

Research Article

Queens Gardens, 1949: The anxious spaces of post-war New Zealand masculinity

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Abstract: One evening in 1949, five met men on the steps of the Cenotaph in Queens Gardens in Dunedin, New Zealand. Two were under arrest by the end of the night, charged with indecently assaulting the others. This article explores these five men's sexual encounters, the space in which these took place, and the meanings given to both. These particular relationships take place in relation to wider global patterns of masculine spatiality and the post-war emergence of new sexual categories. The article suggests that men's intimate and sexual lives have been highly contested within the sexualized spaces of the city.

Key words: masculinity, New Zealand, sexuality, urban space.

Introduction

Public spaces are always 'up for grabs' (Turner 2003, p. 46). They have many uses, some of which are acknowledged and others unacknowledged. While some such uses are socially accepted, others are transgressive (Cresswell 1996). At the same time, the meanings of space are fluid and changing and are contested by a range of individuals and groups (Valentine 1996; Johnston & Longhurst 2010).

These double movements are especially clear in relation to male same-sex encounters. Officially, parks and promenades are places for loitering and observing life, but, unofficially, these spaces also facilitate men's meetings for erotic pleasure (Howard 1995; Chauncey 1996; Brown 2008; Hornsey 2010). Street cruising, Turner (2003, p. 46) suggests, exploits this very ambivalence. A very few steps divide watching the world go by from watching a particular man, desiring that man, and approaching him with a carnal purpose in mind. However, this multiplicity of eroticised spaces is not an 'error' that

threatens to distract us from the 'truth' of space. Instead, the tensions are inherent in the ways spaces, meanings and people interact.

In a more general sense, spaces permit, shape and constrain particular interactions and performances of masculinity (Van Hoven & Horschelmann 2005; Hopkins & Noble 2009). For instance, the street occasions different masculine iterations than the bar room or bedroom. At the same time, some masculinities – and some men – are positioned differently from others, and the meanings of these differences can be highly contested. When we look at the broad field of masculinity, we see degrees of instability and contingency; men's lives, self-expressions and power plays change over time and from context to context (Berg & Longhurst 2003). As McDowell explains, masculinity is 'an uncertain and provisional project', subject to constant 'change and redefinition' (McDowell 2001, p. 182).

Sexuality, masculinity and city space can form a potent mixture. Some urban masculinities involve displays of aggression and physical

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strength, and gay men are sometimes publicly harassed on the grounds of their sexuality (Kirby & Hay 1997; Brownlow 2005). Cities, then, are contact zones where differing masculinities meet and sometimes clash.¹ I will suggest that those who seek erotic adventures in city spaces may be the recipients of legal and physical violence – not only from bystanders but also from those with whom they become sexually involved.

In order to explore the intricate relationships between space, masculinity, violence and homoeroticism in such zones, I offer up a single case from the archives of the Dunedin Supreme Court. One night in 1949, two young Dunedin men met three visitors off a naval ship, tested out the erotic possibilities in the city's Queens Gardens and found themselves in trouble with the police. Markedly different versions of the evening's activities played out in court, and these versions tell us about the ambiguities of – and anxieties over – space, sexuality and masculinity. To discuss this case is to glimpse both its particularity and its broader local and global connections. New Zealand's public spaces – squares, parks, alleys and gardens – have received less attention than their equivalents in London, New York or Sydney, but they are just as suggestive.

This singular example gestures towards the complex character of homoeroticised spatiality and the skirmishes that ensue under particular historical conditions. This is a significant step. Historical geographies of male homoeroticism remain underdeveloped, and most of the existing literature comes out of history rather than geography (Mort 1999; Houlbrook 2001, 2005). Some geographers do acknowledge that in general terms, 'sexualized and gendered norms and conventions' are historically specific, but they provide few detailed examples (Browne *et al.* 2007, p. 4). This Dunedin court case shows how space, time, masculinity and sexuality intersect while revealing the richness of male lives and embedded homoerotic practices.

Stephenson suggests that mid-century sexual geographies are difficult to map 'because of the illegality of homosexuality and the illicit nature of sexual tourism' (Stephenson 2005, p. 52). I disagree. We can begin to map these geographies *precisely because* sex between men was illegal and, as such, generated official documen-

tation. Court files include detailed depositions statements and testimony from credentialised experts: doctors and probation officers in particular. On the one hand, the spaces in which these accounts are put together – police stations and courtrooms – interpellate men as criminals and fashion their accounts accordingly. Still, researchers can read these files 'against the grain' and look for discourses of resistance – as well as those of accommodation – in the interplay of dominant and marginal voices (Brickell 2008a). I will begin to untangle these voices, and the spaces they evoke, by exploring five young men's interactions in Dunedin's inner city.

Queering Queens Gardens

Queens Gardens sits halfway between the Fryatt Street wharves and Princes Street, the commercial centre of Dunedin (Fig. 1). Conveniently located on the sailors' walking route from their ships to the middle of town, and dominated by the Cenotaph, a First World War memorial unveiled in 1927, Queens Gardens was once a well-known beat: a place for Dunedin men to meet other locals or visiting seamen for sex. This is exactly what happened that cool autumn evening in 1949, when five young men gathered on the Cenotaph's steps.

Rupert Vale and Isaac Walters, both 20 years old, had been friends – and occasional lovers – since the age of 18.² Both worked downtown: Vale as a hotel cook, Walters as an office assistant. According to their court statements, the men went to the Broadway Hotel in Rattray Street late in the evening on April 24 and met three stokers from the Navy ship HMNZS Hawea: Jim Harrison, Hugh Wilton and Charlie Hamlin, also aged 20 or thereabouts. The five youths chatted for a while, parted company and soon reconvened in the Gardens (Fig. 2). 'We sat on the Cenotaph', Vale recalled, 'and drank some beer' (Vale 1949).

What happened next is difficult to recover with any certainty from the official files, although it ended in the arrest of Vale and Walters. All five men agreed that the stokers had settled in at the base of the Cenotaph and called out to the local pair to drink with them. From that point on, Vale's court statement accorded with Walters', and the three stokers'

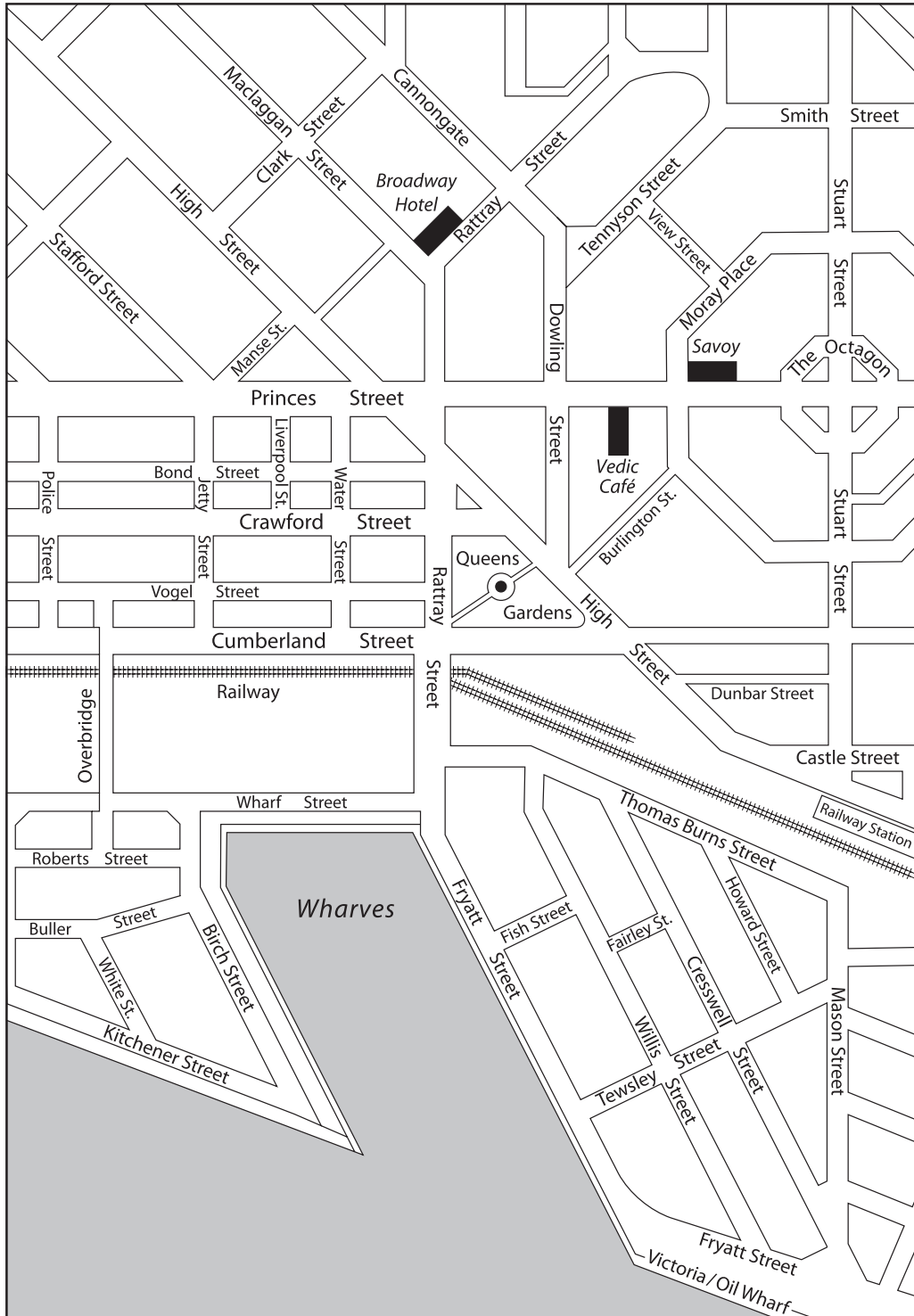


Figure 1 Inner city Dunedin in the early post-war years. Sailors walked from the wharves, through Queens Gardens, to the hotels and other entertainments of the city centre. Our men met in the Broadway Hotel, not far from the gardens. Some of the local queer crowd socialised at the nearby Vedic café and the Savoy tearooms. Map by Les O'Neill.



Figure 2 Queens Gardens, with the Cenotaph as its centrepiece. Alexander Turnbull Library, PAColl-7985-44.

statements were broadly consistent with each other, but there were substantial differences between each set of statements. I will begin with the two local lads' recollections. Isaac Walters told the court:

As it was cold we went and sat on the steps of the cenotaph. While there [Jim Harrison] asked me to put my hand round his 'chopper', meaning his private part, which I did. I did this with the other two in turn. The sailors did not interfere with us in any way, one asked me to kiss him on the cheek. That one was [Harrison. He] asked me to put my mouth round him, his private part, which I did, this took place in the Queens Gardens the other two sailors with [Harrison] also asked me to do the same to them, which I did. This all occurred in the Queens Gardens. We all then walked down to the boat. [Harrison] and I separated from the others, near the entrance to the Victoria or oil wharf. We walked north along past the end of the wharf (oil) and behind some trucks. There [Harrison] penetrated me. He did this with my consent. This took place at 2.30am (Walters 1949).

Rupert Vale, meanwhile, had this to say:

I touched [Hugh Wilton's] private parts and played with them. I just touched them and put my hand on them. He did touch my

private parts and caressed them. [Wilton] the sailor who I was with to-night asked me to go for a walk with him and I left [Isaac] and went a short distance away from the others and then [Wilton] asked me to suck his penis. He forced me to do this. I put his penis in my mouth and I played with my lips with his penis. I know [Wilton] and would know him again anywhere. [Wilton] made me handle his penis and put it into my mouth (Vale 1949).

Both men – Walters and Vale – told of their erotic encounter in and near the Cenotaph in Queens Gardens. In their statements, the local pair said the sailors re-established contact at the Gardens by asking the two men to have a drink and initiated the sex: '[he] put my mouth round him, his private part'; '[he] asked me to suck his penis'. These are explicit accounts in which the sexual encounters are recounted in matter-of-fact detail. Preliminaries took place on the plinth of the monument, although more intimate activities required a quieter spot.

These events, as described by Vale and Walters, were typical of men's cruising practices in New Zealand and internationally (Cook 2003; Houlbrook 2005; Brickell 2008b). This 'subcultural sexual economy', as Stephenson (2005, p. 53) described it in the London context, involved 'a cautious, if recognisable and solicited, system of glances, gestures and slang'. Men struck up a conversation in a public space – a bar, a street, garden or waterfront – before repairing to a quiet spot for a drink, a cigarette or just a chat. There the conversation turned to sex and events took their course: on a seat or bench; in a doorway, an alley or the bushes. The more interactive and intimate the encounter, the quieter the spot.

Sailors were commonly involved with local men at their various ports of call, and many a local 'shippie' or 'shipboard Suzy' – to use terms common in New Zealand during the 1950s – sought out seamen during their leisure hours. Sailors and 'landlubbers' spent many happy nights together aboard ship, enjoying the booze and sex. Ships' cooks and stewards were often keen, and stokers could sometimes be persuaded 'if the time was right and nobody was watching and they were horny enough'



Figure 3 Friends sitting at the base of the Godley Statue in Cathedral Square, Christchurch, c.1949. The statue commemorates John Godley, founder of Canterbury. On the left in the second image is the United Services Hotel, popular in queer circles at the time. Author's collection.

(Brickell 2008b, pp. 233–4; Mark 2010). Trevor Rupe – now the well-known celebrity Carmen – recalled that sailors in 1950s Dunedin would readily accept a ‘cup of tea and a blow-job’ (Rupe 2010).

Stephenson (2005) also reminded us that memorials were popular locations for queer curiosity. This was as true for New Zealand's cities as it was for London. In Figure 3, Tony Jameson (pseudonym used) and his friends pose on the base of the Godley Statue in Christchurch's Cathedral Square one afternoon in 1949. Jameson was a pivotal figure in a circle of homosexual men who occupied a range of spaces together in the 1940s and 1950s: the streets, beaches and private homes of Christchurch and its environs (Brickell 2008b). In the city centre, Cathedral Square was an important site for pickups as well as casual socialising, and the Godley Statue marked the middle of this space.

The accounts of the three Queens Gardens stokers, though, disavow this kind of subcul-

tural sexual economy – and, indeed, any willing sexual involvement at all. The seamen insisted they did not initiate the sex at the base of the Cenotaph in Dunedin nor, they said, did they agree to take part in it. The anxieties of these spaces and activities become clearer in the stokers' accounts. Here is part of stoker Jim Harrison's depositions statement to the Dunedin Magistrate's Court:

The accused tried to put his hand on my penis but I knocked his hand away and then he waited a couple of minutes and then tried to put his hand on the outside of my trousers on my penis. After some time [Walters] and [Vale] offered to show us the way back to the ship. [Walters] and I walked ahead of the others to the ship as far as I can remember. When we got to the gate of the wharf the accused invited me to go and get some more beer and I went away with him. After we proceeded about 100 yards from the others he asked me for my chopper. He started to

undo his trousers then I noticed in his hand a small tin which is now produced and shown to me in Court. He then asked me for my penis, and when I asked him why he said he wanted me to have intercourse with him. I repelled him and asked him where the beer was we had come to get. When he told me there was no beer I returned to the ship. I refused to commit an unnatural offence with him. It is not correct that I penetrated him (Walters 1949).

In its broad approach, stoker Hugh Wilton's account is similar to Jim Harrison's:

It is correct to say that we shifted and sat down on the seat by the Cenotaph to get out of the wind. And the five of us sat down in a row and drank beer. My condition had then not altered a great deal. I remember leaning back without a care in the world. I was leaning back and drinking a bottle of beer, the accused [Vale] had his hand in the flap of my trousers. I told him to desist. He started to kiss me. I repelled him again. He then tried to put his mouth on my penis. It was still in my trousers. The accused then sucked my penis. I tried to stop him I knocked his head away as soon as he touched it (Vale 1949).

In this version of events – which differed markedly from Vale's and Walters' – the sex was entirely the local men's idea. The stokers said they had no desire to fool around with the cook and the office assistant, even though Vale had told the court that Wilton had pressured him to 'suck his penis'. Nevertheless, there are some interesting ambivalences in the seamen's accounts. One wonders how easy it would have been for Vale to get his hand inside Wilton's drop front trousers, remove the man's penis from behind the top-buttoned flap and suck it, if Wilton – as he insisted – objected all the while. The more we ponder Vale's manoeuvrings around and inside the tricky space of the sailor's trouser flap, the less Wilton's account rings true. There is another catch, too: if Wilton was so affronted by Vale's approach, why did he agree to head off with Vale in the dark to the ship?

Days passed, separating the night in the gardens from the witnesses' appearance in court, and the stokers no doubt synchronised

their story in the meantime. This had the effect of standardising stories for the court but was also an attempt to stabilise the men's masculinity and its spatialised components. Charlie Hamlin's statement contains a discourse of ambush, surprise and physical retaliation:

The five of us then went to the base of the Cenotaph to consume beer. We were in a row round the Cenotaph. I heard Stoker [Wilton] abuse the accused. He said 'Fuck off you dirty Bastard'. I was leaning back drinking and then next thing I know the accused put his hand inside my flap. He grabbed hold of my penis. I pushed him away and I had no further trouble with him. Had I been sober I would have knocked his head off. I was in a tolerant mood, and I allowed these two men to remain in my company (Vale 1949).

Hamlin's tolerance had its limits, though: he approached a passing policeman and dobed in the two Dunedin men. Constable Augustine McAlvey arrested Vale and Walters and took them to the local police station. What transpired over the following weeks was catastrophic for Walters in particular. Seen by authorities as 'instrumental in leading [Vale] into vicious habits', Walters was imprisoned for two years, and Vale had to report to a probation officer for three.

The contestation over this particular space, the activities of its inhabitants and the meanings bestowed upon those activities is reasonably clear. It is rather more difficult to disentangle the motivations at play. Given the ambiguities in Wilton's account, in particular, and the global sexual patterns echoing throughout this case, it seems likely the stokers were, in fact, willing participants. In order to further tease apart these tensions, I need to look in greater detail at the erotic geographies at play here, their spatialised aspects and their relationships to social difference. The diverging masculinities of the men are particularly significant.

Erotic geographies and spatialised differences

I have already suggested that public spaces are subject to multiple interpretations and that some of these interpretations are bestowed

with social credibility and others not. The case of Vale, Walters and the others shows that these multiplex understandings divide homoerotically involved men from one another just as they privilege heteronormative uses and definitions of space. As Jon Binnie observed in his work on erotic geographies, we need to pay close attention to 'the differences between and within sexual dissident identities and communities' (Binnie 2009, p. 173). In the Queens Gardens case, at least three (implicit) definitions mediated the five men's actions.

According to the first definition, mobilised by the stokers in court, the base of the Cenotaph was primarily a public place for men to drink. Having settled in, the three seamen told the judge, they invited numerous passers-by to drink with them, but Vale and Walters were the only two to take up the offer.

In the second definition, mobilised by Vale and Walters, this was a spot where horny locals might pick up men for sex. Queens Gardens had a history as a cruising spot; during the 1920s, one man repeatedly tried to kiss male passers-by there and was eventually arrested when he took a young plumber's apprentice into a darkened doorway nearby (New Zealand Truth 1928). Both sexes were implicated here: since the 19th century, female prostitutes had patrolled the general area looking for custom (Lucas 1985). This pattern – in which men's cruising grounds were simultaneously zones of heterosexual prostitution – was replicated elsewhere, including Chicago and Brisbane (Romesburg 2009; Smaal 2010).

The third definition is the inverse of the second: seamen might consider sex with the local men, as long as the locals agreed to the sailors' terms. In turn, these terms were structured by the differences between men involved in homoerotic relations. Houlbrook lays out the London schema as follows: some manual workers – referred to as roughs, renters, trade or 'to be had' – might be willing to have sex with middle class, often effeminate men – sometimes known as 'queens' or 'poufs' – as long as 'these encounters were constrained within particularly narrow limits': trade would take the insertive role in oral or anal sex (Houlbrook 2005, p. 172). Trade usually saw sex with a queen as a substitute for women and thought of themselves as perfectly 'normal' (Houlbrook 2005, p.

169). This understanding was common elsewhere: Reay (2010) discusses the same pattern in New York, and as one gay New Zealand man remembered of the 1960s, 'straight sailors wouldn't go to bed with a man, but they would have sex with a poof, so the more effeminate you were, the easier it was to pick up trade' (Woodhead 2005).³

This distinction between the effeminate shore-based man and the sexually 'normal' seaman played out in the Queens Gardens case. As stoker Jim Harrison said of both Walters and Vale, 'by the way the men were talking we soon discovered that these men were different from ordinary men'. The seamen played the role of Houlbrook's trade. Charlie Hamlin's language – 'I was in a tolerant mood' and 'I would have knocked his head off' – were expressions of social dominance. Where sex was spoken of, the seamen were positioned in the active role. According to Walters, stoker Harrison penetrated the office assistant, not the other way around, and Vale's depositions statement suggests sexual aggression: '[Wilton] asked me to suck his penis. He forced me to do this . . . I was frightened that if I did not do this for [Hugh] that he would hit me'.

The encounter at the Queens Gardens clearly inscribed the differences between the rough stoker trade and those 'different from ordinary men' (in Jim Harrison's words). Those differences were written into the official record too. The superintendent of Seacliff Mental Hospital examined Walters and told the Crown Prosecutor that the youth was 'an effeminate type', even though he showed 'no signs of mental disorder'. As if to underline the point, Walters' probation officer added, '[o]ne is not surprised to hear that he is interested in the stage and that he has taken up tap dancing, musical comedy and ballet dancing' (Walters 1949).

With these deliberations in mind, let us consider why Charlie Hamlin reported his new acquaintances to the constabulary in spite of his self-declared 'tolerant mood'. Consider, first, the possibility that Vale and Walters misinterpreted the seamen's invitation to have a drink on the steps of the cenotaph, made unwanted sexual advances and that Charlie Hamlin felt duty-bound to report them to the authorities. This is not a particularly convincing scenario. It is difficult to believe that Hugh

Wilton – a young man who clearly fancied himself as a tough – protested, but did nothing while Rupert Vale felt his way inside Wilton's trousers to the point of sucking the stoker's penis. Wilton's narrative, with its overtone of passivity, is oddly inconsistent with his own claims of masculine strength. This contradiction is undoubtedly a testament to the power of the courtroom to structure a story (Brickell 2008a). In such a space, in such a moment, an assertion of innocence was needed, even though Wilton could not resist a reference to his masculine prowess ('I knocked his head away').

There is a second possible explanation: one that cuts to the heart of the anxieties at the centre of masculine self-definition. Scholars have pointed out that masculinity is constructed, at least in part, through alterity ('otherness'). Femininity is the 'other' against which dominant masculinity defines itself, in a highly unstable relationship (Gutterman 1994). This othering process can translate into antagonistic, even violent, social interactions in both public and private spaces (Valentine 1996). Perhaps one – or both – of the local men broke a tacit understanding about public sexual exchanges between queens and trade, thereby compromising the stokers' sense of their own masculine dominance. In making the first move, did the 'effeminate' Vale and Walters perhaps offend the stokers who presumed the right to take the lead? When he said 'the accused had his hand in the flap of my trousers. I told him to desist. He started to kiss me. I repelled him again', Wilton may not have meant that he was averse to the idea of sex *per se* but that he took exception to Vale's presumptuousness. Vale was expected to play the same passive role as the female prostitutes who patrolled the area. Their own masculine dominance threatened, the stokers – led by Hamlin – may have sought retribution against the presumptuous Vale and Walters.

The third scenario is the reverse of the second. Simply put, Charlie Hamlin may have been unhappy that he failed to get any action. If Rupert Vale's and Isaac Walters' accounts are accurate, Walters grabbed Hamlin's penis and then backed off when Hamlin pushed him away. Some time after that, Vale and Hugh Wilton moved to a quiet spot for oral sex, and Walters and Jim Harrison went behind some trucks near the oil wharf to have anal sex. Hamlin was left

out, with only Constable McAlvey for company. Jealous, perhaps, and more than a little impulsive – his own sexual prerogative frustrated – Hamlin shopped the local men to the constable.

Hamlin must have overlooked the possibility that he and his stoker friends would have to fend off counter-allegations by Vale and Walters. Houlbrook observes that English trade saw effeminate men as weak, outside of the law's protection and unlikely to be believed (Houlbrook 2005). Perhaps the same presumptions prevailed here, and Hamlin assumed – correctly, as it turned out – that his dominant masculinity would not be questioned by the agents of the state.

Strong emotions – jealousy, desperation and guilt – were all motivators here, and they defined and refracted the masculine positions of the different parties. This was a question of power, at least in part. The stokers, it seemed, sought to reinforce the ostensibly natural order of things – within their interactions and perhaps more widely. When dominant masculinities are at stake, Connell notes, violence can be used 'as a means of drawing boundaries and making exclusions' (Connell 2001, p. 44). Charlie Hamlin may have viewed recourse to the law as an alternative to violence, in pursuit of much the same ends. After all, and quite conveniently, Constable McAlvey was on duty nearby. Whichever scenario we choose to believe, the stokers underlined their gendered normality and emotionally and physically reinstated their own masculine prerogative whether or not that was their deliberate intention. Through a highly specific set of social and sexual interactions in and around the spaces of the Queens Gardens, these men localised a much more widely applicable set of assumptions, ideologies and practices.

The three stokers and the two Dunedin men relied upon these assumptions in the courtroom as well as on the street. In some respect, their stories – carefully enunciated sexual scripts (Brickell 2010) – were defensive moves. By attributing sexual initiative to the other parties ('I told him to desist. He started to kiss me. I repelled him again'), each of the three stokers tried to avoid legal culpability. The stokers' courtroom narratives were not only defensive, though; they were also active, repeated performances of dominant masculinities. As the stokers reconstructed the night's events, they

re-inscribed their toughness – and forcefully contrasted it to the less masculine performances of the two locals ('[t]hey were different from ordinary men'/ 'He said "Fuck off you dirty Bastard"'). In the process, the stokers conveyed their identities and sought – successfully – to gain the confidence of the judge and jury, a confidence that withstood Wilton's momentary slide into passivity ('[t]he accused then sucked my penis. I tried to stop him'). These stories, with their evasions and troublesome tensions, tell us how these men understood the spaces of the Queens Gardens, their place within them, and their own masculine identities.

Concluding thoughts: beyond one case/one space

As our five men – Rupert Vale, Isaac Walters, Jim Harrison, Hugh Wilton and Charlie Hamlin – sat on the steps of the Cenotaph that night in 1949, their interactions – on the steps, in the darkened spaces nearby, on the way back to the ship – evoked and reinforced important axes of social difference within the broader field of homoeroticism. By involving police in the situation, the 'normal' man reasserted his dominance over the effeminate, driving a wedge between different types of participant in male same-sex encounters. These identities and power relations played out in subsequent spaces and scales, too: the police station, the court and ultimately, for Walters, the prison.

These events also reflected broader social patterns. Other scholars have chronicled the anxieties of the immediate post-war years: the desire to stabilise gendered norms and identities following the disruptions of wartime, when couples were separated, marriages strained and women moved into work spaces previously reserved for men (D'Emilio 1992; Houlbrook 2007). Perhaps our military men tapped into this moment of widespread cultural anxiety, and sought – however unconsciously – to counter the perceived crisis of post-war masculinity.⁴ After all, their individual prerogatives neatly dovetailed with the wider social concerns.

Stabilisation of the post-war gender order went hand-in-hand with worries about same-sex eroticism (Cuordileone 2000). In New Zealand, the term 'homosexual' entered widespread use, and started to displace the older distinction

between effeminate and sexually passive 'queens' (or 'queers') and 'normal' men, 'trade' who saw themselves as essentially indistinguishable from those involved exclusively with women (Brickell 2008b). As a new category, 'homosexual' cast a wide net. Even though it does not explicitly appear in this particular case, the category threatened to gather up 'trade' as well as 'queens' under a mantle of stigma and effeminacy. Their masculine dominance threatened in the face of a growing homosexualisation of same-sex activity, trade may have been increasingly vigilant boundary maintainers. A code violation was a threat to be dealt with, through strong language, physical force or recourse to the repressive apparatus of the state. While these sailors may have engaged in same-sex conduct, they would sooner repudiate their conduct than implicate themselves in the new cosmologies.

Having been established at the end of the Second World War, this reluctance remains with us today. In 21st century Paris, Amaouche argues, many hustlers deny their sexual involvements and distance themselves from their clients – and from others who hustle for male-male sex. The 'other' is homosexual; the self is not. Amaouche (2010, pp. 195–7) suggests these disavowals result from both the illegality of soliciting and the ongoing equation of 'homosexuality' with passivity and femininity. Where masculinity and sexuality are perilously interwoven, attributions of homosexuality are strongly contested.

Spaces enable and underline these dynamics. The hotel, the cenotaph, the wharf and the surrounding streets were settings within which a number of critical disjunctions played out: between trade and queens, willingness and reluctance, desire and retribution and, implicitly, homosexuality and its disavowal. These were 'spaces of dread and delight' (Johnston & Longhurst 2010, p. 80), structured through spatialised moments: the men sat at the base of the cenotaph, repaired down a dark alley or headed towards the oil wharf. The cenotaph and its ancillary locations provided the scenery and props for the tense scripts of homoeroticism and masculinity. These Dunedin men's negotiations – similar to those of their counterparts elsewhere – were tailored to particular spaces and given meaning by them.

Much information is missing from these court records, and the men's motivations are hard to read. There are, however, several possibilities in the context of shifting social patterns, and the ambiguities are revealing. There is more than one way to read this case, but that should come as no surprise. After all, the Queens Gardens, the Cenotaph and the surrounding spaces had more than one meaning for those who spent their days and nights there.

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Endnotes

- 1 Pratt (1991, p. 34) coined the term 'contact zone' to refer to 'social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power'.
- 2 I have given these men pseudonyms in order to protect privacy.
- 3 On the development of the distinction between 'queens' and 'normal men' in New Zealand, see Brickell (2008b, ch.2).
- 4 On masculinity's definitional and relational 'crisis' over a long historical period, see Edwards (2006, chapter 1); Forth (2008, pp. 3–5). On the anxieties of masculinity, see Cuordileone (2000).

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