Body Culture

Max Dupain and the social recreation of the body, c.1919-1939

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Abstract

Max Dupain is regarded as the most significant photographer working in Australia during the 1930s. In this thesis I examine his work in relationship to the impact in Australia of what has been called the ‘body culture’ movement. After world war one, many western countries enthusiastically subscribed to schemes designed to control, regulate and develop the body as a means of building individual health and fitness and assisting communal regeneration. Drawing on the pseudo-scientific theories of eugenics, ideas and methods concerning the revitalisation of the body became popular among a diverse range of groups. In a number of countries, including Australia, such discourses were linked to nationalism.

The primary focus of my investigation is to explore how ‘body culture’ developed in Australia and how it was expressed in public culture, education and the visual arts. In particular, I investigate the relationship of Dupain’s work to the ‘body culture’ movement and the role that photography played in general to the imaginative rendering of utopian and dystopian ideas concerning the body in the interwar period in Australia.

Using a cultural studies methodology I investigate the dynamic interchange that evolved as photographs were used in a range of popular magazines, specialist publications and high art journals to record, authorise and perpetuate a range of ideological and social constructs regarding the body. As part of this examination, I propose that Australia’s most distinctive contribution to ‘body culture’ was through the development of two physical archetypes associated with the beach - namely, the lifesaver and the surfer - and that the popularity of these icons was largely enabled through photography.

In a biographical study of the artist, I investigate the impact of Max’s father, George Dupain, a pioneer physical educator and supporter of eugenics, arguing that his influence was significant in the formation of Max’s attitude to photographing the body. I examine the influence of vitalism on Dupain’s creative development and conclude that his reputation as an exemplar of modernist photography in Australia should more properly be seen as residing in his contributions in the 1930s to classical modernism rather than the broader context into which he is customarily placed.
I argue that our understanding of commercial and art photographs of the body, taken by Dupain and others, is both broadened and enlivened when it is seen as embedded in the discourses of ‘body culture’. Likewise, I propose that the field of ‘body culture’ itself could not have captured the public’s imagination with as much force as it did in the interwar period without the aid of this most protean of mediums.
Declaration

This is to certify that

(i) the thesis comprises only my original work,
(ii) due acknowledgment has been made in the text to all other material used,
(iii) the thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies, appendices and footnotes.

Isobel Crombie
Acknowledgments

The idea for this thesis first began around 1984 when I was working as Curatorial Assistant of Photography at the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra. At that time, my colleague, Martyn Jolly, proposed an idea for an exhibition exploring vitalism in Australian photography of the 1930s. Although the exhibition did not progress beyond the theoretical, I found the linkage of vitalism and photography intriguing and I started to read in the area. Other projects intervened but, in 1992, my interests were revived when Max Dupain died and previously unpublished photographs from his archive began to appear on the art market. Among these works was a group of photographs from the 1930s that featured naked white Australians posing in sand dunes. These images were so unlike anything previously produced in this country that I knew they warranted further research.

The opportunity to investigate ‘body culture’ came in 1994 when I enrolled in a Master of Arts Degree in Fine Arts at the University of Melbourne and, as I began to strategically read in this area, the terms of this thesis began to take shape. My conversion to a Doctorate was facilitated by an Australian Postgraduate Research Scholarship which enabled me to take twelve months leave without pay from my position as Senior Curator of Photography at the National Gallery of Victoria. I am grateful to the Director, James Mollison and his successor, Dr Timothy Potts, for allowing me the latitude to work on this project. Although I know neither really believed I could sustain the demands of both work and research, I appreciate that they did not quell my enthusiasm or reject my request for part-time employment.

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Introduction

Something new has appeared. It could be called a movement, a wave, a fashion, a passion, a new feeling for life; this is a reality that has inundated, pursued, inspired, reformed and influenced millions of people... It had no name but was called by a hundred old names and a hundred new ones, and ultimately the old expressions were unable to capture the new sensibility.

Body culture, gymnastics, dance, cult dances, the new corporeality, the new physicality, the revival of the ideals of antiquity, the new gymnastics, physical exercise and hygiene, sport in all its incarnations such as those played in the nude, nudism, life reform, functional gymnastics, physical education, rhythmical exercise with all its countless expressions, and so on.

The entire Western world and its sphere of influence has been transformed by this strange new sensibility and way of life - from America to Australia, from Europe to Japan... Where did all this come from?... It was the Great War; it opened an unbridgeable yawning abyss between then and now, drew a dividing line between old and new... A new, influential metaphysics developed. The external facade was shattered and decayed, at which point a self-discovery process began, a search for a physical and spiritual unity. The entire world longed to hear the heartbeat of the living.

The murderous war had become the creator of this new life... What have been discussed here are the symptoms of a new way of life characteristic of the postwar population. Bolshevism, fascism, sports, body culture, and the New Objectivity are all related... In all realms and walks of life, blood, new impulses and intuition are rising up once more against mere reason, will, and the intellect.

William Grassner, 1927.

In 1927, William Grassner identified a 'body culture' movement that arose with varying degrees of intensity in western countries following the first world war. The desire to build a physically and spiritually energised society after the war was most fully expressed in Germany but ideas regarding 'degeneracy' and revitalisation also found a receptive audience in Australia. The quest for national and individual rejuvenation was expressed through an

2 Grassner was a protege of Oswald Spengler and shared his belief that a transformation of consciousness was taking place in the West. To facilitate this process Grassner maintained that an appreciation of 'life rhythm' was necessary and that this could be re-established through attention to the bodily processes of blood, pulse and breath. As Toepfer has commented, Grassner sought to, "expose the unconscious rhythm of life as an entirely aesthetic phenomenon in tension with the rationalized regulation of everyday life in the socioeconomic realm". Toepfer, 1997, p.14.
3 Toepfer notes that Germans embraced body culture with more enthusiasm than any other nation, however, he does not adequately account for why this should be the case. Toepfer, 1997, p.383.
extraordinary variety of social groupings concerning matters as diverse as body building and food reform to town planning and nudism.

The promotion of these various organisations was often achieved through the use of photography which, it was believed, could reveal the 'energies' or 'degeneration' of the body in a more truthful way than other mediums. The scientific imprimatur of photography also helped legitimise the concepts of eugenics, racial nationalism and vitalism that invariably underpinned 'body culture'.

The main goal of 'body culture' was to create a body that, as Gottfried Benn wrote in 1931, was: "a biologically more valuable, racially improved, vitalistically stronger, eugenically perfected type, justified by a greater capacity for survival and preservation of the species". In modern usage, the 'ideal body' has come to be understood as a contested terrain with various shifting meanings. However, in the interwar period the terms of the ideal human form were considered a quantifiable 'fact' that gained their authority from the proportions of classical Greek and Roman sculptural figures. The possibility of attaining such corporeal perfection appealed to deeply held human desires but, at heart, this utopian dream was an exclusionary vision. Despite its seemingly invincible vigour the ideal body was vulnerable to its own processes of bodily decay and, even more profoundly, to those less than perfect individuals whose 'bad blood' posed a genetic threat.

To sustain the development of corporeal and biological 'energies' the regulation of sexuality was required at a national level. Michel Foucault has argued that since the seventeenth century, western nations recognised that sex was an, "index of society's strength, revealing of both its political energy and its biological vigour". To manage the sexuality of their populations required what he terms 'bio-power', a concept characterised by two inter-related aspects. The first feature of 'bio-power' was the optimisation of the useful potential of the body to economic and communal ends and the second was the supervision of the genetic and biological rigour of the population.

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4 I will be using a lower case 'e' for eugenics throughout this thesis. Contemporary usage varies between lower and upper case with some writers moving between lower and upper case, even in the same paragraph.

5 Foucault, 1990, p.146.
An understanding of the dynamics of 'bio-power' is important in accounting for Australia's interest in biological and corporeal fitness and for the processes of control that were discussed and implemented. The depletion of vital communal energies was a consistent matter for anxiety in popular Australian discourse from the late nineteenth century but became more critical as the country suffered the effects of World War One. The sexual productiveness and health of the population was considered critical to Australia’s growth and prosperity and, as another war loomed in the 1930s, National Fitness issues also became important. Such discussions often intersected with racial nationalism, and an insular belief in the 'purity' of the population played a significant role in the formation of the country's national identity. At its most extreme level these issues were taken up by various ultra-conservative groups and a small, but influential, number of writers on eugenics. However, even moderate commentators were drawn into formulating notions of a utopian body politic whose progress was premised on the genetic and corporeal health of the individual.

Any modern discussion of 'body culture' and its links to eugenics is compromised by the knowledge of what happened in Nazi Germany during the Second World War. The Nazis' use of eugenics to legitimise their extermination of some sections of the population was the end-point of the desire to create an ideal society populated by Aryan super-men and women. While Australian writers and artists interested in the body often worked within the same ideologically charged field it would be wrong to conclude that such interests necessarily constitute an antipodean version of the Nazi regime. It is true that a substantial number of Australians supported eugenic principles but, unlike countries such as Germany and to a lesser extent the United States, the popularity of such views did not go beyond the theoretical to eugenically-inspired legislation. However, although eugenic laws were not passed in Australia I argue that eugenics did have a substantial impact on certain educational practices and, most notably, on the formation of policies towards Aborigines.

The Australian, "fascination for fascism" is considerably more complex than may first appear and is often more accurately described as an attraction to those sets of assumptions on which Nazi ideology was based. The cult of beauty; identification with the community

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as a 'family' governed by a parenthood of strong leadership; and the fetishism of courage, are some of the potent forces that underpinned Nazism but which were also shared to lesser degrees by other western nations, Australia included.

With the start of the Second World War and a growing awareness of atrocities against the Jews and other groups in Germany, the terms by which 'the body' was theorised in Australia fundamentally changed. Popular interest in eugenics was severely curtailed and unquestioning endorsement of national archetypes, such as the militaristic form of the lifesaver, was tempered. Australians' interest in 'body culture' was disavowed with such energy that even today this remains a field of inquiry in which comparatively little sustained work has been undertaken. For instance, an important aspect of the revitalisation of corporeal energies was the move to reassociate the naked body with the primal forces of nature. I develop the pioneering work undertaken by Magnus Clarke to look both at the early history of the 'nudist cult' in Australia and at the relationship between nudism, censorship and photography.\(^7\)

Another pivotal aspect of 'body culture' was eugenics but unlike other countries where there are substantial published histories surveying their involvement in eugenics, Australia has produced no such account.\(^8\) While some good studies of aspects of eugenics have been written by C.L. Bacchi, Mary Cawte and Stephen Garton, I have extended their work to include a history of the establishment of eugenics in Australia. I believe that eugenics is pivotal to the understanding of 'body culture' and, because of its importance, I have foregrounded my discussion of the cultural manifestations of 'body culture' with a thorough investigation of how this pseudo-science developed and was used in Australia. In this discussion I refer to selected international sources most notably German and English eugenic writers whose work had an impact in Australia. However, I argue that the dialogue on eugenics was not entirely a one-way process. For instance, I contend that the substantial

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\(^7\) Clarke, 1982.

\(^8\) International studies on the influence of eugenics in England and Canada include, for instance, Jones, 1986 and McLaren, 1990. A comprehensive study of eugenics in America is offered by Cravens, 1978.
donations of the Australian, Henry Twitchen, played an important - if now unacknowledged - role in sustaining the influential Eugenics Education Society in London.\(^9\)

The relative lack of inquiry into the terms of ‘body culture’ does not mean that this field is without interest or relevance. David Walker, for instance, has offered valuable insights into the impact that concepts of fatigue and regeneration had in Australia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.\(^10\) Walker has also signalled the importance of eugenics to the development of discourses on the body in Australia. While David Kirk and Karen Twigg note:

As a period of transition between Victorian forms of corporeal regulation and the more recent ‘egalitarian authoritarianism’ of aerobics and the so-called ‘new health consciousness’, the period between the two world wars perhaps offers some as yet unexplored insights into the social construction of Australian bodies.\(^11\)

As Kirk and Twigg imply, the ‘body culture’ movement of the interwar period has great relevance not only as a fascinating area of inquiry in its own right but as an important background to contemporary discourses on the body. In Australia, for instance, an interest in the lifesaver as an icon of national identity has re-emerged over the last decade with renewed vigor. Male and female lifesavers are now not only icons of ‘Australianness’ whose muscular strength perform a social role in saving lives but they are also used to advertise a range of products as diverse as hair gel, breakfast cereal and episodes of Baywatch.

Visual culture has an important role to play in understanding the social complexities of the interwar years. However, because of the Nazi use of classical modernism as an official art

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\(^9\) The only modern published account of Twitchen’s life is a small article by Nicholson & Nicholson, 1995, pp.381-3.

\(^10\) See Walker, 1987a, pp.223-33; Walker, 1987b, pp.49-63 and Walker, 1994, pp.164-78. Walker suggests an important distinction between concepts of vitality and fatigue in the nineteenth century and its expression in the 1920s and 30s. As he writes of the latter period: “vitality became less a personal signature that a sign of racial or national character; there was a shift from personal myths of self-creation to a more collectively defined physiological vitality”. Walker, 1987b, p.61.

style those works that express a similar utopian concern for order, beauty, health and fitness have, until recently, been considered an unpopular topic for study.12

In order to work towards a more integrated view of Australian art history it is important to write a different kind of history that incorporates areas of practice formerly deemed too problematic to investigate as well as that art produced outside the dominant hierarchy of painting. John Williams, for instance, offers one such new approach to this period in his book Quarantined Culture where he draws on a range of social, political, economic and cultural sources from 1913 to 1939 to investigate the Australian reaction to modernism.13 Although the scope of Williams research is admirably wide, his account of this period has one notable absence - that is, the contribution of photography.14

The absence of photography in standard accounts of Australian modernism is commonplace but still surprising as, at the time, the medium was widely considered as one of the most perfect tools to express the modernist credo. In the 1920s, for instance, the camera was claimed as a product of the machine age ideally suited to capturing the dynamism and heroics of modern city life.15 G.H. Saxon Mills expressed a common contemporary view when he wrote that photography was:

Part and parcel of the terrific and thrilling panorama opening out before us to-day of clean concrete buildings and steel radio masts and the wings of the airliner. But its beauty is only for those who themselves are aware of the ‘zeitgeist’ - who belong consciously and proudly to their age and have not their eyes forever fixed wistfully on the past.16

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12 Cowling and Mundy, for instance, have also noted the, “mistrust of the language of classicism” as embodying values adopted by the Nazis. Cowling and Mundy, 1990, p.11. International studies that deal with art produced during the Nazi regime include Barron, 1991 and Adam, 1995. However, sensitivity towards this topic is still such that even German art predating the Nazi regime can be considered contentious. For instance, when a major survey exhibition of German Romantic art was shown in Great Britain in 1994 it raised a critical storm amongst writers who believed that certain nineteenth-century works were proto-fascist in spirit and should not be exhibited. See Hartley, 1994. Cowling and Mundy have also noted the, “mistrust of the language of classicism” as embodying values adopted by the Nazis. Cowling and Mundy, 1990, p.11.
13 Williams, 1995.
14 Although the ambit of his study does not include photography, unlike most authors Williams does at least use photographs as illustrations. Little or no mention is made of photography in standard surveys of Australian art of the interwar period. See, for instance, Haese, 1981; Merewether, 1984; and Burn, [1990]. Modernist photography is discussed as part of Australian photographic history in Newton, 1988 and Willis, 1988. See also Ennis, 1997, pp.102-19.
16 Mills, 1931, p.14. Max Dupain was one Australian photographer to respond to Mills’s vision. In 1935, Dupain used this quote by Mills to indicate his own philosophy towards photography. Dupain, 1935, p.40. Dupain’s opinion on the role of photography in modern life was little changed by 1948 when he wrote: “We think of the camera and its product the
Enthusiasm for photography was such that some considered it the means by which a modern 'religion' could be forged. In 1922, for instance, the American photographer Paul Strand published a provocative article titled, "Photography and the New God". which he posited, "a new Trinity: God the Machine, Materialistic Empiricism the Son, and Science the Holy Ghost." The creator of this modern trinity was the 'machine age' and the scientist and inventor were its high priests. Strand argued that in the face of this social order the intuitive creative skills of the artist stood for relatively little - that is, until the invention of the camera. Photographers found themselves at the nexus of science and art in a position that offered the possibility of a new creative path. As Strand writes:

What is the relation between science and expression? Are they not vital manifestations of energy, whose reciprocal hostility turns the one into the destructive tool of materialism, the other into anaemic phantasy, whose coming together might integrate a new religious impulse? Must not these two forms of energy converge before a living future be born of both?"  

The spirit of the times demanded a different style in photography. Some artists considered the dominant mode of soft-focus Pictorialist photography too 'romantic' to capture the new pace of life. Although Pictorialist photography continued throughout the 1930s, a new approach began to develop." In 1929, Werner Graff proclaimed the arrival of a fresh spirit in photography when he announced, "Here Comes the New Photographer!" As Graff observed, modernist or 'New Photography' had appeared in Russia and Germany in the early 1920s and was closely allied to revolutionary politics. The aesthetic concept of oстрание or 'making strange', coined by the pre-revolutionary Russian Futurist, Victor Shklovsky, perfectly expressed the distinctive qualities of this modernist style in which the viewer's perceptions of the everyday were radically altered to bring about a different way of looking at

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photograph as the art medium of the machine age. It is associated with the apparatus of the operating theatre and surgical cleanliness, the gleaming surface of modern aircraft and the steel and glass of modern architecture... It is probably due to the machine (the camera) photographing the new forms thrown up by the machine and their application to modern existence that a new aesthetic experience has been born". Dupain, (1948), p.10.

19 The history of this period is invariably written as one in which modernist photography broke away from the 'old-fashioned' Pictorialist style. However, the 'cleanses' of this break is a matter for conjecture. On the evidence of the illustrated journals produced in the 1920s and 1930s one could argue that this period is more accurately characterised by several approaches in which photographers either fully adopted the stylistic devices of modernism or Pictorialism or mixed these two styles.
the world. This visual disruption was considered to be akin to the disruption of the old society for a new social order.\textsuperscript{21}

Although originally politically motivated, photographers soon found that the stylistic devices of modernism had a wide range of applications. When information about this new approach to photography became widely known in the United States in the 1920s, many advertisers adopted its stylistic mannerisms stripped of the associated political ideologies. Much to the dismay of radical photographers, their tool of cultural change could also be used just as effectively by those of different political persuasions. In Germany, for instance, the Nazis recognised the potential of ‘New Photography’ as a powerful instrument of propaganda. Film-maker and photographer, Leni Riefenstahl, was among many artists who utilised the dynamic qualities of modernism to help portray a muscular form of nationalism.

Modernist photography reached Australia by the early 1930s and one of its earliest and most outstanding exponents was Max Dupain. Although Dupain only established his independent practice in the mid 1930s he came onto the local scene with such assurance that he helped transform photographic practice in this country. Dupain has been claimed as Australia’s leading modernist photographer; indeed accounts of his work often stress his position as, “the only [Australian] photographer of his generation whose works were truly expressive of Modernist or Surrealist philosophies”.\textsuperscript{22} While this opinion does not acknowledge the significant contributions of other modernist photographers of the 1930s such as Olive Cotton, Russell Roberts and Laurence le Guay, it is true that Dupain’s sustained body of work and clearly articulated position give him pre-eminence in this period.\textsuperscript{23}

In line with his status as a quintessential modernist much of the critical investigation of Dupain’s oeuvre has centred on a formalist analysis of his preferred area of practice - that of his personal art photography. Fellow photographer, David Moore, has written,

\textsuperscript{21} Discussed in Watney, 1982.
\textsuperscript{22} Newton, 1988, fn 6, p.196-7.
\textsuperscript{23} Russell Roberts ran one of Sydney’s largest commercial photographic studios in the 1930s but he also produced some notable ‘personal’ work. An issue of the British Modern Photography 1935-36, for instance, includes a dynamic modernist image by Roberts titled Under Sail. This photograph is a radical down-shot of two young women lying on the decking of a sailboat presumably taken from high in its rigging. Modern Photography, 1935-6, pl.45. A second wave of modernist
“[Dupain] . . . relies on visual truths combined with an aesthetic delight in the beauty of form”. Moore stressed what he regarded as an admirably anti-intellectual quality in Dupain’s work arguing that his photographs made an, “emotional response” their priority. However, there is considerable evidence to show that both Dupain’s personal and commercial photography is considerably more complex than Moore suggests.

Rather than being diminished when considered outside of a rarefied aesthetic zone, Dupain’s photographs are enlivened by being viewed as embedded in the social attitudes of their time. This is especially the case with those images that deal with the body. Indeed, I will argue that a proper account of Dupain’s nude photography of the 1930s is only possible when these works are located as part of the prevalent discourses on health, fitness and eugenics. It is also apparent from a close analysis of his work in the 1930s that Dupain’s attitude to modernity was ambivalent. His distaste for the ‘degenerative’ tendencies in contemporary city life and an appreciation of the perfected bodies in classical Greek and Roman sculpture helped shape his production of many images that should be considered as ‘classical modernist’ rather than ‘modernist’ photographs.

Dupain’s photographs of the 1930s often involve the body and one of the most formative influences on his attitudes towards the human form undoubtedly came from his father George Zephrin Dupain (1881-1959), who made a profound and, to date, unacknowledged contribution to Australian physical culture. As a young man, George Dupain originally wanted to pursue a medical career but after he finished school he was persuaded to take up a position with a firm of wool brokers in Sydney. In 1900, at the age of 19, he left the company to continue his private study into the workings of the human body and, that same year, became a pioneer of Australian physical education when he opened a gymnasium at his home. The Dupain Institute of Physical Education and Medical Gymnastics earned the nickname ‘The Tabernacle’ and was sufficiently popular with patrons to move to larger city

photographers came into prominence in Australia after the Second World War with enigmatic photographers such as Wolfgang Sievers and Margaret Michaelis Sachs.

25 Maxell Spencer Dupain was born in Ashfield, Sydney on 4 April 1911. He was the only child of George and Eua (née Hawthorne) Dupain.
26 Information of Dupain’s gymnasium is from Unknown, 1959, pp.408-9.
premises in Sydney at Daking House and later Manning House. Around 1910, Dupain became partners with Max Cotton who was a senior lecturer in physiology at the University of Sydney where together they developed regulated programs of exercise and diet based on Dupain’s belief that, “health meant more than freedom from disease - it was a force for more effective living”.  

George Dupain backed his views with an informally acquired, but very substantial, knowledge of health and fitness. He assembled a library of over 10,000 books on health-related matters in his home and set up his own chemical laboratory. Dupain’s interest in chemistry prompted him to become an inaugural member of the Australian Chemical Institute and the Council of Sydney Technical College Chemical Society through the 1920s and 1930s. He was President of the latter organisation in 1936 and was made a Fellow for his work on the, “analysis of various aspects of the human body in chemical terms”. Dupain used his knowledge not only to develop programs for his Institute but in the numerous articles and books he published as part of his passionate desire to educate the public on the need for health and fitness.

In common with many Australians interested in individual and national health, George Dupain was a supporter of eugenics and believed an awareness of selective breeding would help build a racially stronger white population. As he stated in 1938:

Why should the traditionally weak and sickly be kept alive and pampered by medical research... Should not rather the united effort be to make the strong stronger and

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27 Information about the locations of George Dupain's gymnasiasts is quoted from Clare Brown's unpublished biography of Max Dupain quoted in Newton, [1994].  
28 Unknown, 1959, p.408. Dupain died on 18 December 1958. Max Cotton was originally named Karl Marx by his free-thinking father, Frank Cotton. Frank was a member of the Labour Caucus and an avid supporter of Russian socialism. Max Cotton was the uncle of Olive Cotton, who was to marry Max Dupain in 1939. A portrait of Frank Cotton taken in 1935 by his granddaughter, Olive, in Max Dupain’s studio is reproduced in Ennis, 1995, p.37.  
31 Dupain was a member of Council from 1922 to 1923. For relevant articles by Dupain in the Society’s Journal see for instance, Sydney Technical College Chemical Society Journal and Proceedings, volume 1, 1922, pp.27-63; volume 3, 1925-7, pp.23-8 and pp.37-54.  
32 While many Australians disavowed eugenics following the war, George Dupain continued to promote it throughout his life. In 1948, for instance, he wrote in support of the Australian eugenacists Bostock and L. Jarvis Nye, “[Their] study of Australian race psychology... has followed the track of genetics, disease and sociology, [and] leads to the inescapable conclusion that signs of decay are in our midst... and Physical Education must take a large lead in these regenerative processes”. The book Dupain refers to is presumably Bostock & Nye, 1939.
let the weak and sickly die out? The latter are of no value to Nature, and the sooner they perish the better.\textsuperscript{33}

Dupain maintained that the effects of the “weak and sickly” on the population of Australia were just one of a series of powerful depleting forces at work all of which pointed, “in one terrible direction - RACIAL DEGENERATION”.\textsuperscript{34} The solution, he argued, was to be found principally in physical education and diet and he pointed to Germany as the leader among western nations in arresting the spread of degeneration:

Whatever you may have to say about Herr Adolph Hitler and the organisation behind him, there is one thing he must be acclaimed for - he has stopped the German race from degenerating physically. Indeed, already he has improved a racial type: he has given a physical ideal to strive and live for, while we are just beginning to wake up to the fact that deep down in our communal life powerful degenerating forces are at work. We are fast deteriorating physically - and probably morally and spiritually as well.\textsuperscript{35}

Although Dupain considered the German efforts, “mixed with machine politics” he nonetheless greatly admired their emphasis on building a race of Aryan super-men and women and conjectured whether such a goal were achievable in Australia. As he rhetorically asked, “How far can racial types be altered or improved by applied physical education? . . . In other words, can we, by physical means, build into the race for transmutation additional biological characteristics which make for an ideal type?”\textsuperscript{36}

Max Dupain’s own views on eugenics are not known but from the critical nature of many of his photographs it is clear that, like his father, he saw ‘degenerative’ tendencies in Australian society that had ramifications for the proper development of the body. It is clear too, that he learnt much from George about health and fitness issues and later wrote of his father, “I think he hoped that one day I would join him in his profession of physical education of

\textsuperscript{33} Dupain, 1938, p.15.
\textsuperscript{34} Author’s emphasis, Dupain, 1938, p.14.
\textsuperscript{35} Dupain, 1938, p.14. The following year, Dupain continues this theme in his article, “Can Racial Decay be Stopped”, which he praises Germans for achieving physical regeneration. He also writes admiringly of the attitudes towards health and fitness expressed by European dictators: “Mussolini, for instance, is a healthy athletic man. He is a fine swordsman, takes regular exercise, and does not drink or smoke, and is temperate in diet. The same can be said of Hitler and Stalin. There is nothing of the pot-bellied degenerate-looking politician about these men”. Dupain, 1939, p.23.
\textsuperscript{36} Author’s emphasis, Dupain, 1938, p.15.
which he was a founder in this country, but it didn’t work out that way”.37 As a child Max helped his father in his chemistry laboratory but the real impact of his father’s interests was in generating his love of physical activities. Max has noted that when he attended school at Sydney Grammar his achievements were more of an athletic than intellectual nature: he became a champion rower, for instance, and rowed with the first and second fours in 1929 and 1930. He also regularly attended his father’s gymnasia in the city and as he revealed in an interview in 1975, “I think I can thank my father for a reasonably sound physical basis that I have today. We could put it down to the gymnasia”.38

Along with sport, Dupain’s other great interest of his early years was photography. He was given a Kodak Box Brownie by his uncle in 1924 and when he began secondary school in the following year he seriously pursued the medium. His efforts were rewarded when Sydney Grammar School awarded him the Carter Memorial Prize for a group of Pictorialist landscape photographs he had taken from 1925 to 1930.39 Soon after leaving school, Dupain’s father introduced him to an advertising agent who suggested that he pursue his photographic activities. Dupain became apprenticed to the commercial Pictorialist photographer Cecil Bostock as his general assistant for three years. Although Bostock’s Pictorialist style was one he was later to publically reject, he did appreciate his early training and later noted that the technical skills that he learnt provided a solid background for his future work.40 During the evenings, Dupain also attended the Julian Ashton Art School and later the East Sydney Technical College where he studied painting and drawing and began to establish a circle of art student friends41.

In 1934, Dupain left Bostock to establish his own photographic studio at 24 Bond Street. This building was the home to a variety of artists including the photographers, Harold Venn and Reg Johnson, the painter, Charles Meere and his assistant, Freda Robertshaw, and the

37 Dupain, 1975, 11,618.
38 Dupain, 1975, 11,618.
40 Dupain, 1975, 11,619.
41 Newton notes that Dupain’s friends at this time included Peter Dodg, Chris Van Dyke and Helen Edmonds. She also states that the group used to meet after class at Dupain’s studio “to discuss new ideas in all fields. The music of avant-garde composers such as Ravel, Stravinsky, Debussy and Schoenberg was played at these meetings and the colour-music theories of Alec Hecton, in particular, were discussed”. Newton, 1988, pp.23-4.
publisher, Sydney Ure Smith who produced the magazine *Art in Australia* there. The commercial art studio of Smith and Julius also had its premises in the building and employed artists such as Lloyd Rees, Roland Wakelin and Percy Leason. The hive of art-related activity at 24 Bond Street has promoted Baldwin Spencer to call it, "unofficial art centre of Australia".

During the week, Dupain would work mostly at the Bond Street studio on advertising illustrations and magazine assignments. On the weekends he would leave town and with Olive Cotton and friends, such as the film-maker, Damien Parer and photographer Geoffrey Powell, would travel to his family's home at Newport Beach. Cotton remembers this period in the mid 1930s as, "carefree days" with Dupain spending his time swimming in the surf or working on his personal photography.

Dupain used the coastal landscape as the setting for a series of nude photographs that he began to take in 1931 - some three years before he set up his independent practice in Bond Street - and which continued throughout the 1930s. These photographs, which feature male and female nude models, most profoundly show the impact of 'body culture' on Dupain's work. His attitude towards the body was shaped in part by his father's interest in the field but it was given aesthetic inspiration through the vitalist philosophies that underpinned the health and fitness movement. Dupain was attracted to the vitalistic writings of D.H. Lawrence, John and Llewelyn Powys and the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, largely filtered through Norman and Jack Lindsay. A principal focus of these authors was the necessity for modern men and women to reconnect with 'life forces' which could reinvigorate the body on a corporeal level but also spiritually. That this commonality of view should have arisen at this time in history was perhaps not surprising given the radical social

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42 For a discussion of the role of Sydney Ure Smith in the promotion of Australian art see Underhill, 1991.
44 Olive Cotton (born 1911) had been friends with Dupain since childhood and her uncle was George Dupain's business partner. She began to photograph when she was eleven and, in 1929, she joined the Sydney Camera Circle and the Photographic Society of New South Wales. After obtaining a BA at the University of Sydney, Cotton decided she wanted to pursue a photographic career. In mid-1934 she went to work at Max Dupain's studio as his photographic assistant. The pair married in 1939 but separated two years later. Geoffrey Powell and Damien Parer joined Dupain's studio in the late 1930s as photographers. Information on Cotton is from Ennis, 1995.
changes that had taken place with war and industrialisation. The German author Hermann Hesse observed in 1926:

The new image of the earth’s surface, completely transformed and recast in just a few decades, and the enormous changes manifest in every city and every landscape of the world since industrialization, correspond to an upheaval in the human mind and soul.

In Australia, an interest in revitalised spiritual awareness formed an important part of contemporary social discourse. As Stephen Garton notes: “The complex underside of national efficiency and science was the fascination with the life of the spirit, the role of the irrational and the means for mastering psychic forces”. The contemporary critic P.R. Stephenson placed such concerns in a nationalistic context in 1936 when he wrote:

Into that Abyss, of the Great War and the Great Aftermath, crashed not only ten million and more young human lives, but also the Spirit of Man himself, everywhere on the earth, and even in Sunny Australia . . . If the resurgence of the Spirit of Life, and thus of Life itself [is to be accomplished], it may be possible in our Commonwealth . . . where the physical basis of life is so strong, and yet so comparatively unwarred and undefeated.

Concern for the proper development of the Australian ‘spirit’ lay at the heart too of William Baylebridge’s compendium of writings, This Vital Flesh, published in 1939. With the knowledge of another war imminent, Baylebridge’s introduction to his books carried an urgency. He wrote, “Perhaps never till our own day has the world seen so great a travails of the spirit of man; perhaps never before has that spirit been so threatened by forces pregnant for its destruction”. Throughout his writings, Baylebridge’s aim was to encourage a, “mental, emotional and spiritual resurgence, which Australia now, as other nations had done formerly, should stand for as an idea”. A call for regeneration was frequently invoked in Australia in the interwar period but Baylebridge, more than most, saw that quest in spiritual

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47 Garton, [1998].
49 Baylebridge, 1939, p.ii.
50 Baylebridge, 1939, p.xviii.
terms. A vitalistic conception of life runs strongly through his writings; for instance, in one of his poems, *Life’s Spirit*, he attempts to define the indefinable essence of life as:

Life, the spirit,
The fire refining in this clay,
Hears without ears;
And, without eyes, it sees.\(^{51}\)

Baylebridge’s interest in spiritual regeneration intersected too with eugenic principles and he saw Australia as a, “land peopled by renewed stock, consciously regenerated, and not less than complete man”.\(^{52}\) His vision of a ‘complete man’ was an embodiment of the Nietzschean superman connected to a spiritual life force and purged of ‘impurities’. Baylebridge was an uncompromising eugenicist, who was scathing in his opinion of what he saw as a lack of, “racial foresight”.\(^{53}\) He commented, “A false sympathy has rendered powerless almost every form of racial purification . . . by everywhere suspending selection, by checking the operation of such factors as would automatically purge the state of degenerates, mental and physical”.\(^{54}\)

Baylebridge considered racial nationalism to be a program that should be introduced into Australia, “with the authority of a new religion”.\(^{55}\) The terms of this new ‘religion’ could be perceived most readily by special members of the community, namely, the artist. In his poem, *Appointed Art*, the elite of the Australian community (himself included) are praised as the harbingers of the ‘vital spirit’:

Art is this - the report of vital joy,
Such as the god we vision might employ -
A flowering, ‘neath the spirit’s will,
Of blood whose faith is perfect still.
Life’s artists, vowed to yea,
Are primal-tempered, free,
Strong-cored, immaculate, rude . . . \(^{56}\)

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\(^{51}\) Baylebridge, 1939, p.5
\(^{52}\) Baylebridge, 1939, p.156.
\(^{53}\) Baylebridge, 1939, p.176.
\(^{54}\) Baylebridge, 1939, p.172.
\(^{55}\) Baylebridge, 1939, p.169.
\(^{56}\) Baylebridge, 1939, p.140.
Baylebridge’s views drew heavily on the philosophy of vitalism which was undergoing a resurgence in the early twentieth century. So-called ‘critical vitalists’, such as Henri Bergson and Friedrich Nietzsche, questioned the concept of mechanism as the theoretical foundation for production in the humanities and science, reassessing the relationships of knowledge and reality in terms of an ontology of continual and dynamic flux.\textsuperscript{57} Bergson argued that life was not a matter of logical, sequential development but a, “continuous creation of unforeseeable form”.\textsuperscript{58} Mental life too was, “in [a] constant state of becoming, and the same feeling by the mere fact of being repeated is a new feeling”.\textsuperscript{59} Bergson posited that our concept of time (durée réelle) was perceived intuitively through experience and not through the intellect. Indeed, he regarded the development of the intellect as a way of “[limiting] with a view to action, the life of the spirit”.\textsuperscript{60} According to Bergson the intellect was an instrumental facility that organises material things, offering stable and systematised concepts. Intuition, on the other hand, was subjective, spiritual, holistic and opened people up to the real condition of reality - which was flux.

Bergson’s most influential book \textit{Creative Evolution} (1907) had a profound effect on many areas of scientific and cultural production in the western world. Of particular interest for artists and writers was the challenge that his concept of \textit{elan vital} posed to the scientific and rationalist view of humanity, allowing a place for the intuitive and subjective as a force of creative power. The artist had a special role to play in society by giving form to the creative forces that Bergson regarded as the linch-pin of existence. Using Bergson’s notions of the intuitive, modernist artists could find confirmation of their belief in an inner artistic reality.\textsuperscript{61}

While it does not appear that Bergson’s writings had a large audience in Australia, I argue that his theories had a significant indirect impact on artists such as Dupain through the

\textsuperscript{57} Nietzsche expounded a form of vitalism that was not as straightforward as that proposed by Bergson. For a critical discussion of Nietzsche's philosophy on 'life' see for instance Amrine, 1992, p.131.
\textsuperscript{58} Bergson, 1911 (1907) p.25 quoted in Lehan, 1992, p.308.
\textsuperscript{60} Bergson, 1911 (1895), p.233 quoted in Schwartz, 1992, p.284.
\textsuperscript{61} Richard Lehan has described the application of Bergsonian notions of creativity in the following terms: “The penetration of inner reality . . . owes as much to the principles of art as to cognition, because the movement of intelligence beyond instinct, and then intuition beyond intelligence, takes us to the heightened plane that reality shares with art . . .”. Lehan, 1992, p.311.
1992, p.311.
writings of John and Llewlyn Powys and D.H. Lawrence. Lawrence, for instance, was greatly influenced by Bergson and his novels and poems are concerned with the inner intuitive self that he linked to sexual consciousness. In his writings Lawrence established a dichotomy between the intellect and intuition in which intellect and logic was allied to the mechanical, urban modern world, and intuition to universal, natural and organic time. He believed that in contemporary life the links between the intellect and intuition (or sensuality) were disconnected and needed to be restored.

Dupain's interest in the vitalistic ideas of Lawrence are most clearly shown in his 1937 photograph, Homage to D.H. Lawrence. In this image Dupain has created a surreal still-life in which a carefully selected group of classical and modern objects reveals his appreciation for Lawrence’s ideas. Central to the image is a copy of The Selected Poems of D.H. Lawrence that Dupain has juxtaposed with a small classical bust, a flywheel and a tiny sculptural arm that extends onto the book from a small pile of sand.

For Dupain, classical antiquity represented the pinnacle of human achievement and a time when people were integrated beings fully in touch with their intuitive powers and the forces of nature. The exalted nature of modern white Australian’s classical forebears is suggested in Dupain’s illumination of the small bust with a halo of light. While the relationship of Greeks and Romans to the natural environment is suggested by the placement of the sculpture on sand - the beach being emblematic for Dupain of the powers of nature. However, like Lawrence, Dupain believed that modernity had separated modern men and women from the ancient and the natural. He indicates this disconnection in the photograph through the use of a wheel that appears to sever the arm from the classical figure.

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62 Gael Newton first noted, but did not expand, on this connection in her pioneering study on Dupain. Newton, 1980.
63 Dupain's image was included in an exhibition of photographs held at the David Jones Gallery in 1937. A reviewer of the exhibition for The Sydney Morning Herald concluded their description of Homage to D.H. Lawrence with the remark, "however
John and Llewlyn Powys also proved a source of inspiration to Dupain and, like Lawrence, these Welsh authors promoted a vitalistic appreciation of life. The Powys' regionalist books emphasised a pantheistic view of nature in which sexuality was polarised into male and female 'energies'. Their belief in elemental forces and the importance of intuition and creativity as a means to reconnect with primal powers appealed to those eager for personal and social revitalization. Dupain, for instance, would have admired the Powys brothers' emphasis on the need for passionate experiences as a means of approaching modern life. He also appears to have responded to their interest in sexual 'energies' as evidenced in his photograph Impassioned Clay (1937), which he titled after Llewelyn Powys' book of the same name. In this photograph Dupain has montaged the naked body of a woman with a shell in a direct reference to Powys' comment on the cowrie shell as symbolic of female sexuality.  

Dupain was not the only photographer whose work shows the influence of vitalism. Laurence le Guay frequently focused on procreative energies in his work in the late 1930s. In Reincarnation (1938), for instance, le Guay montages an image of a naked woman over the ghostly form of an apparently naked man. The young woman has drawn her arms behind her head to fully reveal her body to the viewer. The slight twist of her body and the use of studio lights to 'sculpt' her figure accentuate the woman's curvaceous and distinctly female form. The woman's gaze is not directed at the camera but, with her head tilted back,
seemingly appears absorbed in her inner world. Indeed, the lack of props with which to locate the viewer and the presence of an oversized figure from which the woman seems to ‘emerge’, suggests that le Guay is creating a metaphorical realm of ‘ideas’ rather than quantifiable reality.

This impression is reinforced by his choice of male model who appears to have been selected by le Guay as the embodiment of archetypal masculine qualities. In contrast to the soft rounded form of the woman, the man has a hard and powerful body. He is as active as she is passive - indeed his exertions have covered him in sweat. The biologically differentiated nature of the two models indicates that le Guay intended *Reincarnation* as a representation of sexual ‘life forces’ in their most essential and vitalistic form.

The influence of vitalism on creative Australian practitioners has been investigated by Michael Roe, Vincent Buckley and Noel Macainsh - all of whom have offered important insights into how vitalism affected writers. However, comparatively little work has been undertaken on the impact of vitalism on painters and sculptors, and none on how it affected photographers.66 As I will argue, in common with other Australians interested in this subject, photographers may have referred to Lawrence and the Powys brothers but it was to Friedrich Nietzsche that they turned as a major source of inspiration on vitalism.

In his excellent study, *Nietzsche in Australia*, Noel Macainsh has charted how that philosopher’s ideas affected two main groups in Australia: one with nationalistic interests and the other predominantly aesthetic.67 Whatever their primary concerns, both groups were drawn to books such as *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in which Nietzsche asserted that modern men and women were weak and degenerate, owing to their suppression of vital life forces.68 He argued that God was dead and that his place should be taken by a modern superman whose ‘will to power’ was enabled through the utilisation of the forces of nature. As Nietzsche

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68 Writing of the impact of Nietzsche, Dr Oscar Levy noted: “Nietzsche is now read not only in South Africa and Australia [and] Canada . . . but even upon the banks of the Nile”. Levy, 1913, xiii.
declared, “The Superman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: The Superman shall be the meaning of the earth!”.

A contentious aspect of Nietzsche’s theories was his encouragement of selective breeding as a means to produce the all-powerful super-men and women. Combined with late eighteenth-century notions of teleology these ideas were later used by the Nazi party to help legitimise notions of Aryan superiority. Nietzschean ideas were influential not only among eugenicists but those interested in the arts. In 1913, for instance, Dr Oscar Levy noted, “Artists were the first to welcome Nietzsche and have even honoured him with the flattering name of ‘our philosopher’.”

In 1934, for instance, Dupain turned to Nietzsche’s philosophy on the formation of the ideal body for his photograph aptly titled, Superman. In this structurally complex photograph, Dupain again utilises the technique of montage to create a strange polymorphous form, neither wholly male nor female. The photograph resembles a Rochstach test with the left side replicating the right. The body halves form what appears to be a crouching figure with female breasts and rudimentary male genitals. Dupain suggests the possibility of a new hybrid body - a ‘eugenically perfected’ superman that no longer needs to rely on the exigencies of mating to ensure its genetic imprint is carried into new generations.

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70 Opinion on the eugenic principles in Nietzsche is mixed. Frederick Amrine is one commentator to hold a critical view of Nietzsche’s philosophies stating, “As a Lebensphilosoph, Nietzsche is in no sense the heir of a Goethe or a Schelling... He is not the last of the Romantics, but rather the embodiment of their nightmare; the overwhelming of the ideal by naked instinct - ‘the triumph of life’”. Amrine, 1992, p.131.

71 For a study of the political and (to a lesser extent) aesthetic impact of Nietzsche in Australia see Macainsh, 1975. See also Roe, 1984 and Edwards, 1989.

72 Levy, 1913, p.xxv-vi. Levy, who was Jewish, was a supporter of the eugenic movement based on Nietzschean principles. Without Nietzsche he believed society was in danger of, “stifling[ing] in the dark” (pp.xxxii-iii).
Dupain's interest in Nietzsche largely came from his reading of Jack and Norman Lindsay's books. The Lindseys were among Australia's greatest enthusiasts for this philosopher and, as Jack wrote in 1948, "Zarathustra found as natural a habitat among the crisscrossing gorges of the Blue Mountains as around Lake Siwaplan, six thousand feet above men and time." Jack Lindsay espoused a Nietzschean philosophy of the spirit which, although not 'religious' in the usual sense, promoted a paganistic identification with the forces of nature. His views found expression in *Vision: A Literary Quarterly*, a journal that he helped found in response to what he described as the, "depths of devitalisation the world touched in the War". In a foreword to the journal Lindsay exhorted Australian youth to:

> Echo Nietzsche's cry against all who have exhausted the impulse of Life in themselves and also hate that impulse in others. The old world is dead ... The future of the world rests with these young and free spirits who find Life again a thing of mystery and beauty who will unveil the eyes to see again ... Apollo in the fields and Aphrodite on the lily slopes.

Jack Lindsay read *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in 1918, courtesy of his father - the artist Norman Lindsay - and considered it applicable to Australia in the postwar period. With the memory of WWI still fresh, he saw in the book the dissolution of European culture and the possibility of cultural and physical renewal. The apparent death of the old world gave hope to those 'new' nations such as Australia where the development of an empowered nation free from the physical destruction of war and the oppression of history seemed more possible.

*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* had a profound effect on Jack Lindsay as an inspiration and support for his creative efforts. He wrote, "the Zarathustrian passion provided with special force the form of participation alone fully effective in those Australian years for a person struggling to inhabit poetry or art". The impact of Nietzsche also found direct expression in his father Norman Lindsay's book, *Creative Effort*, published in 1924. Norman Lindsay considered Nietzsche as an antidote to modernity and particularly admired his view that great art was

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73 For a good discussion of Norman Lindsay's impact on Australian art see Underhill, 1991, pp.60-85.
74 Lindsay, J. 1948, p.211.
75 Lindsay, J. 1923, p.2. For a discussion of the writings in *Vision* as an example of the interest in 'energy' see Walker, 1987b.
76 Lindsay, J. 1923, p.4.
77 Lindsay, J. 1948, p.225.
the result of a reconciliation between Apollonian and Dionysian elements of life. He wrote, "We owe to Nietzsche the understanding that the human valuation is physiological as well as psychological. We owe to him the knowledge that the aristocratic standard is fixed by Nature - that the higher impulse lives by necessity too."  

I argue that Norman Lindsay's writings were extremely influential on Max Dupain. According to his first wife, Olive Cotton, he often read to her passages of Creative Effort in the 1930s. Dupain himself later wrote that the book, "stimulated my revolt against the status quo" and described Lindsay as, "A radical thinker, his essays in affirmation were intellectual succour for the students and thinkers of his day." What appealed to Dupain was no doubt Lindsay's emphasis on the role of the artist and other creative practitioners whose impulses were the mainstay and true purpose of life. As Lindsay wrote, 'creative effort' was a, "spiritual and moral development which goes beyond life on earth ... the artist, the poet, the musician and the thinker are already the aristocrats of the future".

In Lindsay's terms, 'creative effort' was the preserve of an elite who by virtue of their talents were able to intuit life forces at a deeper level than others and, in turn, their ability to create art helped, "vitalize Life". However, in the complex web of ideas surrounding 'body culture', the fine arts were only one of the visual means by which its principles were expressed. To fully consider the role of photography in promoting and legitimising vitalist, eugenic and nationalist concepts, a range of practice outside of the usual province of 'high art' must be examined. Such an approach offers a more complete understanding of how photographers such as Dupain or Laurence le Guay worked. Indeed, although Dupain disavowed his commercial work, his activities in the area of fashion, illustrative and architectural photography were the mainstay of his practice from the 1930s though the 1960s. This commercial work, which has never been considered in any great depth, is of considerable interest not least in revealing how Dupain often employed the same stylistic devices and props in his commercial and private work.

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78 Lindsay, N. 1924, p.11.
79 Information from Helen Ennis via Sally McInerney, Olive Cotton's daughter. Dupain photographed Norman Lindsay in 1936. Illustrated in The Home, number 7, November 1936, p.45.
81 Lindsay, N. 1924, p.27.
82 Lindsay, N. 1924, p.30.
The social contextualisation of photography beyond the confines of the purely aesthetic allows a more expansive interpretation of practitioners work than has occurred to date. It also permits a broader understanding of the dynamic interchanges that took place between photography and the prevalent ideological and social discourses of the interwar period. In order to investigate 'body culture' in depth I have adopted a cultural studies methodology in which I draw on a wide range of sources including contemporary newspapers, popular magazines, literature, poetry, film, medical journals and social histories along with books on architecture, food reform, body building, nudism, dance and spirituality. While my main emphasis is with fine art and popular photography, I have also referred to works produced in other media including painting, sculpture, prints and drawings and posters. To place Australian ideas on the ideal body in a broader context I have included selected international approaches to this movement and, where possible, demonstrate the impact that these sources had on Australians.

I believe that this broad cultural studies approach is necessary when dealing with 'body culture' as, more than in most movements, the interest in the creation of an ideal human form intersected with an astounding array of social groupings. As I demonstrate, photography repeatedly emerges as one of the principal means by which the concepts of 'body culture' were recorded, authorised and perpetuated across this spectrum of activities and ideas. Indeed, it is hard to imagine how 'body culture' could have captured the public's imagination with as much force as it did in the interwar period without the aid of this most protean of mediums.
Chapter One

The Establishment of Eugenics in Australia

"A free, happy, brilliant people": Building the Australian nation

In 1918, the war historian and commentator, C.E.W. Bean, published his popular ‘call to arms’ book, *In Your Hands, Australia*, in which he encouraged his readers to consider, “Nationalism [as] the soul of our race and the greatest spur to its progress”. Bean, like the majority of commentators of that time, regarded Australian nationalism to be predicated on a rigorously guarded Anglo-Saxon population. In common with many, he sought identification with, and justification for, his views in the social policies of Great Britain and America. Writing of Australia’s link to America, for instance, he declared:

With great, growing, powerful young peoples behind them; ... the majority of these [cities] are Anglo-Saxon, living an Anglo-Saxon life in Anglo-Saxon ways, all trying to do identically the same as we - to raise up each its own Anglo-Saxon nation into a free, happy, brilliant people.

By 1943, when Bean wrote his book *War Aims of a Plain Australia*, his optimistic, utopian tone had changed. While he could still summon up the image of a nation, “framed by the shining gold and green wattle bathed by the glory of sunlight, [with] ... clean fresh idealism and outstanding comradeship of our people”, it was a vision that even he recognised had been tarnished. The Great Depression of 1929 had devastated Australia economically and socially; the population was on the decline; and involvement in another world war was a reality. The soldier settlement schemes that it was hoped would restore the physical and emotional traumas of returned servicemen, had been mismanaged and the ideal of a country

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1 Bean, 1918, p.46
2 Bean, 1918, p.19. For another influential study of postwar reconstruction in Australia see, for instance, Atkinson, who considered the evils of industrialisation and inequalities between the classes were holding back progress in Australia. As he evocatively wrote: “The new social order will never be realised until the scales fall from our eyes, and we see the kingdom of darkness that we have permitted to arise”. Atkinson, 1920, p.38.
3 For a study on Bean see, for instance, McCarthy, 1983.
4 Bean, 1918, p.46.
5 Bean, 1942, p.5.
'fit for heroes' had not come to fruition. The result, Bean wrote, was a country characterised by a worrying, "deadness in political, social and religious efforts"."^6

Bean's two books are the benchmarks between which the focus of this thesis lies; a period that saw a mix of idealism and anxiety concerning Australia's future, fuelled by the experiences of World War One. Participation in the war had altered the way many Australians conceived of their nation and brought an urgency to considerations of how a modern society should be constructed. In discussions regarding the formation of nationality, the community was frequently pictured as a 'body' with corporeal and metaphysical features. The development of the Australian nation thus became dependant on the health and fitness of this communal meta-body and the individuals who formed its constituent parts.

In this chapter I argue that the interwar period witnessed a widespread interest in the development of strategies to ensure the growth of the individual and national Australian body. Issues of potential genetic 'degeneration', biological 'purity', maintenance of population growth and the encouragement of health and fitness were intrinsically linked by writers to Australia's national progress. I show that underpinning many of the discussions regarding ideal bodies was an interest in the principles of eugenics and I chart how this interest was formalised in various organisations. I begin my exploration of this area by a discussion of Australian radical political groups who took eugenic ideas as part of their nationalist agenda. The links between such groups and facist politics is also signalled.

The emergence of specialist eugenic organisations in Australia is a feature of the interwar period and provides the most concrete evidence of the terms by which this pseudo-science was promulgated. I argue that although membership of such groups was relatively small their impact was considerable owing to the influential and respected nature of those involved. As part of my detailed study of the history of Australian eugenic societies, I investigate the role that the Eugenics Education Society of London played in the establishment of its 'sister' organisations in this country. I also demonstrate that this influence was, on occasion, a two-way process through an examination of the Australian Henry Twitchen's impact on the Eugenic Education Society of London.

One of my key arguments in this chapter is that although the societies were important in promulgating eugenic ideas, the impact of their work took place in a more subtle way through helping introduce eugenic terminology into educational, medical, political and creative discourses. I maintain that a 'eugenic vocabulary' is apparent, for instance, in creative literature and I examine several eugenically inspired novels produced during the interwar period. I also introduce photography into this discussion and demonstrate how the scientific authority of this medium was used to provide visual 'proof' of the effects of genetic 'degeneration' on the body. I argue that photography was one of the most powerful mediums at the disposal of the eugenicist offering graphic evidence of the 'fit' and 'unfit' body.

**Eugenics and racial nationalism**

Debates regarding the formation of the ideal body were profoundly influenced by hereditarian and Social Darwinist models, eighteenth-century notions of 'teleology', and Sir Francis Galton's eugenic principles. The essentially utopian ambition of a perfect and productive society was often formulated with reference to classical models - indeed the word 'eugenics' was carefully chosen by Galton from the Greek meaning 'well born'.

It has been argued that eugenics was an ideology expressive of certain social interests and it is clear that the ideal model of society it promoted privileged the professional middle classes. While a genuine desire for social reform underlies some discourse in this field it is also apparent that self-interest lay at the heart of the eugenic debates. According to Galton's model of British society, for instance, the greatest genetic inheritance rested with a small group of professionals at the top of the structure, the 'respectable' middle classes formed the bulk of the population, and at the bottom of the scale were 'undesirables'. Those professionals who possessed the greatest degree of what Galton termed 'civic worth' were

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7 For an excellent survey of the life and work of Galton see Cowan, 1985.
8 Sakaris, 1993, [p. 2].
9 See, for instance, Mackenzie, 1981, pp.21-5 who analyses the membership of the British Eugenics Education Society.
10 Galton, 1909, p. 11.
the people deemed most desirable in society and were just those politicians, doctors, academics, scientists and lawyers who promoted selective breeding.\textsuperscript{11}

In Australia, the eugenic debate had a somewhat different emphasis to Britain. Specific questions circulated not just around the 'quality' of social members but around a concern for greater population growth and monitored racial composition. At the heart of progressive and reactionary responses to the question of how Australian society should be formed there is consequently a form of racial nationalism at work. The desire to control the genetic make-up of Australians is predicated on insular notions of an Anglo-Saxon population. However, unlike Germany - where the Nazis enacted a eugenic program involving the extermination of 'others' - the outermost boundary of racial nationalism in Australia was through the promotion, if not enactment, of eugenic ideals.\textsuperscript{12}

John Bostock and L. Jarvis Nye were typical Australian eugenic writers who drew on their authority as medical practitioners when presenting their views on the potential 'degeneration' of the national body.\textsuperscript{13} Adopting a position that 'selective breeding' was necessary to maintain Australia's progress as a white nation, they played on the fears of many by invoking the specter of population decline, potential invasion and unchecked immigration. Unlike Bean, who figuratively imagined a kinship between America and Great Britain that linked and protected the nation, Bostock and Nye saw the vast open seas around Australia as symbolic of isolation and vulnerability:

\ldots between our island continent and our own kin in the northern hemisphere there are almost one hundred thousand frugal and industrious coloured people who, by virtue of our teachings of sanitation and hygiene, are multiplying at a remarkable rate, and must clamour for entry to our unutilised lands.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{11} As Mary Cawte notes: "The worth of the individual was measured in terms of usefulness to society. Not only did the prosperous and professional classes see themselves as having the superior germplasm, but the professionals also, by virtue of their expertise, were ideally suited to assess, in terms of their particular science, the eugenic or dysgenic properties of others". Cawte, 1986, p.38.

\textsuperscript{12} In comments that apply equally to Australia, Greta Jones notes the differences between the eugenics movements in England and Germany. While England (and Australia) did not carry out compulsory sterilisation for the mentally ill and had ethical limits to experimentation there was, "a similar emotional overstatement and a dogmatic insistence on the relationship between the survival of civilisation and the elimination of the unfit". Jones, 1986, p.146. While eugenic legislation was not successfully implemented in England and Australia it did achieve some success in the United States. For a comparative history of eugenics in the United States, England and Germany see, for instance, Kevels, 1985.

\textsuperscript{13} Bostock and Nye, 1934; Bostock and Nye, 1939.

\textsuperscript{14} Bostock and Nye, 1934, p.7.
The possibility of invasion by those not of European ‘stock’ was linked to anxiety regarding invasion of a genetic kind.\textsuperscript{15} The reproduction of those people in Australian society deemed by the writers as ‘unfit’ was a prospect considered to be as alarming as that of unlimited immigration by non Anglo-Saxons; perhaps even more so, as so-called genetic ‘purity’ was considered a vital but unseen force operating \textit{within} the communal body. In terms that were repeated (and later enacted) in Nazi Germany, Bostock and Nye urged the sterilisation of criminals, ‘degenerates’ and paupers before an attack on the genetic quality of the Australian population could be realised. The authors write in terms common to many such tracts when they state that the, “offspring of such a class we shall have with us always as a parasitical force increasing in multiple progression, battering upon the life-blood of the State”.\textsuperscript{16}

Those Australians who admired eugenic principles could observe their progressive enactment in Germany under the Third Reich. Adolf Hitler adopted the Aryan superman as a symbol of the new German society he wished to form, ‘cleansed’ of its Jewish populations, its ‘degenerates’ and the ‘unfit’. In 1927, he placed a eugenic principle at the heart of his book \textit{Mein Kampf} when he wrote, “The national state has to put race into the centre of life and to care for its purity”.\textsuperscript{17}

Although most initially ignored the threats of genocide that Hitler’s book detailed, the early 1930s saw his eugenic views progressively translated into policy. Australians had only to read the local newspapers to see Germany pass a series of eugenic laws, namely: “Law for the Prevention of Hereditary Diseases” (July 14, 1933); “Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour” (Sept 15, 1935); and the “Law for the Protection of the Hereditary Health of the German Nation” (Oct 18, 1935).\textsuperscript{18} On 20 March 1933, the corollary to these laws was established when Hitler opened the first concentration camp at Dachau.

\textsuperscript{15} The analogy of human reproduction to that of livestock was frequently made by eugenicists. For a contemporary example see, for instance, Herbert Spencer who wrote: “To be a good animal is the first requirement to success in life, and to be a nation of good animals is the first condition to national prosperity”. Spencer, Herbert. quoted in Gates, 1931, p.215.

\textsuperscript{16} Bostock and Nye, 1934, p.13.

\textsuperscript{17} Hitler, Adolf. \textit{Mein Kampf}, 1932, p.446, quoted in Tietze, 1939, p.105. While Hitler’s book was not widely available in Australia in the 1930s, some review copies at least were distributed. An English edition of \textit{Mein Kampf (My Struggle)}, was reviewed, along with a book of Hitler’s speeches, \textit{(The New Germany Desires Work and Peace: Speeches by Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler)} in the Australian magazine \textit{Pandemonium} in 1934. Other books included in this review were John Strachey’s \textit{The Menace of Fascism} and \textit{The Brown Book of Hitler Terror}, published by the World Committee for the Victims of German Fascism.

\textsuperscript{18} Tietze, 1939, p.105. Bostock and Nye wrote of their admiration for the Nazi’s in 1939 as having,
Ignorance of the mass killings in Germany may have been possible in Australia until the 1940s; however, it is clear that some in this country shared philosophical positions that aligned them, consciously or not, with Nazi sentiments. In the interwar period, Australia saw the formation of some small, well-organised political groups for whom nationalism was a pivotal issue. These, often secret, organisations rose during the Depression when anxiety about the direction of Australian society was of great concern. The groups generally comprised ex-army officers opposed to the socialist policies of the Lang government. Some were democratic in philosophy while others held Fascist sympathies, but all believed in the importance of loyalty to the British Empire, and that an Anglo-Saxon population was essential to Australia’s prosperity.

These groups included the White Army (Vic), Old Guard (NSW) Citizens League (SA), Vigilantes (Qld), and the most public of the organisations, the New Guard.19 This latter movement was founded in New South Wales in 1931 and headed by Lieutenant Colonel Eric Campbell.20 It largely comprised military men united in their hatred for Lang’s government and fearful that Communism would take hold in Australia. They were eager to step into the breach should a perceived social breakdown occur and formed a well-ordered group of around 50,000 so-called ‘effectives’. Campbell was proud of a police report into their activities in 1931 that concluded:

We are of the opinion, from the inquiries made, that the New Guard is a highly organised body . . . They are to certainly be in a position to carry out what they say in running, protecting and maintaining essential services . . . should the occasion ever arise for them to do so.21

Members pledged loyalty to King and Empire and maintained one of their key objectives as the, “Suppression of any disloyal and immoral elements in Governmental, industrial and

19 See Cathcart, 1988, pp.38-9. Cathcart’s book is concerned with one of these organisations, namely the White Army, which attempted to mobilise its estimated 60,000 members in 1931. There is also an interesting and apparently realistic contemporary description of a right wing group in D.H.Lawrence’s book, Kangaroo. Some critics have maintained that Lawrence is describing the King and Empire League whose chief commander - General Charles Rosenthal - he may have met through his association with Major Jack Scott. See, for instance, Darroch, 1981.
20 For a first-hand account of the movement see The New Guard, 1931-32 and Campbell’s later history of the organisation (Campbell, 1965). For modern studies see Mitchell, 1969; Amos, 1976.
social circles." With their well-honed rhetoric the New Guard held meetings designed to galvanise their potential 'troops' to a state of armed readiness. However, even Campbell was later to acknowledge a certain frustration (if not modesty) at the lack of enemy forces ready to engage with them. As he wrote:

By early spring of 1931 the New Guard was really fighting fit. There was only one blot on the landscape. There was no one to fight. 'If only the Commies would put up a show'. But they wouldn't - deterred we know through Intelligence, by fear of the New Guard.23

The organisation's declared desire to set up an interim government in a perceived crisis brought them under police scrutiny and, allied with Campbell's increasingly obvious Fascist sympathies, resulted in the forced disbanding of the New Guard by the government in 1933.24 The year in which his group was banned, Campbell had travelled to England to meet with the leader of the British Nazi party, Oswald Mosley. At that time he received a letter of introduction from Mosley which he used in an unsuccessful attempt to gain meetings with Hitler and Mussolini.

In his memoirs, Campbell professed to know nothing of National Socialism and declared his sympathy towards Jews. However, it is known that he maintained a close association with the German Consul General in Australia, Dr Rudolf Asmis, from whom he received information on National Socialism for his lectures and a photograph of the Führer that he placed on his desk.25 Campbell's fascist sympathies directly translated into the running of the New Guard and moved that group in a direction that the Australian government could not endorse.26

With his organisation banned, Campbell's views continued to have limited circulation through newspapers such as Die Brücke (The Bridge).27 This weekly paper was published in

22 "Objectives and Policy". The New Guard, volume 1, number 1, 15 October 1931, p.13.
24 Campbell's account of the end of the New Guard states that by 1933 its members simply felt that their task was completed after the fall of the Lang government.
26 For the retelling of his association with Fascism see Campbell, 1965, pp.129-39. In defending his political sympathies he declares, "In London in 1933 Fascism was not frowned upon, quite the reverse in fact", pp.132-33.
27 Another German newspaper published in Australia was Watchmen of Australia. This publication was financed by the German Consul General. For a study of Germans in Australia see Tampke and Doxford, 1990.
Sydney from 1934 to 1939 by the 'German Alliance in Australia and New Zealand' and, although avowedly 'non-political', each issue included articles supportive of Hitler and National Socialism. In October 1934, the journal carried a transcript of a talk Campbell had given that month on the radio station 2CH in Sydney in which he expressed his admiration for Hitler.

*Die Brücke* was a conduit for the National Socialist party, however, its writers were sufficiently aware of the sensitive nature of their material to carefully position political developments in Germany in a non-threatening manner. For instance, an article on Germany’s sterilisation laws were described - with some truth - as the enactment of ideas that had been called for by some in the United States and England. While the concentration camps of the 'New Germany' were reviewed by the supposedly politically neutral American writer James Williams as being so humane that the, “prisoners’ quarters were better than those occupied by their guards”. In case the reader still felt concern, Williams concluded that the, “physiognomies of most of the prisoners were of a low type”.

The reader of *Die Brücke* was encouraged to consider the social and economic aims of National Socialism as compatible with national goals in Australia. In an article titled, “Population Problem and White Australia Policy”, the local desire for greater numbers of white immigrants was implicitly linked by the writer to the German quest for so-called ‘race purity’. Playing on commonly held views in Australia regarding racial hierarchies, the writer states, “The Australian blackfellows are to be placed on the extremely low grade of civilisation, and are of scarcely any economic or other value, except as herdsmen or rouseabouts”.

*Die Brücke* was an effective way to disseminate National Socialist ideas in Australia and was an important means of propaganda given the very limited membership of the NSDAP in this

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29 *Die Brücke*, volume 1, number 34, October 1934, p. ???
30 Unknown, 1934a, p.3.
31 Williams, 1934, p.8.
32 Williams, 1934, p.8.
33 Unknown, 1934b, pp.7-8.
country. Although membership of the NSDAP in Australia was tiny - reaching only 160 by 1937 - the organisation managed to exert an influence out of proportion to its size by aligning itself to various other organisations who were sympathetic to its goals.\textsuperscript{34}

The promotion of National Socialism also found its way into the popular press in the 1930s. In 1937, for instance, the social magazine, \textit{The Home}, published a serious article by George Patterson titled, "2000 miles in Germany".\textsuperscript{35} This panegyric to fascism begins with the author stating that he was, "led to believe that Hitler was merely another way of spelling devil".\textsuperscript{36} However, after travelling throughout the country he did not find people "terrorised, sullen and subdued" but instead filled with health and vigour.\textsuperscript{37} In his view, "The smiling faces, the clean towns and cities ... seemed to give the lie to those propagandists who decry Nazi-ism as 'a disease worse than death'".\textsuperscript{38}

Patterson particularly endorsed the German approach to health and fitness, and encouraged Australians to adopt fitness programs and compulsory youth labour camps. He concludes his article with an indication of the lessons he believed Australia could learn from the Fascists:

There is no denying the dynamic power of this new world movement of National Socialism - call it Nazi or Fascist as you like. It organises the nation in body and spirit ... Let us, therefore, consider the objectives and results of this democracy [ie Australia] which we hope to preserve. Its greatest weakness seems to be that our much vaunted liberty has become license ... out of that arises lack of discipline, both in body and in mind, in proof of which the Empire's physical standards of both men and women now make a frightening story.\textsuperscript{39}

Elements of Italian Fascism also had a role to play in Australian society in the

\textsuperscript{34} Party branches of the NSDAP opened in Adelaide, Raundera, Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane from 1932. Despite its small numbers Perkins notes that National Socialism had an, "influence ... far out of proportion to its actual membership and was potentially quite a serious threat to the country". They provided, "a point round which the feeling for Germany of certain Australian citizens born or naturalised could crystallise or coagulate". Perkins, 1991, pp.112,114.
\textsuperscript{35} Patterson, 1937, pp. 30-1, 62, 66, 68.
\textsuperscript{36} Patterson, 1937, p.30.
\textsuperscript{37} Patterson, 1937, p.30.
\textsuperscript{38} Patterson, 1937, p.66.
\textsuperscript{39} Patterson, 1937, p.68.
1930s with branches of Mussolini’s Partita Nazionale Fascista operating in all Australian capital cites. Prior to World War Two, the Australian government exhibited a tolerant, even favourable, attitude to fascism considering it a stabilising social force in Italian society that had effectively transformed that nation. From 1930 to 1937, for instance, Italian Fascists marched in Anzac Day parades and the Australian government banned an anti-Fascist newspaper after the Italian consul-general lodged an official complaint. The term ‘fascist’ clearly did not yet elicit terror or repugnance for most Australians prior to World War Two and, in 1926, the very conservative society journal Table Talk even used it as a means of praising the police commissioner, Brigadier Thomas Blaeney. A cartoon of the commissioner shows him as a strong and impressive figure surrounded by swastikas.

Australians who travelled to Italy in the interwar period generally came back with an appreciation of Mussolini based on his efforts in the area of urban development and public works. Supporters included such high ranking officials as Sir George Fuller, the Premier of New South Wales, who met with the leader and praised his policies. Others, most notably Dr Herbert Moran, believed that fascism was an ideology applicable to the Australian situation. Moran helped establish the pro-Fascist society, ‘Per Italia’, in Australia and published a popular book of his Italian experiences, Letters from Rome. While another Australian, the sculptor Dora Ohlfsen, lived for several years in Rome and was patronised by the Italian fascists in the 1920s. Under commission from Mussolini she designed a War Memorial in Fornia in 1924 which was noted as being the, “first public work done by a woman in Italy and the first memorial by a foreigner”. She also modelled a large medallion portrait of Mussolini apparently finding his, “rapid changes of expression rather baffling”.

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40 Cresciani has noted that for Italian immigrants, fascism represented an, “ideology of defence” against the discrimination many they encountered in this country. Cresciani, 1980, p.4. Perkins also notes that there was a limited relationship between Italian and German fascism in Australia owing to ideological differences but that stronger links were forged between the two groups after 1936. Perkins, 1991, p.115.

41 Counsell, 1988, pp.33-35; Cresciani, 1980, p.102

42 Table Talk, 28 October 1926 reproduced in Coulter, 1988, p.35.

43 Cooper has noted that Australian attitudes towards Fascist Italy fell into three categories: a very small number of critics; those who considered Mussolini good for Italians but not suitable for the more advanced Australian society; and a sizable minority who thought a dictatorship was just what Australia needed. Cooper, 1990, pp.19-31.

44 Cresciani, 1980, p.139.

45 For a study of Moran see Cooper, 1989, pp.44-67.


Australian travellers may have admired the economic and social progress evident in Italy, but they generally did not consider fascism to be applicable to their own country. Gladys Owen, for instance, commented in the Sydney Morning Herald in 1930, “Heaven forbid; it is no fit experiment for a country grown old in the habits of democracy and self-government”. Three years later, in 1933, the World Movement against War and Fascism established a branch in Australia and became an increasingly strong voice warning against such a ready reception of fascist ideology.

**Australian eugenic associations: The science of ‘improving stock’**

“Eugenics is the source of race culture. . . The Eugenicist seeks to control the law of heredity, and bring about by education a higher motive for sexual selection than mere animal feeling”.

George Dupain, 1912.

For most Australians, the right-wing politics espoused by the New Guard or the NSDAP did not present a challenge to the more liberal democratic views that dominated the political scene in the interwar period. However, even politically moderate citizens could not help but be affected by the social and economic problems of the Depression and therefore concerned with Australia’s national progress. Invariably debates on complex issues regarding social development returned to the fundamental aspect of any country - its people - and discussions concerning the development of a ‘national type’ frequently invoked eugenic and racial discourses.

The field of eugenics was well-established by the 1920s and those interested in this subject had a wealth of authoritative contemporary and ancient writers to whom they could refer. Early sources include Plato’s Republic where notions of social construction, which parallel eugenics, play an important role in the author’s imagining of the ideal state.

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49 For a first hand account of his experiences in the anti-fascist movement in Australia see, for instance, Howells, 1977, pp.27-32.
50 Dupain, 1912, p.18.
51 Interest in the area is evident, for instance, from a bibliography of books and articles published in Holmes, 1924. In Australia, a leading early exponent of the eugenic cause was William Baylebridge (born C.W. Blocksdale) who detailed his views in books such as National Notes (Baylebridge, 1913). For a discussion of Baylebridge and other Australian vitalists see, for instance, Roe, 1984 and Buckley, 1959.
52 Applying the principles of livestock breeding to human populations, Plato has his characters deduce that, “if we are to keep our flock at the highest pitch of excellence, there should be as many unions of the best of both sexes, and as few
Modern interest in the concept of selective breeding began to resurge at the turn of the century, prompted by Francis Galton's pioneering work in biostatistics. In 1883, Galton first used the term 'eugenics', defining it as:

The science of improving stock, which is by no means confined to questions of judicious mating, but which, especially in the case of man, takes cognisance of all influences that tend in however remote a degree to give to the more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable than they otherwise would have had.\(^{53}\)

Galton regarded the promotion of the most suitable or 'fittest' in society as a practical and expedient way of assisting natural selection. As he noted "What Nature does blindly, slowly, and ruthlessly, man may do providently, quickly, and kindly".\(^{54}\) He believed profoundly in the benefits of eugenics and towards the end of his life, in 1908, wrote in his memoirs: "I take Eugenics very seriously, feeling that its principles ought to become one of the dominant motives in a civilised nation, much as if they were one of its religious tenets".\(^{55}\) Indeed, Galton was to conjure up a world in which eugenics was a governing social principle in his (unpublished) utopian novel \textit{Kantsaywhere}.\(^{56}\) In an imaginary state, similar to the university town of Oxford, the population is governed by a Eugenic College. This organisation classes people by their intellectual faculties and then encourages the 'fit' to marry while segregating the 'unfit'.

By the time Australian eugenicists such as Bostock and Nye published their books in the 1930s, the field of eugenics was institutionalised in various parts of Europe. In England, for instance, Galton endowed a Research Fellowship in Eugenics at the University College, London and, in 1907, a Eugenics Laboratory was established at the same institution with Professor Karl Pearson appointed inaugural Professor of Eugenics. The first eugenics

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53 Galton, 1883, p.25. Galton was strongly influenced by his uncle, Charles Darwin, describing the effect of the book \textit{Origin of the Species} (1859) as "[demolishing] a multitude of dogmatic barriers by a single stroke, and [arousing] a spirit of rebellion against all ancient authorities whose positive and unauthenticated statements were contradicted by modern science". Galton, \textit{Memories of My Life}, Methuen, London, 1908, p.298 quoted in Mackenzie, 1981, p.54.
54 Galton, 1909, p.42.
association in England - the Eugenics Education Society - was founded in late 1907 and, by 1914, had over 1,000 active members. Similar groups also formed in Canada and America with a membership generally drawn from the professional middle class.

It is interesting to note that significant numbers of women were involved in eugenics societies. The Eugenics Education Society in London, for instance, was founded by the energy of Sybil Gatto, a twenty-one year woman who had been inspired by Galton’s research. In Australia too, women interested in the issues of birth control, motherhood support and child clinics were often drawn into groups with eugenic agendas.

Australians first learnt of contemporary developments in eugenics through publications or conference papers that were disseminated world-wide. In 1912, for instance, the pioneer Australian physical educator George Dupain, father of photographer Max Dupain, wrote a glowing editorial concerning the First International Eugenics Congress:

"Eugenics is the source of race culture... The Eugenician seeks to control the law of heredity, and bring about by education a higher motive for sexual selection than mere animal feeling. He proposes to eliminate the unfit as far as possible, and preserve the fit. The whole subject is tremendously complicated, but Professor Karl Pearson and his workers have collected an elaborate mass of statistical detail which has virtually now laid the foundation of eugenics and given it that glorious right to be called scientific."

Popular interest in eugenics was strong enough in Australia to support the establishment of the first eugenics associations at this time. On the 17th December 1912, J.C. Eldridge wrote to the Eugenics Education Society in London to advise them that the New South Wales Eugenics Association had formed the previous night with Richard Arthur (MLA) as its President. In establishing his own credentials as a suitable secretary to the new association, Eldridge stated that he was Secretary of the State Labour Bureau of New South Wales. While the London Society does not appear to have responded to this letter, mention was made of...
the new branch in a Presidential address by Leonard Darwin in 1913. Commenting on the progress of the London Society, Darwin stated, “one new Branch of our Society in England and one in Australia have been formed, whilst others have been affiliated to us”.

The newly formed branch carried out its proselytising about eugenics with vigour. In 1914, for instance, the Society held a ‘Galton Day Dinner’ to which they invited the State Governor, Sir Gerald Strickland - a strategy that earned them a small column in the Daily Telegraph. Two years later, Eldridge advised the Society of a lecture that a Reverend George Walters had given regarding ‘Eugenics and the War’. He also proudly noted that through his contacts with labour organisations he had secured a column space in the journal The Nanny (later known as The Worker) which was circulated to members of the industrial unions.

William Rosser, editor of The Nanny and President of the Railway Workers and General Labourers Association of NSW, was apparently impressed with Eldridge’s articles and published several as booklets. Rosser, along with other members of the industrial associations, proved enthusiastic supporters of eugenics and, by 1921, the NSW Branch of the Workers Educational Association had set up a popular ‘study circle’ to discuss the topic. This discussion group was mainly attended by women who were especially interested in promoting a ‘motherhood endowment’ - a topic promoted by eugenacists as a means of encouraging the reproduction and care of the ‘right stock’.

Despite its apparent success in promoting the cause of eugenics, the London Society appears to have been ambivalent about this new antipodean off-shoot. It seems reasonable to speculate that a reason for their apparent lack of enthusiasm lay in the status of those involved in the NSW Society. The English organisation was filled with eminent doctors, politicians and lawyers - the upper echelons of British society whose numbers, by no coincidence, the eugenics movement sought to increase.

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60 Darwin, 1912, p.1. Darwin was the influential and long serving President of the Eugenics Education Society in London. He was formerly an army engineer whose family had married into the extremely wealthy Wedgewood family. See Jones, 1986, p.20-21 and Mackenzie, 1981, pp.18-21.
63 For a commentary on the WEA see Bourke, 1981, p.32.
The Eugenics Education Society repeatedly advised its sister organisations to garner the support of leaders in the fields of biology and genetics. These associations were encouraged not only for the specialist knowledge that such people could lend, but more pertinently, for the authority and credibility that their names gave to the field of eugenics. University connections were thus greatly encouraged and it was expected that the official positions in Australian eugenic organisations would be taken by professors or doctors. In light of this emphasis, Eldridge was perhaps a worthy but less qualified eugenicist than they may have liked and, although the WEA was associated with the university, his efforts amongst workers were not the usual market for the London Society.

Whatever the reason, the lack of interest did not go unremarked. In his report to the Eugenics Education Society in 1921 on the activities of the NSW Society, Eldridge complained that they had not been mentioned in The Eugenics Review since 1918 and implied that their efforts could be considerably helped with some financial support. The group was probably right to feel that their efforts did not make a major impression. In 1919, The Eugenics Review published a letter from an anonymous Australian correspondent. In reply to an enquiry regarding eugenic activity in Australia the writer commented, “It seems to me that an organisation similar to the Eugenics Education Society could be successfully established in Australia, and could serve a useful purpose”. The following year, a letter was sent to prominent people in the ‘Dominions’ that similarly ignored the existence of any eugenics associations in Australia:

The terrible losses amongst our best types in this war makes questions of racial development of urgent importance. We should, therefore, be very glad to know whether, in your opinions there is any possibility of establishing an organisation in your Dominion similar to our Eugenics Education Society.

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66 Unknown, 1919, p.222.
Similarly, in 1924, the Secretary of the Eugenics Education Society in London wrote to a Brisbane paper merchant Joshua O’Brien: “We are in touch with a few people in your part of the world who are keenly interested in our endeavours, but there is not yet any well organised Society in Australia or New Zealand”. Their advice to eugenic enthusiasts such as O’Brien was to keep in touch with progress in the field through *The Eugenics Review* and other publications produced by the Society. The Society clearly wished to encourage O’Brien’s efforts and made him a Fellow in 1924. In return, O’Brien made sure he kept up to date on the relevant literature and ordered Francis Galton’s *Essays in Eugenics* and Leonard Darwin’s *The Racial Effects of Public Assistance*.

Undeterred, or perhaps unaware of attitudes towards it, the NSW Eugenic Association continued its efforts. One enthusiastic participant in the group was Mrs Marion Piddington, wife of Justice A.B. Piddington who wrote a pamphlet on the topic of venereal disease and promiscuity which was an issue she felt had profound implications for the development of the Australian nation. Her dominant metaphor is drawn from warfare and it is interesting to see how she imaginatively considers proper ‘race development’ as a biological battle:

> No persuasion to patriotism has ever been more constraining than is the ‘call to arms’ to-day. The battle cry for national preservation has raised the passions of men, women and children to protect their country from invading foes. No war as serious as the attack by venereal disease on the health of the nation has ever occurred in the history of the race...[an] invader who has dug itself into the home life of the people.

The NSW Eugenics Association was not the only organisation in Sydney concerned with eugenics. In 1926, the Racial Hygiene Association was established and was described some years later by its General Secretary, Miss Lillie Goddison, as “not a Eugenics Society, [but] we decidedly do a good deal of Eugenic work and our Pre-Marital Health Examinations have been very successful”.

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69 Reiger notes that Justice Piddington was an active member of the law and “a liberal thinker”. Reiger, 1985, p.67.
70 Piddington, [1930]. Piddington was also a member of the Racial Hygiene Association and the Institute of Family Relations in Sydney. In 1938 she wrote an article promoting child endowment and better pre and post natal care for mothers and children for the Institute. Piddington, 1938, p.4
In 1929, the Association organised the ‘Australian Racial Hygiene Congress’ which convened at the offices of the Royal Empire Society in Sydney. Concerns expressed by delegates encompassed the economic damage of venereal disease to popular eugenic topics such as, “Mental Deficiency as a Problem of Racial Hygiene”. Salacious literature was regarded as a cause of the moral corruption of society - in particular, ‘the modern novel’ - and indecent writing on toilet walls rated highly in the members’ list of anxieties. The Congress was acknowledged by The Eugenics Review which stated:

We must warmly welcome this evidence of activity in the Dominions, and all the more because they have a fairer start and a better field than ourselves, and can reasonably expect if they observe eugenic principles now, to preserve and develop a finer white race than the world has yet known.

Interest in eugenics was not limited to New South Wales with other states forming organisations that were either specifically devoted to the subject or with eugenics as an intrinsic part of their charter. They generally turned to the Eugenics Education Society in London as the primary conduit for information and guidance. In April 1937, for instance, Joseph Pearson, the Director of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery wrote a private letter in which he stated, “It is probable that an effort will be made in Tasmania to found a Eugenics Society of Tasmania, and I have already been in touch with the Eugenics Society in England”. Pearson appears to have garnered support from the Australian Women’s National League of Tasmania who had attempted to raise interest among the medical profession, “hitherto without success”. Tasmanian eugenicists appear to have faltered in their attempts to start a society but, in Western Australia, they were more successful. In November 1933, for instance, the State Secretary for the Women’s Service Guild in Western Australia wrote to the London Society:

72 The history of the Racial Hygiene Association is briefly mentioned in Goodisson, 1928, pp.221-2.
73 Hodgkinson, 1929, pp.35-6.
74 Australian Racial Hygiene Congress: A Report, 1929, pp.15,30
75 Unknown, 1931a, p.293.
76 Letter from Joseph Pearson to Dr Victor Wallace, Eugenics Society of Victoria, 15 April 1937, Victor Wallace Archive.
77 Letter from Mrs Grace Spotswood to Dr Victor Wallace, Eugenics Society of Victoria, 14 April 1937, Victor Wallace Archive.
Some time ago, in 1927, I believe, you were good enough to send my organisation pamphlets, and literature on the subject of eugenics, for study purposes. A group of our members is again anxious to go into this question.\textsuperscript{78}

The Guild had a broad charter that included the prohibition of alcohol; the desire “to educate women on social and economic questions”; a pledge of loyalty to State, Commonwealth and Empire; and - most relevant to eugenics - the goal of supporting, “from the standpoint of women, any movement to protect, defend and uplift humanity”.\textsuperscript{79} To fulfil its aims, the Guild set up a number of eclectic departments namely “Parliamentary, Racial Hygiene, Cremation, Broadcasting”, and maintained equally mixed affiliations with international organisations ranging from the International Suffrage Alliance for Equal Citizenship to the Association for Moral and Racial Hygiene.\textsuperscript{80}

There appears to have been a resurgence of interest in eugenics in Western Australia at this time as some months earlier, in September 1933, Mrs Muriel Marion wrote to the London Society to announce the establishment of a Eugenics Education Society. Marion, who was the President, was joined by an impressive group of academics and officials. These included the biologist, Professor Nicholls, and Dr Everitt Atkinson, the Commissioner for Public Health in Western Australia, along with “several leaders in the medical profession in this State”.\textsuperscript{81} Marion advised that a series of lectures were planned, including a talk by Dr R.G. Williams on, “The advisability and practicality of racial improvement by selective breeding”. She also noted that a study group was to be formed among interested students at the University.\textsuperscript{82}

This was apparently not the first eugenics society in Western Australia. As Marion noted, a previous attempt had been made by a Professor Dakin, “about twelve years ago . . . His

\textsuperscript{78} Letter, 2 November 1933 from Mrs Dorothea Cass, State Secretary Women’s Service Guilds of Western Australia to Secretary, Eugenics Education Society, London. Eugenics Education Society, London, E5.
\textsuperscript{79} Letter, 2 November 1933 from Mrs Dorothea Cass, State Secretary Women’s Service Guilds of Western Australia to Secretary, Eugenics Education Society, London. Eugenics Education Society, London, E5.
\textsuperscript{80} Letter, 2 November 1933 from Mrs Dorothea Cass, State Secretary Women’s Service Guilds of Western Australia to Secretary, Eugenics Education Society, London. Eugenics Education Society, London, E5.
\textsuperscript{81} Letter, 12 August 1933 from Muriel Marion, President of The Eugenics Society to the General Secretary, Eugenics Education Society, London. Eugenics Education Society, London, E5.
\textsuperscript{82} Letter, 12 August 1933 from Muriel Marion, President of The Eugenics Society to the General Secretary, Eugenics Education Society, London. Eugenics Education Society, London, E5.
efforts failed however, owing to a lack of public support.\(^83\) The new group felt pleased that, “the newspapers have given us all the publicity we could desire at this stage\(^84\).

A similar situation regarding the formation of a eugenics society had taken place in Victoria. In that State, the first association had formed in 1914, but had a faltering start. In March that year, Mrs Greenshields wrote to the London Society, “on behalf of a few people interested in Eugenics and anxious to start a Society in Melbourne”.\(^85\) The Honorary Secretary advised Mrs Greenshields to assemble a governing body for their organisation drawn from influential staff at the University of Melbourne:

I am interested to hear there are a number of people in Melbourne sufficiently interested in Eugenics to start a Branch of the Society. . . the approval of Professor Spencer at the University would, I think, be almost essential to any branch formed in Melbourne as he is one of the recognised authorities on Biology and is already in touch with the Society.\(^86\)

Professor Baldwin Spencer was undoubtedly the kind of authoritative figure that would have put the new association in the limelight. This Oxford educated evolutionary biologist was appointed the Foundation Professor of Biology at the University of Melbourne in 1887.\(^87\) He was involved in a formidable number of activities from football to art collecting and was appointed a Trustee to the National Gallery of Victoria. He was also an avid photographer and used his camera on his many anthropological expeditions to record Aboriginal people. Spencer corresponded with the Eugenics Education Society but appears not to have joined.\(^88\) In 1915, W. Ernest Jones wrote to the London Society:

\(^{83}\) Letter, 12 August 1933 from Muriel Marion, President of The Eugenics Society to the General Secretary, Eugenics Education Society, London. Eugenics Education Society, London, E5.
\(^{84}\) Letter, 12 August 1933 from Muriel Marion, President of The Eugenics Society to the General Secretary, Eugenics Education Society, London. Eugenics Education Society, London, E5. However, this new group was not to last too long. A note attached to the index to the Records of the Eugenics Education Society notes that “A letter was received in 1937 that the Eugenics Society of Western Australia had ‘gone into recess’”. Quoted in Eugenics Education Society, London, E5.
\(^{85}\) Letter, 3 March 1914 from Mrs Greenshields, Melbourne to Honorary Secretary, Eugenics Education Society. Eugenics Education Society, London, E3.
\(^{87}\) For a biographical essay on Spencer see, for instance, Mulvaney, 1982, pp.vii-x.
\(^{88}\) Spencer held social Darwinian attitudes towards the Aborigines who formed the study of his many photographs. While acknowledging his importance as an ethnographic photographer, Mulvaney notes that Spencer’s attitude to his Aboriginal subjects was informed by a “rather crude evolutionary bias”. This bias led Spencer to state in his 1901 handbook for the Museum of Victoria, “the Australian Aborigine may be regarded as a relic of the early childhood of mankind left stranded”. Mulvaney, 1982, p. x.
I am afraid that the Victorian Eugenics Society is in a state of suspended animation. The war put a coup de grace to it whilst it was yet in a shaky situation owing to the fact that your Society intimated that they would like to see Professor Baldwin Spencer as its first President. This gentleman was so busy that he was quite unable to give us any assistance.  

While it was another 15 years before a eugenics society formed in Victoria, interest in it was expressed in other ways. In the early 1920s, for instance, eugenics was a popular topic of discussion among the Workers Educational Association under the encouraging direction of the sociologist, John Gunn. Gunn considered sociology as being in the service of 'social progress' and coupled national growth with selective breeding.

On the 29th October 1936, the Eugenics Society of Victoria was incorporated as a small but ambitious organisation. An interested group of people had come together a few weeks earlier to discuss the formation of a Racial Hygiene Association in Victoria based on the New South Wales group. The emphasis in the proposed association was initially concerned with sexual awareness with a component being the, "education of the community on Eugenic lines". However, at the first meeting of the provisional committee, Dr Victor Wallace suggested that they instead focus their activities on eugenic issues and seek affiliation with the London Society.

The London Society was no doubt pleased to read that the foundation board of the Eugenics Society of Victoria comprised influential academics and medical practitioners, including Professor W.E. Agar as President and Professor P. MacCallum as Vice President. Agar, in particular, was a highly influential member of the academic community. He was

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90 Bourke has commented that Gunn considered "Eugenics was as important as education" for the development of Australia. Bourke, 1981, p. 32.
91 Minute Book, Eugenics Society of Victoria, 29 October 1936, Victor Wallace Archive.
92 Minute Book, Eugenics Society of Victoria, 12 October 1936, Victor Wallace Archive.
93 Victor Wallace, Minute Book, Eugenics Society of Victoria, 12 October 1936, Victor Wallace Archive.
94 Letter, 2 June 1937 from V.H.Wallace, Honorary Secretary Victorian Eugenics Society to Secretary, Eugenics Education Society, London. Eugenics Education Society, London, D69. In this letter, Wallace states, "Greetings from a little sister organisation in Australia. We formed our Society only last year".

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appointed the Chair of Zoology at the University of Melbourne in 1919, and is believed to have been the first person to teach a course in genetics in Australia.95

In line with the Eugenics Education Society of London, where eighty percent of the membership were classified as ‘eminent’, the Victorian society comprised people drawn from the professional and upper middle classes.96 Of the sixty-four members registered for 1938, for instance, sixteen were doctors (both male and female) with three professors, one judge (Judge Foster) and a minister of the church (Reverend William Bottomley). Other professions included dentists, dieticians (George Philpots) and a physical educator (Fritz Duras). The high level of interest in eugenics amongst women is indicated by the fact that twenty-six of the members were female.

The London Society endorsed this new group as an affiliate of its organisation and, in 1938, sent them a cheque for £25 to help them along with some relevant literature.97 However, unbeknown to the Victorian branch, they did some investigation of the group before it lent its support.98 A member of the Society in London sent a colleague an extract of a report she had received from “an important medical man in Melbourne” in which he offered the following frank and cogent evaluation of the Society:

(i) the Society is modelled upon similar societies in London and its aim is scientific birth-control (ii) it is, as yet, small and without any very influential membership (iii) its president is a well-known man of undisputed standing (iv) its main spirit is ethical but perhaps unstable enthusiasm (v) like all such societies appealing to the lay public it has its ‘lunatic fringe’ (vi) it is quite active, although at present in a small way (vii) it is neither supported nor condemned by the B.M.A.99

95 Drummond, 1979, pp. 16-17.
97 Letter, 10 October 1938 from Miss Hilda Pocock, Propaganda Secretary of the Eugenics Education Society from Dr Victor H. Wallace, Honorary Secretary, Eugenics Society, Victoria. Eugenics Education Society, London, D69.
98 There appear to have been two main people approached to provide reports on the new society. One of these was Dr Geoffrey Kaye whose report is detailed. The other was Colin Clarke who was employed by the Bureau of Industry and a member of the rather ominous sounding ‘Population Investigation Committee’. Clark endorsed the new organisation and wrote that he considered “Agar is a first rate man and I do not think there is any chance of a rival group arising in Victoria”. Letter, 2 May 1938 from Colin Clark to Mr Blicker, Eugenics Education Society, London. Eugenics Education Society, London, E3.
The doctor concluded that potential sponsors of the Victorian Society, “may feel that eugenics have come to Australia to stay and that the Society merits their support”. However, he tempers his full endorsement by noting that the organisation is, “ethical, although its methods of publicity are rather deplored”.

The doctor appears to have enjoyed his secret investigation into the Society lapping into espionage-like jargon when presenting a number of informants’ views of the Society to back his own conclusions. The details gleaned by these informants is certainly made more exciting by the profiles of those involved. In the case of “Informant A”, for instance, the doctor included the following personality sketch: “senior university professor; virile type; positive views; great admirer of National Socialism”. This informant did not know the Society but was aware of its senior officials including Professor Agar, who he described as “perfectly reputable” and Dr Wallace who is slightly referred to as having a, “dubious personality” - a remark that is presented without further comment.

‘Informant B’ sounds like an equally lively source of information being described as a, “locally-eminent psychologist; young, literary, a disciple of Freud, far-travelled; rather communist in opinions - until he went to Russia and found there, not communism, but National Socialism”. The informant in question was Reg Ellery who ran a contraception clinic for the working classes and lectured at the Society in 1937 on “Mental Deficiency and Insanity”. Ellery gave the doctor a less than glowing account of his audience at the Society calling many of them “abnormal types” who, in his experience, often came to lectures when sexual topics were presented. Ellery’s negative view may well have been coloured by his

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103 Letter, 3 June 1938 from Geoffrey Kaye to Mr Memnell. Letter 30 May 1938 from B. Memwell to Mrs Potton, Eugenics Society, London. Eugenics Education Society, London, E3. Wallace was a well-respected doctor in the community. It is possible that this comment may have been inspired by professional jealousy as both Wallace and Ellery (the informant) ran clinics that specialised in birth control.

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subsequent experience when he received an official reprimand from the Ethics Committee of the British Medical Association for his choice of lecture topic.\textsuperscript{106}

It is notable that the two informants Kaye chose for his study into the Society were keen supporters of National Socialism and suggests an undercurrent to the eugenic movement that is not openly articulated in its literature. However, interestingly, it does not appear that political discussion was a part of the Society’s agenda - at least at an officially recorded level.\textsuperscript{106} An examination of the Minutes of the Society reveals no anxiety that local efforts to promote eugenic goals may be associated with events in Germany or indeed any discussion of political events. One of the few references to Hitler comes not in the official minutes but in a private letter to Professor Agar in 1937 where an enthusiast of the society writes, “P.S. Are you going to follow Hitler’s method?”\textsuperscript{107}

On the evidence presented to them, the Eugenics Education Society of London felt confident to support its new sister branch and sent them a generous cheque - a gesture that filled the Victorian Society with great gratitude and enthusiasm. The Society set forth with reformist zeal and its Honorary Secretary, Dr Victor Wallace, declared, “We are not content to be merely a learned Society. We want to educate the people. We want to compel our politicians to take action”.\textsuperscript{108}

The main means of informing the public was through lectures. Their lecture syllabus for 1939, for instance, included such topics as, “The Future of the World’s Population” (Professor Agar); “Poverty and Public Welfare” (Dr John Dale); “Social Efficiency and Levels of Intelligence” (Dr K.S. Cunningham); and “The Production of Superior Races: With special reference to the in-breeding of the Icelanders and the Parsees” (Dr Anita

\textsuperscript{105} Letter, 15 September 1937 from V.H. Wallace, Honorary Secretary, Victorian Eugenics Society to Dr Blacker, General Secretary, Eugenics Education Society, London. Eugenics Education Society, London, E3. In a letter of reply to Wallace, Blacker expresses some surprise at this reprimand stating that they had some 118 doctors in their membership and while the BMA were, “never well disposed to the subject of eugenics” he concluded that this had more to do with their President’s hostility to the movement, than a general feeling among the membership. Letter 18 October 1937 from Dr Blacker to V.H. Wallace. Eugenics Education Society, London, E3.
\textsuperscript{106} Minutes, Victor Wallace Archive.
\textsuperscript{107} Letter from E.C. Dyason to Professor Agar, 23 March 1937, Victor Wallace Archive.
\textsuperscript{108} Letter, 3 September 1938 from V.H. Wallace, Honorary Secretary Eugenics Society of Victoria to Dr Blacker, General Secretary, Eugenics Education Society, London. Eugenics Education Society, London, E3.
Muhl]. That year the Society also showed a silent film provided by the London branch titled, *From Generation to Generation* with a commentary by Professor Agar. The film was not judged a great success by the committee and they complained to London that they, “thought that the possibilities of the subject had not been fully exploited”.

**Henry Twitchen: An Australian eugenic benefactor**

The promotion of eugenic causes in Australia was dominated by the energy and enthusiasm of many individuals. While their sphere of influence generally remained localised, on one occasion an Australian eugenicist had international impact. Henry Twitchen was a wealthy West Australian property owner who, on his death in 1930, left the Eugenics Education Society in London the very substantial sum of around £100,000 to fund its activities. Twitchen was a passionate advocate for eugenics who stated that his interest derived from being involved in the breeding of sheep and considering the application of its principles to humans. He held strong views on the subject and believed that checks on ‘inappropriate’ births should take place, especially in light of the economic stringencies of the period. In 1927, he wrote to Leonard Darwin:

> Perhaps no one but those who have had the management of large stock farms fully realise the practical side of this question. We know the utter madness of going on breeding up when the Ranch is fully stocked and there is no, or insufficient, outlet for the surplus... If it is to do any good we must banish sentiment and act

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110 Letter, 18 June 1939 from Dr Victor H. Wallace, Honorary Secretary, Eugenics Society, Victoria to Miss Hilda Pocock, Propaganda Secretary of the Eugenics Education Society. Eugenics Education Society, London, D69. The Society in London received several requests for copies of its films suggesting a small but active level of interest in Australia in the subject. In 1938, for instance, the Education Department in Hobart wrote to seek a free copy of "Generation to Generation" to show to colleges, schools and the general public. Letter, 8 December 1938 from Education Department, Hobart to Publicity Manager, Eugenics Education Society. Eugenics Education Society, London, D69. In 1939, the Society also received a request from the Racial Hygiene Association of New South Wales for the film "Heredity". Letter, 21 June 1939 from Lilie Goddison, General Secretary, Racial Hygiene Association of New South Wales to Eugenics Education Society. Eugenics Education Society, London, D69.

111 A small article about Twitchen notes that he was born in 1967 in Berkshire, England and arrived in Australia in 1890. The author states that in their opinion his bequest "...had no effect on the development of German policies". Nicholson & Nicholson, 1995, pp.381-83.
drastically. We must not consider the rights of individuals over-much - a lunatic in my opinion has no rights - when the vital interest of the State are at stake.\textsuperscript{112}

Darwin must have responded less enthusiastically to his letter than Twitchen had expected as in their next correspondence the Australian reprimanded Darwin with the words: “I should not, if I were you condemn ‘stockyard methods’, so-called, so severely. What are they but the practice of the very essence of eugenic principles”.\textsuperscript{113}

While Twitchen’s attitudes were shaped by his ‘stockyard’ experiences, it appears that he had altogether more personal reasons for the extremity of his views. According to a personal history written after his death, Twitchen came from a family with a history of poor health; his two siblings died of consumption and his father was an invalid. Twitchen felt cursed by his heredity:

born of unsound parents... [I] inherited their weaknesses and consequently have suffered thereby. Believing in practice as well as principle, I never married, although better fitted to do so probably than fully one-half of those who do.\textsuperscript{114}

For a eugenist, the genetic legacy of his parents must have caused Twitchen considerable distress but he also exacerbated the situation by constantly referring to his various ailments in his letters to Darwin. However, those who knew the Australian thought he was in robust physical health. Indeed, Darwin appears to have felt that Twitchen’s bad health owed more to psychological than physical causes as he wrote that their benefactor, “suffered constantly from periods of depression [although he] must have been physically very strong”.\textsuperscript{115}

Twitchen’s proposed bequest made him a powerful figure in the London Society, but he was astute enough to know that he needed to keep a certain suspense about the terms of his donation to sustain their interest. He encouraged the continuing attentions of the Society by not only presenting them with a cheque for £1,000 a year but also changing the terms of his

\textsuperscript{112} Letter, 10 April 1927 from Henry Twitchen to Leonard Darwin quoted by Darwin, 1930, p.94.
\textsuperscript{113} Letter, 26 August 1927 from Henry Twitchen to Leonard Darwin quoted by Darwin, 1930, pp.94-5.
\textsuperscript{114} Letter, 4 April 1922 from Henry Twitchen to Leonard Darwin quoted by Darwin, 1930, p.93. See also Unknown, biography of Henry Twitchen. Eugenics Education Society, London, H.
\textsuperscript{115} Darwin, 1930, p.91.
will over the years. The effect of these on-going alterations was to elicit a high level of personal interest from Darwin and other members of the Society who corresponded with Twitchen frequently until his death in 1930. It seems clear that Twitchen enjoyed the opportunity to discuss eugenics with Darwin and, no doubt, it made him feel an important player in the international scene despite his location across the world in Western Australia.

In fact, he was right to feel that his money secured him some influence in the London Society. Although the organisation could claim important and wealthy members, the membership base itself was not sufficiently large to make them financially secure. Twitchen's bequest was necessary for their on-going activities and it gave him the opportunity to influence the Society's programs to some degree. While he could not have been said to abuse his position, Twitchen was certainly forthright in offering proposals and there was an implicit expectation that at least some of his ideas would be adopted.

For instance, an extract from a letter around 1925, in which he proposed a range of suggestions to the Society, was circulated by Darwin to a meeting of officers for discussion. In a notation attached to the document, it is noted that this letter shows how Twitchen wanted the Society to develop if he was to give them his legacy. Twitchen offered a frank assessment of the Society, declaring them to be "too academic" and in need of a "bolder approach" to capture the attention of the general public. The Australian had a radical approach to eugenics as is clear from his statement to Darwin:

> In your comments on the Winderen Programme I notice you recommend voluntary health declarations before marriage, and sterilisation only when accepted voluntarily by the degenerate. I'm afraid that if we wait for this it will never be done. We shall lag behind other countries if we do not take a bolder view. Some of the American States have already made health declaration before marriage compulsory.\(^{117}\)

While there was little that Darwin could personally do to enact this suggestion - beyond petitioning those in government - he was able to adopt other proposals by Twitchen. In the

\(^{116}\) Twitchen's initial will of 1912 in which he made the Society his principal beneficiary was cancelled as was a subsequent will of 1919. In 1922 he added a codicil and four years later appointed Darwin and Sir Ernest Allen his executors. On the day of his death, he added a further clause to the will to give the Society the proceeds of the sale of his French property. Darwin, 1930, p.93.

same letter, Twitchen advised that the Society employ, "popular lecturers ... regularly travelling the country preaching the great doctrine, which is more important to the Human Family than all the religions". 118 In his return letter, Darwin replied that he had enlisted Colonel James, a member of Parliament, to put a more lively program in place.119

Twitchen also proposed an exhibition of photographs be mounted, "showing the different human types, good or bad in juxtaposition. If well done it could not fail to strike many, and make them ask why they are cursed with ugly repulsive features, or miserably deformed bodies".120 The inhumane attitudes are reinforced in Twitchen's addendum, "When people cannot see that they are repulsive they should be made to realise that there are others to whom an ugly face or misshapen body are eyesores".121

He also suggested that the Society investigate the idea of exhibiting ill-bred animals alongside improved stock at agricultural shows and holding associated lectures to point out the human parallels. While the first of Twitchen's ideas was not carried through, an investigation of holding displays at agricultural shows took place. In July 1925, a letter was sent to Sir Ernest Allen - an intermediary in the dispersal of Twitchen's estate - outlining the extraordinary events along this line that had been organised under the aegis of the American Eugenics Society and which they hoped could take place in England too:

A Genetics and Eugenics Exhibition is now quite a regular feature of the large agricultural shows. Often, in addition to exhibits demonstrating the Laws of Heredity, and showing instances of Human Heredity which conform hitherto, it is the custom to get up a local Fittest Family competition. This means actually a Baby Show; the child being accompanied by a short family history, and allocated a prize not only on its merits, but on that of its heredity.122

Twitchen's influence in the London Society was perhaps most notable not in the programs he suggested but in the financial support he offered: the strength of the Society's eugenic

122 Letter, 7 July 1925 from the Secretary of the Eugenics Education Society to Sir Ernest Allen. Eugenics Education Society, London, C343. Kevles notes that a 'Fitter Families' contest started at the Kansas Free Fair in the United States in 1920 with the Governor presenting a medal to the eugenically most distinguished family. He also notes that fairs in both Britain and the United States frequently included a depiction of the laws of Mendelian inheritance for animals and that, on occasion, these extended to humans. Kevles, 1978, pp. 61-2.
campaigns during the 1930s was clearly facilitated by his funds. His support for the organisation was intense and sustained and it is worth considering briefly why he chose to endorse a eugenics society on the other side of the world rather than one in his own country.

The Australians correspondence is notable for the lack of interest he shows in the development of affiliated groups in his own country or indeed in any local debates on this issue. Part of the reason lay in the standing of the London Society - association with the leaders in this field must have appeared of more interest than a small Australian group. It is also clear that Twitchen was nervous about his involvement in eugenics becoming well known and was adamant that his involvement be kept confidential. As he wrote to Darwin around 1925:

I am particularly anxious that my bequest to the Society shall not be made public - it will be time enough when a majority in the world can see the truth and importance of its teaching - and I trust that you will take every precaution to keep it secret.\textsuperscript{123}

Twitchen may have concluded that a high level of support in a community where he was known would have been far harder to keep quiet and instead transferred his allegiance to England.

**Eugenic terminology: A vocabulary of exclusion**

The common concerns of eugenics - fertility, 'degeneration', venereal disease, insanity - no doubt made it a cause outside the bounds of 'polite' discussion for many. It is certainly true that the number who actually joined eugenics societies was small in Australia. However, interest in eugenics cannot be measured alone by the membership of specialist organisations. Following World War One and the Depression, eugenic reforms were increasingly considered viable solutions to Australia's social problems and widely debated in the press.\textsuperscript{124}


\textsuperscript{124} Bacchi argues that from 1900 to 1914 Australian eugenics was ‘positive’ or ‘environmental’, that is, concerned with the encouragement of a ‘better’ population through state assistance for nursing mothers and clinics for infants. While ‘negative’ or ‘hereditarian’ elements - concerned with sterilisation and segregation of ‘defectives’ etc - began to appear, in a limited way, after the Depression. She notes that the Depression, “... undermined the faith in social reform, especially among the middle classes who became obsessed with the burden of supporting the wustrels of society. Their increasing insecurity was reflected in a revived and more enthusiastic support for eugenic solutions”. 

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In common with any specialised subject, eugenicists developed a distinctive terminology and it is possible to chart the increasing acceptance of eugenics by the incorporation of its characteristic terms into everyday language. It is clear that the use of a eugenic discourse is not restricted to those who categorised themselves as ‘eugenicists’ first and foremost but was also employed by those interested in the creation of what can be termed ‘ideal bodies’.

Doctors, town planners, government officials, philosophers, body builders and dieticians all utilised a common language to imaginatively explore possible forms of a utopian society. Their vocabulary is often distinguished by terms that reveal a hierarchy of dominance and control - in other words, the catch-phrases of eugenics.

One of the most popular terms in the euphemistic vocabulary adopted by eugenicists was ‘hygiene’. Coined by Havelock Ellis in 1912, the word came from the Greek ‘hugieia’ - Hugieia being the goddess of health. The wide-ranging term ‘social hygiene’ masqueraded as a worthy principle of ensuring that the genetic health of the social body was met and designated social standards to be abided by. One good definition of this seemingly innocuous term is offered by H.E. Garle who described social hygiene as an ‘Art’ concerned with the:

Foundations of society, with the quality of the population, with its changes from one generation to another, and with the social effects of disease, and the application of modern scientific knowledge to the whole social body, for the betterment of the hygienic conditions of civilisation.

Another definition is provided by Sir B. Blackett who was a contributor to the Empire Social Hygiene Year Book for 1935. In common with Garle, Blackett neatly avoids the important questions of who gained the benefits of these utopian aspirations and who was to be excluded. He writes:

Bacchi, 1980, p.211. Garton agrees that postwar, “eugenics began to be widely accepted in Australia” but also believes that there was a mix of hereditarian and environmental views regarding eugenics prior to 1914. He cites the medical profession as central to the development of eugenics in Australia, for instance, Sir Charles Mackellar. Garton, 1986, pp.21-34. For another perspective on eugenics see, for instance, Cawte who notes the importance of considering social Darwinism as an eugenic element in Australia. Cawte, 1986.

Ellis, 1912. Ellis originally used this term to refer to the fight to combat prostitution and venereal disease.

In her survey of social hygiene in England, Greta Jones defines the term as, “the comprehensive and intrusive attention to all that pertains to human biological (and mental) well-being. This involves a discussion of a range of themes: reproductive biology and child care; health instruction; dietary advice and control; and housing and mental health”. Jones, 1986, p.1.

Garle, 1936, p.15.
Social Hygiene focuses attention on those factors essential to the 'good life' which depend on the inherent quality and the personal behaviour of the individual and the race... a minimum standard of mental and physical health is a fundamental requirement.\textsuperscript{128}

Blackett's statement forms one of the opening pages in a yearly publication prepared by the British Social Hygiene Council, and was supported by a detailed listing of population statistics gathered from Commonwealth countries. The use of statistics had taken on added importance in the 1930s since R.R. Kuczynynski developed new and more effective measures of net population rates. Social hygienists and eugenicists employed such figures as 'indisputable' validation of their arguments regarding the 'degeneration' of the communal body. The seemingly innocuous choices of which aspects of life to measure and quantify were invariably governed by moral agendas. From even a brief examination of these charts it is evident that Blackett's idea of the 'good life' was a prescriptive formula based on qualitative judgements about various members of the society.

For instance, in the Australian section of the \textit{Empire Social Hygiene Year Book}, the statistics cover birth and death rates in each of the States, allowing the reader to confirm reports regarding the country's declining net population. However, comfort could be found, for the social hygienist, in the break-down of these figures into racial types. The dominance of the Anglo-Saxon race in Australia was so overwhelming that it formed the unnamed norm against which other races were measured. Aborigines formed such a peripheral consideration in this survey that their presence was not even noted in the category of 'Other Races'.\textsuperscript{129}

Statistics with clear moral overtones were provided with the detailing of 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' births and the reported rates of venereal diseases. As education formed one of the pivotal aspects of the social hygienists agenda, the statistical data also included the

\textsuperscript{128} British Social Hygiene Council, 1935, pp.19-20.
\textsuperscript{129} See for instance the listing of population statistics for South Australia. British Social Hygiene Council, 1935, p.315.
existence of any social hygiene organisations in Australia. The Racial Hygiene Association of
NSW received special mention as it had apparently been, "recognised by Government".¹³⁰

Other characteristic terms employed when flexing the muscles of biological control are
clearly discernible, for instance, in Dr M.H. Downey's 1923 article, "The Prevention of
Feeble-mindedness", published in the papers of the Australasian Medical Congress.¹³¹
Downey, who held the position of Lecturer in Psychiatric Medicine at Adelaide University
and Superintendent of the Parkside Mental Hospital, espoused a straight-forward response
to the problem of the 'feeble minded', confidently advocating the permanent control (that is,
sterilisation) or segregation of those deemed eugenically unfit in order to stop their
'breeding'. While noting that some have advocated, "the lethal chamber... perhaps not
openly, for all types of incurable defects", Downey states his preference for sterilisation as a
more 'humane' method of eventually achieving the, "eugenic ideal of a race mentally
sound".¹³²

Downey's views on the management of the mentally ill are premised, in part, on the
influential English Royal Commission into 'The Care and Control of the Feeble-minded' of
1904.¹³³ This Commission concluded that 'feeble-mindedness' was hereditary and that such
people had a higher fertility than sane members of society.¹³⁴ Anxiety about the possibility
of raising a nation of feeble-minded citizens was compounded in 1914 when a subcommittee
formed by the Australasian Medical Congress to investigate the incidence of mental disease
concluded, "Few outside the medical profession are aware of the menace of mental
deficiency and its relation to crime and delinquency".¹³⁵

In 1929, the Federal Health Council commissioned a survey from Dr Ernest Jones, the
Inspector General of Mental Hospitals in Victoria, in which he found that 2.89% of school

¹³⁰ British Social Hygiene Council, 1935, p.313. The Racial Hygiene Association, Sydney was established in 1926.
See Garton, c1998, p.78.
¹³¹ Downey, 1924, pp.405-8.
¹³² Downey, 1924, p.407.
¹³³ For a study of the history of 'mental hygiene' and related matters in New South Wales see Garton, c1998.
¹³⁵ Australasian Medical Congress, 1914 quoted in Booth, 1938, [p.1]. Angela Booth's booklet is based on a lecture
delivered to the Eugenics Society of Victoria in July 1938. She is at pains to distinguish between, "voluntary
sterilization as recommended by the famous Brock Report in England" which she endorses, and "compulsory
sterilization as practiced in Germany" which she does not advocate. Booth, 1938, [p.1]
children were "defective". While the Lunacy Report of 1936-37 in Victoria maintained a steadily increasing number of the "mentally deficient" in that State. The solution to this problem increasingly favoured Downey's approach and even the generally measured voice of the *Medical Journal of Australia* came out in support of the sterilisation of the 'unfit'.

The category of those deemed socially defective, or 'unfit', was closely followed by a group termed 'inferior' by virtue of its economic standing. In a period when the Depression had reduced many thousands to the unemployment queues, those eugenicists who were not in similarly perilous financial straits proclaimed that unemployment and poverty was the result of genetic, not economic, factors.

Typical eugenic terminology was used by the British President of the Eugenics Education Society, Major Leonard Darwin, when he stated, "If the unemployed had few children, this would in like manner lessen unemployment in the future . . .". A ruthlessly clear economic imperative underscored Darwin's reasoning; the way out of the depression was to off-load those members of society who were holding back production:

> If all the unfit and the inferior, together with all those officials and attendants whose time is taken up in attending to them, were to do a good day's work in producing useful goods, the amount of such goods available for distribution would be enormously increased.

Leonard Darwin, considered the links between the unemployed, the poor and criminals were clear. The promotion of a healthy and prosperous communal body, genetically untainted by either the biologically 'unfit' or the 'inferior', was equally a simple matter: "As to criminals, paupers and all living uncivilised lives in a civilised country, their sterilisation would not only tend to purify the race, but might be beneficial by preventing the appearance of big families in bad homes."

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136 Booth, 1938, [p.3].
137 Booth, 1938, [p.4].
138 Bacchi notes that the editor of the *Medical Journal of Australia* (21 November 1931) recommended this course of action which was endorsed by a Commonwealth Health Report two years later. Bacchi, 1980, p.212.
140 Darwin, 1930, p.59.
141 Darwin, 1930, p.41.
Those espousing such negative eugenic views invariably extracted ‘proof’ for their opinions from aspects of evolutionary theory, drawing on those elements that suited their arguments or extending scientific rationale often beyond the limits intended by its originators. For instance, in Leonard Darwin’s reasoning one can discern traces of Lamark, in particular his view that the genetic code passed from generation to generation carried not only physical but emotional characteristics. Broadening this theory, eugenicists could reason that a tendency towards dissolution and ‘uncivilised living’ in one generation could be transmitted from parents to child, perpetuating a lineage of ‘bad blood’.

It would be wrong to think that all commentators on social progress were wholly amenable to the notion of eugenics. While it did have many well-known and influential supporters in western countries, opposition emerged in the 1930s.\textsuperscript{142} The editor of the \textit{Medical Journal of Australia} may have come out in support of sterilisation for the ‘unfit’ but five years later the same journal published a well-reasoned counter argument by Paul Dane.\textsuperscript{143} His article, “Sterilization of the Unfit” was the transcript of a paper read to the Victorian Council for Mental Hygiene in 1935. Dane clearly considered the topic of how to manage mental illness and ‘degeneration’ a serious problem but he presented a categorical case against the wholesale sterilization of those deemed unsuitable reproductive members of society.

Dane noted that, “economic criteria are ultimately the criteria by which fitness of unfitness is judged in the social group” and argued that the demands of industrial mechanisation for workers of a certain physical standard had created a, “class of unfit [persons]”.\textsuperscript{144} He questioned the criteria used to designate the ‘fit’ from the ‘unfit’ noting that definitions of mental deficiency were vague even among specialists and that:

Some of those regarded as fit today may in a generation be regarded as unfit and come within the ambit of the sadistic reformer, until the operation of sterilization

\textsuperscript{142} Opposition to eugenics in England appears to have been small at the time. Lancelot Hogben was one of the few major British biologists to oppose eugenic ideas. Others to speak out against eugenics were the M.F. Josiah Wedgewood and the writer C.K. Chesterton (Chesterton, 1922). See Mackenzie, 1981, p.46.

\textsuperscript{143} Dane, 1935. See also Philip Parkinson’s anti-eugenic article published in the popular press in 1936. Parkinson stated, “There is no evidence that colour of skin, size of brain or head, or indeed any other physical character, has any influence on the mental character, or the moral character, of any human being”. Parkinson, 1936, p.54.

\textsuperscript{144} Dane, 1936, p.708.
became as commonplace as the removal of tonsils, and the human spermatozoa are looked upon with as much suspicion as the streptococci.145

Even if the plans to sterilize the ‘unfit’ were adopted, Dane debated that it could be easily achieved. He quoted Professor Agar who calculated that one hundred in 10,000 people had mental deficiencies and if those problems were carried genetically then even with a sterilisation plan it would still take a century to reduce recurrent cases to sixty in 10,000. Given the then current medical belief that there were ten genetic ‘carriers’ to every mentally ill person it would be necessary to sterilize over 200,000 people in Victoria alone to eradicate the transmission of mental problems. Dane commented that this was, “A task so immense [that it] might well frighten super-socialists like Lenin or Stalin, or dictators like Hitler, but it appears not to frighten some well-meaning people in this country and elsewhere”.146

In his article, Dane raised one of the fundamental arguments of proponents of sterilization: that the cost of keeping those designated as unfit was too great in economically straightened times. However, he noted that, proportionally, Australia paid £1,000,000 to house and care for the mentally ill which was not excessive when compared to the £22,000,000 lost in land settlement schemes in Victoria alone.

One solution to the problem of the ‘unfit’ lay, for Dane, in a proper examination of environmental factors that may have helped cause or aggravate their condition. Referring to the social problems associated with people living in poverty in Australia he stated:

It would not only be bold, but extremely foolish, to assert that it was not their environment which was responsible, in large measure at least, for the dulling of their intelligence and for their general physical and moral deterioration.147

Dane suggested that a proper investigation of such factors as pre-natal conditions and diet took place before, “deluding the public with the idea that a sharp knife and some sterile catgut will solve a problem of some social importance”.148 For support he cited the opinions of Lancelot Hogben, Professor of Social Biology at the London School of Economics and

145 Dane, 1936, p.708.
146 Dane, 1936, p.711.
147 Dane, 1936, p.709.
148 Dane, 1936, p.710.
one of the few members of the scientific community to raise objections to the consideration of eugenic solutions to social problems.\(^{149}\) In common with Hogben, Dane adopted a rare humanititarian approach to the problems of the so-called 'unfit', believing that the solution lay in an understanding of economic and environmental forces. As he noted in conclusion, "It is not sterilization of the human being, but an understanding of his faulty environment that will lead to an uplift of humanity".\(^{150}\)

**Photography and eugenics**

The eugenic terminology was not limited to the spoken and written word but also entered the visual language. Photography, in particular, became an important tool for the eugenacists in their efforts to provide visual proof of an insidious disease that they believed was undermining society, that of 'degeneration'.\(^{151}\) The practice of discerning who carried a genetic predisposition towards 'degeneration' became a pseudo-science, aided, whether he intended it or not, by the great evolutionary theorist of the nineteenth century: Charles Darwin. Darwin's postulation that the essential nature, or soul, of an individual was reflected in their physiognomy was absorbed into eugenic discourse. Using his theory, eugenacists deduced that corporeal features not only reflected essential characteristics but also the person's moral standing.

Photography came to play an essential role in providing the visual proof for this belief by creating an 'indisputable' visual morphology of criminals, 'degenerates' and the mentally unstable. The protean forms of the human face could be captured using an instrument that, it was believed, provided objective empirical data and could scientifically uncover the subjects inner nature. Charles Darwin, for instance, showed his interest in the scientific and revelatory aspects of the medium when he commissioned the English photographer, Oscar Gustave Rejlander, to help substantiate his theories on the relationship between emotion and facial expressions. His classic physiognomic study, *The Expression of Emotions in Man and

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\(^{149}\) Mazumdar notes that with critics such as Hogben, "The period of unchallenged dominance of the eugenacists in human genetics came to an end in 1930". Mazumdar, 1992, p.146.

\(^{150}\) Dane, 1936, p.712.

\(^{151}\) For a discussion of photography and phrenology see Sekula, 1989, pp. 343-89
*Animals* (1872), is premised on a belief that photography is a simulacrum of reality able to provide empirical data of an indisputable kind.\(^{152}\)

In the same year that Darwin published his book, Alphonse Bertillon sought to extend the use of photography by documenting the emotions of the individual as well as their moral attributes. Bertillon created a massive ‘identikit’ of criminals for the Parisian Police in which he utilised a range of techniques on his involuntary subjects, from facial and cranial measurements to photography.\(^{153}\) During 1882 to 1889 alone, he took over 90,000 photographs of the men and women who passed through the French justice system and employed a complex archival system to catalogue various moral ‘types’.\(^{154}\)

In Britain, researchers were also beginning to see the value in applying photography to the field of criminal anthropology and eugenics. In 1877, for instance, Francis Galton expounded on his own use of photographs when he addressed a meeting of the British Association.\(^{155}\) He reported on his analysis of a group of photographs of criminals in which clear physiognomic ‘classes’ of persons had emerged. To amalgamate this data, Galton rephotographed several portraits onto one photographic plate forming a composite picture of typical features. In the early 1880s, he extended this project to include patients suffering a variety of physical and mental diseases, schoolboys, and Jewish people. Galton believed that his ‘composite photography’ was the perfect adjunct to his various eugenic projects, stating:

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152 Darwin, 1872. Darwin also used photographs by Duchenne de Boulogne to support his physiological theories.

153 See Bertillon, 1890. For illustrations of Bertillon’s photographs also see Clair, 1995 and Lemagny and Rouille, 1987, p. 74. Clair’s book is a fascinating and extensive overview of how identity and alterity have been constructed through the visual arts and contains a range of medical and anthropological photographic projects undertaken in the 19th and 20th centuries.

154 Other pioneers in the field of criminal anthropology include Cesare Lombroso who theorised that there was a ‘born criminal’ whose tendencies was genetically acquired and revealed physiologically. Another notable British specialist in this field was Havelock Ellis whose influential book, *The Criminal* (1890) sought to apply Lombroso’s theory through the extensive application of anthropometrical measures to a group of criminals. Ellis was later a high profile member of the Eugenics Education Society founded in 1907. For a discussion of criminal anthropology see Green, 1985, pp. 3-16.

155 Galton, Francis. “Address to the Department of Anthropology, Section H” reprinted in *Nature*, number 16, pp. 344-7 quoted in Green, 1985, p. 11.
It is the essential notion of race that there should be some ideal typical form
towards which their descendants will continue to cluster. ... there can hardly be a
more appropriate method of discovering the central physiognomical type of any race
or group than that of composite portraiture. 156

Underlying all such ultimately misguided attempts to classify the unclassifiable was
a positivist belief in the authority of observable data. Allied to this trust in empirical data is a
concurrent, if somewhat paradoxical, faith in the power of the mechanical to describe the
intangible. Researchers in this field, not only believed that the subconscious could inscribe
itself on a human face - giving physical form to emotions and moral characteristics - but that
photography enabled the scientist to capture these most subtle of physical and spiritual
manifestations.

For the eugenicist, there was a logical progression from Darwin's use of photography to
capture fleeting emotions to Bertillon's or Galton's projects to investigate the 'anti-social'
mind. The attempt to show aberrant behaviour as a genetic force that engraved itself
physiognomically carried a moral imperative; the normative values espoused by many as an
essential prerequisite for good citizenship could be powerfully reasserted through the visual
description of those who threatened to undermine such codes. This photographic archiving
can be considered part of the desire to give form to ineffable signs of 'degeneration' and
through such descriptions provide the means to control transgressive actions. 157

The popularity of photography in enabling large-scale physiognomic projects was
widespread, with scientists in most western nations embarking on archiving aspects of the
human psyche. In Australia, there are no known photographic enterprises that chart moral
'degeneration' on the monumental scale of Bertillon. However, individuals such as the

157 The symbolic appropriation of people through photography also took place as part of an ethnographic and
Orientalist discourse. In 1851, the French critic, Francis Wey, coined the phrase "conquêtes pacifiques" (peaceful
conquests) in relation to French photographic missions to the Middle East. His comment acknowledged that once a
country and its people were 'known' in a visual sense it was easier to possess them in reality. See Cronbie, 1993.
eccentric reformer, William James Chidley, took photographic documentation of his own face and body in the 1880s as physical evidence of the effects of sexual degeneracy.\textsuperscript{158}

Public projects involving photography more generally took place in Australia among anthropologists, who recorded Aboriginal people in a manner often aligned with Social Darwinism. According to this hierarchy of human types, Aboriginal people were a ‘low’ form of humanity - a curiosity of sorts that had not evolved as highly as the white scientists who recorded and measured them. The idea that Aborigines were a dying race was a consistent thread in writings from the nineteenth century. From a eugenic point of view the impending demise of the race meant that they did not pose a threat to the genetic purity of race. In 1919, for instance, a correspondent for \textit{The Eugenics Review} wrote, “As the aboriginals of Australia have very nearly disappeared, and do not intermarray save to a very slight extent with the whites, the present result is that the population is almost entirely a sturdy Anglo-Saxon one”.\textsuperscript{159}

The supposed disappearance of the race gave added impetus to efforts to record and measure Aborigines. One prolific early photographer in this field was Paul Foesche - a policeman in the Northern Territory - who took 251 images of Aborigines between 1877 and 1890, probably in a studio set up in Fanny Bay Gaol. Each single portrait is taken in the same way, with the subject generally naked from the waist up and seated directly before the camera lens. The photographs frequently include a stick or scale beside the subject as a measuring device.\textsuperscript{160}

\textbf{Fig. 7. Paul Foesche}
\textit{Portrait of ‘Minirrah’, Woolna or Bunti, NT, aged 27 1879}
Albumen silver photgraph

\textsuperscript{158} Chidley was an advocate of nudity, a natural diet (composed of fruit and nuts) and so-called ‘natural coition’ (sexual intercourse without male erection). He was a well-known sight on the city streets dressed in a Greek tunic as he sold copies of his book, \textit{The Answer}. He believed that normal sexual intercourse resulted in ‘shocks’ to the system that caused degeneracy and he documented the apparent physical effects of such activity in a series of drawings of a woman and in photographs of himself. Chidley wrote an autobiography which he sent to his long-time correspondent Havelock Ellis, extracts of which Ellis published in his book \textit{Studies in the Psychology of Sex} (1897-1928). Chidley was frequently arrested and eventually died in an asylum in 1916. See McIlnerney, 1977 and Finnane, 1981.

\textsuperscript{159} Unknown, 1919, p.222

\textsuperscript{160} See, Cooper & Harris, 1997
These projects continued into the mid 1920s with noted evolutionary biologist and photographer, Professor Baldwin Spencer, taking a large number of photographs of Aborigines and ‘Aboriginal life' in the Northern Territory. According to modern accounts, Spencer was a sympathetic recorder of his subjects and promoted the preservation of Aboriginal culture through his role as Honorary Director of the National Museum of Victoria. However, his appreciation was firmly based on social Darwinian attitudes and, like many, he did not hesitate to describe Aborigines in derogatory terms. In 1927, for instance, he prefaced his book *Arrunta* with the statement, “Australia is the present home and refuge of creatures often crude and quaint, that have elsewhere passed away and given place to higher forms. This applies equally to the Aboriginal as to the platypus and kangaroo”.

Spencer's often humane but essentially dehumanising approach to his subjects is evident in the following quote in which he describes his approach to measuring the heads of young Aboriginal children as part of his anthropometric survey:

The piccaninnies were amused the whole time and thought it quite a joke; of course I had them all in together so that they should not be frightened and when it was over gave them a good handful of lollies; they would not at all object to being measured again at the same rate of pay. When I measure them I always take their photographs - side face and full face.

The eugenacists' fear of 'bad blood', passing inexorably from generation to generation, through 'profligate' breeding was not limited to those who carried supposed racial or anti-social flaws. For those concerned with establishing an ideal society, the specter of mental derangement was a particularly fearful aspect of degeneration. The analysis and containment of such powerful psychic forces lent themselves to photographic investigation. Those individuals designated insane were literally a captive group who, like indigenous peoples or

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161 It is interesting to note that Spencer’s work was praised by *The Eugenics Review*. In 1928, for instance, his two volume book *Wanderings in Wild Australia* was favourably reviewed with the comment, “it is the duty of anyone who is interested in human progress to read them”. "LHDB", 1925, p.226.


criminals, were deprived of many social privileges - such as the right to privacy. They also
shared with those groups the status of social outcaste, being removed from acceptability and
‘normality’ because they had fallen prey to the most mysterious and terrifying of illnesses -
that of insanity.

In the mid-nineteenth century an interest in the workings of the mind, in both its
pathological and normal states, was being undertaken with vigour. By 1900, Sigmund Freud
introduced new concepts of the unconscious mind when he published his landmark psycho-
analytical study *The Interpretation of Dreams*. The theories of Freud and Carl Jung had a
profound effect on many artists, and the development of Surrealism in the interwar period
derived, in part, from a desire to explore the unconscious and symbolic forces of the mind.
The documentary power of photography became an important tool in the analysis of the
mentally ill from the mid-nineteenth century. One of the earliest uses of photography in this
context took place in 1851 when Hugh Diamond combined his interest in mental disorders
with his talent for photography - he was President of the Royal Photographic Society - to
take a series of studies of patients at a mental institution.

Three years later another remarkable classificatory project was undertaken by Adrian
Tournachon and Duchenne De Bologne who painstakingly documented expression and
‘passions’ with the aid of electrical stimulants to their subjects’ faces. One of the most
thorough projects of its kind took place from 1872 to 1900 when Jean-Martin Charcot, a
French doctor with whom Freud studied, instructed the photographers Paul Regnard and
Albert Londe to photograph women suffering from hysteria. Their remarkable images
document the bodily manifestations of a disorder that fascinated Freud and about which he
was to publish several papers.

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164 Freud, 1991(1900).
165 Dr Duchenne was a physiologist whose specialisation was the stimulation of facial muscles through electrical
impulses. He worked with the photographer Adrian Tournachon in 1854 to produce images of the emotions as a study
aid for artists, publishing these as plates in his, Mécanisme de la physionomie humaine, ou analyse électro-
physiologique de l’expression des passions applicable à la pratique des arts plastique, Paris, 1862. See Hambourg and
Hebrun and Néagu, 1995, p.223 for a commentary on this publication.
166 Freud became interested in the phenomena of hysteria whilst studying under Charcot at the Salpêtrière in Paris in
1885. He published several papers on the topic including Studies on Hysteria, London, 1956, with his colleague J.
All of these early photographic projects hoped to capture psychic disturbances or signs of social transgression through the camera's ability to record minute changes in the subjects' expressions. The desire to reveal disturbing manifestations of difference were often conceived of in humanitarian terms intended to understand and help those in the grip of 'aberrant' forces. However, such worthy aims also slip easily into the mania of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for the classification of 'others', whether they be 'criminals', the 'mentally ill', or racial 'types'. The desire to explain physical symptoms of disorder not only involves a containment of those forces - rendering them harmless through the ordering processes inherent in classification - but can shade imperceptibly into relativities of a moral and even eugenic nature.

**Eugenics and the literary imagination**

Eugenic issues also found limited expression in literary form in the interwar period.

In Australia, for instance, in the short story, *An Adventure in Eugenics*, published in *The Bulletin* in 1924, the writer T.B. Clegg capitalised on popular interest in the issuing of medical certificates prior to marriage. He writes about two doctors, Berry and Devendish, who are discussing the issue of heredity and disease. Devendish remarks that modern experts have, "chucked over heredity" while Berry, who is a specialist in leprosy, concurs and believes that the spread of that particular disease provides evidence that it is not carried genetically. Musing along these lines he recalls the case of a major in the Indian Army who he was once asked to examine. The old man died from so-called 'senile decay' but he was unable to follow up his suspicion that leprosy was also present as there seemed no point.

As the narrative develops, Berry asks his colleague, Devendish, to examine a young couple at the request of the mother of a prospective bride: "The old lady seems to have been reading up on eugenics and suggests . . . that I should furnish her with a clean bill of health for Phil". He discovers, to his horror, that while the young man is healthy, the woman has the first signs of leprosy and he is obliged by law to report it. Before he can do this, the distressed couple drive away and die in what appears to be an intentional car crash. In the denouement of the tale we realise that the father of the young woman was the old major that

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Dr Berry suspected of having leprosy. Clegg concludes his story with the final exchange between the two doctors: "Of course, Berry, there was no shadow of doubt?" "None", said Berry concisely. "There was the bacillus".\(^{170}\)

This dramatic short story confirms the anxiety felt by eugenicists that heredity is an unseen yet vital force carrying not only essential genetic information between generations but also potentially lethal diseases. Interestingly, Clegg does not place this genetic inheritance in a social or racial context - the young woman is from ostensibly 'good stock' - but considers it a problem of medical knowledge. With the right knowledge about the apparent transfer of leprosy through the genes, the doctor would have known how to treat the old man and presumably save the next generation. Despite its tragic conclusion, the story appears to validate the need for medical certificates before marriage suggesting that the young couple may have wreaked even greater disaster by passing the disease to their own children.

The potential problems of reproduction among those not ‘fit’ in various ways also forms an important theme in Kylie Tennant's social realist novel, *Foveaux*. Here, Tennant uses the popularly held belief that the poor reproduced at rates faster than their economically richer counterparts. Her novel charts the declining fortunes of a group of characters who live in Foveaux - a municipality at the edge of Sydney.\(^{171}\) Her protagonists struggle with over-large families, poor housing, lack of work and the rising tide of modernity that progressively engulfs the community. Holding this group together is an honourable sense of comradeship and a hatred for authority, especially the ever-present rent collectors and child protection officers.

In one scene, towards the end of the book, a Child Welfare Department officer named Kingston, discusses his eugenic notions with the idealistic rent collector, Bramley. After a morning spent viewing, "the running sores of Foveaux", the pair stop for lunch and the welfare officer gives full rein to his pet subject: "Castration," Kingston said with a didactic cheerfulness, as though he was commenting on the salad. "That's the only cure.

\(^{169}\) Clegg, 1924, p.24.  
\(^{171}\) Tennant, 1939.
Compulsory castration. All subnormals”.172 Kingston finished his tirade against the poor of Foveaux with: “They’re no good to themselves or other people. They need to be wiped out like diseased animals. They’re not educated to be clean or human.”.173 While the compassionate Bramley finds Kingston, “just not normal on the matter of slum children”, our sympathies to the eugenic point of view are encouraged when Bramley states that, “One’s view did become warped under the eternal attack of other people’s pain”.174

The subject of eugenics invited stories with a melodramatic turn and one of the most notable Australian books to consider the loaded issues of heredity and madness was Eleanor Dark’s novel, Prelude to Christopher. First published in 1934, this theatrical story is considered one of the few books of the period to engage with such contemporary issues in a modernist style. It achieved some success when published both in Australia and England, with one local reviewer for The Home enthusiastically declaring, “it might almost be regarded in the light of a scientific treatise, if it were not that it is so supremely a work of art. It is in fact the most distinguished achievement by an Australian writer I have so far encountered”.175 Although little mentioned today, Dark’s book provides evidence of the currency of eugenic ideas in Australia and is a fascinating example of the use of the eugenic vocabulary in a creative work of fiction.176

Dark’s story is centred on the possibilities and ultimate perversion of eugenic ideals. Her central character of Nigel Hendon is the kind of genetic raw material that eugenicists would place at the top of the Social Darwinian ladder. A brilliant medical student and ‘practical idealist’, Hendon is obsessed by the desire to reproduce his own genetic glory. Establishing his own genetic pedigree he describes his parents as “extraordinarily healthy people - not only physically but morally too”.177

The description of Hendon’s physical appearance is expressed using a vocabulary suitable for those interested in ‘good stock’: “tall and tough, his muscles hard from exercise

172 Tennant, 1939, p.412.
173 Tennant, 1939, p.413.
175 Tennant, 1935, p.11.
177 Dark, 1936, p.288.
conscientiously taken; he had sound teeth and a good digestion because his tastes were simple and his habits temperate". He also possessed the fine mental capabilities desired by eugenicists and a less than modest appreciation of his own abilities in this area. As Hendon states in a deadpan manner:

To build for so many generations, to put so much into you, such sound and solid material into your body, so many strains of decency and strength into your character, so many treasures of intelligence, imagination, humour into your brain!\(^{179}\)

The self-proclaimed ‘remarkable Dr Hendon’, saw the perpetuation of worthy people, such as himself, as vital for society and founded the settlement of Hy-Brazil on a tropical island. Dark’s use of an island on which eugenic experiments took place was by no means original. H.G. Wells novel, *The Island of Dr Moreau* dealt with similar subject matter, although taking the concept further to mix human and animal reproduction, as did Erle C.Kenton’s 1932 film version of Wells’ book, *Island of Lost Souls*. In Australian society utopian communities were nothing new, and there had been a proliferation of such settlements in the depression of the 1890s.\(^{180}\) It could be that Dark drew her inspiration for Hy-Brazil from the settlements of ‘New Australia’ and ‘Cosme’, in Paraguay, founded by William Lane. However, instead of the dream of shared prosperity and community that underpinned Lane’s ventures, Dark has her fictional character display more messianic qualities.

Hy-Brazil was established by Hendon in order to fulfil his self-appointed role as a, “worshipper of normality, apostle of Eugenics, [and] father of a colony whose basis was to be the rearing of healthy stock”.\(^{181}\) His guiding philosophy was that the ‘breeding’ of humans should follow the same efficient principles as those applied to other spheres of life - a situation that he pessimistically felt did not occur at present:

A man who bred his sheep with infinite care would marry a tuberculous wife and rear an infected family; a man who grew his fruit trees undeviatingly true to type would beget a brood of half-caste children. A man like that one at the arcade -

\(^{178}\) *Dark*, 1936, p.21.

\(^{179}\) *Dark*, 1936, p.80.

\(^{180}\) *Souter*, 1968.

\(^{181}\) *Dark*, 1936, p. 74.
under-nourished, meagre both mentally and physically - still must have his wife, his child, his long shadowy, dreadful line of foredoomed prosperity.\textsuperscript{182}

In the novel's tragic twist, Hendon's grand social plans are undermined by his marriage to Linda Bland. This beautiful scientist reveals to him, on their wedding night, that insanity runs in her family, putting paid to the eugenicists' idea of 'perfect' offspring. The book suggests that not only is Linda the likely inheritor of a history of homicidal madness but that she is the victim of incest at the hands of her scientist uncle. Science, in tandem with a modern version of the 'woman gone bad', appear as the twin culprits in this book. Indeed the combination of the two - the modern, over-educated scientific woman, with a brain, "merciless in its cold logic" - form a central, disruptive evil presence with Linda, metaphorically appearing as the snake in Hendon's garden of Eden.\textsuperscript{183}

Dark's most obvious use of the character of Linda as a symbolic form of modern female corruption is to be found in a scene where a young male doctor views a painting of Hendon's utopian settlement. The painting, hung appropriately enough in Linda's bedroom, depicts the island's tropical vegetation as a natural luxuriant force. Within this idyllic, naturally fecund scene Mrs Hendon appears as a shadowy 'unnatural' presence lurking almost unseen in the lush, verdant undergrowth. In his subsequent description of her, the young doctors remarks, "There was something snake-like about her - something forced underfoot, hated, feared, preserving its life with its subtlety, its gift for camouflage, its fangs".\textsuperscript{184}

Linda's apparent mental degeneration is linked to her moral abandonment; not only does she take lovers while her husband is fighting in World War One but she is a domestic slattern. As the deterioration of her mind progresses, her body too loses its healthful vigour. Symbolic of her 'abnormality' is the fact that she does not have children. Towards the end of the novel Linda describes herself as a, "figure of fun with your angular barren body".\textsuperscript{185}

\textsuperscript{182} Dark, 1936, p.40.
\textsuperscript{183} Dark, 1936, p.107.
\textsuperscript{184} Author's emphasis, Dark, 1936, p.114
\textsuperscript{185} Dark, 1936, p.313.
Juxtaposed against this spectacle of feminine evil and hereditary insanity is the young, healthy and, by implication, fertile nurse, Kay. After an accident that leaves Hendon hospitalised, the pace of the novel accelerates and the final denouement becomes increasingly apparent. The meaning of the novel's title is revealed towards the end of the story as Kay imagines herself with a son named Christopher; a son whose father she wishes was Hendon. As Linda prepares to commit suicide the reader is left with the clear conclusion that Kay will have her wish fulfilled.

While it would be simplistic to suggest that Dark necessarily advocates eugenics, she is not overtly critical of its aspirations in the way, for instance, that Aldous Huxley is in his book *Brave New World*. Indeed, the clear heroes of Dark's book are the eugenic Doctor Hendon and his devoted nurse, while the 'degenerate' wife - who cannot fulfil her duties to 'breed' - loses not only her mind and her body but, eventually, her life. Our sympathies are not encouraged towards Linda; her death providing the only possible solution to allow the 'proper' course of events to proceed. It is also suggested that it is only with her demise that the promise of Hendon's utopia can be fulfilled.

Given the restrictions imposed by Australian censors during the 1930s, Dark's discussion of female sexuality, implicit incest, madness and eugenics were 'hot topics' that required careful treatment. Perhaps in response to the repressive moral standards of the time, Dark employs a breathless narrative style, with the action compressed into a few short days, allowing issues to be suggested without the necessity for lengthy descriptions. What may also have saved the book from prohibition was its political agenda. Although Dark personally espoused a socialist philosophy, the political construct of her novel is deeply conservative. Normative values of family, children and work are suggested as the ideal social construct, while the dangers of blurring gender roles through female education and emancipation are given tragic form in the character of the mad wife.

Unlike Dark, Aldous Huxley argued that eugenics was morally indefensible. He used considerable wit and irony to satirise 'selective breeding' in *Brave New World*, published in 1932. Here, Huxley creates a futuristic utopia in which there is a, “foolproof system
of eugenics, designed to standardise the human product and so facilitate the task of the managers". The dream of eugenicists for a society whose genetic imprint is precisely controlled, reaches its hideous realisation under the patriarchal imprimatur of 'Our Ford'. Huxley's imagining of a utopian Brave New World was predicated on an astute understanding of the contemporary longing for stability. The genetically engineered human eggs that are fertilised and incubated in the factories of the Central London Hatchery are undeniably "Major instruments of social stability".

Liberty and individuality were the necessary sacrifices that the inhabitants of this fictional world cheerfully and unknowingly sacrificed for, "Community, Identity, Stability". In this utopia/nightmare the inhabitants are discouraged from intellectual activity - other than those appropriate to fulfilling their tasks. The anti-intellectual emphasis common among those regimes interested in suppression is satirised by Huxley in several ways, most subtly through his choice of the word 'soma' to describe the drug used by authorities to pacify the population; the word 'soma' being from the Greek word meaning 'body'.

The timely nature of Huxley's book did not endear it to the trenchantly conservative forces of Australian bureaucracy. It is notable that a book that makes such a plea for individuality and the intellect was among 5,000 publications banned in the mid 1930s as a result of the Customs Department's rigorous interpretation of the Indecency Act. The banning of books was considered a retrograde step by those interested in liberty and intellectual freedom. A contemporary comment on censorship in Australia, including Brave New World, is to be found in a cartoon by Mervyn Skipper in the magazine Pandemonium. This illustration, which is titled 'Brave New World' shows a range of authors whose books were prohibited by Australian Customs agents, including Andre Gide, Bertrand Russell, T.S. Eliot, H.G. Wells, James Joyce, Havelock Ellis, Ernest Hemingway, Vita Sackville West and

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187 Huxley no doubt coined the phrase 'Our Ford' in response to the ideology of 'Fordism' that developed in the 1920s. See Von Gottl-Ottillienfeld, 1926.
188 Author's emphasis, Huxley, 1975(1932), p.18.
190 Coleman, 1961, p.13. Other Australian novels to be banned during the 1930s include John Harcourt's Upsurge and G.W. Southern's Making Morality Modern, are discussed in detail in this thesis.
191 Pandemonium, December 1934, p.9.
Aldous Huxley. The group is shown in a leaking balloon under ground fire by cannons and the caption reads “[the authors] inspect Australia during the Lyon’s Golden Age”.

Another reference to the prohibition of Huxley’s book is found in a photograph by Max Dupain. He uses the publication as the inspiration for his 1935 image, *Brave New World*. Utilising the techniques of montage he learnt from reference to photographers such as Man Ray, Dupain shows a naked woman trapped by technology.\(^{192}\) The woman is positioned in the centre of the frame shielding her eyes with her hand. Superimposed over her naked and vulnerable body is a tripod head that seemingly impales the woman. A solarised image of a screw, in the lower right hand corner of the image, is perhaps a play on words - referring to the reproductive manipulations that Huxley’s book details.

That same year, further reference to the book is to be found in the social magazine, *The Home*. In a curious gesture that would not have gone unnoticed by its astute literary readers, the editors titled a page of photographs of children in the garden “The Brave New World”, giving an otherwise innocuous images a rather menacing inflection.\(^{193}\) *The Home’s* reference to Huxley’s book suggests how references to eugenics had become ‘naturalised’ as they were absorbed into mainstream popular culture.

As I have argued in this chapter, Australians proved a receptive audience for ideas regarding eugenics. Although eugenic organisations were small, the social standing of its members helped to effectively spread information concerning the ‘science’ into the broader community. By the 1920s, familiarity with eugenic terminology was widespread among the public and photographic ‘proof’ of the effects of ‘degeneration’ was well-known. As anxieties about the effects of the Depression on Australian society spread and the possibility

\(^{192}\) In 1935, Dupain reviewed the work of Man Ray in his article, “Man Ray: His place in modern photography”. Dupain, 1935b. For more information on Dupain’s interest in Man Ray see Newton, 1980; Batchen, 1995, p.357, fn.5; and Wach, 1997. For an analysis of this photograph see Willis, 1988, pp.167-8.

of another world war became a reality, the ground-work had been laid for the incorporation
of eugenic ideas into social programs.
Chapter Two
Eugenics at Work

Populating the Australian nation: Immigration and fertility

"It has long been argued . . . that one of Australia’s greatest needs is more population". 
G.A Syme, 1923.¹

From the foundation of white settlement in Australia, a prevalent theme in popular discourse was the desire to sustain and protect the racial predominance of the Anglo-Saxon population. The commonly held Australian view that the progress of the nation depended, to at least some degree, on racial ‘purity’ made many receptive to ideas concerning eugenics. In this chapter I detail ‘eugenics at work’ in Australia through an examination of some key areas of national concern, all of which focused on the body at its most basic genetic level. I argue that an interest in regulating the genetic constitution or ‘blood’ of the population is evident in several distinct areas, notably in strategies for encouraging birth rates among white Australians. I discuss how proposed ‘eugenic marriages’ and a critical reaction to the child-free ‘new woman’ were part of a process of controlling female sexuality, and look at the role that photography and other art forms played in endorsing or challenging such views.

I also maintain that discussion about the relative merits of increasing the Australian birth rates and/or an increase in the number of white immigrants was informed by a fear of hybridity. The issue of the so-called ‘half-caste’ becomes important in this context and I argue that debates regarding the control of the Aboriginal ‘problem’ was guided by eugenic principles. I reveal how many considered that the end point of these processes of genetic regulation was to create a ‘new Australian’ - an ideal white body that was a physically and temperamentally distinct product of the antipodes. I discuss how a range of anthropometric measures were employed, particularly on ‘captive’ groups such as school children and prisoners, to ‘prove’ the existence of this Australian type. Photography too was enlisted as a scientific tool and I show how artists such as Max Dupain regularly focused on the archetypal Australian in their photographs.

¹ Syme, 1923, p.5.
In 1923, when the President of the Australasian Medical Congress, G.A. Syme, commented that one of Australia’s greatest needs was, “more population”, his view reflected concerns that had been current in Australia for at least two decades. The perception that the country had too few people to sustain independent nationhood had been noted, for instance, around the turn of the century when the New South Wales statistician reported a decline of 20.8% in birth rates in that State. Such were the public and official concerns raised by this trend that a ‘Birth-Rate Commission’ was established in 1903 to study the problem. It concluded that the “Future of [the] Commonwealth and maintenance of a ‘White Australia’ depend on high birth-rates.”

The population issue - how many people were desirable and of what race - resurfaced after the detrimental effects of World War One. Not only did 60,000 of Australia’s fittest young men die, but over half of those who did return home were injured. The massive physical and psychic wounds of war took time to heal and, as the prospect of another military engagement became increasingly likely in the 1930s, fears were expressed that Australia would not have enough able men for effective national defence.

Encouraging Australian women to improve their fertility through better health and fitness was one answer to the problem of ‘under-population’ but a more immediate solution was to accelerate migration. Simply populating the country was not the main issue here, what was

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2 Syme, 1923, p.5. Information from Syme’s Report was used by those interested in racial ‘decay’. See for instance Beale, 1910, pp.276-80. These concerns were not limited to Australia alone. Writers interested in eugenics in England, for instance, expressed fears that the supposed higher fertility rates of non Anglo-Saxon races and the ‘lower classes’ in that country would eventually lead to the more genetically ‘desirable’ members of the community being ‘swamped’. See, for instance, Enid, 1936. Note however that not everyone in Australia felt the country had too low a population. P.D. Phillips, for instance, commented that Australia was meant to be empty because of its relatively small areas of viable land. As he noted: “Australia is like a very large empty frame, rich gilt surrounding comparative blackness”.


3 The figure of 20.8% applied to the decline in birth rates in New South Wales for the period 1891 to 1900. Rates in Sydney declined by 16.6% and 19.7% in Melbourne. Royal Commission, 1904, p.6.

4 Royal Commission, 1904. Bacchi contends that while fears regarding the declining birth rate reached their apogee around 1900, the issue continued to have relevance throughout the next thirty years with the debate shifting to the improvement of child and female welfare as a means of increasing population size. Bacchi, 1980, p.200.

5 Royal Commission, 1904, p.53.

6 In 1937, for instance, Lord Harrington, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Dominions, held a press conference in which he stated that Australia’s defense capabilities were dependent on a larger population. Lord Harrington, quoted in Still, 1937, p.285. See also Major General Downes who noted in 1938 that the health of those men who were available to fight was very poor. Downes, 1938, pp.29-30. A rare alternative view was expressed by W.G.K. Duncan in 1938. He stated that: “The things that will bring success in the next war are brains, ingenuity, industrial resources, ruthlessly efficient organisation of the whole country for war purposes . . . the size of the population is of secondary importance”. Duncan, 1938, p.46.
needed was the right kind of human ‘stock’. In this debate the concept of ‘nation’ was easily conflated with that of ‘race’ and the dynamic and adaptable nature of population growth was frequently reduced to a hierarchy of desirable and undesirable racial characteristics.

The concept of racial exclusivity was most notably embedded in the Commonwealth Immigration Act, or ‘White Australia’ policy, which, “[prohibited] the entry into Australia of any person who, when asked to do so, fails to write out at dictation, and sign in the presence of an officer, a passage of 50 words of length in a European language”. The policy was motivated by the possibility of widespread immigration to Australia from Asia and was among the first laws passed by the newly Federated Government in 1901. The wording of the Act may not have specifically mentioned Asia, or other non-European countries, but in effect it allowed Australia the liberty to exclude any person deemed inappropriate. The option to test a person in, “a European language” meant that English speaking Asians, for instance, could theoretically be given a language test in Polish or Greek which they were more likely to fail.

Commentators on the policy were clear about its racial intent. Myra Willard in her 1923 book, *History of the White Australia Policy*, states that the authors of the Act, “knew that racial unity, though not necessarily racial homogeneity was essential for national unity, for true national life”. Other observers were more direct. Senator Stewart, an ALP Senator for Queensland, proclaimed at a debate on the bill in 1901:

> At the federal elections a resounding cry went up from one end of the country to the other that the coloured races must go. The verdict all over the country was for absolute exclusion . . . we cannot mix with them . . . This is really a matter of life and death to the people of Australia.⁹

At an earlier reading of the bill, the Leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party, J.C. Watson, spoke along similar lines: “As far as I am concerned, the objection I have to the mixing of

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⁷ The Commonwealth Immigration Act, number 17 of 1901, Clause (a) of Section 3, quoted in Willard, 1923, p.121. This test only applied to non-Europeans. Willard notes that, after protests from various Asian countries, the wording of the act was changed in 1905 to read “… 50 words in any proscribed language” - a change that made little real difference in practical terms. Willard, 1923, p.121.
⁸ Willard, 1923, p.189.
these coloured people with the white people of Australia ... lies in the possibility and probability of racial contamination".\textsuperscript{10} Senator Staniforth Smith from Western Australia invoked scientific 'wisdom' when he declared: "All anthropologists agree that the Caucasian races cannot mingle with the Mongolian, the Hindoo [sic] or the negro".\textsuperscript{11}

The notion of racial exclusivity promulgated by the Act was considered a god-send by those interested in eugenics and, in 1929, Dr Waddy cogently described it as, "Unconsciously ... one of the greatest eugenic laws ever passed in Australia".\textsuperscript{12} An Australian writer for \textit{The Eugenics Review} in London similarly noted:

\begin{quote}
In answer to your enquiry as to what steps have been taken in order to maintain the racial qualities of the Australians of the future, may I state ... that the Emigration Act, which is rigidly enforced, prevents ingress into Australia of undesirable aliens, of person suffering from various diseases ... and of indigent persons ... the present result is that the population is almost entirely a sturdy Anglo-Saxon one.\textsuperscript{15}
\end{quote}

When Australia did seek migrants it was to Britain that it most often turned and the mother country responded enthusiastically to the call. In 1921, for instance, the Imperial Conference on Emigration decided that the redistribution of the, "white population of the Empire" was desirable and necessary.\textsuperscript{14} The following year Britain passed the Empire Settlement Act under which they agreed to match half of the resettlement costs for people wishing to live in Australia. In 1925, the so-called '34 million pound agreement' was passed to encourage mass migration but, although it was hoped that 100,000 British migrants a year would take advantage of the scheme, this figure proved substantially short of reality. For the years 1924 to 1928, approximately 45,000 made the long voyage to a new home in Australia each year. The assisted entry scheme became an expense that the Australian government could not sustain in the Depression and it was suspended from 1930 to 1938.


\textsuperscript{11} Smith, Staniforth. 14 November 1901, \textit{Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates}, volume VI, p. 7245 quoted in Gibb, 1973, p.120.

\textsuperscript{12} Waddy, 1929, p.63.

\textsuperscript{13} Unknown, 1919, p.222.

\textsuperscript{14} Burton, 1933, p.61.
Migration was not only halted in the 1930s but people began to leave the country. The economic crisis in Australia resulted in an exodus of 22,000 from 1930 to 1932. By 1934 the flow had only marginally reversed, with 2,000 people entering the country again.\textsuperscript{15} Understandably, the declining population accelerated discussion about Australia’s continuing viability as a strong and independent nation. More pessimistic commentators offered clear, if sometimes novel, reasons for Australia’s diminishing numbers. For instance, in his address to the House of Commons in London in 1937, Mr Herbert argued that Australia was no longer a desirable destination because of high income tax, rising education costs and an increasing rate of alcohol consumption. Other prohibitive factors apparently included greater levels of unpleasant noise and newspaper editors who showed a distressing, “lack of thought”.\textsuperscript{16}

In a report on Herbert’s speech, G.F. McCleary disagreed with his conclusions and instead extolled the virtues of life in Australia. However, he did acknowledge that there was a population problem and attributed this to declining fertility among Australian women. Referring to the low Australian birth rates, McCleary observed, “one feels the presence of an element of Greek tragedy - the presence of a mysterious force moving ceaselessly, relentlessly to an unknown but tragic destiny”.\textsuperscript{17}

McCleary was fond of classical allusions and in his 1937 publication, \textit{The Menace of British Depopulation}, he related the Australian situation to the fall of Rome.\textsuperscript{18} Attributing the ancient Empire’s eventual decline to infertility, McCleary concluded, “Sapped by sterility, Imperial Rome - the most imposing manifestation of the synthesising energy of the human spirit - crumbled into ruin”.\textsuperscript{19} McCleary ascribed Rome’s population decline to a decadent lifestyle and an increase in homosexuality. Not directly citing the same causes in Australia, he did imply that a ‘degenerative’ social tendency was at work in the country that had resulted in a, “psychological loss of reproductive capacity caused by the increased devotion of the populace to intellectual pursuits”.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{15} Duncan, 1938, p.24.
\textsuperscript{16} Mr Herbert quoted in McCleary, 1938, p.49.
\textsuperscript{17} McCleary, 1938, p.52.
\textsuperscript{18} McCleary, 1937.
\textsuperscript{19} McCleary, 1937, p.116.
\textsuperscript{20} McCleary, 1937, p.37.
In 1937, Charles Enid published his similarly portentous book, *The Menace of Under-Population*. He saw racial ramifications in Australia's decreasing birth rate and stated, "a rapid decline in the fertility of a young and vigorous community was felt to foreshadow grave difficulties in the way of populating the British Commonwealth with men and women of British stock". As Enid notes, the problem of declining birth rates was not limited to Australia but was also a concern in other western countries - however, it was accentuated in the Australian situation because of the relatively low core population.

**Women: “Sacred vessels of maternity”**

With assisted migration halted, it became imperative in the 1930s to find solutions to Australia's low population through changes within the existing community. A concerted move towards improved national health was considered an important start. Along with calls for better child care and a mother's allowance it was hoped that enhanced female fitness would increase the numbers of strong and productive little Australians being born.

The creation of 'better' babies was considered the prime responsibility of women and, according to many, relied on the adoption of good health practices before and after birth. Writers such as the Australian eugenicist, George Philpots, held that diet played a pivotal role in promoting better births and more of them - but only for the 'right' kind of woman. He intoned the familiar eugenicist litany regarding reproduction when he wrote, "On the one hand we have the feeble-minded increasing out of all proportion, hence, the increase of the criminal class".

Philpots articulated his distinctive, but by no means unique views, through his editorship of a magazine that made no pretence of its particular aims. *Better Health and Racial Efficiency: Through Diet, Hygiene, Psychology, Physical Culture* encouraged food reform through policies that,

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21 Enid, 1936, p.9.
22 Baylebridge, 1939, p.185.
23 Philpots, 1926a, p.17.
the editor believed, had individual, national and racial significance. He espoused a commonsense attitude that women should not indulge in too many missed meals, bad food or late nights if they wanted to be the producers of healthy offspring. He also considered that increasing the fertility of Australian women was the best way to national growth, prosperity and racial homogeneity. As he wrote, “No controversy will be started by my saying, at the onset, that the best immigrants this Sunny Land of ours can have are bonnie Australian babies!”

To sustain the health of women in their roles as creators of the next generation Philpots advocated a moderate diet concentrating on fruit, vegetables, milk, honey and eggs. He particularly endorsed ‘vitalised’ foods that still contained their original vitamins and trace elements. The devitalisation of food, as a modern phenomenon due to overprocessing, was linked by Philpots to modernity itself. Predictably, he considered city living as a prime depleting force on the bodies of young women and men:

Many young married couples think they can go blindly along in a whirl of gaiety, which in our days so often consists of late hours, suppers, with liberal supplies of alcoholic drinks, cigarettes, and fancy cakes and pastry that all undermine normal health, and render the young mother incapable of bearing a healthy child.

As early as 1904, the Royal Commission on declining birth-rates in New South Wales had condemned those women who chose not to have large families. They attributed the use of contraceptives, abortions or even abstinence to “selfishness” and described such actions as symptomatic of a, “decadent state of society.” Doctors’ testimony was garnered to ‘prove’ that contraception could lead to female insanity and that abortions resulted either in death or permanent injuries.

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24 This magazine was later known by the all encompassing title of the National Magazine of Health. Philpots also contributed to other magazines including The Eugenics Review. See, for instance, his letter to the editor in volume XXXI, number 4, January 1940, p.231. He was also the President of the Victorian branch of the Food Education Society.
25 'Medicus', 1925, p.6.
26 For more on Philpots’ views on the appropriate dietary requirements of women and children see also his edited transcript of a radio interview on 3AR. Philpots, 1926b, p.17.
27 'Medicus', 1925, p.15.
28 Royal Commission, 1904, pp.16 and 17.
The commissioners recommended the prohibition of contraceptives, making abortions illegal and enlisted the help of the church in encouraging more women to have children. They also questioned the wisdom of work for women quoting the opinion of Dr R.Worrall, Senior Gynecological Surgeon at Sydney Hospital. Dr Worrall listed various medical problems associated with office and factory work which he described as, “evils [that], it is easy to see, must react upon the state of the race”. In conclusion, they issued a sweeping indictment of childless women whose lack of regard for the continued growth of their country showed them to be unpatriotic:

Forgetful of the lessons of history, ignoring the teachings of science, bent on gratifying their selfish desires, and on pursuing social advancement, they are seeking to follow the dictates of a narrow reasoning, and blindly imagine that, in raising the standard of their own physical comfort, they are smoothing the path of life for themselves and for posterity, while leaving to the others the creation of that posterity for which they profess to be so concerned.

The diatribes of the commissioners against women reflected a moral position that dominated Australian society until at least the 1920s. However, the conservative approach to female roles could not inhibit the rise in the numbers of women who not only worked and lived a self-determined lifestyle but who availed themselves of contraceptives. Critical attention fell on the so-called ‘new woman’ or ‘flapper’ who appeared to disdain her role as a breeder in favour of an independent lifestyle and child-free pleasure. The phenomenon of this ‘new woman’ became the subject of art and popular culture through the 1920s with opinion sharply divided between those who endorsed and those who abhorred this social trend.

Some women artists, in particular, promoted the changing nature of gender roles and began to create images of themselves and their friends as representative of female emancipation. In 1925, for instance, Margaret Preston, painted The Flapper in which she shows a young, smartly dressed working woman who is the epitome of this new ‘breed’. With her short

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29 Dr Worrall quoted in Royal Commission, 1904, p.35.
30 Royal Commission, 1904, p.52.
31 For a study of representations of the ‘new woman’ in art and illustrations in women’s magazines see Niehoff, 1994, pp.38-52.
32 Pamela Niehoff notes that images of the ‘new woman’ were created by Australian women artists in the 1920s and 1930s: “Female artists changed the way in which women were depicted in Australian painting, allowing a more forceful and independent image to emerge. These new women created for themselves images of the New Woman, images which male artists were not prepared to produce”. Niehoff, 1994, p.52.
bobbed hair tucked under a jaunty cloche hat and heavily applied make-up, the flapper faces the viewer with a direct, forthright gaze. Her dress, too, carries a suggestion of sexual provocation: ungloved hands and a short skirt revealing her legs are signs that this young woman has rejected a traditional demure female demeanor. Instead, we are presented with a woman who seeks control of her own destiny even if her body language - with arms folded defensively across her body - suggests a certain vulnerability in her fashionable armour.

The emancipated woman presented a threat to those who believed that the sum total of female existence should be directed towards child-rearing. In the 1920s, for instance, George Philpots wrote on ‘flappers’, whose ‘decadent’ lifestyle he considered produced unhealthy children. He described the new woman as a kind of pest to be expunged stating that the, “object of the eugenicist is not to multiply her kind but to exterminate her”.33 George Dupain also considered the modern woman as a contributing factor in the racial ‘degeneration’ of Australian society writing in 1938, “We see painted dolls of women everywhere, with falsely coloured lips and cheeks and stream-lined eyebrows; but beneath this sloppy exterior is the anaemic soddennes of disease and ill-health - whitened sepulchres”34. The following year William Baylebridge joined the chorus of disapproval against modern women when he accused them of producing fewer children and, “spending their instinct for devotion in ways that are barren and unworthy”. He suggested that flappers and their kin come to their senses and realise their true roles as, “the sacred vessels of maternity”.35

The idea of woman as a ‘sacred vessels’ took on allegorical form in some art of the interwar period.36 In 1939, for instance, Max Dupain took an unusual approach to the subject in his

33 Philpots, 1926c, p.19.
35 Baylebridge, 1939, p.185.
36 Jeanette Hoorn has observed that in the late colonial period of Australian art the image of contented motherhood is noticeably absent. She argues that by, “refusing to include images of families interacting freely as regular subjects for
photograph titled *Birth of Venus*. In this image he places identical casts of the Aphrodite from Melos either side of a partially silhouetted image of a heavily pregnant, naked woman. The choice of model was extremely rare – indeed it may be the first public photograph taken of a naked pregnant woman in Australia. Dupain’s intention was clearly not to make a portrait a particular woman, she is not only unnamed but her face is partially in shadow both to protect her identity and transform her into a symbol of all maternity. By positioning her alongside the two casts the viewer is invited to compare ancient with modern womanhood; sculptural idealised form with corporeal reality.

![Fig 11. Max Dupain *Birth of Venus* 1939 Gelatin silver photograph](image)

Unlike many of Dupain’s photographs from this time, in which such juxtapositions infer a critical position on modernity, this image promotes an optimistic view of contemporary life. Flanked by her ancient forebears, it is suggested that the pregnant woman is continuing a genetic line that connects the contemporary Anglo-Saxon body to its ancient Greco-Roman forebears. Dupain also implies the role that women play in producing a new generation of paintings, our culture refuses to recognise the family as an arena in which significant roles for women existed”. Hocan, 1994, p.111.

37 Dupain may have found stylistic inspiration for this work in an image reproduced in *Das Deutsche Lichtbild* in 1936. *Spiegelakt* by Heinz Hájek-Halke is a double image of a naked woman photographed from a side angle. Although the model here is not pregnant, as in Dupain’s image, the effect of doubling may have appealed to him. *Das Deutsche Lichtbild*, 1936, p.61.

38 For an illustration of the Aphrodite from Melos see Richter, 1974, p.170.

39 Around 1937, Dupain took a variant version of this photograph titled *Woman*. In this image, he shows the same pregnant woman but with only one cast of Venus. It would appear that these two photographs were taken at the same sitting and are not two years apart in date as the present dating indicates.
Australian Venuses whose young bodies can, under the right conditions, be formed along ideal classical lines.

Freda Robertshaw’s work also refers to classical antecedents, albeit in a different way. Trained in the neo-classical style by Charles Meere, Robertshaw became his studio assistant in the late 1930s.\(^{40}\) She was working for Meere in 1938 when he began his major painting, *Australian beach pattern*, and decided to create her own work on the same theme. However, unlike Meere, whose painting deals largely with masculine vigor, Robertshaw’s *Beach scene* (1940) celebrates the role of Australian motherhood – a topic which is unusual in the canon of Australian painting.\(^{41}\) While artists such as Thea Proctor and Hilda Rix Nicholas paint evocative images of motherhood, none are so focused as this work by Robertshaw.

![Fig. 12. Freda Robertshaw *Beach scene* 1940
Oil on canvas](image)

In Robertshaw’s rendition of a typical summer’s day at the beach, the men are all but absent, presumably surfing while the women watch over the children. The only adult man in the painting – shown with a child hoisted on his shoulders – does not appear to be part of this intimate group but a passerby heading towards his own beach towels. Robertshaw is clearly not concerned with displays of male athleticism but in portraying the women who cheerfully sacrifice their own desire to swim to look after the children.

\(^{40}\) Information about Robertshaw is derived from, Slutskin, 1995, p.439.
\(^{41}\) For a comparative analysis of *Australian beach pattern* and *Beach scene* see Engberg, 1994, pp.32-35.
All the elements in this painting suggest the nurturing role of the young mothers. The various beach accoutrements of hats, lilos, towels and toys indicate their organisational skills and care. Their carefully chosen position on the beach shows the women's vigilant approach to the children's safety: the women have assembled their brood above the high tide line so that there is no chance of being swamped by the waves, and they can use the rocks on the shoreline as a sand-free place to sit. The beach warning sign similarly indicates their consciousness of the dangers of the surf.

This is a dynamic painting full of the movement associated with beach play. The two mothers in the painting operate as the still points around which the children circulate and to whom they are often physically connected. To the left, Robertshaw has painted a modern Australian Madonna with her baby splayed across her knees and a tender, if somewhat somnolent, look on her young face. Her quietness is counterpoised by a more active woman at the centre of the picture who smingly hands a ball to her child. Around these women there is a flurry of activity, with children anxious to get into the water or drying themselves after a swim.

The vigorous women depicted in Beach scene are a visual analogy to the national calls for better female health and fitness. Their firm bodies show the benefits of exposure to sun and sand while their lively crop of children are evidence that they are helping to increase the numbers of fit, young Australians. These women form a corollary to Dupain's photograph, Birth of Venus - they are indicative of the antipodean goddesses who attentively respond to their female duty to build a healthy nation.

It is interesting to compare Robertshaw's painting with another work on the theme of Australian motherhood and the beach. In Eileen McGrath's plaster relief, The bathers (c1930-32), three healthy young men purposefully stride towards the ocean with their surfboards in hand. At their feet sits a young Australian mother on the sand with a baby propped against her knee; she abandons her pleasure at swimming to take care of the sleeping child. In a charmingly Australian reworking of the traditional Madonna and child paintings, McGrath has replaced the shawl that often covers the Virgin's head with a fringed beach towel. The
woman too is not a typical demure mother figure but an athletic and well-muscled female, who seems as fit and able-bodied as her male counterparts.

Nora Heysen adopted a more conservative approach to the subject of woman and children in her two paintings of 1941, *Motherhood* and *Dedication*. These studies of a mother and child, replace the Virgin Mary with contemporary women - although not in as innovative a fashion as McGrath. In *Motherhood*, the woman who holds her cherubic, golden-haired child is a strong country type, seated against a pastoral background. Her simple unsophisticated dress and unkempt hair are tropes that signify hard work and honest country values.

The labour associated with child rearing is given further emphasis in the companion painting titled *Dedication*. Again the woman is dressed in dark clothes with her sleeves rolled to the elbows to indicate her activities, but here her child is older: a naked toddler who sits in his mother's lap. With large worn hands and a lined face, she is more haggard in appearance than the younger woman who forms the subject of *Motherhood*. This painting is, however, an affirmation and not a critique of the role of motherhood. The woman may be tired, but her

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42 Edwards, 1995b, p.285. See also, Moore, 1934, volume 2, illustration opposite p.82.
dedication is given a noble dimension as she proudly gazes into the distance, her hand held in a protective gesture against the head of her child.

In both these paintings, Heysen affirms the role of woman as ‘earth mother’; the fruits of her labours being a new generation who will continue the time-honoured traditions of country life. The concept of female fertility as an indicator of national prosperity and growth is also explored by the sculptor, Jean Broome-Norton, in her bronze relief, *Abundance* (1934). In this study of gender-defined ‘energies’, a lean and fertile young woman, child at her side, is paired with a heavily muscled man carrying a sheaf of wheat. The fecundity of both the woman and the land is emphasised in a vitalistic tribute to the benefits of health, fitness and creative life-forces.

An identification of the female body with the land and national progress is apparent too in Max Dupain’s remarkable photograph, *Night with her train of stars and her gift of sleep 1936-37*. In this work, the female body is literally inscribed on the land; her giant bare breast forming a ‘mountain’ behind a modern city. Dupain perhaps drew his inspiration for this photograph from the ancient legend of the creation of the Milky Way. Most famously depicted in Tintoretto’s painting, *The origin of the Milky Way* (1570s) this myth tells how Jupiter placed the infant Hercules to feed at the breast of the sleeping Juno in order to make the child immortal. In a charmingly literal rendering, the spilt drops

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44 For a discussion of this work see, for instance, Edwards, 1995c, p.79.
45 Dupain took another version of this image in the mid 1930s, less poetically titled *Nude over the city*, in which the giant ‘breast as mountain’ is reversed. In this work he also superimposed a second image of a naked woman over the lower part of the photograph. Illustrated in Lebovic, 1983, p.151.
46 See Rony Golan for a discussion of the “landscape as body”. Golan, who is writing about French art, suggests that following World War One a so-called “landscape of death” is replaced by images of the land as female and fertile. Golan, 1995, pp.17-21.
47 Illustrated in Wilson, 1977, p.57.
of breast milk from the Goddesses form the stars of the Milky Way.\textsuperscript{48} Dupain's rendition is a more modern version - here the 'stars' are the twinkling lights of the city that, for its inhabitants, outshine the true stars of the sky.

\textbf{Safeguarding the race: 'Eugenic marriages'}

As part of the desire to encourage genetically 'finer' children, eugenic organisations promoted the introduction of compulsory health certificates before marriage. The cause was championed as a means of stopping reproduction by those deemed inappropriate and also as a way of isolating and controlling the spread of various diseases - such as syphilis - by the unknowing or duplicitous. Supporters of 'eugenic marriages' also considered them a means of halting the transmission of the 'bad' genes that were believed to be a primary cause of mental illness.

The payoff for such precautions was not only eugenic but economic. For instance, in the 1936 article, "Health Certificates Before Marriages: Necessity for safeguarding race", the unknown author stated, "Our lunatic asylums, gaols, penitentiaries, schools for mental defectives, mental hospitals, nerve hospitals, are to a great extent filled with cases which are hereditary. How can the Empire bear this burden?"\textsuperscript{49,50}

The campaign for eugenic marriage laws began in the early 1900s when Dr Alan Carroll, the founder of the Australian Anthropological Society, launched a campaign for health certificates to be issued to prospective couples.\textsuperscript{50} His crusade failed to attract much public support at the time but the cause itself did not die. In 1913, for instance, the Victorian Board of Health carried a motion to introduce a clause on marriage certificates into the Health Act.\textsuperscript{51} This resolution - which was not enacted - prompted a satirical poem in \textit{The Bulletin} which in part reads:

\begin{flushright}
\textit{...the Commonwealth, with an eye to the States, / Proposed to make a law to control the procreation of its citizens...} \textit{The Bulletin, 1913.}
\end{flushright}

\textsuperscript{48} Gould, 1975, p. 260.
\textsuperscript{49} Unknown, 1936a, p.23.
\textsuperscript{50} Bacchi, 1980, p.206.
\textsuperscript{51} Unknown, 1913, p.10. The article notes that a Councillor J.J. Brokenshire moved that a new clause be inserted into the Health Act to make it compulsory for people about to marry to produce a certificate of good health. This motion was unanimously agreed to but not enacted by government.
The day of pomp and skite is gone,
Of roaring, rant and make believe.
One time the knight in armour shone
To please his Lady Genevieve
But, sir, to win tomorrow's Eve,
You'll have to stand a sterner test.
And prove your kidneys are the best.

The cant about a loving heart
Is simply void of common-sense.
Don Juan soon must prove that part
Of him is not diseased-immense.
The silly, amorous pretence
Of its great tenderness won't do
If aneurism stops a flue . . .

Certificates will be denied
To sturdy but dull-witted swains
In whom the doctors have espied
A melancholy lack of brains
What chance for Hymen's gilded chains
When brainless men can't wed and don't
And men with brains, as usual, won't. 52

The rise in venereal diseases gave added impetus to the movement and, in the 1930s, the Racial Hygiene Association Centre was established with one of its main aims being to promote pre-marital health examinations and certificates. This organisation took its cause seriously and established a Marriage Advisory Centre at 14 Martin Place, Sydney which offered a health service for those intending to marry. The aim of these assessments is made explicit on the cover of its flier: "May our children bless those who gave them life, May our children never curse the day that they were born." 53

Before the Centre would issue a positive health certificate the candidates had to pass a large array of tests. Doctors and other personnel would examine the patients' circulatory, digestive and respiratory organs and check for bodily defects. A range of blood and urine samples was taken along with a chest x-ray if necessary. Next, the prospective bride and groom submitted themselves to a series of questions on "Inherited disease and the tendency to

52 'Eddyson', 1913, p.10.
53 Sutton, [c.1938].
disease". These questions were designed to uncover any history of "Migraine, Diabetes, Tuberculosis, Venereal Disease, Speech Defects, Paralysis, Epilepsy, Mental Disorders, Alcoholism, Asthma, Tics, Perversions, etc". One final test assessed their sensory organs, reflexes and intelligence and then the team was ready to issue a health certificate for the couple in one of the following four categories:

1. THAT both parties are perfectly fit to marry and raise a family.
2. THAT marriage should be delayed for three to six months.
3. THAT marriage should be permitted without parentage.
4. THAT marriage should be discouraged.

The Centre cited examples in its flier of high-ranking political leaders who supported the issuing of health certificates as an important eugenic measure, including Lord Killmain who (unsuccessfully) introduced a bill into the House of Lords, London in November 1935. They also quoted a statement from the Minister for Health, William Hughes, who wrote to the group in 1937:

When I was Attorney-General in the Labour Government, I submitted for consideration of the Cabinet and the Caucus a bill for a measure to provide for the COMPULSORY EXCHANGE OF A MEDICAL CERTIFICATE showing the state of health of persons about to marry. It was rejected. Some years later when I was the head of Nationalist Government, I recommended a similar proposal to the Nationalist Cabinet. It suffered a similar fate. I am, however, as strongly in favour of it now as then.

**Bad blood: The problems of hybridity in a pure Australia**

"... though a White Australia may be a climatic impossibility, a Pure Australia means practically everything for the future of our race. Our determination, therefore to keep out alien admixture requires to be supplemented by a recognition of the cardinal laws upon which the development of a noble race depends".

Springthorpe, 1914.

The desire to develop a noble race of Australians untainted by 'alien' admixture, found scientific support in racial theories of the period. Charles Darwin and Francis Galton, for

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54 Sutton, [c.1938], [p.1].
55 Sutton, [c.1938], [p.1].
56 Sutton, [c.1938], [p.1].
57 Author's emphasis, Sutton, [c.1938], [p.1]. The group apparently confirmed Hughes' enthusiasm for the notion when they presented a deputation to him on 22 July 1937.
instance, maintained the ill-advisability of inter-racial unions, believing that the mixing of genetic material between so-called ‘distant’ - that is, white and black - races would lead either to infertility or ‘degeneration’. The prospect of so-called ‘miscegenation’ in Australia led some to agitate for immigration laws to be even more restrictive than those enshrined in the White Australia policy. *The Eugenics Review,* for instance, mimicked a cautious, if not paranoid, Australian approach to this issue:

> We are getting on very nicely, thank you, with a high rate of natural increase which will rapidly fill our not-illimitable spaces. We scarcely need immigrants, but we could take a few more of the right type - on no account coloured people, if only for fear of miscegenation and the lowering of our high standard of living ... we're as British as British and intend to remain so.

For those anxious about the purity of the race, confirmation of their concerns was to be found in the views of the influential author, Count Gobineau. Adopting a more extreme position than Darwin and Galton, Gobineau categorised the offspring of racial intermarriages as degraded ‘hybrids’ whose existence would have profound degenerative effects on the bloodlines of the population they came into contact with. It is no surprise that Gobineau’s theories on the importance of ‘good blood’ and the superiority of Aryans as arbiters of civilisation and culture influenced Adolf Hitler in his book *Mein Kampf.*

Gobineau’s influence was felt even in Australia in the 1920s where racial theories played a role in the country’s restricted immigration policy and in national opinions regarding the desirability of racial homogeneity. Ernest Scott, writing the foreword to J. Lyng’s popular book of the period *Non-Britishers in Australia,* notes that, “the modern emphasis on race is due largely to the writings of the French Count Gobineau”. He quotes Gobineau in a passage that he felt had clear lessons for Australians:

> The history of mankind proves that the destinies of people are governed by a racial law. Neither irreligion, nor immorality, nor luxurious living, nor weakness of

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58 Author’s emphasis, Springthorpe, 1914, p.27.
59 Young cogently outlines the various historical positions regarding hybridity from the polygenist species argument to the idea that amalgamation will cause a ‘raceless chaos’. See Young, 1995, p.18.
60 *E.M.*, 1929, p.225.
government causes the decadence of civilisation. If the nation goes down, the reason is that its blood, the race itself, is deteriorating.63

National survival is here fundamentally linked to factors that were not changeable. The life fluid of the body, its blood, carried within it irrefutable ‘laws’ governing the character of its host. To mix these blood types, according to Gobineau, was to perform more than a simple act of chemistry: ‘blood’ in this context was a loaded term that signified race, family kinships and even culture.64

In his book, Lyng applied Gobineau’s theories on racial laws to the Australian situation viewing the countries development in terms of ‘colour’. Implicit in his description is the suggestion that each racial type is fulfilling a destiny dictated by its blood. It is obvious too that all is not equal in this hierarchy: like Gobineau, Lyng considers the ‘white races’ to be the dominant force. As he states:

In Australia four out of the five main groups into which mankind is often divided are represented - the black race from whom the country was taken by the white race - the yellow race who arrived later and threatened to submerge the white race - and finally the brown race whose representatives scour the hinterland as peddlers and camel-drivers.65

Within the category of the white races there existed another hierarchy, a range of sub-groups that took account of different national types. Lyng maintained that a good knowledge of these sub-groups was important when considering the future constitution of the Australian population. He favoured what he termed the Nordic or Aryan types as immigrants for Australia as these were people with, “restless, creative energy”.66 In contrast, the Alpine or Slav types were apparently, “sturdy, tenacious, very stable but apt to be solid and unimaginative”, while Mediterranean’s were, “passionate and excitable . . . quick-witted but prone to be superficial”.67 Lyng offered the following visual corollary of these ‘race types’

64 For a revealing comparative analysis of the “Symbolic and Technical Status of Blood” in key periods from the 1900s to 1990s see Haraway, 1997, p.222.
for his readers: “call to mind a typical Scandinavian for the Nordic, a peasant of Central or Eastern Europe for the Alpine, and a southern Italian or Spaniard for the Mediterranean.”

Such classifications are crude but their influence was pervasive with the links between race, character and relative ‘worth’ of the individual largely unchallenged by contemporary critics. Norman Cowper stated the case bluntly when he wrote:

Nearly all of us believe (a) that the British race is far superior to all others; (b) that the British stock is almost wholly Nordic; (c) that the Nordic races are far superior to the Alpine and the Mediterranean; and (d) that a mixture of the races is a bad thing in itself.

The enactment of this typology is evident at an official level, most obviously with the restriction applied to migrants who were not white. In 1901, when speaking in support of the Commonwealth Immigration Act, the Attorney-General Alfred Deakin wrote:

A united race means not only that its members can intermarry and associate without degradation on either side, but implies one inspired by the same ideals . . . of people possessing the same general cast of character, tone and thought, the same constitutional training and traditions.

The exclusion of non-whites also extended to those sub-groups that would be disruptive to the notion of a united and pure race, either by virtue of their supposed inability to assimilate adequately or for reasons that can be attributed to prejudice. Race types played their role in the late 1930s, for instance, when the government was confronted by large numbers of Jewish refugees seeking entry into Australia.

The increase in European Jews applying for asylum in Australia had been steadily increasing since 1935 with the acceleration of threats to their property and life by the Nazis. In 1937, five hundred Jewish people lodged immigration applications at Australia House in London.

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69 While such racial concepts predominated there were some who believed them to be ill-founded. Opposition to racial theories came, most notably, from Franz Boas in the 1890s whose books on cultural anthropology include The Mind of Primitive Man, Macmillan, New York, 1938 and Boas, F (ed), General Anthropology, Heath, Boston, 1938. Later theorists to oppose racial science included J.S. Huxley and A.C. Haddon who deplored the Nazi’s program of racial vilification. See Huxley & Haddon, 1935.
70 Cowper, 1938, p.121.
during the course of twelve months while the following year three hundred applications a week were received. Australia House notified the Australian Government that using existing criteria 24,000 Jews would have to be granted permits to enter the country, a figure that sparked considerable concern within government.\footnote{For figures on Jewish migration see Markus, 1988, pp.18-20.}

Officially the government exhibited an even-handed approach to accepting refugees. \textbf{John McEwen,} Minister for the Interior, stated in 1938 that, “there is no specific discrimination against Jews in the policy of the Australian Government”.\footnote{J. McEwen to P. Cohen in \textit{The Age}, 6 October 1938 quoted in Markus, 1988, p.19.} It has been noted too that the numbers of refugees Australia accepted was proportionally high compared with other nations, with a publicly stated quota of 15,000 over three years. However, such numbers were certainly not great when compared with those seeking entry and sit strangely with the professed desire for a higher population.

The reasons for this reluctance are suggested by Sydney Tomholt, who wrote an article on “Australia and the Alien Problem”. 1939. Acknowledging the creative and intellectual capabilities of the recently arrived Jewish refugees, his concerns circulate around whether the newcomers will affect the Australian core population:

\begin{quote}
The acceptance of these immigrants suggests possibilities regarding the future of the present-day Australian as a distinctive type. With this present, and other infusions of European blood strongly impregnated with a Semitic strain, some believe that our race will undergo a slow but subtle change in physical and mental make-up.\footnote{Tomholt, 1939, p.20.}
\end{quote}

The ‘Semitic’ nature of the new immigrants was the key to the problem - it was felt that the new strain of ‘blood’ carried by the migrants would alter the Australian type, and not necessarily in a direction that would be positive.\footnote{While the problem of Jewish migration was at heart racially based the question of assimilation was also a factor raised in limiting numbers. It was widely felt that Jewish people would not assimilate easily into Australian society existing and would remain a separate race. See Markus, 1988, p.20, Bartrop, 1994 and Stratten, 1996, especially pp.57-60.} According to such categorisations, the ‘Jew’ was considered as a racial not religious type. This erroneous view is evident, for
instance in the revisions to immigration forms made in the late 1930s. To clearly identify the origins of the applicant the new form read: “Race (State whether Jewish or not)”.

But the successful development of a ‘pure’ race of Australians required more than a rigorously guarded immigration policy, it also needed an imaginative act of reasoning in which certain historical facts and present realities had to be forgotten. This cultural amnesia included the circumstances surrounding white settlement in Australia: the fact that Britain established the colony as a remote dumping ground where social miscreants could be off-loaded did not sit too comfortably with eugenic notions of ‘degeneracy’. As eugenicists believed that the sins of the father or mother lurked within the bloodstream for many generations it was clearly necessary that Australians downplay their convict origins if the pure race concept was to be convincing.

Black bodies in a white Australia: Dealing with the Aboriginal ‘problem’

“The application of Mendelianism is the only solution, and that urges the mating of the half-caste with the quadroon and the octroon, so that the continued infiltration of white blood will finally stamp out the black colour, which when all is said and done, is what we really object to”.
‘Physicus’, 1933.

The quest for an ideal populace involved other kinds of forgetting too. The noble race of Australia was predicated on exclusive notions of race - an ‘indigenous’ Australian for most, if not all, writers was not Aboriginal but Anglo-Saxon. As such, the desire for a white utopia necessitated that the rights of Aborigines, as the original inhabitants of the country, be forgotten. According to the common scenario, Australia was a ‘Terra Nullius’, a blank slate, whose future was to be drawn by white not black hands.

For the early European settlers, the political and economic advantages of ‘Terra Nullius’ was obvious - a contest over property was null and void if the land at stake was not already

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76 Lyng, for instance, considered the Jews to be a distinct sub-group but still contained within the Mediterranean type. He did not arbitrate against their settlement in Australia, indeed, unlike most other commentators, he considered that Jewish people assimilated easily. Lyng, 1935 (1929), p.154.
77 See Stratten who notes that the word ‘race’ was deleted from the form in 1939 after complaints from the Australian Jewish community that they were British subjects of the Jewish faith and not a separate race. Stratten, 1996, pp.59-60.
78 For an account of the penal origins of Australian settlement see Hughes, 1988.
owned. Legal power and assumed racial superiority gave free reign to unhindered expansion throughout the newly established colony. As the country was progressively settled under British rule the issue of race became important when considering the genetic composition of future populations. The racial ramifications of unions between white settlers and Aboriginal or Maori people was explored, for instance, in 1838 when one anonymous writer considered the dangers of 'amalgamations':

It may be deemed a cold and mercenary calculation; but we must say, that instead of attempting an amalgamation of the two races - Europeans and Zealanders, ... the wiser course would be, to let the native race gradually retire before the settlers, and ultimately become extinct.\(^8^0\)

The possibility of inter-racial unions was felt to be a heinous prospect that if not checked could result in the genetic degradation of the white population.\(^8^1\) It was therefore convenient to promote the notion of Aborigines as a 'dying race' whose progressive depletion mitigated against the creation of a hybrid race of Australians. Some commentators even maintained that it was in the 'blood' of the Aborigines to be killed off by Europeans. As J. Lyng blandly states, "Owing to the inheritance of the aboriginals, their deficiency in racial pride, and their extreme primitiveness generally, conquest by the white race became easy".\(^8^2\)

Inaccurate statistics on native populations aided the view that the Aborigines were a problem that was rapidly disappearing. O.A Neville, the Protector of Aborigines and later Commissioner for Native Affairs in Western Australia, noted that in 1900 only 41,000 Aborigines were recorded in the country.\(^8^3\) This figure included some 5,000 Aboriginal people in Western Australia - a number that in his estimation should have been around 40,000.

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\(^8^1\) The existence of children from such unions was documented in 1845 by George French Angas who produced the watercolour: *A rigged - a half-caste New Hollander, Port Stephens*. Illustrated in Deutscher Fine Art. 1996, p.13.


\(^8^3\) Neville, [1947], p.203.
By the 1920s, the containment of the Aboriginal people within the confines of European control had become sufficiently strong and, proportionally, their numbers small enough for most to dismiss them as not a threat to the evolution of a white Australia. With relatively few visual records to show their contemporary living conditions, Aborigines were, in short, forgotten people in the minds of the general population.

However, although the numbers of full-blood Aborigines was declining, a problem remained. Official alarm was raised when it was realised that the numbers of people of mixed Aboriginal and European descent had increased significantly in the first decades of the twentieth century.¹⁺⁴ Lyng writes, “the numbers of half-castes, quadroons and octoroons are increasing. The former rose from 11,500 in 1921 to 15,000 in 1926”.¹⁺⁵ The figures made it clear to Lyng and others that official warnings about the dangers of miscegenation were not working.

In response to this situation different approaches to the problem of the so-called ‘half-caste’ began to evolve in the 1930s based around a two-fold concept of ‘assimilation’. Academics such as A.P. Elkin, who was the first Professor of Anthropology at the University of Sydney, maintained that cultural assimilation through education and other means would be the most effective way of integrating Aboriginal people into the white community. Others, including J.B. Cleland and N.B Tindale from the Board of Anthropological Research at the University of Adelaide, along with public servants such as O.A. Neville, saw biological assimilation as the best course of action.¹⁺⁶

Proponents of the latter view held that the children of inter-racial marriages could be progressively ‘absorbed’ into the white population. Over several generations, it was believed, the offspring would lose their dark colour and Aboriginal features and become part, as it were, of the body of white Australia. O.A. Neville, in particular, promoted the view that Aborigines of mixed blood could be incorporated into the genetically more dominant white

¹⁺⁴ McGregor writes that “... the half-caste [was] simultaneously the victim of social progress and the embodiment of a biological racial problem”. McGregor, 1993, pp.51-63.
¹⁺⁵ Lyng, 1935 (1929), p.204.
¹⁺⁶ These two views on assimilation were not antithetical; Elkin, for instance, wrote the foreword to Neville’s book Australia’s Coloured Minority published in 1947. For information on these approaches to assimilation see McGregor, 1993, p.53.
population. He made a detailed survey of the degrees of ‘Aboriginality’ in those people under his control, taking photographs as corroboration of his belief in assimilation.  

Neville promoted his views regarding absorption at the landmark Conference on Aboriginal Welfare, held in Canberra in 1937, where they were enthusiastically received.  

The promoters of biological assimilation may today appear as radicals who flew in the face of contemporary ‘wisdom’ regarding hybridity. However, they were able to justify their opinions with an interesting piece of evolutionary juggling. In the 1920s, a reclassification of Aboriginal people was taking place: although of different colour and facial characteristics to white settlers, they were now believed to be of Caucasian stock. L.J. Jarvis Nye noted this idea - albeit in derogatory terms - in his paper for *The Medical Journal of Australia* in 1937 where he states that Aborigines: “Stand at the bottom of the evolutionary ladder of anthropological relationships, and they are considered to be a prototype of man as he appeared in the Stone Age”.  

The apparent success of biological absorption of Aborigines was based on the observation that the children born of Aboriginal and European parents became progressively lighter in skin colour and did not ‘throw back’ to darker colours. The view that Aborigines could be ‘redeemed’ through intermixing with the dominant white strain is discussed in a report in the *Daily News* of 1933 by ‘Physicus’. The writer invokes Mendelian ‘laws’ to prove that biological absorption of Aboriginal people is possible:  

A century ago the Abbe Mendel discovered that hybrids follow a distinct law of their own in regard to breeding . . . Human hybrids follow the same rule, most of the family remaining an indeterminate colour, the other children being ‘throw backs’, as the phrase is, to their black, or white, ancestors . . . the application of Mendelianism [to the problem of ‘hybrids’] is the only solution, and that urges the mating of the half-caste with the quadroon and the octofoon, so that the continued infiltration of white blood will finally stamp out the black colour, which when all is said and done, is what we really object to.  

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87 Neville, Sydney, 1947. Although this book was published in the 1940s it is a summation of the views that Neville held throughout his career. It is believed that the photographs were also taken over an extended period of time. Poignant, 1991, pp.178-206.  
88 Jacobs, 1990, p.27.  
89 Nye, 1937, p.1000.
In 1938, N.B. Tindale began to gather data to support what were largely casual suppositions on the appearances of the children of inter-racial unions. His major survey of the genealogies of ‘half-castes’ was presented to the Royal Geographical Society of Australia. In part, he concluded:

Complete mergence of the half-castes in the general community is possible without detriment to the white race. Aboriginal blood is remotely the same as the majority of the white inhabitants of Australia, for the Australian aboriginal is recognised as being the forerunner of the Caucasian race . . . Two successive accessions of white blood lead to the mergence of the aboriginal in the white community.  

Tindale considered the absorption of Aborigines into white Australia as a necessary move to solve the ‘race problem’, however, one unusual writer suggested that it was not only expedient but desirable. According to Neville, the scientist Sir Arthur Keith stated that, “if he were given the task of building a new race he would graft it upon the Aboriginal of Australia”.  

In a similar tone, Nettie Palmer, the editor for the left-wing journal, Woman Today, drew on scientific opinion to show that children of ‘mixed blood’ were, “healthy, physically strong, very fertile, capable, and energetic . . . and without any hint of ‘degeneration’ from cross-breeding”. She frequently published articles in her journal that promoted the rights of Aborigines and considered any attempts to ban marriages between Aborigines and whites as indicative of an officially endorsed racist policy. As she commented in 1936 in an article titled “Do ‘mixed marriages’ adversely affect the next generation”:

This article is of particular interest to Australian readers, who for so many years have heard of the ‘White Australia policy’ and noticed the contempt in which the native race is held. This contempt is part and parcel of the policy of suppressing and wiping out the native race; and the fact that this sort of propaganda is used for political purposes is seen nowhere more clearly than in Germany, where the fascists preach their doctrine of Nordic supremacy to justify their aspirations of conquest and oppression.
Positive views of inter-racial unions were rare and it was much more common for those in official positions to consider Aborigines a problem that could only be solved by their genetic absorption into white Australia. A few even doubted that moves towards assimilation were wise. The writer J. Lyng maintained that any mixing of blood was dangerous and describes Australia as a white body whose purity is threatened by its ‘other’ - a black body whose blood can taint. Referring to Aborigines, Lyng writes:

Their growth is accelerated by breeding amongst themselves and, although on the fringe of this black body, a movement from darker to lighter colours points to racial absorption, the idea of a White Australian ideal eventually being shattered from within cannot be dismissed as altogether absurd.⁹⁵

The evolution of an Australian body

“Natural selection has here created almost a new race”.
E. Huntington, 1925.⁹⁶

The encouragement of good physical and psychic health was a fundamental principle of eugenics. When such improvements were allied to greater female fertility for those deemed appropriate, it was believed that Australia would see an increase in the desirable members of its population base. For some commentators, the logical result of producing more and ‘better’ babies was the development of an Australian national type. This new ‘indigenous’ Australian possessed a body that was considered a distinctive product of the unique conditions of this country with the genetic inheritance of its Anglo-Saxon forebears.⁹⁷ To establish that such a type was possible, or indeed already evolving, researchers drew on a range of physiognomic measures from callimetry to metric anthropometry and teleology along with more general observations of the ‘national temperament’.

Discussions of national types form an important thread in the complex debate on how the communal body of Australia should be constructed on a biological and metaphysical level. While local writers’ assertions that a genetically unique Australian was already evident are

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⁹⁵ [Palmer], p.10.
⁹⁶ Lyng, 1935 (1929), pp.204-5.
⁹⁷ Huntington, 1925, p.378.
⁹⁷ For a historical perspective on the evolution of an ‘Australian national type’ see Cumpston, 1934, and Cumpston, 1940.
specious at best, their claims are of interest in revealing the longing for a utopian community populated by people at the peak of genetic and physical well-being.

It is clear that the quest for national distinction by white Australians is a curious mix, informed not only by a selective vision of the past but a view of the future fuelled in equal measure by pride and anxiety. In one sense, claims for the development of a new body were a bid to literally ‘embody’ the concept of what it meant to be Australian. The appearance of a distinctive physical form was considered proof that Australia had matured sufficiently as a nation to warrant a body different in appearance, however subtle, from those in the ‘mother country’.

This view was fostered particularly after the experiences of World War One, when some felt that the sacrifice of so many young men to an English cause gave Australia the right to claim a separate sense of nationality - to cleave a new body, as it were, from the old. P.R. Stephenson, for instance, wrote that while he recognised that Australia was a dominion to England, the country was raising a, “new human type” distinctly its own and, as a consequence, should move inexorably towards separate nationhood.98

The desire to make real an image of Australians as a self-defined nation of powerful, resilient and singular people often went in tandem with an equally strong need to isolate and protect these characteristics. Claims for corporeal distinction frequently carry an unspoken fear: what if this process of budding originality does not take place fast enough and the population base is unable to fend off genetic invaders from Asia or elsewhere? As William Hughes wrote in 1937:

We are a small community, scarcely more than a corporal’s guard in this outpost of Empire, and we are surrounded by nations whose crowded peoples look with envious eyes on Australia; yet we are not to have an army of children, almost equal in number to the Australian Imperial Forces.99

98 Stephenson, 1986 [1936], p.11.
99 This speech was given by Hughes in support of the Medical Endowment Act quoted in Health, 1937, volume XV, number 8, p.104.
For the eugenacist, Australia’s isolation was both a danger and a blessing. The small size of the population may have brought concerns regarding invasion but its geographic isolation and restricted entry were positive encouragement for the development of peoples unalloyed - to the largest possible extent - by other races. It is not hard to imagine that those with eugenic tendencies may have pictured the island nation of Australia as a human laboratory engaged in the rare work of positively modifying the British race.

Some authors considered the development of this new ‘noble race’ was a fact that did not require corroboration, but more often they sought scientific support for their views from surveys of bodily changes and character development. One of the most popular forms of physical assessment was anthropometry; a codified series of measurements of the body that had its origins in ancient Egypt and Greece. Artists in those cultures had measured the human form to help establish, “ideal standards of physical beauty”.

However, the use of this data was of considerable benefit to groups with other interests. As Dr Mary Booth noted in 1911, “The artist has studied to know man as he is, the anthropologist what he is and has been racially. The eugenist . . . [studies man] for what the race may become”.

Committees formed to measure and categorise human development began work in Australia before the turn of the century. In 1899, for instance, the Australian Association for the Study of Children established an Anthropometrical and Psychological Laboratory to train students who would hopefully graduate as:

skilled and expert anthropometrists, and thus will be capable of properly carrying out the measurements which will make clearly apparent the peculiarities of each child’s organisation; at the same time detecting any defects of deficiencies in the mental capabilities of such children.

These keen young students apparently went to work almost immediately as, by 1901, a survey of the physical condition of 2,000 children had been undertaken in Sydney. While later commentators considered the survey group too small to make any proper conclusions,

100 Booth, 1911, p.689.
101 Booth, 1911, p.690.
102 Carroll, 1899, p.1.
103 Booth notes that this was the first systematic anthropometric survey undertaken in Australia and was reported to the Committee in 1902. Booth, 1911, p.691.
the finding did show that Australian children had chests over three inches smaller than their English or American cousins. According to this data, "It was at once inferred that New South Wales must have an inefficient system of physical culture".  

By 1911, the influential Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science was promoting the establishment of regulated measurements based on an English standard. The leader in their endeavors was Dr Mary Booth who considered physical surveys to be of immense value for eugenic purposes. As she wrote, anthropometry was used as the, "physical basis of the enquiry as to whether heredity or environment is the more potent influence in [man's] moral and physical development". Under her influence, the Association established a sub committee concerned with promoting anthropometry and regulating standards. By 1914, J.W. Springthorpe wrote an article applauding their efforts in performing a thorough survey of the population of New South Wales.

According to Springthorpe, anthropometry had provided a framework for so-called "national standards". These 'standards' enabled him to state that a national type was evolving. However, his comments went beyond the merely physical to a classification of the emotional characteristics. He believed that this newly evolving Australian was of a sanguine and nervous temperament with energy, push and receptivity. Less flatteringly, he also considered them childlike, spoilt and overly sensual. Criticisms aside, Springthorpe considered that the one outstanding genetic advantage for those born here was that they came from, "pure stock and from vigorous enterprising parents".

The most popular subject of anthropometric projects was school children - a compliant and readily accessible group who could provide useful evidence of any changes to the bodies of those born in Australia. Medical inspections were an intrinsic part of this surveying process and began in schools around 1910. Ostensibly, these reports were a straight-forward

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104 Booth, 1911, p.694.
105 Dr Booth advocated that Australians adopt the standard means of anthropometric measurements established by the Royal Anthropological Institute of London in 1908. Booth, 1911, p.693.
106 Booth, 1911, p.689.
107 Springthorpe, 1914, p.58. By this stage the committee was known as the 'Anthropometric Committee of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science to the Premier of the Commonwealth'.
description on the children's physical condition but a moral, not to mention eugenic, philosophy is often evident.\textsuperscript{110}

In New Zealand, for instance, the local Eugenic Education Society considered the introduction of government medical inspectors for schoolchildren to be a eugenic survey. The Society issued a paper encouraging the inspectors to consider such issues as, "The changes in bodily form of the immigrants and their descendants" and "The rise and fall of different racial elements among the immigrant population".\textsuperscript{111} They also advised school inspectors take measurements of the students' heads (using special head callipers and a 'craniometer') along with body height and the colour of the hair and eyes. The Society recommended the value too in noting the colour of the skin and suggested inspectors use a 'tintometer'. This bizarre sounding device had been employed by T.A. Joyce at the Ethnological Department of the British Museum and Secretary of the Anthropological Institute and was apparently handy for the, "problem of race mixture".\textsuperscript{112}

Australian inspectors are not known to have used tintometers but they were nonetheless very thorough in the recording of physical problems, 70-80\% of children allegedly suffered some kind of 'defect'. The high level of problems reported called their efforts into question and a resistance to such inspections was mounted. However, eugenicists, such as Dr Harvey Sutton, felt that they did not go far enough. Sutton advocated the inclusion of categories on the child's race to enable the researcher to ascertain the moment of so-called 'Australianship'. Sutton firmly believed that one of the chief values of the reports was that the, "measurements may demonstrate a new national type on the side of physical development".\textsuperscript{113}

Another anthropometric study in the interwar period compared students with a similarly 'captive' group - that of prisoners - to help provide evidence that brain capacity equalled

\textsuperscript{110} See Kirk & Twigg, 1994a; and Kirk & Twigg, 1994b.

\textsuperscript{111} Eugenics Education Society. \textit{Recommendations of the Research Committee of the Eugenics Education Society Concerning the Proposed 'Eugenic' Survey of New Zealand Children, New Zealand, 1911} [unpublished report].

\textsuperscript{112} Eugenics Education Society. \textit{Recommendations of the Research Committee of the Eugenics Education Society Concerning the Proposed 'Eugenic' Survey of New Zealand Children, New Zealand, 1911} [unpublished report].

\textsuperscript{113} Eugenics Education Society London, B10.
intelligence. Professor Morris Miller, from the Australian Association of Psychology and Philosophy, undertook craniometric studies on the skulls of 4,000 Tasmanian schoolboys and a group of Melbourne University students. He compared this group with the cubic skull size of prisoners in a Hobart goal and retarded children and concluded that the mentally disadvantaged or criminal groups had less brain capacity and hence less intelligence. The eugenic implications of such a study were obvious and it is no surprise that his book, *Brain Capacity and Intelligence*, was favourably reviewed in *The Eugenic Review* in 1927.

Crainometric measures - and their variants - were frequently underpinned not only by moral but racial criteria. The desire to 'prove' intellectual capacity as a function of race impelled Josif Ginsburg's survey of various groups using a goniometer to measure 'facial angles'. The results of his research were published in his eugenically inspired book, *The Hygiene of Youth and Beauty*, in Sydney in 1927. Ginsburg constructed a common enough racial hierarchy in which (unsurprisingly) white men topped the wisdom scale with facial angles of seventy to eighty degrees; while the "yellow or mongol" were next with seventy-five degree angles; negros at sixty to seventy degrees; and last on the list were apes with thirty and dogs with twenty-five degrees.

A variant of this system, termed 'phrenology', was applied by some to the Australian business world in the late 1930s. According to one contemporary article, a psychologist named Haighwood Masters was employed by various companies to assess the structure of applicant's heads. Masters believed that head structure was related to occupation or, as he put it, "structure follows function". Using his measurements, the company was assured of a reliable guide to the placement of candidates in the job most properly suited to them.

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113 Sutton, Dr Harvey. "The Importance of Nationality". *Australian Association for the Advancement of Science*, 1911, p.508 quoted in Bacchi, 1980, p.208.
114 Miller may well have been encouraged in his comparative measurement of Melbourne University students by that university's Head of Anatomy, Professor R.J.A. Berry himself a supporter of craniometry. See Cawte, 1986.
115 Craniometric studies were also popular among anthropologists who wished to make racial comparisons based on this dubious science of the relation between skull size and intellectual capacity. In 1885, Billings and Matthews took a series of photo-lithographs using an apparatus designed to take composite photographs of skulls. The skulls depicted were those of men from the Sandwich Islands. Illustrated http://www.photocollate.com/quirkycorner/info/sandwich.ht.
117 Ginsburg, 1927, p.200

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Along with a myriad of quirky offshoots, anthropometric surveys frequently sought to test the hypothesis that Australian environmental and social factors resulted in a change in the bodies of immigrants. It was generally held that the pasty English man or woman would become more robust after spending time in the sun and fresh air of Australia. In 1928, for instance, Professor Chapman presented a paper on the "Adaptation of Man to Australian Conditions", which he proposed that the distinctive climatic conditions of the country were affecting body shape.\textsuperscript{119}

Chapman’s paper conjures a vision of a team of fresh-faced scientists scouring the country, measuring tape in hand, to record the evolution of this new Australian: “in Australia there are found those younger physiologists striving to define clearly the qualities, composition and structure of the men and women around them.”\textsuperscript{120} He reports on one such project being undertaken by Dr Smith who was in the process of physically assessing the bodies of 6,000 Australian women. He was assisted in this project by Miss Durrell who was, “preparing curves of the relation of height and weight of different women”.\textsuperscript{121}

Another anthropometric evaluation was offered in 1923 by one Captain Pape who addressed the British Association on the development of a so-called ‘Austral-American’ type. Using the language of anthropometry, although probably without supporting research, Pape described this ‘new person’ as possessing the following distinctive characteristics:

The head tends to be dome-shaped . . . hair and skin are fine; eyes luminous, intelligent, but not full; bridge of the nose early developed; lips sensitive and mobile . . . ; general physiology harmonious, proportionate, healthy, not at all the ‘all brain and no body’ type.\textsuperscript{122}

Pape’s description could have been the blueprint for F. Millward Grey’s drypoint print titled \textit{Jim, an Australian boy} (c1935).\textsuperscript{123} In this image of a distinctive ‘Australian type’, extraneous details have been reduced to focus our attention on the boy’s articulated features. His facial

\textsuperscript{118} Unknown, 1939, pp.84-5.
\textsuperscript{119} Chapman, 1929, pp.641-9.
\textsuperscript{120} Chapman, 1929, p.643.
\textsuperscript{121} Chapman, 1929, p.649.
\textsuperscript{122} Captain Pape, 1923 quoted in Unknown, 1926a, p.20.
\textsuperscript{123} Butler, 1985, pp.26-7.
characteristics would have left the contemporary viewer in no doubt that what they were viewing was a classic ‘Nordic’ or ‘Aryan’ racial type deemed to be the most desirable blood stock for the new Australian. Even the strangely cool, wary look of the young boy could be seen as evidence of the, “restless, creative energy” that was considered typical of this racial category.\(^{124}\)

A comparable depiction of the ‘new Australian’ is also to be found in Max Dupain’s photograph, Portrait of a boy in sunlight (1936). Dupain’s model is posed in a very similar manner to ‘Jim’ with the same serious, self-absorbed look. There is a similarity too in his appearance, with Dupain’s unnamed boy having the same healthy and refined features as are evident in Grey’s subject. However, Dupain has created a more sensuous image with the bare-chested young man informally posed on the beach. Light too plays a different role in this photograph: it does not sharply define facial features but plays over the body and face, softening and giving a luminous quality to the flesh. While ‘Jim’ appears carved out of marble, Dupain’s sitter is more tactile and alive.

Portrait of a boy in sunlight is characteristic of the type of model Dupain preferred to use in his photographs - young, healthy and white. It is not clear if his choice consciously reflects a desire to show the development of a ‘new type’ of Australian. However, it is true that Dupain was interested in defining distinctly ‘Australian’ landscapes and a case can be made

that he applied the same criteria to his choice of human subjects. For Dupain, the beach was one of the most characteristically Australian of locations and he frequently chose it as the setting for his photographs in the 1930s. The models that he placed in this location corresponded to the commonly held idea of the ‘new Australian’, and the young man chosen for this photograph is no exception. With his fresh, athletic good looks he is typical of a new home-grown generation of Australians whose bodies were honed through time spent lying in the sun and swimming in the ocean.

A third study of a ‘typical’ Australian was also made in 1936 by the artist Murray Griffin. *Young farmer* (1936), a colour linocut, is again a head and shoulders study of a typical Australian but this is an agrarian version with a schematic view of hills and trees in the background, locating the subject in a pastoral setting. The health, youth and vitality of the sitter is again dominant as are his strong Aryan features. However, this print has a different quality: Griffin was a disciple of Rudolf Steiner, and it is possibly this association that imbues the sitter with a notable spiritual intensity.\(^\text{125}\)

The observations of various artists on the appearance of a ‘typical Australian’ are reflective of the widespread interest that existed in the interwar period in the evolution of a national type. While anthropometricists based their claims on measurements of the physical body, most writers’ ‘evidence’ was no more than observation couched in pseudo-scientific language. Some commentators were not prepared to see physical evidence of new genetic traits in the Australian population, preferring to hedge their bets by considering contemporary personality traits and extrapolating on how these would affect future generations. Dean Hart was one writer to reflect on the subject of, “Australians of To-

\(^{125}\) Roger Butler has noted of this print that “It glows with an inner intensity which vitalizes the whole composition”. Butler, 1985, p.34.
morrow”. He considered Australians to be stoic types, “Adventurous, ready to take a risk, self confident, and prepared for hardship”.  

Other commonly evoked traits in the interwar period - which applied as much to the individual as the national body - circulated around the quality of youthfulness. Charles Thwing, for instance, was a visiting American scholar who carried out relatively intense research in Australia for his sociological study, *Human Australasia*. Thwing, travelled to Australia and New Zealand in the 1920s with the expressed desire to, “interpret the character of old peoples under new stars, on new soils, and by the side of new seas”.  

The author viewed white Australia as a youthful culture stating, “these people... are not grown up. They form a young nation. They are living for the day”.  

Broadness of characterisation is another of the key elements in any discussion on national types. Although Thwing admired the Anglo-Saxon principle of ‘individualization’ he does not employ such values when discussing Australians. In his chapter titled “The Human Product” - a heading reminiscent of Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*, but without that author’s sense of irony - Thwing provided a lengthy exposition on Australian characteristics. One primary aspect of the national body is that ‘he’ is, “strong in body, alert and vigorous in every part of his physical being... intelligent rather than intellectual”. A eugenic principle governs Thwing’s understanding of social development and he concludes his study of Australasia with the rather provisional endorsement, “A Utopia in Australia and New Zealand may be far off, but eugenics and eugenics will, in the human growth, advance its coming”.  

Writers for the journal *Die Brücke* similarly saw the Australian interest in a national type as utopian in origin: “a definite human ideal... is haunting their dreams”. The writer, Karl Heinz Pfeffer, characterised the ideal Australian man as, “a person of the bush, who knows how to help himself, who has a good sense of humour, and who never deserts a fellowman

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126 Hart, 1927, p.20.  
127 Thwing, 1923, p.6.  
129 Thwing, 1923, p.224.  
130 Thwing, 1923, p.258.  
131 Pfeffer, 1934, p.7.
in danger . . . Even the hairdresser apprentice in Sydney would love to look like the men outback.” He considered mutually held goals were responsible for allowing this ideal type to develop, namely:

Common soil for settlement, mutual affection for their country . . . a combination of British with Australian customs and history, a common belief in the mission of social democracy and in the development of the national character; all these features tend to mould Australians into a separate nation.  

The debate regarding the ‘new Australian’ was not limited to the social commentator or scientist; discussion of this topic was also considered important by some spiritual groups in Australia. The Australian branch of the Theosophical Society promulgated distinctive world views that identified the development of a new sub-race in this country. One of the Australian leaders of the movement, Bishop Leadbeater, had the novel proposition that most humans were descended from Mars - ‘advanced’ types coming from the Moon - and, after evolutionary development on Earth, would eventually move on to Mercury.

The Theosophical position on population development on this world was adapted from current racial theories and maintained the existence of five main sub-races, namely Hindus, Arabs, Iranians, Celts and Aryans, and a range of subdivisions. This scheme was based on a racial hierarchy in which ‘primitive peoples’ (including Australian Aborigines) were deemed unable to develop into the higher evolutionary state. Evolution was left to members of the Aryan race, and especially certain members of a newly designated Austral-American group who possessed, “the best of your qualities [i.e. the Aryan race] . . . developed through a long series of years and much admixture of blood; but it is also to have some new and special qualities of its own”.

132 Pfeffer, 1934, p.7  
133 Pfeffer, 1934, p.7  
134 For a biography of this controversial spiritual figure see Tillett, 1982.  
135 Leadbeater, 1925a, p.18. Leadbeater first published his views on the new race in 1914 noting: “When I landed here for a second time a year ago, I was much struck with the fact that the New Race was obviously showing itself here also . . . I saw at once that here were children and young people of a distinctly New Type among you in Australia, and especially in Queensland”. Leadbeater, Bishop C.W. Australia and New Zealand as the Home of a New Race, [1914] quoted in Neff, 1943, pp.61-2. Neff supposes that the reason Queensland was chosen as the site of the New Race was because of its wide racial mix, a view not supported by Leadbeater’s writings.
The Theosophists were founded on principles of global fraternity and equality, or ‘universal brotherhood’, so it is perhaps surprising to see their proposition for a new race formulated in a way that predicates the ‘Aryan’ over other branches of humanity. Contradictions aside, Leadbeater considered that signs of a new race were definitely forming in Australian society, especially in Queensland. It is here that he found the most clear-cut signs of an ‘indigenous’ Australian: “They are mostly big men, unusually tall, with clean-cut, fine-looking faces - not exactly Englishmen, Irishmen, or Scotsmen any more, but definitely Australian”. However, it was in the spiritual or cognitive realms that the real distinction in this new race was to be found. According to Leadbeater, the members of the ‘sixth race’ had more highly developed “intuitive facilities” and a greater “co-operative and fraternal spirit”.

North of the divide: Home of the new Australian

Racial nationalism and the search for distinctive national types are nowhere more evident than in discussions of settlement in Queensland and the Northern Territory, because it was here that the principles of a White Australia were being tested most keenly. The work force in these tropical areas comprised many, so-called, Kanakas - indentured labourers from the South Pacific Islands - along with Italian and Chinese workers. In 1937, only twenty percent of the population of the Northern Territory were European, the majority being Aboriginal, Asian or Melanesian. The workers from Melanesia and Asia had been allowed into the country because many Australians believed that it was not possible for white people to labour effectively in tropical climates.

Mr Bardwell, the Premier of South Australia, supported this view and called for the relaxation of immigration laws in the tropical regions of the country. In 1922, he stated that, “the Northern Territory cannot be fully developed without colored labour”. The ramifications of his view were obliquely noted by the American writer, Charles Thwing, when he wrote, “The effect upon both the social and hygienic relations of the white race is a

136 Leadbeater, 1926b, p.54.
137 Tillett, 1982, p.106.
138 For a contemporary account of the history of the Kanaka’s see Willard, 1923, especially Section IV, pp.135-87.
140 Mr Burwell in Horn, W.A. The West Australian, January 5, 1922 quoted in Thwing, 1923, p.32.
matter demanding constant vigilance, as well as prolonged attention". The visiting writer was more explicit in what he considered the racial implications of allowing such labour into Australia. Dr Haden Guest, directly proclaimed that, “For a white Australia to be successful means that white men must learn to adapt themselves to working in the tropics”.

The Australian commentator, Dr Wigmore, felt strongly enough about the issue to publish a brochure on the topic titled, *White Australia and the Tropics*, in which he considered how, “the Ideal can be completely realised” - that ideal being a white work force. Wigmore considered the ‘problem’ in simple racial terms. According to him, the ‘black races’ reflect heat and are therefore more suited to working in the tropics while the ‘blonde races’ absorb heat. To reduce the effects of lassitude, he suggested white Australians did not work in the middle of the day and wear black underwear and white outer clothing.

The effects of climate on European settlers were considered a matter of grave importance and some scientists called for anthropometric surveys to help quantify the effect of heat on the white body. In 1911, for instance, Dr Mary Booth wrote: “The problem of settling the Northern Territory is particularly inviting to an anthropological survey and can only be adequately solved by demonstrating how far the white race can control an unfavorable environment”.

However, not everyone believed that the tropics would negatively affect the European settler. Some saw it as a place where the forces of nature could restore, not enervate, physical and moral energy. In his 1930 best seller, *The Broken Melody*, Charles Thwaites uses northern Queensland as a place of redemption for his white hero. Ted, originally a country boy, fell prey to the corrupting influence of the city, depleting his body through...
drugs and fast living. However, hard work and the tropical environment of Thursday Island eventually transforms Ted's body into a specimen of vigor and virility. Thwaites describes his character's new physique in seductive terms:

[Ted was] fully six feet two [with], shapely shoulders, deep of chest, strong and clean of limb, his face tanned a healthy brown, his eyes clear and keen. He carried himself with a panther-like grace, like a man who has yet to meet his rival”.146

With his new body making him once more an effective member of society, Ted could also help repair the racial balance of the island in favour of virile Anglo-Saxons. As he says, "Yes, people could say what they liked about this old island, there were plenty of Chows and Dagoes but that was not all, there were one thousand white men, some good, some bad, but still they were white”.147

From an official viewpoint too, the tropics were envisaged by some as a healthy place for the white settler. In 1925, for instance, Ralph Cilento wrote a booklet, *The White Man in the Tropics*, in which he detailed his findings on life in Australia's far North. Cilento held an influential position as the Director-General of Health and Medical Services in Queensland, and based his booklet on evidence he had gathered on behalf of the Commonwealth Department of Health. Refuting the American climatologist Ellsworth Huntington's belief that, "climate determines the distribution of civilisation", Cilento set out to prove that white Anglo-Saxons could successfully live in tropical areas.148 He also maintained that a new type of white Australian had emerged there as a result, writing, “there is being evolved ... a distinctive tropical type”.149

The nationalist imperative of Cilento's research was perhaps so obvious to the specialist reader of his paper that he felt no need to overtly state his reasons for undertaking this research. But he does make it clear that it is white settlement that he has in mind when discussing the development of this region. Cilento considers Queensland and the Northern Territory to have great advantages from both a medical and genetic standpoint with, “no

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146 Thwaites, 1930, p.8.
147 Thwaites, 1930, p.133.
148 Huntington, 1925, p.355.
149 Cilento, [1925], p.57.
teeming native population, riddled with disease, but . . . many thousands of pure-blooded European settlers”.150 In this under-developed part of Australia, Cilento foresaw the potential of an economically viable region: “the jungle of the present is the city of the future, and with the ear of the Imperialist and the enthusiasm of the pioneer, he hears the hammer of the builder in the crash of every falling tree”.151

In the process of establishing settlements, Cilento discerned a new type of person emerging who was genetically forged from British stock. According to him, the North Queensland male type was tall, rangy, sparsely built and slow moving.152 He had endurance and muscular strength and his British heritage apparently meant he was speediest on the working gangs - unlike the Japanese worker, who Cilento considered weak, and the Southern European who, although ‘racially purer’, was still not as adept. The women were graceful and, over the years, had developed darker hair. Cilento’s findings accorded with Huntington’s evolutionary assertion that in Australia, “Natural selection has here created almost a new race”.153

Unlike Germany or the United States, Australia did not adopt eugenic laws to foster the development of this ‘new race’. However, this is not to say that enthusiasm for the utopian idea of creating a new Australian did not affect the country’s social policy. As I have shown, for instance, the fear of hybridity influenced policy with regard to Aborigines; while eugenics also lay behind the anthropometric projects that measured the bodies of schoolchildren and other ‘captive’ groups.

The evolution of a distinctly Australian body was an idea that may, in all probability, have remained a matter of scientific conjecture if not for the first world war. The deaths and injuries inflicted to so many of the nation’s young men appears to have encouraged the desire to ‘build up’ the Australian population both in numbers and strength. The fear of another world war in the 1930s saw an increased focus on bodily capabilities and, as I will show in the next chapter, National Fitness became a matter of urgency. In encouraging the

150 Cilento, [1925], p.5.
151 Cilento, [1925], p.11.
152 Norman Cowper agreed with Cilento stating, “Queenslanders are lean and dark”, comparison to Tasmanians who, “tend to be florid and thick-set”. However, he considers such differences superficial and more attributable to the weather more than to genetics. Cowper, 1938, p.121.
153 Huntington, 1925, p.378.
development of a physical health among Australians, photography became an important and influential tool, and artists such as Max Dupain played a significant role in promoting the athletic ideal.
Chapter Three
National Bodies, Sport and Art

In this chapter I demonstrate that the links between genetic 'health' and its visible manifestation in the body became a matter for widespread discussion, and argue that interests in this area were increasingly directed towards defence goals. To show the connections between the development of the ideal body and a military preparedness, I examine the growth of National Fitness movements in Australia and suggest how they drew inspiration from similar German organisations.

One of the primary archetypes of the fit body in this period was the athlete, a person who had reached the pinnacle of physical development but whose energies were contained in subservience to sporting and nationalistic ends. I explore the intersection between the development of 'national bodies', sport and art through a close reading of Das Deutsche Lichthild, a journal that I argue had an important influence on Australian modernist photography. I also consider the work of Leni Riefenstahl whose film and stills of the Olympic Games held in Berlin in 1936 were a powerful tribute to the Aryan ideal of bodily perfection. I argue that the figures of the discus thrower and the diver in her work were two athletic archetypes that captured the imagination of many photographers of the period, Max Dupain included. Finally, I consider one of Australia's most distinctive contributions to 'body culture' - the lifesaver. Using a range of fine art and popular photographs drawn from contemporary journals I show how the lifeguard was heroised as a figure who combined athletic prowess with military skills.

"1 Russian = 1 German = 5 Australians": National Fitness programs in Australia\(^1\)

In the 1930s, the possibility that Australia would be drawn into another world war, prompted discussion regarding National Fitness. Australia was not alone in seeking to develop a strong, healthy population with so-called 'National Fitness' goals a priority in

\(^1\) Dyte, 1937, p.42.
countries such as the United States, Canada, South Africa and Great Britain. However, while much was written about the need to develop fitness in Australia, official action was slow. Concepts of National Fitness were not mooted at an official level until 1938 when the National Health and Medical Research Council passed the following recommendation:

The Council, having regard to the increasing complexity of international relationships, is deeply concerned at the falling birthrate, particularly in Australian cities, and the evidences presented from time to time of preventable defects affecting the general health, the bodily fitness and the national efficiency of a large part of the young people of this young nation.

The process of setting up a committee to oversee the implementation of National Fitness goals was relatively slow, a delay that attracted adverse public comment. In 1937, for instance, The Age newspaper published a cartoon showing a National Fitness ‘race’ titled ‘Still Waiting for the Starter’. In this satirical drawing, the Federal Government - embodied as a sports official - is depicted with gun raised to start a race but he, like the runners, is immobilised and covered in cobwebs. That same year, The Home, a journal more usually concerned with social events, the arts and fashion - published an article on the desirability of compulsory games and physical training. The writer, Dyte Warren, provocatively sub-titled his piece, “1 Russian = 1 German = 5 Australians”, to suggest how far Australians lagged behind other nations in terms of fitness.

Warren’s comments were no doubt prompted by Australia’s poor results in the Olympic Games held in Berlin in 1936. Although Australia sent one of its largest teams it received only one medal, a bronze for the hop, skip and jump event. Many concluded that the dismal outcome at the Games was the result of casual training and pushed for organised fitness programs to develop a base of trained athletes. The manager of Australia’s Olympic team, H.G. Anderson, was one influential voice in the debate stating that, after the loss in

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3 Unknown, 1938a, p.111.
5 Dyte, 1937, pp.42-3, 64, 66.
6 This medal was won by Jack Metcalf. For information on Australia’s involvement in the Berlin Games see Phillips, 1992, p.49.
the Games, he felt the nation should adopt the German system of, "Strength through Recreation".7

Warren agreed with Anderson stating, "No country can properly promote national physical growth and efficiency except through a government program of physical education".8 Using Russia and Germany as prime examples of compulsory fitness campaigns, he posed the question, "Why do we halt before adapting, with modifications, if necessary, the physical culture ideal so prevalent on the continent".9 The ramifications of such programs were felt to have benefits beyond the winning of sporting events. George Patterson drew on a quote from The Observer to conclude that, "To accept the Olympic challenge is to place our national prestige in issue. To be beaten into an insignificant ranking is to convince half the world that we are decadent".10

Despite agitation it was not until 1939 that there was some action on the National Fitness front. In January the National Co-ordinating Council for Physical Fitness held its first meeting; members of its board included the Minister for Health, H.S. Foll; Brigadier Derham of the Returned Sailors' and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia; A.H. Curlewis, President of the Surf Life Saving Association of Australia; and Sir Ralph Cilento. Given Cilento’s openly expressed concerns for racial purity it is not surprising that one of the first of eleven resolutions adopted by Council was, "To develop community and individual appreciation of the need for and the benefits of physical well-being and to develop a sense of racial responsibility in that regard".11

Training for the future: Australian youth and physical education

The young were of particular concern to the committee and they enlisted youth groups to their cause such as the Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, the 2GB Youth Club and the Empire Youth

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7 Dyte, 1937, p.42
8 Dyte, 1937, p.42.
9 Dyte, 1937, p.64.
10 The Observer quoted in Patterson, 1937, p.66.
11 Unknown, 1939a, p.16. The resolutions of this Committee eventually resulted in the passing of a National Fitness Act in 1941. See Hansard, number 26, 1941, pp.614-8.
Movement. These organisations were ideally suited to promote the goals of the National Fitness scheme as they not only provided a ready-made system of exercises for their young charges but promulgated a belief system based on the pivotal importance of family and country.

Concurrent with the worthy principles of health and sport espoused by youth movements was a military emphasis that did not pass unnoticed by commentators. In 1914, for instance, the writers Bostock and Nye were straight-forward in their estimation of the Boy Scouts as having a, “camp life based on military principle”. However, they sought to diffuse any totalitarian implications of this idea with the qualifying statement that, “the compulsory training of youth does not sacrifice sport, pleasure or friendship; but inculcates the most desirable attributes of discipline and esprit de corps so necessary for serviceable citizenship”.

Bostock and Nye were writing when the prospect of another world war was only a possibility while, in 1943, C.E.W. Bean considered the role of youth organisations from the perspective of war as a reality. Bean regarded the Boy Scout and Girl Guide movements as an essential training ground for future Australian citizens providing, “ideal character training, with eyes firmly on true values”.

In Australia, the concept of National Fitness was adopted by various youth groups and, more widely, through the school system. In December 1938, the Conference of the New South Wales Public School Teachers Federation adopted a series of recommendations by Gordon Young regarding the introduction of physical education in schools. These included compulsory attendance at school swimming classes; the employment of physical education teachers, and the provision of gymnasiums at schools with more than 300 children. School time devoted to exercises was substantially increased with one afternoon a week set aside for sport; one hour a week devoted to physical culture; and short daily drills. The use of the

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12 The Empire Youth Movement was founded in 1937 and sought to invest Australian youth with Royalist values. As befits its name, they emphasised the importance of links to Britain in sentimental and pragmatic military terms. In a booklet published by the organisation after WWII the writers expressed the following, no doubt long held, sentiment regarding Australia’s defenses: “Consider, for example, how precarious Australia’s position would be if it were severed from the Empire and became a lonely island at the south-eastern tip of the vast Asiatic world”. Unknown, 1949.

13 Bostock and Nye, 1934, p.86.
term 'drill' to describe school exercises had military overtones that at least one Australian writer commented on. In 1914, J.W. Springthorpe approvingly noted that, "military drill [has] now been introduced with great advantage into the different State Schools, in which regulated exercise subserves some definite industrial or national aim".

Following the First World War, physical education in schools continued to have a nationalist slant, an emphasis that is evident, for instance, in a pamphlet produced by the Victorian Education Department to commemorate the visit of the Prince of Wales. In 1920, the Department organised a large display of physical training for the Prince, including an exercise performance by 3,000 girls. Despite the inclusion of young women in the program, the emphasis of the event was primarily masculine. The interest in regulated training was apparently geared towards young men taking their places in the armed forces if required. As the authors of the brochure comment, "The practical end of education is to fit men for the service of mankind". This stress on masculine endeavour and strength is clear too in their inclusion of C.J. Denis's epic poem, *The Builders*, which charts the role of youth in the development of white Australia:

Strong were the young, and fearless;  
Bravely they dreamed and wrought.  
Founding a race, we laboured;  
Saving a race, they fought.  
Strong are the sons that spared us,  
Proved in the pit of war.  
But, for that race, who takes their place,  
That come back home no more?

Appropriate to the occasion, the stirring answer to Denis's question is to be found in the contribution of Australia's youth whose physical strength is seen as essential for the revitalisation of the nation:

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15 For a modern commentary on the use of drills see Kirk, 1998, p.5  
16 Springthorpe, 1914, p.92.  
17 The 'massing' of bodies became a popular feature of both physical training displays and military drills in the interwar period. Susan Sontag had noted of this phenomena that, "The masses are made to take form, be design. Hence mass athletic demonstrations, a choreographed display of bodies, are a valued activity in all totalitarian countries; and the art of the gymnast... also evokes features of Fascist art; the holding in or control of force; military precision". Sontag, 1988, p.317.  
18 Unknown, 1920, [p.4]
Out of the schools and playgrounds
Over the whole wide land
Answers the clear young chorus,
Confident proud and grand.
'We are the nation's builders!
Ours is the task ahead!
And here and now we take the vow
For our three score thousand dead.\(^{20}\)

Another popular means of training school children for military ends was the cadet program. In 1936, for instance, a pictorial feature in *The Sydney Morning Herald* showed school cadets being drilled at the Royal Military College. The photographs show cadets equipped with gas masks practising hand to hand combat using a bayonet; charging through a mock gas barrage; and setting up anti-aircraft guns\(^{21}\). Interestingly, images of the cadets were placed alongside an image of that other symbol of the fit body - the athlete - with a photograph that showed the Australian Olympian Cecil Pearce preparing for an event in Berlin.

Regulated exercises may have been widely adopted in schools but they had their share of critics. In 1934, George Dupain attacked the use of formalised exercises and drills which, he believed, were undertaken with the "aim of militarism".\(^{22}\) Writing for the progressive monthly journal, *Pandemonium*, Dupain criticised physical education in schools as being led by, "Political schemers, acting under the instruction of pontifical militarists [who] frame acts to force children to engage in glorified 'breathing exercises' and silly 'Swedish movements'. Is this education?"\(^{23}\)

The adoption of physical training programs was also treated with suspicion by the British writer, F. le Gros Clark. In his 1938 book, *National Fitness*, he cast doubts on the sudden interest that western governments were taking in the health of their constituents. While approving the benefits of exercise he noted that physical training in groups often involved,

\(^{19}\) Unknown, 1920, [p.1]
\(^{20}\) Unknown, 1920, [p.1]
\(^{21}\) Unknown, 1936g, p.18.
\(^{22}\) Dupain, G. 1934, p.13.
\(^{23}\) Dupain, G. 1934, p.13.
"disciplined movement [that] might shade off imperceptibly into training of a military nature".\textsuperscript{24}

Clark was an astute commentator who clearly identified the mixed motives of politicians who promoted public health and fitness when they were really concerned with war preparedness. He couched his suspicions in diplomatic terms but his final paragraphs leave the reader in no doubt regarding Clark's views. As he writes, "the whole history of physical culture in modern times has been most curiously interwoven with an urgency for military fitness. We need not pause to consider the tendencies at work in Fascist countries today".\textsuperscript{25}

Clark considered the intermixing of fitness programs and military agendas in Germany as suspect but others thought their lead should be followed. The Australian military historian, C.E.W. Bean was one who enthusiastically supported the notion of state regulated exercise. Indeed, Bean suggested that the best means of installing health and happiness was through labour camps based on German models:

many educationalists, including the Vice-Chancellor of Melbourne University, believe that we should take a leaf out of the Nazi educational system by adopting a plan of labour camps [whose]... aims are not unlike those of the National Fitness camps established in Australia.\textsuperscript{26}

His suggestion is startling given the political situation of the times but he apparently saw no contradiction in adopting a system from a nation with whom his country was at war. He believed that the advantage of such labour camps lay in their egalitarian nature - "All classes go into them together" - and their ability to toughen the, "soft and unrealistic" bodies and psyches of city people who had lost contact with nature.\textsuperscript{27}

Bean was by no means naive in his understanding of the role that mass physical training could play in society, noting that, "the body, as the most powerful lever in education, can be used for base ends as well as for good ones".\textsuperscript{28} His proposal to adopt German-style labour

\textsuperscript{24} Clark, 1938, p.207.  
\textsuperscript{25} Clark, 1938, p.208.  
\textsuperscript{26} Bean, 1943, p.109.  
\textsuperscript{27} Bean, 1943, p.109.  
\textsuperscript{28} Bean, 1943, p.110.  

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camps in Australia is made with a recognition of the dangers inherent in such projects. Bean acknowledged that youth groups could provide a ready means for totalitarian regimes wishing to form a physically powerful and compliant force of young people. He also noted the Australian propensity for worshipping athletic prowess, believing that nationalistic pride could easily lead to racial and national superiority. But, Bean argued, Australia's democratic principles acted as a natural guard against the perversion of sports and fitness programs for political ends.

Bean was by no means the only person to see value in labour camps. In 1937, for instance, George Patterson's article on Nazi Germany in *The Home* enthusiastically supported the notion for economic and health reasons. Patterson wrote that in Germany, "2,000,000 young men are working in Labour Camps, each serving six months for no reward . . . doing whatever is needed in the district to help the economic life of the nation . . . what a marvel of health these lads appeared, and how cheerful!")

The German model of labour camps was also taken up by England. In 1934, the Australian journal *Die Brücke* reported on a cable that it had received from London in which:

> The Prince of Wales was ardently supporting the plan to organise labour camps for the young people in England . . . on the model of those existing in Germany. His Royal Highness declared that such communal camps would reawaken a hopeful outlook among the unemployed, keep young men in good health and save them from moral degeneration."

In 1938, when the camps had come into being, the Australian *Pix* magazine ran an article titled, "Remaking Men in Britain's Labour Camps". It reported that the twelve-week course took long-term unemployed and others often in poor physical condition and 'remade' them. The article noted that participants at these camps often went on to join the army. There is no doubt that Germany also provided a model for National Fitness programs in Australia. In 1938, for instance, the Commonwealth Government requested that Australia House in London send any relevant papers on fitness programs; they soon responded with

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29 Patterson, 1937, p.66.
30 Unknown, 1934c, p.3.
31 Unknown, 1938b, pp.8-9.
pamphlets, including one from Germany titled *Physique and Health*. It is possible that Nazi Germany’s ‘Strength through Joy’ campaign - with slogans such as “Your Duty is to be Healthy” - also influenced the health and fitness interests in Australia.\textsuperscript{32}

Information about German health movements such as *Lebensreform* (life reform) and *Körperkultur* (culture of the body) came to Australia through German literature or were filtered through the work of American and British writers. The historical antecedents for these interwar movements date back to at least 1811 when Friedrich Ludwig Jahn founded his ‘German Gymnastic Association’. Jahn promoted physical culture as a means of encouraging national defence and his militaristic views appear to have influenced the Weimar Republic’s emphasis on athletics as an important aspect of education.\textsuperscript{33} In his popular book of 1810, *The German Way of Life* (Das Deutsche Volkstum), Jahn stressed the role of exercise for defence capabilities:

> Only when all men of military age have become capable, through physical education of bearing arms, have become ready for combat through weapon training, prompt to strike through new kinds of war games and constant alertness, and battle keen through love of the Fatherland - only then can a people be called militarily prepared.\textsuperscript{34}

Most discussions of National Fitness issues were necessarily serious but at least one Australian popular magazine saw the interest in health issues as an opportunity to validate more light-hearted pursuits. In 1938, for instance, *Pix*, used the issue of national health and fitness as justification for running a beauty contest. “Pix Big Summer Contest” offered £300 for photographs of the most “natural and beautiful beach girls”. The impetus for the competition was apparently not a desire to see photographs of semi-naked women but reflected a mixture of national pride and interest in export potential. As the writer of the article enthused:

> Artists, physical culture authorities, famous doctors and other visiting nobilities have recently expressed amazement not only for the glory of our beaches, but the health, virility and natural beauty of our young women.

\textsuperscript{32} The possibility of this influence has been observed by Dutton, 1985, p.82 and Simpson, 1986, part 1, p.1. For an outline of the ‘Strength through Joy’ campaign in Nazi Germany see Bleul, 1973, p.120.

\textsuperscript{33} See Kaes, Jay & Dimendberg (eds.), 1995, pp.673-5.

\textsuperscript{34} Jahn, J. F.C.L. *Das Deutsche Volkstum* quoted in McIntosh, 1963, p.57.
At the height of the Empire plan for National Fitness, *Pâx* intends, therefore to demonstrate our wealth of national beauty, not only to Australians and New Zealanders, but to those abroad.\(^{35}\)

**Physical training programs: Fritz Duras**

An important source of information regarding German styles of physical education was provided by European émigrés who came to Australia in the 1930s. The most influential figure in this regard was Dr Fritz Duras who held the position of founding Director of Physical Education at the University of Melbourne from 1937 to 1962.\(^{36}\) Born in Bonn in 1896, Duras received a classical schooling which instilled in him a belief that, “Perfection comes from the search for harmony and balance”.\(^{37}\) He was involved in the German Youth Movement, 'Wandervogel', and during World War One saw active war service, receiving the Iron Cross for his outstanding contribution.

After the war Duras studied medicine at the University of Freiburg-in-Breisgau, where he graduated in 1932. In the course of his training he was appointed House Physician to the University Hospital and clinical assistant to the University Institute for Sport. From 1929 to 1933 he was Director at the Institute for Sport and formulated a “Development Drill” of exercises for the sick along with acquiring, “experience in the application of natural healing factors such as climate, sunshine, geological and spa treatments”.\(^{38}\)

Duras gave a series of lectures during his time in Germany that reveal the range of his interests with topics including, “The health of the people and mental hygiene”, “Drill therapy, its possibilities and its limits” and “Effects of swimming”.\(^{39}\) Despite his contribution to German sports medicine and physical education he was forced to leave the country because his grandparents were Jewish. In 1936, he successfully applied for the newly created position of Director of Physical Education at the University of Melbourne where he

\(^{35}\) Unknown, 1938c, p.49.

\(^{36}\) A small booklet has been published on Duras' influence on physical education by Kentish, 1984.

\(^{37}\) Duras quoted in Kentish, 1984, p.22. Kentish promotes Duras as the “father of physical education in Australia”, a title that more rightly applies to G.2. Dupain who founded his Institute of Physical Education and Medical Gymnastics in 1900, some thirty-six years before Duras arrived in this country.


\(^{39}\) Kentish, 1984, p.16.
developed a teacher training course that included programs on hygiene, dietetics, gymnastics, Greek dancing and modern physical education.⁴⁰

Duras arrived at a time of growing interest in physical education in Australia. While exercise had been recognised as important to some degree since the late nineteenth century - the Victorian Education Department including swimming instruction in its curriculum in 1894 - it was not until 1934 that the first Physical Education Branch was established. Miss Rosalie Virtue was appointed the founding Officer in Charge of this new Department and played an important role in advocating exercises for women.⁴¹

The mid 1930s saw a growing recognition of the importance of physical education. Another passionate, if now unrecognised exponent of physical fitness, was George Dupain. In 1934, he wrote an article promoting physical education as an important and legitimate course of study that warranted a place in Australian universities. He criticised the general lack of scientific knowledge concerning the writing on physical education arguing, “Physical education in this land of sunshine and sea beaches is encumbered with a mass of traditional theories and wholly unscientific practices”.⁴² Dupain would, no doubt, have felt vindicated in his promotion of a more serious appreciation of physical education, with the appointment of Duras to the University of Melbourne only two years later.

Perhaps in an effort to establish a similar high degree of appreciation for physical education, Dupain helped established a private training college in 1937. The Leadership Training College of Physical Education was run by Edgar Herbert with Dupain as Director of the Physical Science Courses. Its advisory panel included some high-powered professionals such as the eugenacist, Professory Harvey Sutton, and the historian, C.E.W. Bean, who probably helped form the nationalistic credo for the college: “The new stress on national health and physical fitness, and the new leisure made possible by the machine age, have brought a new need for specially trained and qualified professional workers”.⁴³

⁴⁰ See Physical Education Branch, 1981.
⁴² Dupain, G. 1934, p.12.
⁴³ Herbert, Edgar, “The Leadership Training College of Physical Education” advertisement in Health and Physical Culture, October 1937, p.39. Dupain was part of an international movement in the 1920s and 1930s that was reevaluating the nature and methodology of physical education. See Mechaikoff & Estes, 1993, pp.243-6.
In common with Dupain, Duras considered that the task of teaching good physical education practices needed to extend into the wider community. He was an active lecturer, presenting papers on various health topics to groups including the Eugenics Society of Victoria where he spoke on “Eugenics in Germany today”. Perhaps surprisingly, given his Jewish background, Duras was an active member of the Eugenics Society, having joined in 1937, and his enthusiasm for the topic resulted in his being elected to the Advisory Committee.

Interestingly, it appears that eugenics also underpinned Duras’s physical education programs. In 1937, for instance, he wrote to the Society’s Secretary, Dr Wallace to say:

I would like to add that I am not only personally interested in the aims of the Society, but also in regard to our new course of Physical Education. One of the main aims of the course is to show its students not only the right way to teach physical exercises in schools and so on, but also to make them acquainted with the chief ideas of hygienic life and of the responsibilities we all have towards the community. That eugenics have a big part in reaching that aim is my strong opinion.

Duras saw his role as a physical educator naturally extending into the area of National Fitness. In his Report on the Work of the First Two Years of the Physical Education Course he noted that:

The National Fitness Campaign, too, is linked up with our course, and having been appointed to the Victorian State Council I shall not fail to stress the need of having well trained teachers and instructors for the coming campaign.

Duras’ concern for the promulgation of health and fitness at a broad level is apparent from his stated interest in community health. In a report to the University of Melbourne in 1939, he outlined his belief that a link existed between physical and mental aspects of health, asserting that healthy personalities were shaped by what people did in their leisure hours. In a later publication, he similarly noted, “You will know that the right usage of leisure time and

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44 Syllabus of Lectures, 1938, Eugenics Society of Victoria, 1938. The previous year he also delivered the Charles Mackay lecture at the Australian Institute of Anatomy, Canberra on the topic of “Physical Education and its Relation to Preventable Medicine”. See Duras, 1937, p.899.
45 Letter from Dr Fritz Duras to Dr Victor Wallace, Secretary, Eugenics Society of Victoria, 23 April 1937, Victor Wallace Archive, University of Melbourne Archives, L83/30/3.
recreation is one of our most urgent problems of modern civilisation".\textsuperscript{47} He suggested that the regulation and organisation of leisure activities was best achieved in a democracy through voluntary groups and backed his beliefs with his own involvement in the Boys Club Movement.\textsuperscript{48}

**Intersections: National bodies, sport and art**

Sporting activities operate at the juncture of many discourses: national identity, popular culture, art and personal development. The body in movement and the body in competition came to function as a complex metaphor in the interwar period, resounding with notions of revitalisation, National Fitness and eugenic potential. A sense of the energised body became a powerful icon of nationhood and reflects new conceptions of nationality.

It was believed that genetic health was made manifest through physical form with corporeal perfection evident in certain kinds of muscular development and bodily strength and flexibility. Discussions regarding the form of physical vigour operate on the immediately physical level - how fast a man or woman can run, how fit they look - as well as the metaphysical. A particular type of body, namely the ectomorph, became the standard through which national identity was projected in visual and written form. The athlete signified an ideal embodiment of this model, finely honed and perfectly containing their energies in subservience to sporting and nationalistic ends.

In the 1920s and 1930s, information concerning health and fitness movements came to Australia from sources as diverse as biological studies, newspapers, films and journals. Along with English and American publications, a revealing range of material regarding attitudes to the 'body politic' were available in imported German art magazines.

Hitler had an astute understanding of the role that art and culture could play in the transmission of Fascist ideology. As one writer observed in 1938, "Adolf Hitler's state had made it its responsibility to embrace all art, in past and present forms and to absorb it into

\textsuperscript{47} Duras, 1939, p.2.
the great idea of *Volk*" - 'Volk' being part of the National Socialist philosophy literally meaning 'folk and folkdom', or, in other words, the German people. Art increasingly came to reflect National Socialist ideas concerning the Aryan roots of the German race, embodied in a relationship to nature and classical antiquity; the importance of the family as a means of sustaining good eugenic ideals; and the strength and fitness of the body, maintained and developed through sport and exercise.

One influential source of information about German art and culture, which transmitted this complex mix of art, racial health and fitness to an Australian audience, was the annual photographic journal, *Das Deutsche Lichtbild*. This illustrated journal is widely regarded as one of the key means by which modernist photography was introduced to Australia, along with the British Modern Photography Annual and U.S. Camera. In 1930, *The Australasian Photo-Review* recommended *Das Deutsche Lichtbild* to its readers praising its "unusual" selection of images, and Axel Poignant, Athol Shmith and Max Dupain were three of the high profile photographers of the time who took their advice. In an interview in 1991, Max Dupain recalled:

Books like *Das Deutsche Lichtbild* were available in Sydney and we used to subscribe to them. I think we got them through a Swains bookshop primarily. We just used to dwell on them; when *Das Deutsche Lichtbild* arrived on the scene we'd just hoe into it to see what they were thinking on the other side of the world. This was great, you know.  

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49 Despite his involvement with the National Fitness Council and his training of combat techniques to University staff, Durst and his wife were classed as 'enemy aliens' during WWII.


51 Max Dupain, for instance, held copies of *Modern Photography* (1931, 1933-34) in his library and, in 1935 one of his own photographs titled *Blanket rhythm* was reproduced in the journal. This photograph, which was atypical of Dupain's work at this time, was an almost abstract photograph of folded blankets and was reproduced beside a close-up view of cactus taken by Akira Nakagawa. *Modern Photography*, 1935-6, pl. 70. Information on some of the contents of Dupain's library were kindly supplied by Gael Newton, Senior Curator of Photography, National Gallery of Australia and Josef Lebovic.

52 *Australasian Photo-Review*, June 14, 1930, p. 293. Axel Poignant, who was based in Perth in the 1930s, received copies of *Das Deutsche Lichtbild* from his aunt in England while Athol Shmith bought copies from a Melbourne bookseller. See Newton, 1988, p. 110 and Crombie, 1988, p. 34. It is likely that Shmith's source of copies was T.B. Costin at 410 Collins Street, who is listed as a supplier in the 1936 edition of *Das Deutsche Lichtbild* (p. 102). Dupain had the following issues of the journal in his Library: 1927, 1930, 1933-36, 1938. See Newton, 1980, p. 123, fn 7.

53 Ennis, 1991, p. 11. Other possible sources of books on German art and literature was a German bookseller in Sydney who ran a bookshop called 'The Oracle' and a business called Moore's Book Shop, Pitt Street, which featured.
Dupain also noted Gilmore’s bookshop in Bond Street, Sydney as a source of German journals and books, a business that was conveniently in the same street as Dupain’s studio. As he wrote in 1986: “The shop was run by a German refugee who would visit the studio frequently with the latest haul of photographic books from Europe - most of which I still possess”.

However, not all photographers were as enthusiastic about the journal. Wolfgang Sievers, who was a student of the Contempora School of Arts in Berlin before being forced to leave the country for Australia in 1938, is highly critical of Das Deutsche Lichtbild. He terms it “Nazi propaganda” and states that he and other photography students in Germany opposed to National Socialism refused to read it after 1933.

Because of the importance of this journal to the development of modernist photography in Australia, it is perhaps surprising that no analysis of it appears to have been undertaken to date. A close analysis of the photographs chosen for illustration reveals a progressive shift in the type of images reproduced in the 1930s in line with the cultural values and philosophies of the Third Reich.

Das Deutsche Lichtbild was first published in Berlin in 1927 by Bruno Schultz and became an important annual showcase devoted to photographic art. The work reproduced was selected by Schultz from the many thousands of photographs submitted to him and covered a vast range of photographic styles. Its most notable inclusions were those photographs produced in the newly evolving modernist style and these illustrations provided a major source of information for the amateur and professional practitioner in Germany and elsewhere. The diversity of material in the early years of the journal was striking with avant-garde expressions featured alongside bucolic landscapes influenced by the late manifestations of Pictorialism. This mixture of the traditional and the progressive encouraged the legitimation

"Important Books on Health, Athletics and Sport, Photography etc". Moore’s Book Shop, Health and Physical Culture, March 1, 1937, p.50.
53 Dupain, 1986, p.64.
54 Telephone conversation between Wolfgang Sievers and Isobel Crombie, October 1995.
of the modernist movement by implying that such photographs had a valid place in a pluralist aesthetic culture.\textsuperscript{55}

A clear shift in this enlightened editorial policy took place when the National Socialists came to power. The work of those photographers of Jewish origin, such as Yva (aka Else Simon) and Martin Munkacsi, disappeared from the pages of the journal, and the pictorial emphasis shifted from abstract and experimental expressions of New Photography to a culturally approved range of subjects.\textsuperscript{56} For instance, sixteen abstract photographs were reproduced in 1931 as opposed to two in 1934. The importance of rural utopias to Nazi rhetoric - as the embodiment of the 'eternal' values of hard work and simple moral values - was emphasised with an increase in the number of photographs of rural life in the journal from ten in 1931 to thirty by 1936.

Images of the body became increasingly heroic in their embodiment of strength, health and potency with a new category of military imagery introduced into the magazine in 1934. The nationality of the subject was an increasingly dominant issue, and the representative national body became resoundingly Aryan. Photographs of subjects who fell outside this criteria were invariably labeled as a 'racial type', devoid of a name or other signifier of individuality and were depicted as weak or unattractive. From 1931, for instance, the magazine included portraits that designated their sitters as Jewish and the following year several portraits were captioned simply by racial type, for instance, 'Chinese' and 'Arab'.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{55} Anne-Marie Willis briefly discusses Das Deutsche Lichtbild suggesting that the diversity of styles represented in the magazine led to a homogenisation of imagery. As a consequence she writes that, "Australian photographers were presented with a reduced and domesticised version of the diversity of German photographic culture and debate" - a conclusion that I contest. Willis, 1988, p.156.

\textsuperscript{56} The careers of the photographers Yva and Munkacsi are worth elaborating because they represent the two ends of the spectrum for those 'others' who were deemed to be part of the 'degenerative' arts in the German Third Reich. Martin Munkacsi (Marmorstein) was one of many artists who were forced to leave Germany and he migrated to New York in 1934 where he became a leading fashion photographer. Yva (Else Simon) was forced to give up the management of her studio in 1936 but was allowed to work as a photographer. In 1938 she was banned as a photographer and became an x-ray technician. She subsequently died in a concentration camp in 1942 where she had been interned by the Nazis. For further information on the National Socialist treatment of Jewish photographers in the 1930s see Sachse, 1997, pp.93-4.

\textsuperscript{57} The 1931 issue of the journal includes the photographs "Stadtschichte Juden" and "Alter Jude Ars Aleppa", Das Deutsche Lichtbild, 1931, p.16-17. For other racial 'types' see Das Deutsche Lichtbild 1932, pp.148 and 179. For a discussion of the photographic portrayal of Jews see Laewry, 1997, pp.100-14.
These changes were in line with national policy in Germany concerning the medium of photography. An awareness of the persuasive power of photography as a means of disseminating national values was appreciated early in the new regime’s history. In 1933, the Ministry of Propaganda established a ‘Photography Section’ that produced propagandist imagery and also sought to utilise amateur photography.⁵⁸ That same year, Joseph Goebbels conveyed something of this nascent strategy in his speech opening the Berlin Photography Fair.

Photography today is accomplishing a lofty mission in which every German should collaborate by buying a camera... The conditions thus exist for art, technical progress and the photographic industry to unite in a great national endeavour; to create a labour front evolved from the vast domain of photography... furthermore, photography has a particularly important political role to play.⁵⁹

As the self-appointed epitome of ideal German nationalism, it is interesting to consider the way that Adolf Hitler chose to present himself for the camera. Das Deutsche Lichtbild includes one portrait of the Führer, taken in 1936 by his personal photographer, Heinrich Hoffmann.⁶⁰ Hitler is shown in a relaxed mood seated on the balcony of ‘Berghof’, his country home at Obersalzberg, surrounded by an ersatz family comprising a fair-haired woman and child. The image is symbolically positioned in the journal opposite a photograph of a rugged alpine landscape, thus relating Hitler, and the Aryan people, to the strength and eternal power of nature. Mountain landscapes were particularly popular with the Nazis as they symbolised the rugged, pure and Romantic qualities considered the birth right of Aryans. They also represented a mystical goal that was both beautiful and frightening.⁶¹

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⁵⁸ Amateur photographers were targeted by the Minister for Propaganda because they were producers of a great mass of pictorial information that could be used to persuasive effect and, as Sachsse suggests, because this was a medium that could be used by almost anyone. As Sachsse writes, “the fact that this means of expression [was] available to all and sundry could be used to justify an anti-intellectual attitude which alone could bring about the dissolution of the individual within the mass”. Sachsse, 1987, p.150.


⁶⁰ Hoffmann was the head of a team of photographers who produced propaganda for the regime. He also produced a range of publications on Hitler’s activities along with more general photographic picture books on Germany’s new social order such as Deutschland Erwache! (Germany Awake!), Munich, 1923. Quoted in Sander, 1989, p.8. For information on Hoffmann’s activities see Sachsse, 1987, p.156. For a discussion of photographs of Hitler see Reichel, 1987, pp.71-74.

⁶¹ Interestingly, there was a proliferation of alpine films in German cinema in the 1920s. A major star of such films was the actress and film-maker Leni Riefenstahl. For a description of her role in these films and their symbolism to the emerging Nazi Party see Sontag, 1988, p.313.
By 1937, the reader could not be mistaken in thinking that *Das Deutsche Lichtbild* was anything other than a conduit for Fascist values. The preface to the 1937 edition quotes Adolf Hitler's revealing epigram: "It is impossible for anyone to have an inner relationship with a work of art which does not have its roots in the very essence of their being". One now not only had to be Aryan to truly understand a work of art, but this understanding was an anti-intellectual matter of 'essences' derived from appropriate genetic inheritance and, in consequence, unavailable to racial 'outsiders'.

**Iconic bodies: The Discobolus**

"The disc-thrower of Myron ... is the splendour of the body in excelsis".  
Francis Jackson, 1923.

The trained athlete is the ideal embodiment of strength and control whose prowess can be admired as the epitome of bodily perfection. While it is possible for athletes to function as a non-political figure, it is more common for their activities to be linked to national aspirations. The athlete, like the soldier, has an individual character but it is uncommon to conceive of such individuals operating independently of their national origin. In this manner, the athlete functions as an icon whose successes are inextricably linked to national pride and progress.

In common with the soldier too, the athletes' vital energies are honed to enable their use in a concentrated, often explosive form when required. The containment of bodily power, and its regulation into a socially acceptable form, is important. The elite athlete or soldier must normally be submissive to authority as their operation outside of normative social goals can pose a challenge to the goals of the State.

The athlete can be considered an essentially docile figure, acting at the behest of their trainers and 'carrying the flag' for the nations they represent. In Germany, primal energy and sporting prowess were promoted as forces that should be harnessed for nationalistic

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63 Author's emphasis, Jackson, 1923, p.44.
ends; a vigorous race of Nietzschean 'super-men' could better defend and extend the Fatherland. The athlete stood as the embodiment of such goals, their bodies not only trained in a physical sense but imbued, metaphysically, with an ancient authority. Hellenistic Greece was frequently invoked as the physical and moral touchstone of the German Empire. For athletes, ancient Greece held a special symbolic place as it was here that the greatest of all sporting events - the Olympic Games - began in 776 B.C.

Hitler publicly expressed his admiration for Hellenistic ideals and, no doubt with his encouragement, one of his favourite film directors graphically translated ancient principles of strength and beauty into celluloid.\(^6^4\) Leni Riefenstahl's documentary film, \textit{Olympia}, celebrates the Olympic Games held in Berlin in 1936 and is a celebration of the ideal body that takes on almost religious proportions.\(^6^5\) Riefenstahl later stated in her book, \textit{Beauty in the Olympic Struggle}, that the film was a, "hymn to beauty and competitive endeavour".\(^6^6\)

Riefenstahl was, of course, not alone in viewing the Games in this manner. A reverential, even rapturous, tone was common amongst commentators of all countries when reporting on Olympic events. Howard Marshall, writing for the \textit{Daily Telegraph} on the opening of the 1936 Games, provides a good example of how the athlete could be viewed in mythical terms:

A great rustling whisper rose from the crowd and upon the steps we saw the Olympic torch. He was well chosen for the part, this runner. His golden hair streamed in the wind, and he moved with swift and lovely grace, sparks from the blazing torch fell in a golden cascade behind him... There he stayed for a moment, a symbol of youth, and then, with a sudden gesture, he thrust the torch forward and a sheet of flame shot upwards, to burn throughout the Games.\(^6^7\)

The lighting of the flame to mark the start of the Olympic Games was a symbolic act that made reference to the original Games in which rituals and sacrifices in honour of Zeus took

\(^6^4\) The relationship between Riefenstahl and Hitler is explored in the documentary "The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl", 1994 (directed by Ray Muller). See also Sontag, 1988 for a critical analysis of Riefenstahl and Fascism.

\(^6^5\) It is interesting to note that one meaning of the word 'iconic' is, "Greek statues of victorious athletes". See Brown, 1993, volume 2, p.1302.

\(^6^6\) Riefenstahl, 1994. Sontag considers \textit{Olympia} to be similar to many of Riefenstahl's films in that it promotes a, "[celebration] of the rebirth of the body and of the community, mediated through the worship of an irresistible leader" Sontag, 1988, p.313.

place along with competitive sports. In both her film and subsequent book on the Games, Riefenstahl conflates this sacred element of the festival with a cultic appreciation of ideal beauty. In the opening sequences of the film she locates the viewer in the ancient world of fifth-century Greece with repeated shots of ancient temples and classical nude sculptures. In one early pivotal scene, the camera lovingly describes the refined musculature and coiled strength of Myron’s *Discobolus* - a statue of a discus thrower carved around 460-450 B.C. by one of the outstanding sculptors of the Greek period. Slowly, the marble sculpture ‘comes to life’ as this supreme example of Greek heroic athleticism metamorphoses into the naked, living form of a trained German athlete. The power of the contemporary athlete is not only linked to that of antiquity but he is shown to be the possessor of primal energies through his location in a natural setting - a sand dune beside the Baltic sea.

Interestingly, there are several photographic corollaries to this image taken in Australia in the late 1930s. The popularity of the *Discobolus* to contemporary Australians was based on the widely held view that the statue represented the apogee of the perfectly developed male.

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68 The book largely comprises enlargements from Riefenstahl’s film. The photographs of Greek temples, sculptures and nudes were taken by Willy Stelke under Riefenstahl’s direction. George Mosse has observed, Greek nude sculpture became symbolic for the Germans (and other nationalities) of strength, harmony, order and dynamism. Nudity, in this context, was a stylistic principle emblematic of control over passion and morality rather than degeneracy. See Mosse, [1991], pp.25-31 and Mosse, 1985, p.49.

80 Gisela Richter describes Myron’s ‘Diskobolos’ as part of a small group carved by the sculptor that show “a number of figures in what may be called arrested motion”. Richter, 1974, p.111.
This appreciation was not without its racial overtones: in 1923, Francis Jackson wrote an article entitled “Athletics and Art”, in which he observed that *Discobolus* offered valuable eugenic lessons for Australians as it showed, “the perfection of the racial type”. Jackson considered this ancient athletes body type to be one that white Australians should use not as a model for their art but themselves:

The disc-thrower of Myron... displays a matchless sense of form and of rhythm of movement. In another twinkling of an eye the thrower will have turned right about on the point of the right foot and the disc will have flashed into the air. The beauty of strength and suppleness are supreme. It is the splendour of the body *in excelsis*.

Australian photographers also made reference to the classical statue in their work. In 1938, for instance, a photograph of a naked discus thrower was used as the central focus of a colour photo-lithograph poster and commemorative sticker designed by Charles Meere. The poster was produced for the Empire Games held in Sydney as part of the sesqui-centenary celebrations of the founding of European settlement in Australia. But, unlike Riefenstahl's photograph in which the model is clearly an athlete, Meere's poster shows a man with remarkably little in the way of articulated muscle. His pose does little to bring to mind the iconic Greek sculpture: the arrested physical energy of *Discobolus* is here dissipated by the model's almost upstanding stance and relaxed limbs.

Somewhat closer to the spirit of Riefenstahl's photograph and Myron's *Discobolus* is a figure study taken by Laurence Le Guay around 1939 for a popular men's magazine. Simply titled *Man*, to suggest the iconic nature of the subject, Le Guay's model adopts the pose of a discus thrower with his taut, muscled and oiled body displayed to its best effect by being shown naked. While the image initially appears to be accurately posed, there is an

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70 Riefenstahl, 1994, illus pp.26-7. In the foreword to this book it is noted that the photographs of sculptures and nudes were taken by Willy Zielke, however as with all images resulting from the film the cameramen were regarded as 'operators' who were fully under Riefenstahl's artistic direction.

71 The status of the Discobolus as a symbol of athletic perfection is still apparent today. The statue is used on the cover of the publication: Mechikoff and Etes, 1993.

72 Jackson, 1923, p.44.

73 Jackson, 1923, p.44.


75 This photograph was reproduced in the magazine *Man*, June 1940, p.35. Laurence Le Guay returned to this subject in 1947 with his photograph titled *The discus thrower* (Collection: AGNSW). This photograph falls outside the dates of this present study, however it is worth noting that it differs substantially from the other photographs under consideration, showing only the naked upper torso of a muscular man.
awkwardness to the man’s posture that suggests the model was not entirely aware of the stance of a real discus thrower. His improbable position on the downward slope of a sand dune—chosen more for its potential for dramatic shadows than verisimilitude—suggests too that Le Guay photographed the discus thrower primarily because it was a ‘modern’ subject with the kind of provocative frisson that readers of the men’s magazine enjoyed.

The choice of a subject that legitimated the use of a nude model may also have been the impetus for Keast Burke’s photograph titled *Karl with discus*. Taken around 1938, this image was part of a series of 26 photographs of nude men engaged in various sporting and work activities that were apparently taken as exercises in formal composition. Burke, who was the Associate Editor of the *Australasian Photo Review*, was an active amateur photographer and was elected a member of the Royal Photographic Society of London in 1938 for his photographs of male figures.76

His photograph of the naked ‘Karl’ shows the model in an upright position rather than the more usual coiled posture adopted prior to releasing the discus. While the pose is authentic, it seems that Burke was more interested in finding appropriate props or activities that could be associated with nudity than in documenting athletes. Discus throwing gave the photograph an authentic classical flavour and, given it was traditionally performed while naked, allowed Burke the chance to depict a male nude in a socially approved manner.

A different impetus seems to drive Max Dupain’s photograph, *The athlete* (1937).77 His photograph is so similar to that by Riefenstahl that it is tempting to conjecture that Dupain was aware of her work. Although it appears that no contemporary copy of Riefenstahl’s film

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76 Information on the series is derived from the Acquisitions and Loans Report, Art Gallery of New South Wales, January 1996.
77 This photograph is reproduced in *The Home* under the variant title of *Quoit thrower*. *The Home*, volume 18, number 12, 1937, p.47. It should be noted that at some stage Dupain inscribed two dates on the vintage print of this image; one being ‘1938’ the other ‘1937’.
It is probable that the print was exhibited as the reverse of the photograph bears his inscription “Section 1 ......£7.7.0”
was available in the country, it seems likely that her book of film stills and enlargements, *Beauty in the Olympic Struggle*, was available. This book closely parallels the film and gives the reader a clear indication of the pivotal elements of *Olympia*. It includes two photographs of the discus thrower; one shows a sculptural cast of Myron’s original and, on the page opposite, is positioned a photograph of a living athlete in an identical pose. The relationship between the two is reinforced by the titling of the latter image as, *Living statue*.

The similarity between Riefenstahl’s photographs of discus throwers and Dupain’s photograph suggests that the Australian photographer could have had access to this publication - and there is little doubt that the subject matter would have been of profound interest to him. Max Dupain’s father, George, had strongly influenced his views regarding the importance of the properly developed body and this interest is reflected in his own love of sports - especially rowing and surfing - and the numbers of photographs he took of athletic men and women during the 1930s.

Dupain could also have found inspiration for his work from various other sources. His 1933-34 issue of *Modern Photography* included the photograph, *Disk thrower*, by Grete Kolliner, an almost abstract image of an athlete drawing back in preparation to throw the disc. In addition, he had spent much of his youth in his father’s gymnasium which included casts of various Greek and Roman statues - including Myron’s *Discobolus*. George Dupain regarded this sculpture as the apogee of masculine development and in 1948, for instance, he reproduced a photograph of this sculpture in his book *Exercise and Physical Culture* with the caption, “this piece of marble portrays the classical ideal of physical development during the Greek athletic period.” As a living example of how classical sculpture could act as a model for contemporary Australians, George Dupain posed for a photograph, probably taken by his son, in imitation of *The Dying Gladiator*.

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78 Riefenstahl, 1988 (1937). Given anti-Nazi sentiments it is unlikely that *Olympia* was commercially released in Australia. There is a slight possibility that it was shown through a film society or club, however, an extensive search of Australian film archives (State Film Centre, Melbourne; AFI; Office of Film and Literature Classification; AFA; Australian Archives) has uncovered only one extant print of *Olympia*. This copy was donated to the National Film and Sound Archives, Canberra in the 1950s.
79 *Modern Photography*, 1933-34, p.102
80 Dupain, 1948, p.20
81 Dupain, 1948, Foreword.
The adoption of poses in imitation of classical statuary was common practice among body builders from the 1900s, and Max Dupain would have seen both his father and other physical enthusiasts adopt these attitudes. Perhaps inspired by this model he too posed for at least one photograph around 1935 in the manner of a discus thrower. Taken by his wife, the photographer Olive Cotton, *Max, number two* is a striking image that shows Dupain with his eyes closed in concentration and arms extended as if in the preparatory stages of hurling a discus. The photograph is not a documentary image intended to show the dynamics of the sport, but is a modernist study accentuating the graphic possibilities of the body.

Cotton has placed her camera below the subject and edited the hands from the frame to create a simple and strong effect of arms and bare torso. No extraneous information has been allowed into the image, with full attention given to dynamic motion of the body. The photograph is part of a series taken of Dupain on the beach and Cotton has used the strong natural light to full effect, allowing the sun to highlight the face and body and create contrasting shadows. Light is employed to sensuous effect with Dupain's lean torso lovingly described by the camera.

When Dupain himself chose to photograph a discus thrower in *Athlete*, he also used a beach setting in which to place his nude male model. The resulting image is notably similar to Leni Riefenstahl’s image in several ways. He adopts a similar camera angle - positioned slightly below the figure to accentuate the athlete's dominant stance in the landscape. Light is used by both artists in a purposeful fashion to articulate and 'sculpt' the body; fashioning a form that becomes symbolic of masculine agility and controlled strength. However, there is one notable difference between the two images. Unlike Riefenstahl, who has positioned

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her model in the exact pose of the ancient sculpture, Dupain does not show his athlete with his hand clasping his knee but drawn back in preparation for releasing the discus. This change gives Dupain's photograph a different sense of vitality and energy. Myron's Discobolus is a perfect study of the 'essential' male athlete; focused, strong and contained, ready to move with maximum energy towards one goal - the dispersion of explosive energies through the body to the discus. Dupain's figure, on the other hand, is not coiled in the climactic split second before his energy is released but is in the process of releasing that action.

Dupain's photograph is closer in form to another photograph of a discus thrower, Strength, which is illustrated in the first few pages of Riefenstahl's book. The placement of this image was significant for Riefenstahl who used it in a special section of the book that foregrounds her study of the modern-day Olympics. It was used as part of a series of photographs that both assert the 'essential' qualities of the athlete, and establish a lineage of sporting and social values from classical Greece to modern Europe. Riefenstahl also employs these initial images to differentiate male and female athletes, and to suggest the distinct expressions of their physicality and their relationship to nature.

Riefenstahl began her book by showing the symbolic metamorphosis of the ancient classical athlete into a modern competitor - a transformation that is most apparent in the different ways that she depicts discus-throwers. Living statue, for instance, was photographed in an old fashioned, soft-focus Pictorialist manner that created an appropriately archaic mood appropriate to the depiction of a classical sculpture. In contrast, the real life athlete posing for Strength was depicted using a straighter style that gave a 'flesh and blood' realism to the image. The choice of backgrounds in the two photographs also works to different effect. Living statue has a grainy, overexposed sky behind the athlete that resembles a backdrop, while Strength features a cloudscape photographed in a realistic manner.
This progressive change of style signals to the viewer that the classical sculpture has now become fully animated and is expressing the archetypal qualities of a modern athlete. Befitting his more active nature, Riefenstahl has captured the athlete in an animated stance, still with his hand on his knee but now almost standing and with his disc-throwing arm drawn back in the act of throwing. However, although it is more documentary in style, *Strength* is still intended to be a symbolic work: a reading that is reinforced when the image is compared to Riefenstahl’s photographs of contemporary discus-throwers, such as Erwin Huber and Robert Clarc. These images, which appear later in the book, are captioned with the contestants’ names and countries, locating the reader in the present day world of the 1936 Olympics. Their clothes, complete with national insignia, also give them an historical specificity lacking in the earlier images.

However, even here Riefenstahl does not abandon the symbolic quality that infuses all her work. These men are photographed in a heroic manner, largely from below to accentuate their dominance in the picture plane. The images are closely cropped, excluding all superfluous detail, and focusing our attention on the gestures and expressions that mark these men as special. Our attention is repeatedly drawn to their faces - concentrated, focused, inward-looking. These may be real individuals with separate identities but there is also a trans-personal quality to them that elevates the athletes to the arena of the gods.

*Strength* can be considered as a representation of this Platonic essence - a visualisation of a quality that the individual athlete should aim to embrace - but it is also a study of specifically masculine athleticism. To highlight this differentiation, Riefenstahl pairs the male athlete beside a photograph of a naked female athlete shown in the same natural setting beside the ocean. The woman athlete adopts a eurythmic dance pose; head thrown back, arms extended and body stretched giving her body a lithe, elegant line. Riefenstahl has captioned this photograph, *Grace*, and, when seen beside its male companion, it is clear that the sporting body is a gendered body.
In Riefenstahl’s work, the male athlete is almost always pictured as aggressively active and muscular. He is engaged in activities that involve strength, endurance and energy, such as javelin and discus-throwing or weight-putting. Besides these images, the woman athlete exhibits a less dynamic, assertive presence. Her apparently natural predisposition for harmony and grace are made manifest through her participation in sporting events such as gymnastics (including eurythmics), diving and swimming.

Riefenstahl similarly establishes a different relationship between the sexes and nature. Men appear to operate on the face of the landscape - they run through the sand dunes or force themselves into competition with mountains or oceans. Women, on the other hand, are shown to have a closer, even intimate relationship to the natural world. In two photographs in particular, By the sea and In the dunes, woman is literally part of nature, her body appearing to almost dissolve into the water or become part of the grass. There is an abandonment about these images, a profoundly sensuous identification of female sexuality with nature.

While Max Dupain’s photograph of the discus-thrower comes to us without the revealing context enabled by Riefenstahl’s book, Dupain also depicted the male and female sporting body in different ways. Dupain’s views were probably reinforced by his father who, in 1934, characterised women’s essential nature to be, “anabolic, reposeful and [tending] to store up force rather than dissipate it”, and men as, “muscularly active, violent, katabolic”. Accordingly, he maintained that different types of sporting activities should be assigned to the sexes. He encouraged women to participate only in indoor gymnastics, natural dancing, swimming, tennis, golf, hockey and basketball and discouraged them from cricket, boxing, rowing or ‘German gymnastics’. The consequences of women choosing an ‘inappropriate’ sport were apparently dire: “Competitive athletics of an enduring or stimulating type will tend to excessively expand and break up women’s store of nervous energy, which if overtapped, will end in emotional storms and nerve cataclysms”.

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83 Dupain, 1934, p.18.
84 Dupain, 1934, p.18.
Alfred Briton agreed with George Dupain’s estimation and in his 1937 article, “Should Girls be Sports?” encouraged the banning of competitive sports among women. He wrote:

What is wanted is play-exercise of a natural, unrestrained character. . . Games of skill, yes; games of strenuous activity, again yes - within reason. But intense concentration on a bat, for instance, is just about as ludicrous as putting an antelope in the shafts of a brewer’s dray.  

Not all commentators agreed with this proscriptive approach to women’s sports. In 1927, the Sun-News Pictorial commented on the ‘challenge’ that women’s increasing involvement in athletics posed to men when they wrote, “Some of our young men will have to look to their laurels or they will soon be taking second place in sport and athletics to the modern girl”.

While in the lead-up to the 1936 Berlin Olympics, The Australian Women’s Weekly ran an article enthusiastically promoting women’s competitive sports. “Sports Prospects for 1936: Big chances for women athletes in four States” was followed up a month later by a cover that featured a drawing of a young woman hurdling. Under the title ‘Sport Girl’ they ran the following verse by ‘PD-B’:

The furbelows are laid away with all the frills of yesterday And now the wizard Time reveals what Grandmamma could ne’er suspect Fair women in the field of sport

From end to end of all the earth Of every creed, and state of birth They meet in one great sisterhood not for applause or idle fame . . . Their joy is only in the game.

Writers for the The Sydney Morning Herald Women’s Supplement were similarly encouraging about female involvement in sports and used interest generated by the 1936 Olympics to push for improved facilities for women athletes. As the sports correspondent noted: “Now that the international aspect of women’s sport is growing in importance, a women’s ground

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85 Briton, 1937, p.9. Briton was the editor of this magazine and owner of a physical education business. He and Dupain knew each other and Dupain frequently wrote for Briton’s magazine.
86 Unknown, 1927, p.6.
87 Unknown, 1936b, p.39.
88 P. D-B, 1936, cover.
of the nature of the Cricket Ground... is more urgent". The fact that only four women were selected for the Australian team to Berlin and that none received a medal did not deter the enthusiasm of the reporters. The Women's Supplement published a lengthy article at the opening of the Games titled "Women at the Olympic Games", which it was reported that: "beautiful women will revive memories of the great sports of ancient days, while modern women competes [sic] in the arena. Amongst the competitors are four Australian girls".

Divers: 'A symphony of beauty'

One of the few sports in which women were popularly considered to excel was that of diving. This athletic and graceful sport was popular in the 1930s among the general public and naturally lent itself to depiction by photographers and film makers. Diving held special appeal in Germany having, to a large degree, been developed there around 1811 as part of Freidrich Jahn's gymnastic movement. During the summer months, Jahn would take his pupils to the Baltic Sea and encourage them to perform gymnastics from boards placed over the water. Proficiency in diving was furthered by the Scandinavians, who came to prominence in this sport at the 1900 Paris Olympics where they displayed their skills on diving boards over the Seine. The Germans gradually gained ascendancy in diving and it is telling that Leni Riefenstahl chose to return to the origins of the gymnastic and diving movement - the Baltic - to film the opening sequences of Olympia.

In her film, Riefenstahl emphasises containment and controlled release of energy as key qualities for the athlete. The athlete's energies are not dispersed in a chaotic manner but are focused on a goal; mind and body are perfectly attuned and, as a result, an 'ideal' balance is achieved. This disciplined employment of balance and natural grace is nowhere more evident than in her images of male and female divers.

Riefenstahl later recalled that she positioned three cameras to capture the action in the diving pool; one either side of the board and one cameraman in the water to enable upward shots.

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89 Unknown, 1936e, p.20.
90 While few in number their representation was at least an improvement on the 1930 and 1934 Empire Games where no women from Australia were included. Phillips, 1992, p.41. Phillips notes that in the previous Olympic Games at Los Angeles, three women were included in an Australian team of only nine members.
and underwater views. In her film the pace of this sequence is carefully established. It begins slowly with a commentator giving the names of each of the female contestants. As the men begin their final heats, the action accelerates and the documentary structure of the film is abandoned in order to concentrate the viewers' attention on the divers' extraordinary athleticism.

The main form of diving in the 1930s was the swallow dive, a supremely fluid, almost balletic movement, which apparently had resonance for Riefenstahl who had begun her career as a dancer. It is apparent that those sections of the film that deal with the diving events are the most 'personal', and certainly Riefenstahl alludes to the interpretative nature of these scenes when she writes, "Here the cameraman could achieve his most artistic effects". While Riefenstahl employed various cameramen to take the shots required, there is no doubting that the direction was hers and that the distinctive qualities of the diving sequences are the result of her careful editing. Indeed, the pivotal role of Riefenstahl in all aspects of the film is stressed in her book by the inclusion of a separate section titled 'On Location' which contains thirty photographs of the omnipresent film director at every event.

In the diving scenes, Riefenstahl creates an almost abstract sense of the body in motion by emphasising those parts of the event that take place mid-air. She heightens the disorienting sense of the body divorced from its usual earth-bound position, by cutting sections of the film that include the board or show the crowd. Straight filming and reverse action shots are intercut to show the divers swooping and 'flying' like mythical bird-men and woman. The diving is set to music that gradually builds to an exhilarating tempo, encouraging the viewer to become immersed in this glorification of bodily grace and vitality.

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91 Unknown, 1936f, p.20.
92 Riefenstahl's main cameraman at this event was Hans Ertl who positioned his camera in the pool, sometimes diving underwater as the divers entered the pool. See Sprawson, 1993, p.196-197.
93 In 1924, Riefenstahl appeared as a dancer in the film The Golden Road to Strength and Beauty: An Idyll of Man's Strength and Woman's Beauty. This documentary was an important indicator of the diversity of views in Germany regarding the 'new body'. It has been noted that this film, "presented an astonishingly rich parade of dancers and gymnasts, Lebensreform philosophers, and promoters of body culture". See "The Cult of the Body: Lebensreform, Sports and Dance". Kesser, Jay and Dimdbaugh (eds.), 1995, p.675. The film had a wide circulation and was also shown in Australia in the 1920s, see Adyar, [1920].
94 Riefenstahl, 1994, Preface.
95 Riefenstahl, 1994, pp. 251-281. This sequence begins with a photograph of Riefenstahl.
Riefenstahl recognised that it was with the depiction of divers that she could potently suggest the transcendent presence of the elite athlete and in such sequences that her film reaches its climax. As she writes: "The swimming stadium, above all, presented a symphony of beauty - those flying bodies, floating above us like birds, rolling, turning and twisting through the air in consummate physical harmony". By linking the body to elemental forces - air, water, earth - and then suggesting the body's command over those forces, Riefenstahl invested the athlete with a mythological quality. These bodies are supra-natural; the modern day gods and goddesses of a classical Greek lineage who draw their power and harmony from the universal forces of nature.

An excellent example of this heroic quality is apparent in Riefenstahl's still photograph of Marjorie Gesting, a thirteen-year-old diver representing the United States. Gesting's performance greatly impressed Riefenstahl who described the young diver's, "incomparable control, [as she] skimmed the air like an arrow, slender as a reed, barely making a splash as she entered the water". In this photograph Gesting is captured mid-air in a pose called 'the flying man'. Her feet appear to touch the clouds overhead and with no sign of the pool in sight she is seemingly disconnected from the earth like a female Icarus. Gesting becomes an 'essential' figure in this photograph, perfectly honed, supremely physical and an ideal embodiment of grace and power.
To gain a fuller understanding of the differing ways in which personal and national symbolism suffused images of athletes it is interesting to compare Riefenstahl's still images to those by other contemporary photographers. In 1936, the German photographer John Gutmann also photographed Gesting at the Olympic Games. His photograph, *Class*, takes a more formalist approach to the subject than Riefenstahl. Gesting is shown moments after her lift-off from the board in a strange, seemingly dangerous perpendicular position. She is positioned slightly above the board but perfectly aligned, apparently even overlapping with it, with one hand on her hip and the other almost at right angles to the water. Gutmann's choice of gelatin silver as his medium and his over-exposure of the film gives the image a graphic quality. The athlete is no longer identified with natural forces, as in Riefenstahl's work, but is an elegant and almost abstract form placed in a collage-like fashion on a dark backdrop.

Another photographer to use the divers as his subject was the Russian Constructivist artist, Alexander Rodchenko. In *Turnspringer* he created an extraordinary photograph of the diver as human projectile, not just in the clouds - as Riefenstahl shows Gesting - but seemingly above them. The diver is photographed from behind, curled into a ball with arms clasping his/her legs and head tucked close to the torso. Unlike Riefenstahl's photograph, in which the depiction of the athlete is linked to gender-based qualities - female grace or masculine strength - the sex of Rodchenko's diver is ambiguous. The emphasis instead is on the diver as a gravity-defying force, soaring magically beyond the clouds.

Rodchenko employs the characteristic devices of the so-called New Photography movement to disorient the viewer. Realism is purposefully confounded by the angle at which he takes his image; the viewer is disoriented as the diver is pictured with no apparent connection to the earth in sight. Indeed, it is unclear if this is a 'straight' photograph or a montage of two images. In common with many who worked in the idiom of early modernist photography, Rodchenko regarded his photographs as a political act. The concept of *ostranenie* (making

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strange) is clearly at work here, with Rodchenko taking the ordinary and presenting it in an unfamiliar way in order to 'revolutionise' the viewer's perception.\footnote{The concept of astranenie was formulated by the Russian Futurist, Victor Shklovsky. See Watney, 1982 and Crombie, Ennis, Jolly and North, 1984, p.2.}

Aurel Abramovici was similarly interested in the modernist potential of photographs of divers. One of his photographs, \textit{No title (Divers)}, was reproduced in \textit{Das Deutsche Lichtbild} in 1934.\footnote{No title (Divers) c1933, \textit{Das Deutsche Lichtbild}, 1934, p.85.} In common with Guttman and Rodchenko, Abramovici has adopted a bold approach to his subject. However, instead of photographing the divers from below - to emphasise the affinity of diving to bird flight - Abramovici has chosen a camera angle looking down on his subjects. The photograph has an abstract quality, with unusual spatial relationships created between the elongated shadows of the figures on the boards and the strangely suspended postures of the divers. The dark mass of the water below creates a pictorial ‘field’ on which all the elements are arranged with a deft touch.

\textbf{Fig. 28.} Aurel Abramovici \textit{No title (Divers)} c.1934 Gelatin silver photograph

\textbf{Fig. 29.} Aurel Abramovici \textit{Die springer} c.1934 Gelatin silver photograph

Abramovici took another photograph in this series, \textit{Die springer}, in which the rather whimsical quality of the previous work shifts to the symbolic. In this photograph, a male and female diver are shown poised in the climactic moment before they begin their descent. Standing with their backs to the pool, their feet are only partially touching the edge of the board and their arms are raised above their heads. Their ‘salute’ to the viewer is an intrinsic
aspect of their performance but also can also be read as a salute to their own ideal form.\textsuperscript{104} In common with other photographers working with this subject matter, Abramovici exploits the formalist potential of the body in this setting. The pair is shown standing on diving boards of differing heights which project into the picture plane at a slight angle. The effect is unsettling and, in tandem with the close cropping of the image, helps create a consciously modernist image.

Interestingly, a print of *Die Springer* was either acquired or given to the Australian photographic association, the Sydney Camera Circle, in the late 1920s or early 1930s.\textsuperscript{105} The members of this photographic ‘circle’ included Harold Cazneaux, George Morris and Henri Mallard and they promoted themselves as dynamic and creative practitioners of the medium. The group was open to aspects of the New Photography but, on the whole, preferred to incorporate some of its principles into a progressive form of Pictorialism. While few members of the Circle - with the possible exception of Cazneaux - created images as ‘radical’ as those of Abramovici, photographs such as *Die Springer* played their part in bringing modernist photography to Australia. Along with illustrations of athletes in magazines including *Die Deutsche Lichtbild, Photography Year Book* and *U.S. Camera*, such images encouraged a pictorial dialogue regarding the body.\textsuperscript{106}

While several leading Australian photographers linked modernist devices to ideas concerning the energised modern body, the symbolic potential of diving was not a common subject.\textsuperscript{107} A notable exception is a small group of work produced by L. Gee and Max Dupain for *The Home* at the time of the British Empire Games in Sydney in 1938.\textsuperscript{108} L. Gee adopts a distinctive approach to the subject: in his photograph *Off the Bridge* he shows the Australian,

\textsuperscript{104} The divers posture is also reminiscent of a series of ‘Salute to the Sun’ images produced by various artists in the 1920s and 1930s.

\textsuperscript{105} This information comes from the Acquisition Worksheet for the photograph which is now held in the collection of the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Under the category ‘Source and method of acquisition’ it is noted that the work was presented by the Sydney Camera Circle on behalf of Robert Nasmyth and Mrs Rainbow Cazneaux Johnson (the daughter of the photographer Harold Cazneaux).

\textsuperscript{106} Photographs of divers were included in the *Photography Year Book*. See E.A. Ignatovitch’s image of a female diver in the 1938 issue, p.28. See also Karl Oser’s photograph of a male diver in mid flight in *U.S. Camera* 1936, p.66.

\textsuperscript{107} While I am only considering Australian photographs on the subject of diving it is worth noting one remarkable drawing made by Eric Wilson in 1937. *Life drawing – self-portrait as diver (collection: NGA)* is a dramatically foreshortened front view of Wilson preparing to dive. Wilson’s fine grasp of anatomical details and proportion make this a startling image of the artist in the guise of an athlete. For an illustration and extended caption relating to the work see Sawyers, 1989, p.162.

\textsuperscript{108} *The Home*, volume 19, number 3, March 1938, pp.41-8, 56-7.
Ron Masters at the Olympic Pool in Sydney. With no sign of water in sight and the camera angled to include the Sydney Harbour Bridge and distinctive architecture of the changing rooms, it appears that Masters is diving into buildings. The emphasis here is less on the grace and power of the dive and more on the apparent incongruity of his location.

Max Dupain also took a series of photographs connected with the pool and diving events for the Games. His most notable image is *The diver* which shows Lynda Adams, a Canadian-born diver with an Australian connection - her father was born in Ballarat - who represented Canada at the Olympic Games in Berlin in 1936. Dupain photographed the diver from below the high diving board including the edges of the concrete platform in the photograph to locate the image. Adams is centre of frame, in full flight with her arms above her head and legs together in a supple but highly controlled stance. With no inclusion of the water this image, like many of the Riefenstahl photographs, *The diver* emphasises the 'bird like' quality of diving.

As part of a small group of photographs Olive Cotton took of Max Dupain around 1935, there is an image of him adopting the pose of a diver. *Max, number one* shows Dupain, hands raised above his head apparently preparing to dive. In common with the other photograph previously mentioned in this series - in which he is shown as a discus thrower - Cotton has included few documentary elements to locate the image in a particular place or time. The image is suggestive rather than descriptive with more attention paid to the effect of shadow on his naked torso than the act of diving. In both images too, the subject is in-drawn with eyes closed and attention focused on the action they are about to perform.

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109 *The Home*, volume 19, number 3, March 1938, p.56.
110 *The Home*, volume 19, number 3, March 1938, p.43.
Australian lifesavers: Soldiers of the sea

"Hail to the sons of the surf, the gods of the golden sand,
The man at the reel and the belt, and the 'sweep' with the oar at command!
Hail to the standard-bearer as he proudly marches along,
With shoulders squared
And a heart unfeared
At the call of the surf's wild song!"
Laura Eveline Dixon, 1936.111

While the pictorial possibilities of diving did not interest Australian photographers to the same degree as their European counterparts, there was a comparable area of athleticism that held considerable attraction. In the 1920s and 1930s, photographers began to document the lifeguards who patrolled Australia's beaches and the resultant images show these men as a distinctively 'indigenous' embodiment of ideal athletic prowess.

Other countries also had lifesavers but the Australian clubs could take pride in having the most organised of movements, and the clubs considered their pioneering efforts in nationalistic terms. The Bondi Club, for instance, published a credo as a forward to their history that reads:

The surf lifesaving movement which our club pioneered is truly Australian in spirit. Its character savours the sun-drenched sand and a free and boisterous surf. In it we see democracy function as it was meant to. There are no barriers of creed, class or colour. All these things are forgotten in the wonderful spirit of humanitarian mateship.112

The lifeguard was one of the last major national types to be added to the catalogue of Australian icons and there is little coincidence that they came to prominence at a time when the relationship between health, vitality and preparedness for war was evolving. There was a clear value to government in encouraging the physical training of young men to form well-disciplined and athletic groups - especially since lifesaving was voluntary and thus cost little or no public money.

111 Dixon, 1936, p.17.
112 Unknown, [1956], Foreword, p.5.
Lifesaving was a highly regulated activity and an emphasis on military-like discipline was considered an essential aspect from the beginnings of the movement. According to a history of the Bondi Surf Bathers Life Saving Club, by 1906, "the spirit of discipline, which has already been to the forefront in the Bondi Club was beginning to manifest itself".\textsuperscript{113} The terms used to describe the training process also stress the militaristic. In 1935, for instance, Violet Roche wrote that, owing to the rigorous nature of pre-selection, "only the very fit survive" and were chosen to train as lifesavers.\textsuperscript{114} Once selected, the training was of, "military precision" before the men were allowed to patrol the beaches.\textsuperscript{115} This association of lifesaving with the military is made explicit in the terminology used to describe their activities: lifeguards wore distinctive 'uniforms', 'patrolled' beaches, held 'drill' and went 'on parade' as part of their regular carnivals.

Although military analogies were commonplace among those who wrote about lifesavers, at least one commentator was impelled to make a distinction between the Australian and German style of youth training. In 1937 William Jenkins wrote that:

\begin{quote}
Fascist youth are trained for war... The army of lifesavers throughout Australia seek to publicise their country in a different manner - that of making their surfing beaches safe... Their movement is a voluntary one and they have no maniacal dictators to over-ride their love of freedom.\textsuperscript{116}
\end{quote}

The combative, vigorous nature of lifesavers - whose 'enemy' was the ever unpredictable and potentially life-threatening ocean - was stressed in the majority of photographs of this period. A favourite subject of photographers was the 'carnival'; an event that, despite the frivolous overtones of its name, was a serious occasion in which clubs competitively engaged in displays of their prowess. Max Dupain captures something of the excitement of one of these events in his 1940 photograph, \textit{Surf race start}.

In this photograph, Dupain has entered the water himself to capture the moment as the lifesavers run through the shallow surf to start their swim. He locates us in the midst of a

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{113} Unknown, [1956], p.8.
\footnotetext{114} Roche, 1935, p.22.
\footnotetext{115} Roche, 1935, p.22.
\footnotetext{116} Jenkins, 1937, p.24.
\end{footnotes}
flurry of movement as the men force their way through the almost blinding white sea foam and low surf that partially obscures their bodies. Dupain's photograph suggests the speed, the intense focus of the participants, and the somewhat visually confusing nature of their endeavors. By arresting their physical actions, he also creates a photograph with a classical flavour. Although showing a resolutely modern event, our attention is drawn to the angular movements of the lifesavers captured in profile - poses that are reminiscent of heroic Greek and Roman warriors carved into a sculptural frieze. Such allusions would not have been unexpected from Dupain given his interests in the classical body as the supreme exemplar of physical perfection.

Other images of lifesavers by Dupain focus on the impressively regulated nature of lifesaving displays. In his 1938 photograph, The carnival at Bondi, he again chooses a side-on camera position to show a march past by a team of lifesavers. Dressed in their striking bathers and with caps fastened under their chins, the coordinated movements of the men make them resemble a finely honed battalion of soldiers - albeit under-dressed ones. Dupain has chosen the most visually interesting, and symbolic, moment of their march for his image. The men are shown with one knee raised, mid stride, and one arm swinging in a controlled fashion at their sides. With their identical motions and hands drawn into a clenched fist they are the epitome of a crack team ready to defend the less physically adept men and women swimmers of Australia.

A similar view of lifesavers was captured for The Sun newspaper. This image, which was later reproduced by Violet Roche, is evocatively titled, These Strapping Sons of Neptune and
shows a team of lifesavers marching towards the viewer. Fully 'armed' with their line and
reel and with one member proudly carrying the club flag, the viewer could feel justifiably
secure in the knowledge that such virile men existed to defend his or her day at the beach.

![Fig. 33. Unknown Those strapping sons of Neptune c.1935 Gelatin silver photograph]

The benefits of having lifesavers patrol the beaches was by no means theoretical. By 1939,
the Surf Lifesaving Association could claim to have saved 29,000 lives in its 32-year history.
Most of these rescues were not reported by the press but one particularly dramatic event was
the cause of considerable publicity.

In 1938 a sudden rip at Bondi Beach swept 300 swimmers out to sea. Eighty members of
the local lifesaving club were preparing for a surf race at the time and, in an impressive
effort, were able to save all but five people from drowning. The event, which was referred
to as 'Black Sunday', received immense local coverage and confirmed the heroic status of the
Australian lifesaver. Validation for this view was sought in the statement of an American
doctor who was present at the scene and reputedly said, "There are no men in the world like
your lifesavers... This is the greatest labour of love in the world... I have never seen
anything like it".  

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117 Roche, 1935, p.23.
118 Unknown, [1956], p.8.
Public opinion towards lifesavers reached a high point after this mass rescue and photographers - who were always affirmative in their approach to the subject - used various devices to further accentuate the heroic nature of the men. In a double page spread in *Walkabout*, for instance, a revealing pairing of images positions the lifesaver as a resolutely strong defender of Australian lives. On the left hand page of the layout is a photograph of a young woman standing at the edge of the surf holding a large wooden surf board on her back. She is smiling happily and, with the sun playing on her face and a good sized surf crashing behind her, the image conveys ease and happiness.

![Image of a lifesaver and a woman standing at the edge of the surf.]

*Fig. 34. Unknown. *These surfers c.1938
Gelatin silver photograph

The photograph of the woman is positioned so that she appears to face a much larger image of a lifesaver on the opposite page. Dressed in his uniform, this man is the leader of a parade showing off the main lifesaving device of the club - the line and reel. Indeed the cord of the line is attached to the back of the flotation device he is wearing. The man has been caught in mid-stride and, with his purposeful gait, powerfully muscled body and serious demeanour, he appears to be deliberately moving towards the woman.

In between these two full page images is a much smaller photograph, placed almost at the knees of the lifesaver. This photograph shows a small child at the edge of the water, arms raised in glee at the foam that is rushing towards him, and unaware of the threats of the surf. On its own this image would appear an innocuous example of childhood fun but in this context the viewer is made uneasy. The layout of this spread tells a cautionary tale: the woman and child may be happy but their pleasure is dependant on the strength of the
lifesaver whose figure dominates the pages. The lifesaver is clearly the successor of the Anzac - a man who lays down his life to protect and save not only Australian women and children but also a way of life. Their continued happiness and well-being have become his credo.

Towards the end of the 1930s, the lifesaver literally became larger than life in many photographs that record his activities. In one article on Sydney surf clubs in 1939, a photograph showing the massed march past of various clubs is dominated by the figure of a gargantuan lifesaver who has been montaged onto the image. He is the archetype of all lifeguards, a superfit figure akin to the classical gods, who proudly carries the flag of his club.

![Image](Fig. 35. Unknown Surf clubs, Sydney 1939
Gelatin silver photograph)

In common with the Anzacs, the raw material for the lifesaving movement was not drawn from an Australian elite but from all classes. Commentators of the period often stress the egalitarian nature of lifesaving organisations which was felt to be indicative of Australian society in general. As Violet Roche wrote, "The clubs are drawn from all walks of life - professional men, tradesmen, artisans, labourers". The lack of social proscriptions associated with lifesaving, which was considered to be indicative of Australian society, extended also to the gender of the trainee lifesaver.

119 Unknown, 1939c, p.30.
120 Roche, 1935, p.22.
Although public emphasis focuses on male achievement, women were also involved to some extent in rescues and, more regularly, in team work. In the early 1900s, for instance, the first Women’s Rescue and Resuscitation Club was established in Wollongong and women participated - to greater or lesser degrees - in most of the major clubs. Photographs occasionally appear in journals of the period showing women’s involvement in demonstrations of lifesaving techniques. In 1939, a photograph of women lifesavers at Williamstown, Melbourne was used to illustrate an article on the lifesaving movement in *Health and Physical Culture*.

It is interesting to compare the description that accompanies this photograph with the celebratory prose that march-pasts by male lifesavers usually attracts. The author writes of the women: “Ah! Now we know why the lads of Williamstown, Melbourne try to get out of their depth! So would we with such a charming band of feminine lifesavers on hand!” These typically condescending comments about women’s activities helped ensure that information about the extent of their involvement is generally relegated to the footnotes of histories.\(^1\)

Patronising comments were one thing, but many associated with the lifesaving movement were actively opposed to women’s involvement, ignoring facts in an effort to dismiss their contributions.\(^2\) Violet Roche offered a typical contemporary view when she (erroneously) wrote in 1935:

> The membership [of lifesaving clubs] is confined entirely to men, as women, well and all as they may and do swim, are not considered fit for the extreme buffeting and the call for endurance made in the arduous work of life-saving”\(^3\).

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\(^1\) A rare balanced view of early lifesaving clubs that includes the contribution of women see Jaggard, 1997.

\(^2\) Jaggard notes: “though women were prohibited from obtaining surf lifesaving’s bronze medallion (the measure of proficiency in rescue and resuscitation methods), they swam, ran, drilled in teams and often enjoyed interclub competition, especially in Western Australia”. Jaggard, 1997, p.184. Even the ban against women receiving Surf Bronze Medallions appears not to have been exclusive with at least three women being awarded the medallion at the Palm Beach Surf Club during WWI. See Brawley, 1996, p.46.

\(^3\) Roche, 1935, p.22.
The writer Maxwell Bede was similarly blatant in his view of women lifesavers when he commented:

‘No women - no worry’ is graven in the tissue of every Surf Life Saving Association officials’ heart . . . strong swimming girls have brought off surf rescues in quite sizeable seas . . . but officially the movement will have none of them.\textsuperscript{124}

The prejudice that existed against women is apparent too in the written history of the Bondi Lifesavers Club. The ‘Bondi Ladies Surf Club’, formed in 1908, is dismissed as a ‘mainly social’ club, despite photographs that show women joining their male colleagues in rescues.\textsuperscript{125} Similarly, while women were allowed to be members of the Palm Beach Surf Club the rules stated, “No female shall be permitted to enter the Club house or the precincts thereof except by invitation of the Committee” - an exclusion that saw the women set up their own premises, the ‘Pacific Club’ in 1937.\textsuperscript{126}

A well-intentioned, but still slighting, attitude to women is also clear in an editorial for the magazine, \textit{Surf in Australia}, in 1938. Under the title “A Word for the Ladies”, the author writes:

\begin{quote}
We are proud of the physique of our men; we should be just as proud of our women. The men get a chance to show their worth in the surf; can we deny the women the opportunity to show their value on the beach. They are willing to learn resuscitation and first aid.\textsuperscript{127}
\end{quote}

Even in the pages of this magazine the contribution of women were actually far greater than the editor himself acknowledged. The previous year an unknown writer contributed a small piece on the Ladies' Surf Club of Newcastle whose members gave a demonstration of their lifesaving techniques using the reel and line both at their home beach and at Bondi.

However, more often the presence of women in the magazine was limited to a ‘Ladies page’ titled “Powder and Paint”, which the social and romantic activities of the various clubs was detailed.

\begin{footnotes}
125 Bondi Surf Bathing Life Saving Club, [1956], p.9.
126 Palm Beach Club Rules, number 38 quoted in Brawley, 1996, p.46.
127 Unknown, 1938d, p.1.
\end{footnotes}
Most commentators clearly preferred to consider lifesaving as a masculine pursuit and the fitness and bravery that was requisite for the job acted as an endorsement of male virility. Bede, for instance, describes the beach as a field of battle on which the lifesavers display their prowess and courage against the forces of nature – however, the ‘prize’ is not so much safety or national pride as sexual prowess. He describes the spectacle of lifesavers on patrol ‘performing’ before the appreciative eyes of women: “Each [man] that strode past, magnificent and colourful, was in her eyes a mighty surf-swimming hero, the breakers his steeds, the ocean his broken foe”.

The sexual attractiveness of the lifesaver is implicit too in Vance Palmer’s short story, “Sharkbait”, where sexual tension between the male lifesaver and a woman surfer is the generating force for the narrative. In this story, Geraghty, a mailman and part-time lifesaver, arrives at the beach to find it ‘unmanned’. As he exclaims: “No reel out, and only a pack of women on the beach! Lucky there’s one man with a bit of time on his hands . . . Get to it, boy!” The scene that confronts Geraghty is described in terms reminiscent of an oriental harem. Preened and pampered women, “drowsy under their spread wraps or coloured parasols, opened sleepy, sun-dazzled eyes to watch him pull the door of the shed open and lug the reel to the water’s edge”. The spectacle that greeted the women was no less sexually appealing with Palmer writing of the young lifesaver: “All his pride was in his body - in its symmetry, suppleness, latent power”.

Contrasted against this picture of female sensual indolence is the figure of Joyce, a young woman surfer. As Geraghty swims out to her to engage in banter she rides her board past him: “Slim and dark, she was a seal in the water”. The play between the two is clearly flirtatious and as the story progresses a serious romance seems possible. However, the lifesaver’s pet name for his young woman friend - ‘sharkbait’- almost proves prophetic as he loses a leg saving her from the grip of a great white shark. With his leg gone and seated in a

128 Bede, 1949, p.29.
130 Palmer, 1938, p.38.
131 Palmer, 1938, p.38.
132 Palmer, 1938, p.38.
133 Palmer, 1938, p.38.
wheelchair, the young lifesaver makes a brave but tragic hero who, like the diggers returned from the war, sacrificed his body for the good of others.

Not surprisingly, Palmer's story was included in the issue of *The Home* that celebrated Australia's sesqui-centenary, as it was this event that saw the high point in interest in lifesavers as a archetypal Australian figure. In the 'March to Nationhood' parade through Sydney on January 26, lifesavers took pride of place with *The Home* reporting: "One of the most popular sections of the March to Nationhood procession throughout the streets of Sydney on Anniversary Day was the representation of the surf clubs. Many of them marched the whole route in bare feet".  

Photographs of the surf floats in the march display charming ingenuity. In one float representing 'the surf', a plaster model of a huge breaker was ridden by a young female Naiad seated on what appears to be giant puffer fish. Another float representing the lifesaving movement comprised a fully-manned surf boat on a plaster-cast representation of a wave. Either side of this float was a party of lifeline men complete with their reels.

![Lifesaver and Captain Cook](image)

Lifesavers were a necessary functionary on the beach but they also served a useful touristic purpose. The Australian National Travel Association (ANTA) used a photograph of a lifesaver manning a reel as part of its advertising campaign to encourage Britons to visit Australia during the sesqui-centenary of 1938. The advertisement was a canny mix of the historical and the contemporary: the photograph of a lifesaver absorbed in his work is flanked by a line drawing of a spectral Captain Cook who appears to be similarly engrossed in gazing from the deck of *The Endeavour*. The viewer is left to speculate on the

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135 Photographs of the floats were taken by I.Kagiyama. *The Home*, volume 19, number 3, March 1938, p.33.
136 Advertisement for Australian National Travel Association illustrated in Gammage and Spearritt (eds), p.12.
137 The photograph, which is not attributed here, was taken by Laurence Le Guay and appears in an issue of *The Home*, volume 18, number 11, 1937, p.45 titled "Life-saver".
different views that confront the two men - Cook may well look across the ocean to a landscape in which only Aborigines are present while, 150 years later, the lifesaver inhabits that land and looks to a sea filled with white Australians at play.

The historical space that lies between these two men is vast and resonates with stories of progress and destruction. However, critical interpretation was not the point here for this is a reductive history lesson with an ulterior motive. Although not present, there is a third person in this advertisement who is just as important as the other two men. That person is the potential tourist who is considering following in the steps of Cook and making the long sea voyage to Australia. In this historical tale, Captain Cook represents the past; the lifesaver the present; and the tourist the future. When imaginatively placed in the same time continuum, the scene that the two men are so absorbed in viewing could be considered in a different way. In this scenario what they look out on so avidly is not Australia but England, with the lifesaver not rescuing a swimmer in strife but symbolically ‘reeling in’ the potential visitor from across the seas.

The lifesaver had become an iconic figure almost on a par with the founder of white settlement in Australia, and perhaps more immediately recognisable than Captain Cook internationally. Certainly, the inherent spectacle associated with lifesaving was effectively exploited in the 1930s as a distinctive and unusual spectacle for the tourist.

Around 1936, for instance, Gert Sellheim produced a memorable poster for ANTA in which the characteristic reel and line maneuver of the lifesavers has been used to create a striking design. Sellheim placed a line of four stylised lifesavers, arms raised to hold the line, on a bold yellow block of sand. At the corner of the image, their colleague strides purposefully through schematically drawn surf, its rolling waves contrasting with the angular form of the lifesaver. The effect is reminiscent of Art Deco with a stylish and typically Australian flavour.

Lifesavers were centre stage too in an inventive promotional display at the New Zealand Centenary Exhibition. The acknowledged highlight of the Australian stand was a mechanised surf beach dominated by a group of lifesavers observing a surf boat in the distance.
Described by a reviewer for the tourist magazine, *Walkabout*, magazine as, “extraordinarily realistic and beautiful”, the diorama had a mechanical device that lent motion to, “foaming breakers on a painted sea of deep blue, sending spray behind a surf boat, and up against the rocky headlands”.

![Image](image1)

**Fig. 38.** Unknown. *No title (Diorama of lifesavers and beach)* 1940
Bronze, sand, oil on canvas

The team of lifesavers positioned on a stretch of sand added to this dramatic spectacle: the figures were fashioned out of bronze in a manner that was apparently, “intensely life-like in its naturalness”. The expense of such a construction at a time of war may seem excessive but, as the reviewer raved, “As an example of ‘pulling’ power in tourist lure . . . it will be surprising if many New Zealanders do not swell Australia’s surfing crowds this season”.

![Image](image2)

**Fig. 39.** Unknown. *No title (Lifesavers)*
c.1940
Gelatin silver photograph

As war became a reality for Australia, photographs of lifesavers were overlaid for the viewer with the knowledge that these fit young men would soon be called up to engage in an altogether more bloody battle. In 1940, the cover image for the tourist magazine *Walkabout* reflects this new mood with a photograph that could equally be of soldiers as lifesavers. Here, three young men, dressed in dark bathing suits with military-looking insignia sewn to their bathers, stand ‘to attention’ behind their reel. With their serious gaze fixed on the distant

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139 Unknown. *Walkabout*, 1 January 1940, p.14
140 Unknown. *Walkabout*, 1 January 1940, p.14
shoreline, the lifesavers strong and resolute profiles seem to brook no weakness. In short, these 'soldiers of the sea' are the kind of resolved and supremely strong young men who could amply serve their country.

The advantages offered to the military of young men trained under the discipline of the lifesaving movement were many. Writing from the perspective of post World War Two, Bede Maxwell observed:

By virtue of their acquaintance with the rigid discipline imposed by lifesaving requirements, being of fine physique, and possessed of courage tested and re-tested in endless battling with the seas, [the lifesaver] constituted any recruiting officer's ideal. 141

The lifesaver was the epitome of the goal of National Fitness - a finely honed, locally grown and socially productive 'product', whose body protected Australians at play and, later, in war. His was also the archetype of the 'natural' body, drawing strength from contact with the energising forces of nature. As I discuss in the next chapter, the lifesaver and the athlete were among the most important role models for those photographers concerned with depicting the 'degenerative' forces that could undermine the ideal body.

141 Bede, 1949, p.287. The relationship of swimming (if not lifesaving) to military preparedness was occasionally made by commentators in other countries. The following passage from a German army manual conjures up a frightening image of nationalist supremacy: "[The breast stroke] best utilised the power of the German legs that spread wide then slammed together with maximum force, like those of that legendary Teutonic warrior who by the grip of his thighs made his war horse groan beneath him". Unknown, German Army Manual [1940s] quoted in Sprawson, p.217
Chapter Four

Utopias and Dystopias: Photography, modernity and the body

The development of the ‘machine age’ in the twentieth century brought with it a thrilling sense of speed and energy. Cars, planes, skyscrapers, new and faster means of communication - this range of new inventions helped transform the life of city-dwelling men and women. Australian photographers, such as Laurence le Guay, used photography to create montages that celebrated the possibilities of modernity and progress. However, for many, the excitement of the new came at too great a cost. It was modern technologies, they reasoned, that caused such damage during the First World War. Massed heavy artillery destroyed not only property and the environment but, along with chemical weapons, such as poison gas, often wreaked profound bodily disfigurement and psychic trauma.¹

In this chapter I show that a negative response to modernity also came from those involved in monitoring the health of the population after the war. In Australia, for instance, George Dupain reflected a widespread disquiet regarding bodily well-being when he wrote, “the racial physique . . . is not improving - it is degenerating. The Great War showed this . . . and the results of city life prove it”.² His views on the Australian ‘city-bred type’ was, to a large degree, premised on his belief that ‘modernity’ was a degenerative force that drained the body of its natural vitality and beauty.³ I argue that George Dupain’s opinions influenced his son Max’s photography. This understanding helps, in part, account for a group of images Max Dupain produced that are critical of modernity as a ‘degenerative’ force on the body.

In this chapter I also explore how the reaction to the developments of modernity and the horrors of war saw a reassertion of ‘traditional’ values as a way of restabilising and

¹ The results of poison gasses on the body and faces of soldiers were recorded in graphic detail by the English medical artist Henry Tonks. See Clair, 1995, p.269. The similarly traumatic effects of war wounds from artillery or other causes was recorded in precise detail by the Australian, Daryl Lindsay. He was commissioned by the AIF in 1918 to record soldiers’ faces before and after restorative surgery undertaken at Queen’s Hospital in Kent, England. His series of watercolours are now held by the Royal College of Surgeons in Melbourne. For a discussion of this work see, Nicoll, 1997, pp.132-6.
² Dupain, 1934, p.7.
³ Dupain, 1934, p.8.
regenerating society. I argue that in the arts a resurgence of interest in conventional landscape subjects took place as an affirmation of key national beliefs. Using Pictorialist photographs as my point of reference, I propose that photographers, such as Harold Cazneaux, used elements of the landscape as metaphors for the body: most notably the gum tree, whose qualities of forbearance and strength were considered indicative of the Australian national character.

The interwar period also saw the emergence of ‘classical modernism’, and I examine how Max Dupain’s creation of images of idealised bodies can be seen as part of the ‘call to order’ movement in the arts. As a popular expression of the interest in the classical western notions of corporeal perfection I then investigate how body-builders used photography to record their efforts in transforming their own bodies into the modern equivalent of ancient Greek and Roman gods.

Pivotal to my discussions in this chapter is that the various approaches to modernity were affected by two types of bodies. The first of these was the ideal body – an essential figure whose perfection was the standard by which all ‘degeneration’ could be assessed. This paradigmatic body was, by definition, eternal, and thus not subject to the normal processes of decay. Its qualities of grace, youth and strength were inherent - drawn from an internal source but nurtured by living in a utopian society that held the ‘natural’ as the paramount facilitator of moral and physical health. However, I argue that equally important to this golden scenario was the spectre of the corrupted body whose only promise was that of dystopia and ‘degeneration’.

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4 Australian artists whose work subscribed to classical modernism include Herbert Badham and Charles Moore. Romy Golan has noted that the ‘call to order’ was an aesthetic response in France to a, “world stilled and a vision infused... by nostalgia and memory”. Golan, 1995, p.ix. For a discussion of classical modernism in Europe see also, Cowling & Mundy, 1990.
Utopias and dystopias: Ideal and ‘degenerate’ bodies

“Health has come to mean something social and moral as well as mental and physical”. Edgar Herbert, 1937.5

“At the present we are carrying a race of neurasthenics, pessimists, cranks, weaklings and disease carriers. We want vigorous youth and men and women with healthy bodies and mental alacrity, poise and balance”. George Dupain, 1938.6

The concept of ‘degeneration’ was pivotal to eugenic discourse and had been employed in a pseudo-medical sense as a moral ‘disease’ since the 1850s.7 The word ‘degeneration’ gradually became part of a normative moral code, most infamously in Germany, but also in other parts of Europe, England, United States and Australia.8 It frequently employed racial nationalism to help define the parameters of socially acceptable behaviour against which was set the abnormal, immoral and degenerative. The prime ‘causes’ of degeneration were complex and shifting: race, ‘blood’, alienation from nature, and modernity in all its forms were invoked as culprits.

The net of degeneration was spread wide with those who fell outside a fictional utopian norm drawn into its ambit. In 1895, Max Nordeau cited the avant-garde as part of the ‘problem’, declaring in his influential book, Degeneration, “Degenerates are not always criminals, prostitutes, anarchists and pronounced lunatics; they are often authors and artists”.9 Oswald Spengler, the author of the much read publication, The Decline of the West, regarded the alienation of people from their rural origins as a pivotal feature of the degeneration of society.10 He wrote scathingly of urban life:

In place of a true-type people born of and grown on the soil there is a new sort of nomad, cohering unstably in fluid masses, the parasitical city dweller, traditionless,

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5 Herbert, 1937, p.46.
6 Dupain, 1938, p.15.
7 Max Nordeau cites the French author Dr B.A. Morel as the first to formulate the term ‘degeneration’ in his book Traité des Dégénérances physiques, intellectuelles et morales de l’ Espèce humaine et des Causes qui produisent ces variétés maladies, Paris, 1857 quoted in Nordeau, 1895, p.16.
8 There is no modern published study of the concept of ‘degeneration’ in Australia, however Beale includes Australia in his survey of ‘de cars’. See Beale, Octavius Charles, 1910. Information on ‘degeneration’ in other countries can be found in Pick, 1989; Sumner, 1994, (especially Part one, “A New Deal for Degenerates?: The sociology of social deviation 1825-1940”, pp.1-134); Nye, 1984.
9 Nordeau, 1895, p.vii.
10 For a commentary on Spengler see Herf, 1984, pp.49-69.
utterly matter-of-fact, regionless, clever, unfruitful, deeply contemptuous of the countryman.\textsuperscript{11}

The language of ‘degeneration’ was frequently edged with hysteria as those who promoted the concept believed the forces of social and genetic chaos were increasing. Joseph Goebbels, for instance, invoked notions of degeneracy in an almost frenzied manner in 1930:

\begin{quote}
THE JEW IS RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR MISERY AND HE LIVES ON IT. That is the reason why we . . . oppose the Jew. HE HAS CORRUPTED OUR RACE, FOULED OUR MORALS, UNDERMINED OUR CUSTOMS, AND BROKEN OUR POWER. THE JEW IS THE PLASTIC DEMON OF THE DECLINE OF MANKIND.\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

Goebbels’ attack against the Jews was supported by Hitler whose own ideas about ‘degeneracy’ brought race, modernism and the avant-garde together in simplistic equations.\textsuperscript{13} When attacking modern art as degenerate, for instance, Hitler linked radical art forms with internationalism, which he then allied to Judaism and the metropolis. Against this degenerative formula he placed ‘true art’ which he equated with the countryside, good physical and mental health and the racially pure Aryan peoples of Germany.\textsuperscript{14}

Hitler’s views on ‘degenerate’ art were most forcefully expressed in the touring exhibition ‘\textit{Entarte Kunst} (Degenerate Art) which opened in Munich in 1937 and attracted some two million visitors. The choice of the word ‘\textit{entarte}’ is itself revealing, suggesting a plant or animal species that has changed to such a degree that it no longer resembles its original species.\textsuperscript{15} In an art context, the word implies creative productions that have been pushed so far beyond the boundaries of bourgeois sensibilities as to no longer resemble ‘real’ art.

\textsuperscript{11} Spengler, 1926, volume 1, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{13} Barron has noted that the “thoroughness of the National Socialist’s politicization of aesthetic issues remains unparalleled in modern history”. Barron, Stephanie. “1937: Modern art and politics in pre war Germany”. Barron, [1991], p.9. For a further discussion of the National Socialist approach to modern art see Adam, 1992.
\textsuperscript{14} Adam, 1992, pp.15-6.
\textsuperscript{15} The meanings of ‘\textit{entarte}’ are discussed in Barron, 1991, p.11.
Examples of this 'non-art' were drawn by the exhibition curators from the Cubist, Dada and Expressionist movements and were selected as examples of the painters distortions of the human face. The works emphasised the so-called symbols of 'degraded' art which were, to use the words of the architect and social theorist Paul Schultz-Naumburg, "the idiot, the prostitute, and the sagging breast... a genuine hell of inferior human beings". Use of these symbols betrayed the equally inferior race of its maker and 'proved' that good art could be produced only by Aryans. To stress their point further, a series of exhibitions called Grosse Deutsche Kunstausstellung (Great German Art exhibition) were held. The first, mounted in 1937, contained paintings selected by Hitler to highlight the perfection of the Nordic type. In Australia, a substantial proportion of the art establishment opposed modernism. Most notable was Lionel Lindsay who variously described modernism as, "leaded with the leprosy of the ages" and, "the outward visible symptom of a spiritual malady". In books such as the evocatively titled, Added Art, Lindsay laid the blame for the poor state of modern art on the Jews whom, he maintained, not only often created the works but who supported their promotion through their domination of the art market and press.

An anti-modernist stance was also encouraged by Jack Lindsay, one of the editors of the short-lived Vision: A Literary Quarterly (1923-24). The journal's third issue carried a short article 'revealing' the decadence of modernism through the faces of its exponents. Titled, "Screamers in Bedlam (11) The Literary Lombroso: A Gallery of Modernists" it reproduced portraits of various artists with the intention that, "These faces are here collected that to the exposure of Self in work may be added the exposure of that's Self's structure to physiognomy". The Futurist pianist, Leo Ornstein, was described as having, "some negro element - his old-womanish fat face, which accounts for the primitive disarticulation of his work". The facial 'analysis' of D.H. Lawrence was equally scornful - "[he] is doing his best

17 See Adam, 1992, pp.92-119.
18 Unknown, 1927a, p.14 and Lindsay, 1942, p.ix.
20 Unknown, 1923, p.60.
21 Unknown, 1923, p.60.
to look like a sewer rat” - and Gauguin, Van Gogh and Cézanne were described as the, “direct forerunners of the vilest elements in modernism”.

Racial theories also underpinned the approaches of influential Australian critics such as J.S. MacDonald who, writing in 1935 in praise of Arthur Streeton, commented:

We are not only a nation, but a race, and both occupy a particular territory and spring from a specific soil. The racial expression of others will not be ours nor their methods of interpreting their own country and folk. We will be mainly contented only with our own imagery expressed in our own independent minded sons.

**Photography and physiognomy: Capturing the social face of the times**

Many commentators believed that signs of degeneration literally manifested themselves on (and in) the human body. Using this rationale, the attentive observer could assess the ‘moral standing’ of both individuals and the nation through a study of that population’s physiognomy. The tell-tale features of degeneration, such as feebleness, nervousness, exhaustion and facial abnormalities, could most effectively be captured by the camera and, once recorded, these visual documents were seamlessly allied to various ideological agendas.

During the 1920s and 1930s, for instance, the journal, *Australia Today* - a commercial and tourist magazine published by the United Travellers Association - ran a photographic competition to find the ‘best’ boy and girl. The publishers promoted these, “Children of the Commonwealth” as, “typical Australian Children” and by 1931 had distributed some 869 of the photographs around the world. The story that these photographs told of contemporary Australian society is revealing: in this utopian world every child is smiling, well-dressed, healthy, rosy-cheeked - and white. A startling uniformity prevails in which genetic regularity and national prosperity appear to have produced a country populated by a benign tribe of Anglo-Celtic *wunderkind*.

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22 Unknown, 1923, p.60.
25 Unknown, 1931b, pp.84-5.
26 Unknown, 1931, p.84.
Another more complex form of typology is to be found in the work of Dr Julian Smith. Smith, who was a surgeon and lecturer at the University of Melbourne, became an avid amateur photographer around 1925 and frequently exhibited his photographs at international camera club exhibitions. He specialised in portraiture and character studies, often choosing larger than life figures from popular novels - the work of Charles Dickens was a favoured source of inspiration.

Along with references to fictional worlds, Smith also photographed local models selecting those subjects whose facial appearance and demeanour indicated strong character traits. He emphasised singular personal qualities and, in case the viewer should miss the obvious allusion, he gave the work appropriate titles. For instance, a photograph of a man whose craggy face showed apparent strength and fortitude was called The Rock, while an image of a sharp-eyed 'intellectual' type holding a book was titled The Thinker. In this pictorial world of unambiguous qualities, men were invariably strong, clever and brave and women pure and selfless. Smith's favourite poses for his female models were as nuns, however, he also photographed women involved in other 'caring' roles such as The theatre sister, where he shows a gown woman bathed in soft light apparently patiently waiting for the arrival of the 'real' medical professional - the male doctor.

Theatrical portraits and allegorical studies were popular choices amongst Pictorialist photographers in the 1920s, but Smith's interest in 'types' appears to have been as influenced by his interests in eugenics and heredity as much as aesthetic concerns. In the 1920s, Smith became fascinated by Mendel's laws of heredity and conducted private experiments using pigeons to test the theory. For a period, his passion for the subject was all consuming with one writer noting that, "Pigeons were installed - hundreds of them, all over the garden until his long-suffering family was almost turned out of home by pigeons". Smith eventually

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27 Lebovic notes that, because of his regular involvement in international exhibitions in the 1920s and 1930s, Smith was, "probably Australia's best known Pictorialist photographer outside Australia". Lebovic, 1989, p.194.
28 One reason for Smith's attraction to strong characters may have been personal. Contemporary accounts note his flamboyant, even eccentric nature. Cato states: "When I first met him in middle life, I found him forthright, turbulent, explosive and pretty much a holy terror; but I soon learned that he was also charming, kindly and lovable, with a deep regard for suffering humanity." Cato, 1977 (1955), p.157.
29 Other notable Australian photographers working in this genre include May and Mina Moore.
30 Grimwade, [1948] [p.2].
concluded his experiments when he felt that his breeding program had confirmed the accuracy of Mendel’s theories.

He continued to be interested in the subject of heredity and, in 1938, joined other like-minded enthusiasts in the newly established Eugenics Society of Victoria. Smith was one of a group of medical practitioners who found confirmation of their views in the Society and, in 1939, he wrote to its Secretary, Dr Victor Wallace, “Every medical man is at heart a Eugenician”.

The impact of eugenics on Smith’s photography is by necessity a matter of conjecture, given the lack of written evidence. However, his choice of certain subjects suggests that a concern regarding racial heredity underpinned at least some of his photographic practice. Around 1939, for instance, he took a portrait titled *The blond*, which shows the perfect profile of a fresh-faced young man. The image is not intended as a portrait of an individual - there is no identification of the model - but of a racial ‘type’. Taken at a time when concerns for the genetic and physical strength of the population were dominant, this portrait presents the Nordic type popularly deemed to be the most desirable blood stock for the development of the Australian race.

![Fig. 40. Julian Smith *The blond* c.1939 Gelatin silver photograph](image)

![Fig. 41. Julian Smith *Leaf music* c.1939 Gelatin silver photograph](image)

It is interesting to compare this model of evolutionary refinement with another image taken around the same time by Smith. *Leaf music* (c.1939) shows an Aboriginal man making music.

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31 Letter, 22 July 1939 from Dr Julian Smith to Dr Victor Wallace, Secretary of the Eugenics Society of Victoria. Victor Wallace Archive, University of Melbourne Archives, L83/30/3.
with a eucalyptus leaf pressed to his lips and is a rare example of Smith’s choice of an
identifiably Australian subject. The contrast between the two men is striking: the Aboriginal
is naked and his hair is long and matted, while ‘the blond’ is dressed in a white open-necked
shirt and has carefully cut and coiffured hair. The Aboriginal man is making music using the
most rudimentary of instruments while we are led to infer that the Nordic type would be
more at home listening to chamber music in a sophisticated concert hall. Smith’s hierarchy
of types places the Australian Aborigine at a different ‘level’ - he is a primitive expression of
heredity beyond which the Nordic type has moved.

In Germany, the use of photography as a means of reinforcing racial and social distinctions
was developed even further. From 1929 to 1933, for instance, a range of so-called ‘Blue
Books’ was published in which photographers focused on discrete sections of society. With
titles such as People of the Time and Female Faces of the Present, these compendiums of portrait
photographs subsumed individual identity into a typology of national types in which
occupation was inextricably linked to physiognomy. In this manner a simple portrait of a
male or female farmer functioned metonymically as an indicator of national ideals. The rural
‘type’ became the epitome of hard work, family values and an unbroken relationship to
natural forces. These men and women represented the financial and moral backbone of the
nation and, as such, were frequently depicted in heroic terms.

One of the most notable German photographers to operate in this ideologically charged
field was August Sander. Sander worked on two major projects of social documentation,
producing a portfolio of sixty portraits, titled Face of the Times, in 1929 and assembling work
for his massive unpublished opus, Citizens of the Twentieth Century. His public career was
effectively cut short in 1934 when the Government Bureau of Fine Arts destroyed the

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32 People of the Time: One Hundred and One Photos from Present-Day Germany, Blue Books, Germany, 1930 and
33 In evaluating Sander’s photography Keller has commented that, “As heavily as Sander’s work may have been
burdened with uncertainties, and as emphatically as it was a product of its time, it is nonetheless outstanding . . .
Sander’s view was significantly wider and shaper . . . than those of racial theorists”. Keller, Ulrich in Sander, 1989,
p.11.
printing plates for *Face of the Times*, presumably because his survey revealed German society as too racially diverse for the new regime's liking.\textsuperscript{34}

Before his fall from official favour, Sander presented a series of radio talks on photography referring to his photographic projects as a, "physiognomical time exposure of a whole generation".\textsuperscript{35} In common with other social surveys, Sander chose to accentuate the public aspects of his subjects by carefully grouping and captioning his works in an occupational hierarchy. When viewing the photographs, attention is invariably directed to the myriad means by which people project their social identity through gestures, clothing and even, it is suggested, facial expressions. Sander revealed the typological philosophy that informed his work when he stated, "[each group] carry in their physiognomy the expression of their times and the mental attitude of their group. Individuals who display these qualities in a particularly obvious manner can be called types".\textsuperscript{36}

It is evident from notes accompanying his massive unpublished project, *Citizens of the Twentieth Century*, that Sander held particular views regarding the order of society based on notions of 'decadence'. His projected portfolio was organised into seven categories: a social hierarchy that began with portraits of farmers in the so-called "Germinal Portfolio". These photographs were followed by four distinct groupings of portraits of craftsmen, the professions, women and artists. Moving down the social ladder, the last two categories comprised people whose lives were, to a greater or lesser degree, perceived as degenerate. In the section called "The Big City", Sander gathered portraits of city children, circus folk, homeless people and persecuted Jews. "The Last People" had portraits of those members of society that occupied the lowest social rung, described by Sander as "The Idiots, Sick, Insane and other matter".\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{34} No official explanation was given for this ban, however, in 1929, his work was publically criticised as a, "physignomic document of anarchy and inferior instincts... not a document of uplift, enthusiasm, let alone essence" Unattributed author, German newspaper clipping, 1930 quoted Keller, Ulrich in Sander, 1989, p.19.


Although *Citizens of the Twentieth Century* was never published, it is clear that it reflected Sander's long-held social views. In 1927, for instance, Sander's friend, Paul Bourfiend, wrote a review of the photographer's exhibition at the Cologne Art League in which he commented:

Rural natural man is the source of life for the bustling metropolis... To the extent that man removes himself from nature he becomes more complicated and uses himself up. Two or three generations are enough to reveal this process of decay... Does the way lead to the stage in which we find those in the seventh group, 'The Last People'? Is the idiot with his instinctive vitality geared only to self-preservation, the final result? Should humanity after its detour away from nature again return to her so confined?38

**The spirit of endurance: Pastoral havens**

The countryside was considered a well-spring of national vitality and fecundity in Australia as elsewhere. Its inhabitants were praised as being 'simple', anti-intellectual types who maintained strong links to the land and, by implication, preserved their essential human qualities in its purest form, untainted by corrupting modern trends. The invocation of the 'natural', with its accompanying range of traditional values, was frequently contrasted with the dubious benefits of city living and sophisticated modes of behaviour. In 1927, for instance, the writer Dr Arundale wrote:

We need people for Australia who will not be enslaved by the lure of the towns and cities, who will not want to live in suffocating herds and droves. We need people of the pure pioneer type - simple minded, simple living, preferring nature to tinsel, preferring stars and sky to theatre, club and picture house.39

The Anglo-Saxon notions of tradition, family, health and prosperity are all contained in the notion of 'the land' and those who inhabited it.40 Visually, these ideas were reinforced through the predominance of pastoral landscapes that showed Australia as a land of plenty,

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39 Arundale, 1927, p.113.
40 For a good modern survey of changing attitudes to the land see: Shiell and Stephen, 1992.
brought into productive order by the hard work of white settlers. Artists such as Arthur Streeton eloquently expressed the vision of Australia as an Arcadia untroubled by the effects of war - literally *The Land of the Golden Fleece* (1926) - and he was widely praised for capturing the national spirit of the country. As J.S. MacDonald tellingly wrote of Streeton's paintings in 1935:

> To me they point to the way that life should be lived in Australia, with the maximum of flocks and the minimum of factories. If we so choose we can be the elect of the world, the last of the pastoralists, the thoroughbred Aryans in all their nobility.  

Streeton's earlier works such as *The selectors hut: Whelan on the log* (1890), showed the hard, simple and productive life of these thoroughbred Aryans and no doubt inspired photographers such as Charles Kerry and Nicholas Caire. Taken around the time of Federation - a peak time of interest in national identity - celebrated the lives of the pioneer men and women and their documentary photographs were sold largely to an urban audience unused to the rigours of such a life. Charles Kerry's *A pioneer settler* is one such image that documents the often demanding existence of a selector. It shows a woman and her three children outside their basic but neat home. Surrounding the recently built house are the remains of the trees whose large hewn stumps tell a story of the labour required to clear this little patch of land. The romantic and nationalistic appeal of such 'view' photographs for dwellers was substantial and by 1903, Kerry and Company had 50,000 photographic postcards of bush and other scenes in stock.

The photographic approach to farm workers changed in the 1900s with the rise of the Pictorialist movement. While magazines still ran documentary images that celebrated the productivity of the land and the energy of those who worked it, art photographers

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41 The body in this pastoral context was generally that of the hard-working farmer whose physical and moral strength was ensured by close association with nature. See for instance, George Lambert and Frederick McCubbin. Two women artists to depict the body in bush settings were Nora Heysen and Hilda Rix Nicholas. For information on Nicholas see, Pigot, 1994, pp.53–64. Stephanie Holt considers the contrasting forms of the Australian pastoral ethos and city life in terms of gender when she writes, “Whereas the pastoral ethos proclaimed the virtues of tradition, nationalism, masculinity and ‘nature’, the city was positioned as modern cosmopolitan, feminine and artificial. Constructed in this confluence of negatives [the city] became the site of complex arbitrary and unstable meanings”. Holt, 1995, p.235. Ian Burn also discusses the anti-mechanistic nature of the pastoral utopias painted during this period; see Burn [1990], p.99.


43 For information about Kerry and Caire respectively see Millar, 1981; and Pikethly & Pikethly, 1988.
aestheticized farmers until they became little more than picturesque motifs. Until the 1920s, with the emergence of Pictorialists interested in creating specifically ‘Australian’ images and the impact of modernism on the movement, the farmer literally dissolved into an impressionistic haze.

Examples of the changing depiction of farmers in Pictorialism are to be found in the work of Harold Cazneaux. His photograph, *Winter sunlight* (1907), is a typical early Pictorialist depiction of the body in the landscape. A young man, carrying firewood, is seen walking through an Arcadian forest lit by the raking, soft winter sun. The image is an evocation of a ‘mood’; a romantic ode to the peaceful joys of nature in which man is an unobtrusive and eternal presence. *Winter sunlight* is a fine example of what Dupain describes as Cazneaux’s ability to create landscapes that reveal the, “poetic silence of sunlit afternoons”.

By the 1930s, the essentially romantic depiction of the farmer favoured by Pictorialists in which plough horses and hand-labour dominated, looked increasingly out of place. As modernist photographers accentuated the clean lines of machinery and the new faster tools of farming - if indeed they ventured into the country at all - the Pictorialists’ gentler, romantic approach to the land seemed old-fashioned. This shifting spirit of the times is captured by Cazneaux in his photograph *Toil* (1935), which shows a farmer with his cart and horse moving across a rather barren stretch of land beside an inlet. The photograph is rendered in the soft focus Pictorialist manner and, at first glance, appears little different from images made thirty years earlier. However, what seems to be a scene from the past is disrupted by the presence of the tall smoking smelters of Port Pirie that appear in the background. Industry has made itself felt in even the isolated reaches of Australia and in this new world the farmer appears as an anachronistic presence - as much a remnant of the past as the photographic style in which he is captured.

44 Information derived from Newton, 1988, p.82. Other photographers to choose such subject matter include John Watt Beattie and Charles Bayliss.

45 A typical documentary approach to the life of the contemporary farmer is illustrated in Dunstan, 1936, pp.44-5. This photograph shows the new breed of timberman who, instead of using a cart and horse to haul the giant trees, employs a ten ton lorry. The accompanying article describes the new technology used to fell and haul which includes trolley lines and high-tread cables.

While the farmer was not a significant feature of Pictorialist images in the interwar period, the relative lack of people in landscape photographs does not mean that the land was empty. A symbolic relationship had long been established between the distinctive qualities of the land and of its people whereby the ruggedness of the environment was felt to have bred similarly robust individuals. Accordingly, elements of the natural environment were sometimes treated anthropomorphically. Gum trees, for instance, were considered living relics of a primeval age with a ‘personality’ that marked them as tenacious and majestic survivors. Their ‘spirit’ was akin to that of the Australian people and their characteristic muscular, lean shape became symbolic of the Australian body which had likewise been honed by the forces of nature.

The painter, Hans Heysen, became almost synonymous with the depiction of the gum tree which he described as, “a wonder. Its main appeal to me has been in its combination of mightiness and delicacy - mighty in its strength and delicate in the colouring of its covering”. Heysen drew and painted the gums as heroic and beautiful emblems of an Australian Arcadia, and his style was an influential one for photographers. Harold Cazneaux, for instance, literally followed in the painter’s footsteps when he travelled to Heysen’s favourite painting sites at Wilpena in the Flinders Ranges in South Australia.

47 The relationship of climate to the development of a distinctive Australian type is discussed briefly by Mary Eagle who notes: “It seems that Australia’s claim to possess a regional character rests heavily on the landscape... The antipodean landscape is characterised as arid, weathered, unsympathetic, un-nurturing. In particular the bleaching, flattening light has been claimed as unique to Australia. Accordingly the people are said to be dry, with weathered skin and worn bodies, uncommunicative, unsentimental, enduring, lazy, irreverent, and with a deadpan, if macabre, sense of humour”. Eagle, M. “Grounds for a Visual Culture”. Sydney Review, September 1990, p.16 quoted in Willis, 1993, p.90, n.1.

48 The primeval nature of gums was noted by Charles Weetman who stated that eucalpts represented the “survival of an age long past”. Weetman, 1936, p.33. A more pragmatic approach to trees was taken by photographers such as Kery whose interest in gums was limited to the efforts used to cut them down. See his photographs, Felling a gum tree (c.1890s) and Hauling timber (c.1890s). Millar, 1981, Illustrated pp. 87 and 91. Also, Felling a forest veteran (c.1890s) which shows six tree-fellers in the process of cutting down a giant gum. Lebovic & Cahill, 1989, Illustrated p.95. The gum tree not only provided timber for regular houses but could also be a convenient (if unusual) home for itinerant travellers and solitary settlers. See Caire’s Giant tree house, Gippsland, c.1887, Down on his luck, c.1893 and Big tree camp, King Parrot Creek c.1903. Pitkeithly & Pitkeithly, 1988, Illustrated plates 32, 48 and 65.

49 Heysen, Hans quoted in Moore, 1934, volume 1, p.87.

50 For a good introduction to the work of Heysen see North, 1977.

51 Heysen admired Cazneaux’s work and stated that his gum photograph Storm and Sunshine was, “truly a beauty. The whole picture is a perfect unit and very convincing - not forced to get effect anywhere”. Hans Heysen quoted in Mitchell, 1950, p.8. A series of “Australian Gum Trees” taken by Cazneaux in the Flinders Ranges, South Australia were reproduced in The Home, volume 18, number 10, October 1937, pp.29-36, 41-8. An earlier issue included his photograph of gums, Philemon and Bauois, in a group of photographs including one of Hans Heysen sketching trees in the same area (a portrait later attributed to Hans Hasenplug, see The Home, volume 19, number 7, July 1938, p.70). The Home, volume 18, number 9, August 1937, p.37. Another photographer to work in this territory was Frederick Joyner. Joyner accompanied Heysen to the Flinders Ranges in 1926 and 1927. Waterhouse, 1981.
It was in the Flinders Ranges in 1937 that Cazneaux took his most celebrated 'gum picture', *The Spirit of Endurance*. This photograph of an imposing gnarled gum tree with its roots exposed and a great gash in its trunk, was originally titled *Giant gum from the arid north*.

53 It was given its new and more evocative title in 1941 after Cazneaux's only son was killed in fighting at Tobruk. Cazneaux considered it one of his most nationalistic images and, in 1941, included it in an article titled: "My most 'Australian' picture" for the magazine *Australia: National Journal* writing:

The passing of the years has left [the gum] scarred and marked by the elements . . . unconquered, it speaks to us of a spirit of endurance. Although aged, its widespread limbs speak of a vitality that will carry on for many more years.  

In a similar vein, Cazneaux produced *Hollow gum* (1937), a photograph in which the vital appearance of the tree is even more impressive than that in *The Spirit of Endurance* as the eucalypt's lower trunk has been almost totally hollowed.

54 The tree's obstinate grasp on life, despite seemingly overwhelming odds, was an allegory for the Australian spirit that Cazneaux's viewers would have no doubt have appreciated. When describing Cazneaux's photographs of trees many years later, Max Dupain certainly considered them in iconic terms. He wrote, "His trees are not objective renderings of trees, they are symbols of power and endurance".

Association with the land not only developed the qualities of perseverance and tenacity in its white settlers but it also encouraged connectedness, 'grounding' its inhabitants in a psychic and moral sense. In Frederick Thwaites' popular novel, *The Broken Melody*, the author tells a tale of paradise lost and found as his main character abandons his connection to the land.

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52 The photograph was reproduced with this title in *The Home*, volume 18, number 10, October 1937, p.29.

53 Cazneaux, 1941, p.25. For a discussion of this work see, Newton, 1988, p.109.

54 An illustration of this photograph and a short description is contained in Adams, 1994, p.21.

55 Dupain, M. 1978, p.xii.
(and his physical and moral well being) for the pleasures of the city. 56 Thwaites locates his novel at a country property in Narrandera - the rural town in which the author had been raised. The land represents the moral centre of the novel; a locus of traditional values linking hard work and appreciation for family and heritage with spiritual and bodily health. As Thwaites writes of the property, “every acre of it bore witness to the men who won it, through sheer hard work and the sweat of their brow”. 57

The contrast between nature and the city is repeatedly invoked by Thwaites in his depiction of the sunset in rural and urban settings. Nightfall in the country is a time of almost religious awe - in one scene the main character, Ted, and his country girlfriend ‘Nibs’ stand, “hand in hand on the lawn watching the sun’s last rays as it slowly disappeared over the blood-red horizon, leaving the plains and trees wrapped in the crimson haze of sunset”. 58 By contrast, night in the city is a time resonating with moral and physical threat: Thwaites writes of Ted’s sojourn in Sydney, “The cloak of night was slowly wrapping itself around the city, casting with it that unexplainable shadow of gloom that comes with the setting of the sun”. 59

Association with the land was considered important for city dwellers as a means of reconnecting them to the true meaning of the nation, and themselves. In 1941 Max Dupain chose a simple, but evocative image, of a group of young people around a camp-fire at early morning for an article on “My Most ‘Australian’ Picture”. 60 In the accompanying caption he wrote:

Australians stand awed and amazed at their landscape. The land is the fundament of the people. A strange and desperate urge concentrates in the heart of the city people, whose lives are locked in the jaws of industry, to struggle free and experience the relief that comes with the contact of natural forces. This photo-document shows the early sunlight coming up over the ridge and giving life and form to these city dwellers lighting their campfire. 61

56 Thwaites was one of Australia’s most popular authors of the 1930s. The Broken Melody, was first published in 1930 and the fact that it was reprinted fifty-four times indicates that it touched a profound nerve with the Australian reading public. See entry for Thwaites in Wilde & Hooten & Andrews, 1985, p.746-7.
57 Thwaites, 1930, p.8.
58 Thwaites, 1930, p.40.
59 Thwaites, 1930, p.52.
60 The photograph, titled Early in the Morning, was illustrated in Dupain, M. 1941, p.27.
61 Dupain, M. 1941, p.27.
The call to order: Classical modernism and Max Dupain

As part of the creative response to modernity some artists saw a return to classicism as the best means to re-establish pictorial order in the arts. Classical modernism, as it came to be known, formed one response to modernity and was a strong aspect of art in Australia, as elsewhere, in the interwar period.\(^62\) Max Dupain was the most notable photographer of the 1930s who produced work in this style - an association that may seem surprising given his almost canonical standing as an Australian modernist.

Dupain is today regarded as having an unequivocal and celebratory approach to the contemporary world and it is certainly true that he took many modernist photographs that revel in the scale and forms of modern buildings.\(^63\) However, Dupain’s approach to modernity was idiosyncratic and his admiration for the machine age was tempered with a belief in the degeneracy of certain aspects of modern life.\(^64\) No doubt influenced by his father’s views on physical and genetic ‘degeneration’, Max Dupain even applied these social trends to an aesthetic paradigm, relating decadence to falsity in photography. As he observed in 1940:

Paul Gauguin fled to Tahiti to revolt against the degenerate sophistication of Parisian life. A little later the ‘dark otherness’ in D.H. Lawrence cried out against the intellectualising of the deeper instincts in man. Forty or so years have passed since they uttered their hatred of this decadence in human society; since then certain spartan influences have grown and perhaps the ‘heightened physical awareness’ they yearned towards has developed to some extent.

From Gauguin and Lawrence to contemporary photo-portraiture is admittedly a far cry indeed, but the photo-studio today, with all its fake sophistication, false effects and general dishonesty, in a way symbolises the decadent unreal living that these men revolted against.\(^65\)

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\(^63\) Newton identifies Dupain’s break with the Pictorialist style and adoption of the modernist style as taking place around 1933 with photographs such as *Silos - morning* (1933) which emphasise the abstract potential of his subject. Newton, 1980, p.21.

\(^64\) Such ambivalence to modernity is rarely, if ever, mentioned in relation to Dupain. David Moore, stated the prevalent view of Dupain’s approach to modernism when he wrote: ‘From the German example and his inner self it seems a voice of reason was heard which spoke of a future in harmony with emerging technology and the philosophy of the machine age of modernism’. Moore, 1991.

\(^65\) Dupain, M. 1940, p.19.
Dupain’s rally against the ‘fake’ in photography was part of his move towards a direct documentary style in photography – an interest that can be seen to be developing in the 1930s with his use of models in outdoor, natural settings and which crystallised during World War Two. Dupain’s statements from the 1940s onwards have tended to ignore the considerable body of commercial work that he produced in the 1930s along with the many so-called ‘false effects’ in his personal ‘art’ photographs of this time.66 As he wrote in 1947, for instance, “photography is at its best when it shows a thing clearly and simply. To fake is in bad taste. The studio is synonymous with fake”67

One of his major stylistic tools of the 1930s was montage, a pictorial device that he copied from international photographers such as Man Ray. Montage allowed him to depart from ‘reality’ to produce works that were complex and often critical explorations of modernity. These photographs show Dupain’s knowledge of the stylistic devices and concerns of Surrealism, in particular the evocation of unconscious states of being. However, just as important was his incorporation of classical sculpture: those idealised figures that were so favoured by exponents of classical modernism.

An examination of three typical images of this period reveals how Dupain found no contradiction in depicting the body using the most modern of art mediums - photography - with reference to the most avant-garde of styles - modernism - and yet underpinning his work with a thoroughly classical sensibility.

For instance, in his 1936 photograph, The Apotheosis of Man, Dupain superimposes the head of a classical sculpture with that of a modern man wearing a gas mask and holding a saxophone.68 The implications of the juxtaposition are clear. The refined profile of the ideal ancient man (that epitome of masculine strength and good breeding) has been debased by

66 It should be noted that the majority of Dupain’s income in this period was derived from producing commercial studio photographs. The Mitchell Library holds an archive of 15,000 negatives produced by the Dupain studios. See Schmidmaier, 1997.
68 Illustrated in The Home, volume 17, number 7, 1936, p.51. The previous year, Dupain produced another less symbolic study of modern jazz. Titled The Saxophonist, Dupain creates a simple but effective super-imposition of a jazz player - one appearing to emerge out of the other. This image was reproduced in The Home where the reviewer described it as, “A photographic representation of the jazz spirit by super-imposition. This is the work of the clever Sydney photographer, Max Dupain”. The Home, volume 16, number 9, 1935, p.24.
the modern forces of war and degenerate living. Contemporary man is even unable to reveal his face, covering it with a mask in order to avoid the toxic gases that could kill or maim him.

![Fig. 43. Max Dupain The Apotheosis of Man 1936 Gelatin silver photograph](image)

The saxophone, in this photograph, operates as a potent symbol of modernity. Jazz was a quintessential contemporary form of music that flourished in America, and elsewhere, in the 1920s and 1930s. It carries associations of a liberal style of city living, evoking nightclubs, dancing and drinking. Many considered ‘jazz’ as a powerful sign of modernity, emblematic of the exciting pace of modern life. As the photographer, Harold Cazneaux, noted of Sydney in the 1930s: “the modern crowd . . . [and] modern bustle of our modern city streets, where electric trams, motor cars, concrete and steel, colour and human beings seem all messed up and doing jazz!”⁶⁹ In Dupain’s photograph, jazz and modernity are not celebrated but rather treated as destructive forces on the body, equivalent - if less immediately overt - than warfare.

Two years earlier, in 1934, Dupain produced a photograph that can be considered a precursor to *The Apotheosis of Man*. This untitled work was used as the cover illustration for a short-lived Australian magazine, *Pandemonium*, and is a complex montage of images on the
theme of modernity. It shows a screaming man in the midst of a chaotic scene. A cello appears to transmute into an oppressively tall modern building while, to the right, ancient masks and three devils without heads are mixed amongst sheet music. It is an image that comments on the disruption and noise of modern life, creating a 'symphony' of psychological distress that, literally, results in a hair-raising response from the man.

The image for Pandemonium has a comic aspect but Dupain also dealt with issues of modernity in a rather more portentous fashion. In Doom of Youth (1937) he created an allegorical photograph in which a naked body is used to represent the photographer's vision of modern Australia. Dupain operates within the modernist idiom not to produce a celebratory image of revitalisation and progress but a bleak image of mechanistic catastrophe.

With the prophetic overtones of its title it is not surprising that the central motif in Doom of Youth carries a biblical significance. Dupain shows a naked man tied to a cross and, superimposed over this classic Christian image of sacrifice, is a wheel and a large serrated knife. The demands placed on the body by the tools of modern industry have literally trapped this modern young man with the axis of the wheel appearing to encase his feet. His vulnerability is emphasised not only by his nudity but by the presence of the large knife to the right of the photograph, which looms in a menacing manner ready to wound or even castrate. Using symbols that signify psychic disempowerment, Dupain suggests in this photograph that the flywheel of mechanisation has doomed youth - the representatives of a nation's future - to a bleak fate.

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69 Cazneaux, 1930, p.65. Dupain was not unaware of the pictorial possibilities of the city and, in 1938, produced Rush hour, Kings Cross (1938). This photograph shows the dynamism and rhythm of city life as a crush of cars, trams and people move through the wet streets of Sydney at rush hour.

70 Pandemonium, August 1934, volume 1, number 7, cover.
Dupain's views regarding the degeneration of modern society were not entirely pessimistic. Underlying his sometimes grim indictment of modernity was an expressed belief that a reinvigorated sense of the body could help revitalise the individual and the community. The importance of physical awareness found expression in Max Dupain's photographs through an emphasis on the body in motion, engaged in physical activities usually with the natural environment as a backdrop.

Dupain had always taken his camera out of doors, particularly to photograph his models by the beach, but the physical restraints of using a bulky tripod in such a situation were obvious. The introduction of smaller cameras and faster films made portability no longer an issue and clearly proved a liberating force for Dupain who wrote, "This new, little machine will take us out of the studio into the sunlight and bring us face to face with a new realness". However, while the 'realness' Dupain sought came from contact with the natural landscape that surrounded him it also lay in a more symbolic realm: the classical world of ancient Greece and Rome.

"Are You an Australian Apollo?: Embodying the Athenian ideal in Australia"

"Every limb [of Apollo] is well proportioned; the torso presents an aspect of litheness and 'flowing lines' seldom met with in other works of art from the Grecian chisel. Here, then, is the model upon which to base YOUR aspirations!"
Alfred Briton, 1939.

A potent western expression of the ideal natural body was found in those figures of corporeal perfection portrayed in 5th century Greek and Roman art. The lithe athletes and heroic muscular figures depicted in classical sculpture and vase paintings were used as a utopian model for the development of the body in an individual and national sense.

Reference to the 'golden age' of antiquity provided a touchstone against which to judge

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71 For an account written by the model of this photograph see Unknown, 1939e, pp.112-6
72 Dupain, M. 1940, p.19.
73 Author's emphasis, [Briton] 1939, p.51.
74 It should be noted that the Eastern response to the 'ideal' body was strikingly different. As one writer has observed: "Alongside ancient Greek statuary we have Indian and Egyptian sculpture, which present to our gaze bodies turned in on themselves ... the chests are not bulging, there is no muscular relief expressive of strength, the stomachs are soft, often rounded, and the posture - often seated or standing, sometimes recumbent - indicates how little importance is attributed to the movement of the body". Andrieu, G. "La Respiration Reflet de nos Apirations". Andrieu, G (ed). Sport, Arts et Religions, Université de Paris X Nanterre, Paris, 1989, pp.23-24 translated and quoted in Dutton, 1995, p.28.
contemporary society and established physical ideals with which to measure the modern body.

Contemporary writers were sometimes remarkably literal in this process of comparison. In 1907, for instance, the British writer, Daniel Brain, used classical goddesses Venus, Juno and Minerva as three physical and character models for modern women. As he wrote: "What are called 'types' not only indicate forms on which our notions of beauty are based, but also the co-existent attributes, such as ways, manners, methods of life appertaining and peculiar to each".75

A belief in the efficacy of such comparisons prompted P.W. Pearce to pose the question, in 1928, to readers of the Melbourne journal, *Swimming Illustrated*: "Have you a Bathing Suit Figure?"76 In case anyone felt a rising sense of confidence at this question, Pearce promptly deflated the reader with the statement that, "The day of Venus and Apollo is gone".77 As proof of his views, he provided statistics of "An Ideal Man" according to the so-called, "Ancient Greek standard" and "An Ideal Woman" based on measurements of sculptures of Venus.78 These figures were specific - providing the height, weight, chest, waist, thigh, hip and neck measurements of these model ancient citizens.

Despite evidence that the real-life Athenians of the 5th century were actually thickset and sturdy in appearance, Brain and Pearce (among many others), considered the idealised projections of classical sculptures as corporeal fact.79 From measurements of Greek and Roman sculptures, Pearce constructed a modern ideal that, give or take a few inches, was the same as the ancient model. Needless to say, he then concluded that such bodies were not frequently found in modern society. Pearce deduced that contemporary urban lifestyle was having a detrimental effect on the human form, with parts of the body withering from lack

75 Brain, 1907, p.iii.
76 Pearce, 1928a, pp.10-12.
77 Pearce, 1928a, p.11.
78 Pearce, 1928a, p.11.
79 As one authority on Greek palaeopathology notes: "The inhabitants of Greece in the Mycenaean, archaic, and classical periods were thickset and sturdy, with relatively short lower limbs. The image of their general appearance that one obtains from osteoarchaeological evidence does not coincide with the idealized representation of the human body in Greek sculpture. [But] although the average man had neither the slender grace of the statue of Apollo nor the force concentrated in one of Herakles, he did have a supple, vigorous body attuned to the grind of daily life". Grmek, Mirko. *Diseases in the Ancient World*, Paris, 1993, p.110 quoted in Stewart, 1997, p.12.
of use. This problem was apparently evident, "not only [in] the business man, but the
workman, [who] has very little work for his arms to do. Naturally this will have a direct
bearing on the measurements of the future generations".80

Not everyone held as pessimistic a view of the Australian physique as Pearce. Alfred Briton,
Editor of the magazine Health and Physical Culture, maintained that at least some Australians
had bodies that were comparable to the ancient ideals. In his 1939 article, "Are you an
Australian Apollo?", Pearce pointed to one group of men who were living proof that such
classical bodies still existed: the lifesaver.81

I have no hesitation in saying that here in our midst we have some splendid
specimens of manhood. Look at those sun-bronzed surf-teams ... to watch a
march-past of these chaps is to be privileged to witness some of the finest physiques
in the world! ... the deep chests whose lungs are filled with ozone-laden air; the
strong supple limbs born of strenuous toil with the surf ... all bear eloquent
testimony to the value of a great outdoor life!82

Briton's choice of Apollo as the body type on which Australian men should model
themselves had symbolic as well as corporeal meaning: Apollo was the sun-god and as such
was felt to have a natural resonance with sun-loving Australians. Briton chose the Apollo
Belvedere to illustrate his article and placed it with a much larger photograph of a semi-
naked young Australian man. The man in question was not a lifesaver but an ex-pupil of
George Dupain's gymnasium, and stood as testament to the power of self-transformation
through exercise.

Businesses that specialised in body development flourished in the West from the 1900s and
many Australians - most generally men but also some women - became enthusiasts for this
form of 'physical culture'.83 The development of the body through weight-lifting and other
muscle developing exercises was intended to restore the natural strength, flexibility and
beauty to a person sapped of such qualities through city living. The promotion of these

80 Pearce, 1928a, p.11.
81 [Briton], 1939, pp.51-2. In his article, Briton encouraged readers to send photographs of themselves if they felt they
measured up to the Apollo Belvedere. He had previously sought images of women who, "rival Venus".
82 [Briton], 1939, pp.51-2.
83 Body-building was popular in other countries, most notably the United States and France. Research into the
reclaiming of the body as part of a nationalistic project of rejuvenation has been undertaken by Garb, 1996.

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values is evident, for instance, in a 1925 advertisement for Weber and Rice's Health and Strength College at 135 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne. Promoting "The Body Beautiful", a suitably muscular man is shown revealing the impressive musculature of his semi-naked body.\textsuperscript{84} The advertising copy for this prime specimen of body development reads: "Rippling with muscular power and vitality, F.L. Mack . . . of Melbourne sought better health and found it through Physical Culture".\textsuperscript{85}

As with other projects concerned with physical development, it was to classical models that body builders turned to give form, meaning and authority to their efforts. The idealised sculptural forms of ancient Greece may not have reflected the true body shape of the average Athenian but, for the puny Melburnian or Sydneysider of the 1920s such bodies were the goal of their efforts. The physical transformation of the ineffectual modern body to god-like classical form was frequently given credence through the power of photography.

![Fig. 55. Unknown The author in classical pose. 1909 Gelatin silver photograph](image)

It was common practice for body builders and physical trainers to stress their relationship with the classical body by posing for the camera in the manner of ancient sculptures. In an ironic twist, this modern machine was used to validate contemporary body builders' association with their classical forebears. George Dupain, for instance, included a photograph of himself wearing a loin cloth and Roman sandals in the forward to his 1909 publication, \textit{Are you Satisfied with Your Physical Condition}\textsuperscript{86} The caption to the image reads, "THE AUTHOR IN CLASSICAL POSE. After the famous piece of statuary, "The Dying Gladiator".\textsuperscript{87}

Dupain encouraged the patrons of his gymnasium to look to the classical as a model for their physical development. In 1912, for instance, he ran a photographic competition offering prizes for the best images of, "a developed man after some classical piece of

\textsuperscript{84} Advertisement in \textit{Better Health and Racial Efficiency}, volume 3, number 12, August 1925, p.16.
\textsuperscript{85} Advertisement in \textit{Better Health and Racial Efficiency}, volume 3, number 12, August 1925, p.16.
\textsuperscript{86} Dupain, G. 1909.
\textsuperscript{87} Author's emphasis, Dupain, 1909, Foreword.
Male applicants for this, "physical culture art competition" were encouraged to clothe themselves in a, "loin cloth or leopard skin". Women, too were encouraged to submit photographs of themselves in artistic poses representing physical exercises such as, "dancing, skating, club-swinging, fencing, etc". The club-swinging woman and her compatriots, were then judged on, "delicacy of pose, gracefulness of position, beauty of contour, appropriateness of costume".

Along with photographic competitions, George Dupain claimed a classical imprimatur for his business by using the twin figures of the *Venus di Milo* and Myron's *Discobolus* on the cover of his journal, *The Dupain Quarterly*, and as the letterhead for his stationary. Dupain's gymnasium was indeed a museum of sorts in which the aesthetic of body building was ensnared. He placed casts of ancient sculpture in his rooms, along with photographs of men in classical poses, encouraging the modern man or woman to compare the ideal with their own puny form and be inspired to bodily transformation.

However, unlike many gymnasium operators, Dupain's view of the perfect male body was not the overdeveloped heroic musculature evident in such classical sculptures as the *Farnese Hercules* or *Death of Lacoön and his sons*. In 1934, he wrote an article titled, "The Big Muscle Myth". which he disputed that, "big muscles are a sign of the superman, that muscle culture is the only pathway to racial reconstruction, and [that] this ideal is best accomplished by converting oneself into a kind of human derrick". Instead, he favoured a balanced diet and sensible exercise program as a means of achieving individual and social regeneration.

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88 Unknown, 1912, p.40.
89 Unknown, 1912, p.40.
90 Unknown, 1912, p.40.
91 Unknown, 1912, p.40.
92 *The Dupain Quarterly*, 1912 - [1913]. Information on the letter head from Newton, [c.1994].
93 Photographs of the interior of George Dupain's Ashfield school are contained in Dupain, G. 1909.
94 For a discussion of this heroic body type see Dutton, 1995, pp. 21-32.
95 Dupain, G. 1934, p.12.
Despite George Dupain’s views on the ‘myth’ of big muscles, it is clear that the acquisition of such physical attributes was desired by most body builders. Muscles were a clear sign of masculine power but they also had other symbolic meanings.\textsuperscript{96} The possession of a well-developed body showed that the man in question had the discipline required to achieve such physical prowess and, as many contemporary gym operators boasted, this conflated to being a ‘success’ in life. Most men involved in body building considered muscles beautiful - after all, the Greeks had fetishised them so surely it was legitimate, they reasoned, for modern men to regard them as aesthetically desirable. Moreover, large muscles on men were ‘natural’, a sign of their inherent physical strength that helped differentiate them from women and, at some level, assert their patriarchal dominion.

Male body builders easily found support for their physical efforts through association with the idealised sculptures of antiquity but it was more complex for women to find appropriate ancient models for their fitness goals. This is not to say that the classical body was never invoked for women: certainly the female desire to access the lofty realms of ancient Greece is suggested by Laurence Le Guay in his photograph, \textit{Youth} (c.1937).\textsuperscript{97} Le Guay’s image shows two naked women on a hilltop in exaggerated attitudes of obsequiousness to a statue of Apollo, which appears from the clouds above them. The image is odd and would appear even stranger if it were not considered as part of the desire by modern Australians to achieve the physique of the classical gods. In this light, the women’s contortions before Apollo can be seen as reverence towards the god who emerges from the heavens and a sign that this metaphoric realm still has relevance for contemporary men and women. The ‘youth’ of the photographs title can be seen as a reference to an essential form - a Platonic ideal to which modern Australians could aim.

\textsuperscript{96} A discussion of the various symbolic meanings of ‘muscles’ in Greek culture is to be found in Stewart, 1997, pp.93-5.
Appeals to the classical female body were also used in a commercial sense by advertisers who capitalised on the popular interest in all things ancient in the 1920s and 1930s. For those women who were not blessed with a 'classical' figure, and who did not want to undergo a physical make-over through exercise, there was an alternative offered by commerce: namely, corsets. An advertisement in 1936 for one such product cleverly incorporates appeals to the ancient and the modern in its promotion:

The Golden Age of Greece inspires this year of Grace. This is the season of Grecian influence - in fashion, in coiffures, in figures. You must hold your head high, walk with lithe, long steps, look as though your floating chiffons draped an UNCORSETED figure.  

For the full-bodied woman to achieve the easy, natural grace of her slender Grecian sisters required considerable modern ingenuity. The advertisement suggests slipping into the 'Charnaux Belt' a formidable panty girdle constructed of, "electrically-deposited latex, a new material which has the feel of gardenias, the allure of lace, a stretch and come-back without parallel in corsetry". To make the point visually the advertisement featured a drawing of a stylised Greek sculpture out of which 'steps' a schematically drawn woman with latex girdle and bra tightly constraining every curve of her body.

The invocation of the classical became a popular device among advertisers and, in 1938, Berlei began promoting their product as a means of reshaping the modern female body along ancient lines. In an advertisement in Walkabout magazine, they combined a photograph of a dressmaker adjusting a corset on a woman against a backdrop of a sketched Ionic column. The copy accompanying the illustration promoted the corsets', "Classic Beauty of Line":

In the Greek conception of beauty was nothing severe, never a harsh or rigid line. On this classic tradition are the new Berlei foundations moulded. Planned with care

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97 This photograph was illustrated in the popular men's magazine, Man, March 1937, p.24. Interestingly, the following year the images of the women were reproduced as two separate photographs in a section on 'nudes' in the British journal, Photography Year Book: An international annual of camera art, volume 3, 1938, p.192.
98 Author's emphasis, advertisement for the Charnaux Belt in The Home, volume 17, number 3, March 1936, p.79.
99 Advertisement for the Charnaux Belt in The Home, volume 17, number 3, March 1936, p.79.
and cut with skill, they give to the figure the grace of line that Grecian art exemplified.\footnote{Advertisement for Berlei in \textit{Walkabout}, November 1938, p.56.}

In 1937, Max Dupain also incorporated ancient imagery in his advertisement for “Lingerie by Lustre”.\footnote{Advertisement for Lustre Lingerie in \textit{The Home}, volume 18, number 3, March 1937, p.69.} In this studio photograph, he shows a woman dressed in a long flowing slip leaning against steps to accentuate her curvaceous form. A plaster copy of Venus de Milo placed to the side of the steps makes the point: the modern Venus has little to fear from the comparison with her ancient sister - as long as she wears Lingerie by Lustre.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.25\textwidth]{fig48.jpg}
\caption{Max Dupain \textit{Advertisement for Lustre by Lingerie} c.1937\newline Gelatin silver photograph}
\end{figure}

Dupain may well have been influenced in this photograph by the German photographer, George Hoyningen-Huene, who visited Sydney as part of a commercial fashion shoot for David Jones in 1937. Dupain greatly admired Hoyningen-Huene’s stylish fashion photographs which he had viewed in the pages of imported journals such as \textit{U.S. Camera} and \textit{Harper’s Bazaar}, and he no doubt had the chance to see further work when the photographer used Dupain’s studio during his stay. Indeed, a photograph taken by Geoffrey Powell at the time shows an enraptured young Dupain seated beside Hoyningen-Huene who discusses a print with him.\footnote{Illustrated Newton, 1980, p.27.}
Hoyningen-Huene frequently used classical props in his fashion and advertising illustrations. H.K. Frenzel’s introduction to a small book of the photographer’s portraits published in 1932 makes it clear Hoyningen-Huene’s enthusiasm for Greek and Roman antiquity was a reflection of the times:

The ancient world celebrated its entry into Montmartre to the beat of jazz. Ionic columns rose alongside of factory smoke-stacks, Greek temples alongside railway tunnels . . .; and the ladies and gentlemen from Paris, London, New York, and Biarritz enjoyed the sunshine among pedestals from which the gods of ancient Greece looked down in naked silence, between snorting stallions and muscular gods.\(^\text{103}\)

In 1934, some three years before Hoyningen-Huene visited Sydney, he took an image that bears a striking resemblance to Dupain’s advertisement for ‘Lingerie by Lustre’. In Hoyningen-Huene’s photograph of a simple, flowing dress by Augustabernard, he has posed his model on the bottom of three steps\(^\text{104}\). Behind her, and partially in shadow, is a bust of Venus whose womanly curves mimic those of the slim but shapely model. His choice of classical props, the steps on which he placed his model and his atmospheric use of studio lights all appear in Dupain’s photograph some years later.

Corset companies may have preferred their clients to strap on ‘foundation garments’ but physical educators were keen for Australian women to create a classical body through exercise. In 1924, for instance, Francis Jackson compared an image of a classical Greek sculpture with a photograph of a contemporary Australian woman in his article, “Australian Sports - the game beyond the prize”.\(^\text{105}\) He reproduced a painting of, *A Spartan Girl*, in which a young girl is dressed in a loose chiton. Her body has almost non-existent breasts.

\(^{104}\) Illustrated in Ewing, 1986, pl.17.
\(^{105}\) Jackson, 1924, pp.14-5.
and strong, rather masculine features. Jackson acknowledges the androgynous nature of the sculpture but considers it in positive terms as proof of the woman’s, “complete absence of sex-consciousness. The girl is evidently an athlete, quite as completely as a man”.

Next to the Spartan, Jackson includes a photograph of, An Australian Girl. Dressed in the same clothes and adopting a similar pose, she represents a continuance of a genetic line that stretches back through the centuries. Jackson suggests that the pivotal reason for the strength of this genetic heritage is sport: “the gain has been enormous for the real beauty of the individual female and of the race”. Indeed, the cumulative result of such physical efforts on the gene pool have apparently resulted in a modern Australian woman actually superior to the ancient. As Jackson observes, while the statue may be an idealisation of the ancient female body, the photograph is a true document of reality:

[it] is not, as perhaps was the statue, a mere idealization from fact, a composite representing a type, but it shows the beauty and strength of the modern Australian girl as she actually is when she practices athletics.

The Spartan athlete offered one archetype for the Australian women that could help legitimise their physical efforts and love of sports. However, a more commonly invoked model, albeit a non-human one, was that of the Goddess Diana (Greek Artemis). Diana was apparently a popular figure among Australian women - Jackson observed that, “the modern cult is that of Diana the huntress and athlete” - and it is not hard to see why the goddess might appeal to the ‘new woman’. Diana was considered to be a virgin, and, although early stories have her enjoying many casual affairs, she ultimately chose hunting alone in the mountains over marriage. Her hunting skills and athletic body made her a role model for the warrior tribe of female Amazons who apparently mimicked her dress and

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106 Greek philosophers regarded women as ‘unfinished men’. This concept is explored in Stewart, 1997, p.6. Stewart summarizes the prevalent view of women in Greek culture as being, “afflicted with too much blood, too much emotion, breasts, no muscles, and no penis”, p.11. Thomas Lacquer provides a more detailed analysis of the history of gender in Lacquer, 1990.


108 Jackson, 1924, p.14. Sporting activities became part of the curriculum for women in Hellenistic Greece but they did not join athletic competitions until the 1st century AD. See Pomeroy, 1975, p.137. Note too the cover of this book which shows a detail from a mosaic from the Villa Romana del Casale, Sicily of women exercising (one with mini barbells) dressed in bikini like outfits.

109 Jackson, 1924, p.15

110 In Grecian mythology there were six major Goddesses: Athena, Artemis, Hestia, Aphrodite, Hera and Demeter.

111 Jackson, 1924, p.15.
hunting style. Although a virgin, she was also the goddess most concerned with the physical aspects of female life such as menstruation and childbirth.

For the modern woman, it was probably Diana's independent and strong nature that held most appeal. The Australian artist, Dorothy Thornhill, captured just this quality in her painting titled *Diana resting* (1931). This work shows the Goddess stripped of her usual tunic and hunting boots pausing to lean against a tree before she bathes in a mountain stream. She is a striking figure with a forthright expression and powerful body that would unnerve most men who crossed her path. Her hand, resting near an arrow in her phallic-shaped quiver, carries a warning and suggests that this is a woman not to be treated lightly. However, what makes this painting most interesting is its contemporary resonance: it is a retelling of an ancient tale made with the modern Australian woman in mind. With her lean, muscled body, short-bobbed hair and makeup, this Diana looks like a particularly well-honed flapper who has abandoned convention in favour of a free life.

While Diana was a symbol of independence for Australian women with an adventurous and liberated spirit, the more usual ancient model of womanhood was that of Venus. A far less contentious proposition, Venus was the Goddess of beauty, fertility and sexual love. As a symbol of all that was physically desirable in a woman, it was most common for Venus to be used as the arbiter of corporeal perfection to which Australian women should refer.

Max Dupain, for instance, reinterpreted the Venus story in 1936 in his photograph, *Birth of Venus*. This work shows a seated naked woman, arms raised above her head. Her face is obscured in darkness and a pattern of filtered light plays across her body. The use of light effects in the image renders the body anonymous and curiously asexual - the woman's breasts are flattened by the light and her body has a leanness that could be masculine. She is depicted as a modern Venus, rising out of the shadows, with a body that is leaner and more honed than traditional representations of the usually soft and curvaceous Goddess of love.
However, this photograph has another unexpected element that may not be obvious at first viewing. At the bottom edge of the photograph, and lying in front of the woman, is a female dummy on its back. The addition of this mannequin makes more sense when the original published title of this work is used. In 1937, Dupain’s photograph was reproduced as *The mechanical birth of Venus*, a title which gives a different inflection to the work. This modern Venus is the progeny of the machine age born not from the foam of the sea but inanimate technology.

The classical body was an important physical and psychic model to Dupain who considered the ancient Greek and Romans as an inspiration for modern men and women. But he did not consider contemporary association with this heritage to be so strongly embedded in the culture as to be sustained without question. As *The mechanical birth of Venus* suggests, the machine age had fundamentally altered the path of humanity and the link between past and present had become tenuous.

Dupain’s sense that modernity was destroying an essential part of its tradition is powerfully suggested in his photograph, *Shattered intimacy* (1936). This photograph shows a small Roman plaster cast of a male figure that lies in pieces in an abstract interplay of light and forms. The ideal body - that genetic and cultural forebear of modern white Australians - lies broken and uncared for, a tiny figure of a god who once reigned supreme in people’s minds.113 Dupain suggests that the abandonment of such models has severed a connection that was an intimate and profound one for the Anglo-Saxons and whose loss has robbed modern culture of an essential ideal.

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112 For a discussion of this work see, Bruce, 1995, p.392; and Edwards, 1989, p.44.
113 Dupain’s father, George, had taken a different approach to these remnants of sculptural antiquity. As he wrote: “A Shattered Discobolus still reveals the entrancing beauty of the Grecian Ideal”. Dupain, G. 1934, p.14.
Photographers, such as Dupain, used ancient sculpture as a metaphorical device to comment on contemporary society and the modern body. In another context, contemporary sculptures of women were based on corporeal forms that, in a conceptual loop, took their authority from classical conceptions of beauty. Around 1927, for instance, the Sydney sculptor, Raynor Hoff, produced a female torso titled *Australian Venus*. This headless, armless, but sexualised, Venus is in the classical mould but is realistic enough to be equally a woman from fifth century Athens as from contemporary Sydney. It is not known if Hoff based his Venus on an actual Australian woman but, seven years earlier, another sculptor found the similarities between living models and classical art.

In 1920, the Sydney sculptor, Dora Ohlfsen, was commissioned to model an Anzac medal in aid of disabled Australian and New Zealand war veterans. According to a newspaper report in the Sydney Morning Herald, Miss Ohlfsen’s stated that she had also produced ‘slightly draped’ male and female statuettes. The female model for these statuettes was a New Zealander named Eve Balfour who had apparently visited the artist’s studio in London. The woman modestly claimed to possess, “the most perfectly proportioned figure in the world” to which Ohlfsen added,

> She is 5ft 6in tall, and is certainly wonderfully fine, though taller than the ancient classic conception of feminine beauty. I found her proportions slightly above those of the famous Cirenaica Venus, recently discovered by soldiers digging trenches during the Tripoli War.

Interestingly, critical responses to Ohlfsen’s female statue - and its companion modeled on a ‘perfect type of Anzac’ - were informed less by aesthetics than national, even eugenic, considerations. As the artist comments, “Much interest was excited in London by the fact that ‘the New Zealand Aphrodite’ and ‘the Australian Apollo’ were the products of British civilisation at the antipodes”.

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114 For information on Ohlfsen see Edwards, 1995a.
115 Unknown, 1920. My thanks to Elena Taylor, Curator, Australian War Memorial for alerting me to this article.
The Metropolis: Laurence Le Guay and the celebration of modernity

“We live in cities. Our fields are asphalt, our stars are the electric streetlamps, our forests the pylons of high-tension wires”
Hans Windisch, 1929.117

The cities and surrounding suburbs were where the majority of Australians lived by the end of World War One. ‘Nature’ was a place to be visited by tram, train or car on the weekends and holidays but home was the modern metropolis. While some lamented the lack of contact with nature, a utopian humanist approach embraced modernity as the potential saviour and liberator of modern peoples. For these commentators, the machine age carried the promise of a new world in which the fruits of industry could release people from mundane and dangerous employment and technology could even be used to alter the body.

In 1937, the Sydney writer, Denis Sullivan, presented a prescient view of the future, in his article, “People of the Future”.118 Sullivan imagined a day when plastic surgery would give people perfect features; monkey gland injections would help maintain youth; and heart and eye transplants were commonplace. At the time, his predictions no doubt seemed far-fetched, but they were a remarkably accurate harbinger of how modern innovations would come to affect the modern body.

The imaging of a new futuristic body - part machine, part human - was taken up by some artists such as the French painter, Fernand Leger, who remodelled the human body to create formal yet dynamic images of mechanistic men and women.119 Leger’s paintings are a creative interpretation of how people might appear in some future world but there were other artists who believed that modern life had already reformed the body. In 1939, for instance, the English sculptor Frank Dobson was interviewed for the Australian magazine Health and Physical Culture. Dobson expressed the view that changes to lifestyle wrought by modern technology had impacted in a favourable manner on the body of the modern

118 Sullivan, 1937, pp.27 and 48.
119 The robotic woman in Fritz Lang’s film, Metropolis is the dystopian counterpart to Leger’s figures.
woman. As he wrote: "In the development of the lines of the modern woman's body the influence of the bold, slim lines of ships, motor-cars, and aeroplanes can clearly be traced".\textsuperscript{120}

According to Dobson, western women's physical emancipation from the labours of the past allowed her more leisure time and the combination of exercise and relaxation had helped reform her body to a streamlined version of her classical sisters. The effects of such changes had brought about a, "modern Venus of the twentieth century" who was a, "perfectly simple and simply perfect piece of machinery".\textsuperscript{121} Dobson's ideas - while unconventional - were treated seriously by at least one commercial company. The dimensions of his 'perfect woman' were sought by a corset manufacturer to create, "a female figure which might serve as a basis of the modern corset industry".\textsuperscript{122} Dobson was clearly delighted by the commission, seeing it as a positive sign that industry could look to the artist for advice and inspiration.

Another generally affirmative view of the intersection between the body and modernity is apparent in the work of Laurence Le Guay.\textsuperscript{123} Le Guay began his photographic career at the Dayne portrait studio in 1935, at the age of eighteen, and produced commercial fashion illustrations as well as montages on contemporary themes. Many of these early montages were illustrated in the newly founded \textit{Man: The Australian magazine for men}, which published a mix of articles ranging from serious articles on foreign affairs and business to slightly salacious cartoons.\textsuperscript{124} It was this range of interests that no doubt attracted the magazine editors to Le Guay's work which, along with its often portentous social messages, invariably featured naked women. As the editors wrote of his work in 1937:

\begin{quote}
Le Guay is a young man . . . he has not yet won a great name. That is more reason, rather than less, why \textit{MAN} publishes his work. It is good. The simplicity of thought in his symbolic renderings is refreshing. We will hear more of Le Guay.\textsuperscript{125}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{120} Frank Dobson quoted in Lorant, 1939, p.24.
\textsuperscript{121} Frank Dobson quoted in Lorant, 1939, p.24.
\textsuperscript{122} Frank Dobson quoted in Lorant, 1939, p.24.
\textsuperscript{123} John Williams notes that, "Rarely in these cultures [ie Germany and Australia], except among photographers and female painters, was the city acknowledged as having an aesthetic potential". See Williams, 1995, p.35.
\textsuperscript{124} For a discussion of the history of \textit{Man} magazine see, White, 1979.

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Certainly, Le Guay's style brought him to the attention of other progressive members of the photographic fraternity in Sydney and, in 1938, he was invited to join the Contemporary Camera Groupe that included Max Dupain, Olive Cotton and Russell Roberts. That same year he created one of his most notable works from this period, *The progenitors* (1938). In this photograph a naked man and woman, at whose feet he sits, appear as massive figures in the midst of factory towers and equipment. The woman's face is turned upwards with one hand clasping her forehead in the manner of an ancient oracle absorbed in a vision of the future.

![Image](image-url)

*Fig. 52. Laurence le Guay, The progenitors 1938
Gelatin silver photograph*

The title of Le Guay's work potently suggests the complex mix of issues regarding race, heredity and modernity that circulated during the 1930s. The artist implies that these healthy, naked Anglo-Saxons are a contemporary, industrial version of Adam and Eve set to forge a distinctively Australian species of men and women. Their generative potential is linked to the productive capabilities of the industrial world in which they stand - both machine and human are creative forces. Le Guay also appears to couple the genetic meaning of the word 'progenitors' with another, more metaphysical definition related to modernity.

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125 Editor, *Man*, March 1937, p.21. Dupain also contributed a couple of photographs to the magazine - the first issue in December 1936 featured his image *The Debussy Quarte in G Minor* - but the editors appeared to have preferred Le Guay's work.

126 For information on the 'Groupe' see Newton, 1988, pp.112-114.

127 Illustrated in *Man*, May 1940, p.35.
A progenitor can mean a spiritual, political or intellectual predecessor and, in this context, the couple offer the viewer the reassuring promise of future prosperity.

The progenitors emphasises the central role of the woman as creator and carrier of a new generation, literally arising in the midst of an industrial world. In contrast, in his photograph, *Rhythm in labour* (1939), Le Guay deals with masculine energies.\(^{128}\) He montages two images of a sweating half-naked man, muscles straining as he swings a pick. A sense of movement and dynamism is conveyed as one shot shows the man with his pick raised and the other as it strikes the ground. Le Guay has used moody studio lighting to accentuate the strain of the man as his body works hard to carry the weight of the pick and weather its jarring motion as it hits the ground. The sensation is a filmic one as we are witness to a sequence otherwise denied in regular photography.

The following year Le Guay expanded on this theme by placing the same man in a more industrial setting. In *Man power* (1940) he has montaged two negatives; the same bare-chested pick swinging man as he used in the previous photograph and a photograph of a train at full steam.\(^{129}\) The juxtaposition suggests that human and mechanical forms of energy have an equivalence as they both utilise their inherent power to forge a modern nation. The use of the train in this context was also a timely reference to the launch a year earlier of ‘The Spirit of Progress’, a sleek, streamlined locomotive proudly described as, “Australia’s most modern achievement”.\(^{130}\) In common with his earlier photograph, Le Guay places Australia’s development in a sexualised context. The masculine subject of this work is shown as a virile force able to forge national progress through the power of his own body. In particular, his strong large chest was a well-recognised symbol of health and strength in an

\(^{128}\) Illustrated in *Man*, June 1939, p.21.

\(^{129}\) Illustrated in *Art In Australia*, 25 November, 1940, p.44. The caption to the work notes that it was included in the annual exhibition of the Photographic Society of New South Wales held in September that year.

\(^{130}\) Unknown, *The Home*, volume 19, number 1, 1938, p.21. The ‘Spirit of Progress’ was built by the Victorian Railways under the inspired Directorate of Harold Clapp. For a contemporary article on the role of the railways see Unknown, 1939d, pp.80-3.
age when TB was relatively common.\textsuperscript{131} Beyond such lofty notions regarding bodily energies, there is also an obvious eroticism to the photograph. By pairing a bare-chested and sweating man with a similarly overheated train, the photographer taps into a sexual symbolism inherited from Sigmund Freud’s investigations into the subconscious mind.

Le Guay’s use of montage was perhaps itself a reference to the experience of modern life.\textsuperscript{132} The metropolis was conceived of by some as a fragmented environment, a site too large and discontinuous to be grasped visually as a whole. City-dwellers moving through this space were caught up in a dynamo of speed and movement that did not allow stable readings of what they saw. A prose poem published in \textit{The Home} in 1937, evoked the experience of modern life when it noted that Sydney was:

\begin{quote}
no smooth Symphony. She rings the changes in a thousand ways. Against a bar of modern jazz is laid the melody of olden days. Staccato movement - speed! - and clothes! - and manners! - can rout the soft adagio of some garden gem.\textsuperscript{133}
\end{quote}

The montage could replicate something of this sensation, allowing the photographer to incorporate slivers of scenes into a destabilised whole. It also allowed a metaphoric dimension to the work not as easily achieved if the photographer was simply utilising the world in front of their eyes. Le Guay’s photograph, \textit{Metropolis of Man} (1937) is one such modern allegory. In this image a naked woman stands with her hand raised to her head before a night-time city scene with tall towers and electric lights. However, the intent of the work is ambiguous: is the woman a symbol of nature despairing at the ‘man-made’ creation that appears before her which denies her energies? Or is this a celebratory image of the creativeness of mankind?

\textsuperscript{131} For the symbolism of strong chests as an indicator of bodily vigour in the early 1900s, see Walker, 1994, p.167-70.
\textsuperscript{132} For a discussion of this idea see Phillips, 1991, p.217.
While Le Guay generally presents a positive view of modernity in which physical and psychic ‘energy’ is seen to be creating a new race of Australians, his work could also have a critical edge. As the prospect of another world war became increasingly real in the late 1930s, artists’ views of the wonders of modernity were tempered by the knowledge that the miraculous inventions of the industrial world carried the seeds of their own destruction. Le Guay engages with this prospect in his photograph, *Twentieth Century* (c.1937), a symbolic ‘world view’ set against a backdrop of a giant globe. In this menacing image a bayonet is being thrust towards the naked body of a young woman who lies defenseless beside a skull. While the female body is often used by Le Guay as a powerful symbol of nature and fertility, here its vulnerability is stressed: lying naked and unguarded this body is helpless before the deadly tools of the twentieth century.

As I have argued in this chapter, the body was used by photographers such as le Guay and Dupain as a symbol both of strength and vulnerability; ideal corporeal perfection and ‘degeneracy’. Dupain, in particular, exhibits an ambivalent attitude towards the impact of modernity on the body and, as I have suggested, to fully understand the complexities of his work it is necessary to place it within the context of popular discourses of the interwar period.

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133 Curtis, & Emerson, p.51.
Chapter Five

Essential Matters: Revitalising the Australian body

In this chapter I consider the concept of ‘fatigue’ and the various means that were formulated in the interwar period to revitalise bodily energies. I argue that fatigue was a key symptom of ‘degeneration’, and that when enough individuals began to exhibit nerves, ‘brain fog’ or lack of energy it was widely believed that the nation’s vital powers were also under threat.¹ ‘Fatigue’ had been noted in Australia since the late nineteenth century but resurfaced with renewed force after World War One when the health of the populace was felt to need special attention.

While ‘fatigue’ was a difficult concept to measure or demonstrate there was general consensus that bodily energies could be increased by attention to the basic requirements of human development. These included the circumstances under which people lived and worked, how they moved their bodies and the foods that they consumed. In each of these areas photography played a significant role in helping promote ‘revitalising’ products or activities. Photography was especially important in the area of advertising and I will use a range of illustrations from popular journals, often taken by unknown practitioners, to illustrate my arguments in this chapter.

Fatigue and restoration: Regenerating the body with ‘vitalised’ food

“The Whiter Your Bread, the Sooner You’re Dead”.
George Philpots, 1925².

Many believed that a primary cause of fatigue was ‘modernity’, with overly intellectual pursuits, city food habits and a more sedentary way of living all contributing to a degenerative shift in communal health. The shift in diet from plain country food to sophisticated mass-produced ‘city foods’, full of processed products and stimulants, was perhaps the most pernicious of trends. In 1937, for instance, William Hughes delivered a

² Philpots, 1925a, p.8
speech in his role as Federal Minister for Health in which he placed dietary changes at the
core of Australian bodily degeneration - and laid the blame on modernity:

The pace of life has speeded up. The dietary ... habits of the people have been
changed. We inherit the appetites of our ancestors, but our lives are ordered to a
very different pattern. They lived a life in the open air and earned their living literally
by the sweat of their brows; their skins were active, ridding the body of much of its
waste products. Now things have changed. Our artisans have become mere
machine-minders ... We, the descendants of one of the most vigorous, active and
adventurous races, lead sedentary lives, take little corrective exercise and live on
devitalised food. The ill effects of [sedentary occupation] must be counteracted by a
suitable regimen - diet, exercise and personal hygiene.3

That same year, George Dupain engaged with the debate on food in his article “Nutrition
and Evolution” writing, “Can our present civilised diet breed a decent type of physique or is
degeneration going on until some great racial cataclysm overwhelms us?” 4 Dupain
considered ‘proper’ foods as an essential palliative measure to ensure the continued
development of white Australians. He reiterated this point in an article written a few
months later, posing another question, “can a new nutrition make man a better animal in
every sense a nobler being? ... Suppose we could purge this dirty blood from our veins and
build up a new life stream? 5 The answer for Dupain was clearly ‘yes’ and he proposed to
cleanse the blood with a rejection of ‘modern’ foods and a return to the dietary habits of,
“our ancestors”.6

Dupain’s solution lay in eating more meat, an idea that he had consistently espoused since at
least the 1920s. In 1927, for instance, he presented a lecture to the Food Education Society
of New South Wales in which he maintained that a lack of protein following the war had
diminished essential vitality and resulted in a range of social ills. These included a lack of
motivation, reduced interest in sport and other activities, the stultification of the arts and
sciences, and the poor parenting of children. In short, he wrote, “The national ‘pep’

3 Hughes, 1937, pp.102-3. In 1928, Prime Minister Lyons commented along similar lines: “Australia needs not only a
numerous but a virile population and virility is very largely a matter of proper feeding”. Lyons, 1928, quoted in Reiger,
1985, p.75.
4 Dupain, G. 1937, p.50. Dupain was deeply interested in dietetics and, in 1934, published his book, Diet and Physical
Culture. This book was reviewed in a number of magazines including Pandemonium with one reviewer writing, “Mr
Dupain has brought to his subject rare candour, considerable learning, a high degree of earnestness and intelligence and
an engaging literary style”. Unknown, 1934d, p.17.
underwent great changes!!” Dupain’s recommendations regarding meat eating derived from his belief that, “dietetic habits fashion anatomical dispositions”, however, they also neatly corresponded with an economic need in Australia’s primary industries. In the 1930s, there was an oversupply of lamb and mutton in this country and any call to ‘eat more meat’ would have been heartily endorsed by government.

Fellow dietitian, George Philpots, also believed that Australians should pay urgent attention to the foods they ate if the individual and the nation were to evolve. He advocated that, “Drugs, nostrums and faked foods must be replaced by the saner methods of Prevention and right living, if Australia is to maintain her place among the virile races of the earth”. Philpots’s solution for national salvation lay in a diet that rejected white bread, refined sugar, processed foods, tobacco, alcohol and - in an unusual addition - acid or alkaline toothpaste.

In drawing a moral conclusion concerning the dire consequences of ‘unnatural’ modern foods, Dupain and Philpots reflected concerns that had held currency both in Australia and internationally for some time. In 1894, for instance, the writer and activist, Reverend Herbert Tucker, published his popular utopian novel, The New Arcadia: An Australian Story, which detailed the establishment of a community called ‘Mimosa Vale’. Tucker had considerable practical experience on which to draw for his writing having established the Village Settlements Association in 1892, an organisation that encouraged the development of communal townships such as those in The New Arcadia. Food was an important aspect of life in the fictional community and at one point in the novel the founder of Mimosa Vale, Dr Courtenay, addressed, “mothers and housekeepers of present and coming generations” on

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7 Dupain, G. 1927, p.22.
8 Dupain, G. 1937c, p.19.
10 Philpots, 1925b, p.8.
11 In England, for instance, the notion was discussed by E. Roland Williams who identified ‘fatigue’ as a characteristic postwar syndrome. Along with better dietary habits, Williams advocated that serious attention be paid to bodily ‘rhythm’ and considered ancient Greece a model to which modern men and women should refer. Williams was optimistic about contemporary life, believing that people were learning the necessary ‘rhythmic lessons’ from classical models: “Utopian though it may seem, there are not lacking, even in present day life, signs that betoken a beginning, not a decline, but of such a sane ‘progression backwards’”. Williams, 1936, p.53.
12 The 1890s witnessed a highpoint in the publication of utopian novels both in Australia and internationally which reflected a similar growth in the popularity of utopian settlements. For information on Australian utopian literature see Albinski, 1987.
the subject of ideal food values. In his lecture, "A Grain of Wheat", the Doctor refers to wheat as the biblical staff of life, stating:

men, in the outer world, had broken that staff, stripped the good grain of God of its precious outer coating; 'bolted', refined, and 'silk dressed' the *product of Providence* until nothing was left in the pasty, consumptive-looking 'refined-flour' save fat and heat.

The doctor refers to processed grain in an anthropomorphic fashion, describing its 'covering' in terms akin to modern clothing ('silk-dressed', 'refined'). A moral allegory is clearly implied when this apparently advanced product of modernity is uncovered to reveal a useless and decayed interior ('pasty', 'consumptive-looking'). *The New Amsadia* proposes a clear relationship between the denial of natural food values as symptomatic of a rejection of a natural, rural and God-given scheme of living. Counterpoised against the healthy, rural world of Mimosa Vale is an urban lifestyle that, for the author, signaled moral and physical decay.

Over thirty years later, similar language was still being used by medical practitioners concerned by the modernisation of food. In 1935, for instance, the eugenicist, Professor Harvey Sutton, wrote a scathing criticism of 'city food' of which he stated, "Everything, especially the fresh elements, tends to be depreciated, spoiled, sophisticated". The use of the word 'sophisticated' in this context is evocative. It not only suggests food that has been altered from its original, natural condition but is a pejorative comment on the overly cultivated tastes of the urban dweller.

To combat the fatigue that was supposedly sweeping the nation, commercial food products appeared in earnest on the Australian market after 1919 that appealed to the notion of physical and psychic restoration. One such product was Bovril, a drink supplement made

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13 Tucker, 1894, p.132.
14 Tucker, 1894, pp.132-3. Philpots would have agreed with these sentiments entirely; he frequently used the following jingle in his magazine concerning processed flour, "The Whiter your Bread, the Sooner you’re Dead".
15 On the topic of bread, George Dupain quotes Professor Sherman from the Columbia University who wrote in 1937, "the millowner [sic] who is tearing out the heart of the wheat and selling it as poultry and cattle food, and supplying the rest of the corpse to the public as bread, is allowed to go unscathed". Sherman, *Chemistry and Nutrition*, 1937 quoted in Dupain, G. 1939, p.35.
16 Sutton, 1935, p.139.
17 Along with food additives, local magazines and newspapers ran advertisements for patent medicines and devices 'guaranteed' to banish fatigue and nerves. For a study of 'nerves' in America see Green, 1986, especially pp.137-180.
unavailable during the war and whose return to the market was promoted with the caption: “With peace has come Bovril, and now those who have suffered under the long strain of war can once again build up their health and strength with this unique food”.\footnote{18}

In 1920, Sanagen was promoted along similar lines as a drink that helped “revive energies” and alleviate “nerves”.\footnote{19} Under a suitably alarming caption reading “The Twentieth Century Disease. Neurasthenia - or Nerve Weakness and Brain Fag” the copywriter proclaimed:

One of the evil results of the War is the spread of Neurasthenia . . . In Recent British Health Statistics, nervous troubles show an alarming increase of this Twentieth Century Disease, which is responsible for the craving of stimulants and drugs, the desire for the excitement of pleasure and the distaste for work. Medical authorities have declared in favour of special nerve nourishment rather than medicinal treatment.\footnote{20}

Other popular products to combat fatigue and nerves included Hean’s Tonic Nerve Nuts, for “lassitude and poorness of blood”. Horlick’s Malted Milk helped “cases of mental exhaustion . . . in fact all nerve troubles” and Bidomak was, “The tonic of the century for nerves, brain and that depressed feeling”.\footnote{21} Curing ‘nerves’ was also the goal of Nyal’s Esterin tablets which advertised its product with a dramatic photograph. The image shows a fraught looking middle aged woman with her brow furrowed and hand clasping at her face\footnote{22}. Superimposed over this ‘real life’ image of anxiety are the words “NERVY! JITTERY!” while underneath the caption reads: “[the] ‘nervy’ person wins little sympathy! Unfit for work, disinclined for play . . . irritable, depressed, cut off from normal life and normal people . . . the victim of nerves is isolated amongst depression”\footnote{23}. 

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{image}
\caption{Fig. 56. Unknown 'No title (Advertisement for Nyal Esterin) c.1937 Gelatin silver photograph}
\end{figure}

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\footnote{18}{Advertisement for Bovril in The Triad, volume 5, number 1, 10 October 1919, p.42.}
\footnote{19}{Advertisement for Sanagen in The Triad, volume 6, number 2, 10 November 1919, p.18.}
\footnote{20}{Advertisement for Sanagen in The Triad, volume 6, number 2, 10 November 1919, p.18.}
\footnote{21}{Advertisements for Hean’s and Horlick’s in The Triad, volume 5, number 2, 10 November 1919, p.11 and p.34. Advertisement for Bidomak in The Australian Women’s Weekly, volume 3, number 32, 1936, p.16.}
\footnote{22}{Advertisement for Nyal Esterin in The Australian Journal, June 1937, p.833.}
\footnote{23}{Author’s emphasis, Advertisement for Nyal Esterin in The Australian Journal, June 1937, p.833.}

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The fight against neurasthenia and ‘degeneration’ was considered especially important for young people as they were the foundation of an reinvigorated post-war Australia. As part of its advertising campaign in 1936, for instance, Creamoata used a photograph of a young boy high jumping over a bar with one hand to promote, “The Vigour of Youth”. The choice of image was astute and would have appealed to a market well-versed in the growing need for National Fitness and also in the popularity of the Olympic Games. With his strength ensured by eating his daily oats this athletic boy could eventually take his place defending his nation in war or, in peacetime, as a lifeguard on the beaches. The potential for a future filled with vigour was reiterated in the accompanying caption:

Jumping...climbing...running. Never still - always using up energy...that is the life of a boy. And if he is to keep his health, the energy he uses must be replaced, and he must have, in addition, the right food for the growth of his body and brain.

Photography was a powerful tool in promotional campaigns for food products, revealing the concepts of fatigue and energy in a more graphic and convincing manner than drawn illustrations. With the introduction of smaller cameras and faster films in the 1920s it became possible to capture bodily movement with greater effectiveness and photography became the medium favoured by advertisers who wished to show the physical effects of their products. The demand for photographic illustrations was interrupted by the Depression but resurged again when the economy began to recover.

The use of photography in advertising was sufficiently strong enough by the mid 1930s to merit its own section in the international photographic annuals. The *Photography Year Book 1935*, for instance, included a large feature on commercial photography divided into product

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24 Advertisement for Creamoata in *The Sydney Morning Herald Women’s Supplement*, 21 July 1936, p.23
26 Willis notes that “The market for industrial photography and product illustration was to burgeon in the postwar era, as there was a huge increase in the volume and range of manufacturing industries” Willis, 1988, p.159.
type drawn from illustrations in international journals. Such publications were freely available in Australia and provided powerful models for local photographers, such as Russell Roberts and Max Dupain who could use them as a guide for their own work.

Advertisements for food products that encouraged ‘energy’ raised public interest in this field and no doubt contributed to a more serious consideration of the relationship between diet and health that began to take place in the 1920s. In 1921, for instance, the first study of the food intake of a group of Australians was undertaken and a few years later the profession of dietitians was established in hospitals, stimulated by the visit of several specialist American doctors. One of these visiting specialists, Dr Malcolm McEachern, was commissioned by the Australian and New Zealand governments to report on how they could improve hospital diets.

In 1930, Miss Mabel Planley became Australia’s first hospital-based dietitian when she was appointed to the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne and, five years later, the first dietetic association was formed at that same institution. At a national level, the Australian Government passed The Medical Research Endowment Act in 1937 as a means of funding the proper investigation of health and diet. In 1938, William Hughes’ call for a new dietetic ‘regimen’ took a step towards being realised with the establishment of the Commonwealth Advisory Council on Nutrition. This body was especially concerned with the diet of children viewing it as of, “vital importance to Australian as a nation” to ensure perfect health in its rising generations. The establishment of such a group was no doubt largely fuelled by altruistic motives, it is no coincidence that it coincided with the formulation of National Fitness programs that same year.

Some parents took the call for a new regimen for their children to heart, implementing ‘natural’ diets with apparently good effects. In 1938, Pix ran an article titled, “No sugar, no

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27 The advertisements for food and drinks frequently mention the notion of energy and fatigue. See Photography Year Book 1935, pp.335-6, 339-42, 351-3.
28 This small scale study analysed the mean energy intake for a group of young male and female University students. The findings were noted in the Medical Journal of Australia, 1922, p.294. Discussed in Clements, 1986, p.80.
29 For information on the early history of dietetics in Australia see Nash, 1989.
30 Unknown, "Commonwealth Advisory Council on Nutrition": Health, volume XVI, number 8, August 1938, p.70. The Council undertook a large-scale survey investigating the links between household costs, consumption of food and the physical condition of children. See Reiger, 1985, p.75.
meat, no bread for this baby boy” which the parents of Robert Record, a two year old Sydney boy, implemented a strict diet for their child.\textsuperscript{31} Under a photograph of a laughing, healthy child the copy ran:

His diet is made up of orange juice, parsnips, carrots and spinach. He is allowed such fruit as grapes, apples and peaches . . . In his 2 years and 4 months he has never known the taste of bread, sugar or meat . . . ‘His intelligence is far above average and he has never yet been known to lose his temper’ say Robert Record's parents.\textsuperscript{32}

**Patriotic drinking: Nationalism, beer and photography**

"Foster's Lager - Australia's National Beverage"

Unknown, 1939.\textsuperscript{33}

Appeals to national identity played an important part in the promotion of food and drink, encouraging individuals to join in the creation of a strong, vitalised Australia. In the 1930s, various products were advertised through their association with a healthy Australian ‘way of life’. Despite the fact that most Australians lived in the city, this characteristic lifestyle was rural with images of the outback and the sturdy white pioneers who conquered the land used as potent sales devices.

The urban audience viewing these advertisements in their magazines or newspapers was drawn into an imaginative rendering of the land that formed a powerful counterpoint to their everyday existences. The healthful vigour of the country men and women was not only an endorsement of the value of the product being promoted but carried with it moral, even psychological promise. The bush was a locus of traditional values - hard work, emphasis on the family, a patriarchal social structure and pride in a White Australia. By using images of the outback, the advertisers offered the urban consumer the chance to imaginatively ally themselves with this value system. Food or drink, unlike clothing and cars, helped to physically form the body and so ingesting a physically and morally sanctified product was a powerful antidote to the modern rigours of living in the city.

\textsuperscript{31} Unknown, 1938a, p.55
\textsuperscript{32} Unknown, 1938a, p.55.
\textsuperscript{33} Advertisement for Foster's Lager in *Walkabout*, June 1, 1939, p.61
One commercial campaign that drew on powerful myths of place to sell its products was launched by the Foster’s Brewing company in the late 1930s. Foster’s placed a series of advertisements for beer in the tourism magazine *Walkabout* under the flier “Our National Heritage”. These advertisements appeared on a monthly basis from 1937 to 1939 and used a cunning mix of text and photographs to promote beer as a drink for individual and national health. It is notable that none of the advertisements feature people in the act of drinking but involved more complex appeals to the patriotic sensibilities of their readers.

Foster’s generally chose photographs of rural landscapes to accompany the carefully written texts promoting their product. In June 1939, for instance, they ran the following copy under a photograph taken from a hill overlooking a pastoral landscape near Launceston in Tasmania:

> It is taking time to mellow this vast land of Australia. Old and primitive, and unaccustomed for so many centuries to the rule of man, it has been a hard country to tame. But the work that our forefathers began is still being continued by men no less resolute. By men, too, who still enjoy reflecting quietly on their achievement, over a glass of golden ale... For handed down as part of our rich inheritance, is the ability to grow fine barley, hops and sugar, and the skill to brew them into the most healthful and nourishing of all beverages - Foster’s Lager - Australia’s National Beverage.”

The advertisers offer a typically Eurocentric and gendered reading of Australia’s history. Conquest of the land is achieved by the hard work of white not black men and ‘success’ is evident from the level of profit. In this scenario the ‘taming’ of the land comes not from reaping its natural, indigenous bounty but as a consequence of commercial aims. The transformation of the ‘primitive’ uneconomic forests to arable productivity is emphasised in the accompanying photograph in several ways. The carefully fenced land is stocked with quietly grazing introduced animals while, in the foreground, laden fruit trees provide another kind of useful commodity.

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34 Advertisement for Foster’s Lager in *Walkabout*, June 1, 1939, p.61. This photograph may have been originally purchased by the advertisers from the Tasmanian Tourist Bureau. It first appears as a coloured image in *Australia Today*, October 26, 1936, p.75 where it is captioned as “Near Launceston, Tasmania”.

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Interestingly, the resolute and hardy white men who forged this productive scene are nowhere to be seen. For the contemporary reader it is merely enough to view such a landscape to know how it originated and by whose hands. Indeed, visual evidence that the land is safely conquered is provided by a group of women who form the only human presence in the photograph. Dressed in flimsy summer dresses and collecting the windfall apples on the hillside these women look like characters from a Somerset Maugham play and present the viewer with further proof that the once wild landscape has been domesticated.

The pleasures offered by this rural legacy were vicarious ones for most urban dwellers but even for those who rarely ventured into the bush or pastoral leases, Foster’s offers an appealing promise. The raw materials of beer - its hops, barley and sugar - are posited as the direct consequence of the pioneers’ hard work and skill and by merely purchasing a drink the consumer can metaphorically ingest, ‘Our National Heritage’.

A few months later Foster’s decided to tap into another kind of Australian mythology in their advertising campaign. In December 1939, they used the following copy under a photograph of a beach:

THE ROLL OF THE SURF on warm, golden beaches is music to our ears. The clean, green gleam and the crisp whitened edge of ceaseless waves makes glad our eyes. The love of the sun and sea on our bodies is a healthy, pleasant custom that is typically Australian. And it is just as naturally Australian that a cool glass of Foster’s Lager should toast the good companionship of surf and beach. In the skilful brew of Foster’s is the nourishing, sungrown goodness of Australia’s finest malt, hops and sugar. Foster’s is indeed “Australia’s National Beverage”. 35

It could be expected that the image accompanying this text would show people drinking or even tables laden with glasses awaiting thirsty drinkers returning from the beach. Instead, the copy is illustrated with a panoramic photograph of an idyllic beach, pristine water glinting with sunlight and the long rolling waves that surfers dream of. It is the end of the day with the last few swimmers remaining in the water and a surf-boat returning to shore. The viewer of this atmospheric image is invited to look through the eyes of the camera lens and to imagine that the view they are witnessing is a lived experience, seen perhaps from the

35 Author’s emphasis, advertisement for Foster’s Lager in Walkabout, December 1, 1939, p.53.
verandah of their beach side house. The photograph is used here as a mnemonic device arousing powerful memories held by most Australians of summer times spent at the beach.

The advertisers also played on cultural memories by enclosing the image in an ornate frame of a kind more usually found on an oil painting. In bold letters underneath this image of Arcadia are the words 'Our National Heritage'. The word 'heritage' and the use of a traditional frame around the image set up a disparity. The viewer is cued to expect an image from Australian bush pioneering history or a painting from the 'Heidelberg School' but, instead, they are given a photograph of the beach possibly based on the Max Dupain image, *Manly Beach*.36

The use of a modernist photograph stresses the contemporaneity of the promotion - this is an image that taps into modern day realities. 'Heritage' in this context is thus less concerned with an archaic view of 'tradition' as much as an Australian 'birthright', with a persuasive appeal made equally to nationalism and hedonism. The advertisement also conflates the word 'beverage' with 'heritage'; the caption 'Our National Heritage' being echoed in the final words of the copy, 'Australia's National Beverage'.

Fig. 58. Unknown No title (Advertisement for Foster's Lager) c.1939 Gelatin silver photograph

Fig. 59. Max Dupain *Manly Beach* c.1940 Gelatin silver photograph
The intent of such devices is to normalise Foster's Lager: it is not only a national but a natural
drink. The enjoyment of nature, in the form of the beach and sunshine, is allied in various
ways to the apparently health-giving properties of beer. In the most obvious example, the
ingredients of malt, hops and sugar are described as having been 'sunblessed' before being
blended into a drink which apparently offers both physical and psychological nourishment.
On a more subtle level, the natural qualities of the beer are suggested by the copywriter's
description of the surf. The "clean gleam" of the ocean subliminally evokes the cold drink
and the "crisp whitened edge" of the waves is similar to the foam of the beer. The pleasure
of water and sun on the body is also related to the equally enjoyable sensation of feeling a
cold beer within the body.

The delights promised by drinking beer are cunningly promoted in the advertisement with an
appeal made to all the senses. The sound of the surf is, "music to our ears" and the look of
the beach, "makes glad our eyes". The feeling of sun and sea on the body, "is a healthy
pleasant custom" and to top off this litany of physical delights a "cool glass" of Foster's
Lager pleases the palate. The individual body is not only satisfied in this manner but, it is
implied, the national body is also appeased. The 'typically Australian' equation of beach,
sun, health and beer is a patriotic combination that is part of our shared heritage.

Other brewing companies also recognised the potent appeal of linking beach culture with
drinking. This juxtaposition did not always require a promotional text, as in the case of the
Foster's Lager advertisement, but could be achieved through the astute placement of images
in an architectural context. For instance, in 1938, Tooths and Co commissioned the artist,
Herbert Reginald Gallop, to produce two paintings for the entrance to Newcastle's main
hotel, the Great Northern Hotel.37 The resulting paintings, Pleasure and Industry BHP, greeted
potential beer drinkers with images that showed scenes of work and play typical to the area.

Gallop's commission was part of Tooths' campaign in the 1930s to positively alter the
public's perception of beer drinking and pubs. Along with rebuilding pubs to make them

36 Dupain was unsure of the precise date he took Manly Beach, later dating it as c.1940. It is, however, quite possible
that it was taken in 1938 or 1939 and was the inspiration for the Foster's Lager's almost identical image.
more appealing and modern, Tooths employed artists to paint scenes of Australian life for the patrons. These works, which were often oils on glass, rarely showed people drinking beer but instead focused on pastimes considered characteristic of the Australian 'way of life', such as football or swimming. The seamless narratives of pleasure, health and prosperity linked the drinking of beer to a lifestyle that the patrons could identify with or aspire to.

As in the case of Gallop's work, these paintings were often given a local resonance. By focusing on regional scenes, the bottom line of the pub - to sell more beer - was downplayed in order to place the business in a warm relationship to the community it served. By emphasising the familiar, the consumption of beer was normalised as a positive social activity that was part of life in that region and through which the drinker could achieve inclusion in the local scene.

Gallop's two paintings, for instance, show specific areas of Newcastle that would have been familiar to anyone living locally. *Pleasure*, depicts a busy summertime scene at Nobby's Beach. A man and woman are depicted in the foreground to the left and right of the painting. The woman, dressed in form-fitting bathers, is seductively posed on a rock beside lifesaving equipment. Her head turns coyly to look over her shoulder and her legs are stretched out to show their leanness to best effect. On the right hand side, a man in trunks moves forcefully up a pathway carrying a surfboard in his strong muscular arms. The two figures invite the viewer to a world of pleasure full of games and sport on an idyllic beach. The scene would in some ways be a generic one if not for the smoke-stack in the distance, indicative of Newcastle's industry, and the ever-present bulk-carrier ships.

The other painting in the pair shows the industrial backbone of the city, that is, the steel works of BHP. Instead of a provocatively posed woman, the foreground of the painting

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37 Pickett, 1990, pp.49-51.
shows a grizzled man loading cargo onto the latest boat to dock in the harbour. It is a painting filled with activity and the modern realities of industrial labour. *Industry BHP* not only forms the flip-side to *Pleasure* in terms of activities depicted but also in terms of the atmosphere - the clean, natural beach is replaced by an environment thick with smoke from the dense conglomeration of stacks in the background and from the coal-powered boat. Both paintings encourage identification among the pub visitor declaring: 'here is the reality of life in Newcastle and we, the brewers, understand that'. Drinking beer becomes a patriotic act not in the general way of the Foster's advertisement, which appealed to a generalist kind of Australian nationalism, but in a specific and regional sense.

**Modern living: Housing and domestic appliances**

Along with proper food and drink, many argued that Australians needed adequate housing conditions to augment good bodily development. Physical regeneration could certainly not proceed at the rate that many wished if the buildings that housed the population were not of a suitable standard. The link between the quality of urban development and the health of the Australian body became more obvious during the Depression when urban poverty brought with it a host of health problems. As a consequence, the issue of housing became a matter for debate during the 1920s and 1930s as some influential voices in the field pushed for fundamental changes in local town planning and housing.

Some saw the solution in modernisation and new, sleek buildings in the modernist style full of the latest in 'hygienic' gadgets were a potent symbol of how Australia could best enter into the machine age. As Sydney Ure Smith wrote in 1936:

> The time is approaching when intelligent householders in Australia will demand modern houses and interiors from their architects. Many of our architects are like some of our artists - they have set their faces sternly against new ideas.

> The public will lead the artists and the architects ... Progressive people have realised the attractiveness of new ideas, the use of new materials, and the advance in modern lighting equipment.38

38 Smith, 1936, p.21.
Smith backed up his views by including a special architectural section that featured interesting Australian advances in building and interior design in his magazine, *The Home*. This section was invariably accompanied by photographs as this medium was considered the most appropriate means of capturing the clean lines of these new buildings. During the 1930s, Smith commissioned a range of photographers to take architectural photographers for *The Home* including Max Dupain.39

Dupain was an ideal photographer to choose for such an assignment given his long-standing interest in architectural design. As he later wrote, “In my youth I had made drawings from reproduction of Greek temples and capitals, and later in school my interest in the practical application of materials to structural purposes made me think seriously about becoming an architect”.40 While his evolving style was often constrained to some extent by the documentary demands of these magazine assignments, Dupain nonetheless effectively suggested the ‘feel’ of the contemporary homes by incorporating modernist elements into his work.

One typical photographic assignment for Dupain was to photograph the Samuel Lipson designed apartment, ‘Darjoa’ in 1938.41 This stylish building in Point Piper, Sydney featured all the latest in modern accoutrements including air-conditioning, built-in gramophone in the lounge and a traymobile and buffet inlaid with bronze in the dining room. While the black and white images Dupain produced could not capture the ‘cigar brown’ carpet or striped cream wallpaper, he emphasised the minimalist style of this quintessential modern home through astute angling of the camera.

Lipson must have appreciated the interpretation of ‘Darjoa’ as, that same year, he employed Dupain to photograph another of his projects - the Hastings Deering Building which housed a car servicing business. An article that appeared in *Building* magazine described the new construction as, “striking from many standpoints. Its very appearance indicates modernity and efficiency”.42 Dupain’s photographs of the building form an integral part of the article.

39 Other photographers commissioned in the 1930s included Russell Roberts and Athol Shmith.
40 Dupain, M. 1986, p.16.
41 Unknown, 1938f, pp.58-9. Dupain received his first commissions to photograph architecture from Lipson.
42 Unknown, 1938g, p.17.
and were praised not least because of the difficult siting of the building on a corner block which, “offers many problems to the photographer”. His resulting images are striking examples of the modernist style featuring strong use of lighting and dramatic ‘up-shots’ of the structure. They were considered by the magazine to be as contemporary as the architecture itself and the writer approvingly commented, “Max Dupain . . . has portrayed the building with a disregard for verticals in the modern manner”.

The average working-class Australian could look with wonder at these new buildings that were beginning to appear in the cities. They could also marvel at the photographs of the stylish and sophisticated modern apartments filled with the latest in home appliances. They might also feel a sense of guilt as the growing ‘domestic science’ movement exhorted them towards greater hygiene in the kitchen through magazine articles of popular women’s magazines. However, for most Australians, especially during the Depression years, such emblems of modernity were still largely unaffordable luxuries that made relatively little impact on their daily lives. It was only after the Depression, as the economy started to stabilise, that new appliances for food preparation, such as gas and later electric cookers, began to enter the homes. As they did, the nature of women’s relationship to her family duties began to shift - processed foods and labour-saving tools cut down the amount of time that she spent in the kitchen and allowed her time to pursue activities outside the home.

The positive impact of modern appliances on the female body was suggested by Douglas Annand in his photographic montage of 1935. In this advertisement for the Australian Gas and Light Company, gas is promoted as a safe and natural product that, “spells security from the cold, from kitchen worries, from hidden dangers”. To reiterate this message, Annand has placed a woman smiling reassuringly at the viewer alongside the body of woman adopting a flame-like shape with her arms. An equivalence is drawn between the protective properties of gas and

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43 Unknown, 1938g, p.16.  
44 Unknown, 1938g, p.16.  
45 The Home, October 1935, p.69.
the role that women take in the home, both being ‘natural’ forces that sustain those in their care and ward away dangers. The “blue flame of health” is also a symbol of modernity - as the copywriter notes, “To women it is truly a symbol of modern progress and dependability” - that could relieve the drudgery of washing and cooking.

In 1937, Dupain was another commercial artist who was called on to promote the new mechanical devices being marketed to help women in the home. His photograph for the Hoover vacuum cleaner is a striking, if non-descriptive image, of one such product. Dupain has used wooden letters spelling out the name of the product which he has lit with studio spots so that their shadow extends across the foreground of the photograph. Behind the word ‘Hoover’, the vacuum cleaner emerges from the shadows glowing like some strange alien creature about to make its entrance. Dupain’s photograph may reveal nothing about the product’s capabilities, or even what it looks like, but it does create a sense of drama that herald's a new era in mechanised home assistance.

Dupain took another equally theatrical image around 1937 to promote the newest line in Kelvinator refrigerators. In this photograph, a male and female model dressed in evening clothes stand either side of a box-like refrigerator. Dupain has backlit the Kelvinator through a sheet of frosted glass that gives an aura of light to the rather prosaic object. Indeed the light emanating from this ‘miracle’ of technology casts a glow onto the couple who stand transfixed beside the glowing machine.

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46 For a discussion of this photograph see Stephen, 1983, pp.40-5.

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But this photograph is more than a simple illustration of a product, it is also a theatrical tale of desire and romance in which the Kelvinator is an integral player. On one level this is a simple story in which the acquisition of the new refrigerator has liberated the woman from the drudgery of household chores to enjoy a life of nightclubs and romance. However, the relationship between the couple implies other dramatic possibilities.

While the elegantly dressed man fixes a smoldering look at his female companion, she does not respond. At first, her averted glance appears to be a coy gesture but then the viewer follows her downward glance to its real destination. The object of this woman’s desire is not the debonair man but the refrigerator that stands between them captivating her attention. As Dupain suggests in this photograph, the Kelvinator may offer its female audience liberation from household duties but its beauty and functionality is such that it ultimately draws them back home.

The narrative techniques that Dupain employs in this photograph suggests the influence of Hollywood films and glamour portraiture on his work. Dupain no doubt saw some of the many American films that came to Australia in the 1930s. He was also familiar, from international journals, with the work of Hollywood stills photographers such as George Hurrell who transformed the natural good looks of actors and actresses into images of iconic perfection through the use of judicious lighting and retouching.47

Hollywood portraiture was developed to ‘sell’ the stars to the public and its seductive photographic techniques were easily translated to advertising other kinds of ‘products’. The impact of these advertising techniques reached Australian photographers through magazines and films but it also spread through companies such as the American advertising firm of J.Walter Thompson and Lintas. This organisation established a branch in Australia in the early 1930s and although it used local photographers their work was produced in accordance with American styles.
Garden Cities

"Here all my myriad flesh and bone are prisioned,
Prisioned with puny death - no splendour here -
Held by a plumless power, a mindless demon,
Of stone and concrete, and so inexorable steell"
T. Lees, 1934.48

Although the kind of homes that The Home featured were outside the range of all but the wealthiest Australian, affordable solutions to the problems of poor housing and its devitalising effects on the working classes were also being tackled in the interwar period. Several progressive Australian town planners began to promote schemes influenced by the so-called ‘Garden City Movement’ which found its first expression in Letchworth, near London in 1903. The principles behind this movement were succinctly defined in 1919 by the English Garden Cities and Town Planning Association:

[These are] Towns designed for healthy living and industry; of a size that makes possible a full measure of social life, but not larger, surrounded by a rural belt; the whole of the land being held in public ownership or held in trust for the community.49

The reformist character of Letchworth initially attracted a similarly progressive community to settle there and a School of Theosophical meditation called ‘The Cloister’ was established in the township.50 The fundamentally radical basis of the movement was diffused by the time it reached Australian shores, however, it was still underpinned by humanist and regenerative imperatives.

John Sulman was one of the most influential Australians to incorporate ‘Garden City’ principles into his practice as a town planner and teacher. In his 1921 publication, An Introduction to the Study of Town Planning in Australia, Sulman interpreted the key components of the movement as space, light and an emphasis on nature. One of the most lasting elements introduced by Sulman as a means of reminding Australians of their links to the natural world

47 For information on glamour photography see Ennis, 1986; Fahey and Rich, 1987; Crombie, 1989.
48 Lees, 1934, p.23.
is the (now ubiquitous) 'nature strip' located at the front edge of most urban properties. Sulman listed the nature strip as a desirable aspect of town planning along with the:

allocation of special quarters or sites for each kind of building, the absence of the congestion of dwellings and their better arrangement, the ample provision of parks, playgrounds, and open spaces, the planting with trees and grass of part of the width of the road where not required for traffic, and the provision of greater opportunities for social intercourse.\(^{51}\)

Sulman's writings reflected his interest in post-war reconstruction in a broad social sense. In his chapter titled, "The Health of the Town", he considered town planning in the context of communal health and military strength. Relating city living to national security, he noted the high numbers of men rejected for war-time service in 1914, quoting figures that 71% of men who presented themselves in Brisbane were rejected. Working with the premise that the quality of life in the city resulted in a standard of health that was, "inferior to those living in the country", Sulman concluded that contemporary town planning methods were clearly inadequate.\(^{52}\)

Sulman considered health in a holistic manner, linking physical depletion to moral and spiritual degeneration. He intoned a familiar diagnosis of bodily decline when he wrote, "Working in a vitiated atmosphere arouses the craving for stimulants; the abuse of drink encourages immorality; immorality causes widespread disease and there cannot be sound minds in unsound bodies".\(^{53}\) His choice of the word 'vitiated' in this context is telling, encompassing pollution of an environmental and social kind.

While Sulman limited his views on the implications of town planning to moral and physical dimensions, an earlier advocate of town planning in Australia saw eugenic implications in urban development. John Daniel, an alderman of Sydney City Council in 1904, regarded town planning as inextricably allied to national revitalisation and wrote:

\(^{51}\) Sulman, 1921, p.106.
\(^{52}\) Sulman, 1921, p.35.
\(^{53}\) Sulman, 1921, p.40.
To hold its own... [Australia] must guard the stamina of that race. If the destiny of the progressive race is fixed as that of town dwellers of the future, then country conditions must, so far as possible, be combined with city conveniences.\textsuperscript{54}

Fitzgerald believed Australians had missed the opportunity to make Sydney into a site akin to the grandeur of ancient Rome viewing it instead as a, "city flung down in a crazy mass, formless, inorganic, a maze of slums, of ruelles, defiles, cul-de-sacs".\textsuperscript{55} To accompany the article, the artist, Lionel Lindsay, contributed a drawing of, "Circular Quay, Sydney, as the Romans would have it", which featured a remodelled Circular Quay with temples, triumphal arches, chariots and men in togas.\textsuperscript{56}

Sulman had rather less antiquarian notions when he came to consider Australian urban development. He considered three elements as essential for the modern city and suburb: fresh air, lack of congestion and sunlight. The third of these elements - sunlight - was believed by many to be a vital component of happy and healthful living. It is significant that Sulman promoted sunshine not only in his work as a town planner but also in a wider communal sense through his sponsorship of a prize for Australian landscape art at the Art Gallery of New South Wales - landscape painting at this time being replete with the golden glow of sunshine deemed characteristic of this sun-blessed country. His attitude regarding the importance of sunlight in cities is made explicit in his statement:

\begin{quote}
It is quite appalling, from a health point of view, to realise what a large proportion of city workers carry on their duties by artificial light. When their work is finished the daylight has gone, except in summer, and, but for the weekends, they are debarred from the life-giving, germ-destroying sunlight.\textsuperscript{57}
\end{quote}

Sulman emphasised proper housing and urban development as a means of creating an environment conducive to corporeal health, while others were to consider planning from the viewpoint of spiritual well-being.\textsuperscript{58} For instance, Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Griffin

\textsuperscript{54} Fitzgerald, 1907a, p.59. Fitzgerald contributed another article to this journal on the implications of overcrowding in Sydney and its link to eugenics. See Fitzgerald, 1907b, pp.562-8.
\textsuperscript{55} Fitzgerald, 1907a, p.57.
\textsuperscript{56} Fitzgerald, 1907a, p.57.
\textsuperscript{57} Sulman, 1921, p.35.
\textsuperscript{58} For information on this project see Houston, 1929, pp.37-9. William Lane was perhaps the most notable Australian of this period to establish a utopian community, albeit in Paraguay. For information on Lane see Souter, 1968.
(Mahoney) were architects and town planners whose perspective was fundamentally informed by their interest in the spiritual movement of Theosophy.  

In 1927, Marion Griffin led a reporter from the Theosophical journal, *Advance Australia*, on a tour of their newly established suburban development at Castlecrag in Sydney. In the resultant article, "Building for the Future", I. Anson noted that, "In brief, Castlecrag belongs to the New Age". The reporter praised the evident level of social co-operation that the settlement encouraged, seeing the estate as proof that, "beauty and utility are not opposites". The following year, Walter Burley Griffin stressed the need for architectural and communal interests to be linked. It was clear that he envisaged Castlecrag as a community where like-minded people would live together, and inevitability, those with spiritual interests conducive to Theosophy and Anthroposophy (a break-away group from Theosophy) were attracted there, especially in its early years. As part of the Griffin's plans the development included not only houses but a natural amphitheatre where Marion Griffin held plays in the 1930s.

The magazine, *Pix*, reported on one such theatrical production stating that, "In the charming setting of Castlecrag on the shores of Middle Harbour, Sydney, a band of players, under the auspices of the Anthroposophy Society regularly produce Greek dramas". Marion Griffin not only designed the costumes (making Greek tunics out of decidedly unclassical materials such as linoleum) but also produced the plays. The group considered their theatrical efforts in a spiritual context and the reporter from *Pix* concluded that, "The Anthroposophy Society bases its etchings on all of man's activities - bodily, spiritual, and of the soul".

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59 Theosophy and Rudolf Steiner's 'Anthroposophy' movement had a period of florescence in Australia in the 1920s and 1930s. They impacted significantly on a group of creative artists including, Murray Griffen, Jane Price, Violet Teague, Florence Fuller, Ethel Carrick Fox and Vida Leahy, and the writers Christopher Brennan and Mlle Franklin. Christian Waller (nee Yandell) was also influenced by Theosophy along with another spiritual group called 'The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn' - this latter movement was more Western in its interests than the Theosophical Society, drawing on a Celtic heritage allied to a belief in alchemy, astrology and Tarot. Another convert to theosophy was Jack Bean, the younger brother of the war historian C.E.W. Bean. A substantial study of the impact of Theosophy in Australia has been published by Roe, 1986 and Neff, 1943. For reference to the influence of Theosophy on the arts see Thomas, 1992, pp.7 and 16.
60 Anson, 1927, p.117.
61 Anson, 1927, p.118.
62 Griffin, 1928, p.126
63 Unknown, 1938k, p.32
64 Unknown, 1938k, p.33.
The idea of a natural amphitheatre made reference to that apogee of civilisation - 5th century Greece - and suggested the harmony that could exist between nature and a built environment. Nature, as the basis of the new suburban development, was a keystone of the Griffins' architectural plans. Griffin felt that architecture should derive from "communion with primeval nature" and Castlecrag saw the physical realisation of these goals by incorporating, "as much kinship with the world of the outdoors as is compatible with civilised living". In 1922, Walter Burley Griffin related the relationship of architecture to nature in terms influenced by the Theosophy. In his article for the mainstream architectural magazine, *The Australian Home Builder*, he wrote of architecture as an expression of the new, evolved Australian:

> [a] sordid environment is the consequence of an egotism that hardly ever questions wanton sacrifice to immediate and personal - not social - advantage, of the harmonious, perfect development which an intense evolutionary process through aeons has prepared for us.\(^{66}\)

The Griffins aspirations for a harmonious symbiosis between nature and modernity were utopian in conception, however, they differed from most such schemes in the practicality of the proposals. In essence, their plans for Castlecrag were to place sophisticated housing in natural environments that were, as far as possible, untouched by inappropriate and intrusive developments. These goals were informed not only by a Theosophical philosophy but a belief, shared by some Australian architects and town planners, that people needed to live in environments that incorporated, not denied, nature. In this context, Griffin noted:

> The Australians probably spend more time and endure more discomfort in trying to enjoy nature than any other people in the world today, but holiday outings and weekend humpies comprise the least satisfactory and most extravagant way of gaining necessary respite from the monotony of home and business life in a metropolis. Civilised man has never had a greater opportunity to find his home in the midst of a natural paradise than that offered to him right in the Australian city.\(^{67}\)

Unlike Fitzgerald, who rejected contemporary urban developments in favour of an idealised form of classical architecture, the Griffins believed that modernity and nature were not

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\(^{65}\) Griffin, 1928, p.126. Cooper, 1929, p.58.
\(^{66}\) Griffin, 1922, p.52.
\(^{67}\) Griffin, W.B. 1929 quoted in Cooper 1929, p.12.
incompatible forces. In this view they differ too from Sulman who, although sharing their appreciation for the natural environment, based his philosophy of town planning on a belief that modern urban living was inherently degenerate. Sulman was practical enough to acknowledge the necessity of cities (in contrast to Fitzgerald whose nostalgia for the ancient subsumed any modernist tendencies). However, one detects in Sulman’s writings a certain pessimism regarding urban environments not evident in Griffins comments.

The Griffins had an encompassing attitude towards the best that modernity and nature could offer. They did not respond to their projects with overly nostalgic longings for the golden age of antiquity, or with a desire to work in a modernist idiom that, at heart, they regarded with suspicion. Instead, developments like Castlecrag reveal a desire to utilise the most modern of architectural facilities with a profound appreciation of the natural. Castlecrag was an expression of their beliefs that Australia was a ‘promised land’ where an evolutionary advanced stage of humanity could find a suitable home.

**Rhythmic lives: Australian ‘body culture’**

“It is the new dance that mirrors the image of our era in all its qualities. One finds embodied in dance the image of the machine, one finds the eruption of the chaotic ideas of the Bolshevism world as well as the strict forms of fascist hierarchies, but above all an unbridled dynamism, the sensually turbulent ecstasy of movement in the frenzied lunge towards the Immeasurable that is our life”.

Wolfgang Graeser, 1927. 68

In 1926, the Theosophist, Reverend G.S. Arundale, succinctly described the ideal living conditions of the new Australian race:

They live hygienically. Their clothes, their homes, all their arrangements for the care of the body, are designed to this end. And they have learned that hygienic living does not merely mean pure air, the right values in food, and so on; it means also artistic and rhythmic living, graceful living. 69

Arundale’s mention of a ‘rhythmic’ way of living reflects the interest in distinctive forms of body movement and body development that flourished during the early decades of the


69 Arundale, 1926, pp.9-10.
twentieth century. 'Rhythm' was considered a vitalising force that allowed the body to move naturally in accordance with its own internal cadence. This concept came into being as part of the belief that modern living had destroyed the individual's harmonious relationship with their own physical being. In 1936, Roland Williams wrote of this destructive modern tendency, "[rhythm] evaporates out of modern life, and modern conditions in industry murder it as surely as Macbeth did murder sleep". Williams considered body movement as an essential component of reducing, "that tired feeling" endemic to Western countries since the end of World War One.71

So-called 'eurhythmic' styles of dance and movement were regarded as an essential means of restoring natural rhythm and vitality to the body. One of the most influential exponents of this new body movement was Emile Jacques-Dalcroze, a Swiss-born teacher who founded a so-called 'eurhythmic' system that promoted, "training in and by rhythm".72 Jacques-Dalcroze drew authority from classical sources believing that the ancient Greek sense of rhythm gave that society a harmony and pleasure that modernity lacked. In common with other movements, eurhythmity was underpinned by a belief that health and fitness were social imperatives. As he writes, "The education of to-morrow must embrace reconstruction, preparation and adaptation: aiming, on the one hand, at the re-education of the nervous facilities and the attainment of mental calm and concentration".73

According to Jacques-Dalcroze, rhythmic movement fulfilled a broad agenda of benefits that could liberate mental, physical, emotional and creative powers. Paradoxically, this 'liberation' was underpinned by the notion of control, as true freedom only came as the individual gained dominion over their physical and moral functions. Jacques-Dalcroze's approach was not only an apparent panacea for the modern ills of 'degeneration' and neurasthenia but had 'racial' benefits. As he wrote, "The possession of highly developed impulses and racial

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70 Williams, 1936, p.29.
71 Williams, 1936, p.20.
72 Jacques-Dalcroze quoted in Pennington, 1925, p.4. Toepfer maintains that Jacques-Dalcroze was the pivotal figure in the promotion of modern dance in Europe whose theories made it possible for dance to become such a powerful force in German body culture. Toepfer, 1997, p.20.
73 Jacques-Dalcroze, 1921, p.x.
instincts should be supplemented by the power of controlling these faculties by an intelligence instructed in the diversity of their powers.”\textsuperscript{74}

Jacques-Dalcroze had a vision of a “new social order” and from 1910 to 1913 he headed the Jacques-Dalcroze Cultural Institute at Hellerau near Dresden which was part of a model community founded by Wolf and Harold Dohnn.\textsuperscript{75} A contemporary description of the Institute clearly places the Institute in line with other regenerative schemes for the physical and spiritual body.\textsuperscript{76} As the American reporter, Dave Herbert, writes, “The new school at Hellerau follows German educational ideals of a beautiful soul in a beautiful body. It applies modern architecture, with a host of hygienic improvements, newest systems of psychology, pedagogy, art and gymnastics”.\textsuperscript{77}

During the 1920s, Jacques-Dalcroze's body movement methods became popular in England, Russia and the United States and his teachers established centres in these countries. Information concerning his system of body movement reached Australia too and by 1913, George Dupain wrote, “Have you heard of Eurhythmics? ... [it] is the invention of Dr Jacques Dalcroze, a Swiss Viennese ... [and] is really exercise and music so combined that the highest physical and mental results are obtained simultaneously”.\textsuperscript{78}

Information regarding the new body movement techniques came to Australia through films, books and a number of demonstrations by those trained in its various methods. The variety of ‘body culture’ schools was vast, and the range of techniques was seen by Australians in the 1920s in a release of the popular German film, The Golden Road to Strength and Beauty: An Idyll of Man’s Strength and Woman’s Beauty (1924), which was shown at the Adyar Theatre in Sydney.\textsuperscript{79} A promotional pamphlet accompanying the film’s release stated, “Every great school that has achieved success in body culture is represented - Dalcroze, ... Anna

\textsuperscript{74} Jacques-Dalcroze quoted in Pennington, 1925, p.76.
\textsuperscript{75} Jacques-Dalcroze quoted in Pennington, 1925, p.57.
\textsuperscript{76} Jacques-Dalcroze quoted in Pennington, 1925, p.33. The community has been described by Irwin Spector as, “a benevolent social enterprise, a planned industrial city modeled after a similar project in England”. Spector, 1990, p.2. The model city Spector refers to is that of Letchworth in England, a highly influential early example of the so-called ‘garden city movement’.
\textsuperscript{78} Dupain, G. 1913, p.2.
\textsuperscript{79} Adyar, [1920s].
Herman, Laban etc.”. The selling points of the film was the extensive use of slow motion camera work that allowed the viewer the opportunity to, “follow each ecstatic step and drink in the beauty of every moment”.

Screenings of such body movement films were a rare occurrence in Australia and it was more common for people to gain their knowledge of the latest trends in this field from photographs published in books or popular journals. Photography could convey a sense of physicality and suggest the complexity of poses in ways that drawing or paintings could not. As the ballet writer, T. Essington Breen, noted in 1940, “photography . . . has grown to the dimension of being one of the most charming and fascinating artistic reactions to ballet”. Given the written descriptions regarding the dynamism of the new body movements it is perhaps surprising then that these early images show generally artificial and mannered dance poses.

In 1922, for instance, Bernice Agar photographed Miss Gladys Talma after she had given one of the first public displays of eurhythmic dancing in Australia. Talma, who had spent fourteen years training with Isadora Duncan before teaching at the Langridge School of Physical Culture in Sydney, is shown in the characteristic ‘uniform’ of a Grecian-style tunic and bare feet. She is depicted in profile with her knees bent and arms drawn inwards in imitation of the figures of Greek attic vases. Her static pose appears the antithesis of ‘freedom’ of movement, however Talma, along with other eurhythmic dancers, passionately believed that these seemingly awkward body movements would help bring about a revolutionary approach to the body. As Talma wrote in 1923:

Eurhythmy . . . The word was at one time much used by painters, sculptors, designers, and dilexants [sic] of the arts. It connotes the idea of ease, rhythm, harmonious movement of all the parts in a body, exquisitely balanced and justly proportioned, complete physical fitness allied with perfect physical grace.

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80 Adyar, [1920s], p.4.
81 Adyar [1920s], p.1.
82 For a description of dance photography in Germany see Toepfer, 1997, pp. 374-81.
83 Breen, 1940, [p.1].
85 Talma, 1923.
The ‘radical’ nature of the movements - which were touted as quintessentially modern - were, in fact, a return to the classical. Dr Duncan, the father of Isadora, had created poses for modern dancers based on the, “représentations ingenieuses” he found on Greek vases and then, “transmitted [these] into actual living movement”. The approximations of the classical were conflated with notions of what was ‘natural’ for the body. As Talma writes, “[the dance] was distinctly natural in the sense of that word when opposed to artificiality - true, simple, sincere . . . sunshine and violets”. The effects of performing such movements were considered by its followers to have effects that were emotionally and even eugenically beneficial. Talma, for instance, believed that the dance was a useful conduit for over active ‘female emotions’ that could be expressed in a, “joyous yet restrained and hygenically beneficial action”.

Eurhythmics became a popular form of dance for young women throughout the 1920s and could be performed in solo movements or in groups, where as series of interconnected poses could take on quite complex dimensions. Ruth Hollick photographed one such group eurhythmic display in the 1920s showing three women carefully posed at the entrance steps of a home. In her photograph, the central woman, standing on her toes, holds up one of each of the arms of the two flanking women. These women are leaning back while standing on one leg with the other raised and their toes pointed. The two side women complete this interlocking posture by stretching one arm back to clasp each other’s hands. The whole movement forms a static star formation and appears to be a ‘set piece’ rather than part of a fluid movement or continuous dance.

Harold Cazneau also photographed the new Grecian inspired dance forms on a number of occasions. In a photograph improbably chosen by The Home to illustrate the glories of the Fiscus tree, Cazneau shows a large group of eurhythmic dancers dressed in gauzy tunics.

86 Talma, 1923, p.30.  
87 Talma, 1923, p.31.  
88 Talma, 1923, p.31.  
89 Toepfer notes the importance and predominance of women in the German body culture movement writing, “Germanic body culture was largely the achievement of women who associated modernity with expanded opportunities for freedom of identity and action”. Toepfer, 1997, pp.10-11.
The young women are shown under the spreading branches of a fig tree where they are dancing in a self-consciously 'free-spirited' manner, hands held, in a circle.\(^9\)

![Fig. 64. Harold Cazneaux No title (Eurhythmics pose) 1920s Gelatin silver photograph](image)

Teachers of this new style of dance were to be employed both by traditional schools and other progressive organisations. Enid Lorinna, for instance, taught eurhythmics at the Star of the East amphitheatre in Sydney - a Theosophical venue.\(^9\) Others used eurhythmics as only one of several dance methods in their schools. The aptly named Louise Lightfoot incorporated new movement styles from Germany into her independent dance company. Lightfoot began her career as an architectural draftsman with Walter Burley Griffin and was one of the original members of the Castlecrag community. She trained in a variety of dance styles, including traditional forms of classical ballet with Daphne Deane at the Sydney conservatorium; 'Greek' dancing with Gertrude Sievers; and Modern Dance with Sonia Revid.\(^9\)

In 1929, Lightfoot jointly founded the 'First Australian Ballet' with her partner Micha Burlakov, and staged a range of original productions and reworkings of existing programs until 1938, at the Savoy Theatre in Sydney. The company met with a varied response and, in

\(^9\) Ruth Hollick, No title (Eurhythmics pose) 1920s. Illustrated in Lebovic and Cahill, 1989, p.159.
\(^9\) Hunt, 1935, p.45.
\(^9\) Pask, 1979, p.137. Revid was a pupil of Mary Wigman who was the main exponent of the Laban method.
the year that they disbanded, the pair commented to *Pix* magazine, “sometimes we get discouraged and depressed [sic] when people don’t seem to want ballet”. Lightfoot subsequently left Australia for India where she studied alternative dance forms.

Lightfoot’s despondency over Australians’ lack of interest in modern dance was true - but unfortunately only applied to the ‘local product’. In 1936, the Ballet Russes, travelling under the name ‘Covent Garden Russian Ballet’, toured Australia for the first time and were met with a rapturous response. Although classically trained, this was a progressive company that brought to the country some of the world’s finest dancers; a range of modern ballets by Balanchine, Nijinska and Fokine; sets by artists including de Chirico, Miro and Dufy; and music composed by Stravinsky among others.

To celebrate the arrival of the company in Australia on their 1937 and 1938 tours, Russell Roberts and Max Dupain were commissioned by Sydney Ure Smith to photograph the dancers for *The Home*. Smith devoted almost the whole of the February 1937 issue to the dancers’ tour of Australia. Along with numerous photographs, he included articles written by the ballet journalist, Arnold Haskell, who toured with the company, and Basil Burdett, who noted his pleasure in seeing that, “there is a receptive and eager public here for new ideas in the arts”.

Russell Roberts adopted a documentary approach to the subject, recording the dancers during and after their performances. In contrast, Dupain preferred to take portraits of the dancers in his studio where he could control their poses and employ studio lighting to dramatic effect. A typical example of this work is his photograph of Tournanova and Lifar in Swan Lake in which the dancers pose in a manner characteristic of their dramatic roles in this classic production. Dupain used spots to give a theatrical edge to this fairy tale story of a swan princess and her lover.

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94 Unknown, 19381, pp.32-3
96 In an interview in 1990 with Michelle Potter, Dupain was rather dismissive of these images stating, “I don’t place great importance on the Ballet Series . . . they were largely illustrative” and “It’s not an Australian ballet . . . it’s an ingredient that’s been imported”. Dupain, M. 1990, pp.4-5.
97 *The Home*, volume 18, number 2, February 1937. The Ballet Russe were also featured in the March and June issues of 1937 and the November and December issues of 1938.
98 Burdett, 1937, p.41.
Dupain’s interest in light is apparent too in his portrait of Leila Rousova taken in 1937. Perhaps surprisingly he chose not to pose the young dancer in a manner that shows her supple body to best effect or indeed to identify her in one of her character roles. Instead, Dupain positioned his studio lights to accentuate her face and casts the rest of her body in shadow. The result is a striking image in which our attention is directed towards Rousova’s indrawn demeanour. Her attributes as a dancer become less important as the viewer is engaged by the enigmatic and impenetrable expression on her face.

Fig. 65. Max Dupain Leila Rousova
1937
Gelatin silver photograph

Dupain later recalled that the two most co-operative dancers from the Ballet Russe were Tamara Toumanova and Paul Petroff whom he photographed in his studio and in bushland at Frenchs Forest, Sydney. The latter series of work arose from his desire to place the artificial high art world of ballet into a sunlit Australian bush setting. Dupain became friends with some of the dancers and their entourage, socialising with them and using some as models for his non-commissioned art photographs. For instance, he used Paul Petroff as

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99 These photographs, which were not illustrated were mentioned by Dupain in an interview with Michelle Potter in 1990. See Dupain, 1990, pp.3-4.
a model on several occasions and persuaded the ballet writer, Arthur Haskell, to pose for an elaborate surrealist photograph that was reproduced in *The Home.*

Haskell’s familiarity with modern art, gained through his work with the Ballet Russe, no doubt prepared him to some extent for the demands of his photographic session with Dupain. He appears serious, but not uncomfortable, as he holds a metal hoop over his own head and that of a disembodied female mannequin. Dupain was particularly keen on producing surrealist photographs in the late 1930s and this image combines an eccentric combination of camera equipment with ropes, hoops and a cast of a classical statue. The interplay of the mechanical with the classical was a favoured device of Dupain’s - both in his creative and commercial work - and he may have also considered it appropriate to include a sculpture of a muscular Greek body as a reference to Haskell’s life, which was spent observing the similarly refined bodies of young dancers.

The tour of Ballet Russe marked a watershed in the development of dance in Australia, and its success has tended to overshadow the small, but interesting, dance events that preceded it. By the mid 1930s, performances of the new dance were becoming more regular in Australia, although the ‘liberated’ nature of the movements caused some adverse comment. In 1934, for instance, the ‘interpretative dancer’, Eve Alwyn, gave a performance at the Criterion Theatre in which she departed from a classical program to perform such evocative numbers as “The Storm”, “Dawn” and “The Departure of the Soul from the Body”. Wearing only trunks and a dark coloured gauze top, her lack of undergarments prompted an

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100 *The Home* erroneously attributed Dupain’s portrait of Haskell to Russell Roberts. The portrait illustrated an article by Francis, 1937, p.32. Dupain’s photographs of dancers were used to illustrate an article by Haskell for *Art in Australia* in 1937. See Haskell, 1937, pp.44-49. Dupain used Petroff as his model for his study of a discus thrower. He also chose a portrait of the bare-chested Petroff as part of his book highlighting what he considered to be his best early photographs. Dupain, 1948, pl.20.

101 Dupain

102 Alwyn was photographed in 1936 for *The Home* performing her “scarf dance” and described as an “expressionist dancer”. Unknown 1936c.
reporter from the *Smith's Weekly* to file a sensationalist article under the headlines, “Nudity on the Stage: Even the Brassiere was Discarded” and “Dancer displays naked bosom”.

The reporter would have been shocked to learn that totally nude dancing was, in fact, a significant aspect of body culture in Germany and that Alwyn was relatively modest in her attire. The motivation of such performances was to encourage a new and liberated attitude towards the body. It was also felt that nudity would help the unhindered expression of deeply held emotions through unconstrained body movements. In 1936, for instance, *The Home* featured photographs of the Mary Wigman trained dancer, Norda Mata, who was billed as a, “Famous German creative dancer . . . [who] stresses the important fact that dancing, like music and poetry, is only successful when it stirs the deepest emotions”.

Two years later, another exponent of the ‘German dance’ was brought to Australia by the Women’s League of Health and Beauty. Anny Fligg was a student of Rudolph von Laban and performed at the Conservatorium in Sydney in a dance that sought to, “emphasize emotional expression”.

The emotional and the intuitive qualities of the new dance were also emphasised by Irene Vere Young who wrote two articles on German dance for the journal *Manuscrits* in 1933 and 1934. Young was one of Australia’s most enthusiastic evangelists of body culture in the 1930s and gained her initial experience of modern dance styles in New York with an (unnamed) German woman who had, “gathered around her a handful of young women and fired them with her inspiration”. These loyal devotees danced at the Guild Theatre without musical accompaniment in a performance claimed by Young as “the first recital of its kind ever given in America, taking place years before the triumphant New York debut of Mary Wigman, who with Rudolph von Laban stands to-day the world-wide acknowledged leader of the modern German Dance”.

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103 Unknown, 1934e, p.10.
105 Unknown, 1936d, p.49.
107 Young, 1933 and 1934.
108 Young, 1933, p.47.
109 Young, 1933, p.48.

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Young describes the new dance as a physical method with social consequences, thus allying it to the plethora of other regenerative projects of the interwar years. Her promotional articles contain little description of the actual form of the dance beyond a photograph of a young woman. The woman is posed in a resolutely non-classical dance pose; her body twisted in an extreme movement with her knees slightly bent, upper arms raised over her head and her back almost perpendicular to the floor.  

Young considered this new form of body movement as a project offering physical and spiritual liberation of a vitalist kind. As she observes:

> it offers you what the whole world is seeking - a means to freedom - freedom from the accepted stereotyped designs, freedom from routine so damning to the life instinct, freedom from artificial posturing and posing.  

In 1934, Young published a follow-up article triumphantly recording that the first productions of the so-called German Dance had been staged in Sydney. The 'Modern Solo and Group Dancing' company held a performance at the Savoy Theatre in October 1933, followed by two sell-out shows the following year. Young promoted these events as a proletarian dance form, concerned with vitalist essences and emotions and unable to be appreciated by intellectuals. She was judgmental of the latter group whom she characterised as a coldly critical elite, disenfranchised from the 'humanity' of the working classes. In her description of these two apparently opposing social forces, Young posits the intellectual as an over-sophisticated, over-refined individual divorced from the 'natural' emotion of the 'mass man':

> It [the new dance] makes contact with the masses, and they can understand it. The intellectuals draw their pleasure from the beauty of its design and its technique, but their composite mind, coldly critical, drained and refined of nearly all spontaneous emotion, comes up over the footlights and they make an unhappy audience.

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110 Young, 1934, p.16.  
111 Young, 1933, p.48.
Not so the mass man. His emotions come up over the footlights too, and there is the warmth of mutuality, the recognition of our common lot.\textsuperscript{112}

Young later modified her judgements on the capacity of the intellectual to appreciate the new dance. After a trip to Europe to view developments in the ‘body culture’ movement, she ecstatically reported on the capacity of movement to change the lives of everyone who embraced it - even intellectuals. As she wrote:

For the education of the people; for the culture of the artistic; for the mental stimulus of the intellectual; for the freeing of the Spirit; in short for the unity of spirit, mind and body - the three in one - the \textit{Complete} Man - this, for me, is Dance - the Spirit of Culture of the Physical.\textsuperscript{113}

Young also viewed the new body movements as having national ramifications. In an interview for \textit{The Home} in 1937, she described viewing the opening of the Olympic Games in Berlin in which 10,000 dancers presented a choreographed version of a historical battle.\textsuperscript{114} Clearly impressed with this mass display, Young wrote, “Germany is easily fifty years ahead of the British Empire in physical and dance culture”.\textsuperscript{115} The experience prompted her to call for Australia to develop its own culture of body movement:

It must not be based on any antiquarian traditions; it must be something vital and dynamic and expressive of our virility. It must be something that truly expresses the rhythm of living; ... virile and healthy, strong and lusty with imagination and zest of life. Through the Dance we could express ourselves as the sons and daughters of a vigorous pioneering stock, and through physical education in general strengthen our heritage.\textsuperscript{116}

Young considered dance as a means of increasing the appreciation of essential ‘life forces’ and as a way to revitalise the body. As I have shown, Young’s linkage of bodily regeneration

\textsuperscript{112} Young, 1934, p.17
\textsuperscript{113} Young, 1938, p.39.
\textsuperscript{114} Young, Irene quoted in Dyte, 1937, p.64.
\textsuperscript{115} Young, Irene quoted in Dyte, 1937, p.64. Toepfer comments that mass physical displays in Germany was antithetical to the principles of individuality and liberation that the body movement espoused. As he writes, Nazi concepts of mass movement featured, “integration of the athletic body into a vast image of community in which all bodies were minute compared to the great movement of the whole”. Toepfer, 1997, p.316.
\textsuperscript{116} Young, Irene quoted in Dyte, 1937 p.64.
with a eugenic program of national 'rebuilding' was shared by a diversity of social and commercial organisations. In this chapter I have discussed how fatigue could be banished through attention to various essential bodily requirements. However, those concerned with 'body culture' had one even more important tool at their disposal in restoring the energies of the Australian body: that of nature.
Chapter Six

Elemental Forces: Nudity and nudism in early twentieth century Australia

Advocates of bodily rejuvenation frequently invoked the primordial forces of nature as a primary means of achieving their goals. Time spent in the natural environment was considered more effective than even the best tonic or patent medicine in restoring the health and vitality of the individual. In Australia, those interested in 'body culture' recognised that the nation's generally sunny climate and beautiful beaches were its greatest sources of bodily and spiritual rejuvenation.

In this chapter I argue that sunshine became an important trope of good health and national identity for Australians, and I investigate how both Pictorialist and modernist photographers used sunlight as an aesthetic and nationalistic device in their work. I also show how the pastime of 'sun worship' naturally aligned itself with nudism, and give a detailed history of the attitudes towards nudity in Australia in the interwar period. As I demonstrate, the 'nude cult' may have been popular among certain parts of society but it was treated as an illegal activity under Australian law. Using the books of George Southern as my case study, I investigate how censorship laws were applied to the promotion of nudism in literature and to the distribution of nude photographs.

This study of social attitudes towards nudism forms an important background for a detailed analysis of a series of nude photographs taken by Max Dupain in the 1930s. These works were unlike any that had previously been produced by art photographers in Australia, and I argue that a full understanding of this body of work is only possible when they are considered in the context of prevalent discourses on health, fitness and nudity. As part of this discussion I include a recently discovered article written by one of Dupain's nude models from the late 1930s.

Dupain chose coastal landscapes as the setting for many of his nude photographs and he considered the beach to be a primary site to connect with vitalistic impulses. In this chapter,
I examine the terms of Australian ‘beach culture’ and discuss how it was imaginatively portrayed both by Dupain and others.

The sunbaker: Health through sunshine

“Out of passion for sunshine springs the noble shrine of loftiest idealism”
Hans Suren, 1925.¹

Sunlight, in particular, was considered an elemental means of promoting physical and spiritual well-being. Following world war one, exposure to the sun was seen as a means of psychic regeneration that could rekindle a primitive sense of physicality in soldiers who had lost contact with their ‘life force’. As Charles Spender evocatively wrote: “the sun healed their bodies of the years of war, and made them conscious of the quivering, fluttering life of blood and muscles, covering their exhausted spirits like the pelt of an animal”.²

Max Dupain’s *The sunbaker* (1937) is possibly the most well-known Australian photograph. It is also the most notable image of the sun’s primal power. Although taken many years after the end of the war, memories of the Anzac were still strong enough to lend this image a

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¹ Suren, 1927, p.1.
particular nationalist resonance. Dupain has photographed a young man at Culburra Beach who lies ‘sun struck’, oblivious to anything but the heat on his wet back and the warmth of the sand below. The use of military allusions when describing sunbathing was common - in 1929, for instance, Jean Curlewis described Sydney beaches as a kind of battle ground with: “Acres of beach covered with smooth brown bodies that seem sun-slain. Some are flung face downwards - others lie face up, eyes closed, the sun beating on their faces. All are as immobile as marble”.

Dupain’s sunbaker is a monumental muscular form who effortlessly claims his place in the landscape. Dupain has positioned his camera almost at ground level in order to emphasise the sunbaker’s domination of his environment, and his almost palpable connection with the sun and sand. Although the figure of the young man is an inert presence, seemingly stupefied by the heat of the sun, we know from his browned body that he is a habiuté of the beach. Unlike the damaged bodies of the returned Anzac’s, we can be sure too from his fit, lithe appearance that this young man’s state of lethargy is only temporary. When the sunbaker has had enough of the sun’s intoxicating rays he will rouse himself to ‘battle’ the surf once more.

The ‘vitalising’ power of the sun was considered a fundamental means both of restoring bodies to good health and helping them build resistance to diseases. As the Australian Theosophist, Thelma Slingo, wrote in 1929:

The body that receives its proper daily share of the energy and vitalizing force which is being poured forth from the great life centre of our solar system ... gains a resistance to disease that is unknown to the thousands who suffer from sunlight deprivation.

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3 For an excellent analysis of this image see Batchen, 1995, pp.349-57. See also Newton, p.206. Newton notes that the photograph was taken while Dupain was on holidays at Culburra near the Shoalhaven River, NSW.
4 Curlewis & Canneaux, 1929, p.2.
5 Slingo, 1929, p.26. For devotees of Theosophy, the sun provided a ‘vitality’ that made a palpable difference to the spiritual body. Deriving his views from Indian Yogi traditions, the Australian Theosophist Bishop Leadbeater wrote concerning the spiritual capabilities of the sun, “All students of Theosophy know that we draw vitality from the sun. We draw it into ourselves through the spleen, and specialize it there, so that it makes what are called in the Indian books ‘the five vital aie’”. Leadbeater, 1926c, p.138.
Exposure to sunlight had some well-established health benefits: it helped cure rickets and, more importantly, was considered a vital element in the prevention and remedy of tuberculosis - a major killer in the interwar period. Migration to sunny climates, such as Australia, was encouraged by the medical profession for TB sufferers and therapeutic emigrations took place from the 1850s to the 1950s. The sanatorium was a common enough feature of life to become the setting for the German novelist, Thomas Mann’s, *The Magic Mountain* (1924). The inhabitants of this hermetic environment, set high in the Swiss mountains, were caught in a battle between death and decay and the life-giving forces of sunlight and nature. Mann used the hospital as a metaphor for bourgeois German society suggesting disassociation from nature as one of the causes that resulted in the First World War.

Some of the most influential proponents of the benefits of sunlight came from Germany where sun, health and national development were linked in movements such as Nacktkultur. In 1939, George Dupain wrote admiringly of the German approach to sunshine in an effort to encourage a similar attitude in Australia:

*One of the most remarkably healthy men I ever submitted to anthropometrical tests was a German who had practiced 'Nackt-Kultur' for ten years in pre-Hitler times. He was bronzed from tip to toe. His clear blue eyes danced the dance of health. His teeth were like glittering pearls ... He had never been treated for any sickness or disease since adopting this regime. His muscle tone and general condition were as perfect as nature could make them. The sun was responsible.*

An important source book for Australians on this topic was Hans Suren’s *Man and Sunlight*. First published in Germany in 1925 and translated into English two years later, its popularity can be measured by the fact that it was reprinted sixty one times over the following decade. The essential message of the book was linked to, “the aspirations of the true German race” and the national desire to create a race of ‘super-men’, “weather-hardened, bronzed with sun

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6 The benefits of sunlight were being expounded by some in the nineteenth century. See, for instance, a range of ‘sanitary tracts’ on health issues published by the Australian Health Society which was founded in Melbourne in 1875. One tract to deal with the health giving properties of sunlight and fresh air was: Australian Health Society, 1875.
7 Robin Haines notes that, “From the commencement of systematic colonisation in the 1830s, the medical profession in Britain and the Australian colonies promoted the therapeutic efficacy of the long ocean voyage to Australia for sufferers of tuberculosis”. Haines, 1992, p.76-7.
8 Mann, 1960 (1924).
9 Dupain, G. 1935, p.5.
and strong as steel". Suren believed this goal was an essential requirement of good
citizenship, writing, "It is everyone’s sacred duty to help in this great enterprise by active
individual hygienic: for the benefit of the race and of humanity. Active hygienic requires
gymnastics, air and sunlight".

As part of ‘active hygienic’ Suren promoted regular habituation to the forces of nature
stating, "Out of passion for sunshine springs the noble shrine of loftiest idealism". His
own ideal was the quest for, “racial upbuilding” and he promoted the notion that Aryan
Germans were the prime inheritors of an indomitable heritage that included classical Greece
and Rome. Along with a classical approach to the body, his quasi-religious appreciation of
natural forces drew on Nietzsche’s highly influential, Thus Spoke Zarathustra as an example of
a, “pre-Aryan heritage towards which . . . we must again strive”. Nietzsche’s central
character was the prophet Zarathustra - an allusion to Zoroastres who was the leader of a
religious system founded in Persia in the 10th century B.C. The dualistic system of
Zoroastrianism was based on the opposing forces of a spirit of light and goodness (Ormuzd)
and a spirit of darkness and evil (Ahriman). The religion held sunlight in special reverence,
an aspect that Nietzsche uses to great effect in the final triumphant image of his book where
Zarathustra leaves his cave declaring:

‘This is my morning, my day begins: rise up now, rise up, great noon tidel’.

Thus spake Zarathustra and left his cave, glowing and strong, like a morning sun
emerging from behind dark mountains.

10 Another influential book by Suren was his Gymnastik der Deutschen published in 1938.
Dimendberg (eds), 1995, p.678. Suren, 1927, p.194. Suren became a Nazi when the National Socialists came to power and
adjusted this book in line with their ideology. Toepfer, 1997, p.33.
Dimendberg (eds), 1995, p.678.
13 Suren, 1927, p.1. The preface to this first English edition included a foreword by C.W. Salesby who had himself written
on this subject in his book Sunlight and Health (1923) linking sunlight and health to nationalist ideals including that of
eugenics. Salesby, 1923, p.5.
14 Suren, 1927, p.x. Regarding the link between Germany and Greece, Suren wrote: “The Greek culture is however
Germanic, since the ancient Greeks derived from Germanic ideals, and from their culture we can draw conclusions
regarding the Germans”. Suren, 1927, p.18.
15 Suren, 1927, p.31. For another contemporary homage to the transcendent power of the sun see, for instance, Powys’s
‘prayer’: “O unvanquished and visible sun, from whom we draw the very sources of our being, give me the strength this
day to repeat . . . they eternal doctrine”. Powys, L. 1931, p.7.
16 On Nietzsche’s use of the Zoroastrian religion see Hollingsdale, 1977, pp.30-31. This religion is still practiced today in
parts of Iran and India.
17 Author’s emphasis, Nietzsche, 1977 (1892), p.336.
Nietzsche's transcendent image appears to have inspired Suren's first chapter, "Salutation to Light", and his choice of a photograph of a naked man raising his hands to the dawn as the frontispiece and endpiece for his book.\(^\text{18}\)

This strikingly Nietzschean image of the 'super-man' drawing his strength from nature was relatively popular with artists, with at least two producing works on the same theme. In 1923, for instance, the photographer Professor Rudolf Koppitz's, *Männlicher Akt II*, featured a naked man with arms outstretched towards a glowing sky and, four years later, 'Fidus' (aka Hufo Hoppen) painted an almost identical image in his *Salute to Light*.\(^\text{19}\)

These photographs have a corollary too in an Australian book, *Mixed Nudist Camps throughout the World* (1939) which includes a photograph of a naked man raising his outspread arms towards the rising sun. Titled *The Dawn*, the photograph is captioned "A supplicant at the Shrine of the Sun, that mender of broken bodies and tired spirits".\(^\text{20}\) Interestingly, while Suren's photograph is a documentary image of a naked man standing *in* an alpine setting, the Australian version montages a naked man *onto* a mountainous landscape. An advantage of this latter approach is that it gives a symbolic quality to the subject: the naked Australian man hovers above the mountains with the clouds at his feet like an Antipodean god of nature.

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18 Although Suren uses the same image twice in the endpiece he added 'rays' of light to the photograph to more graphically show the effects of the sun.

19 Koppitz illustrated in *Sotheby's* auction catalogue, New York, 7 April 1998, p.54. The notes accompanying this illustration note that the image was shown extensively in America including the California Camera Club, San Francisco and the Smithsonian Institution. Fidus illustrated, Adam, 1995, p.35.

20 Unknown, 1939d, illustrated between pps. 36-7. This same photograph was also used to illustrate, Vogan, 1939, p.43 where it was captioned: "Humanity, stricken with fear and doubt at the hopeless tangle into which world affairs are drifting is searching for some modern 'Joan of Arc' who will unravel the skeins of intrigue and distrust which now exist".
This Australian 'superman' was different to his European cousin in other ways too. The experience of sunlight in Europe was briefer and less intense than that generally enjoyed in Australia and sustained exposure to sun required some effort. The 'culture' of sunbathing in Europe therefore required more persuasion on behalf of the health specialists and a conscious intentionality by the participant. In contrast, Australia was promoted as a 'land of sunshine' where exposure to the sun was a matter of course. The tropical warmth of New South Wales or Queensland was used as an incentive by the tourist industry to lure sun-starved Europeans to the country.

As part of its promotional campaign, the Australian National Travel Association commissioned posters by some of the country's leading designers and photographers. Designers, including Douglas Annand, Percy Trompf and Gert Sellheim, worked with the photographers, Max Dupain and Russell Roberts, to promote Australia as a sunny holiday destination.21

In 1931, for instance, Gert Sellheim incorporated a photograph of a smiling woman splashing through the ocean in a design that advertised Australia as a place "For Sun and Surf". Seven years later, Douglas Annand used a photograph of a smiling family illuminated by the rays of a hand-drawn sun containing the words, "Follow the sun".22 ANTA also produced brochures advertising the country and, by 1936, had distributed over three and a half million brochures in Australia and overseas. A typical copy for one brochure described Australia as:

Truly a land of sunshine. More than one-third of its area - 1,149,320 square miles - is within the tropics; the remainder lies within the temperate zone, but it is temperate with a warm geniality on the sun's contact over eight months of the year.23

Sunshine was cited as a bountiful elemental force that ensured sunny, happy holidays and encouraged physical health as well. However, this positive view contained a certain irony:

21 For an excellent guide to Australian poster making of this period and an outline of ANTA's role in commissioning such products see Butler, 1993.
22 Both Sellheim and Annand's posters are illustrated in Butler, 1993, pp.20-1.
23 Australian National Travel Association, 1936, [p.4].
the commonly held view by Australians was that the population was depleted, a view that was conveniently abandoned when tourist dollars were at stake. As the Travel Associations’ copywriter proudly observed: “Incidentally, but very importantly, Australia’s great gift of sunshine is responsible for its processing the best record of health of any country in the world”.

A country bathed in golden light: Sunshine, nationalism and Australian photography

“We of the southern land, born amid sun . . .”
William H. Elsum, 1926.

In Australia, the sun was more than a palliative aid: it was also a national symbol that signified the country’s distinct identity. From the late nineteenth century, the ‘idea’ of Australia became intrinsically linked to the sun and, for artists, the search for a national style was allied to the depiction of the landscape bathed in sunshine. Sunlight was an important aesthetic element in a nationalistic system of the picturesque that suggested fecundity and vitality both in the landscape and the character of its people. The poet, William H. Elsum, captured this mix of patriotism and vitalism in his poem titled, “The Man”:

We of the southern land, born amid sun,
And pulsing life, and eager tropic warmth
Belong not to despair; rather to hope
Turbulent, full, pregnant with higher thoughts
And splendid powers . . .

Such was the alignment of sunlight with Australian identity that the depiction of the country in anything other than a radiant golden light could raise questions of national allegiance. Writing in the year of Federation, A.J. Hill Griffiths appealed to photographers’ sense of nationalism by suggesting that they only choose landscapes bathed in full sunlight as their subject:

I deem it an unpardonable error to illustrate Australian scenes with unseasonable English atmospheres, and advocate . . . the local fraternity not to turn from the bright and beautiful because it is difficult . . . but to cast their efforts in with their loyalty, and so exhibit a national character in their work which will come with our

24 Australian National Travel Association, 1936, [p.4].
merit, just as our soldiers in South Africa did not ape the Imperial Troops by keeping shoulder to shoulder, and yet come our with honours.\footnote{Griffiths, 1901, pp.33-4.}

Griffiths was writing at a time when the international style of Pictorialism had been enthusiastically embraced by Australian art photographers.\footnote{See Crombie, 1993.} This early form of Pictorialism was characterised by low-toned, highly manipulated prints whose impressionistic effects were achieved through a variety of chemical and optical means. References to specific localities were suppressed and an idealised view of nature outside of the particularities of time and place was encouraged. However, some Australian critics of Pictorialism argued that this soft-focus approach reflected the atmospheric appearance of the northern hemisphere and that local practitioners should produce work more in line with southern conditions.

The evolution of a new, and specifically Australian, form of Pictorialism was allied to an emerging call for national distinction, and the well-defined symbolic properties of sunshine were called on to support the cause. The photographer and editor, Walter Burke, was one of the principal agitators for a 'Sunshine School' in Australian photography.\footnote{A discussion of the 'Sunshine School' and its limitations is contained in Jolly, [1983].} In 1912, he seamlessly incorporated his aesthetic bid into a nationalistic framework writing:

> Our glorious country is in a state of evolution. We have no strongly defined customs, no glorious landmarks of the past, no reminders of bygone sufferings or successes. In our midst are no ancestral castles, no clinging to conservative ideas, in business or politics, nothing but a wonderful optimism and a healthy spirit of progress . . . What is really needed in Australia is a Sunshine School of photographers - cameraists who will devote themselves to the artistic portrayal of our land as it is, not the copying of it to the plan of another land.\footnote{Burke, Walter. "Pictorial Photography in Australia", _Photograms of the Year_, 1901, quoted Jolly [1983].}

The use of sunshine to which Burke referred - based as it was on references to Heidelberg School paintings - was not to prove easy for Australian Pictorialists as the depiction of scenes flooded with clear, strong light denied the fundamental aesthetic terms of the movement. In 1921, Harold Cazneaux suggested some of the difficulties when he wrote:

> Brilliant hard clear atmosphere conditions oftimes discourage the worker; the soft focus lens has not yet solved the problem of dealing with these conditions. The
printing medium, to my mind, is still the nearest solution, combined with careful work on the glass side of the negative to overcome the depth and clearness of distant tones in our landscape on typically Australian sunny days.31

Cazneaux was one of the few Australian Pictorialists who partially overcame the technical and aesthetic conundrum of depicting sunlight.32 As the historian, Jack Cato, noted of his use of light:

As soon as Caz was released from working in a city studio he behaved as though he were sunstruck. In all of his new pictures the sun streamed through windows, across lush lawns, through suspended vine, or through the foliage of trees and shrubs to pour a pattern of light across a subject.33

A characteristic example of Cazneaux’s use of light is ‘Neath the vine (1931) which shows a stylish young woman in profile seated in a garden area. The dappled light filtering through the slats of a blind casts areas of shadow and light onto the woman’s hair and body. The use of light transforms this straight-forward portrait into an atmospheric study, dissolving the solidity of the figure and giving it a shimmering, transient quality.

It was partially Cazneaux’s desire to represent ‘true’ Australian scenes through the use of light that so endeared him to Max Dupain. Unlike Pictorialists, the modernist photographer was able to use sunshine without hesitation. Dupain, among others, considered it a pivotal element in their work, giving definition to the subject and imparting a distinctly Australian inflection. In 1941, A.G. Dodd stressed the importance of natural light to Dupain when he wrote: “Visual beauty depends on light. Mr Dupain uses light as other artists use watercolours - it is his medium”.34

31 Cazneaux, Harold, “Pictorial Photography in Australia”, Photograms of the Year, 1921, quoted Jolly, [1983]
34 Dodd, 1941, p.16.
The cult of nudism: Establishing individual and ‘racial’ health

“the new vitality of contact between liberated man and nature, . . . will find its realisation in a nudist world”
Jack Lindsay, 1939. 35

The practice of nudism flourished in the West in the interwar period as a means of rehabitualising the body to nature and maximising the amount of health-giving sunshine it received. George Dupain was an early Australian supporter of nudism, considering it an excellent way to revitalise the body. As he wrote in 1935:

The modern ‘nude cult’ is an attempt to get more sunlight and is a thoroughly healthy reaction against the despoiling dangers of darkness. The truth is that the larger the body surface exposed to the action of sunlight, the greater the benefit to individual and racial health. 36

Acceptance of nudism came relatively late in Australia, with the first formal organisations not starting until the mid 1930s with the establishment of the New South Wales Sun and Country Club. 37 As in most matters concerned with ‘body culture’, nudism found its greatest wide-scale acceptance in Germany with camps being founded that aimed to build national and racial fitness. Arnold Rickli was one of the first to use exposure to nature as body therapy in the early twentieth century, and around the same time Richard Ungewitter promoted the idea of social nudism. 38 In 1903, Paul Zimmerman established nudist camps, most notably ‘Klingberg’. These camps emphasised the regeneration of the German nation through physical and spiritual means. Zimmerman was a disciple of Nietzsche, and his strict regime of training – with no alcohol, vegetarian food and daily gymnastics - gave his camps an austere and militaristic quality.

35 Lindsay, Jack. Sun Bathing Review, volume 7, number 35 quoted in Clarke, 1982, p.54
36 Dupain, G. 1935, p.5.
37 Magnus Clarke, who has written the only published history of nudism in Australia, has suggested that the first groups formed in the late 1930s and cites the English magazine, Health and Efficiency as the primary source of information regarding the movement. Clarke, 1982, pp.53-4. However, there is evidence to show that formal nudist groups began in 1935 and the practice of informal nudism even earlier. For instance, the journal The Australian Sunbather, which promoted itself in 1947 as the “First Nudist Magazine and Official Organ of the New South Wales Sun and Country Club”, refers to the organisation commencing in 1935. The Australian Sunbather, 11th issue, August 1947, p.12. A letter to this journal from ‘RMB’ notes that he joined The Victorian Health and Sunbathing League in 1938 (p.12)
38 For a brief history of international nudism see Clarke, 1982, pp.48-9.
Hans Suren was also an influential and enthusiastic promoter of nudism for health and used the classical Greek model of athletics performed whilst naked as a guide. His book, *Man and Sunlight*, includes many photographs of people engaged in sport while naked, the most alarming being the pastime of nude skiing. The exposure of one’s body to the elements in this manner involved a remarkable act of will that Suren considered analogous to purity and strength of character.

Before these politically diverse groups were absorbed into the Third Reich’s totalising concept of culture and life, called ‘Weltanschauung’, they had an influence on health and fitness movements in other parts of the world. Exponents of nudism in England, for instance, essentially adopted the German approach, but groups such as the Gymnososophical Society (founded in 1922) were generally not as strict as Zimmerman’s organisation and few included compulsory sporting activities or dietary rules. The views of the English gymnosophy movement were promulgated by the sexual reformer Dr Maurice Parmelee in his book, *Nudity in Modern Life: The New Gymnosophy* (1929). Parmelee defined gymnosophy as an outgrowth of Nacktkultur with a, “philosophy both of nature and of cultural evolution”.

Australian awareness of the nudist movement often came from those who had first-hand experience of German, English or American nudist camps or from international enthusiasts who published on the subject. In 1932, for instance, F. and M. Merril visited Zimmerman’s ‘Freilichtpark’ in Germany. They reported that the naked men and women engaged in gymnastics were just like athletes in a new “uniform”.

The Merrils’ book, *Among the Nudists*, was noted in *The Eugenic Review* - the editors’ of which considered nudism a topic of interest to its readers because of its promotion of ‘racial health’. The Merrils’ gained their knowledge of German nudism just in time. The year following their visit nudism was banned by the Nazis as an, “error in taste” and, in 1935, nude bathing was prohibited by the Reich Ministry of the Interior as a pursuit that could lead to homosexuality.

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59 Parmelee, 1929, p.6. For information regarding this and other banned publications on nudism see Southern, 1934, p.56. A gymnososophical club was established in Sydney by the late 1930s and by the mid 1940s the movement had grown to an Australian-wide organisation. In 1948, a pamphlet titled *Summerland Scorn*, was published which referred to the "Queensland Gymnososophical Society and its development into the Australian Gymnososophical Health and Educational Association and the Queensland Gymnososophical Community". See Unknown, 1948.

42 See Mosse, [1991], p.28.
Australians could be tantalised with news of the Merrils’ adventures in German nudist clubs through reading *The Eugenic Review* but it was highly unlikely that they were able to read the book first-hand. From 1929, the Trades and Customs Department actively seized books entering Australia under Section 52(c) of the Trades and Customs Act, which prohibited the importing of publications deemed, “blasphemous, indecent or obscene”.41 In 1933, the repression of literature in Australia increased with the foundation of the Commonwealth Book Censorship Board. Between them these two powerful official bodies banned *Among the Nudists* and the Merrils’ later publication, *Nudism Comes to America*. Other books on nudism, such as Dr Parmelee’s study of the English Gymnosophy movement, were also not permitted into Australia.44 As George Southern noted in 1935:

> Most of the standard accounts of contemporary ‘nudism’ in Europe and America are kept out of Australia by our Customs Department (an apt name for a Department which takes such a conspicuous part in perpetuating the tyranny of custom throughout our land)!45

However, the vigilance of customs officials monitoring the importation of books and other material did sometimes slip and, on at least one occasion, a film partially dealing with nudism was screened in Australia. In the 1920s the popular German film, *The Golden Road to Strength and Beauty: An Idyll of Man’s Strength and Women’s Beauty*, was shown at the Adyar Theatre in Sydney. The film promoted a vast number of body culture practices, and claimed legitimacy for public nudity by showing mise-en-scènes in Roman baths and models posed as naked Greek athletes.

Aware of public morality, the Australian promoters were careful to reassure potential patrons that this was a wholesome film and stated in a promotional booklet that, “nude body has been treated in ‘The Golden Road’ with such chastity as to enable every mother to bring her sons and daughters”.46 In order to dispel the audience’s doubts, the promoters emphasised the film’s moral impetus which, they claimed, sought to reveal the machine age.

41 Southern, 1934, p.56.
44 Parmelee, 1929, p.6. For information regarding this and other banned publications on nudism see Southern, 1934, p. 56.
46 Adyar, [1920s].
as the cause of bodily dysfunction and degeneracy. The film producer promised to, “disclose without mercy”:

The typist, stooping over her machines; the seamstress bending over her work; the mother now and to-be jazzing the mid-night hours [who] will awaken to the truth when they see... the film. [It] strips typist and seamstress of bodice and shows how slowly but certainly her vocation unless relieved by the right relaxation is despoiling her of her rightful physical beauty, and proves by example the result of over indulgence in wrong exercise and wrong hours.\(^{47}\)

Local interest in degeneracy may have persuaded authorities to allow this unusually frank film into the country because of its educational value but, by the 1930s, international films or publications on the subject were regularly banned. These strictrues did not stop the little available information from spreading and Australians increasingly wrote about their own experiences of nudism for the more liberal-minded local journals. In 1934, for instance, the Australian magazine, Pandemonium, published a letter that challenged the editor’s negative views on the, “cult of Nudism”. The author of the letter (signed only as ‘L’) had travelled 50 miles out of Melbourne to the beach with a group of friends and here they:

Swam, sunbathed, ran up and down the sand, and picnicked, all of us quite naked. We all agreed that the experience confirmed our opinion that nakedness is not objectionable or erotic, and felt ever so much fitter, not only physically, but mentally and morally.\(^{48}\)

The editor responded commenting satirically that if nudism was not erotic then, “in the members of ‘L’s nude club the preservation of the race is unsafe”.\(^{49}\) Subsequent issues of Pandemonium ran more letters on the subject with ‘L’ offering an insight into the means by which Australian nudists gained knowledge of the movement:

My advice to you, Mr Editor, is to beg, borrow or steal some of the all-too-rare literature and books by psychologists and doctors on the subject of Nudism, which our careless custom officers have, from time to time, allowed into sunny Australia.\(^{50}\)

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\(^{47}\) Adyar, [1920s], p.4.
\(^{50}\) ‘L’, 1934, p.24.
Perhaps sensing that his censorious comments were out of keeping with the progressive nature of the magazine, the editor embarked on a series of ‘anonymous’ satirical letters. These letters detail a fictional nude cult on the island of ‘Babu’, where men and women reveal every part of their bodies except for their ears. Like the islands of Lilliput and Brobdingnag in Johnathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, the author of these letters invokes an imaginary setting in which to mock prevalent morality and censorship.\(^{51}\) For instance, the general social prohibition against showing male genitalia in art works is lampooned with the statement: “Babuan artists are allowed ... to paint females completely naked; but pictures of males invariably show the ears covered”.\(^{52}\) In a further installment on this theme, literary censorship is parodied with the fictional visitor taking in a swag of books banned in Australia only to find that it is a publication called *Wheat in the Ear* that raises the ire of officials.\(^{53}\)

*Pandemonium’s* essentially light-hearted response to the topic of nudism was common. As one writer observed in 1939: “the nude cult will ever remain for us Australians something to read about with a feeling akin to amazement and mirth”.\(^{54}\) The Australian love of the absurd saw cartoons on nudism proliferate in the 1930s. One typical example showed a man leaning over the top of a high wall to the alarm of three nude young women who were sitting beside the sign, “Healthville Nudist Camp”.\(^{55}\) With a smile the man states: “I’ve been sent by ‘The Herald’ to cover you”.

No matter how they were mocked, the committed nudist invariably responded with glowing stories on the joys of nakedness or earnest epistles about its health benefits. Nudism was rarely described as a matter of sensual physical gratification but as an almost spiritual pastime with all the commitment and passion of a religious ‘cult’. Indeed, the word ‘cult’ was used to describe nudism by opponents and supporters alike - although presumably both groups had different implications in mind when they employed the term.

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\(^{51}\) Swift, 1975 (1726).
\(^{52}\) ‘M.G.S’, 1934, pp.19-20.
\(^{53}\) ‘M.G.S’ 1934, pp.7-8.
\(^{54}\) Unknown, 1939, p.33.
\(^{55}\) Cartoon in *Mas*, December 1936, p.94.
Nudists attributed serious meaning to their pursuit by associating it with the concepts of individual and national 'revitalisation'. The Nietzschean love of natural 'life-forces' was also invoked. In 1939, for instance, Jack Lindsay showed his knowledge of Nietzsche when he wrote that nudism was, "no reversion to primitivism. Rather it is the final emancipation from savagery and all its pervading fears . . . the new vitality of contact between liberated man and nature, which will find its realisation in a nudist world".56

Lindsay may have hypothesised about a 'nudist world' but Harry Meatheringham went considerably further when he attempted to realise that goal. In an entertaining article in Smith's Weekly in 1934 titled, "Oh to be in the Northern Territory when the Nudists get there!", a journalist reported on Meatheringham's grand (if unrealised) ambitions to form a nudist sect.57 'New Jerusalem' was to be founded with 50,000 young men and women (but no barmaids!) drawn from around Australia, who would create a separate, naked colony in the, "great, romantic, underdeveloped North".58

Based on the ideas of the unconventional Australian sexual reformer, William Chidley, the members of New Jerusalem would, "lay the foundations for a future race of Australians superior to the present generation".59 Nudism was fundamental to the tenets of the group and, as its name suggests, Meatheringham saw the colony as having a Christian philosophy. As he listed in their charter, the approved religion was, "Worship of Sun and Nudity, with Christianity as a basis".60

Sue Elvery also adopted a high-minded, if far less eccentric, approach to nudism in her 1938 article for Pix magazine.61 "I was one of those Nudists" detailed the author's personal experiences of nudism gained at English nudist clubs such as 'Spielplatz' near London. Elvery no doubt caught the reader's attention by illustrating her article with photographs of naked men and women enjoying the sunshine - albeit taken at a discreet distance. However,

56 Lindsay, Jack. Sun Bathing Review, volume 7, number 35 quoted in Clarke, 1982, p.54
57 Unknown, 1934f, p.7.
58 Unknown, 1934f, p.7.
59 Unknown, 1934f, p.7
60 Unknown, 1934f, p.7
61 Elvery, 1938, pp.16-9.
her purpose in writing was far from salacious indeed she described her involvement in nudism in a rather self-righteous manner, stating:

I am a nudist because I believe in the value of sunshine, fresh air, freedom of movement and good health.

I am perhaps odd enough to believe that physical well-being generally begets mental well-being and that too many subjects vital to national hygiene development and welfare lack the intelligent approach.62

Elvery noted that nudism was privately practised on a wide scale in Australia, but she casts doubt on its validity stating, “I do not think there is the same need for it in Australia. Nudist clubs are generally based on the need for sunshine in relation to unrestricted physical exercise and there is very little sunshine abroad compared to Australia”.63 Elvery was scathing of anyone who treated the topic with less than the seriousness she felt it deserved and was especially scornful of what she termed, “insincere nudism practiced on less worthy principles, such as showmanship and sometimes with even more obscure motives”.64 Her earnest tone was out of keeping with Pix’s usual tabloid style but, in case its readers began to fear that the magazine had changed policy, the next page featured a fine example of ‘insincere’ nudism - no doubt much to Elvery’s disgust.65

A photo-essay focused on the antics of the remarkable Cubitt sisters from America who performed a nude skipping rope routine to packed audiences. Some 150,000 people paid to see the five well-endowed young women at the San Diego Exposition extol the virtues of nudism, although one suspects that the joy of ‘national hygiene development’ was not on the minds of many of the onlookers.

Elvery was not the only Australian woman to praise the health benefits of nudism. In 1938, Hilda Merton reported on her nudist holiday held not in an English club but with a small group of friends 20 miles outside of Sydney. Published in the journal, Health and Physical Culture, Merton’s glowing article stressed how the activity led to the, “eradication of sex

62 Elvery, 1938, p.16.
63 Elvery, 1938, p.17.
64 Elvery, 1938, p.17.
65 Unknown, 1938b, p.18.

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consciousness". As she wrote, "No immorality is bred among the ranks of sun's adherents: no indecency - for the simple reason they KNOW there is nothing indecent in the naked form!"

Merton's article formed part of a small flood of letters and articles sent to Health and Physical Culture on the issue of nudism. These ranged from the positive - "Nudism is a form of religion - the religion of health" - to the outraged - "They are but Morons and EXHIBITIONISTS". The editor, Alfred Briton, was personally opposed to nudism calling it, "a neurosis", but was canny enough to see the burgeoning interest in this pastime as a marketable proposition. In 1939, his Health and Physical Culture Publishing Company produced the first Australian book on the subject titled, Mixed Nudist Camps throughout the World. The motto of the publication was "Health through Sunshine" and the foreword carried a message so moral that, in another context, it would have been considered conservative. As the editor declared, "The man whose mind is not befouled by lust is most likely to enjoy this life to the full, for to him pleasure is cleanliness, and serenity to the laws of Nature".

Briton's book featured diverse articles by anonymous writers that ranged from the serious ("Psychology of Nudism", "Sunlight and Health") to the personal ("Experiences during a Nudist Holiday", "I was a Photographer's Model!") and the historical ("Where did Nudism Start?", "Nude Bathing in Ancient Rome"). It was also illustrated with, "pages and pages of artistic photographs of scenic beauties, sylvan scenes where whole families enjoy nude sunbathing, swimming, dancing and tennis". A common theme in the book was the comparison of modern nudists to their ancient cousins in Rome and Greece. Antiquity was equated with moral certitude, national vigour and physical health and so association with classical attitudes to the body naturally lent authority to nudism. The attractions of the

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65 Merton, 1938, p.33.
66 Merton, 1938, p.55.
69 Unknown, 1939, foreword.
70 Advertisement for Mixed Nudist Camps throughout the World in Health and Physical Culture, February 1940, p.41. Although the writers for the book remained anonymous one chapter titled, "50,000 Naked Britons" was published in Health and Physical Culture in 1937 under the name of Hadrian Swift (Swift, 1937, pp.17, 62). It is likely that Alfred Briton himself was either the editor for the book or the writer of various articles.
classical were encapsulated by Suren who wrote glowingly of, "the health, the power, the nakedness, the chastity of antiquity".

The Greek model was used, for instance, by two young women who went on an adventurous nudist holiday on a deserted beach in Warrnambool, Victoria. For several months the women underwent a punishing daily physical regime in the nude at the end of which they described themselves as, "a pair of lovely brown Greek goddesses to look upon". Another writer described the ancient Greek attitude towards physical training as the philosophical basis for the nudist movement:

[the Greek model] upon which we base our science, used health as an avenue to learning, hence the gymasia ... were schools in which the pupils exercised [naked] to fit their minds and bodies preparatory to the absorption of culture. The terms of this 'Greek model' were a mix of quantifiable fact and popular fiction, with details often adjusted according to contemporary needs. For instance, while it is true that male athletes in Athens began to exercise naked around 720 BC, Athenian women did not participate in athletics until at least the 1st century AD and then always appeared clothed. Contemporary female nudists could look instead to Spartan society where women exercised naked as part of eugenic rituals designed to increase their fitness and ability to breed healthier children.

Much of the information concerning nudity came from drawings on vases and other art works, however, the casual observer may not have appreciated the considerable complexity in such representations. While a naked man in Greek and Roman art came to signify the male citizen - whose role as the head of the polis enabled him to appear naked - the depiction of nude woman was less fixed in meaning. The depiction of a naked woman could signify...

71 Unknown, 1939, p.8.
72 Unknown 1939, foreword. The lineage of nudism and sport was stressed too in a later article, "Nudism and the Classic Games". The Australian Swimmer, which contained the comment that, "A blameless, well-trained and strong body was the ideal of Greek youth, and nudism helped him to attain that end". Unknown, 1947, p.19.
73 All Greek athletes originally wore loincloths. The athletes of Crete were the first to exercise naked followed by the Spartans. According to legend, in 720BC a Greek athlete lost his loincloth while running a race and seeing this, a Spartan took his off too. The custom gradually took hold and by the end of the 5th century exercising while naked became standard practice for all Greek male athletes. See Stewart, 1997, p.26. Stewart also notes that in Greek art, "By the classical period, nakedness had become the secular 'costume' of the male citizen who is distinguished physically from the slave and both physically and 'sartorially' from women and barbarians", p.26.
that the subject was a Goddess, a prostitute, an athlete - if it was an art work from Sparta or Crete - or a woman being abducted or raped. 74

Whether accurate or fictional, the ‘classics’ were a source of inspiration for nudists. A description of the Gymnosophist Club in Sydney evokes a wonderful picture of the zeal with which some nudists attempted to mimic a ‘classical’ lifestyle. According to this source, the Gymnosophists - who named themselves after an ancient mystical sect that supposedly wore little clothing - had:

gone Athenian. Vestal virgins and god-like youths; staid matrons and hoary patriarchs, reviving the mysteries of Arapahos, of Crete and of Eleusis, dancing and disposing to their god the sun, revolting against the falsities of civilisation and heroically defiant of two thousand years of convention. There you have the Sydney Gymnosophists. 75

“Australian nudists beware!”: George Southern and censorship.

“Australian nudists beware! There are lots of snakes in the grass”. George Southern, 1934. 76

Before the publication of Mixed Nudist Camps throughout the World broke new ground in Australia, censorship was a major dilemma for those who wanted to produce their own publications on the subject. The outspoken psychologist George Southern’s experiences provides a fascinating example of how one Australian author fought the forces of censorship in his bid to promote nudism. He is also of interest because of his professional relationship with both George and Max Dupain.

Southern was a regular writer for Pandemonium and, in 1934, sent a letter to the editor in which he outlined his views regarding nudism. He declared his wholehearted support for the movement for various reasons including his belief that it diffused the lust with which women apparently lured men into marriage. 77 Southern’s letter also mentioned his forthcoming book, Approaching Nudism, for which he was seeking a publisher. Southern again refers to

74 Stewart, 1997, p.26. The Spartans depicted the female nude in art long before it was popularised in the rest of Greece. See Pomeroy, 1975, p.36.
75 Unknown, 1939, p. 20.
76 Southern, 1934, p.43.
77 Southern, 1934, pp.23-4.
this proposed treatise in his *Making Morality Modern* (1934) noting the problems he encountered as he tried to bring suitable photographic illustrations into the country for his new book:

Only an ignorant and stupid person could splutter with indignation at the thought of nude pictures, as a certain Customs official did at me when explaining that he had seized a bundle of thirty-nine photographs consigned to me from Germany ... the photos were samples from which I had hoped to select illustrations for a book on Nudism (as yet, unpublished).\(^77\)

It is telling that when Southern wished to illustrate his proposed book he chose a German source for photographs. The Germans showed little prudery in the 1920s and early 1930s when it came to depicting naked bodies, whether as the subject of avant-garde photography or as documentary illustrations of sport and nudism. In 1927, for instance, Suren’s *Man and Sunlight*, was copiously illustrated with naked men and women enjoying outdoor activities. A decade later, *Das Deutsche Lichtbild*, carried a notice for, *Happy Beings: The German Nude Studies*. The advertising copy for this latter publication employed ecstatic prose, describing the images as, “Brilliant photographs of happy human beings to whom fresh air under a sparkling sun, in the wild sea-surf, means highest devotion to nature through a healthy happy vital body”.\(^78\)

In Australia, attitudes towards nude photographs were ambivalent. Customs officials were generally vigilant in banning books or portfolios that featured documentary images of nudes until the late 1930s.\(^79\) However, despite Southern’s experience to the contrary, photographs presented within the ambit of ‘art photography’ could pass through the censor’s net. For instance, the journal *Das Deutsche Lichtbild*, was regularly imported into Australia even though it invariably contained images of nude men and women.\(^80\)

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\(^77\) Southern, 1934, p.60. Southern also raised the ire of Customs officials in Australia by trying to import literature on nudism and states that the prohibitions extended to, “immense number of nudist magazines and photographic studies of nudity of indisputable artistic merit”. Southern, 1934, p. 56.

\(^78\) Advertisement for *Happy Beings* in *Das Deutsche Lichtbild*, 1937.

\(^79\) Towards the late 1930s the ban on nudism appears to relax slightly. By 1939, an advertisement for Moore’s book stores list Park and Gregory’s *Sun Bathers* on their booklist along with Welby, W. *Its only Natural: The Philosophy of Nudism and My Best Nude Study* a book featuring nude photographs by 48 photographers. *Health and Physical Culture*, July 1939, p.56.

\(^80\) Interestingly one such photograph by Heinz Hafel–Hafle titled *Spiegelslakt*, shows a woman’s pubic hair - an inclusion that was socially transgressive in the 1930s. See *Das Deutsche Lichtbild*, 1936, p.61.
The lack of relevant images with which to illustrate his book, and his inability to find a publisher, persuaded Southern to shelve *Approaching Nudism*. Although no doubt disappointed, the lack of publishing interest must not have surprised him too greatly. In 1934, Southern unsuccessfully tried to find a printer for his first book called *Making Morality Modern*. In this instance, Southern refused to give up on his publishing plan, buying a press and laboriously hand-printing 1,000 copies of the book himself. When the Commonwealth Postal Authority banned the distribution of the book, under the Obscene and Indecent Publications Act, he sold it from his home. And, when no newspaper would advertise it he took out a hawker’s license and distributed advertising pamphlets on the streets.

Southern clearly intended *Making Morality Modern* to be provocative - the cover boldly stated his intention to launch, “A broadside attack on sexual morality, likely to make the wowsers yell and thinkers think”. When the ‘wowsers’ did yell, Southern used their attempts to ban his book as a promotional tool by bringing international attention to censorship laws in Australia. He sent questionnaires to various respected authors, including Havelock Ellis, asking if they thought the views expressed in his book constituted obscenity. Ellis responded:

> It is terrible indeed to hear of the restrictions that have been placed on liberty and thought and literature in Australia. Some of the happiest years of my early life were passed in New South Wales. It was there that I received the inspiration for my lifework in the psychology of sex.”

The rationale behind official bans on *Making Morality Modern* initially seem hard to justify. In some respects Southern’s views on sexuality were not nearly as radical for their times as he imagined. The nub of his argument - that eugenic selection was desirable for social regeneration - was widely debated by Australian authors including Eleanor Dark whose novel, *Prelude to Christopher*, contained a mix of sexuality and eugenics just as explicit as Southern’s propositions, albeit in a fictional context. Southern’s ideas regarding eugenics were undoubtedly alarmist and sometimes extreme but his opinion that the, “propagation of the congenitally unfit” would,

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82 Southern, 1934, cover.
83 Southern, 1934, [p.3].
“threaten ... to throw the white races back into the melting pot of history” was no more (and often less) radical than the propositions of many respected members of Australian society.\footnote{Southern, 1934, p.29.}

It was more likely that Southern’s politics were the real reason for his repeated run-ins with officialdom. His sympathies lay with socialist and communist organisations, and it was his alignment with the struggles of the working classes that probably invoked the censors approbation more than his eugenic propositions.\footnote{Political censorship also appears as the cause of the banning of another Australian book to deal with sexual morality. It has been conjectured that the censorship of John Harcourt’s novel, Upang, in 1934 occurred, “because of its support for a political programme and its Marxian analysis of the depression”. Nile, Richard. “Introduction”. Harcourt, 1986 (1934), p.xxiii.} While Southern sometimes underplayed the radical nature of his politics with statements such as, “Sexual Reform, like Socialism, is simply an application of Democracy”, at other times he acknowledged that his proposed overturn of conventionality was allied to radical politics.\footnote{Southern, 1934, p.13.} As he stated, shifts in morality were, “bound up with changes in political, educational, and philosophical thought, all of which are essentially revolutionary”.\footnote{Southern, 1934, p.9} Southern claimed the nudist movement as a significant aspect of sexual and political freedom quoting Dr Samuel Schmalhousen: “Once Communism triumphs in the world, nudity will come into its own automatically”.\footnote{Schmalhousen, Samuel quoted in Southern, 1934, p.72.} Southern viewed current prohibitions on nudism as part of an outdated morality, writing:

> It is clear that, besides robbing us of the profound mental benefits of mixed nakedness (ie, satiation of sexual curiosity and release of psychic energy for more profitable forms of research), our morality is also the sole obstacle to our getting bodily health from sunshine.\footnote{Southern, 1934, p.43.} Southern’s book contains a chapter on “Sexual Offences, Nakedness and Modesty”, which his views on nudism are thoroughly discussed.

Southern took his position as self-appointed champion of moral liberation seriously, and proudly noted that he was the only Australian member of the World League for Sexual Reform. This organisation was inaugurated in Berlin in 1921 and included such influential members as Aldous Huxley, Havelock Ellis, D.H. Lawrence, John and Lytton Strachey, and Sigmund Freud. Southern closely followed League Policy when formulating his book, in
particular the sections that encouraged political, economic and sexual equality for men and women; the liberation of marriage from “Church and State tyranny”; and “Race betterment by the application of the knowledge of eugenics”. He even tried to establish a Sydney-based equivalent of the League approaching various, “social hygienists” and notable activists for political and social reform but although he maintained many were supportive in private, no-one would publicly support his views.

In fact, Southern was not without Australian supporters: George and Max Dupain both knew and helped the author by contributing to his various publications. The Dupains probably met Southern through their mutual association with the magazine Pandemonium. Southern was a regular contributor to the magazine, who published his letters and articles on educational, sexual and racial subjects. George Dupain wrote an article for Pandemonium in 1934 and, that same year, Max created a striking montage photograph for the cover of the magazine. In 1934 too, Southern invited Max Dupain to take a portrait of him printing copies of Making Morality Modern at his Mosman home which he later used as a frontispiece to the book. The following year, George Dupain wrote a foreword to Southern’s self-published book, Bathers Beware!, which detailed the dangers of woolen bathing costumes.

The connection between Max Dupain and Southern makes it interesting to speculate whether the author ever asked Dupain to photograph nudes for Approaching Nudism, especially considering his lack of success in obtaining images from overseas. Such an invitation, although ultimately not realised, could have appealed to Dupain who was at this time taking many photographs using naked male and female models.

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90 World League for Sexual Reform, League Policy quoted in Southern, 1934, p.64.
91 The eclectic range of Southern interests are apparent from his major articles for Pandemonium which include: “Education: The birch and the delinquent boy” (volume 1, number 3, May 1934, pp.3-4); “Education: Open letter to a bride” (volume 1, number 6, pp.5-7); “Celibates in Prison Cells” (volume 1, number 7, August 1934, pp.11-2); “Mr Nutall’s Race Consciousness” (volume 1, number 10, November 1934, pp.3-4).
92 Dupain, G. 1934, Dupain, M. Pandemonium, August 1934, volume 1, number 8, cover.
93 Southern, 1935.
"Adoring the naked body": Max Dupain’s photographs of nudes

Photographs of the naked body were the most enlivened and accurate means of showing the results of degeneration or revitilisation at work. The all-seeing lens of the camera could record bodily disfunction and disease just as easily as it could celebrate the perfect form of a naked athlete. It is not surprising therefore that supporters of nudism used photography to help their claims that exposure of the body to nature was the best path to rejuvenation.

The photographs chosen to illustrate books or articles on nudism fell into two categories. Some favoured documentary images of people happily sitting in the sun, playing tennis or swimming, using ordinary poses to ‘naturalise’ the fact that the subjects were naked. Others preferred photographs that elevated nudism to something more meaningful. They selected photographs that symbolised ‘higher values’, depicting the naked body as an idealised form, perfect in features and curiously purified of sexuality. An example of this latter category is Bertram Park and Yvonne Gregory’s book, Sun Bathers (1935), which featured a collection of photographs of nudists. The English authors considered nudism a vitalistic activity that attuned the body to essential life forces, energising and ‘cleansing’ it of physical and moral impurities. Although nudism was recognised as physically liberating, the potential for it to be a pastime with sexual overtones was always downplayed. Park and Gregory, for instance, adopted a common approach to this most contentious aspect of the movement when they wrote that nudists:

Sought this physical nakedness and found in it a new cleanness of spirit, a closer contact to ultimate things. This restored nakedness has released their minds forever from the grubby and confounding things that threatened to swamp their philosophy.

In illustrating books on nudism, photographers were required to fulfill a specific brief - the revitalised body could be celebrated for its healthy appearance and the joys of physical freedom but there could be no suggestion that such physicality was potentially erotic. As Park and Gregory stated, “The highest art of the photographer is to symbolize through the

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94 Lindsay, 1924, p.50
95 Park & Gregory, 1935.
medium of things physical, conceptions of the spirit".\textsuperscript{97} With titles such as \textit{Balance}, \textit{Young Venus}, \textit{Straying nymph} and \textit{Awakening}, the photographs fulfill this criteria by appealing to the nudists' conception of their movement as a classically-based and spiritually restorative form of 'body culture'.

Nudists downplayed the issue of sexuality knowing that acknowledgment of sexual or sensual pleasure would be disastrous for the movement but others in the interwar period openly discussed this powerful 'life force'. The work of D.H. Lawrence, for instance, resounds with descriptions of an inner intuitive self irrevocably tied to sexual consciousness.\textsuperscript{98} To deny this essential aspect of consciousness was, for Lawrence, a denial of a person's inner being.

In a similar vein, one of Norman Lindsay's main tenets in his book, \textit{Creative Effort}, was that artists should represent the body in a forthright manner as a means of reconnecting it with the animating spirit of life. As he wrote:

\begin{quote}
Art, where it touches the most vital of all issues, which is sex, the stimulus of Life's re-birth, will be frank, licentious, shameless, seeking every image which may emphasize the gesture of desire, adoring the naked body, surrounding it with emblems of happiness, strength, courage.\textsuperscript{99}
\end{quote}

Interestingly, Norman's brother, Lionel Lindsay, took some of the first known nude art photographs in Australia in 1908.\textsuperscript{100} His classical posed nude models were photographed using the autochrome process - an early form of colour photography that gave the image a pointillist appearance. Autochromes helped aestheticise the subject by removing them from straight, documentary reality and giving the reassuring look of a painting. It was perhaps this reassuringly 'aesthetic' quality that enabled Lindsay to broach what, to that point, had been an almost taboo subject with Australian art photographers. Unlike their international colleagues, for whom the nude was an increasingly common subject, Australian practitioners were reticent to use naked models. It was not until 1917 that the next notable photograph

\textsuperscript{97} Park and Gregory, 1935, p.vii.

\textsuperscript{98} For a contemporary Australian discussion of Lawrence's attitude to sexuality see Goode, 1933, pp.2-36.

\textsuperscript{99} Lindsay, 1924, p.50. See also Lindsay, I. 1923, pp.22-8.
of a nude was taken when Cecil Bostock included a striking image of a woman in his limited edition portfolio of "Art Photographs".\textsuperscript{101}

Lindsay and Bostock's photographs of nudes were more or less one-offs and it was not until the 1930s that Max Dupain made a sustained contribution to this genre.\textsuperscript{102} From 1931, Dupain began to take a substantial group of photographs using the nude as the subject for his illustrative, commercial and personal art work. One of the earliest examples of his personal nude studies was Resting nude (1931) taken when he was still working in the studio of Cecil Bostock. On his weekends, Dupain would travel out of the city to the family home at Newport beach or take his camera to Cronulla where he would begin to develop his own creative practice. In common with other art photographers of the period, he initially employed the soft-focus Pictorialist style, producing brooding landscapes with allegorical titles such as \textit{Weather of Tartarus} (1933) and \textit{The flight of the spectres} (1932). However, Dupain was increasingly dissatisfied with the traditional, 'old fashioned' look of Pictorialism and eager to try something new.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image}
\caption{Max Dupain. \textit{Resting nude} 1931
Gelatin silver photograph}
\end{figure}

In 1931, he received his first inkling of modernism though the German journal, \textit{Das Deutsche Lichtbild}, and he began to incorporate its devices into his own work. Resting nude was one his first experiments with the new style and sits uneasily between soft-focus Pictorialism and the 'straight' look of a modernist image. The ungainly pose of the man indicate an early

\textsuperscript{100} Photographs of naked Aborigines were frequent in the nineteenth century and were taken with an anthropological or touristic intent. It is worth noting, however, that an erotic quality is also implicit in some of the photographs of naked Aboriginal woman and girls who have, on occasion, been posed in a provocative manner.

\textsuperscript{101} Bostock, Cecil. \textit{A Portfolio of Art Photographs}, Bostock, Sydney, 1917, Edition of 25 copies with 10 photographs in each. A copy of this portfolio is held in the collection of the National Gallery of Australia. Biographical information on Bostock by Gadel Newton in Lebovic and Cahill, 1989, p.132. Max Dupain may, in some small degree, have been influenced in his decision to photograph nudes by Bostock who he trained with from 1930 to 1933.

\textsuperscript{102} In the 1990s, Max Dupain sold five folio's of work comprising 17 photographs of his nunes from the 1930s. The titles of these works were as follows: Nude on beach alone; Nude with wire screen in front; Nude on sand, Figures exercising, Torso in sunlight, Nude in sunlight at French's forest, Cardi, Nude with glowing gown, Nude in landscape, Monica in mirror, Cronulla, Model and child, Cronulla, Ella with drape, Torso seated, Birth of Venus, Monica with book. See Lebovic 1995.
attempt by Dupain to create a self-consciously ‘modern’ image and, from the footsteps that appear in the sand, appears to be only one of a series that Dupain took that day. Although not as confident as his later images, _Resting nude_ is of considerable interest as an unusual departure from the subject matter of contemporary Australian art photography.

The comparative lack of local or international photographic references available to Dupain in 1931 suggests that the inspiration for _Resting nude_ came from other sources. While the subject of a nude posed in a natural setting was unknown in Australian art photography, it was common in books on the benefits of sunbathing and nudism. Given his support for these activities it is quite possible that Max Dupain’s father, George, managed to bring restricted books on nudism into Australia. Aware of his son’s interest in photography, any illustrations of the naked body would no doubt have been shared with him. Association with such passionate advocates of nudism as George Southern may also have encouraged Max to consider photographing nudes in the natural environment.

However, translating his father and Southern’s educational and scientific interests into the terms of his own practice was a considerable leap. Such a transition may well have been facilitated by his reading of Norman Lindsay’s book, _Creative Effort_, a publication that remained a touchstone for Dupain’s art throughout his life. Lindsay’s vitalistic call to, “adore the naked body” by showing its power and beauty was perhaps the creative spark that ignited Dupain’s already developed interest in the fit body and may have encouraged his investigation of this subject matter.

By the mid 1930s the burgeoning interest in health and fitness, and the popular use of the naked body as a subject among modernists, resulted in greater numbers of photographs of the nude in nature being illustrated in magazines.\(^{103}\) In 1933, for instance, Dupain is known to have purchased _Modern Photography 1931_ which included an outstanding range of modernist photography from artists including Man Ray, Sougez, Herbert Bayer, Tina

\(^{103}\) By the late 1930s a number of Australian photographers were placing their nude subjects in beach settings. For examples of these images see _Australia: National Journal_, volume 2, numbers 1 to 3, 1940 which reproduces photographs by P. Rainier, William Buckle and Rob Hillier.
Modotti, Florence Henri and Edmund Kesting. Although the issue did not include photographs by Edward Weston - whose images of naked figures in sand dunes would have proved a useful model for Dupain - there was one photograph, in particular, that may have appealed to him. Martin Munkacsi’s The Strand Nymph was an unusual overhead shot of a woman on a beach. Although more radical in composition than Dupain’s photographs in the early 1930s, it nonetheless may have helped inspire him to break out of the Pictorialist mould and take a bolder approach to his subject. Another relevant image he saw in his copy of Das Deutsche Lichtbild (1934) was Bruno Schultz’s An der Ostsee, which shows a young naked woman against the blanket ground of a sand dune. By the late 1930s, the subject of nudes was common enough for the Photography Year Book (1938) to include a ten page section of nude photographs from around the world that featured several in outdoor settings.

Initially Dupain was alone among his Australian colleagues in choosing to photograph the nude body. However, there is a comparable painting of a nude from the early 1930s by Arthur Murch. Murch painted the strikingly direct small painting Sun worshipper, Thirroul Beach (1933) which features a naked man lying face down in a sand dune. The relaxed posture of the man, with his legs slightly spread and body absorbing the heat of the sun, has an erotic immediacy that suggests Murch was part of a party that went nude sunbathing. Certainly his use of the title ‘sun worshipper’ has a contemporary resonance that shows his knowledge of the fad for sunbathing and nudism.

Dupain’s images of nudes on the beach fall into two broad categories. Some reveal his interest in formalism, exhibiting what the Imagists and later, photographer Edward Weston, would call a fascination for ‘the thing in itself’. This is demonstrated in his 1938 photograph, No title (Nude on a sand hill), which explores the sensual and graphic possibilities of natural light on the naked body. In this photograph Dupain poses a woman in a sand dune lying on

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105 Dupain has stated that he did not see Weston’s work until the late 1940s or early 1950s through illustrations in U.S. Camera Annual although the journal did include work by Weston in earlier issues (see, for example Nude on a roof in U.S. Camera Annual, 1939, p.21). Newton, 1980, p.35. Dupain’s library included U.S. Camera Annuals from 1950 to 1959.

106 Das Deutsche Lichtbild, 1934, p.81.

her stomach with her arm slightly bent back and hand resting between her legs. The patterning of the sand and the deep shadows cast by the afternoon sun make this a strong modernist study of form and structure.

Dupain also took another kind of nude photograph in which aesthetics are mixed with social interests. *On the beach* (1938) is an image that serves to illustrate how his creative concerns were informed by a knowledge of body culture and racial issues. Taken in 1938, at the time of peak interest in national fitness, *On the beach* shows a utopian white Australian family lying naked in the sand dunes. The man, woman and child are a racial archetype representing the ideal embodiment of the Australian nuclear unit. They are all in ruddy good health displaying supreme confidence in their own naked bodies and harmony with their environment. The image carries the reassuring promise that the qualities of fitness so evident in the man and woman have been passed to the child, thus ensuring the continuity of this race of god-like beings.

Compositionally too, Dupain has photographed his models in a manner that accentuates their power as individuals and their relationship to the world around them. The trio each pose in a different and distinct way: the man sits with his back to the camera clutching his knees; the woman lies on her stomach propped up on her arms; and the child sits to the right of the image. Their postures define them as separate entities but also places them in

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108 Also of some relevance is Noel Rubie’s painting *These yellow sands* (c1935). Rubie’s naturalistic painting shows a bare chested man in shorts seated on the sand while behind him two naked women play at the edge of the water. Rubie’s
relation to the dunes in which they pose. The clean sweeping lines of the sand dunes follow the curves of the human forms and imply that the body and landscape are linked in some basic way. This equivalence between animate and inanimate forms is also stressed in the way that Dupain has positioned his camera. Unlike *Resting nude*, where a medium long shot made the figure appear as a fairly small element in the frame, Dupain gets in close to his models and adopts a low angle. The effect is more powerful, with the bodies taking on a monumental quality that establishes their importance in the natural environment.

Along with nudes posed in the landscape, Dupain also used the naked body as the subject of striking formalist compositions, surreal narratives and even for his commercial work. The importance that he placed on this aspect of his practice is evident in 1935 when he included three nudes in a section devoted to surveying his work in *Art in Australia*[^108^]. Among these photographs were *Reclining nude* and *Dart*, both striking and resolved formalist studies in which the female body is articulated through the dramatic use of light and shadow. *Dart*, in particular, is an erotised image in which the lean form of a women appears to be part of a gleaming projectile that thrusts through the picture plane.

*Dart* is indicative of the strikingly sexual nature of some of Dupain’s nudes. Two other examples were illustrated in the 1936 issue of *The Home*[^109^]. *Untitled* shows a naked woman, her midriff in darkness, with the shadow of a long extended trumpet and a man’s head appearing to ‘penetrate’ her. In *Missadventure in the woods*, a naked woman is held in the arms of a man while the image of trees have been superimposed over the couple to create a claustrophobic effect. The implication of a violent incident or accident is clear, and the apparent nudity of the pair carries the suggestion that the ‘misadventure’ was sexual in nature. The disturbing nature of the image was unusually strong for Australian photography of the period, which generally offered a more upbeat or sanitised view of life, and suggests the influence that writers such as Lawrence and Lindsay had on Dupain.

Dupain’s use of nudes was generally serious but on one occasion he cheekily incorporated sexually suggestive elements into his advertising work. In *Advertisement for Hardy’s base* (1937),

[^108^]: *Art in Australia*, number 60, 15 August, 1935, pp.69-75.

[^109^]: *Art in Australia*, 16 November 1936, p.76.
he provocatively montages a unfurling hose near the genitals of a naked male statue. In light of the conservatism of Australian society images such as these represent a quite daring acknowledgement of male and female sexuality, and one can only presume that the innuendo of Hardy's hose was lost on most magazine editors who ran the advertisement.

"I was a photographers model": Posing for Dupain

One of the first problems that Dupain must have encountered when he began to take nude studies in 1931 was where to find suitable models. Models for painting were obtained relatively easily but total nudity was not a matter of course. Charles Meere, who shared Dupain's building at 24 Bond Street, frequently used models for his painting and, as the art teacher E.A. Harvey recalled in relation to Meere, "He advocated that both male and female models should be totally undressed and requested that male models remove their tights, which was not common practice at the time".111

Dupain may have hired some of Meere's models for his own work although the transition from painting to photography would not have suited all sitters. Whereas a painter could

easily adjust their work to preserve the sitter’s anonymity it was harder to obscure identities in a photograph. However, Dupain did not have to always rely on agencies for his subjects. His father’s gymnasium was full of well-built men and women who frequently posed semi-naked for photographs to record and promote their own bodies. It is known that Dupain used a wrestler associated with the health studio as his model for Bondi (1939), albeit in bathing costume.\textsuperscript{12} He also used his friends as models and, in 1938, for instance, Paul Petroff, a member of the touring Ballet Russe, posed in the guise of a naked athlete for The discus thrower.\textsuperscript{13}

Information about Dupain’s use of models has been scant but the recent discovery of an article written by a man he hired adds valuable new insights into the photographer’s approach to his work, and to the profession of nude modelling. This anonymous article titled, “I was a Photographic Model” forms a chapter in Mixed Nudist Camps Throughout the World and, although the author does not directly name Dupain, the photographer’s identity is made clear from various aspects of the article.\textsuperscript{114} The most compelling evidence is that when the model entered the studio of, “the city’s leading commercial photographer”, he was told that he was to pose naked tied to a crucifix.\textsuperscript{115} He explains that the theme of the work was “The Crucifixion of Youth” and his description of the image precisely matches that of a photograph made in 1937 by Dupain which he subsequently titled Doom of youth.

The article’s author had previously visited Dupain’s studio and he writes that this,

\textsuperscript{12} Batchen, 1995, p.351.
\textsuperscript{13} Most of Dupain’s associates at the time are now dead and so information concerning his models is hard to establish. Before her illness, Olive Cotton was asked if she remembered who Dupain used as his nude models. Although her memory was generally clear, Cotton was apparently shy of the question and was unable to give the identities of the models. My thanks to Helen Emis for this information.
\textsuperscript{114} Unknown, 1939e, pp.112-6. Another article on the subject of nude modelling was published in Pic featuring an interview with 21 year old Hope Kelly. The model gave a grim picture of her profession stating, “Work is irregular and at current rates a bare living”. Unknown. 1938k, pp.4-5.
\textsuperscript{115} Unknown, 1939e, p.112.
“most modernly and beautifully fitted out” space was regularly used for, “advertisements or artistic magazine studies”. It appears that Dupain had originally selected the model in question from a so-called ‘model book’, a catalogue of men’s and women’s faces that was standard practice amongst hiring agencies. The model notes that he had begun work as a model for sculpture but found photographic modelling easier and better paid and was now, “on the list of male models, used for nude or athletic studies mostly, for illustrations for the better class of magazines”.

For his assignment with Dupain, the model was left a message asking him to be at the studio that night at 8:30pm. No ‘props’ were necessary (a code that this was a nude job) and the only request was that his hair should not be oiled but left slightly untruly. When he arrived he changed out of his clothes into a dressing gown and entered the brightly lit studio. In front of him was a huge wooden cross angled at 45 degrees behind which was a tinted and frosted green glass screen. The studio lights were positioned to shine on the glass and reflected off this surface onto the man’s body. After much positioning of lights and time spent tying knots to his wrists, the crucifix was raised and a series of negatives made. When Dupain had finished photographing him, the model dressed and the film was processed. However, the shoot was deemed unsuccessful as the cross could not be raised as high as required in the limited space of the studio. The model was paid and booked for another session, this time at a deserted beach.

With the large wooden cross strapped to the top of a roadster and the car loaded with cameras and other equipment, Dupain drove the model and an assistant to the beach. The man who accompanied them was described as the advertising manager of a large city store and an amateur photographer who had apparently been praised in the newspapers as, “an earnest pictorial worker”. This time the shoot proceeded well, the cross was successfully raised, “in the smoothness of a blown sandhill, unmarked by tracks of animal or man and in the brilliant sun I was lashed to the cross”. The model was surprised that the new assistant had been completely uninterested in the process and, as the man in question was

116 Unknown, 1939e, p.112.
117 Unknown, 1939e, p.113
118 Unknown, 1939e, p.115
119 Unknown, 1939e, p.115
dropped off at the end of the day, he remarked to them: "Don't... say anything to the wife about nude models or posing; she doesn't quite understand".120 The model later asked Dupain to explain and was laughingly told that the man had pestered him to come on a shoot when nude models were involved. The man's disappointment that it was a male and not female nude had, Dupain hoped, cured him of his interest. The model was greatly impressed by this story and used the episode in his article to prove that moral standards in the profession were high.

**Beach culture**

"The race of men whom we are building on our beaches can look at Nature honestly, for they have fashioned a new faith in her image".

Geoffrey Dubout, 1938.121

It was natural that Dupain should choose the beach as the setting for his outdoor nude studies as, for him, this area was the most 'Australian' of locations. While the outback was still a key locus of national identity, the rugged interior of the country remained an imaginary realm for the majority of people, neither visited easily or considered a desirable place to live. The dominant population centres huddled around the Australian coastline and it was to the beach that most turned in the summertime.122 The mythic qualities of the beach as expressed through art, literature and film thus often took on added potency as they reinforced personal memories of time spent lying prostrate on the baking sand or swimming in the ocean.

As interest in personal and national health grew so too did the level of attention paid to this site of physical vitality.123 During the 1920s, the beach variously became a free playground for the average Australian; a venue for the middle classes to show off the latest in beach fashions; the location of unconscious (or conscious) sexual forces; and a place to re-establish physical vitality. The experience of swimming was also a means by which some people

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120 Unknown, 1939e, p.116
121 Debout, 1938, p.61.
122 Beach swimming was not always officially condoned in Australia. From 1833 to 1902 a ban was placed on bathing during daylight hours (6am to 8pm). The ban was finally challenged in 1902 and four years later the first surf clubs were established in Sydney.
123 Not all critics considered swimming to be of benefit for the body. Hans Sürén, for instance, considered swimming in the ocean an unhealthy pastime that robbed the body of heat, magnetism and 'personal electricity'. Sürén, 1927, p.31.
chose to reject the depleting forces of modernity and align themselves with a classical past. Jack Lindsay, for instance, considered his swimming experiences as a physically strenuous ‘initiation’ into a Romantic and classical world. Recalling a formative event in the 1920s he wrote:

With an Irish Terrier for companion, I used to row up the river and land in wild tangled parts, among fir trees and lantana bushes; and there I read Shelley aloud to the terrier. We swam round a small rocky island in a fierce current and lay wetly naked on the gritty heat of stone. And exulted. In the hard light, under cloud swags of brittle lilac silver, the voice was Shelley. Under the hanging lichened boughs, in the Australian dusk with its heavy liquid incrustation of stars, the voice was Keats. When I almost drowned and scrambled breathless and bleeding up the teeth of the stones, it was good; an initiation.

During the Depression the beach also became a place that offered rejuvenation for the spirit without any monetary cost. As one writer wittily commented in 1931, “When a nation is down in the dumps, the right place for you is out in the dumpers.” In the same vein the journal, Surf: All about it ran a poem on how the surf could, at least temporarily, banish the Depression blues:

Little Jantzen Josie
Jumping in the spray
Sweet and neat and rosy
Blow us all away!
Take us where the bubbles
Wipe away the town -
Politics and troubles,
Bid ‘em all go drown!
Use your own discretion

What the bailiffs do -
Bother all Depression
WE will go with You

124 The anti-modernist leanings of swimmers is noted by Sprawson who writes: “On the whole they reject the material world, respectability, the industrial system and contemporary society. They are generally out of harmony with their age... It was as though water, like opium, provided the swimmers with a heightened existence, a refuge from the everyday life they loathed”. Sprawson, 1993, p.137. The German writer, Goethe, for instance, travelled as a young man from the city to the country one summer where he and a friend swam naked in a stream. He later wrote that this experience, “transformed bourgeois sensual exhaustion into a fresh and vigorous existence”. Goethe quoted in Sprawson, 1993, p. 207.
125 Lindsay, 1948, p.218.
126 Unknown in Surf: All about it, Mortons Ltd, Sydney, 1931, p.4.
Mad and glad and cosy,
Never more to roam -
Little Jantzen Josie
Jumping in the foam.\textsuperscript{127}

For a nation trying to cope with the economic ramifications of the Depression the effects of
the surf were felt to have benefits that could help business. As Violet Roche noted in her
article, “Surfing: Australia’s National Pastime”, a weekend spent at the beach work would
lead to approaching work with greater physical and emotional vitality:

On a Monday morning it is interesting to see the men and girls in shops and
factories, bearing the imprint of an out-of-doors weekend in their clear, sparkling
eyes . . . what work is not accomplished with greater zest and perfection under the
influence of this most fascinating of recreations.\textsuperscript{128}

While the beach was necessarily a generic zone that was impossible to claim as uniquely
Australian, the culture that developed around it was considered expressive of an archetypal
‘way of life’. The hedonistic pursuit of pleasure and play was felt to be characteristic of the
Australian personality and the ‘politics’ of the beach also reflected the national temperament.
The beach was a democratic zone where the lawyer and factory worker became equal when
stripped of the clothes that usually distinguished their position. In his article “Sun Gods of
the Pacific”, Gerald Dillon observed, “The surf is a glorious democracy in which wealth,
rank, Norman blood, or scholarship have no privilege of place. All are freemen of the
surf”.\textsuperscript{129} This commonality was also appreciated by Roche:

All classes of the community meet on common ground on the beaches of Australia.
The society dowager bathes with the attractive little office typist or factory worker;
the ‘bay-windowed’ capitalist beside a news-runner or a hotel waiter; grandpapa
sports joyously in the surf with two or three-year-old chubby infants.\textsuperscript{130}

However, this classless beach society was not without its hierarchy. In an environment
without the usual props designating social standing and position the new criteria for success

\textsuperscript{127} Unknown, 1931c, p.37.
\textsuperscript{128} Roche, 1935, p.21.
\textsuperscript{129} Dillon, 1936, p.11.
\textsuperscript{130} Roche, 1935, p.21.
was ‘the body’. As an advertisement for The Bjelke-Peterson Institute of Melbourne stressed, the most athletic physique on the beach was an ‘aristocrat’:

Do you strip well? Do you feel confident in your bathing costume... Wealth and social position do not count in sunbathing costumes. The aristocrat of the beach is the man or woman with the attractive physique. Get Fit! Look It!.

The well-developed body dominated the pecking order of the beach but the spectacle of bodily display could increasing be helped by commerce. As beach culture developed and shifts in public morality gradually permitted more form-fitting bathing costumes, fashion companies recognised a golden opportunity to extend their range of ‘beach wear’. The 1920s saw a thriving industry develop in accessories for the beach-goer, Pix being one magazine to advise its readers of these new trends writing that, “With the growth of the popularity of surfing and sunbathing, and the design of beach costumes of brighter colours and smarter cut, attention has been tuned to the development of new accessories to add to the comfort of sunbather”. The commodification of sun bathing and swimming was also noted by magazines such as The Home, which regularly ran features on the chic, sleek Australian woman dressed for the beach. One typical article in 1937 on the smartest beach fashions ran:

You can be as bizarre as you like on the beach this summer. Load your arms with incongruous brilliant bracelets. Wear a barely-there purple coat over a pink rubber swim suit. If you’ve a mind there to, add a colossal scarlet hat... You can take shelter in an enigmatic personality behind dark glasses, with huge white rims. Very H.G. Wells and Woman-of-the-future.

Beach culture was well established enough in Australia by the 1920s to warrant a book on the subject. Sydney Surfing was published in 1929 and featured a series of Harold Cazneaux’s photographs with text by Jean Curlewis. Cazneaux was attracted both by the social phenomena of beach society and by the decorative possibilities of bodies as they lay on the

117 Unknown, Advertisement in Swimming Illustrated, volume 1, number 3, December 1928, p.27.
118 Unknown, 1938i, p.3.
120 Unknown, 1937b, p.41.
121 Curlewis & Cazneaux, 1929.
sand or played. In the former category is *Sand minstrels* (1928), which shows a group of young men gathered around a guitar player. In the caption accompanying the image, Curlewis described the ‘sand minstrels’ and their followers in pseudo-sociological terms writing, “These interesting creatures haunt the beaches during the summer months. They gather in little patches of colour by pier and promenade, and strum away the hot hours with ukulele and steel guitar.”

The casual arrangements of men and women lounging on the sand in their bright costumes also provided Cazneaux with striking pictorial opportunities. In *Beach scene* (1930), a group of carefree sunbathers lie ‘sun slain’ oblivious to anything but the sensation of the heat on their bodies. Cazneaux has taken his camera to a position where he can look down on this scene of abandon, accentuating the abstract potential of the subjects as they lie against the blank field of the white sand. The graphic possibilities of this subject were also appreciated by other photographers. In 1931, the journal *Modern Photography* published an image by the German photographer, Umbo, which is remarkably similar to that by Cazneaux. Umbo’s *Sun bathers* was also taken from an elevated position allowing the photographer to look down on the men and women lying on the sand in their bathers. Like Cazneaux too, Umbo has printed the image in a vertical format to accentuate its decorative frieze-like dimension.

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136 Curlewis, 1929, [p.3].
The free and easy quality of the beach offered the individual a new sense of social and physical liberation. But this freedom was not always appreciated by sections of Australian society. In 1931, for instance, an article promoting the joys of surfing noted that:

> It has given health to the sick, it has swept away prudery, it has bred a race of manly men and lovely woman. Yet even today the act of jumping into the Pacific with as little as possible on the body is regarded with gloomy suspicion by the WOSSERS.\(^\text{138}\)

It was clear that surfing and swimming were expressive of a physicality that could be robustly sensual. However, the erotic possibilities of the pastime were consistently downplayed with most at pains to deny its implicit sexual possibilities.\(^\text{139}\) In 1912, the potential moral impropriety of half-naked men and women in close proximity to each other troubled the “Surf Bathing Committee” which had been convened to report on surfing to the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales.\(^\text{140}\) The committee approved of surfing as a “clean and healthful pastime” but they were less sure about the morality of bodies being displayed on the beach. Accordingly they recommended that, “No person, shall, while in bathing costume, mix with the general public on the beach, beach reserve, or promenade, who are not bathing, unless such person wears, over the bathing costume, an overcoat, mackintosh, or other sufficient wrapper or clothes”.\(^\text{141}\) Needless to say few bathers chose to follow such a ruling.

P. Pearce took a different approach in his 1928 article, “Flesh and the Devil” by refusing to acknowledge that any ‘normal’ person could see the erotic potential of people in bathing costumes. As he exclaimed, “What ordinary Australian, when faced by visions of well built humanity, happy and clean in sunshine and salt water, would even consider the possibility of evil of association of boys and girls in their bathing garments”.\(^\text{142}\)

\(^{138}\) Author’s emphasis, Unknown, 1931d, p.18.

\(^{139}\) For a wide ranging account of Australian attitudes to the body on the beach see Booth, 1997, pp.170-82.

\(^{140}\) Surf Bathing Committee”, 1912 , pp.1-27.

\(^{141}\) Surf Bathing Committee, 1912 p.5. Prohibitions against brief bathing costumes were an on-going matter of concern for the more moralistic members of Australian society. In 1935, for instance, a local government minister in NSW, Eric Spooner, amended the bathing ordinance to prohibit the use of the two-piece costumes that were becoming so popular. Spooner sought instead to have suits that covered all the body and, for women, included a half skirt. The new regulations were a total failure, as bathers chose to continue to wear fashionable two piece outfits. See Booth, 1997, p.173. Spooner’s new ordinance was the topic of George Southern’s critical book, Southern, Sydney, 1935.

\(^{142}\) Pearce, 1928a, p.6.
Pearce may not have seen the erotic possibilities of the beach but John Harcourt certainly did. Harcourt used the beaches of Western Australia as one of the settings for his study of political and sexual revolution in his controversial book, *Upwarp* (1934). This social realist novel was the first Australian novel to be banned by the Commonwealth Book Censorship Board who felt its support for a workers’ uprising and free expression of sexuality was unacceptable for local readers. One of the contentious sections of the book was set on a local Perth beach where a magistrate, James Riddle, has come for a swim on a hot Sunday. Riddle describes the city he has just left as a soulless, barren place where, “the unemployed lay gasping in the sweat-soaked rags... In the hot Sabbath sun the city slept amidst its ordure, amidst the excrement passed from its concrete bowels”. In contrast the beach he now enters is full of life and vitality with people dressed in, “bright, scanty bathing-suits, in loose gay gowns, in jazz-patterned pajamas”.

After the heat and ugliness of the city, Riddle is keen to dive into the ocean, “coming up refreshed, washed clean of discomfort and self-consciousness and incipient bad temper”. But the beach is more than a site of rejuvenation after the depletions of the city, in this novel it is also a sexual zone. Soon after arriving, Riddle meets a friend who describes the scene as: “a pagan bacchanal!... They’re drunk with the wind and the surf and the sun - especially the sun. A thousand half-nude men and women luxuriating in pure sensation. Bare backs, bare shoulders, bare thighs”. Initially dubious of his friend’s description, the magistrate gradually succumbs to the sensuality of the experience and, as he lies on the beach with his head on his arms, thinks to himself:

The enervating, vitalizing heat of the sun, and the cool effervescence of the surf... then the sun again and the surf again - a sort of multi-layered sensual sandwich...

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143 Before it was banned, *Upwarp* was favourably reviewed in *Pandemonium* as, “An Australian proletarian novel of considerable distinction”. The unknown reviewer considered the censorship of the book as indicative of Australian's old-fashioned attitudes and praised the author for his moral truthfulness noting that Harcourt gave, “a lively picture of the changes in moral and manners which are going on in this country as much as in any other and concerning which our romantic writers are as blissfully ignorant as so many Rotarians”. Unknown, 1934g, p.16.
144 A official report on the novel by C.J. Cane notes the link made by the author between sexual freedom and the downfall of capitalism. Cane also believed that the novel was, “sharply disguised propaganda on behalf of Communism and social revolution” and should be banned. Nile has written that it was the radical politics of the novel rather than its moral freedom that brought about its prohibition. Cane, C.J. quoted in Nile, Richard. “Introduction”. Harcourt, 1986 (1934).
147 Harcourt, 1986 (1934), p.16
This elemental sensuality, he thought, was a philosophy; it made him remember that he was an animal.\textsuperscript{149}

With his usual moral defences weakened by the effects of the sun and the surf, Riddle finds himself with new found 'beach friends' who easily lead him into more carnal pursuits that seem to flow quite naturally from a day spent in this hedonistic environment.

As Harcourt suggests, the beach could be a site of liberation enabling a freedom of physical expression not permitted in general society. But while the informal society that gathered on the sand may have been governed by its human inhabitants the ocean that they viewed and swam in was a place outside of their control. The primal forces of the ocean were complex and unpredictable and, in the arts, were employed both as a metaphor of rejuvenation and disempowerment. In Kylie Tennant's social realist novel, \textit{Foveaux} (1939), the author uses the ocean as her dominant imaginative trope throughout the book. For Tennant the ocean is not a redemptive natural presence but symbolic of the overwhelming and destructive potential of modernity. For instance, Sydney is described as an oceanic force whose growth is inexorable, and unstoppable - an irresistible impetus that overwhelms all in its path. When Mrs Cornish visits Sydney, for instance, she fearfully thinks that, "the city . . . would roll over and engulf her".\textsuperscript{150} Another character observed that the sound around Dennison Square was a, "tremendous monotonous uproar . . . blended with the thousand surges of small noises as the one roar of the surf combines the confusion of a million broken bubbles".\textsuperscript{151}

The 'natural' progress of modernity is suggested too by Tennant's division of the book into four sections - 'Ebb Tide', 'Full Tide', 'The Surf' and 'The Rocks'. This categorisation suggests both the inevitable progress of modernity and the human upheavals and declining fortunes of the inhabitants of Foveaux. As Sydney grows towards and gradually subsumes the small municipality, the process is variously considered a threat and a blessing by its inhabitants. For instance, the corrupt Lord Mayor, 'Honest John' Hutchinson, regards modernity as a cleansing force with moral benefits commenting, "The waves of progress . . .

\textsuperscript{149} Harcourt, 1986 (1934), pp.29-30.
\textsuperscript{150} Tennant, 1939, p.196
\textsuperscript{151} Tennant, 1939, p.109.
will sweep away the wreckage which for years has encumbered Foveaux". Those living in the Depression affected areas of Foveaux also conceive of themselves as human inhabitants of a littoral zone deposited along the shoreline by the forces of destiny. An old man named Rolfe refers to himself and his friends as, "wrecks cast up on the shore-line of the city... we're drift, just drift, left-overs". Later in the book he remarks, "I can't ever get out of my head when I'm in Foveaux that it's a kind of seashore with flotsam and jetsam tumbled together in the strangest heaps. Dark tides... strange tides, washing people about".

In Foveaux, the ocean and the city are generally paired as destructive and essentially impersonal forces that threaten to overwhelm and suck people into oblivion. However, towards the end of the book a more redemptive, albeit critically observed, image of the ocean is offered. One of the more beleaguered members of Foveaux, named Bramley, escapes briefly from the oppressive pressures of his life to visit a bathing club where he can swim and sunbathe naked. In this enclosed environment, the water and sun psychologically nourish Bramley; as he comments, "the water washed the bitterness out of you". The combined effects of sun and water may leach away the effects of modern living but they also lead to a kind of oblivion. Bramley muses to himself, "Perhaps... one of the reasons why Jamison found trouble organising the unemployed was that, although they might not have food or shelter many of them could go swimming". Australian political apathy in the face of hedonistic opportunities is also apparent when Bramley engages in the following conversation with a fellow bather:

"Is there anything about the war in Europe?" he asked to divert the talker. The stout man was happy. "Yeh. Here, wait a minute, I've lost the page. Hitler says..." he mumbled, turning the sheets. "Here it is. 'War in Spain. Air raid on Madrid'". "Huh, huh", Bramley said peacefully... In a minute, he thought he would have another swim."  

The dreamy, sensual feelings fostered by sun and water dull Bramley's alertness making him insensible to the threats of war. Writing on the eve of the Second World War, Tennant

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152 Tennant, 1939, p.85.
153 Tennant, 1939, p.131.
154 Tennant, 1939, p.192.
155 Tennant, 1939, p. 441.
156 Tennant, 1939, p.441.
clearly suggests the potency of such physical pleasures - and their dangers. These 'waters of unconsciousness' are more subtle in their power but just as dangerous as the 'ocean of modernity' seen in action throughout the book. Both are primitive forces against which the individual has to be constantly vigilant in order to maintain their personal and political integrity.

In 1929, Jean Curlewis also observed that, although the ocean was good for the development of the Australian body, it did little for the mind. Pondering the effect of surfing on the intellectual capacity of Australians she concluded that surfers and sunbakers did, "not think at all". While she acknowledged that this lack of mental activity might be considered strange by other nations with industrious natures, Curlewis saw it as a positive aspect of the Australian attitude writing, "why get all hot and bothered over More Production when the thing you want is produced by the Pacific for free?".

![Image: Harold Cazneaux, *Ocean tonic*, 1928]

Losing oneself to the power of the ocean and the sun is a dominant theme permeating descriptions of the Australian beach experience. Harold Cazneaux, for instance, evoked the pleasurable sensation of disorientation that can take place in the ocean in his *Sydney Surfing* (c.1928). In this image, a group of surfers appear as small human specks in a visual confusion of waves and foam as they 'shoot' the wave or dive through it. A variant of this image, *Ocean tonic*, was reproduced in *Sydney Surfing*, where Curlewis described the agitation of the surf as a natural palliative in which it is the sea and not its human occupants that is in control:

Swirling waters that foam like brisk wine catch the bathers on the very edge of the ocean, stirring them in a maelstrom of bubbles, buffeting their bodies, loosening

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157 Tennant, 1939, p.443.
158 Curlewis and Cazneaux, 1929, [p.4].
159 Curlewis and Cazneaux, 1929, [p.4].
their limbs, awakening their livers, and tossing them light-hearted and laughing on the yellow sand.\footnote{166}

Cazneaux considered beach culture as a playground where people could lose their physical and emotional troubles in the swirl of the surf or lying on the hot sand of the beach. Dupain also saw the carefree side of the beach, as is evident in photographs such as Bondi, but his approach was informed by a vitalistic appreciation of the ocean that often gave a different ‘weight’ to his images. Dupain was especially interested in the writings of John and Llewellyn Powys who considered ‘man’ an elemental being that drew power from association with nature and for whom intuition and will were ultimately more important than the intellect. John Powys’ book, Weymouth Sands (1934), for instance, is based around a pantheistic view of the universe in which the ocean is described as a primal ‘absolute’: “rolling, tumbling, curving, cresting, restless activity, that immemorial sea trouble which, when it does cease, evokes the feeling that the waters have really been made a path for the feet of the eternal”.\footnote{161}

No doubt of interest to Dupain as well was Powys distinction between the wet and dry ‘zones’ of Weymouth Beach, each of which had their own character. The dry sands were a social arena in which bathers were, “forever limning and dis-limning themselves, groups and conclave of a rich, mellow, Rabelaisian morality, eating, drinking, love-making, philosophizing, full of racy quips, scandalous jibes and every sort of earthy, care-forgetting ribadry”.\footnote{162} In contrast, the wet sands were a purer zone in which association with nature was stronger. In this region the sands were walked on by, “‘printless’ feet, light, immortal, bare, of what might easily have been the purer spirits of an eternal classical childhood, happy and free, in some divine limbo of unassailable play-time”.\footnote{163}

\footnote{160} Cazneaux and Cazneaux, 1929, [p.9].
\footnote{161} Powys, 1934, p.550.
\footnote{162} Powys, 1934, p.457.
Unlike Cazneaux, whose main emphasis was on the ‘dry sands’ of the beach, Dupain was drawn to the ‘wet sands’ where it was easier for him to suggest the symbolic relationship between the ocean and the body. For Dupain the ocean was largely a female force - sexual, emotional, intuitive and governed by unconscious forces. In his photograph, No title (Woman and water), for instance, a naked woman appears to have merged into the ocean as a photograph of crashing waves is montaged onto her body, while in No title (Female torso and water), the truncated form of a bare breasted woman appears to lie under an area of water illuminated by the sun. Although the model he uses is clearly female the radical cropping of her form also creates a phallic. Dupain suggests that this body is a primitive ‘essential’ form embodying both male and female characteristics as it emerges from a great cosmic ocean. The symbolic nature of the photograph recalls a passage from one of Dupain’s favourite books, Llewelyn Powys’ Impassioned Clay (1931), in which the author describes the creative force of the sun with the words: “It was from the mere glance of this God, full of an Invincible magnetism, that dead matter was first made to give birth to life”.

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153 Powys, 1934, p.457.
154 Powys, 1931, p.7. Dupain’s admiration for this book is evident from an interview he gave late in life in which he concluded by saying: “What was I going to wind up with? Llewelyn Powys’ philosophy, ‘I am nothing. I was nothing. Eat bread, drink wine, make love, come’. This is on an old roman gravestone that he found somewhere and he quoted it at the end of his philosophical treatise called Impassioned Clay”. Ennis, 1991, p.25. Dupain also referred to Powys‘ vitalistic philosophy in his 1937 photograph, Impassioned Clay.
Conclusion

"Laughing gods in bathing costumes": The Australian surfer

"Today is the day of the athlete. The athlete, from the point of view of [our] readers is the swimmer"
Unknown, 1933.²

Australia's most distinctive contribution to 'body culture' was the development of two physical archetypes associated with the beach. One of these iconic figures was the lifesaver - a highly regulated and almost exclusively male athlete with militaristic overtones whose identity was essentially public. The other was the surfer who, while inhabiting the same territory as his or her lifesaving cousins, was considerably less easy to control. The surfer was not in service to the Australian beach-going public and was subject to less regulation. It was therefore possible for this athletic icon to be male or female.

The ocean was considered the home of the surfer and in an imaginative sense was also its creator. The action of the ocean literally worked to 'carve' a new, refined body from the depleted or underdeveloped form of the city dweller. As Jean Curlewis wrote in 1929:

The surf is a sculptor. Those tons of breakers fall like a mallet's blows and swimmers are chiselled slim and straight. The foam fizzing and stinging like iced champagne, restores to slack fibres the priceless quality that doctors call tone. The sun polished skin to an incredible smoothness until the Australian surfer looks like - I cannot help it - a young Greek god.³

Surfing was more than just a pleasurable pastime but was, rather, seen to be a means by which Australian men and women could most effectively realise their full genetic potential as the distant modern relatives of classical Greeks or Romans. Like a perfect classical sculpture that emerged from an unformed marble block through the skill of the master carver, so too was a new race of Anglo-Australians being formed by the hand of nature. This process of

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¹ 'Eve', 1931, p.27.
² Unknown, 1933, p.2.
³ Curlewis & Cazeaux, 1929, p.4.
transformation was noted by Gerald Dillon who wrote in 1936: “On the beaches one sees Greek sculpture transformed into the real life in the forms of sunburnt Australian men and women”\(^4\).

The female surfer was a popular subject with writers and photographers in Australia in the 1930s - a reflection, in part, of the growing public interest in women’s fitness as a means to increasing the population. In 1931, for instance, ‘Eve’ noted that, “Modern girls are outdoor girls, and their beauty is of the clean-limbed, vigorous Greek type that flourishes wherever games are played”.\(^5\) While three years later, the artist, Napier Waller included a ‘Beach girl’ as one of the modern representatives in his mural of “Sports through the Centuries” for the Myer Mural Hall in Melbourne.\(^6\)

A ‘clean-limbed’ woman was the model for a photograph taken in 1938 to illustrate a pictorial feature on the joys of surfing in the Australian National Tourism Agency’s journal, *Walkabout*.\(^7\) In this striking image, the unknown photographer has positioned their camera low to the sand to emphasise the athletic body of the woman who strides towards the viewer. With her striking dark bathing costume cut away to accentuate her lean figure and her happy expression, the woman is an effective example of the power of the surf to shape the body and uplift the spirits. Indeed, the editors of *Walkabout* accompanied the image with lines paraphrased from Curlewis’s 1929 book, *Sydney Surfing*:

t “‘Chiselled slim and straight’ by the pounding surf”.\(^8\)

*Sun-worshipper* projects an image of the Australian woman as a healthy, vitalised person and was apparently the kind of positive view that ANATA believed would encourage tourism. Around 1940, Douglas Annand used the photograph as the basis for a poster commissioned

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\(^4\) Dillon, 1936, p.11.
\(^5\) Unknown, 1931c, p.37.
\(^7\) “Sun-Worshipper”, *Walkabout* 1 December 1938, p.29.
by ANATA as part of series to promote Australia overseas. Annand often incorporated photographic elements into his work and, in this poster, accentuates the graphic potential of the image by placing the black and white photograph against a blue sky. In bold red letters at the top of the poster the word ‘Australia’ proclaims the woman as the emblem of a distinctive way of life.

Gert Sellheim also used a photograph of a female surfer as the central motif in a promotional travel poster he produced for the Victorian Railways around 1936. In this work, an image of a smiling woman, her hair tousled by the wind, is overlaid with a stylised series of waves. Sellheim’s image was not only an appealing inducement to become ‘part of nature’ - an idea he stresses with the words “Sea & Sunshine. Go By Train!” - but of the role that photography could play in preserving the beach experience. At the bottom of the poster, Sellheim includes the words “Take a Kodak” in a reference to the mnemonic power of photography.

In the 1930s, women surfers joined the retinue of ‘archetypal’ images used to promote Australia to an overseas audience. In 1937, for instance, a series of photographic murals were employed as one of the main means of promoting the country in the Australian Pavilion at the Paris Exhibition. These one and half metre high photographic enlargements featured an eclectic array of subjects chosen for their ‘Australianess’. An image of a woman surfing was placed alongside the head of an Aboriginal man, a koala and a modern suburban house in a picture book style mural that celebrated the ‘spirit’ of the nation in a heroically sized format. The photographs were apparently a success with the public as they were reused again by Douglas Annand in 1939 when he was appointed art director of the Australian exhibit at the New York World’s Fair. One report on the Australian Pavilion praised the sophistication of Annand’s display: “Trim, with decorations

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8 Unknown, 1938n, p.29.
9 Unknown, 1937c, p.32-3.
in good taste, and colours bright but not gaudy, it show that the days of Wembley's pyramids of oranges and tins of bully beef are gone".\textsuperscript{11}

The female surfer who took her place in this 'tasteful' display is a tribute to the powers of nature in shaping the bodies of the nation. The rhetoric implicit in such an image did not require any captioning - the viewer of the time was generally frequently well-versed in the eugenic possibilities of a nation replete with such healthy sports woman.

The spectacle of the Australian surfer was used as an inducement to tourists to visit a land where classical sculpture had 'come to life'. In an interesting twist, the Australian beach was also promoted as a place where artists could find models for their classical inspired art. In 1931, J.S. McDonald, the Director of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, suggested that sculptors should visit their local beaches as it was here that they could find a surfeit of models among the skimpily dressed surfers. McDonald described the Australian coast as a utopia in which the physical beauty of Australian men and women helped create a latter day classical paradise. This beach was a place devoid of flies or the threat of sunburn in which, "On golden and milky sands, bodily excellence is displayed the year round, clearly defined by the sun in an atmosphere as viewless and benign as the air of Hellas as described by Euripides"\textsuperscript{12}.

The association of the surfer to classical sculpture also served another more subtle purpose as a means of 'containing' the body within moral parameters. The natural physicality of the surfer could only be openly praised when that body was purged of sexual overtones. However, without the disciplining aspect imposed on athletes or lifesavers the surfer could easily be an unruly figure who freely exerted their physicality. The act of plunging into the ocean and surfing its waves involved an identification with natural forces and a liberating sense of bodily movement that was both athletic and sensual. In 1938, Ronald McCuaig suggested the potential eroticism of surfing when he wrote regarding a female surfer:

\textsuperscript{10} Beiers, 1939, pp.76-9.
\textsuperscript{11} Beiers, 1939, p.76.
\textsuperscript{12} McDonald, 1931
Up high; as it curves,
Her body, brown and lean
Swoops down and swerves,
Breasts keeling the green

Like an impatient bride
Grudging her lover sleep
Shaking speed from his side
In a long sweep,

Whose wakening kiss
Flakes, flashes and smoulders
In white ashes that hiss
On hips, eyes and shoulders

One means by which the potentially disruptive sensuality of the surfer could be arrested was through the use of classical allusions. The perfected bodies of ancient statuary were admired without imputation because their forms were considered emblems of physical beauty devoid of eros. By relating the surfer to such statues their bodies were likewise rendered ‘pure’. In this state the celebration of athletic men and women on the beaches was no longer could not be misinterpreted but was an admiration akin to viewing objects in a museum.

The sensuality of the surfer was also contained by the nationalistic demands of ‘race building’. In 1936, for instance, in the magazine, Surf in Australia, the unknown author described surfing as a eugenic activity responsible for:

Building up of a new and virile nation that is Australia ... one only has to look to our beaches during the summer months and see the vigorous specimens of manhood and womanhood, revelling in the health-giving surf and sunshine which do so much to develop that healthy body in which a sound mind can function ... one sees the promise of a stronger race being built up, and future generations of Australian will be the better for the sun and surf which their fore-runners enjoyed.

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In 1940, Charles Meere painted a vision of the eugenically improved new Australian forged by the surf in *Australian beach pattern* (1938-40). Begun in 1938, at the end of Australia's sesquicentennial celebrations, this painting eulogises national identity. Meere depicts an almost superhuman race of Australians frolicking at one of Sydney's ocean playgrounds, although 'frolic' is perhaps too animated a term for bodies so perfect in their athleticism that they are more like classical sculpture than flesh and blood. Resolutely Anglo-Saxon in origin, these preternaturally healthy, honed and virile specimens of Australians are perfect embodiments of eugenic and racial goals. They are faultless apogees of human development devoid of sensuality establishing a moral standard through the purification of their passions.

![Fig. 82. Charles Moore Australian beach pattern 1938-40 Oil on canvas](image)

But the disconcertingly 'bloodless' quality of Meere's figures was not the only vision of surfers that existed in the 1930s. A far more erotic appreciation of the body is evident in Olive Cotton's photograph of Max Dupain posed in his father's house at Newport after a day spent on the beach. Titled, *Max after surfing* (c.1939), the photograph is an intimate study of the young man apparently taken shortly after his marriage to Cotton. It shows

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16 For a discussion of this painting see Slutskin, 1988, pp.176-77 and Engberg, 1994, pp.32-5. It has been noted that Meere never went to the beach and certainly the figures and their placement seems to owe more to the commercial art illustrations that were his trade than to real life. As Freda Roberts, 1987 quoted in Slutskin, 1987, p.6.
17 For information on these artists see Slutskin, 1987, Dixon, 1987.
18 This was an unusual image for Cotton who more commonly took still-lifes, architecture and clothed portraits. For a good contemporary interview with Cotton about her approach to photography see Unknown, 1938m, p.13.
Dupain fresh from surfing standing behind a low screen over which he has casually thrown his shirt. Attention is focused on his muscular and lean body which are given prominence through the dramatic use of studio lighting.

However, the emphasis on Dupain’s physical presence is more than the attraction of a woman for her husband: it also reflects his own strongly held attitudes towards the body. Dupain’s interest in health and fitness is clearly borne out by his healthy appearance, invigorated by time spent in the sun and surfing. The emphasis on his classically proportioned torso suggests that he has physically enacted his belief that modern men and women should model their bodies on those of Greek and Roman statuary.19

![Fig. 83. Olive Cotton Max after surfing c.1939 Gelatin silver photograph](image-url)

19 As a comparable ode to classical male beauty it is interesting to compare Cotton’s photograph to an image taken eight years earlier by George Hoyningen-Huene of his fellow photographer, Horst P. Horst. In Horst 1931, the young naked torso of the man is illuminated in a similar fashion to Cotton’s work through the careful placement of studio spots. The two images also clearly reveal the photographers pleasure in their subjects with a palpable sense of physicality conveyed. Dupain greatly admired Hoyningen-Huene’s work and he and Cotton may well have seen this image when the German photographer came to Sydney for a brief stay in 1937. Hoyningen-Huene used Dupain’s studio and a contemporary photograph by Geoffrey Powell shows Dupain enraptured as the pair view a print together. The two photographers appear to have maintained their friendship and a copy of Max after surfing was recently uncovered bearing the inscription, “To Max in friendship George”. My thanks to Helen Ennis for this information. The discovery of this inscribed photograph has raised the question of whether Hoyningen-Huene actually took Max after surfing when he visited Australia in 1937 and inscribed and sent it to Dupain. However, Cotton has always maintained that the photograph was taken by her and certainly she held a print in her own collection.
Max after surfing is an almost perfect illustration of Hans Suren’s statement that, “The brown body, like a statue in bronze, enchants the eye to sheer admiration.” With his tanned body sensually articulated by light, Dupain appears as an Australian embodiment of an ancient Greek god. Indeed, the only modern intrusion into this image is a cigarette held in his hand - a sophisticated, if decidedly unhealthy intrusion, into what is otherwise an ode to the masculine beauty and good health of the surfer.

Cotton’s photograph was taken the year that the second world war was declared. With the start of this conflict, and the growing revelations of German atrocities performed in the name of ‘racial upbuilding’, the notion of muscular nationalism, eugenics and ‘body culture’ became tainted. Idealised photographs of strong, militaristic lifesavers and Aryan-looking Australians naked on the beach or engaged in displays of athletic prowess, took on undesirable ‘fascist’ overtones that were unsuitable for a nation at war against such ideologies. As the decades have passed, such images have had a chequered history: frequently detached from their original context they have often been subsumed into a modernist discourse largely leached of its political context.

However, as I have argued, Australian art - and especially photography - of the interwar period that deals with the body, is most productively understood when it is considered as part of a dynamic interchange between its maker and the prevalent cultural, political and social milieu in which they lived and worked. To contextualise the photography of Max Dupain and others, I have found it important to closely investigate the broad context of ‘body culture’. As I discuss in chapter one, interest in ‘body culture’ was frequently underpinned by eugenics. To indicate the impact of this pseudo-science in Australia I chart the growth of eugenic societies and, through an examination of its distinctive terminology, signal how eugenic ideas spread into the fields of education, medicine and literature. I also show how photography was used to help authorise this pseudo-science by creating an ‘indisputable’ visual morphology of human types.

20 Suren, 1927, p.146.
In chapter two, I discuss eugenics at work in Australia through a survey of some key areas of national concern, all of which focused on the body at its most basic genetic level. Aspects of what Michel Foucault has termed, 'bio power', include various strategies to increase, regulate and protect the genetic constitution or 'blood' of the Australian population. I discuss the development of the 'new Australian' and show how artists such as Dupain focused on the archetypal Australian in their photographs - a figure who was invariably white, fit and Anglo-Saxon in origin.

Moving from the biological to the corporeal level of the body in chapter three, I argue that the promotion of the 'ideal' body was connected to a need for military preparedness in Australia in the interwar period. I consider the intersection between the development of 'national bodies', sport and photography through an examination of various German sources and argue that Australia's most distinctive contribution to 'body culture' was through the depiction of the lifesaver. I also propose that Dupain and others helped to heroicise the lifesaver as a figure who combined athletic prowess with military skills.

In chapter four, I expand on the notion of the 'ideal' body by examining how attitudes towards modernity produced two distinct types of physical forms. I argue that many artists, Dupain included, had a critical response to modernity following World War One and as a consequence often produced work in the classical modernist style. Equally important to this utopian picture of idealised bodies based on classical models was the spectre of the corrupted body whose only promise was that of dystopia and degeneration.

I propose that the concept of 'degeneration' is critical to properly understanding 'body culture' and, in chapter five, unpack the elements of this notion especially in regard to 'energies'. I show how revitalisation of the Australian body was a consideration in those fields concerned with some of the basic requirements of human development, such as food, drink and housing. Using commercial photography by Dupain and others, I show how the medium was highly influential in revealing concepts of fatigue and energy.

In my final chapter, I examine another aspect of revitalisation: namely association of the body with nature. A detailed study of social attitudes towards sunbathing and nudism, forms
an important background for my analysis of a series of nude photographs taken by Max Dupain in the 1930s. As part of my discussion of his work I discuss the terms of Australian ‘beach culture’ and discuss how it was imaginatively portrayed by Dupain and others.

The interwar period in Australia was a historically distinct moment in which concerns regarding the regeneration of the body and society following the war captured the attentions of many. However exclusionary its vision, it is clear that the terms of ‘body culture’ were persuasive and, even today, it continues to hold a powerful grip on the imaginations of many. Indeed the enduring appeal of Max Dupain’s work is perhaps testament as much to his talents as a photographer as to the seductiveness of a ‘body culture’ ethos in which the ideal body - in all its perfect, tanned, healthy and muscular glory - was held to be an achievable reality.
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