



# Affect and the history of masculinities

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – Many scholarly disciplines are currently engaged in a turn to affect, paying close attention to emotion, feeling and sensation. The purpose of this paper is to locate affect in relation to masculinity, time and space.

**Design/methodology/approach** – It suggests that historically, in a range of settings, men have been connected to one another and to women, and these affective linkages tells much about the relational quality and texture of historically experienced masculinities.

**Findings** – Spatial settings, in turn, facilitate, hinder and modify expressions and experiences of affect and social connectedness. This paper will bring space and time into conversation with affect, using two examples from late nineteenth-century New Zealand.

**Originality/value** – If masculinities scholars often focus on what divides men from women and men from each other, the paper might think about how affect connects people.

**Keywords** Masculinity, History, New Zealand, Affect

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introducing affect

Other day Sid tore my hat. Next day Donald made me upset a compound of nitric acid down my coat, burning the arm of it terrifically. Today with old trousers on knelt on one knee while skating stones [at] bathing hole and made a tear 2in. in knees. Two or three weeks ago went up to J[im] Gully's. He alone. Spent glorious evening: we are rather awkward with one another, as he is extremely refined & I always feel a boor in his company. On the other hand I am much better read & the better arguer & he in his sensitive, but to me embarrassing way, looks up to me for information. He professes to have no poetic feeling but what I have seen leads me to think differently. On evening referred to, after time [we] got on [a] track I am so enthusiastic but extremely reserved in, namely influence of souls on one another, mesmerising beauties of art, & sensitiveness, soul & body etc (Gibbs, 12 September 1883).

Fred Gibbs was a schoolboy of 16 when, in the spring of 1883, he wrote this passage in his diary. This jotting, like so many of Gibbs', is a repository of feeling, a word that appears twice in this excerpt. In sometimes disjointed prose, Fred tells of his school days – a hat tearing and acid spilling – and contrasts these moments to a “glorious” evening at a friend's house discussing poetry. The boisterousness of adolescent male jostling contrasts with the sensitivity of an awkward friendship. Fred's spaces of feeling vary markedly – from a busy school chemistry lab and a bathing hole to a parlour with two boys together, one looking up to the other. Fred Gibbs and his companions – Sid (Fred's brother), Donald and Jim – are enmeshed in moments of affect.

This paper explores the contours of affect in a particular time and place: New Zealand in the nineteenth century. I suggest that studies of masculinity have often examined what divides men from women and men from each other, but a study of affect suggests some new possibilities. Although separation and distance – whether social, geographical or political – have long been features of masculine relating, so too have connection, proximity and feeling. By looking at affective connections we can explore the relational quality of masculinities as they have been experienced in



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certain settings. This piece examines the where, when and how of affect and its instantiation in masculinity. Fred Gibbs' diary provides us with one key source, and I present another New Zealand example too: a diary of young law student Charles Prendergast Knight from the early 1890s that tells of his feelings for New Zealand's scenery and young women. These historical examples illustrate the specificities of time and place, but they also suggest how we might (re)think masculine affectivity in other contexts too.

So, what is affect, one of the most slippery of recent scholarly preoccupations? As geographer Nigel Thrift puts it, "[t]here is no stable definition of affect" (Thrift, 2004, p. 59). In spite of this, some theorists and empirical researchers have named a moment after the concept, and the "affective turn" has made its presence felt in such disciplines as psychology, sociology, geography, history, anthropology, literary studies and cultural studies (Agnew, 2007; Forgas *et al.*, 2006; Greco and Stenner, 2008; Gregg and Seigworth, 2010; Thrift, 2004; Wulff, 2007). Sometimes the term "affect" is used more-or-less synonymously with "emotion", or stretched to denote a terrain of "moods and emotions" (Forgas *et al.*, 2006, p. 6)[1]. Greco and Stenner (2008, p. 1) widen the mood/emotion pairing slightly to include passion and sentiment; Thrift (2004) adds anger, fear, happiness, joy, disgust, embarrassment, shame and grief. In these instances, affect is usually experienced as internal to the subject, even though its expressions – vocalising, crying, shouting or even writing – may be outwardly expressed.

Fred Gibbs' diary reflects some of the elements canvassed above: Gibbs felt inadequate and somewhat embarrassed when his friend expressed his refinement, for instance. But there is more to this young man's account than emotion alone: Fred's text evokes a wider embodiment of affect. What are we to make of Fred's response to the "mesmerising beauties of art etc.", and his judgement of "poetic feeling"? Gregg and Seigworth (2010, p. 2) suggest that affect can encompass "sensation and sensibility" as well as emotion. What of the moment when Fred knelt at the bathing hole and tore his trousers, for instance, or the time he and Sid scuffled over the hat? These are moments of intensity – or "felt aliveness" (Clough, 2007, p. 2) – that involve emotions but are broader than them alone.

Massumi (1995, p. 85) has more to say about "the bodily nature of affect", particularly the role of intense sensations. These, he proposes, are "most directly manifested in the skin – at the surface of the body". The skin is a particular site of intensity; in Fred Gibbs' case, a skinned knee evokes affective experience. Skin is also an interface between individual sensations and collective social endeavour. It is a permeable boundary between us and our world, marking "a body's belonging to a world of encounters" (Gregg and Seigworth, 2010, p. 2; see also Benthien, 2002; Paasonen, 2010, p. 69). When another person touches us, intensities are transferred from body to body. Touch may be affirming or antagonistic; a transmission of care or an intent to harm.

Social interaction is particularly important here. Ahmed and Stacey (2001, p. 1) write of "interembodiment", a "mode of being-with and being-for, where one touches and is touched by others". Dowling, meanwhile, regards non-verbal communication – such as Jim's sensitive looking up at Fred – as a form of "trans-action":

Affect denotes the attempt to articulate the intensities that are sensed and perceived by the body. Affect draws attention to a substratum of nonverbal, noncognitive communication between bodies, as one of the dimensions or registers of human relationships. It is an attention to the inter – or better *trans* – actions that occur between and among bodies (Dowling, 2012, p. 115).

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At this point, emotion reappears as one of several forms of affective experience. Emotions, of course, may be embodied: blushes, laughs and expressions of rage emanate or explode from the body, while fear or happiness cause feelings of discomfort or elation. Another's touch may draw forth feelings of satisfaction, desire, unease or disgust. Still, affect cannot be reduced to emotion. Sensations – the feeling of kneeling and skimming stones across the water, for instance – may not elicit an especially emotional response. Emotion may or may not overlap with other forms of affective experience.

In this paper I use the term “affect” to refer to feeling-in-interaction, where feeling is understood to include the full gamut of emotions and sensations. Affect is embodied and has its physiological elements. The embodiment of affect, though, is always socially embedded; our feelings develop within and with reference to the social settings in which we are located. This is also a reflexive matter. In “doing” affect, we both affect the world around us and are affected by it.

Space is a crucial element of this social context. Affect is always instantiated in particular geographical locations (Anderson and Harrison, 2006; Chapman and Hendler, 1999; Thien, 2005). Dowling, for example, suggests that affect involves the movement of the body through a range of spaces. Her autoethnographic example is the waitress, a worker who negotiates her own relationship to the body and emotions, and the bodies and emotions of others, as she navigates the spaces of a restaurant. “I immerse myself in the space I move in”, she writes, “I am attentive to atmosphere, to the sensations and mood [...] I am attentive to how we engage with one another and to how I relate to what is going on around me” (Dowling, 2012, p. 114). In Dowling's account, space informs and modifies affective experience (see also Davidson and Milligan, 2004).

Affect has its histories too (Agnew, 2007; Cvetkovich, 1992). Fred Gibbs' diary is a record of affect in the small New Zealand city of Nelson during the 1880s and, as we will see, his conceptions of friendship and interpersonal attachment are historically specific. Relatively few historical scholars have explored men's lives in terms of affect, although there is some writing on men, emotion and sentiment (Chapman and Hendler, 1999; Halperin, 2003; Roper, 2005, 2007). It is often assumed, in New Zealand at least, that nineteenth-century men's emotions express themselves in anger and violence, and such accounts preclude the possibility of warmth, vulnerability and an openness to connection with others (see Belich, 1996; Phillips, 1996). I would suggest a more complex analysis is required, and the diaries of Fred Gibbs and Charles Knight can provide us with new insights and widen our understanding of men's affective lives during this period.

### **The affective world of Fred Gibbs**

Young Nelson man Fred Gibbs was the son of a civil servant. His family migrated from London to Nelson, New Zealand in 1877. In 1883, at the age of 16, Fred began a series of private diaries he would continue until 1952, the year before he died. In prose laden with affective resonances, Fred's earliest diaries evoke an adolescent's world of school, home and leisure. We have already read the account of a torn hat, an acid-burned coat, a pebble skimming session and a “glorious” evening spent with another youth in contemplation of poetry.

In other diary entries, Fred tells of his feelings and bodily interactions. In April 1883 he recalled a “Scratch football match” in which “Self played, felt very awkward & nervous at first but warmed to it” (Gibbs, 26 April 1883). This was a moment of inner

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feeling and an engagement with the game itself, and we sense that Fred's movements became more fluid and confident as he "warmed to it". This excerpt evoked the male adolescent body without naming it as such. Sport was an intense space of affect, as indeed it still is (Evers, 2010). Gibbs and his friends played rough; our young protagonist was often "covered in bruises", "having skin off arms and thigh and neck, a bad ankle etc but nothing serious" (Gibbs, 29 August 1885). An arm or leg could break with a sickening snap. One such time – when it happened to someone else – Gibbs "suddenly felt very queer, but by immense effort controlled myself from fainting" (Gibbs, 1 October 1883).

On a rugby trip to Wellington, affect surfaced both on and off the field. Here is a description of a pillow fight in the dormitory after lights out:

Next morning I was awakened by a pillow & then several others were thrown at Sid & self as occupying the end beds of 2 rows. We took it half in good part merely taking possession of the pillows, in order not to make a row although I mentally determined to do something afterwards, as they came from Oldham, Cresswell and other young cads. They even dared to try & retake a pillow from Sid, whose firmness however soon made them desist. They then began to pitch them at Jones whose want of tact & extreme unpopularity soon involved him in a fracas, which was going on when Mackay entered (Gibbs, 5 December 1885).

Like the rugby match itself, the pillow fight was a game of transitory antagonisms, bodily movement and sensation. Once again, Gibbs' diary entry evokes action and sensation without detailing every move: his sketch suggests jostling, the sensation of being hit by feather-filled missiles and a mesh of embodied social connections.

This was something of a friendly "fracas", a scuffle that would be interrupted by Mackay's arrival. This chap seems to have been an overseer of the dormitory, a role he undertook with, in Fred's words, "a disagreeable imperious tone". Mackay was not amused. He told the lads they "were a gang of rascals & that he would have no more of us". The next evening, Mackay extracted repayment for the earlier disruption:

At tea that night Mackay revenged himself or rather added another provocation by having some Jalap put in the tea which made us all ill. I felt queer when trying to get to sleep, woke up later on with a cold sweat, numbed limbs & excruciating pains in stomach. [M]anaged to get to sleep but awoke worse than before to find all the boys slipping on or off their clothes & entering or departing from the room. I soon joined them & had to go downstairs 2 or 3 times before daybreak. All next day self & others too were weak & really unwell.

Although the pillow fight was rambunctious, it was less intense than Mackay's administering of the Jalap – a cathartic drug, a plant extract with similar effects to a strong laxative. Wetherell (2012, p. 10) suggests that affect "puts the visceral in touch with the social", and this is certainly true of a night's sleep punctuated by bodily pain and discomfort – and frequent hurried trips to the toilet (the following day was no doubt ruled by Jalap's main side-effect: serious dehydration). Once again, locally enacted social relations – the antagonism between Mackay and the others – gave rise to viscerally embodied experiences.

Inner emotional states can be written on and through the body. Fred Gibbs's nervousness resurfaced when he had to speak in public. The lad noted, with trepidation, a "fear of completely breaking down, & also of blushing violently" (Gibbs, 18 October 1883). His text offers up a confluence of inner feeling and embodied engagement with the world, a sense of vulnerability in the face of social interaction. This excerpt's tentativeness and confessional quality allow the reader a sense of its writer's "phenomenological experiences", to borrow Roper's (2005, p. 62) phrase.

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Sometimes the body impeded the senses. One afternoon Fred reported a “dull headache” which, he wrote, “makes it impossible for me to appreciate poetry” (Gibbs, 24 October 1883). Cultural appreciation had its affective qualities, as did the headache that got in the way. There is a gendered component here too. Of the nineteenth century, Cvetkovich (1992, p. 3) suggests that middle-class women, not men, were assumed to be “feeling individuals”. As Fred’s diaries show us, however, sensation was not solely women’s domain. Fred appreciated poetry, and when it came to literature he wrote: “I think I shall prefer E.B. Browning to Tennyson”. His responses to poetry and art were anchored in their time and place; they reflected the familial and educational environments that shaped culture, knowledge and pleasure in particular ways during the late nineteenth century. Class was significant here: Fred’s reading habits and enjoyments differed from those of many young working-class New Zealanders, who enjoyed the penny novels that told of adventure, piracy and murder (Brickell, 2014).

Affect is spatialised in Fred Gibb’s diaries, as it is in other men’s lives. This becomes especially clear when Fred Gibbs recalled a friendship with Fred Kelly, “my greatest friend”, who had died a week or so earlier. The pair got to know one another when they played rugby together at Nelson College. Fred “was a splendid quarterback, not being strong but exceedingly quick and tenacious” (Gibbs, 1 October 1883). In a long diary entry from 1884, Gibbs told of an afternoon walk and swim with Kelly and another friend, Jones:

It was a glorious summer’s day & it was in the highest spirit [...] We went to Sunday [swimming] hole and went round the upper end, where we took off shoes & socks, waded across, & undressed on margin on other side [...] We had a delightful bathe though not a long one. After it I proposed climbing the hills on the south bank & taking the beautiful walk I had discovered some weeks before, they heartily assented & off we went chatting all the way [...] we examined carefully all the landscape beneath us & revelled in its beauty. Kelly seemed to feel it immensely (Gibbs, 27 April 1884).

Here the landscape affords an affective response, offering a “delight” and a “beauty” that three young men all appreciated and “revelled in”. Fred Kelly, in particular, found the natural surroundings intensely satisfying (he “seemed to feel it immensely”). The landscape’s beauty reinforced these fellows’ affective connection with one another. As they walked and swam through these idyllic spaces, they strengthened their ties. Fred Gibb’s retelling has one key function: to emphasise the intensity of his and Kelly’s friendship. Our protagonist continued the story:

We constantly stopped to talk[;] now and again [we] raced [and] Kelly and I kept nearly abreast with Jones far behind. As we got close down by Hunter-Brown’s hill, a beautiful sunset took place [...] Then suddenly remembering that the other two were in a greater hurry than myself to get home I turned to descend, when Kelly in his simple way, expressed admiration at my description [of the sunset] and both declared I was a poet etc [...] We got down at dusk having spent a most delightful afternoon, in fact it was the most rapturous time I ever had (Gibbs, 27 April 1884).

Intensity infuses every sentence of this paragraph. Natural beauty and delight appear once again, and they reinforce the connection between Gibbs and Kelly: an admiration and description of a sunset strengthens the connection between this pair. The movement and lived intensity of bodies (“we stopped [...] we raced”) and their relative position in space (“Jones far behind”) helps to summon the emotional connection between these two young men. Fred punctuated his account with a metaphorical

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full stop: “the most rapturous time I ever had”. He then began another paragraph, evoking similar themes:

On way home, Fred and self would dash about like mad. On the flat between the two [swimming] holes, I charged at him with a towel as hard as I could go, but he dodged every time till suddenly I intercepted him and he rushed right into me head down and I caught his head between my knees. Then chased him along path [...] After gambolling like this till tired walked quietly home. Catley can't understand anything like a romp, while F[red] was the essence of buoyancy. While waiting on terrace one moonlit night [...] he was saying how he sometimes was seized with a mad fit of activity, would rush over the hills (esp. at night) jump fences, streams etc, etc, which would have frightened him at any other time. This kind of feeling [...] I have seldom experienced much of (Gibbs, 27 April 1884).

Bodies connect here, in evocative ways: “I intercepted him [...] I caught his head between my knees”. Fred Gibbs clearly admires Fred Kelly's penchant for mad dashing and pushing the usual limits of feeling. Kelly's idiosyncrasies endeared themselves to Gibbs, and he proved a close (if enigmatic) friend. As Gibbs reminisced about their “rapturous” connection, he described the nub of his and Kelly's friendship:

Kelly and I have had the most perfect understanding. Without realising it I was far more confidential with him than with anyone else. We could always enter into and sympathise with one another's moods, which I now perceive to be the greatest proof of true friendship (Gibbs, 27 April 1884).

While Gibbs delineates the activities of the friendship – swimming, walking, running – his attachment to Kelly is characterised by a sympathy of mood, experienced as a characteristic of “true friendship”.

Fred Gibbs' attachments to other men have an element of mystery about them. For instance, the young man wrote that pictures of handsome, strong-jawed men stirred in him intense feelings. A visitor stayed and gave Fred a likeness of Joseph Cook, an attractive English Methodist minister who died in 1811, aged in his mid-1930s: “Have been tremendously struck by his face. Some books and things give me a tremendous impulse at times, viz. Carlyle, Todd, etc, & this has similar effect. The finest face I think I have seen, of course I don't mean exactly in way of beauty but rather expression” (Gibbs, 18 October 1883).

On another occasion, Fred hinted at something stronger. Of an evening with a male associate in 1887, he wrote: “H. & self necessarily interfere with one another, while the most unfortunate result is that I get nervous & unnatural” (Gibbs, 9 July 1887). Unfortunately young Fred did not elaborate on the precise nature of this “interference” and “unnaturalness”. Significantly, Fred Gibbs' world was not our own. During the nineteenth century, the term “unnatural” was often used as code for sexual attachments between men, while emotional connections could be understood as “pure” expressions of a romantic friendship. Gibbs' diaries tell us he read key writers on platonic love between men, including Plato, Euclid, Virgil and the ever-popular Tennyson, whose long poem “In Memoriam” – a requiem for the poet's close friend Arthur Henry Hallam – would undoubtedly have resonated with our Nelson lad (Robb, 2003, pp. 211-212).

Was Fred Kelly our protagonist's own Hallam? Was he sexually attracted to the mysterious young “H.”? We do know Fred Gibbs wasn't much interested in young women during his early years, and he never married. He went out of his way to avoid them while walking in the hills around Nelson, and he complained when there were too

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many women and too few men at a local dance (Gibbs, 17 July 1886). “Only danced with a girl”, he wrote one evening, “and didn’t like it much” (Gibbs, 27 April 1884).

### **Charles Knight: affect, ankles and foiled romance**

If Fred Gibbs was ambivalent about women, Charles Prendergast Knight, a young law student, was quite the opposite. His diaries from 1892 to 1893 tell of his passionate feelings for the young women of his acquaintance. Like Gibbs, Knight hailed from a well-off family. His diary entries evoke a range of social settings: bushwalks, New Zealand’s coastal ships, tennis courts, the drawing rooms and gardens of Wellington’s middle classes and the well-to-do. For Charles Knight, these were all spaces of affective interaction.

Charles shared Fred’s appreciation of natural beauty. In January 1892, he and a large party of others embarked on a boat tour around the forested inlets of scenic Fiordland. When not on the vessel, they climbed hills and viewed waterfalls. Charles’s account is full of bodily exertion and aesthetic responses. “Had a stiffish climb to the top of the zigzag”, he jotted, “but [we] were rewarded by a glorious view of the harbour enhanced as it was by the shadows which broke in on the wide expanse of shore and water bathed in glorious sunlight” (Knight, 19 January 1892). Charles offered florid descriptions of intense beauty. At Preservation Inlet, “A lovely sunset lit up the mountain tops with a roseate hue which deepened in a ruddy gold” (Knight, 22 January 1892). Halls Arm had “an isle covered to the edge with dense verdure around which there flowed a belt of deep intense green” (Knight, 24 January 1892). These responses to the scenery are detailed and luscious, evoking sunsets, soaring views and the smell of the forest[2].

Such spectacular natural settings were also spaces of social interaction. After an excursion ashore, Charles “helped Miss Walter over the stream and we scrambled down to the waterfall and arrived just in time for afternoon tea which we [ate] with great gusto” (Knight, 24 January 1892). Four days later, “we climbed a track, covered in supplejack [...] which impeded our footsteps and afforded us an excellent excuse to help the ladies” (Knight, 28 January 1892). In these examples, affect intersects with objects. The supplejack twined itself around legs and impeded bodily movement but also afforded an opportunity for a particular kind of gendered interaction, one that generated a certain pleasure for Charles and the other men (unfortunately the women’s responses went unrecorded). Devoured “with great gusto”, afternoon tea provided a reward for the hard scrambling and successful gendered performances by all involved. Charles’ descriptions remind us that feeling is both internal and external to the embodied subject, a subject who may both affect and be affected by the world around him or her. Bodies – whether engaging with a view, grappling with supplejack or performing gender as they connect with others – are centres of action and reaction (Wissinger, 2010, p. 232).

Writing his diary on board ship, Knight evoked a boating culture now lost. Meal times, seasickness and quoits were all recalled in some detail. Passengers and crew took part in the occasional boating race; Knight’s team “rode very hard” and lost, but “a rub down and a lemon consoled us” (Knight, 25 January 1892). There were literary pleasures too. En route to Fiordland, Charles started reading Paul Bourget’s novel *A Love Crime* – a book the lad would later pass among his friends. This was “a story of a man who seduces his friend’s wife although he did not love her, and the remorse he feels in consequence. It is a fine study of human nature”, Charles wrote (Knight, 17 January 1892). He also applied himself to Alphonse Daudet’s *Sappho*, “a realistic

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French novel” but one, he noted with a degree of disappointment, that was “never very coarse” (Knight, 24 November 1892).

On another occasion – once again on board ship – Charles began reading Ernest Feydeau’s novel *Fanny*. This volume contained lots of overblown sentimentality and a moderate amount of “voluptuous thrilling” and bodice ripping. On one page “her white satined bodice swelled and strained to the pressure of her bosom”, and in another moment “she seized my head in both her hands, and kissed me convulsively on my lips” (Feydeau, 1888, pp. 51, 137). Charles described the order of events:

Whilst in Christchurch I bought *Fanny*, a novel by E. Feydeau. We left at 6 o’clock. I turned in at 9 and read the Introduction to *Fanny*. Had Dean Jacobs in my cabin as well as two other clergymen. There was among others a Mrs Jones and two daughters on board. One of these was rather good looking and possessed a neat ankle which she seemed to take pride in showing (Knight, 2 February 1892).

Did such reading matter sensitise Charles Knight to the pleasures of the flesh? After all, he segued from *Fanny* to an appreciation of a “rather good looking” young woman and her bodily features. Several days after Charles’ encounter with the ankle, his diary tells us, “Read *Fanny* in bed, got up in time to have a bath” (Knight, 4 February 1892). Charles often read in bed – Tolstoy, Hardy, Browning, Cicero, Plato, Burke, Shakespeare and the South African feminist Olive Schreiner, among a great many others – before rising for a leisurely soak and an exercise routine of “dumbbells and clubs”. We can imagine the sensations generated in this sequence: the quiet flicking of a book’s pages, the satisfying exertion of a dumbbell routine and a bath’s warmth.

Many of Charles’ pleasures reflected his privileged social position. On 1 June 1892 the young man turned 21, that age “when I assume the toga viriles and become a voter”. “Received heaps of presents”, he noted: opera glasses, a silver match box and silver pencil case; plum pudding at dinner followed by a night at the opera (Knight, 1 June 1892). On other days pleasant diversions were enjoyed: euchre, supper, billiards, strolls on the beach, rowing and endless games of tennis. Charles’ diary includes each game’s score. It also lists the materials of education, class and status: opera books, those French novels (Bourget’s *A Love Crime* cost 3/6), tennis balls, strawberries and cream, photography supplies, dance tickets.

Dances were highly interactive occasions, greatly enjoyed by Charles and those in his social circle. Back on board ship, men and women enjoyed “a jolly dance” as the vessel was “heaving and pitching” (Knight, 29 January 1892). With the certainties of youth and social position well established in his own mind, Charles pulled no punches in describing his feelings about those on board. He noted his thoughts on appearance, clothing and dancing ability. Christiana Walter, one of Charles’s dance partners, “looked pretty in a red ball dress”, while Mrs Allen “had a long train and was out of practice” (Knight, 23 January 1892). Miss Bull was “a very lively girl, rather good looking but has unfortunately a rather twangy voice” (Knight, 25 January 1892). Charles reserved his most scathing comment, however, for Mrs Torrance: “dances like a witch on Walpurgis night” (Knight, 30 January 1892). Some months later, back on dry land, the notes continued. In Wellington, Charles “danced with Miss Reynolds of Gisborne who waltzes like a ton of lead but is otherwise very agreeable” (Knight, 10 May 1892). In Christchurch, he “nailed the Larrikin polka with Alice J. Kneebreeches and new dance making quite a sensation” (Knight, 18 April 1892). The “larrikin polka” appears to have been an antipodean invention; one newspaper described it as “riotous”,



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another as “vulgar romping” (*Wairarapa Daily Times*, 1893, p. 2; *Wanganui Chronicle*, 1899, p. 1).

Charles Knight’s diary is not merely a document of dance hall pleasures and name-calling, for it also records this young man’s feelings of anxiety and vulnerability. Christiana Walter, the dancer in the red ball dress on board ship, was Knight’s first recorded love. He did not always spend as much time with her as he would have liked: “[Mr] Ryan interrupted a tête-à-tête between Miss Walter and myself”, he wrote. “I consoled myself with Miss Rashdale and Miss Tripp” (Knight, 24 January 1892). Having returned to Wellington after the Fiordland trip, Charles danced with Christiana once more, escorted her home to the Occidental Hotel, and the following afternoon he shared his photograph collection with her (Knight, 19 March 1892). At a dance soon after, Christiana permitted Charles three dances but not four, a fact he grumbled about in his diary: “much irated [...] parted coolly” (Knight, 1 April 1892). Still, he had no choice but to stop sulking: Christiana left the district the following day. “Oh day of parting. Goodbye my love we now must sever”, Charles wrote sadly (Knight, 2 April 1892). He took flowers and grapes to Christiana’s hotel, talked to her on board ship and then, heavy-hearted, watched her sail away.

The following year, Charles confessed his feelings for a young woman named Di. As the pair wandered in Christchurch’s Hagley Park, Di mentioned a chap by the name of Bannister. She “wondered whether he was in love”. He keeps to himself, she said, and takes long solitary walks. What follows in Charles’ diary is an account of a conversation, partly written using the Greek alphabet:

I then told her how I had gradually fallen in love with her. If to always think of one person, to model one’s life as one thinks another would wish, waking always thinking of her, to let one person dominate one’s existence is to love then I loved. She listened and said no-one had ever yet entered into her life that she could say dominated her life. “Silliness”. I bridled at this and said that I did not think of the noblest emotions and thought silliness. She apologised and said she meant it would be unwise when we are boy and girl if not both loved one another. I agree it would be unwise [...] Let us be friends (Knight, 18 August 1893, p. 39).

Crushed, Charles extricated himself from the situation. “Goodbye. Her face lit up by the crescent moon. I turned and fled hurriedly down Armagh Street”. This was a highly spatialised experience of affect. As Davidson and Milligan (2004, p. 524) suggest, “[e]motions are understandable – ‘sensible’ – only in the context of particular place. Likewise, place must be *felt* to make sense”. In this instance, Hagley Park and Armagh Street became spaces of intense feeling – abjection and rejection, even – and these feelings defined both the space and the social situation. Charles’ diary, meanwhile, was the repository of feeling for future reference. It evoked all of these places and the emotions expressed within them.

Charles Knight’s diary epitomises the “stickiness” of affect. Ahmed (2004, p. 119) describes the ways emotions “stick” together signs, figures and ideas, and move sideways and between bodies in the process of social interaction. A “sticky object” – like the diary – is one that contains much affective value. As the diary carried on through time – from early 1892 to 1893 – its emotional record became increasingly layered and more complex. The diary’s entries demonstrate the felt realities of class, gender, action, reaction, confidence and vulnerability. The diary then travelled down through time and, early in the twenty-first century, I am using it to stick together contemporary theorising of masculinity, affect and the specificities of the late nineteenth century. Charles’s diary recorded the existence of other sticky objects

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too: a copy of Feydeau's *Fanny* passed from hand-to-hand, a dance floor, a park and a street in which a romantic failure took place.

Charles Knight had a sophisticated sensitivity and his diary reveals a reflexive emotional engagement. It hints at a rich world of affect always influenced by context and social relations. In the French novels he read, his descriptions of the pleasures and hardships of travel, and the revelations about his romantic life (or the lack of it), Charles recorded his emotions, feelings and sensations in settings specific to his time and place. He also approached affect in a marvellously visceral, opinionated way, especially when it came to other people.

### **Conclusion: affect, connections, space**

Affect is a productive concept for the study of masculinities. Its wide focus – from emotion and mood to other forms of feeling, including sensation, touch and the pleasures or perils of social relationships – covers a great many elements of human experience. I have offered only two examples here, both specific to late nineteenth-century New Zealand and reflective of that time and place. Other contexts will offer other insights into lived experiences, subjectivities and the effects of social change on modes of masculinity.

I suggest that affect is best conceptualised broadly and inclusively. A matter of bodies “touched as well as seen” (Ahmed and Stacey, 2001, p. 5), affective masculinities open people to intimacies with the bodies of others. This is no essentialist move, however, for moments of affect come into being through social relationships and collective action. “Feeling practices”, to use Wetherell's (2012, p. 10) term, always reflect, refract – and often affect – the social patterns and practices of a given context. Fred Gibbs' friendships and appreciations, for instance, tell of his culture's constructions of sporting masculinity and literary taste, along with a form of male-male intimacy that pre-dated the division of subjects into one or other side of a homo/hetero binary (Brickell, 2008, 2012). Ideas change – notions of “unnaturalness” and the concept of becoming a citizen at 21, for instance – and feelings change with them. As props in affective life, the meanings of objects vary too. Some of the sticky objects in Charles Knight's life – the dance card with its associated social rituals, and the Victorians' ankle fetish, to name but two – no longer structure romantic and erotic feeling.

Affective connection, of course, need not be intimate in a positive sense. Intense connection may be pleasurable, anxiety-producing or generate ambivalent or adverse feelings, as Fred Gibbs' account shows us[3]. A torn hat, a touching moment of connection with another young man over poetry, a run-in with a dormitory supervisor and an unpleasant encounter with the cathartic Jalap were all affective moments. Each instance involves both feeling and social connection, but not always are they affectionately experienced or remembered. At the same time, a broader focus on connection and feeling allows us to explore the breadth and complexity of nineteenth-century men's relationships with one another, including their peculiar intimacies. Fred Gibbs met his best friend when both played rugby, a game that occasioned the snapping of limbs; Charles Knight experienced the dance as a moment of both pleasure and abjection – as well as an opportunity to make acerbic comments, if only to himself.

If social relationships are important, so too is social change. I have already noted that societal shifts delimit the shape of affect to varying degrees. Roper (2007, p. 266) takes a slightly different tack, suggesting that “emotional experiences can be motors of social and historical change, they can contribute not only to the emergence of new identities,

but to the refashioning of subjectivity". While my two nineteenth-century examples are small in their scale, they do suggest that their protagonists' actions – reading new literature, for instance, or discussing poetry – gave rise to transformations on a very local level. To pass around one's books – Feydeau's *Fanny* or Olive Schreiner's novels, as Charles Knight did – was to share pleasures and circulate new modes of understanding. Other periods would occasion their own pleasures and understandings.

In the study of men and affect, context is everything. A moment in history sets the scene for relationships and their meaning; class and gender both generate and delimit possibilities. Our examples speak of worlds of well-off men, worlds that sometimes included women, but not always. Sentiment is spatialised too. Affective forms and specific pleasures were moulded by their locations: on board a ship "heaving and pitching" in the open sea, on a hillside, in a dimly lit park. These places were both containers of affect in a particular time and place, and the locations for its expression. Our examples were bounded by time and place, and they gesture towards the specificities of masculinity and feeling in particular settings. Ultimately, the turn to affect provides a multitude of new agendas for research on masculinity, whether we choose to focus on the past – the world of Fred Gibbs and Charles Knight – or the specificities of the present.

### Notes

1. For a long time, Greco and Stenner (2008) suggest, emotions had been the preserve of the natural sciences, regarded as expressions of the psychobiological (p. 7). For many in the fields of neuroscience, evolutionary psychology and social cognition studies, emotions are a matter of learning, psychodynamics, "neural substrates and circuitry" (Forgas *et al.*, 2006; Greco and Stenner, 2008). Some – by no means all – social sciences and humanities scholars draw from biological sciences (see the discussion in Koivunen, 2010).
2. Roper (2007) also notes the appreciation of natural beauty in soldiers' letters and diaries from the First World War.
3. In more contemporary settings, for instance, Ahmed (2004) and Sedgwick (2003) have explored fear, shame and trauma in terms of affect.

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