



‘I Do Down-Under’: Naturalizing Landscapes and Love through Wedding Tourism in New Zealand

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Abstract

This paper examines the importance of place for wedding tourism. A focus on tourist weddings offers a unique opportunity to examine critically the ways in which wedding rituals rely on ‘natural’ landscapes to produce ‘down-under’ weddings. Drawing on material from a New Zealand television documentary ‘I do down-under’, New Zealand wedding tourism websites and brochures, plus interviews with wedding tourism operators, I offer an analysis of New Zealand destination weddings. I suggest that heteronormative tourist weddings and New Zealand landscapes constitute each other as ‘natural’, 100% pure, exotic and romantic. Landscapes such as white glaciers, rugged mountains, lush green subtropical forests, blue water coastlines and golden beaches are promoted as part of the wedding package. In turn these moral geographies of tourist weddings naturalize and romanticize heterosexuality. Furthermore, the landscape takes on the

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role of family and friends who are ‘escaping’ down-under to marry. Throughout this paper I employ moral geographies and feminist poststructuralist theories to show that heterosexuality and nature spaces have no ontological or fixed status apart from the various acts which constitute their realities. Wedding tourism, therefore, is a useful lens through which to highlight the production of heterosexual bodies and spaces.

Key words: weddings, tourism, nature, heteronormativity, moral geographies, romantic love

Introduction

‘An exotic South Pacific wedding and honeymoon in New Zealand is 100% pure romance’ (<http://www.chc-weddings.co.nz/>), according to the Cashmere Heights Weddings’ webpage. Wedding clients are lured to ‘Romantic New Zealand’ with images of white glaciers, rugged mountains, lush green subtropical forests, blue water coastlines and golden beaches. I too am lured by this advertisement, not to marry on the beach, in the bush, or on a mountain, but to think critically about heterosexuality, landscapes, nature, love and tourism.

Phil Hubbard (2000) remarks that geographers have been slow to examine heterosexuality. The valuable work on sexuality and space has a firm focus on queer geographies, but there has been a dearth of writing on heterosexual desires (and disgusts). Within the broad scholarly field of tourism studies, critical examinations of heterosexuality are absent. Furthermore, the conceptual power of heterosexuality is underserved by tourism studies. Some academics have addressed tourism and honeymoons (Dubinsky, 1999) and gendered and sexualized place promotion (Goss, 1993) but have not yet turned their attention to weddings. My research responds to Hubbard’s (2000, 206) claim that: ‘there appears to be little overt consideration of how moral heterosexual performances are naturalized in a variety of ‘everyday’ social settings, either public or private’.

Weddings might be understood as the public performance party piece of heteronormativity. As rituals, part of their work is to present a type of ‘natural’ heterosexuality that conceals historical and material changes. While no wedding works as a transparent window into social structures, they may be, however, powerful markers of a couple’s ‘normality’, morality, productivity and ‘appropriate’ gendered subjectivities. Hubbard (2000, 194, italics in original) explores

how particular expressions of heterosexuality are constructed as moral or immoral in particular spatial and temporal contexts, with the boundary between what is considered ‘normal’ and what is regarded

as 'perverted' being struggled over in a variety of sites (which, importantly, also exist as visual *sights*).

Examining the moral geographies of heterosexual performances at tourist weddings offers a starting point to explore how heterosexuality is naturalized in and through space. At the same time, the site/sight and embodied experience of New Zealand landscapes may be further naturalized by tourist weddings. By drawing on feminist and poststructuralist theories (Butler, 1990, 1993) I hope to denaturalize these landscapes of heterosexual love. Discursive constructions of nature (Little, 2003; Little and Leyshon, 2003) come under scrutiny as I highlight the constitutive relationship between landscapes and love.

Here I examine representations of New Zealand destination weddings. The business generated by New Zealand wedding tourism has increased by 300 per cent over the last 10 years. In 2003 1000 couples came to New Zealand to marry, and in 2004 it increased to 1200 couples. This business is estimated to contribute about 30 million dollars each year to the New Zealand economy (TVNZ, 2004).

I was prompted to begin this research after I watched a Television New Zealand documentary 'I Do Down-Under' that screened in New Zealand in April 2004 (TVNZ, 2004). The documentary follows a wedding tourism operator – Vanessa Leeming – during her peak business season as she runs one of New Zealand's biggest wedding planner companies 'Cashmere Heights Weddings' (<http://www.chc-weddings.co.nz/>). Her website states that the company 'designs simple elopement weddings to large weddings with guests' (<http://www.chc-weddings.co.nz/>). These wedding options are always enfolded into iconic landscapes, such as Mount Cook, Lake Tekapo and Queenstown. Leeming gets 'asked to do all sorts of different weddings. Outdoor weddings, garden weddings, beach weddings, um, weddings on mountain tops. Really whatever anyone has planned, or has an idea for, I'm really happy to try' (TVNZ, 2004).

I draw on this material to illustrate that that particular powerful performances of sexuality – in this instance heterosexuality – are deemed by hegemonic society as proper, respectable, moral and normal. Hubbard (2000) discusses ideas of morality which have served to naturalize the view that sex must be based on an exchange which is meaningful both emotionally and materially. Weddings are the symbolic rite-of-passage for heterosexual men and women entering the institution of marriage and as such they formalize the moral pathway to sexual acceptability.

This paper first outlines literature associated with heterosexuality, destination weddings, and dominant moral discourses that help sustain and reproduce its hegemony. I offer a short review of current theorisations of heterosexuality, space and tourism. Second, I turn my attention to specific New Zealand destination wedding case studies and consider their moral geographies. I

argue that place and heterosexuality become mutually constituted as ‘romantic and 100% natural’. Furthermore, landscapes take on the role of family and friends who are ‘escaping’ down-under to marry. Throughout this paper, I attempt to unsettle heteronormative bodies and nature spaces.

Sexuality, place and tourism

This research brings together two areas of research – embodied geographies of sexualities, and moral geographies - and seeks to make contributions to tourism knowledges. Tourist academics have responded to the sexual and erotic component of tourism, although very few accounts make explicit reference to embodied sexuality (but see Johnston, 2005; Veijola and Jokinen, 1994). Adrian Franklin and Mike Crang (2001, 5) note that this is ‘the trouble with tourism and travel theory’ and urge investigations into the sensual, embodied and performative dimensions of tourism. While tourism studies tends to down play the connection between sexuality and embodiment; romance, heterosexual love and weddings are at the forefront of tourism marketers’ minds (Ingraham, 1999).

One of the reasons for the absence of the gendered and sexualized body in tourism is that until relatively recently tourism has been dominated by visualism, based on the centrality of vision to concepts of modernity and abstraction (Macnaghten and Urry, 2001; Crawshaw and Urry, 1997). I have suggested, along with others (Franklin and Crang, 2001) that tourist studies have privileged the visual and consequently have perhaps too readily colluded in writing other bodily experiences out of tourism (Johnston, 2001). I do not wish to undermine the significance of the visual or of tourist gazes. I am concerned, however, with a more gendered and sexually embodied approach to tourism research.

Bodies are moving towards a more central position in tourism studies, and researchers using social and cultural theories are paying more attention to tourists’ physical action and experience. It has been noted that tourist academics do not speak of love too often (Singh, 2002). A special issue of *Tourist Studies* (2003) addresses the relationship between tourism, the body, subjectivity and space. David Crouch and Luke Desforges (2003, 19) note that ‘the body emerges as a central feature in developing the larger cultural questions in tourist studies concerning identity and power’. Interestingly, none of the papers in the special issue address gendered and sexualized bodies. Cara Aitchison (1999, 2001, 2003) provides useful material for tourism academics who do focus on gendered and sexualized embodiment. Bringing together tourism studies, gender studies and cultural theory, she adopts poststructural and postcolonial feminist theorising to problematise the construction of the Other in tourism (Aitchison, 2001). Vincent Del Casino and Stephen Hanna (2000) engage with questions of performance, heterosexuality and sex tourism spaces in Thailand. Using tourism maps, the authors consider how

various representations may normalize and simultaneously challenge the naturalizing practices of heterosexuality, sex work and tourism.

Elsewhere I have written about the growth of queer tourism and the greater visibility of lesbians and gay men as consumers (Johnston, 2005). Queer tourism has prompted a flurry of critical attention and research that acknowledges and analyses gender and sexuality as key cultural constructs in the social construction of place, space and landscape (see Binnie, 2004; Puar, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c; Richardson, 2005).

Critical social theories have been crucial to the understanding of leisure landscapes as social and cultural geographies of imagination (Aitchison, 1999). Gillian Rose (1993, 89) states, 'whether written or painted, grown or built, a landscape's meanings draw on the cultural codes of the society for which it was made'. New cultural geographies emphasise that bodies 'differently engaged and differently empowered, appropriate and contest their landscapes' in different ways (Bender, 1993, 17).

Landscapes are thus polysemic, and not so much artefact as in process of construction and reconstruction ... The landscape is never inert, people engage with it, rework it, appropriate and contest it. It is part of the way in which identities are created and disputed, whether as individual, group, or nation-state (Bender, 1993, 3).

For many wedding tourists, New Zealand is synonymous with 'nature' tourism. The country's tourism board sells the country as '100% Pure', building upon and promoting the nation's reputation as one of the world's premier 'natural' destinations, with plenty of opportunities to be 'awed' (<http://www.purenz.com/>; Cloke and Perkins, 1998). Spaces of nature and wilderness are often places for the expression of very conventional forms of heterosexuality (Phillips, 1995; Woodward, 1998, 2000). In the empirical material of this paper, I suggest that wedding tourism plays a key role in helping to produce New Zealand's nature spaces as 100% pure, natural and heterosexual.

This paper draws on material that has been gathered from a variety of different sources. As previously mentioned, I draw primarily on a television documentary called 'I Do Down-Under' screened in New Zealand on the 5th of April, 2004. The documentary follows Vanessa Leeming, the director of Cashmere Heights Weddings, over the duration of a week in February 2004. The documentary is an in-depth examination of the planning and rituals of five weddings. The couples in the documentary come from the Netherlands, the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom and Japan. Viewers are told the age of the youngest couple (early 20s) and I estimate that the oldest wedding tourist featured in the documentary would be aged late 30 to early 40s. Interviews with wedding tourism operators have since confirmed that the average age of wedding tourists is

approximately 30 years old. Tourism operators have also estimated that 60 percent of their clients come from Japan, while 40 percent tend to be from European countries or the United States. The documentary, however, focuses more on European and United State tourists, rather than wedding clients from Japan.

The second source of material on which this paper draws involves semi-structured interviews with staff at three Christchurch wedding tourism companies and participant observations at the 2006 Christchurch annual Festival of Flowers and Romance (see www.festivalofflowers.co.nz). Christchurch is an important site for wedding tourism as the former Vicar of Fendalton (a suburb of Christchurch) - Canon Bob Lowe - was first to promote weddings to Japanese tourists in the 1970s. This early initiative encouraged a wedding tourism industry based in Christchurch (but has since expanded throughout New Zealand). Four people interviewed were able to provide me with their own stories of tourist weddings, wedding tourism promotional material (brochures, glossy portfolios and links to their web pages) and comment on the TVNZ production 'I Do Down-Under', which is the main source of data for this paper. The narratives from interviewees, participant observations, brochures, web pages and company portfolios confirm that the television documentary reflects dominant discourses of wedding tourism in New Zealand.

100% Pure: Nature and Heterosexuality

All couples in the 'I Do Down-Under' documentary had been made aware of New Zealand's landscapes through discursive representations such as film, television, websites and literature. When asked why they had chosen New Zealand for their wedding ceremony Arianne and Sebastiaan, from the Netherlands, remarked:

Arianne: We've come to New Zealand because we've seen a lot of it from television and on movies, so we thought it was a beautiful country to go to.

Sebastiaan: Also, we've seen a lot on Discovery Channel for years and years (TVNZ, 2004).

Klaus and Petra, from Germany, express similar discursive imaginations of New Zealand landscape.

Klaus: I first learnt about New Zealand, I think when I was a boy, on this television channel there was a documentation about New Zealand's fern trees and they were special to New Zealand. You

can't see them anywhere in the world. So I saw this and I wanted to go to New Zealand. It's like a dream.

Petra: I too also wanted to go to New Zealand because of the beautiful surroundings. Nature untouched and unspoilt and that's something you don't get in Europe, in Germany (TVNZ, 2004).

Gavin and Kristine, a couple from the UK, reinforce the idea of New Zealand as somewhere exotic and extraordinary to have their wedding. 'Somewhere different isn't it? It's somewhere we've always wanted to go – to New Zealand' (TVNZ, 2004). Similarly, Han and Christine, from the US, remark: 'the backdrop of this wedding [at Mount Cook] would be more extraordinary than any of my friends' weddings' (TVNZ, 2004). As Han and Christine drive through the foothills of the Southern Alps towards Mount Cook for their wedding, Han compares places. 'Sydney, Tokyo, Chicago, New York. They're cities with the same sorts of things there. You come out here and it's different, it's exotic. That's why I like it out here' (TVNZ, 2004).

The discursive construction of New Zealand as unspoilt, natural, exotic and pure is common-place and rigorously promoted in tourism marketing discourse. The official 'Pure New Zealand' tourism website runs a video showing six '100%' landscapes: 100% pure awe, 100% pure wonder, 100% pure exhilaration, 100% pure welcome, 100% pure indulgence, 100% pure escape (http://www.newzealand.com/travel/souvenirs/video-library/super-tvc/super-tvc_home.cfm).

In each of the '100% pure landscapes' young white European male and female couples are depicted interacting with 'nature' and being romantically involved with each other. In four of these landscapes they are 'alone' in New Zealand. Consider the following text from the New Zealand tourism website:

Immerse yourself in the awe-inspiring majesty of New Zealand's scenery, and be amazed like never before. The untouched beauty of New Zealand extends from north to south and coast to coast, from snowy peaks to rugged fiords, spectacular waterfalls to glaciers and boundless ocean ... The South Island's spectacular Milford Sound is emblematic of the New Zealand scenic experience: nestled amid towering cliffs in Fiordland, it is an untouched haven with a unique mystical beauty
(http://www.newzealand.com/travel/souvenirs/video-library/super-tvc/super-tvc_home.cfm).

Words such as 'primal beauty', 'ancient', 'untouched', 'escape', and 'complete relaxation' appear liberally throughout the website. In these remote and beautiful nature spaces, couples ride horses along beaches, sail yachts close to

waterfalls in Fiordland, walk through native tree forests and stroke the trees, ski down snowy mountains, and stay in isolated bush huts on the edge of rivers. Couples both touch the landscape and each other in this tourism promotion. They appear happy, excited, content, and sexually aroused. These various expressions of heterosexuality and gender are considered 'moral' and normal, and New Zealand's wild and exotic nature becomes loving and romantic space. Wedding tourism websites adopt these discourses to further the claim that a wedding in New Zealand is 100% pure romance. The more 'exotic' or 'natural' the landscapes presented, the more enticing it is for tourists who, by many accounts, seek 'other' experiences (MacCannell, 1999; Shields, 1991; Urry, 1990).

I asked a wedding tourism operator, who had been in the business since 1987, what he thought of the 100% pure New Zealand Tourism marketing campaign.

Lynda: It does work well, that 100% pure marketing campaign, doesn't it? Are there links between people wanting to be in a pure environment for the start of their *new* lives together?

Aaron: Yes and its got safety connotations. A pure place is pure in thoughts, it's going to be a welcoming place ... The word pure is a magnificent word because it translates uniquely into, um, special cleanliness. The Japanese translation, I've forgotten it now, but the Japanese translation of pure is like six words but it actually means 'open to you', un, un-dirtied, or un-muddied. But also in our [Pākehā/European or 'white' New Zealander] attitudes we sort of see the other side of dirt as pure. Pure is always good (individual interview, 15 February 2006, emphasis in original).

Significantly, Aaron adopts his interpretation of a Japanese understanding of 'pure' to make connections between nature and heterosexual relationships. In common with other tourism wedding operators he made comments about selling New Zealand's 'clean and green' image to wedding tourism clients. He appropriates his Japanese understanding of pure to make links to a Pākehā (Western) understanding of pure – that which is *not* dirty. Dirt, or the un-pure, may provoke anxiety and disgust by those who identify with a particular moral geography such as romantic love spaces (Cresswell, 2005).

To adopt Hubbard's (2000) argument, these landscapes ('real' and imagined) are morally acceptable and crucial for defining heteronormativity, tourism and nature. Sexual identities are imbued with moral values which encourage and normalize the creation of idealized 'pure' heterosexual couples and place – New Zealand. These expressions of heterosexuality are 'in place' in New Zealand's 'natural landscapes', and not transgressed or contested (Cresswell, 2005).

The notion of 100% pure has particular resonance in relation to constructions of heterosexual love. Feminists have discussed meanings of romantic love, focusing on the relationship between romance, emotion, women's agency and power in the context of heterosexual love (Jackson, 1999; Langford, 1999). Romantic love serves to 'validate sexual activity morally, aesthetically and emotionally' (Jackson, 1999, 103) and may help alleviate fears about sexual and emotional exploitation. The transformative power of love is comparable to the transformative power of being a tourist; put simply, to overcome mundane and everyday routines.

Hence the transformative power of (romantic) love, its ability to turn frogs into princes. One of the most obvious appeals of romantic fiction is that it enables readers to relive the excitement of romantic passion without having to confront its fading and routinization. In real life we too often discover that our prince was only a frog after all (Jackson, 1999, 116).

What is operating here is a discursive system that produces and regulates sexual identities of bodies and places. Judith Butler (1990, 151 n6) refers to this dominant regulatory system as the 'heterosexual matrix', that is, 'that grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalized'. Dominant discourses of heterosexuality clearly organise these nature spaces of tourist weddings, as the next section shows.

Alone Together in Nature

When the bride and groom are gathered together into an 'exotic' down-under 'primitive' locale, heterosexuality is enfolded into nature, and nature into heterosexuality. The destination wedding entwines sexuality with a sensory appreciation of landscape. The wedding, which is usually followed by a honeymoon, extends the emotion, erotic and exotic between man and woman to New Zealand landscapes.

By isolating the couple, the destination wedding makes marriage significant to only the couple. A wedding away from family and friends may escape the polymorphous perversions that are latent in the wedding as well as the couple's triangulation with wedding officials and state. In a sense then, New Zealand landscape takes on the role usually occupied by family and friends. The shift from people visiting the couple's wedding party, to the couple visiting 'wedding places' suggests that the consumption of an unfamiliar environment becomes increasingly central to the production of nuptial privacy. Couples alone together in nature are able to distinguish their marriage from, and elevating it above, other affectionate bonds. The function and meaning of weddings has changed according to different

times and spaces. Elizabeth Freeman (2002) sketches a history of weddings and notes that marriage was once a means of subordinating a couple's relationship to a larger social framework. It is now 'more and more a means of separating a couple from broader ties and obligations' (Freeman, 2002, 11).

To return to the television New Zealand documentary 'I Do Down-Under', Arianne and Sebastiaan's wedding, Leeming notes, is in 'a secluded west coast beach [Punakaiki] and it has a real New Zealand feel to the whole, whole wedding and that's what the couple wanted – a really New Zealand wedding' (TVNZ, 2002). Leeming tells us that: 'legally they aren't able to be married in two different countries. So they have chosen to have a ceremony which reflects their relationship, more of a relationship ceremony' (TVNZ, 2004). Marriage and weddings have been regulated by an overlapping sequence of institutions and different states. State control over marriage is relatively recent and as such the wedding might be understood as more than just a ritual of the state.

For Arianne and Sebastiaan's wedding Leeming has organised hair, make-up, flowers, photographs, a wedding celebrant, and accommodation. Arianne wears a flowing white dress and Sebastiaan a suit. They walk with bare feet on the sandy beach. The nature space of their wedding – a deserted beach – is wholly embraced by the couple in that their bodies are regulated by conventions of both wedding *and* beach attire. The secluded beach wedding reinforces New Zealand as remote, exotic, pure and isolated. The couple have chosen nature to witness their wedding, rather than family and friends. Sebastiaan and Arianne explain:

Sebastiaan: Our marriage here is a big, big secret. The idea was to go off somewhere and marry and then come back and tell our family. This New Zealand wedding is practical because we both have *mothers that want something to do with it*.

Arianne: My mother thinks we are in Greece.

Sebastiaan: My mother thinks we are in Italy (TVNZ, 2004, emphasis in original).

It is useful to remember that a couple's agency over their wedding is a product of the institutionalisation of a variety of social practices, rituals and laws. What seems normal or natural for heterosexual weddings (not having family and friends attend New Zealand tourist weddings) has sifted and changed, as Freeman (2002, 11) notes:

Before the Christianisation of Europe, fathers, families, and community customs regulated marriage, to be followed by priests and the church, then by magistrates and the civil law, now inflected

by a commercial industry, with the couple's authority over their own marriage waxing and waning alongside these institutions.

The couple, Leeming, a marriage celebrant and photographer perform their various wedding roles on a secluded west coast beach under perfect blue sky. Vows are made, rings are exchanged, and champagne is popped. The viewers of the documentary are treated to a shot of the newly weds walking barefoot, arms linked, along the beach as the afternoon sun dips below the sparkling watery horizon. Arianne confirms: 'this is exactly what we wanted to do, without family, just two of us, just cosy' (TVNZ, 2004). Ironically, and not noted by the couple nor seen by documentary viewers, they must have had several other people at the ceremony who were involved in the filming.

Escaping to a more domesticated type of nature was the desire of UK couple Gavin Luke and Kristine Wilson. Kristine expresses the 'problems' of a wedding held at home:

It's away from all the hassle of planning, all that planning that has to go into a church wedding back home and who to invite, who not to invite, people who you haven't seen for years and years and years and people you don't really like but you think, oh, I should really invite them. So this takes all of that away so we can just be together and away from all of that, which is great (TVNZ, 2004).

A priest performs the ceremony for Kristine and Gavin in a church just beyond Christchurch city. A coastal suburb, Sumner, is chosen for the sea views and the desire to have wedding photos taken on the beach. The church ceremony is performed in both te reo Māori and Pākehā (Māori and English language), giving reassurance that this is an exotic wedding but with familiarity. The couple are wed without the 'fussing' of family and friends.

After the ceremony the couple, still dressed in traditional wedding costumes, go punting on the Avon River. Colonial residues make this tourism encounter intelligible as both 'home' and 'away'. The landscape is inscribed with British imperialism through naming – Christchurch, Sumner, Avon. Nature here is domesticated and controlled but still exotic. Discursive practices and imaginations of colonisation mean that for Kristine and Gavin this nature space feels like home. They are both 'in place' and comfortably 'out of place' (Cresswell, 2005). The beach and the river become their witnesses, family and friends.

Wedding photographs are elevated to high importance and the next day, Kristine and Gavin pour over their freshly made photo album. The landscape (and its various photographic permutations) functions to authorize and naturalize the wedding (Crang, 1999).

Han and Christine from the US remark that their friends are jealous that they are able to be in New Zealand and they have been instructed to 'take good pictures'. While having her hair done, Christine is asked about being away from family and friends: 'I think that being without family and closest friends on such a special day means that something is missing. At the same time we're doing this the way we want to' (TVNZ, 2004).

An online testimony from Leeming's website reinforces the notion of escape and secrecy.

All the friends and relatives were surprised to know our marriage. They loved to see our photos very much and asked many many questions about our wedding. They were very curious since it was very special and so different from the traditional Chinese wedding (Sharron and Frankie, Hong Kong) (<http://www.chc-weddings.co.nz/comments.shtml>).

The only couple in the documentary to bring family to New Zealand is Iia and Shinche from Tokyo. They are a party of nine people with their own wedding coordinator. Ideas of being 'away' and 'escaping to romantic nature' permeate their desire for a New Zealand wedding. The documentary team interview Setsuka Yajima, Tourism New Zealand Japan Marketing Manager.

First, New Zealand is perceived as a romantic destination and second, New Zealand is isolated ... so we can feel relaxed, no stress here. When we have a wedding in Japan we have lots of stress and also the cost of weddings here is much cheaper than the cost of weddings in Japan. New Zealand is romantic and has several English style churches (TVNZ 2004).

Iia and Shinche's wedding is held at Lake Tekapo at the Church of the Good Sheppard. A church wedding is often requested by Japanese couples, rather than weddings on mountains, glaciers or beaches. A traditional Western style Christian wedding, as Aaron and his wedding tourism business partner, Stephanie, claim is a radical break from Japanese wedding and marriage traditions. Consider the following advertisement for weddings at Lake Tekapo:

Naturally the Church of the Good Shepard on the shores of Lake Tekapo has captured the hearts of brides and grooms all over the world. The church is located only metres from the teal blue waters of the lake and provides spectacular views that are remembered by visitors for the rest of their lives. The church's interior matches its natural surroundings with its traditional wooden pews, exposed ceiling beams and a large window behind the alter that provides romantic views of the lake and mountains beyond. Only ministers of

religion can perform wedding services in the church
(<http://www.tekapotourism.co.nz/weddings.htm>).

For Iia and Shinche the nature space of Lake Tekapo is isolated, romantic and Christian. The church, constructed from native timbers and local stone, is a prominent and much photographed feature of the small village. The teal blue waters of Lake Tekapo look back at the wedding party through the large window as the minister performs the ceremony. As the wedding party emerges from the church another group of Japanese tourists arrive to photograph the Church of the Good Sheppard. Iia and Shinche are delighted by their new (but unknown) Japanese guests. They are fussed over and photographed in their stress-free (away from home) romantic landscape.

Being close to, and in nature, is seen to enhance social well being, reduce the stress of a 'traditional' wedding and allow the couples time to fully commit to each other (but not, necessarily, to each other's family and friends). To be married in what has become one of the world's premier nature space – New Zealand – implies a total commitment to the relationship which is contrasted to the unnatural stress and fuss of weddings at home with family. Ideas of nature are used to support heteronormativity and provide a defence of existing power relations in the construction and performance of sexual relationships (Little, 2003).

In summary, wedding tourism separates the couple from their previous social networks, glorifies their relationship with one another over their ties to parents, extended family, friends, and other lovers, past and present. In their place, nature steps in. Escaping to a tourist wedding in New Zealand romanticizes both nature and heterosexuality. The couple, like the landscapes are deemed to be pure, natural, exciting and romantically 'meant to be'. Tourist weddings in New Zealand nature spaces make heterosexuality seem natural, inevitable, and sacred.

Conclusions

This paper has sought to explore the constitutive relationship between wedding tourists and landscapes through an examination of heteronormativity, nature, and romance. The paper develops from a broader concern within research and writing on the geographies of sexualities, and more recent work focusing on heterosexual spaces and subjectivities.

The central concern of the paper has been to demonstrate how the study of heterosexuality can contribute to the wider understanding of the relationship between tourism, New Zealand's nature landscapes and sexuality. In doing so the paper has looked at the articulation of a particular ritualised form of heterosexual identity - tourist weddings - and its associated values and characteristics as

embodied in nature spaces. These sexual identities are sustained and continually recreated through a series of strategies and tactics.

New Zealand's nature spaces are not innocent back-drops, rather, they are produced and marketed as nature par excellence. Cindi Katz suggests that, 'a scratch almost anywhere on the transnational landscape will reveal, preservation and restoration facilitate the privatization of nature and space that have become the hallmark of global neo-liberalism' (1998, 58). The discursive practice of New Zealand's wedding tourism landscapes 'invite a moral reading' (Smith, 1997, 587). What counts as moral is infused with a geographical imagination 'and shot through with ideology' (Cresswell, 2005, 128).

The paper has developed ideas about the naturalization of heterosexuality in tourism nature spaces. Building on suggestions that heterosexuality can take different forms in different spaces (Hubbard, 2000; Little, 2003) the paper has argued that New Zealand tourist weddings (and their various representations) are constructed as pure, romantic, exotic, and natural. Ideas and discourses about New Zealand wedding tourism are, in particular, underpinned by the naturalness of heterosexuality and nature spaces. Weddings in remote and isolated nature spaces are seen to enhance social well being and reduce the stress of a wedding back home. Being alone together in nature implies a total and 'natural' commitment to the relationship which is contrasted to the unnatural stress and fuss of weddings at home with family. Ideas of nature are powerful defence of existing power relations in the construction and performance of sexual relationships. Heterosexuality and nature spaces have no ontological or fixed status apart from the various acts which constitute their realities. Wedding tourism, therefore, is a useful lens through which to highlight the production of heterosexual bodies and spaces. I hope that this paper raises possibilities for further critical examination of heteronormativity, nature and naturalness, romantic love and landscapes.

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