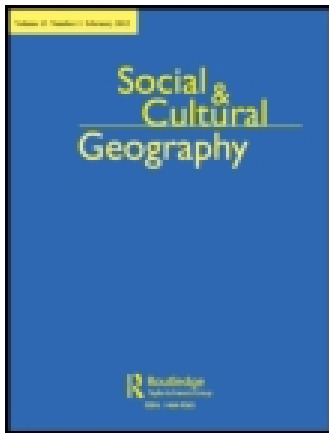


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## **Networks of affect, male homoeroticism and the Second World War: a soldier's archive**

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While geographies of affect are increasingly influential and geographies of sexuality well established, there is considerable potential for enhancing links between these subfields. This article explores the archive of a gay World War II veteran, revealing the intricacies of an intense same-sex wartime affair in New Caledonia and introducing the concept of 'networks of affect': the interconnected pathways through space and time that provide conduits for emotion and desire. This account of networks of affect, read through archival materials, provides rich insight into wartime homoeroticism and allows us to further develop embodied geographies of affect and sexuality.

**Keywords:** affect; homoeroticism; masculinity; World War II; New Caledonia; New Zealand

### **Réseaux d'affect, homoérotisme masculin et la deuxième guerre mondiale: archives d'un soldat**

Alors que les géographies de l'affect ont de plus en plus d'influence et que les géographies de la sexualité sont bien établies, il y a encore un potentiel considérable pour la mise en valeur des liens entre ces deux sous-zones. Cet article explore les archives d'un vétéran gay de la deuxième guerre mondiale, en révélant les complexités d'une liaison passionnée du même sexe en temps de guerre en Nouvelle Calédonie et en introduisant le concept de « réseaux de l'affect »: les chemins reliés à travers l'espace et le temps qui permettent la canalisation de l'émotion et du désir. Ce récit de réseaux de l'affect, lu à travers du matériel d'archives, fournit un riche aperçu d'homoérotisme en temps de guerre et nous permet de développer plus avant les géographies de l'affect et de la sexualité.

**Mots-clés:** affect; homoérotisme; deuxième guerre mondiale; Nouvelle Calédonie; Nouvelle Zélande

### **Redes de afecto, homo-erotismo masculino y la Segunda Guerra Mundial: archivo de un soldado**

Resumen: Mientras las geografías de afecto son cada vez más influyentes y las geografías de sexualidad se encuentran bien establecidas, existe un potencial considerable para mejorar los vínculos entre estos sub-campos. Este artículo explora el archivo de un veterano gay de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, dejando al descubierto los entresijos de un intenso romance de guerra entre personas del mismo sexo en Nueva Caledonia e introduciendo el concepto de 'redes de afecto': las vías interconectadas a

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través del espacio y el tiempo que proporcionan conductos para la emoción y el deseo. Esta narrativa de redes de afecto, leída a través de materiales de archivo, ofrece datos valiosos sobre el homo-erotismo en tiempos de guerra y permite desarrollar aún más las geografías corporales de afecto y sexualidad.

**Palabras claves:** afecto; homo-erotismo; masculinidad; Segunda Guerra Mundial; Nueva Caledonia; Nueva Zelanda

## Introduction

We went into the detention barracks swimming enclosure. It was such a turn-on to crush each other, and feel his lips on mine: I couldn't bear that in a few minutes I would have to let him go. I yielded to his need and for a few minutes he was inside me. God! He's wonderful! He left at ten and I, feeling very self-satisfied and reassured, went over to the YMCA. (Wildey, 21 October 1943b)

David Wildey was a young New Zealander, a medic stationed in the Pacific during the Second World War. This diary entry refers to his affair with a young combat soldier by the name of Charles Boyd. David's beautifully written diary documents his affair with Charles (known as 'Darkie') in extensive detail and tells of David's friendships, his impressions of wartime, his angst and pleasures. Set alongside a swimming pool in a military installation, my opening excerpt recalls sexual and emotional 'turn on', bodily contact, pressing 'need', the happiness of reassurance and the spaces between and within bodies, all in only five lines of text.

A small, brown, leather-bound notebook held in the Hocken archive in Dunedin, New Zealand, the diary covers two weeks in January 1943 before David left New Zealand, and the months between September 1943 and January 1944 while the 23-year-old was based in New Caledonia and the Solomon Islands. Helpfully for the reader, in 1993 David transcribed his diary and added further detail in brackets. When revising our opening excerpt, he added: 'with a bumfull of honey'. As he transcribed, he pondered: 'On reflection it amazes me how I did so much writing, presumably late at night, on my cot, under the mosquito net without burning the net or burning down the tent!' (Wildey, 21 October 1943b).<sup>1</sup> In recalling his earlier diary, David reconsidered his wartime experiences, re-reading and sometimes reinterpreting them through the lens of his later life. While a diary captures a mood at the time it was written, the process of transcribing it years later – typing out the text for oneself, family or friends – applies further layers of meaning and recasts the significance of some passages.

David Wildey's archive also contains a number of photographs, taken by him or friends, which capture slivers of wartime experience: soldiers diving and hanging about, and a treasured shot of Darkie. Along with David's autobiographical writings, these photographs – five of which I discuss in this article – illustrate affective connections and their wider social and spatial worlds. David's diary and photographs paint a vivid picture of male homoerotic desire, feeling and emotion in very particular locales: New Caledonia and the Solomon Islands during wartime.

This diary's attention to gay male experience in the Pacific during the Second World War is very rare. Some historians have explored same-sex relations between military men during the war, suggesting that distance from home and new homosocial settings afforded opportunities – as well as perils – for homoerotically inclined men (Bérubé, 1990/2010; Costello, 1985; Jackson, 2010; Willett & Smaal, 2013). A few published memoirs tell of wartime experiences in gay men's own words (Carpenter & Yeatts, 1996; Lord, 2010). The Pacific Islands, however, rarely feature in those accounts. 'Vaseline alley', a popular cruising spot in the Solomons Islands' jungle, merits the briefest of mentions: 'I used to go

there and pick up all sorts of trade and tricks', one soldier told his interviewer without further elaboration (Bérubé, 1990/2010, p. 194). We still know very little about the experiences of homoerotically inclined men, like David, who were posted to the Pacific during those years.

David Wildey's writing is often explicit, he wore his heart on his sleeve and he was keenly attuned to the vicissitudes of place. His diary is the ideal source for an exploration of the connections between sexuality, time, space and feeling. The concept of affect is useful here, even though its theorizing is wide-ranging and diverse. Sometimes the term 'affect' is used more or less synonymously with 'emotion', or stretched to denote a terrain of 'moods and emotions' (Forgas, Wyland, & Laham, 2006, p. 6). Greco and Stenner (2008, p. 1) widen the mood/emotion pairing to include passion and sentiment; Thrift (2004) adds anger, fear, happiness, joy, disgust, embarrassment, shame and grief. Some scholars draw on Spinoza, Deleuze and Guattari in order to suggest affect is a 'non-conscious experience of intensity' (Shouse, 2005) given form as subjects affect and are affected by other bodies (Brown, 2008; Gregg & Seigworth, 2010; Lim, 2007). Dowling brings together some of these strands when she suggests:

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. (2012, p. 115)

In this article I use the term 'affect' to refer to feeling in interaction, where feeling is understood to include the full gamut of emotions and sensations. Feelings may be experienced both internally (distress, for example) and externally (the warmth of a lover's touch), and they are transmitted from 'outside' to 'inside' across the boundary of the skin (Benthien, 2002; Massumi, 1995). Feelings can be visceral and highly embodied, intense or subtle, violent or peaceful. The embodiment of affect, though, is always both socially embedded and reflexive. Our feelings develop within and with reference to the social settings in which we are located, often drawing us into social relationships. 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. Our young protagonist's fulfilment involves an array of linkages between 'turn on', need, etc., and reaches its apex as he and Darkie move and connect near the pool.

The last 15 years have seen a growing interest in affective and haptic geographies, a field whose scholars consider the spatial constitution of emotion, feeling and touch (Anderson & Harrison, 2006; Johnston, 2012; Paterson, 2009). These authors note that bodies, sensations and places are mutually constituted through a set of reflexive processes and the very meaning and character of space are formed through everyday embodied practice (Dowling, 2012; Morrison, 2012). In particular, 'touch is always situated somewhere' (Morrison, 2012, p. 10), and experiences of touching reveal much about people's 'emotional and affective relations with place' (Johnston, 2012, p. 1). More than that, our relationships with others 'shape the contours of space by affecting relations of proximity and distance between bodies' (Ahmed, 2006, p. 3). Johnston suggests the turn to sexuality in haptic geographies – and to queer emotions and subjectivities in particular – is very recent (2012, p. 1). This is a response, at least in part, to a perceived 'squeamishness' within both geography and queer theory where the body has become an abstraction and questions of citizenship have largely displaced the erotic, gritty aspect of queer sex (Binnie, 2007; Brown, 2008).

This article, with its focus on the bodily and emotional intensities of David and Darkie's relationship, follows Brown's (2008) attempts – and my own (Brickell, 2010,

2012) – to explore the spaces of sex, the ways erotic connections are geographically embodied, and the interaction of bodies in place. As Brown notes, ‘men are drawn into relational structures not only with other men’s bodies, but the fabric of the space in which their encounters occur’ (2008, p. 929). The swimming enclosure, that site of ‘turn on’, need, etc., is but one location in which David and Darkie’s sexual desire took shape. At the same time, desire is not all about bare skin and body fluids; physical connections intertwine with emotional relations and other spatial pleasures. For instance, there are similarities between David Wildey’s writing and photography and the love letters examined by Orr in a recent article on queer domestic space and the archive. The 1952 correspondence between Bill and Jack speaks of physical desire (‘the warmth of your embrace and your kiss were, as ever, undenyng, fulfilling’), but also the emotions stirred by the affair (moments of ‘idyllic happiness’ and ‘longing’) and Bill’s affective experiences of Jack’s apartment (the smell of fresh coffee and the strains of ‘glorious’ music) (Orr, 2012). David’s account, like Orr’s analysis of Bill and Jack’s affective lives, weaves together forms of spatialized affect that span a range of experiences.

This article has two main strands. First, it describes David’s movements through time and space, outlining his passionate relationship with Darkie Boyd. This rich detail sets these two men’s intense interactions in their context: David’s affair with Darkie was profoundly enmeshed in a wider world of embodiment, desire, sounds, smells, visual beauty, daily hardships and social connections, and it illustrates homoerotic enmeshments rarely seen in the Second World War archive. The article’s second strand takes David’s story and develops the concept of ‘networks of affect’. This involves the interconnections between feelings, emotions and spaces, and the ways feelings travel along literal and figurative pathways – between people, spaces and people in both space and time. David’s Pacific networks included places and senses, private and public moments, feelings of pleasure and reassurance. Numerous locales were linked by the roads and pathways along which men and their emotions travelled: the Base Camp Reception Hospital where David spent much of his time, the tents of the Base Training Depot where Darkie was based, the YMCA and a range of semi-private locations in the nearby countryside. The concept of ‘networks of affect’ evokes the interconnections of time, place and sensation, expanding the scope of geographies of affect and sexuality.

### David’s travels

David Wildey was born in 1921 in Christchurch, the largest city in New Zealand’s South Island (he died in the same city in 2012). He worked as a bookkeeper for a farm machinery company and then joined the staff of a shirt factory before undergoing basic training and learning the work of the New Zealand Medical Corps. By his own account, David readily acclimatized to military life. He did not mind the discipline and, as an enthusiastic amateur physical culturist, the army’s emphasis on ‘PT’ suited him well. After three months of medical training at Burnham camp near Christchurch, he headed north to Auckland and boarded a military vessel bound for New Caledonia.

A French colony, New Caledonia was an important base for the allied forces during the Second World War. In March 1942, Noumea, the capital of the archipelago, became the headquarters of the US military’s Pacific arm after the Japanese invasion of the Solomon Islands to the north (Aldrich, 1990, 1993). Fearing eventual Japanese occupation of New Zealand some 1400 km to the south, the New Zealand government sent supplies and troops to New Caledonia, by then a strategic base, to assist in fighting the Japanese (McGibbon, 2008).<sup>2</sup> David Wildey and his fellow passengers disembarked at Noumea to a

‘wonderful unforgettable sunset’ and were transported by lorry to their camp in Tene Valley, near the settlement of Bourail. In his early weeks on the island, David worked as assistant quartermaster at the Base Camp Reception Hospital (abbreviated in the diaries to BCRH), and he soon moved on to general orderly duties. The BCRH treated mostly skin problems, burns and some infectious diseases (Gillespie, 1945, chap. 2).

David’s official duties were not especially arduous, surveillance of his movements was light and there was plenty of time for relaxation: ‘the pictures’, writing, sunbathing and swimming at a spot he dubbed ‘Shangri La’. This was ‘leisure living’, to use one of David’s own phrases (5 November 1943b). His diary describes sensations and emotions in rich detail: ‘I spent the morning, between frequent swims, washing, reading, sunbathing of course, though incidentally, and doing a little writing. The day was very hot and for once I did get rather burnt and was a little tender this evening’ (13 October 1943b). This text echoes Obrador-Pons’ (2007) discussion of ‘how it feels to be nude’ in a beach environment where bodies are interlaced with the elements. In such spaces – in this case a spot at the river rather than the beach – there is space for sensuality and enjoyment, a combination of feeling and doing. Sunburn, meanwhile, is the negative corollary of the feel of sun tickling skin (Paterson, 2009, p. 780).

Another day, David ‘worked an uneventful, mundane shift this morning and spent the rest of this afternoon at Shangri La. Had a read, a swim, a sunbathe and a “regret”!!’ (15 October 1943b). An annotation from 1993 explained the meaning of the last term in this list, ‘a wank – a jack off – which I always, and sometimes still, refer to as a “regret”, which I always did after orgasm’ (15 October 1943b). Why was this? Did the term ‘regret’ signal the ebbing pleasures of orgasm or was it a sign of guilt conditioned by David’s religiosity? As an adolescent he belonged for a time to the Evangelical Church of Christ, proclaiming an attachment to God that would wane after the war ended. Whatever the meaning, this idiosyncratic usage stayed with David in later life. In Obrador-Pons’ terms, David’s diary tells of the ‘affectual body open to the environment’ (2007, p. 129). In this private space of enchantment, a spot much less constrained than most of the spaces in the military compound, David felt the sun and his own body simultaneously, a sunbathe sliding into something more (auto)erotic.

David travelled through a range of spaces and affective experiences. Early one evening, he ‘saw Barbara Stanwyck in *Lady of Burlesque*. Awful trash! Barbara looked cheap – but beautiful!’ (6 September 1943b), and another night he experienced the particularities of the local climate: ‘Tonight I watched the most violent electrical storm that I have ever seen; away to the north-east, it was beautiful, incredible and scary! It seemed to last for hours’ (18 September 1943b). In such moments of intensity, experiences of nature carried an erotic charge. As Gandy (2012) points out, sexual and sensual bodies can be understood not as the possessions of single human subjects, but as complex entanglements with their physical surroundings, be they swimming holes, the sun, the night sky or the cinema. Eroticism could be implicit as well as explicit. One evening, David recalled, ‘[I] took a lovely hot shower before mess. Stowell, Johnston and some other officers came to shower and were curious about my all-over tan and asked how I came by it. Envious! Too shy to divulge I nonetheless positively glowed with the attention and my self-satisfaction’ (31 October 1943b). The effects of private sunbathing were all too evident – if not openly disclosed – in a group of curious military personnel.

‘Military geographies’, to borrow Woodward’s (2004) phrase, had both physical and social elements, and these shaped affect in particular ways. David described another afternoon like this:

After tea-break I went back down to Sh. La, lit my fire, boiled up one or two things, read, washed and swam, altogether my idea of a pleasant, satisfying way to spend my time alone. This evening I went to the BTD [Base Training Depot] canteen then on to the new recreation bure, Bourail Club. What a wonderful place! I was absolutely aroused! Everything so fresh and clean and new; built on a spacious, luxurious scale and with choices of entertainment, and every facility and comfortably furnished. I eventually settled into an enjoyable evening reading. (19 November 1943b)

Like my opening extract, this text is laden with sensation: arousal, comfort, luxury, enjoyment, pleasure and satisfaction. In his general history of the Second World War, Bérubé (1990/2010, p. 101) notes that the service clubs were popular places for queer personnel to catch up with friends, and this was true of David too. Wal McConnachie and John Waldie became especially good pals of David, notwithstanding an occasional falling out. These three sometimes swam together and hung out at the YMCA: ‘I took Johnny to the rendezvous, rather proudly, since it’s such a unique spot. We dropped in at the YM for a cup of tea, then back to camp again. A pleasant morning’ (11 September 1943b). Wal, John and David posed together for the camera at one swimming hole (see Figure 1). We see them composed symmetrically, wearing broad grins and a full set of clothes – an unusual get up, perhaps, in a site of leisure and relaxation in such a warm climate. Formality and informality intersect here, but the men are clearly comfortable in each others’ company. The spot’s seclusion visually reinforces the triad’s affective connection.

The arrival of new recruits to New Caledonia, en masse and names unknown, provided cause for further excitement, and David’s notes are impressionistic responses to a large body of new men on the archipelago. ‘Some of them are beautiful – handsome, and maybe “thrilling” company’, David jotted; ‘others looked a “bit much”’. In 1993, reflecting upon his time in New Caledonia, he described the subsequent dissolution of beauty: ‘in time



Figure 1. From left to right: Wal, John and David at a private swimming hole, New Caledonia. Reproduced by permission of Hocken Collections (S11-500f).



they would lose it as the novelty of being in the tropics wore off and the mosquitoes and the mundane, humdrum existence took its toll' (20 October 1943b). As this excerpt hints, pleasure alternated with boredom among those stationed in the non-combat zone of New Caledonia.

David Wildey's account of a week's leave in Noumea traces physical discomfort and its remedy, the thrill of a crowd and a fleeting friendship. David and other men travelled from Bourail to Noumea in the back of a truck. 'We were all tired and dirty when we arrived, and our eyes were sore from the dust so we welcomed a good cold shower and clean up' (28 November–5 December 1943b). Soon rejuvenated, David watched the indigenous Kanaks, the French, and 'thousands of Yanks in uniform' and spent time in the American Red Cross Servicemen's Club. Over the course of a few days, he hung out with Eddie Ladeau, a US Marine. One afternoon David 'laid it on the line', but Eddie was unresponsive. David's attempt at seduction foiled, they went to the beach where, David noted happily enough, Eddie 'looked good in briefs' (28 November–5 December 1943b). Not all American servicemen proved quite so reluctant. Some time later, David enjoyed 'a torrid escapade with a nice, friendly Marine':

We walked out of town into a suburb and apparently, looking for somewhere private, entered the grounds of a very big convent. We followed a path through the garden up-hill to a small retreat or summerhouse at the end. I cannot recall what sex took place but vividly recall that he had just cum on the floor when I happened to look up in time to warn him that a senior nun or mother was hurrying along the path towards us. We'd obviously been seen from the convent. We passed her guiltily without a word. She did not attempt to stop us, nor do I recall that she even spoke. (28 November–5 December 1943b)

This excerpt conjures up the spaces of desire: the shade of a summer house, the pleasure of orgasm, the threat of an encounter with a disapproving nun. The latter cut straight across David's religious commitments, the adverb 'guiltily' signalling the transgression. Still, the religious setting seems to have intensified rather than blunted its sexual appeal. Gandy writes of 'queer ecologies', with their arenas of 'doubt, self-criticism, and the possibility of liberation', that incorporate 'nonhuman nature, inanimate objects, surfaces, and smells' (2012, pp. 730, 738). Here desire took shape in a garden full of palms, hibiscus, bougainvillea and fragrant frangipani; affect encapsulated space, sensation and the ways bodies both affected and were affected by one another ('he had just cum on the floor/we passed her guiltily').

### David and Darkie

David Wildey's encounters with the US Marines paled into insignificance when compared to his passionate relationship with Charles 'Darkie' Boyd, a regular soldier and fellow New Zealander. Darkie was 23, the same age as David, a warehouse storeman in his civilian life and a keen rugby player. The pair met at the hospital in Bourail after Darkie had been admitted with fluid on the knee. David and Darkie talked for hours and Darkie 'unburdened a lot: about his family, his whole life from childhood, his work, his ambitions, his weaknesses! [...] I used to help him exercise his leg, and with the intimacy of physical contact, and his dependence, the bond grew and I began to care about him' (26 October 1943b). David went on to document the physical features that attracted him to Darkie: 'five-foot-nine of muscle and tan, sad eyes brown but alive, a little scar over the right brow, dark complexion, dark hair' (29 October 1943b).

David managed to take only one photograph of his new friend with his Box Brownie camera, framed by the tents and guy-wires of the camp near Bourail (see [Figure 2](#)).

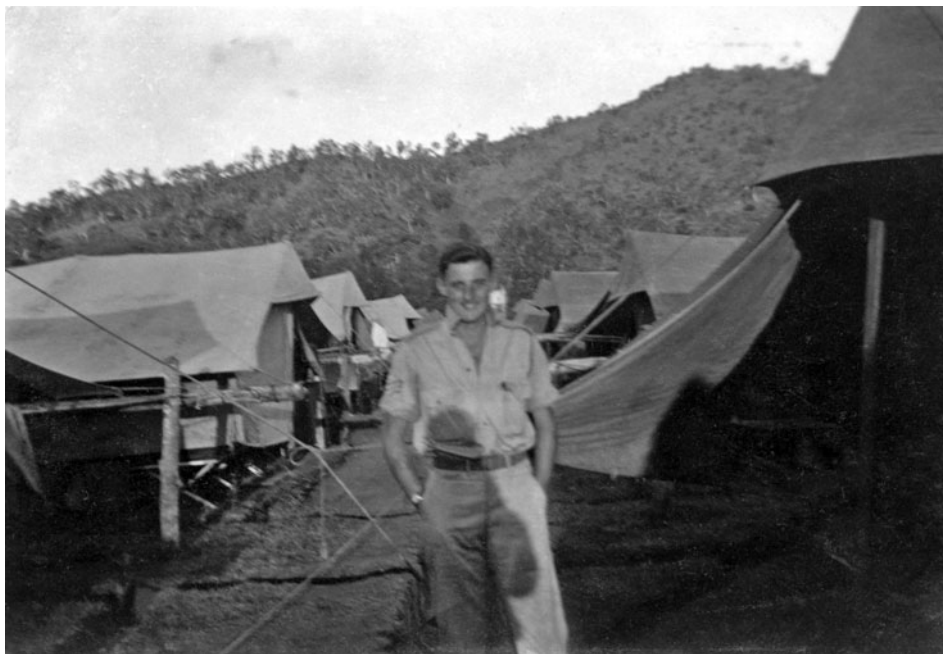


Figure 2. Charles 'Darkie' Boyd among the tents, Bourail, New Caledonia. 'How lovely his lashes are! And long! And his brows, like his hair, so sleekly, ebony black! And his eyelids! So silken, and heavy, and cool, and moist, the soft sheen on them so seductive!'. Reproduced by permission of Hocken Collections (S11-500 g).

Although Darkie stands square towards the camera, he looks a little shy. His tan and dark hair colouring are evident, although the spectral quality of the photograph elides some of the other details in David's description. Still, we can see David, the photographer, reflected on Darkie's chest: a shadow connects the two men. Darkie's photo was, in Ahmed's terms (2010), a 'happy object' infused with feeling. So too was David's diary, with Darkie's details – home address, next of kin, military postings, blood type and battalion – inscribed on its flyleaf. Although this was David's diary, Darkie's life adorned its first page, creating a permanent affective tie between the two men.

In early September, Darkie was due to be transferred to the Solomon Islands where the Allies were fighting the Japanese troops. His redeployment was repeatedly delayed, but there was an upside: the opportunity for an unfolding passion with David. One day in early September, David noted, 'I went down to the hidden rendezvous by the river which Darkie first showed me at 1.30 although I knew Darkie would not come before 14.00hrs. The day was overcast & looked very doubtful although the sun shone through occasionally. I was quite warm and stripped off for a couple of hours ... I did a solid set of exercises in the raw before Darkie arrived at the appointed time of 14.00hrs' (5 September 1943b). David's Shangri La suggests a 'rural erotics', to borrow from Bell (2000b): a set of interactions in an idealized space free of the surveillance of the more populated parts of (in this case) Bourail. The swimming hole was somewhere to escape to, a spot within which homoerotic desire could take shape quite freely. This rural erotics was played out in practice, not merely enjoyed as the fantasy suggested by the term 'Shangri La' (that earthly paradise first evoked in James Hilton's 1933 novel *Lost Horizon*). As Vickers (2010) suggests, military locations provided their own homoerotic possibilities and

sometimes, paradoxically, they were freer than the cities scholars often regard as the crucibles of queer identities (on the claim about cities, see Cook & Evans, 2014, p. 7).

On this particular afternoon, rain threatened and the pair retired to the YMCA for a while. 'As the weather showed signs of improving we went back to the rendezvous and spent a pleasant hour together; then said what we thought were our last goodbyes for some time' (5 September 1943b). Still Darkie's call did not come, and in the weeks that followed the two men often retired to their Shangri La. The relationship soon progressed to another level, and one evening in October David noted:

I sat for a while but we neither said much – lost for words for once; then, longing to tell him what I felt, and perhaps, wanting to comfort him, I took his hand in mine. He reacted, seeming amused, perhaps a little unsure, or embarrassed maybe, but he did not withdraw his hand, remarking that it had been a long time since anyone had done that. He seemed to like it and to trust me. Soon, though tentatively, warily on both our parts, I was held firmly in his arms. God! What memories! His tenderness! His caresses! This was the night of my first ever sexual experience. I surrendered my virginity to him as bestowing a gift and we fused like two peas in a pod as one united, as I received his gift, his thrusting magnificent body in return. This was only the first of other treasured holy nights as embarkation was delayed time after time. (26 October 1943b)

A strong sexual connection cemented the bond the men had forged over shared confidences. 'He wasn't loathe to share our physicality! Nor my body! He begged for it, demanded it!', David wrote breathlessly (26 October 1943b). There were other erotic moments too, including the half hour in the detention barracks swimming enclosure. One sunny afternoon, David wrote, 'I was heading for the YM to see if he were there when I met him coming. We found a secluded spot and after much resisting I let him have his way. Ah, Love! He buggered me. He had to leave around eight-thirty. I went as far as the YM with him and stayed for a cup of tea' (10 October 1943b). Another time, 'After mess we stole an hour of bliss welded as one before he had to be on his way' (3 October 1943b). David's diary reveals the 'embodied and visceral thrill of the mutual enjoyment and exploration of bodies and place', in Johnston's words (2012, p. 4), intersecting with a power play ('after much resisting'/'Ah, Love!'). Darkie's redeployment to the Solomons always seemed imminent, and the ever-present threat of spatial dislocation added a real frisson to these encounters:

There is a pretty spot up behind the camp and we climbed the hill into the lantana. We lay in a little clearing and taking me in his arms he asked, tauntingly maybe, Is this what you want? A few nights ago, I had sadly commented, we will never kiss again, will we? God! Clutching our last fleeting moments together. What a mad world! Happiness belongs only in this moment! For the last time we were one, he in me! God! Keep him safe! (28 October 1943b)

Intensity took several forms, and the relationship was not without its jealousies. David sulked when Darkie spent time with other friends, and he hung about in search of consolation: 'I saw him alone for a moment. He was his usual "very cool" but nice and friendly self, not cold nor reserved as I had feared. We arranged to meet tomorrow night' (17 October 1943b). David noted that Darkie was bisexual, and one afternoon he complained to his diary that 'fickle Darkie had plans of his own which did not include me – a nurse "lined up"?' (8 October 1943b). We know nothing of the geography of Darkie's encounter with the nurse, where or when, and even less about the erotic lives of other women. Although there was a corps of nurses at Bourail, and female personnel in other parts of the base, including the library, they do not feature heavily in David's narrative. Bérubé (1990/2010, p. 102), Ford (1995, p. 98), and Vickers (2009) note that the service clubs afforded formative social opportunities for lesbians as well as gay men, but these

relationships remain unspoken in David's account. Through his eyes, New Caledonia was primarily a male space.

After a month of passionate to-ing and fro-ing, the time finally came for Darkie's reassignment to the Solomons. David desperately wanted to follow Darkie, and in late October he sought his own transfer to a medical unit there. The brigadier to whom he appealed was widely assumed to be both married and homosexual, a fact David claimed to know through his friends Wal and John. This approach carried risks. In an allusion to the fate of some military men caught in homoerotic encounters, David later jotted: 'Had he been unsympathetic I'd probably have faced Court Martial' (24 October 1943a).<sup>3</sup> Other risks lay in wait, for a stint in the Solomons would be a more dangerous assignment than the New Caledonia posting. Japanese forces had invaded the Solomons, a British colony, in January 1942, along with New Guinea, Burma and the Dutch East Indies. The Japanese advance was slowly pushed back: after a bloody campaign the allies reoccupied the island of Guadalcanal in February 1943 and Vella Lavella early in October the same year (Bennett, 1987). The region remained dangerously unstable, however, and fighting would continue in nearby Bougainville until mid-1945. David must have wondered what he was signing up for. 'Ah! Love is strong as death, and I will suffer death to be near him', David told his diary. 'So when I die, young or old, whether my love lives or dies, I'll take into the grave a part of him, imprisoned for all eternity in my heart and soul, that love I live today' (25 October 1943a).

David's transfer came through and soon he was shipped to Vella Lavella, by then an important supply base for the fighting to the north, to join the 22nd Field Ambulance. He would serve in the Solomons for five and a half months until his return to New Zealand. 'Of course I may never see Darkie again, even if I am shipped forward', he wrote, 'but at least I'll be hundreds of miles nearer to him' (25 October 1943b). Sure enough, David's trip to the Solomon Islands was marked by drama and, as usual, his diary refers to the intensities of the process. First, he got very sick on the potent home-brewed alcoholic cocktail he imbibed with several other men, and spent most of his journey confined to the ship's hospital, a much less enjoyable place than Shangri La or the Bourail Club. At one point, David wrote, he 'was having an emotional crisis before [the doctor] arrived, blubbering like a big kid, apparently just the effect of what I'd drunk, or maybe some subtle defence mechanism' (13 December 1943b). Having arrived in the Solomons, David set to work at the Field Hospital on the island of Vella Lavella. The new environment made quite an impression on him. '[I am e]nchanted with the savage beauty of the island', he noted,

with jungle depths (what lurks in there?), beautiful coloured birds, parakeets and white sulphur-crested cockatoos, and huge butterflies, and a beautiful flower, waving palms and coral shore. It took another three days before I fully recovered from the trip – that vile concoction! (8 January 1944)

Once again, our protagonist's account is shot through with feeling. One afternoon, just before Christmas, David went diving off a raft:

I spent one of the most memorable, most enjoyable, idyllic hours of this lifetime. I went out on a raft moored off the beach with Murph and three or four others. We poled from one coral reef to another agog at the beautiful fish in shoals of blues and greens and striped yellow-and-black, and the incredible coral growths in an orgy of colour. The water was crystal clear and warm, and there were deep chasms in the coral where the water was very blue. We had fun diving into them. [Later] we went diving from the wharf. It seemed a long way down to me and I wasn't keen to try at first but after the first I felt so exhilarated that I had two or three more. Walking back to camp naked, with my towel draped around my neck instead of around

my waist, we passed a group of natives who laughed and pointed. I didn't think much of it; I had gone native and they were natives. I meant no disrespect though I noticed that none of them was entirely naked. (8 January 1944)

As Clough (2007) writes, affect is a sphere of 'felt aliveness' (p. 2). A constellation of feelings arose when David dived into the depths of the coral chasms and stepped outside of convention by 'going native'. The notion of 'going native' may have had a particular resonance for a young man negotiating his sexuality a long way away from his family and heterosexually inclined acquaintances. For David, this out-of-the-way spot was free from the 'yoke of civilization', to use a phrase of Bech (cited in Bell, 2000a, p. 533). At the same time, such sensations were conditioned by notions of exoticism, divorced from the realities of life for the indigenous Solomon Islanders (the 'group of natives' mentioned), many of whom were both displaced by the fighting and emaciated following a poor crop yield that year (Bennett, 1987, p. 289). David also reinscribed the distinction between 'civilization' and its other when he wrote: 'I was very excited to actually find a radio tucked away in this savage, uncivilized place and heard Rossini's William Tell Overture, the latter section of which sounds not unlike a tropical rainstorm!' (8 January 1944).

Pleasure could be tinged with a sense of danger. Although the Japanese forces no longer occupied Vella Lavella when David arrived there, Japanese bombers continued the occasional raid on allied territory. The Army Board's 1945 (p. 14) publication *Guadalcanal to Nissan* put it most dramatically: 'High in the blue planes zoomed and droned, their machine guns spitting viciously. It seemed as though the sky were made of cloth which was being violently torn to shreds by giant invisible hands'. There would be lasting impacts. On Vella Lavella, a Japanese bomb landed near David, deafening him in one ear and leaving him with post-traumatic stress disorder. Decades later, friends reported, he would imagine the bombers were coming and dive for cover.<sup>4</sup>

David soon stopped writing in his diary, having recorded his 'short account of only four months, undoubtedly the most interesting and representative of the eighteen and a half months in the Pacific' (8 January 1944). His time in the Solomons was mostly sketched in, albeit briefly, when he transcribed and added notes in 1993. A tantalisingly worded mention in the annotations informs us he did find Darkie Boyd: 'Meet we did, but that's another story. Another time, another place' (25 October 1943b). Why did David largely abandon his diary in the Solomons? Not long after arriving there, he jotted: 'Absolutely fed up with writing at this stage. Don't get enough time to go anywhere or to see anything. I have so many letters to write and so much to tell everybody that I don't feel like making a beginning' (8 January 1944). Climate was undoubtedly another contributing factor. *Guadalcanal to Nissan* describes the sudden tropical downpours, the rain veiling the landscape 'until it resembles a watercolour painting in soft greys and greens', the dense forest covering every island, and the debilitating humidity (Army Board, 1945, p. 6). 'The heat was so extreme', David wrote, 'so when I wasn't wallowing naked in the sea I was invariably lying naked in the sack' (8 January 1944). Under such conditions, wallowing was doubtless more enticing than writing.

Photographs, in contrast, were quick and effortless to take, and captured a sense of place: the dramatic waterways, tropical jungles and the men who spent time in them. As David took his camera around Vella Lavella, he recorded the sights, including other soldiers' bodies against the landscape. In Figure 3, 20 naked men dive off a pontoon in a bay near Joroveto. As Bachner (2007) shows in his book *Men of WWII: Fighting men at ease*, there was little unusual about this type of nude scene. Military personnel were often snapped – including by official photographers – while showering and relaxing on the beaches of New Caledonia, Guadalcanal and other locations in the Pacific (see also



Figure 3. Soldiers diving and swimming near Joroveto, Vella Lavella. The sailor in mid-air can be seen in the centre of the shot. Reproduced by permission of Hocken Collections (S11-500c).

Hanson, 2014). David signalled his particular interest, though, in a note on the back of his print: ‘Swimming sports, Joroveto, Vella Lavella. Note diver in mid-air. Don’t look too closely’. No doubt he was grinning as he clicked the shutter and recorded this ‘sensuous geography’ (Rodaway, 2011), and, once again, when he wrote on the back of the photograph.

David’s keen eye is also evident in Figure 4, a scene in which soldiers mill in front of the New Zealand roadhouse, a recreation centre at Joroveto. In the tropical heat, the shirtless men ignore the photographer, all the while providing inspiration for him. In these all-male settings, a gay participant was differently disposed from those with little erotic interest in other men’s bodies. When we peruse most images of male military bodies in the Pacific, including those in Bachner’s *Men of WWII*, we know little about the meanings these generated for subjects and photographer alike. In David’s case, however, we can trace the connecting strands of desire. My protagonist’s archive juxtaposes pictures of male military bodies with eroticized text, including a reference to a ‘sexy’ ambulance driver named Paddy: ‘very swarthy with a magnificent body. Very sexy! Such magnetism!’ (27 September 1943b). Many Pacific-based men remembered their friends through photographs, as Quanchi suggests (2006, p. 36), but David would go on to recall massed male bodies in settings that were, for him, highly charged with feeling, and provided opportunities to look, desire and relate.

### Networks of affect

Space and affect have a close relationship, as David Wildey’s experiences demonstrate. Our feelings develop within the spaces we inhabit and, conversely, spaces become meaningful when emotions and sensations circulate through them. Feelings ‘coalesce within and around certain places’ (Bondi, Davidson, & Smith, 2005, p. 3). A bougainvillea-filled



Figure 4. Milling about, sports day at the Roadhouse, Joroveto, Vella Lavella. Reproduced by permission of Hocken Collections (S13-503f).

garden, a ship's hospital and a roadhouse are just three examples from David's archive. References to spaces and feeling infuse David's diaries and images, and they reveal the impact of location on sexual identity itself. When David swapped his New Zealand civilian life for the military geographies of New Caledonia and Vella Lavella, he came to understand his erotic interests in new ways. Bérubé (1990/2010, p. 228) has suggested that the Second World War profoundly transformed the lives of the homosexual men sent away from their families and their everyday realities by bringing them together in radically new – and often gender-segregated – milieux. This was certainly true for David, and he wrote (in a transcript of an earlier diary) that his experiences in New Caledonia 'brought me out' (16 December 1940). He was previously so 'innocent' at the YMCA in Christchurch, he noted, even though he was 'always nude' in a setting with plenty of attractive men to admire, but his wartime opportunities, grasped in a range of places far from home, stirred new passions. David's sexual becoming, a particular disposition to affect whose resonances would last a lifetime, was profoundly shaped by the young man's interactions with others in wartime New Caledonia and the Solomon Islands.

David's experiences show us that affect is not only spatialized, but also networked. In contemporary urban life, Thrift argues, affect is increasingly 'engineered', resembling 'the networks of pipes and cables that are of such importance in providing the basic mechanics and root textures of urban life, a set of constantly performing relays and junctions that are laying down all manner of new emotional histories and geographies' (2004, p. 58). Although Thrift's insight is historically and geographically specific, referring to postmodern cities in an era of increasing social surveillance, his network metaphor is also suggestive when applied to other times and places. Its 'relays and junctions' suggest the complex connections – we might call them 'networks of affect' – that characterized the geographies of wartime. In the Pacific during the Second World War, physical spaces provided pathways through which feeling flowed. Roads and tracks

zigzagged through the jungles (see [Figure 5](#)), joining together military installations and the secluded spots that afforded a greater level of privacy. In New Caledonia, David tells of travelling the paths between the BCRH, Bourail township, Darkie's tent at the BTD and his swimming hole, the evocatively named 'Shangri La'. Sometimes, when he had an afternoon off, David headed down to the swimming hole with his washing, relaxed for a while and travelled back to base; occasionally he waited for Darkie and then the two men went to 'Shangri La' together.

David's travels around his network exemplified the 'energetics of movement and emotion', to borrow Thrift's words (2004, p. 72). An entry for 23 October was fairly typical: 'I walked the roads for hours and waited down by the barracks for Darkie to return but did not see him' (23 October 1943a). David often described his emotional state when he travelled between the spaces that carried great resonance for him. One afternoon he and Darkie crossed paths as Darkie headed off to see friends. David 'walked down with him and very wistfully left him at the same spot where we parted last night' (27 September 1943b). Sometimes the natural environment also stirred intense feelings. One evening David prayed at the YMCA with his friend Charlie Forbes before returning to base:

about seven miles with little prospect of a lift at such a late hour. It was a marvellous moonlit night, returning, and I was moved to a kind of euphoria, the walk, the stillness, the shadows. I kept thinking what I'd tell them about when I wrote home. I crawled in about 1.00 Friday morning with blistered feet. (16 September 1943b)

Travel, space and feeling intersected when David and his contemporaries moved from one location to another. In a truck en route from the hospital to BTD, 'Frank, Darkie and I



Figure 5. Military personnel in the mess queue, Joroveto, Vella Lavella, showing a pathway through the dense jungle along which men stand waiting for food. It hints at other forms of affect – hunger and its imminent satiation – and once again documents a mass of male bodies which no doubt appealed to its gay photographer. Reproduced by permission of Hocken Collections (S13-503d).



cleaned up a bottle of red wine and I had a beer before leaving' (10 October 1943b). A note from 1993 tries to make sense of his earlier omission of the erotic details: 'I recall indiscreetly reaching under Darkie, who was sitting alongside me, 's [*sic*] shirt to feel his warm body. Why didn't I record this? He didn't resist, perhaps a little drunk, or not to draw attention on the crowded truck, or hopefully, maybe he was enjoying it' (10 October 1943b). When eventually it came time for David to say goodbye to Darkie in the evening of 28 October 1943, the men bid one another 'a last au revoir and good luck with a formal hand clasp' (28 October 1943b). Early the next morning, Darkie moved out of his compound in a convoy of trucks bound for the wharf and the troop ship that would take soldiers to the Solomon Islands. David recorded the poignancy of the moment:

I was up at five and down to the bridge. The empty convoy of transports going up had awakened me and my first panic was that they had left earlier and I'd already missed him. Sharp on six, far off on the clear, still, morning air, the shouted orders, the hubbub of farewells and the martial movement of not one band but two prepared me for the approach; and all too soon they came. God, what a thrilling, heart-swelling, moving experience is a convoy! Especially when a part of oneself is being swept away in its grandeur! The roar of engines, the wheels my enemy! Hypnotic! The screen of stirred up dust, that lump in my throat. (29 October 1943b)

This early morning moment, and the spaces that gave it shape, was heavy with feeling: David's rush to the bridge and the worry that he'd missed his lover, the din of farewells and the playing of the band, and visceral, 'heart-swelling' and 'hypnotic' feelings as the convoy passed. Many years later, the reader can almost feel the heady mixture of sadness and excitement, the raw emotion that David experienced and committed to paper. Darkie gone, David was lonely for a time: 'How empty and purposeless life seems now he's not here' (2 November 1943b). David's everyday spaces, like life itself, took on a less lively, somehow less fulfilling quality, and he expressed his loss in highly spatialized terms:

What a day, I want to forget. I can hardly realize it yet. I won't notice it for a day or two and in the evenings at Shangri La. Then I'll miss him and the longing will increase. I'll be looking down the road for him, fretful because he doesn't come, wondering what he's doing, realizing he's far away and praying for him. O God take care of him, and bring him back to me . . . there is just myself here at BCRH and somewhere else there is Darkie and all around there is just space and nothing else and no-one. (26 October 1943b)

A road carried Darkie away, although David's emotions continued to travel its trajectory in Darkie's absence ('I'll be looking down the road for him, fretful'). The road became, in Gregg and Seigworth's words, a 'passage of force or intensity' (2010, p. 1). In David's case, previously shared spaces were occupied only by the memory of time spent together. If such feelings seemed overwhelming, though, David moved on soon enough:

I don't feel that I'm being left behind though [...] I'm about to be on the move myself! On active service! I guess I deserve what's in store. I suppose for a while it's going to seem like the tough old training days back in New Zealand, and then the waiting and at last I shall be part of a glorious convoy. Darkie Boy, we'll meet again! (29 October 1943b)

David's diary – and his photography too – expressed the spatial organization of his experience: the swimming holes, pathways and roads that provided the networks for his social interactions and linked those interactions together: friends in the YMCA, Darkie in his tent, the road out to the port. Modes of affect connect in other ways too. The exertion of physical exercise, the pleasure of diving off a raft, the awesome power of a thunderstorm, the intensity of orgasm are all elements of a sensuous landscape (an 'erotic topography' to use Bell's, 1994, term) that inspires and shapes those who inhabit it. Over and over again,

David Wildey's diary documents the ties between space and feeling. David and other servicemen, whatever their sexual interests, forged their wartime locales as interconnected spaces of pleasure, connection, heartache and personal transformation.

These movements also speak to the mobilities literature within geography. As Gorman-Murray points out, bodies – here David's, Darkie's and their friends' – are vectors of movement, and affect is 'insinuate[d] into queer migration processes' (2009, p. 442). The movement from New Zealand to New Caledonia, and on to the Solomons, was affect-laden in its own right, as David's account of 'blubbering like a big kid' attests, while movement through unfamiliar landscapes involves subjects 'reinhabiting the skin: the direct "impression" of a new landscape, the air, the smells, the sounds . . . create new textures on the surface of the skin' (Ahmed, 2006, p. 9). Indeed, the body changes as it moves through networks of affect: burned by the strong sun, reassured by passionate sex, longing after departure. Mobility operates along the smaller scales of affective networks too – the tent, the road and so on – and moderates smaller scales still: men's bodies and minds. A search for queerness may not have been at the forefront of our protagonists' minds when they set off for service in the Pacific, but these networks' particular spaces and trajectories enabled homoerotic experiences and subjectivities nevertheless. Loss, optimism and a longed-for reuniting – 'Darkie Boy, we'll meet again!' – take shape along these very paths.

Networks of affect are temporal as well as spatial, and affect travels some long pathways. David kept his diary safe, held on to it until the end of his life, revisited it 50 years after the war and expressed a wish that it be preserved in a public archive. A kind of time machine, it was transmitted through the decades, connecting the New Caledonian spaces of its creation with David's later life in suburban Auckland and Christchurch, New Zealand. Memories accompanied the diary itself; David recalled his life in New Caledonia and the Solomon Islands when he sat down to transcribe its contents in 1993. As Vickers (2010, p. 69) suggests, place plays a critical role in binding together experience and memory. Transcription, along with the addition of the annotations, was a deeply affective practice through which David reiterated and sometimes reinterpreted his wartime experiences. Here is the annotated transcription of an excerpt describing a nervous meeting at the YMCA in New Caledonia:

Towards the close [of a service at the YMCA] Darkie must have come in with some friends and when I first noticed him he was standing at the bar with his back to me. This last blow was the limit. My head was thumping and I was feeling very strange inside. I think I almost blacked out (1993: Oh, what Love can do!) I didn't go to him, which should have been perfectly natural. Instead I waited hoping that he might see me and come over. He did look all around but did not appear to see me. I waited in sickening suspense (1993: Ha, ha, ha). (Wildey, 17 October 1943b)

David laughed at his younger self, ridiculing his maudlin feeling, exaggerated emotion and intensity. Years after he had known Darkie intimately, he could distance himself from his old feelings. At the same time, to annotate the diary was to spin a thread that would connect the past and the present. Much the same can be said of David's photographs. Snapshots of friends were important for those involved in the war effort. Quanchi suggests that self and group portraits were 'a mnemonic device' through which New Caledonia-based personnel would later recall their posting, and that most preferred to remember their friends rather than the military aspects of wartime (Quanchi, 2006, p. 36). When US troops raided the stock of official New Zealand photographs, and took them home as mementoes of their own, David expressed relief that his single shot of Darkie was safe (Wildey, 5 November 1943b). Like his diary, with Darkie's details so carefully written inside the front cover, David kept Darkie's photo carefully tucked away among his papers as he

moved around New Zealand after the war. David's jottings on the backs of other images ('don't look too closely!') suggest a continued dialogue between the image and its affective significance. As Kofoed and Ringrose (2012, p. 10) remind us, affect flows through the interface of people and technologies: in David's case, pens, paper, a camera and a typewriter.

### **Conclusion: wartime, space, feeling**

'Emotions', Davidson and Milligan suggest, 'might be seen as a form of connective tissue that links experiential geographies of the human psyche and physique with(in) broader social geographies of place' (2004, p. 524). Aspects of David Wildey's life underscore Davidson and Milligan's point: in his wartime experience in New Caledonia and the Solomon Islands, desire, physicality and subjectivity come into being in a series of spaces. In turn, interactions with and between these elements constituted David's sense of himself as a sexual being. David's records speak forcefully to the co-constitution of affect, identity and space. His images and text evoke place, personality and feeling: men swimming in a lagoon or milling in front of the New Zealand roadhouse, Darkie's brooding smile. As we look through David's archive, we might ask what it felt like to inhabit forms of desire, a moment in time, an unusual situation, a geographical location quite different from 'home', and consider how these feelings were mapped spatially as well as socially.

Affect also travelled along the pathways on the islands: sometimes literally, as David made his way from swimming enclosure to YMCA, and sometimes figuratively, when David looked longingly down the roadway after his departed lover. These moments gesture towards networks of affect: those interconnections across multiple directions. Sometimes these networks suggest a linearity whereby affect travels directly from one point to another: David making a beeline for his swimming hole, for instance. At other times – when David intercepted Wal and John on the way to the YMCA and spirited them off to Shangri La – paths, people and affect intersected. We are fortunate that David was a skilled diarist, a reflexive and introspective character with a knack for articulating his own – and his relationships' – circulation and constitution through the social and physical spaces of the Pacific. He shows us how military spaces, along with rather more liminal spots in the surrounding countryside, provided the conduits for feeling.

Networks could be fleeting, in place for a moment or several days, dying away as men moved on. In wartime New Caledonia, David 'surrendered' to Darkie's passion and gave form to his own desires as he moved from location to location. Movement, though, was a constant. Darkie's departure from New Caledonia and an intense convoy of 'shouted orders, the hubbub of farewells' brought David's feelings to a head: 'The screen of stirred up dust, that lump in my throat'. Just as the convoy moved on, so too did David. Place moulded feeling. Life on New Caledonia meant both relaxation and monotony, while time spent on Vella Lavella, much closer to the battle zone, suggested fear and danger as well as desire.

A networks of affect approach opens the door to some new foci in queer histories and geographies. No longer are identity and embodiment fixed, coming into being and then retaining their form over time. Instead, movement through networks casts and recasts the meaning of queerness itself. As Woodward (2004) notes, military operations 'produce their own ordering of space', along with the subjects that occupy and shape it (p. 4). On the paths, in the tents and nestled within a swimming enclosure, Darkie was David's lover, as passionate as could be. The sea voyage to Vella Lavella immediately severed that connection, and Darkie moved on, later marrying and dropping out of contact. Spatial displacement cut the thread for David too, and when he moved to Vella he quickly found

another lover. Embedded in new physical and social networks, David's declaration of eternal love for Darkie soon washed away.

This is a story of both change and continuity. While some affective networks are momentary, others ripple out through time, almost sonar-like in their spread, and influence future understandings of selfhood, pleasure and suffering. David Wildey's annotation of his jottings hints at both an awareness of continuity and rupture: wartime relationships brought him out, in his view, a fact for which he was grateful. Conversely, he considered his younger self to have been overly intense, and at one point the annotation on his transcript reads: 'I have deleted an awful lot of awful mawkish immature, youthful sentiment at this point' (26 October 1943b). Although he never stayed in touch with Darkie, he later wrote to Matt, his new lover from Vella Lavella, and John, his friend from the swimming hole. Letters allowed the maintenance of networks, albeit tenuously.

For David, the diary and its 1993 dialogue had a broader significance than his life alone, and he had an eye on a possible future readership. I first heard about the diary and photographs in 2009 from a friend of David, who learned of my interest in New Zealanders' gay archives and sought a home for David's collections. Near the end of his life, David was pleased to hear of their transfer to the Hocken Collections in Dunedin. He had wanted them kept for posterity, a potential resource for wider cultural conversations and future publishing projects.<sup>5</sup> They spoke powerfully to me. Robinson (2010) suggests archival research is itself a deeply affective practice, and I was profoundly moved by David's war memoir: excited that such an account of gay wartime experience had survived, drawn in to the intensity of his affair with Darkie. I experienced a curious tension between familiarity and disconnection. Most profound were the differences between my own life in an academic institution and the spaces of war some 70 years earlier. As much as I would like to, I cannot grasp what it must have felt like in the Pacific under wartime conditions, in settings so utterly defined by the military context, physical geography, climate and the possibility of death. At the same time, I am well aware of the connections between the queer past and the present, of my own desire to reach out to David's experience and somehow 'stitch up the gap in the temporal fabric', as Love puts it (2009, p. 36). To some extent, David Wildey's experiences retain an ineffable quality. As distant as they may seem, though, his mesh of feelings and networks can broaden our knowledge of wartime affect and its spatial relations, and deepen our appreciation of feeling in queer histories and geographies.

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### Notes

1. In terms of referencing conventions, Wildey (1943a) refers to the original diary and (1943b) to the transcribed form. I use 1943b for the transcript rather than the likely alternative, 1993b, for reasons of clarity and accuracy: the dates in the transcription are 1943 dates, not 1993 ones.
2. In the Pacific, fighting personnel appear to have been mostly of European (Pākehā) heritage; the New Zealand military's 28 (Māori) Battalion was posted to the Middle East rather than the Pacific (Soutar, 2008).
3. Some scholars suggest that many senior military personnel looked the other way when confronted with same-sex eroticism, even though sex between men (if not sex between women) contravened military codes (Bérubé, 1990/2010; Vickers, 2009, 2010).
4. Roger Eltoft, the executor of David Wildey's estate, told me of David's stress at such moments.

5. Eltoft relayed to me David's happiness at the prospect of his archive being published, provided it took place after his death.

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