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

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11

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

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

22
23 **Réseaux d'affect, homoérotisme masculin et la deuxième guerre mondiale:**
24 **archives d'un soldat**

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

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

37
38 **Redes de afecto, homo-erotismo masculino y la Segunda Guerra Mundial: archivo**
39 **de un soldado**

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

46
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48 An early version of this article was presented at the conference of the Sociological Association of
49 Aotearoa New Zealand, Auckland, December 9–11, 2013

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

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

56

57 **Introduction**

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

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

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

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

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

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

103 David Wildey’s writing is often explicit, he wore his heart on his sleeve and he was
 104 keenly attuned to the vicissitudes of place. His diary is the ideal source for an exploration
 105 of the connections between sexuality, time, space and feeling. The concept of affect is
 106 useful here, even though its theorizing is wide-ranging and diverse. Sometimes the term
 107 ‘affect’ is used more or less synonymously with ‘emotion’, or stretched to denote a terrain
 108 of ‘moods and emotions’ (Forgas, Wyland, & Laham, 2006, p. 6). Greco and Stenner
 109 (2008, p. 1) widen the mood/emotion pairing to include passion and sentiment; Thrift
 110 (2004) adds anger, fear, happiness, joy, disgust, embarrassment, shame and grief. Some
 111 scholars draw on Spinoza, Deleuze and Guattari in order to suggest affect is a ‘non-
 112 conscious experience of intensity’ (Shouse, 2005) given form as subjects affect and are
 113 affected by other bodies (Brown, 2008; Gregg & Seigworth, 2010; Lim, 2007). Dowling
 114 brings together some of these strands when she suggests:

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

120 In this article I use the term ‘affect’ to refer to feeling in interaction, where feeling is
 121 understood to include the full gamut of emotions and sensations. Feelings may be
 122 experienced both internally (distress, for example) and externally (the warmth of a lover’s
 123 touch), and they are transmitted from ‘outside’ to ‘inside’ across the boundary of the skin
 124 (Benthien, 2002; Massumi, 1995). Feelings can be visceral and highly embodied, intense
 125 or subtle, violent or peaceful. The embodiment of affect, though, is always both socially
 126 embedded and reflexive. Our feelings develop within and with reference to the social
 127 settings in which we are located, often drawing us into social relationships. When another
 128 person touches us, intensities are transferred from body to body. Touch may be affirming
 129 or antagonistic, a transmission of care or an intent to harm. Our young protagonist’s
 130 fulfilment involves an array of linkages between ‘turn on’, need, etc., and reaches its apex
 131 as he and Darkie move and connect near the pool.

132 The last 15 years have seen a growing interest in affective and haptic geographies, a field
 133 whose scholars consider the spatial constitution of emotion, feeling and touch (Anderson &
 134 Harrison, 2006; Johnston, 2012; Paterson, 2009). These authors note that bodies, sensations
 135 and places are mutually constituted through a set of reflexive processes and the very
 136 meaning and character of space are formed through everyday embodied practice (Dowling,
 137 2012; Morrison, 2012). In particular, ‘touch is always situated somewhere’ (Morrison,
 138 2012, p. 10), and experiences of touching reveal much about people’s ‘emotional and
 139 affective relations with place’ (Johnston, 2012, p. 1). More than that, our relationships with
 140 others ‘shape the contours of space by affecting relations of proximity and distance between
 141 bodies’ (Ahmed, 2006, p. 3). Johnston suggests the turn to sexuality in haptic geographies –
 142 and to queer emotions and subjectivities in particular – is very recent (2012, p. 1). This is a
 143 response, at least in part, to a perceived ‘squeamishness’ within both geography and queer
 144 theory where the body has become an abstraction and questions of citizenship have largely
 145 displaced the erotic, gritty aspect of queer sex (Binnie, 2007; Brown, 2008).

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

[AQ3]

148 2012) – to explore the spaces of sex, the ways erotic connections are geographically
 149 embodied, and the interaction of bodies in place. As Brown notes, ‘men are drawn into
 150 relational structures not only with other men’s bodies, but the fabric of the space in which
 151 their encounters occur’ (2008, p. 929). The swimming enclosure, that site of ‘turn on’,
 152 need, etc., is but one location in which David and Darkie’s sexual desire took shape. At the
 153 same time, desire is not all about bare skin and body fluids; physical connections
 154 intertwine with emotional relations and other spatial pleasures. For instance, there are
 155 similarities between David Wildey’s writing and photography and the love letters
 156 examined by Orr in a recent article on queer domestic space and the archive. The 1952
 157 correspondence between Bill and Jack speaks of physical desire (‘the warmth of your
 158 embrace and your kiss were, as ever, undenyng, fulfilling’), but also the emotions stirred
 159 by the affair (moments of ‘idyllic happiness’ and ‘longing’) and Bill’s affective
 160 experiences of Jack’s apartment (the smell of fresh coffee and the strains of ‘glorious’
 161 music) (Orr, 2012). David’s account, like Orr’s analysis of Bill and Jack’s affective lives,
 162 weaves together forms of spatialized affect that span a range of experiences.

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

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181 **David’s travels**

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

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

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

202 David’s official duties were not especially arduous, surveillance of his movements was
 203 light and there was plenty of time for relaxation: ‘the pictures’, writing, sunbathing and
 204 swimming at a spot he dubbed ‘Shangri La’. This was ‘leisure living’, to use one of
 205 David’s own phrases (5 November 1943b). His diary describes sensations and emotions in
 206 rich detail: ‘I spent the morning, between frequent swims, washing, reading, sunbathing of
 207 course, though incidentally, and doing a little writing. The day was very hot and for once I
 208 did get rather burnt and was a little tender this evening’ (13 October 1943b). This text
 209 echoes Obrador-Pons’ (2007) discussion of ‘how it feels to be nude’ in a beach
 210 environment where bodies are interlaced with the elements. In such spaces – in this case a
 211 spot at the river rather than the beach – there is space for sensuality and enjoyment, a
 212 combination of feeling and doing. Sunburn, meanwhile, is the negative corollary of the
 213 feel of sun tickling skin (Paterson, 2009, p. 782).

[AQ4]

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

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

[AOS1]

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

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

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

265 The arrival of new recruits to New Caledonia, en masse and names unknown, provided
 266 cause for further excitement, and David’s notes are impressionistic responses to a large
 267 body of new men on the archipelago. ‘Some of them are beautiful – handsome, and maybe
 268 “thrilling” company’, David jotted; ‘others looked a “bit much”’. In 1993, reflecting upon
 269 his time in New Caledonia, he described the subsequent dissolution of beauty: ‘in time
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293 Figure 1. From left to right: Wal, John and David at a private swimming hole, New Caledonia.
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295 they would lose it as the novelty of being in the tropics wore off and the mosquitoes and
 296 the mundane, humdrum existence took its toll' (20 October 1943b). As this excerpt hints,
 297 pleasure alternated with boredom among those stationed in the non-combat zone of New
 298 Caledonia.

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

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

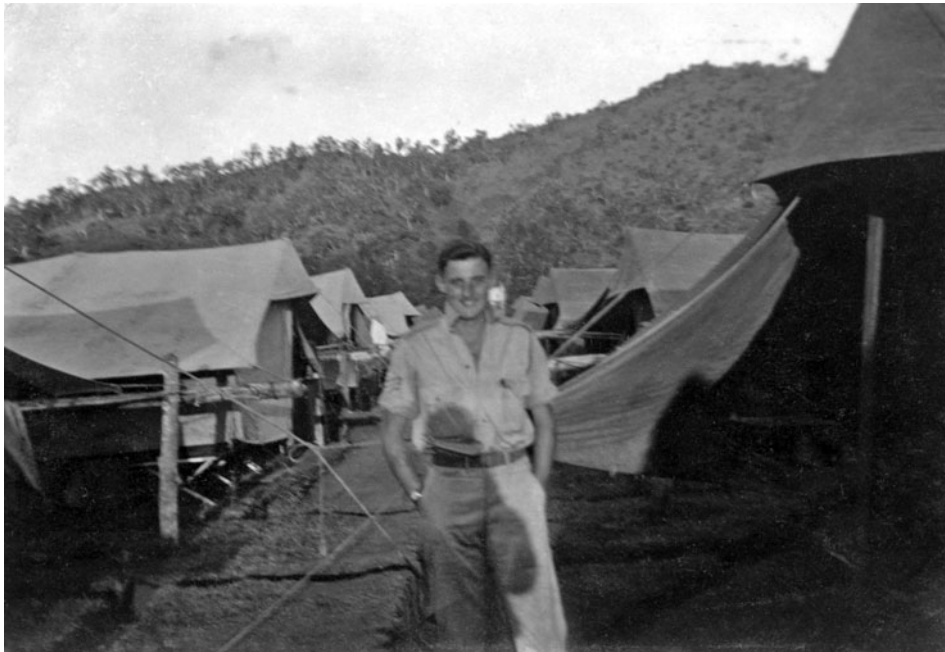
318 This excerpt conjures up the spaces of desire: the shade of a summer house, the
 319 pleasure of orgasm, the threat of an encounter with a disapproving nun. The latter cut
 320 straight across David's religious commitments, the adverb 'guiltily' signalling the
 321 transgression. Still, the religious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

329 David and Darkie

331 David Wildey's encounters with the US Marines paled into insignificance when compared
 332 to his passionate relationship with Charles 'Darkie' Boyd, a regular soldier and fellow
 333 New Zealander. Darkie was 23, the same age as David, a warehouse storeman in his
 334 civilian life and a keen rugby player. The pair met at the hospital in Bourail after Darkie
 335 had been admitted with fluid on the knee. David and Darkie talked for hours and Darkie
 336 'unburdened a lot: about his family, his whole life from childhood, his work, his ambitions,
 337 his weaknesses! [...] I used to help him exercise his leg, and with the intimacy of physical
 338 contact, and his dependence, the bond grew and I began to care about him' (26 October
 339 1943b). David went on to document the physical features that attracted him to Darkie:
 340 'five-foot-nine of muscle and tan, sad eyes brown but alive, a little scar over the right brow,
 341 dark complexion, dark hair' (29 October 1943b).

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

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

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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.

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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

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

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

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

410 A strong sexual connection cemented the bond the men had forged over shared
411 confidences. ‘He wasn’t loathe to share our physicality! Nor my body! He begged for it,
412 demanded it!’, David wrote breathlessly (26 October 1943b). There were other erotic
413 moments too, including the half hour in the detention barracks swimming enclosure. One
414 sunny afternoon, David wrote, ‘I was heading for the YM to see if he were there when I
415 met him coming. We found a secluded spot and after much resisting I let him have his way.
416 Ah, Love! He buggered me. He had to leave around eight-thirty. I went as far as the YM
417 with him and stayed for a cup of tea’ (10 October 1943b). Another time, ‘After mess we
418 stole an hour of bliss welded as one before he had to be on his way’ (3 October 1943b).
419 David’s diary reveals the ‘embodied and visceral thrill of the mutual enjoyment and
420 exploration of bodies and place’, in Johnston’s words (2012, p. 4), intersecting with a
421 power play (‘after much resisting’/‘Ah, Love!’). Darkie’s redeployment to the Solomons
422 always seemed imminent, and the ever-present threat of spatial dislocation added a real
423 frisson to these encounters:
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425 There is a pretty spot up behind the camp and we climbed the hill into the lantana. We lay in a
426 little clearing and taking me in his arms he asked, tauntingly maybe, Is this what you want?
427 A few nights ago, I had sadly commented, we will never kiss again, will we? God! Clutching
428 our last fleeting moments together. What a mad world! Happiness belongs only in this
429 moment! For the last time we were one, he in me! God! Keep him safe! (28 October 1943b)

430 Intensity took several forms, and the relationship was not without its jealousies. David
431 sulked when Darkie spent time with other friends, and he hung about in search of
432 consolation: ‘I saw him alone for a moment. He was his usual “very cool” but nice and
433 friendly self, not cold nor reserved as I had feared. We arranged to meet tomorrow night’
434 (17 October 1943b). David noted that Darkie was bisexual, and one afternoon he
435 complained to his diary that ‘fickle Darkie had plans of his own which did not include me
436 – a nurse “lined up”?’ (8 October 1943b). We know nothing of the geography of Darkie’s
437 encounter with the nurse, where or when, and even less about the erotic lives of other
438 women. Although there was a corps of nurses at Bourail, and female personnel in other
439 parts of the base, including the library, they do not feature heavily in David’s narrative.
440 Bérubé (1990/2010, p. 102), Ford (1995, p. 98), and Vickers (2009) note that the service
441 clubs afforded formative social opportunities for lesbians as well as gay men, but these

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

444 After a month of passionate to-ing and fro-ing, the time finally came for Darkie's
445 reassignment to the Solomons. David desperately wanted to follow Darkie, and in late
446 October he sought his own transfer to a medical unit there. The brigadier to whom he
447 appealed was widely assumed to be both married and homosexual, a fact David claimed to
448 know through his friends Wal and John. This approach carried risks. In an allusion to the
449 fate of some military men caught in homoerotic encounters, David later jotted: 'Had he
450 been unsympathetic I'd probably have faced Court Martial' (24 October 1943a).³ Other
451 risks lay in wait, for a stint in the Solomons would be a more dangerous assignment than
452 the New Caledonia posting. Japanese forces had invaded the Solomons, a British colony,
453 in January 1942, along with New Guinea, Burma and the Dutch East Indies. The Japanese
454 advance was slowly pushed back: after a bloody campaign the allies reoccupied the island
455 of Guadalcanal in February 1943 and Vella Lavella early in October the same year
456 (Bennett, 1987). The region remained dangerously unstable, however, and fighting would
457 continue in nearby Bougainville until mid-1945. David must have wondered what he was
458 signing up for. 'Ah! Love is strong as death, and I will suffer death to be near him', David
459 told his diary. 'So when I die, young or old, whether my love lives or dies, I'll take into the
460 grave a part of him, imprisoned for all eternity in my heart and soul, that love I live today'
461 (25 October 1943a).

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

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

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

484 I spent one of the most memorable, most enjoyable, idyllic hours of this lifetime. I went out on
485 a raft moored off the beach with Murph and three or four others. We poled from one coral reef
486 to another agog at the beautiful fish in shoals of blues and greens and striped yellow-and-
487 black, and the incredible coral growths in an orgy of colour. The water was crystal clear and
488 warm, and there were deep chasms in the coral where the water was very blue. We had fun
489 diving into them. [Later] we went diving from the wharf. It seemed a long way down to me
490 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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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584 Networks of affect

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

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

612 garden, a ship's hospital and a roadhouse are just three examples from David's archive.
613 References to spaces and feeling infuse David's diaries and images, and they reveal the
614 impact of location on sexual identity itself. When David swapped his New Zealand civilian
615 life for the military geographies of New Caledonia and Vella Lavella, he came to
616 understand his erotic interests in new ways. Bérubé (1990/2010, p. 228) has suggested that
617 the Second World War profoundly transformed the lives of the homosexual men sent away
618 from their families and their everyday realities by bringing them together in radically new –
619 and often gender-segregated – milieux. This was certainly true for David, and he wrote
620 (in a transcript of an earlier diary) that his experiences in New Caledonia 'brought me out'
621 (16 December 1940). He was previously so 'innocent' at the YMCA in Christchurch, he
622 noted, even though he was 'always nude' in a setting with plenty of attractive men to
623 admire, but his wartime opportunities, grasped in a range of places far from home, stirred
624 new passions. David's sexual becoming, a particular disposition to affect whose resonances
625 would last a lifetime, was profoundly shaped by the young man's interactions with others
626 in wartime New Caledonia and the Solomon Islands.

627 [LA071](#) David's experiences show us that affect is not only spatialized, but also networked.
628 In contemporary urban life, Thrift argues, affect is increasingly 'engineered', resembling
629 'the networks of pipes and cables that are of such importance in providing the basic
630 mechanics and root textures of urban life, a set of constantly performing relays and
631 junctions that are laying down all manner of new emotional histories and geographies'
632 (2004, p. 58). Although Thrift's insight is historically and geographically specific,
633 referring to postmodern cities in an era of increasing social surveillance, his network
634 metaphor is also suggestive when applied to other times and places. Its 'relays and
635 junctions' suggest the complex connections – we might call them 'networks of affect' –
636 that characterized the geographies of wartime. In the Pacific during the Second World
637 War, physical spaces provided pathways through which feeling flowed. Roads and tracks

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

645 David’s travels around his network exemplified the ‘energetics of movement and
 646 emotion’, to borrow Thrift’s words (2004, p. 72). An entry for 23 October was fairly
 647 typical: ‘I walked the roads for hours and waited down by the barracks for Darkie to return
 648 but did not see him’ (23 October [1943a](#)). David often described his emotional state when
 649 he travelled between the spaces that carried great resonance for him. One afternoon he and
 650 Darkie crossed paths as Darkie headed off to see friends. David ‘walked down with him
 651 and very wistfully left him at the same spot where we parted last night’ (27 September
 652 [1943b](#)). Sometimes the natural environment also stirred intense feelings. One evening
 653 David prayed at the YMCA with his friend Charlie Forbes before returning to base:

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

658 Travel, space and feeling intersected when David and his contemporaries moved from one
 659 location to another. In a truck en route from the hospital to BTD, ‘Frank, Darkie and I
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683 **Figure 5.** Military personnel in the mess queue, Joroveto, Vella Lavella. This picture of a long mess
 684 queue shows a pathway through the dense jungle, along which men stand waiting for food. It hints at
 685 other forms of affect – hunger and its imminent satiation – and once again documents a mass of
 686 male bodies which no doubt appealed to its gay photographer. Reproduced by permission of Hocken
 Collections (S13-503d).

687 cleaned up a bottle of red wine and I had a beer before leaving' (10 October 1943b). A note
 688 from 1993 tries to make sense of his earlier omission of the erotic details: 'I recall
 689 indiscreetly reaching under Darkie, who was sitting alongside me, 's [*sic*] shirt to feel his
 690 warm body. Why didn't I record this? He didn't resist, perhaps a little drunk, or not to draw
 691 attention on the crowded truck, or hopefully, maybe he was enjoying it' (10 October
 692 1943b). When eventually it came time for David to say goodbye to Darkie in the evening
 693 of 28 October 1943, the men bid one another 'a last au revoir and good luck with a formal
 694 hand clasp' (28 October 1943b). Early the next morning, Darkie moved out of his
 695 compound in a convoy of trucks bound for the wharf and the troop ship that would take
 696 soldiers to the Solomon Islands. David recorded the poignancy of the moment:

697 I was up at five and down to the bridge. The empty convoy of transports going up had
 698 awakened me and my first panic was that they had left earlier and I'd already missed him.
 699 Sharp on six, far off on the clear, still, morning air, the shouted orders, the hubbub of farewells
 700 and the martial movement of not one band but two prepared me for the approach; and all too
 701 soon they came. God, what a thrilling, heart-swelling, moving experience is a convoy!
 702 Especially when a part of oneself is being swept away in its grandeur! The roar of engines,
 703 the wheels my enemy! Hypnotic! The screen of stirred up dust, that lump in my throat.
 704 (29 October 1943b)

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

714 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
 715 the evenings at Shangri La. Then I'll miss him and the longing will increase. I'll be looking
 716 down the road for him, fretful because he doesn't come, wondering what he's doing, realizing
 717 he's far away and praying for him. O God take care of him, and bring him back to me . . . there
 718 is just myself here at BCRH and somewhere else there is Darkie and all around there is just
 719 space and nothing else and no-one. (26 October 1943b)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

773 David laughed at his younger self, ridiculing his maudlin feeling, exaggerated emotion and
 774 intensity. Years after he had known Darkie intimately, he could distance himself from his
 775 old feelings. At the same time, to annotate the diary was to spin a thread that would
 776 connect the past and the present. Much the same can be said of David's photographs.
 777 Snapshots of friends were important for those involved in the war effort. Quanchi suggests
 778 that self and group portraits were 'a mnemonic device' through which New Caledonia-
 779 based personnel would later recall their posting, and that most preferred to remember their
 780 friends rather than the military aspects of wartime (Quanchi, 2006, p. 36). When US troops
 781 raided the stock of official New Zealand photographs, and took them home as mementoes
 782 of their own, David expressed relief that his single shot of Darkie was safe (Wildey,
 783 5 November 1943b). Like his diary, with Darkie's details so carefully written inside the
 784 front cover, David kept Darkie's photo carefully tucked away among his papers as he

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

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Conclusion: wartime, space, feeling

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'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.

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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.

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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.

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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

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

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

846 For David, the diary and its 1993 dialogue had a broader significance than his life
847 alone, and he had an eye on a possible future readership. I first heard about the diary and
848 photographs in 2009 from a friend of David, who learned of my interest in New
849 Zealanders' gay archives and sought a home for David's collections. Near the end of his
850 life, David was pleased to hear of their transfer to the Hocken Collections in Dunedin.
851 He had wanted them kept for posterity, a potential resource for wider cultural
852 conversations and future publishing projects.⁵ They spoke powerfully to me. Robinson
853 (2010) suggests archival research is itself a deeply affective practice, and I was profoundly
854 moved by David's war memoir: excited that such an account of gay wartime experience
855 had survived, drawn in to the intensity of his affair with Darkie. I experienced a curious
856 tension between familiarity and disconnection. Most profound were the differences
857 between my own life in an academic institution and the spaces of war some 70 years
858 earlier. As much as I would like to, I cannot grasp what it must have felt like in the Pacific
859 under wartime conditions, in settings so utterly defined by the military context, physical
860 geography, climate and the possibility of death. At the same time, I am well aware of the
861 connections between the queer past and the present, of my own desire to reach out to
862 David's experience and somehow 'stitch up the gap in the temporal fabric', as Love puts it
863 (2009, p. 36). To some extent, David Wildey's experiences retain an ineffable quality.
864 As distant as they may seem, though, his mesh of feelings and networks can broaden our
865 knowledge of wartime affect and its spatial relations, and deepen our appreciation of
866 feeling in queer histories and geographies.

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871 Kelly and Greg Rawlings also provided helpful suggestions on the draft, as did this journal's three
872 referees.

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Notes

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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).

- 883 4. Roger Eltoft, the executor of David Wildey's estate, told me of David's stress at such moments.
 884 5. Eltoft relayed to me David's happiness at the prospect of his archive being published, provided it
 885 took place after his death.

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