-parent families and same-sex parent families, other analyses have suggested that this notion of nuclearity is one that is based on a specific set of intergenerational, gender and heterosexual relations (Bell, 1992; Johnston and Valentine, 1995; Gibson-Graham, 1997; Elder, 1998). Sedgwick (1993: 8), for example, writes of the home as a site where family, surname, a legal entity, economic and cultural consumption, parenting, the sexual dyad and a building are supposed to 'line up perfectly'. Similarly, Bondi (1998) contends that the dominant notion of the family household implicit in housing provision incorporates an implied domestic role for the female parent and a public role for the male parent (roles that clearly conform with heterosexual assumptions of male sexual dominance and female passivity). As such, although the heterosexual nuclear family unit is far from numerically dominant (now constituting a minority in most of the urban west), the idea that it *is* the dominant form continues to encourage oedipalization, suggesting that we should all aspire to emotionally and materially fulfilling heterosexual roles as mothers or fathers at some time in our lives (Rubin, 1989). Suburban spaces in particular are often seen as instru-mental in the oedipal process, disciplining men and women into the practices of the idealized nuclear family and body politics (Ross, 1997), with Somerville and Knowles (1992: 43) noting a strong statistical association between two-parent nuclear family household types and owner-occupation (an association that can be only partly explained in terms of class and income).

The complex relationship between heterosexuality, family and housing has also been explored in Nast and Wilson's (1996) deconstruction of housing projects in Kentucky. Reading these residential landscapes through the work of Lefebvre and Lacan, they vividly show how heterosexuality is promoted through suburban building codes, development regulations and aesthetic frameworks enacted through the 'paternal law of the state' and maintained through state surveillance. Even in a housing project designed primarily for single mothers, they show that women are moved from housing unit to housing unit on the basis of their (and their children's) reproductive status, a policy designed to maintain the illusion of heterosexual moral order even when the idealized nuclear family no longer remains the dominant household type. Hence, while Giddens (1992) has contended the late modern era is characterized by forms of sexuality uncoupled from any intrinsic relationship with biological reproduction (what he refers to as *plastic sexuality*), research by geographers has begun to interrogate how the *domestication* of heterosexuality continues to be encouraged by a range of state policies from housing allocation and social security to income tax and family law. In this sense, although the widespread availability of contraception and divorce has been heralded as marking the advent of sexual freedom (with Duncan, 1996, stressing that it is now socially acceptable for women and men to express their sexuality outside the traditional constraints of wedlock) notions of sexual citizenship still appear to be based around an idealized heterosexual exchange of material, physical and emotional values centred on the formation, maintenance and (inevitable) dissolution of domestic relationships.

Discussions of housing allocation, access and design around heterosexual norms therefore raise interesting questions about rights and obligations in relation to sexuality. While Susan Smith (1989) reminds us that forms of citizenship may be institutionalized and imagined very differently across national boundaries, a widely noted trend has been for national citizenships in the urban west to be based around socially constructed visions of liberty and equality which reinforce heterosexual identities (Van Every, 1993; Weeks, 1995; Nast, 1998). Smith (1989: 151) refers specifically to the example of Australia, contending that its notions of citizenship have been constructed based on notions of 'mateship' and 'fraternity' which are simultaneously racialized, gendered and sexualized. This, she argues, results in rights of citizenship for Australians which are not liberatory but instead represent an institutionalization of sexual, gender and racial inequality. Here Smith draws on the theories of sexual and social contract developed by Carole Patemen which suggest that civil society is, in effect, a patriarchal construction that serves to limit women's participation and rights in the public sphere. For Pateman (1989: 20), the idea that the 'social state of nature' is inhabited not by isolated individuals but 'families' appears to be particularly important in determining the importance of the family as the 'natural' basis of civil life. Consequently, she asserts that the historic development of civic society has revolved around specific associations between private space, sexuality and 'love' and, invoking contractual and democratic theories of the state, suggests that individuals are only able to leave this space and enter a public space of rights, property ownership and citizenship if their interests are subordinate to the wider interests of the state. As such, it appears that civil society can be conceptualized as a heterosexual (as well as patriarchal) construction in that it serves to make entry into the public realm very difficult for those whose sexual lives are judged immoral. For example, both Evans (1993) and Bell (1995) note that both men and women who do not conform to dominant sexual standards and expectations are

effectively invisible to the state in respect of entitlements (but not in terms of obligations), while, conversely, good sexual citizens are 'rewarded' in terms of medical, welfare and housing provision.

But while the home remains a key site where heterosexuality is naturalized (and de-eroticized) through its association with the family, the meaning of 'family' has been the subject of numerous political debates as different groups struggle to redefine the boundaries of sexual citizenship. In both Britain and the USA, practices such as genetic engineering, surrogacy and child adoption by nonheterosexual couples have been condemned by those arguing for the 'naturalness' of the nuclear family, with Van Every (1993: 67) suggesting that the family assumed by western social policy consists of a heterosexual, married couple with their own naturally-conceived 'genetic' children. Recent moral panics over donor insemination to 'virgins' exposed this belief as politicians and press alike sought to question why a women seemingly unwilling to have a sexual relationship should make a fit mother (Woodward, 1997). In a similar vein, lesbians, gays, errant fathers and divorcees have been variously depicted as enemies of the family in recent debates on morality and social policy (see Smart and Neale, 1997), with single-parent families being particularly prone to forms of moral censure (Bland, 1995; Blaikie, 1996). Clearly, lone parents constitute a varied and diverse social group, yet contemporary cultural debate has primarily focused on the figure of the 'benefit-claiming' single mother, a paradigmatic figure in the political rhetoric concerning the future of the welfare system. For example, Michael Howard's speech on benefit laws at the 1993 Conservative Party conference argued that lone parents were 'proving an unacceptable burden on the welfare system', simultaneously questioning their commitment to bringing up their children as 'well-adjusted citizens' (*Guardian*, 6 October 1993). In the same week, this message was reinforced by Conservative Secretary of State for Social Security, who similarly argued that 'young girls' were 'making themselves pregnant' to jump ahead of 'more deserving' young families (*Guardian*, 9 October 1993). Perhaps surprisingly, this discursive identification of lone mothers as a problem group has survived the political transition to 'New Labour', with the publication of a green paper on *The future of the family* reiterating that 'marriage is the best way for two people to bring up their children' (*The Independent*, 5 November 1998).

Therefore, while it is important to stress that the identities of lone parents are created through a series of complex and contradictory discourses and metaphors which draw on varied notions of race, gender, age and class, issues of sexuality seem to be central in the construction of this group as a moral threat. Like the prostitute, the single mother, in 'choosing' to bring up a child without the support of a heterosexual partner, far from being heralded as independent and resourceful, is often depicted as culpable, irresponsible and sexually unruly. As a result, lone mothers are frequently (and controversially) described as part of the so-called underclass, a faction of society permanently excluded from the job market and caught in a 'cycle of deprivation' characterized by long-term joblessness, rampant street crime, low educational attainment and high welfare dependency (Smart and Neale, 1997). This drawing of boundaries between the deserving and undeserving poor echoes nineteenth-century discourses of the poor, using the language of choice and individual responsibility to construct single motherhood as a personal choice and a moral aberration (Woodward, 1997). According to Winchester (1990: 82), who has contrasted geographies of lone motherhood in Australia and Britain, this demonization of lone mothers by the state represents a clear

demonstration of the ideological support given to the idealization of domesticized heterosexuality. State laws, including the British Family Law Act 1996, Australian stamp Acts and the US Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (1996), serve to discriminate against lone parents (as well as childless couples in some contexts) by granting forms of tax relief, allowances and pensions to heterosexual families that are denied to nonnuclear households. Thus, while lone parenthood is not illegal, Winchester stresses that the legal structures of society embody the ideology of the nuclear family with a male breadwinner and a female (formally unpaid or underpaid) carer. One consequence of this, Winchester suggests, is that lone parents are characterized by high levels of poverty and typically concentrated in the public housing sector (see also Bradshaw *et al.*, 1996; Edwards and Duncan, 1997).

While in the USA right-wing politicians and Christian organizations have thus often identified the source of threats to family life as residing in the 'welfare-dependent black ghetto' (Gallaher, 1997; McCarthy *et al.*, 1997), in contemporary British political and social discourse, single motherhood has become primarily associated with 'no-go estates', predominantly white areas of council housing which have become demonized through sensationalist media reporting of endemic violence, crime and drug-abuse predominantly associated with 'unemployable' young men (Haylett, 1996). The female counterpart of the unemployable (and unmarriageable) male youth in such environments is the young single mother, who, for many, symbolizes the breakdown of traditional social structures in such areas. Significantly, the growing financial exclusion of such areas, associated with their decoupling from the labour market, further reinforces notions that these areas are welfare-dependent, with the idea that lone parents are bringing their children up in a stigmatized area further symbolizing their sexual immorality (i.e.,that they had sex without any notion of raising children in 'stable' family surroundings). For example, recent headlines have identified Knowsley, a deprived outer suburb of Liverpool, as 'Single Mother City', with typically sensational rhetoric describing the descent of the area from that of a 'peaceful, rural place with solid values' to 'a place with no moral compass where girls expect the state to provide their children with designer clothing' (*Daily Mail*, 11 July 1998). In this way, a spatiality of desire and disgust binds imaginings of lone motherhood with areas that are culturally denigrated, while idealized heterosex remains associated with suburban sites of stability, solidity and desirability.

This process, where sexual and moral order is transposed on to the landscapes of the city, thus appears central in fuelling anxieties about heterosexual difference and perpetuating ideas about appropriate sexual performance. This process is, of course, much more complex than this superficial reading implies, and recent feminist research has rightly sought to deconstruct the idealized heterosexual spaces of suburbia. For example, the home has been frequently critiqued as a site where women's subjugation to the feminine career is secured, tying them to housework, child-rearing and a submissive heterosexual role (see Watson, 1986; Dyck, 1990; Domosh, 1998). Moreover, as Hartley (1996: 153) points out, suburbia is also a site of sexual perversity, domestic violence and incest, and work by geographers on child sex abuse, nonconsensual sexual activity and sexual violence has begun to show that the private space of the home can be a space where aggressive forms of misogynous masculinity are performed with impunity (Pain, 1991; Cream, 1993; Boyer, 1996; Duncan, 1996). Hence, at the same time it is idealized, the proscription of the heterosexual family as 'normal, natural, healthy

and holy' obscures the way that heteronormality forecloses other avenues of sexual expression, potentially trapping women in unfulfilling or violent relationships. Yet, as Cream (1993) reminds us, the strictures of domesticated heterosexuality can also weigh heavily on men, with the scripting of male heterosexual identities around domestic routines of fatherhood and parenthood sometimes resulting in crises of self-control (which, as Collier's, 1997, controversial interpretation of the Dunblane massacre suggests, may take violent forms). In a fascinating account of the relations of masculinity and heterosexuality, Seidler (1995) provides a clear elucidation of these ideas by showing how men grow up imagining sexuality in terms of conquest, consequently ignoring their own emotional needs and failing to explore themselves sexually. He suggests that, because of this, heterosexually identified men often feel that sex is somehow owed to them, and tend to separate the sexual act from contact and intimacy. As such, Seidler describes how injuries of all kinds – psychic, emotional, physical – are done to men and women when they feel they are in a sexual relationship because it is expected of them. By 'closing off' different avenues for inner desire to be outwardly expressed, it seems that normative heterosexuality anticipates the roles which men and women should play in their relationships and creates a dangerous silence around how people might learn to negotiate more equal forms of heterosexuality.

VI   Conclusion

This essay has attempted to unravel contemporary debates over the relations of sexuality and space by demonstrating that the sexualized identity of space is not simply the result of a struggle between dominant, rigid heterosexuality and alternative homosexual identities. Instead, drawing on ideas concerning the morality of sexualized identity and the maintenance of oedipal order, it has been proposed that different heterosexual performances occur within different contexts of moral regulation, permission and encouragement. As such, the city organizes and 'naturalizes' heterosexuality in so much as it divides and confines sexual identities across public and private spaces, defining the locations appropriate for specific sexual performances. Exploring how the boundaries between moral and immoral heterosexual identities are created, sustained and challenged in specific urban spaces therefore appears to offer one route into interrogating the geography of heterosexuality but, as this overview has suggested, this is only a beginning. Indeed, notions of public and private morality may collide and intertwine in urban space in often unpredictable and unforeseen ways; the spaces often imagined as 'moral' frequently acting as spaces of confinement which foreclose avenues of heterosexual expression, while 'immoral' sites are often characterized by sexual performances that may be, in their own way, imbued with as much emotional complexity, resonance and romance than is the case in monogamous, procreative relationships (see also Weeks, 1995).

   As I have attempted to highlight here, there are a number of geographers whose work on sexuality and/or morality is therefore beginning (belatedly) to clarify the importance of heterosexuality in maintaining and reproducing geographical order, particularly in their attempts to elucidate the importance of domestic space in maintaining the 'family values' which lie at the heart of heteronormality. Against this, however, it should be stressed that many attempts to study the nature of sociospatial relations in

the late modern era have paid insufficient attention to the way heterosexuality intertwines with other markers of identity, such as class, gender, race, age and so on. In this respect, it is important to note that many of the paradigmatic figures discussed in the geographic literature – the prostitute, the pornographer, the lone mother, the errant father, the good wife, the lad – are not simply scripted in terms of sexuality, but also in terms of gender, race, class and age. To understand how oedipalization occurs, it therefore seems necessary to decouple (and subsequently reattach) notions of how heterosexuality serves to confine and oppress from a consideration of the dynamics of patriarchy, racism, capitalism and ageism. Of course, this distinction relies on a problematic deconstruction of sexuality and other forms of power relation, yet without this, as Holland and Adkins (1996: 1) argue, doing (sexual performances) will always be subsumed by questions of being (the way people are labelled with a sexual identity) in debates surrounding sexualities. This final point stresses that the fragmented geography of heterosexuality, in terms of what it means to be a sexed subject in different spaces, needs much more careful scrutiny by geographers, necessitating an appreciation of how different sites stimulate our senses and emotions, evoking notions of desire and disgust in contradictory, and sometimes unsettling, ways.

Acknowledgements

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