Unsexy Geographies: Heterosexuality, Respectability and the Travellers' Aid Society

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Abstract

Hegemonic sexualities are often allowed to remain in obscurity. Geographical and historical research on sexualities, preoccupied with overtly sexualised minorities, has much to gain intellectually and politically from interrogating the hidden and apparently benign sexualities of the moral centre: people and places constructed as normal. This paper examines the work of the Travellers' Aid Society, an organisation established in London in 1885 to assist girls and women to travel respectably and chastely on trains and ships in Britain and the British Empire. Interrogating the 'unsexy spaces' that were marked out and monitored in travellers' aid work, this case study illustrates how it was (and is) not just in frank or dramatic moments of sexual expression or transgression that power is transferred, constructed, expressed and contested through sexuality; these things also happen in mundane moments of conformity and continuity.

Warning – Young women on landing are most earnestly warned not to accept offers of help from men or women who are unknown to them, and not to go to any address given to them by strangers. Such persons are often the agents of evilly disposed people, whose object it is to entice young girls to their ruin. Young women landing at any of the places named below and having no friends to meet them, are begged to go at once to the address given on the paper, where they will find a lady ready to give them all the information and help they require. (Notice to female passengers on ships to and from English ports in 1886.)[2]

Women and girls travelling on passenger ships and trains in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries were warned, in notices and handbills posted and distributed on board and at ports and stations, about sexual dangers and how to avoid them. The Travellers' Aid Society, an organisation established in London in 1885, followed up its warnings with assistance to female travellers.[3] Its representatives met girls and women at transport interchanges and arranged their respectable and safe passage and temporary accommodation. Protecting female travellers from heterosexual dangers or, depending upon one's point of view, opportunities, the Society at once attended to, implicitly normalised and erased their sexualities. Its work among individuals also served a broader social purpose, reproducing hegemonic constructions of morality and sexuality.

Despite their obvious significance, hegemonic sexualities are often allowed to remain in obscurity. Historical and particularly geographical research on sexualities has much more to say about the margins than the centres of sexual life. Michel Foucault's analysis of sexuality as an historical construct and 'an especially dense transfer point for relations of power' (Foucault 1978, p. 103) has inspired many valuable studies of power over sexualised groups of people in marginalized and/or subordinate social and geographical positions – notably female prostitutes, gay men and lesbians, colonial subjects. Meanwhile, there has been much less scrutiny of those who occupy the moral and sexual centre ground: people who quietly conform to the unwritten, commonly heteronormative rules of the time and place in which they find themselves. As Kirsten McKenzie has shown through her work on colonial gossip and scandal, the obsession with deviance was (and is)

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[2] TAS Annual Report 1886, 7, 4/TAS.

3 TAS records – including minutes of the General and Executive Committees, Annual Reports, and Reports on Station Work (1920s-40s), are held at the Women's Library in London. Unless otherwise stated, archival sources referred to in this document are held at the Women's Library.

ultimately concerned with the construction and regulation of boundaries of sexual and moral normality, and with the hegemony of the generally implicit 'moral centre of civilised society' (2004, p. 105). Scrutinising embodied moralities and sexualities, social practices such as gossip (about who may have transgressed conventions of respectability) and travellers' aid work (to 'protect' others from doing the same) have defined and defended the moral centre.

Exploring the moral centre ground, this paper makes a distinctively geographical intervention in debates about sexuality and power. It begins with a critique of geographical research on sexualities, arguing that a disproportionate amount of attention has been paid to the social and spatial margins of sexual life, effectively letting the centre off the hook. It goes on to develop a case study in the 'unsexy spaces' of the moral centre ground, through the work of the Travellers' Aid Society (hereafter TAS).

Sexy and unsexy spaces

Commenting on the state of the art of geographical research on sexualities in the mid-1990s, David Bell and Gill Valentine observed that 'A big absence from geographies of sexualities is, ironically, the dominant sexuality within contemporary sexualities – heterosexuality' (Bell and Valentine 1995, p. 12). But their own influential edited volume on the subject did not quite fulfil the promise of its inclusive subtitle: *Geographies of Sexualities. Mapping Desire* was concerned less with sexualities than sexuality in the singular: homosexuality. Twelve out of eighteen chapters in the book were about gay men and/or lesbians. Research published in *Mapping Desire* and in this field more generally, heavily influenced by Manuel Castells' (1983) work on gay men in San Francisco, privileged a particular – homosexual, generally male, urban, western – sexual subject. There have been some good academic and political reasons for paying so much attention to these figures: urban gay men are key figures in sexuality politics, significant beyond their numbers. But those who inhabit and define themselves through gay-identified urban areas are but a minority – what Peter Jackson (1989: 128) has called 'the most politicised and vocal fraction' – of a minority. Becoming so preoccupied with gay men in western cities, research in the field has generated a doubly limited picture of sexual geographies. The other main point of departure for and ongoing thread of geographical research on sexualities, which builds on the work of Judith Walkowitz (1980), is concerned with urban and historical geographies of female prostitution. Like research on geographies of gay men, this work is insightful with respect to relationships between sexuality and power, but limited in terms of the sexual experiences identities and relationships it actually describes, since prostitution is at most a peripheral form of sex. Boundary figures

such as gay men and female prostitutes both speak of the moral centre, but they do so indirectly, leaving the centre ground uncharted.

Bell and Valentine's observation echoed Julia Cream's call for researchers interested in sexuality and space to move beyond their initial concentration upon specific groups of male homosexuals and female prostitutes, to consider the often hidden sexualisation of a wider range of geographies:

> We need to know how space is produced as uncontaminated, and shorn of its associations with sexuality. Sexuality is so often hidden away in the upstairs of homes, behind closed doors, or in the upper reaches of the disciplinary house. We need to expose the ways in which it has been excluded, obscured and rendered irrelevant. (Cream 1994, p. 122)

This means interrogating the reciprocal construction of sexualities, *including those constructed as normal*, and a wide range of material and metaphorical geographies.

Progress has since been made in this area (see Hubbard 2000). Research on sexuality and space is broader than it once was. Linda McDowell's work on heterosexual performance and straight male power in City of London financial offices, which presented the only sustained attention to heterosexuality in *Mapping Desire*, has been the springboard for further research (McDowell 1995; 2005). Richard Symanski's (1974, 1981) early studies of female prostitution have also provided points of departure for explorations of heterosexual geography, notably Phil Hubbard's (1999) work on prostitution in contemporary western cities, and historical research of the same in Britain and the British Empire by Miles Ogborn, Philip Howell and myself (Howell 2000; Ogborn 1998; Ogborn and Philo 1994; Phillips 2006; see also Levine 2003). Meanwhile, Jason Lim (2005) has charted the performance of heterosexuality on the dance-floor, while Susan Frohlick (2005) and Jessica Jacobs (2005) have investigated women's heterosexual behaviour in vacation/holiday resorts. On a broader geographical and intellectual level, Julia Graham and Katherine Gibson (Gibson-Graham) identify strands of heterosexual discourse underpinning economic geographies and forms of capitalism (Gibson-Graham 1996, 1998), while Cynthia Enloe (1989) demonstrates the centrality of heterosexual practices and institutions from military prostitution to compulsory heterosexuality for international relations.

This eclectic, emerging body of work addresses the criticism that early research on sexuality and space was narrow in scope, concentrated on minority sexualities and uncommonly overt expressions of sexuality, but it does not get to grips with Cream's call to recognise and interrogate the sexualisation of everyday spaces. There is nothing very surprising about the sexualisation of male-dominated

City firms, red light areas, dance floors or tourist resorts. Though productively investigated in the studies I have mentioned, these places do not represent (hetero)sexual geographies so much as caricature them. The same criticism could be levelled at the titles of the conference sessions from which the papers in this special issue originate.   The Sexuality and Space Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers (AAG) sponsored a number of multi-session strands at the Annual Meeting in Denver in 2005, including 'Sexy Spaces,' organised by Kath Browne and Tiffany Muller and 'More Sex! More Gender!' organised by Kathryn Besio and Pamela Moss. Both titles suggested an interest in erotic spaces in which sexuality – of whatever form – is most overt. Happily, the titles were not entirely accurate. A number of presenters in these sessions spoke against the differentiation of sexual and asexual spaces, and contributed to a small geographical literature on apparently asexual heterosexual geographies: spaces of home and domesticity (see: Robinson, Hockey and Meah 2004; also Hayden 1984; Johnston and Valentine 1995); spaces of marriage (Johnston 2005; Ogborn; 1999); and geographies of the contested, sexualised parameters of family (Phillips 2006). Still, the dominant interest within the sessions and the field more generally remains with sexualised minorities and erotic locations.

Though it is valuable to study sites in which (hetero)sexuality is flaunted, it would be a mistake to see these places as representative in a broader sense of the reciprocal relationships between heterosexuality and space. Heterosexuality, sometimes visible, is commonly hidden away in what Heidi Nast (1998, p. 191) calls 'unsexy spaces'. Herein lies its power: the apparent asexuality of many different homes, workplaces, cities, landscapes and other material and metaphorical geographies conceals and naturalises the hegemonic heterosexualities that structure and dominate them, and are reproduced through them. Nast argues that in concentrating too much on overtly sexy spaces, we are letting other people and places off the hook, missing the opportunity to denaturalise heterosexuality and contest heteronormativity. By exempting apparently unsexy spaces from critical research on sexuality and space, we are tacitly accepting the self-effacement of heterosexuality as 'benign and/or asexual' (Nast 1998, 192), and buying into naturalised heterosexual hegemony. As David Sibley (1995) has shown, more generally, it is impossible to understand the forms and spaces of 'deviance' – in this case non-heterosexual and heightened forms of sexuality – without understanding those of 'normality'. To denaturalise normality is to contest the social power enjoyed by people who pass themselves off as 'normal,' and their subordination of those who are and have been identified with excess sexuality or polymorphous perversity: not only gay men and female prostitutes but a range of colonised and racialised subjects (McClintock 1994). For instance, European colonial governments scrutinised the sexualities and regulated the sexual behaviour of gay men and female prostitutes – through local statutes on same-sex behaviour and prostitution – but also operated an elaborately differentiated system of sexual

regulation, which distinguished between colonies and colonial subjects on the basis of religious, ethnic and racial identities (Levine 2003; Phillips 2006).

This means exposing the constructions and conventions of respectability and heterosexuality, which powerfully structure social worlds. It means contesting the over-sexualisation of those constructed as sexually deviant and exposing the taken-for-granted, hidden sexualisation of people and places constructed as normal. It means recognising the limits of sexual frankness, freedom and expression, the reality and social functions of celibacy, modesty and secrecy.

The Travellers' Aid Society

The Travellers' Aid Committee was formed in London in 1885 by the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in association with the Girls' Friendly Society, Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants, National Vigilance Association, and the Reformatory and Refuge Union as well as individual members. Within a year, the word Committee was replaced with Society, which was changed in 1891 to the Travellers' Aid Society (for Girls and Women).[4] This built upon the work of an earlier meeting in July 1881, at which associates of the YWCA gathered 'to receive information, and to confer upon the best means of counteracting the organised dangers at home and abroad for young women'.[5] The TAS agreed to pursue two aims: first, to prevent 'country girls, as far as possible, from coming to London'; second, when the first aim failed, to assist and chaperone young female travellers on ships and trains, and in transit (Balfour 1886, 56-57). To this end, 'lady workers' met passenger ships at ports including Dover, Southampton and Liverpool, and trains at all the large stations in England, particularly London. They met individuals by arrangement with their parents, employers or the travellers themselves, and they also responded to calls from station staff, who kept an eye out for young women who appeared to be lost or appealed for help. The TAS claimed to meet up to 80 girls and women a day, and kept records of every one.[6] The archives on this are largely one-sided, consisting of the case and weekly reports by TAS workers, where these survived, plus a

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[4] TAS General Committee Minutes 1885-93, 19-22, 4/TAS.

[5] 'Perils for girls at home and abroad,' Sentinel, August 1881, 25

[6] Station Work Reports 4NVA/5/7: Proceedings of Conference on Railway Station Work, 9 February 1911.

relatively small number of letters from their clients. The first annual report includes the follow case histories, which illustrate the work of the TAS:

> H.T., most respectably connected, came up to London from a far-off country village, it was thought to meet a young man whose acquaintance she had made. Fortunately he failed to meet her at the station, and, on asking a porter to direct her to an hotel, she was sent by him to the office, 16a, Cavendish St. It was late in the evening. She had only 6/- in her pocket, and had never been away from home before. She was safely lodged and persuaded to write to her mother, who, it turned out, was in the greatest anxiety about her, and who sent for her home again at once. We are glad to say that this mother expressed her gratitude to the porter who, humanly speaking, saved the girl from ruin.[7]

> S.N.'s friends wrote from Ireland to ask for enquiries to be made about a situation which the girl was thinking of taking in London. Her proposed master had been lodging for a few weeks with the girl's mistress in Ireland, and, knowing that she was leaving her place, offered a situation in his house, and proposed that she should accompany him on his immediate return to London. Her friends dissuaded the girl from this, and the would-be employer was told that he should hear later whether the girl accepted his situation. In the meantime the T.A. was communicated with, and having found out that the employer in question had no intention of returning to the address where he had lived in London, and was, besides, an unmarried man, they wrote to tell the friends not to let the young woman accept the situation. [8]

These case histories refer to the work of the society in a number of areas: meeting female travellers; helping them find accommodation; and monitoring their employment. The following paragraphs explain this work and the structure of the Society in more detail.

The TAS was staffed by a small number of employees and a larger number of volunteers (who were unpaid but sometimes claimed expenses[9]). Revealingly,

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[7] TAS Annual Report 1886, 11, 4/TAS.

[8] TAS Annual Report 1886, 13, 4/TAS.

[9] Minutes of meeting between TAS and NVA, 9 November 1938, 4NVA/7/A/9.

the organisation spoke of working for 'girls' and 'women', but described its female workers and contacts as 'ladies' (Balfour 1886, 57). Both these 'ladies' and the relatively small number of men who worked for or with the Society, the latter generally as accommodation providers or at docks that were considered too dangerous for women,[10] were vetted for character and suitability. The TAS would seek verbal references through its network of personal contacts and, where individuals were unknown, it would visit and conduct interviews.[11] Some of the Society's costs were covered by its female clients, who made modest payments or in some cases more substantial donations, according to their ability to do so. Thus, for instance, a group of fifteen factory workers arriving in 1894 were charged five shillings each for this service[12], whereas a 'Polish girl' who arrived in 1896, carrying the address of 'a house of very doubtful character' was provided with free accommodation while enquiries and arrangements were made for her.[13]

The TAS concerned itself with women's travel, accommodation and employment. In terms of accommodation, it began by directing and in some cases conveying young women to YWCA hostels, but gradually built up a list of approved lodgings and hostels (Balfour 1886, 57). The policy was not to directly run accommodation, but to work with housing providers and other organisations, 'to use to the utmost the many excellent homes and lodgings already available for young women, and to utilize the services of the Societies that have their organization already formed'.[14] Accommodation providers applied to the Society for approval and recommendation.[15] The Committee vetted and monitored accommodation, making enquiries where they considered it necessary. For

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[10] Station Work Reports 4NVA/5/7: Proceedings of Conference on Railway Station Work, 9 February 1911.

[11] Minutes of Executive Committee of TAS, 20 December 1895, 4TAS/A2/2: For example, the Secretary of the TAS made enquiries about a Mr Schafer by visiting his house and interviewing his wife; she was 'favourably impressed'.

[12] Minutes of Executive Committee of TAS, 15 June 1894, 4TAS/A2/2

[13] Minutes of Executive Committee of TAS, 15 May 1896, 4TAS/A2/2

[14] TAS Annual Report 1886, 8, 4/TAS.

[15] Minutes of Executive Committee of TAS, 11 March 1886, 4TAS/A2/1: For example, when it met in March, 1886, the Executive Committee agreed to such a request 'from the Committee of the Ladies Association for the Help and Training of Girls at Hanley, saying that they would like their Home to be added to those given on the placards and would be glad to lodge girls for the Travellers Aid. It was directed that they be told the Committee accepted their kind help and would put the address of their Home upon the placards at their nearest stations'.

example, when it heard that a 'girl had been taken' to a London address of which 'nothing was known', the Committee decided to make enquiries through the neighbours, making 'an application to Miss Hoare, a Lady residing' nearby.[16] On another occasion, when Committee members expressed doubts about a young woman's situation in Notting Hill, it was thought best to 'have further enquiries made through the police'.[17]

The TAS was also concerned with the employment of young women, particularly those who came to London to take live-in domestic situations. It undertook to 'make inquiries respecting any situation about which a country girl is in negotiation, before the final arrangement is made to take it' (Balfour 1886, 57). But the Society did not generally seek employment for girls or women who arrived without arrangements of their own. Thus, for instance, it provided a 17-year-old Russian who arrived at St. Katharine's Dock 'penniless' with a situation in a drapers shop, but not without reservations about the scope of its own mission and the 'burden … on the shoulders of society' that was brought by 'destitute strangers'.[18] Others were not so lucky: a 30 year-old woman, met at the same dock, who could 'not read or write, or point out her country in an atlas', was taken to the court in Marylebone where an order was granted for her admittance to the workhouse.[19] The Society became increasingly firm about the limits of its mission. For instance, it responded sharply to the Mother Superior of the Convent of the Good Shepherd, when 'girls from the convent' had written to the TAS for help in finding work, 'advising her that the Travellers' Aid Society is not a Registry Office for servants'.[20] The TAS reiterated this position, minuting the consensus of its Executive Committee that they 'feel strongly that it is not part of the work of the Travellers' Aid Society to find situations for travellers'.[21]

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[16] Minutes of Executive Committee of TAS, 16 March 1894, 4TAS/A2/2: Secretary's Report to Executive Committee.

[17] Minutes of Executive Committee of TAS, 6 July 1887, 4TAS/A2/1

[18] Minutes of Executive Committee of TAS, 20 March 1891, 4TAS/A2/1

[19] Minutes of Executive Committee of TAS, 20 March 1891, 4TAS/A2/1

[20] Minutes of Executive Committee of TAS, 15 May 1891, 4TAS/A2/1

[21] Minutes of Executive Committee of TAS, 19 June 1891, 4TAS/A2/1

Normality

I have suggested that geographies of sexuality should not necessarily be concerned with sexiness or deviance, but equally with conventions of respectability, normality and (respectable, normalised forms of) heterosexuality, which powerfully order social worlds. This hegemonic heterosexuality is distinguished both from the others of heterosexuality, such as homosexuality, and also from heterosexual practices such as prostitution and (heterosexual forms of) sado-masochism. Nor should geographies of sexuality be concerned solely with the sexually active, given the prevalence and social functions of celibacy. Considerable work is put into maintaining reputations for virginity or marital fidelity, which are in many times and places crucial to women's status as eligible spinsters or respectable wives. The TAS illustrates closely the form and force of respectability, normality, heterosexuality and celibacy, and the spaces in which these sexual identities are reproduced and performed.

Those who were represented and present at the 1881 and 1885 meetings shared a broad if differentiated commitment to defining and defending the moral centre ground. They included members of social purity groups, which had sprung up in the 1860s, first to oppose legislation that targeted women for intrusive regulation (the Contagious Diseases Acts gave police and doctors unprecedented powers over female prostitutes, and turned a blind eye to their male clients). In the 1880s, some social purity activists expanded and shifted their agenda, lobbying for the enactment and enforcement of 'positive' legislation, which would curtail the sexual liberties enjoyed by men at the expense of women and girls. The membership and agenda of the TAS emerged through and overlapped, albeit selectively, with contemporaneous social purity organisations. Founded by the Ladies National Association (LNA), under the auspices of the YWCA, it was primarily identified with preventative purity activism, which lobbied for women's civil liberties, rather than with the 'positive' movement of the 1880s, which was led by the National Vigilance Association (NVA). But in practice these organisations were often close, with overlapping memberships and agendas. For example, both the TAS and NVA sent visitors to stations, where they met young women and monitored dangers to them. This augured well for the merger that took place in 1939, when the NVA effectively took over the work of the TAS (Balfour 1906; Bland 1995; Walkowitz 1980), which it continued until its own demise in 1952.[22]

During the fifty or so years in which they operated separately, and thirteen years together, the TAS and NVA shared a commitment to the core values of the purity movements, which galvanised around the reproduction of hegemonic,

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[22] TAS General Committee Minutes 1885-93, 19-22; Station Work Reports 4NVA/5/8

normalised feminine respectability. These core values adapted to changing circumstances, enabling these organisations to survive when the moral panic of the 1860s, 70s and 80s died down, and to renew themselves when new issues arose, including the new panic over 'white slavery' in the first decade of the twentieth century. These organisations were both involved in the national conference on the protection of female travellers, in London in 1911, which followed on from two important international conferences on white slavery: on the protection of female travellers, in Berne in 1910, and on the trafficking of young women, held in Brussels in 1907.[23] The TAS also continued to reinvent and renew itself, without changing its fundamental agenda, by adapting to the politics and crises of the twentieth century. In the 1930s, for instance, it responded to the descent of Germany into fascism and Europe into war, playing an active part in meeting and helping young female refugees. Station workers in the late 1930s reported the difficulties faced by Jewish girls and women, who had been 'flocking' to England since the *Anschluss*, many with the help of the TAS and Jewish organisations with which it cooperated.[24]

Though it emerged largely from the social purity work of Christian-identified activists and groups, the TAS developed into a secular organisation, which asserted an ostensibly secular moral politics. At first, as one might expect from an organisation founded under the auspices of the Young Women's *Christian* Association, the TAS was overtly Christian. Its committee meetings began meetings with prayers, which revealed the religious inspiration behind its moral project. For example, the Executive Committee offered the following prayer on October 17, 1890:

> Help us also, O our Heavenly Father, to do Thy work on earth, especially among those of Thy children who are exposed to the dire perils and temptations of a great city, so that by timely aid and loving counsel we may save their souls from death, their eyes from tears, their feet from falling.[25]

But as it grew the TAS tended to downplay its religious affiliation, seeking to appeal to and to serve as broad a constituency as possible. To this end, the Executive Committee decided to remove the words "Young Women's Christian

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[23] Station Work Reports 4NVA/5/7: Proceedings of Conference on Railway Station Work, 9 February 1911.

[24] Station Work Reports 4NVA/5/8: Report for week ending December 8, 1938, by Kathleen Kelly.

[25] Minutes of Executive Committee of TAS, 17 October 90, 4TAS/A2/1

Association" from publicity, 'as they feared it might deter some girls from availing themselves of the proffered protection'. Placards were headed "Travellers' Aid", with YWCA relegated to the small print beneath.[26] Station workers were also forbidden from distributing religious tracts or using their station work as an excuse for evangelism.[27] Still, there was a religious dimension to travellers' aid work, and the TAS worked alongside Catholic and Jewish organisations such as the International Catholic Association and Jewish Gentlemen's Committee for the Protection of Girls to see that girls and young women would be helped, advised and 'placed in Homes according to their nationality and creed.' [28] Thus, for example, the TAS paid agents of the Association of Jewish Girls, which primarily served Jewish girls and women at the Blackwall and St Katherine's Docks, to assist female travellers of Christian and other faiths.[29] Elsewhere, the arrangement was often reciprocated. The organisation had transcended its roots in one religion, in an effort to appeal to and serve women of all religions and none, and to generalise its moral project. At the heart of this project lay a commitment to a moral centre ground in which sex was confined to heterosexual marriage, and in which unmarried girls and women remained demonstrably celibate.

Spaces of celibacy

If, as I have argued, after Cream (1994) and Nast (1998), geographies of sexuality are as much about conventional respectability and celibacy as deviance and sexiness, then it should not be surprising that these geographies are not necessarily dominated by stereotypically sexually active quarters of western cities, but are just as much about their rural and provincial hinterlands, as well as non-western countries, and the spaces of travel and connection that bind these places together (Phillips, Watt and Shuttleton 2000). Despite the urban preoccupation of the literature on sexual geographies, which I have noted, there is widespread attention elsewhere to the sexualisation of both travel and also colonial geographies. This was sometimes overt: for instance, the eighteenth-century grand tour was as much about sowing wild oats as understanding European architecture,

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[26] Minutes of Executive Committee of TAS, 25 May 1886, 4TAS/A2/1

[27] Minutes of Executive Committee of TAS, 19 December 1890, 4TAS/A2/1: For example, a station worker was told not to distribute tracts at stations, 'even in her private capacity'.

[28] Station Work Reports 4NVA/5/7: Proceedings of Conference on Railway Station Work, 9 February 1911.

[29] Minutes of Executive Committee of TAS, 25 May 1886, 4TAS/A2/1

and its nineteenth and twentieth century successors were equally eroticised for many travellers (Edwards 2001). In the European imagination, more generally, colonial people and places were sexualised, associated with general and specific ideas about sexuality (Aldrich 1993; Kabbani 1986; McClintock 1994; Phillips 2000). These ideas about sexual geographies were mobilised by the TAS in its work among women travellers, though the organisation was concerned primarily with helping women to *avoid* sexual dangers. These dangers – or, depending upon one's point of view, opportunities – revolved around imagined moral and immoral geographies, structured around distinctions between home and away, country and city, domestic and foreign.

Thus, for instance, Lady Frances Balfour, co-founder and first president of the TAS, writing in the *Sentinel*, reiterated then-familiar anxieties about the 'dangers to which these girls are exposed on their arrival in London' (Balfour 1886, 56). She worried of the dangers to 'ignorant country girls, not knowing a single person in London to whom to turn,' who were vulnerable, portrayed diminutively as 'girls' or 'children' (Balfour 1930),[30] despite the fact that few of those in question were less than sixteen, in a society where childhood, at least for the working classes, had ended long before (the statutory school-leaving age, for example, was 12). This imagined sexual geography translated in specific ways to the work of the Society. In its first annual report, the TAS stated that, although similar organisations were already in existence, 'none of the other societies practically met the vital need there is for extending protection to the *respectable country girls* who come up to London immediately on their arrival, so that they may not fall into the difficulties and dangers that await them there'.[31] Successive annual reports and publicity material stressed that the Society had remained true to this aim, which drew upon and reproduced ideals of home consistent with those of conservative cultural critic John Ruskin. Away from home, they asserted, women were at risk, and preyed upon by 'evil persons who are on the look-out to entrap inexperience and innocence'.[32] Thus, for example, the 1888 annual report stated that:

> Our lady at a small village in Berkshire writes that several girls have
> applied to her to help them in finding situations, and she always tries
> to find them a place in the country or one of the nearest towns, rather

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[30] TAS Annual Report, 1886, 12; See also: In Memoriam, The Lady Frances Balfour, 1885-1931, British Library Pamphlet Collection 10824.bb.26, 2.

[31] TAS Annual Report 1886, 1, 4/TAS.

[32] TAS Annual Report 1886, 3, 4/TAS.

than in London. This we were very glad to know, as we are most anxious that girls should be discouraged from coming up to London.[33]

This imaginative geography, in which homes in the country represented a virtuous contrast with the radically un-homelike spaces of the city, was repeatedly echoed.

This was not a purely *imaginative* geography, of course, since many of the dangers to girls and young women in London were very real. Most were driven to London by poverty, which they did not entirely escape once they had arrived. As one Irishwoman put it, in a letter to the TAS, many 'friendless girls' were 'compelled to go to earn a livelihood' in London.[34] According to TAS statistics, there were '4,600 girls under the age of 22' in 'common lodging houses in London in 1892, 'many of them fresh from the country'.[35] 'Respectable' employment was often poorly paid, and young women were often forced to supplement their incomes. For this, some resorted to part-time prostitution (Barret-Ducrocq 1991, p. 52). For single women, the city was often a forbidding and dangerous place, as newspapers acknowledged in their sensationalist coverage of the 'Jack the Ripper' murders in the late 1880s (Walkowitz 1992). Case histories and station reports, recorded by the TAS, convey some of the reality of this danger, even though they also betray many of the organisation and its workers' perceptions of danger, and many of their preoccupations. For young women, living and working in middle-class households, there was always a risk that male head-of-households would not pay them, or would threaten them sexually. This is illustrated in a report submitted in April 1935 by the TAS worker at Kings Cross Coaching Station, which noted that some 'girls' had returned to the station 'a few days' after arriving in London, complaining that their pay was lower than promised and that 'the master went in to their bedroom'.[36] The vulnerability of young women to male employers is also illustrated in the following case history, which was recorded in the TAS Annual Report for 1886:

> J.A., aged 17, got into a bad situation, and was taken abroad by her employers. After some weeks she was dismissed; but her master, who was a bad man, insisted on accompanying her by train to the

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[33] TAS Annual Report 1888, 23, 4/TAS.

[34] Station Work 4NVA/5/5: Letter dated 11 August 1938, from Kate O'Brien, Co. Cork, Ireland.

[35] Minutes of Executive Committee of TAS, 17 June 1892, 4TAS/A2/1

[36] Station Work Reports 4NVA/5/5: Report by M. Lecot

port where she was to embark for England. With much difficulty she got away from him, and was received on board a steamer for England. Her employers had borrowed the small sum of money she possessed, and in return for this and for the wages that were due to her, her master had given her £2 (as she thought). It was found that this money was false, being merely counters used by card-players. Her fare to London was however most generously subscribed by the officials on board, and on her arrival in London (this being one of the steamers having the Travellers' Aid handbills on board) they sent her at once to the Travellers' Aid office. She was cared for while her friends in the country were communicated with, and is now a member of the Young Women's Christian Association. She is a good, superior kind of girl; but the fright she underwent has affected her health. Efforts have been made abroad, so far in vain, to trace her late employers; but they have been identified as well-known seducers of young girls.[37]

And, for all its rhetoric and panic (see, for example: Moor 1911; Roe 1911; Shearer, Brookings and Mineham 1911), early-twentieth-century worries about 'white slavery' were not entirely unfounded. They need not have been racialised as they were, for trans-national networks of prostitution were multi-racial rather than simply white, but there is nevertheless evidence that trafficking of female prostitutes did go on (Hyam 1990).

These dangers were real to the young women themselves. TAS reports refer to anxiety among female travellers, as for example in the case of two 'painfully nervous' Irish Catholic 'girls', aged 19 and 20,' who arrived at Paddington Station on January 16, 1935. The Station Worker noted that 'in these cases where the girls are so nervous, the police officer is the only one they will listen to,' but in this case the duty officer assured the travellers that they could trust the TAS worker. 'These two girls were seen off by train and were most grateful.'[38] The perception of danger in London was also articulated in letters to the TAS, sent in by female travellers and by their parents and employers. For example, a father in Salisbury wrote in to thank the organisation for caring for his daughter, whose travel arrangements had left her stranded on Euston Station, stating that 'The child is far too young to be wandering around London on her own, and the care which your people took of her

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[37] TAS Annual Report 1886, 11-12, 4/TAS.

[38] Station Work Reports 4NVA/5/5: Report by Miss A. Eyre

is very much appreciated'.[39] Similarly, Kate O'Brien from County Cork wrote to thank the TAS for 'meeting my little girl and conducting her safely to her destination and then wiring to me to allay me fears'. [40] The fears of girls and women were shaped both by real dangers, which some experienced first hand and others heard or read about, but also by organisations such as the TAS, which propagated geographies of fear and danger.

Not only destinations but also spaces of travel in their own right were prominent in these real and imaginative geographies of sexual danger, upon which the Society based its work. In the Victorian railway age, it is not surprising that a large proportion of its energy and time was devoted to railways, railway stations and areas near stations. The railway, not only physically transporting the country girl to the city, symbolically brought the contrast between provincial and metropolitan, innocent and the threatening, into sharp relief. Station visitors frequently referred to the moral dangers of the station. Reports from the 1930s, where the archives are most complete, point to a range of moral dangers, including local prostitution, white slavery and general immorality. A 1934 report by the worker at Liverpool Street Railway Station in London repeated rumours of white slavery:

> The inspector on the 9:30 Flushing Express told me that he thought it was nothing but White Slave Traffic – all these girls coming up from Wales, the North and other places. He said that he knew for a fact that numbers of girls had come up with only coach fare and a night's lodging and then the streets. I tried to continue the conversation. He said he would not say any more.'[41]

Reports and other documents comment on prostitution and procurement of women to work as prostitutes in and around a number of stations, not only in London but also in provincial towns such as Scarborough on the northeast coast.[42]

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[39] Station Work Reports 4NVA/5/5. Letter from J. Butterworth, Salisbury to Secretary, National Vigilance Association and Travellers' Aid Society, enclosing cheque for £2, 17 September 1941.

[40] Station Work Reports 4NVA/5/5: Letter from Kate O'Brien, Co. Cork, Ireland, 11 August 1938.

[41] Station Work Reports 4NVA/5/5: Report by M. Lecot on work at Liverpool Street Railway Station, 17 April 1934.

[42] Minutes of Executive Committee of TAS, 11 July 1888, 4TAS/A2/1: For example, the Executive Committee considered allegations about seasonal workers in Scarborough being targeted by 'bad women waiting for their arrival'.

The worker at Victoria (railway) Station documented and investigated allegations about the use of the station, including the Ladies Waiting Room and a bar in the nearby Grosvenor Hotel, for purposes of prostitution. [43] Similarly, the worker at Kings Cross Coaching Station reported that a station employee, had 'seen servant girls arriving from the North and then … seen them on the streets' a few days later. The report also quoted a 'woman employed in Tea Room' who claimed that a 17-year-old girl had been stranded for a night at the coach garage a year before. 'The woman told me that nine men went down to the girl during the night – paying her one shilling – the woman said she thought coaches in garage were still used for immoral purposes'. [44] In addition to prostitution, TAS reports also referred to what they saw as a more general moral laxity at stations. In 1934 the worker at Liverpool Street 'counted 13 couples in various affectionate positions' in the waiting room, and found instances of immorality and sexual danger. 'Yesterday,' for example, 'a man came in, had a good look round the room. He then sat down and for the 20 minutes I was there he hardly took his eyes off a young girl who was reading. I could see the girl was distressed so send in this report.' [45]

In addition to its attention to railways *per se*, the TAS targeted certain sorts of railway journeys, particularly young women's first journeys to work. In its first year, the Society claimed to have met 136 'girls' at London stations and 9 'young women' at the docks. [46] In successive years the volume of work increased, such that in 1909 the organisation was dealing with an average of over 500 cases per month in total (6508 in the year as a whole) (Moor 1911, 103). Despite fluctuations, this volume of work was broadly the same in the summer of 1938-39, when the TAS merged with the NVA. [47]

The expansion in the Society's caseload reflected its geographical expansion. Initially it concentrated on assisting female travellers in London, but it widened its horizons to include a wider range of national and international travel,

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[43] Station Work Reports 4NVA/5/6: Report by Kathleen M. Kelly of work at Victoria Railway Station, 17 June 1936.

[44] Station Work Reports 4NVA/5/5. Report by M. Lecot of work at Kings Cross Coaching Station, 27 February 1935.

[45] Station Work Reports 4NVA/5/5: Report by M. Lecot on work at Liverpool Street Railway Station, 10 April 1934.

[46] TAS Annual Report 1886, 1, 4/TAS.

[47] Minutes of meeting between TAS and NVA, 9 November 1938, 4NVA/7/A/9: In July 1938 the TAS met '318 foreign girls and 282 English girls'; the following month it met '323 foreign and 220 English girls'.

both for pleasure and for longer distance journeys to work, involving emigrants and immigrants alike. The TAS served national travellers by establishing or supporting the establishment of branches in provincial towns and cities: beginning with Southampton in 1891, then Liverpool in 1898, Hull in 1903, and Birmingham in 1909. Some of these, located at English ports, were geared up to international travel, as were TAS branches overseas. Soon there was a Travellers' Aid Society or close equivalent in most major ports and cities throughout the British Empire and United States (Pivar 2002). Whether her destination was London or Dublin, Halifax or Montreal, Brisbane or Adelaide, and whether she was travelling by train or steamship, a young 'friendless' woman might see the same sorts of publicity and be offered the same sort of assistance.[48]

The TAS also attended to the long distance journey itself. It secured the co-operation of the pioneer tour operator, Thomas Cook, which allowed it to assist its female clients, particularly those destined for places identified in some way with immorality, including reputedly immoral ports such as Portsmouth and Southampton.[49] Its 1889 Annual report thanked the company 'for allowing their interpreters at Paris station to give cards, with addresses of two homes for young women, to any girls or young women who asked them to direct them to lodgings, and also, as far as possible, to any girls or young women travelling alone' who, the Society asserted, 'might find themselves in very undesirable surroundings'.[50] In its first year of operation over 27,000 English, French and German handbills such as the one quoted above were distributed on passenger ships, with the cooperation of 45 steamship companies.[51] Many of these ships carried female emigrants, both to and from English shores. The YWCA had begun its work among female emigrants in 1857, when it collaborated with the British Ladies' Female Emigration Society to assist female passengers on board ships (Moor 1911, 95). The *Sentinel*, an English social purity journal, directed its readers to agencies such as the Women's Emigration Society, formed in 1880, which helped English women to safely and

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[48] TAS Annual Report 1889, 16, 4/TAS: Travellers' Aid Society handbills advertised respectable residences for single women, such as a Governesses' Home in Brisbane.

[49] Report of Executive Committee of NVA, presented at Annual Meeting, 1886, published in London in 1887: The first Annual Report of NVA referred to work done in seaport towns nearest to the Continent, in support of the Sub-Committee for the Suppression of Foreign Traffic.

[50] TAS Annual Report 1889, 14, 4/TAS.

[51] Minutes of Executive Committee of TAS, 7 December 1886, 4TAS/A2/1

respectably emigrate.[52] Overseas branches of the TAS supported this project. For instance, the Canadian Travellers' Aid was represented in centres of immigration – beginning with Quebec in 1887 – and was expanded to assist and promote female immigration.[53]

These inter-regional, inter-colonial and international dimensions formed a network rather than a hierarchy. The TAS sprung from the extension of travellers' aid networks from Germany and Switzerland to England, when a German activist (Countess Schack) addressed counterparts in London (at the YWCA meeting in 1881).[54] The TAS then assumed the form of a network, coordinating the activities of disparate organisations and activists, and extending to include others. It initiated some sister organisations and supported others, such as an organisation founded through the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) in the United States. The WCTU wrote to the TAS in 1889, stating that they wished to form a Travellers' Aid Society, and would like to obtain information on the subject from the English Travellers' Aid Society. The London organisation sent information, and cooperated with its American sister organisation once it was formed.[55] The London office also supported – but did not control – organisations in the British Empire. It sent a representative to Ireland in 1886, who 'requested that someone would take up the work in Ireland', which Irish counterparts successfully did.[56] Some of these societies, most notably the National Travellers Aid Society of Australia (formed in 1944 from local groups founded in Adelaide in 1887, Victoria in 1916 and Queensland in 1928), outlived the metropolitan organisation and modernised its agenda (expanding their work in the 1960s to include men).[57] The London office became a hub of travellers' aid work, not only in the capital but also nationally and internationally, though it was never simply the 'centre' of that work.

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[52] 'Safe emigration for women,' Sentinel, May 1882, 1; 'Emigration of women to our colonies', Sentinel, August 1881, 30.

[53] Canadian YWCA website, www.ywca.ca consulted on June 20, 2005.

[54] 'Perils for girls at home and abroad,' Sentinel, August 1881, 25

[55] Minutes of Executive Committee of TAS, 17 April 89, 4TAS/A2/1: Executive Committee 'directed that the required information be sent, and that it be suggested that they should affiliate their Travellers' Aid, when started, with the English one'. Minutes of Executive Committee of TAS, 18/12/89, 4TAS/A2/1: Later that year, the WCTU wrote again to confirm that an American TAS had been established, and to appeal for cooperation and assistance, which the London office granted.

[56] TAS Annual Report 1887, 12, 4/TAS.

[57] http://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/AWE1122b.htm

Many of the non-metropolitan branches were effectively independent from that in London, and some proved more robust. Thus, for instance, the Liverpool branch was 'quite independent' of London, and outlived the latter for some years.[58]

The networked structure of the TAS is significant because it warns against simple conclusions about the moralities that travellers' aid workers and societies – each in the plural – produced and deployed. Within and between different nodes in the network, moral constructs such as normality, celibacy and respectability meant different things, and were put to different uses.

Uses of respectability

Despite the application of what Foucault called the repressive hypothesis to the past, despite their optimistic projection of ideas about repression onto historically and geographically distant people and places, supposedly less liberated than themselves, most people in most times and places respect conventions about sex. Some attention is devoted to who should or must have sex with whom, where and when, but more to who should not or cannot. Sexual identity and the social position it brings or denies are defined by having sex, as Adrienne Rich (1980) argued in her analysis of 'compulsory heterosexuality', but these things also depend on specific forms of sexual inactivity. Consequently, it has often been necessary for people – women in particular – to demonstrate their celibacy or fidelity. Moreover, these assertions and displays of respectability are contextual, taking different forms in different times and places. As Alison Blunt showed in her analysis of Mary Kingsley's travels in West Africa, women travellers have had to enter into complex negotiations of sexualised femininity, crucial to their status as travellers and authors. Kingsley, frequently quizzed about her marital status, found it best to lie, saying that she was travelling to meet her husband. Some travellers effected moderate transgressions of contemporary constructions of femininity, contesting the conservative moral geographies that were asserted and policed by organisations such as TAS. Assuming somewhat relaxed attitudes towards moral norms, 'new women' nevertheless worked to maintain their (slightly more liberal form of) respectability. Erica Rappaport (2000) has shown how they strode into what some journalists and organisations were presenting as danger zones, guided by accounts in fashion magazines and feminist journals of dauntless heroines who safely and fashionably travelled alone in the city. Their chaperones were not the respectable married women who staffed the TAS, but guidebooks published and promoted by magazines such as *The Lady* and *The Queen*. But the *flâneuse* did not

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[58] Minutes of meeting between TAS and NVA, 9 November 1938, 4NVA/7/A/9

abandon her respectability, so much as contest the terms on which it was defined, calling the bluff of certain moralists without actually compromising her reputation for sexual purity.

What this does not answer, however, is the question of what celibacy or respectability is for? The commonsense answer is that celibacy is at best a moral choice, at worst a repressive and conservative convention, which only preserves the *status quo*. In *Scandal in the Colonies: Sydney and Cape Town, 1820-1850*, Kirsten McKenzie (2004) challenges and complicates this simple interpretation of respectability. She shows that scandal and gossip, which framed and punctuated colonial respectability, effectively defined the changing pecking order of bourgeois social life. As crises of respectability, scandals divided the respectable from the rest, and accorded lucrative social position to the former. As McKenzie (2004, p. 90) puts it, 'A respectable woman's sexual reputation was as much a commodity as a merchant's good name and credit.' There is evidence in the archives of the TAS and female emigration societies to support this reading of respectability as a form of social capital. Opportunities not only for marriage but also for employment were restricted to 'respectable' girls and women. Letters between Canadian immigration agents and representatives of British and Irish female emigration societies made this explicit. For example, Miss H. B. Richardson, an agent of Department of Agriculture in Ottawa, visited London in 1883 to 'communicate with societies and individuals interested in the emigration of *respectable* women and children to Canada'. [59] Its correspondence archives show that the Women's Emigration Society also rejected prospective emigrants whose reputations were questionable. For instance, it rejected a request for contact with 'a Christian lady in Canada or elsewhere' who would look after a woman who 'has fallen some years ago, but has reformed'. [60] The TAS also differentiated between women on the basis of their respectability, and also their nationality. With respect to women arriving at the docks, for instance, the Executive Committee directed that 'disreputable foreigners' were to be 'personally conducted to [the] Workhouse,' whereas 'respectable cases' would be taken to an approved 'address or Home – but *not* to the workhouse'. The

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[59] Women's Emigration Society, 1883-1915, Press Cuttings, 1BWE/B/3/1, 23: Letter to Mrs Ross (of the Women's Emigration Society, living in Ashbourne, Derbyshire) from Miss H B Richardson (agent of Department of Agriculture, Ottawa, Canada), Quebec Institute, Baker St, London, 22 May 1883, emphasis added.

[60] Women's Emigration Society, 1883-1915, Press Cuttings, 1BWE/B/3/1, 55: Letter to Mrs Ross Ross (of the Women's Emigration Society, living in Ashbourne, Derbyshire) from Miss L Barrington, Kingstown, Dublin. Note on letter 'refused'.

Committee added that 'English cases of a disreputable order need not be personally conducted'.**[61]**

Mackenzie also shows how scandal was used to contest and disrupt power relations between classes, shifting the dynamics of power within and between colonies. People, not simply imprisoned by conventions of respectability, actively deployed respectability and reputation in their social relations and sometimes conflicts. For example, a domestic slave in Cape Town stirred up a scandal involving her master, alleging that he was the father of her daughter, not only undermining his authority over her, but also placing a question mark over the institution of slavery in the colony. Counter-intuitively, conventional respectability was used not to reproduce the *status quo*, but to unpick it. This rather specific example illustrates the generative power of convention, celibacy, respectability and, most generally, the 'unsexy' in defining social relations, and sometimes changing them.

Conclusion: power and the moral centre

The TAS illustrates the construction and naturalisation of normalised and hegemonic sexualities, through the definition of the apparently asexual moral centre ground. In research on sexuality there has been a lot of emphasis, perhaps attributable to the influence of contemporary cultural studies, upon resistance, deviance and the open defiance of convention, each as means of exposing and contesting heteronormativity and the sweep of power relations that are channelled through sexuality. But, as Nast (1998) has argued and as the case study of the TAS fleshes out, sexualised power is not only revealed in the moments where it is contested or overturned, but also in quieter times and places, where its hegemony is unchallenged and perhaps unnoticed. Furthermore, as McKenzie has shown in her analysis of scandal in Cape Town, respectability was not necessarily the vehicle of the *status quo*; it was also deployed in challenges to the moral legitimacy of individual and collective social relations. Conspicuous deference to conventions of respectability was also a means of negotiating interventions in other spheres. Deferring to conventional sexual morality, the TAS worked around contemporary ideas about the place of women, helping them travel by minimising the danger this posed to their personal safety or social status.

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[61] Minutes of Executive Committee of TAS, 20 March 1892, 4TAS/A2/1: Original emphasis.

Deference to conventional morality liberated women in important ways, but it turned a blind eye to the reasons these conventions existed: the fundamental power relations between men and women, metropolitan and non-metropolitan, in a capitalist, imperialist, patriarchal society. Deborah Gorham (1978) has argued that attitudes towards prostitution in Victorian London, which underpinned the more general work of organisations such as the TAS, failed to recognise the social and economic rather than simply (im)moral reasons why girls and women prostituted themselves. Like purity activists and organisations including William T. Stead and the NVA, the TAS did acknowledge aspects of the class- and gender-specific vulnerability of girls and women whom they sought to protect. Stead argued that 'wealth is power, poverty is weakness,'[62] while the ladies of the NVA and TAS recognised the pressures of poverty and unemployment that drove many young women to leave home in search of paid work.[63] And yet, these activists presented very limited solutions to the underlying causes of vulnerability. Perhaps their conservatism was simply pragmatic, for it was inevitably more feasible to protect women (the TAS project) or to regulate and restrain powerful men (which the NVA tried to do) than it would have been to overturn the social order that produced wealthy men, had they been so inclined. Perhaps it was simply pragmatic to organise interventions around distinctions between immoral and moral geographies, danger and safety, sexy and unsexy spaces. But their deferent negotiation of the safe and the unsexy played a part in the reproduction of the moral centre and the power relations that rested upon it.

In this paper I have argued for the need to broaden research on sexuality and space, moving away from the repetitive preoccupation with gay men, lesbians and female prostitutes in western cities, and more generally with homosexuals and overtly sexualised heterosexuals, to pay more attention to more subtle expressions of heterosexuality and the moral centre ground. But while I agree with Bell and Valentine (1995, p. 12) and Hubbard (1999, p. 2) that more attention should be turned to heterosexual spaces, this will be a limited agenda, just as heterosexuality and homosexuality are limited sexual categories. Binary constructions of heterosexuality and homosexuality, normality and deviance, the invention of which historians of sexuality have traced to western Europe in the 1860s (Foucault 1978; Katz 1995), have limited reach. In western countries their acceptance has been particularly weak in the countryside and provinces, and among religious groups, libertarians and a diverse mixture of others who subscribe to anachronistic or oppositional understandings of sexuality (Phillips, Watt and Shuttleton 2000). These terms have also been actively rejected by intellectuals and activists who

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[62] Pall Mall Gazette, 6 July 1885, 1

[63] 'Perils for girls at home and abroad, Sentinel, August 1881, 25

declare themselves to be anti-gay, after-gay, post-gay and/or queer (Simpson 1996; Sinfield 1998). Outside the west, terms such as *gay, lesbian, bisexual and queer* have still less currency. For example, western academics and activists may use terms such as bisexual to describe the behaviour of certain men in the Arab world, but those men rarely do (see Hemmings 2002; Gollain 1996). I would argue that the recent tendency to apply the term *queer* to sexual subcultures in non-western countries is equally problematic, another metropolitan projection. Since sexualities are understood in different ways in different places and among different peoples at different times, there can be no substitute for specific recognition of the multiple forms of sexuality, which do not collapse into either western models or each other in any generic way (Gallagher 2005; Jackson 1995). Critical research on the moral centre ground should not, therefore, be identified too closely with heterosexuality, and it must be open to the multiple forms that sexual normality can assume.

To speak of deconstructing the moral centre ground, and to think how this might work differently in metropolitan and non-metropolitan locations, is to frame a project that transcends sexuality politics in any narrow sense, and resonates most closely with postcolonial intellectual and political projects, concerned with writing back to and against material and metaphorical centres of power in all their forms.

Acknowledgements

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