

**Masculinity on Trial:
A Creative History of Masculinities
of German Internment at Trial Bay,
New South Wales, 1915–1918**

by James Gerard Worner

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

under the supervision of Associate Professor Anna Clark
and Doctor Sabina Groeneveld

University of Technology Sydney
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

July 2020

Masculinity on Trial: This page is blank for printing.

Certificate of original authorship

I, **James Gerard Worner**, declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

This research is supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program.

Production Note:

Signature: Signature removed prior to publication.

Date:

15 / 7 / 2020

Masculinity on Trial: This page is blank for printing.

Acknowledgements

'Masculinity on Trial' had its origins in a Master of Creative Arts creative writing project at UTS. Thanks to Paul Allatson and Andrew Wright-Hurley for the initial green light and shaping the early project. The doctoral work was supervised by Anna Clark and Sabina Groeneveld, committed and nurturing advocates both. It's hard to imagine better support, so massive thanks. From Anna's introductory advice, that 'The past is what happened; history is how and from whom we know it,' I felt emboldened to begin my own historiographical quest and confident of the creative reach. And being the recipient of the Doctoral Scholarship in Historical Consciousness attached to her ARC Future Fellowship has been the fuel in the tank. Thank you, Anna, so much.

The Australian Centre for Public History at UTS is a dynamic and collaborative research environment peopled by creative and supportive folk like Anna, Tamson Pietsch, Gabrielle Kemmis, Chelsea Barnett, Paul Ashton, Paula Hamilton and Kiera Lindsey. Big thanks to all—but to Paula and Kiera especially for so much expertise, time and protection of my sanity. I am grateful too to the team in the faculty research office, particularly Claire Moore, Maggie Magrath and Lenka Pondelickova, as well as Bhuva Narayan, Nick Hopwood, Alex Munt and Sandy Schuck for opportunities given.

UTS is a great environment for post-graduate research. Members of the UTS Graduate Research School, such as Jing Zhao, along with the team at UTS International and the faculty's School of International Studies, collaborated to secure the 2017 graduate exchange with the University of Bologna of which I was the fortunate beneficiary. What a great gig! I am indebted to the work of Ilaria Vanni Accarigi and the European Union's Erasmus Plus mobility scheme for funding that opportunity. The supervision and support in Bologna of Professori Alessandro Bellasai and Maria Pia Casalena strengthened the footings of European masculinities on which the project turns and allowed a solid writing block.

Back home, 'Team James' has included rock-solid peer support from friends and super-scholars Germana Eckert, Harriet Cunningham and Angela Argent and, more recently, Matilda Keynes, Amy Thomas and Catherine Freyne—all amazing researchers and writers. The eagle eyes of Emma Wise have worked magic with proofreading. Big thanks, one and all.

My Monet writing group—including Annarosa Berman, Shelley Kenigsberg, Lisa Heidke, Dianne Riminton-Johns, Angela Argent, Tess Pearson and Penelope Janu—read and supported early drafts of parts of this thesis as other friends and gifted writers, like

Chris Baker and Kathy Gelding, have offered valued support. Meanwhile, Robin Booth, Sue Sim, Sue Roy and Jennifer Raines are among the smartest and most patient readers—not to mention the most wonderful work colleagues—I could wish to know.

Archivists, historians, curators and librarians at the State Library of New South Wales must be acknowledged, including for securing the collection of World War I internee papers to the UNESCO Memories of the World register. ‘Masculinity on Trial’ has been utterly dependent on the library’s collection and would have been impossible without work done by the team of volunteer transcribers and translators. Rosemarie Graffagnini’s translation of diaries and the translation of other works by Cat Moir’s students of Germanic Studies at the University of Sydney are important and appreciated. It was a pleasure to track Rosemarie down in Switzerland to talk of feelings gleaned, as a translator, of the men behind the diaries.

Selina and Deborah Samuels, grand-nieces of the guard Edmond Samuels, and Susan Diver, grand-daughter of Dr Max Herz, have been generous and enthusiastic supporters of my research. Meeting these people has been one of the unexpected joys of the project.

Friend of Trial Bay Gaol Tom Jones’s passion for the history of the gaol is formidable, as was his generosity in tracking and sharing specific sources. Site access and ongoing custodial care by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service was appreciated as was research support from volunteer community historians at the Macleay River Historical Society and Kempsey Museum, particularly Phil Lee and Dianne Nolan. Support from fellow travellers Kathy Duncombe, from the Friends of Bruny Island Quarantine Station, and Ann McLachlan, the former Bourke librarian, has been appreciated. Kathy provided access to the recently received diary of internee Fritz Stegherr and Ann has been indefatigable in unearthing and sharing information relating to the broader cohort including the Kersten family photo used at Image 6.1. Thanks, Ann.

I am indebted to Nadine Helmi for hosting me at Mainz in the beautiful German Rhineland and sharing the remarkable story of her encounter with the Dubotzki collection as well as the photographs themselves. How magnificent! Praise for Franz Streibl and other community historians in Dorfen, Bavaria, for digitising the collection cannot be over-sung.

Friends and colleagues at Sydney’s Pride History Group, including Shirleene Robinson, Sarah Midgley, Scott McKinnon, Robert French, John Witte, Garry Wotherspoon and Peters de Waal, Bonsall-Boone and Trebilco, originators of *Unfit for Publication*, have all provided invaluable insight into NSW’s post-colonial queer history,

while Graham Willett, Yorick Smaal, Robert Reynolds, Andrew Gorman-Murray and Robert Aldrich, among others, have provided footholds for exploration in other Australian states. Thank you all for your work and support.

To the memory of my mother and father and to my brothers and sister, in whose company I first encountered Trial Bay and its intriguing ruin, I dedicate this work.

But to Scott McKinnon, scholar, writer and advocate extraordinaire: Thanks for your ongoing support, bud, and your ever-patient, informed engagement.

My love and biggest thanks, always, go to you.

Masculinity on Trial: This page is blank for printing.

Statement indicating the format of thesis

When this project was upgraded to a doctoral work, the format of the intended thesis was the subject of much discussion. It was eventually settled that a ‘non-traditional’ scholarly submission was the ideal format to achieve the project’s academic and creative reach. The submission would:

- incorporate four works of supporting fiction strategically throughout the thesis body (4x 2,500 words)
- top and tail the thesis with brief personal reflections (2x 1,000 words)
- include photographs, such as those by internee Paul Dubotzki, many of which are previously unpublished and all of which contribute to the social and cultural milieu being described. Some images are intentionally duplicated. (111x black and white images)^
- include as appendices a glossary of German terms, a timeline of significant action and a set of maps to assist readers’ orientation.

While the aspiration, rationale, reach and format of ‘Masculinity on Trial’ have not changed, descriptions relating to submissions have. These changes reflect new conventions in the academy: that all theses are inherently creative; and that forms of knowledge other than traditional scholarly dissertations are valid and important additions to the academy’s scope.

This is an excellent thing.

Thus, this submission is in the style of a ‘conventional’ thesis.

^ Permission was given by the custodians of the Dubotzki collection to include the 78 selected photographs for the examination of this thesis. As that permission did not extend to publishing the images, they have been obscured in the final rendering.

Masculinity on Trial: This page is blank for printing.

Preface

Trial Bay, 1975

It's a Sunday sometime late in 1975 and we're on our way to Trial Bay. Our altar duties are done for the day and my four brothers and I have bagsed our spots in the family's station wagon. First-born gets first pick. The bench between Mum and Dad is prime, so my eldest brother is there; last-born chooses last, so my youngest brother is backseat middle. With my third-born choice, I opt for over-the-back, looking out at what we pass and playing with my infant sister, making her laugh with her toy giraffe. She lies on her back in the bassinette, kicking, punching and gurgling whenever the giraffe appears.

Trial Bay is close to Port Macquarie, just thirty minutes as the seagull flies along the mid-north coast: Hastings River, North Shore, Point Plomer, Crescent Head, Hat Head, Smoky Cape, Laggars Point. I imagine the seagull's view. Dolphins. Waves. Rocks.

But we're in the station wagon and Dad is driving so it's two hours on the old Pacific Highway. Hairpin bends. Logging trucks. Caravans. Dad rarely overtakes. It's slowest through Telegraph Point with its one-lane timber bridge; quicker once we've cleared the mountain at Kundabung. At Kempsey, things speed up when we cross the Macleay. The slight elevation of the bridge gives a backwards view across immense and fertile flats. Dairy cattle graze. I whisper what I see to my sister, watching the world in reverse. We turn off the highway at Seven Oaks for the final run to South West Rocks, fifteen miles along the river. Smithtown, Kinchela and Jerseyville sit squat by the river like pelicans on their poles.

It's Dunghutti land, but I don't know that yet. Nor have I learned about Kinchela's role in the history of stolen children, even though the training home closed its doors fewer than five years ago. We still compete against boys from Kinchela in our regional athletics carnivals. Our sky-blue shirts and neat white shoes are never a match for their violet singlets and swift bare feet.

We pass the gentle bends of the lower Macleay. The river is wide and slow. The legendary timber stands have long been cleared, the banks now stunted and empty, though all is green and lush. Hardwoods—ironbark, brush box, turpentine and tallowwood—became struts and beams in English schools and churches. The softer woods—cedar, beech and rosewood—their windows, desks and pews.

At Jerseyville, the old river wharf sags against the current. Trawlers bump their moorings, nets high on outrigged booms. We know the beach is near when we hear the

surf and smell the salt. Dad takes the back road, past the lighthouse turnoff, directly into Arakoon.

*

The car has barely stopped before we're out. The sound of slamming doors shatters the Sunday quiet. We tumble over one another as we race onto the beach. I'm not sure why but I'm fearful of being beaten to the water by one of my younger brothers. I seek to beat the older ones but they're always where we're going well before I arrive. Often I don't know where that is; my job is just to follow them as fast as I can run. We push and trip rather than come in second; cry foul to Mum when pushed ourselves. We leave her and Dad to set up the barbecue and tend the bassinette. Mum shouts not to go too far, that lunch will be ready soon. My eldest brother will hear and yell back 'Right-o, Mum'. He has to look after us and make sure we don't get into trouble. The crash of the surf, the yelps of being splashed, the squeak of sand beneath our sprinting feet. White and flat. Like running on a ribbon. Our faces turn to Laggery Point, the southern lip of the scoop of ocean we've known and loved for years. The gaol. Why we've pestered Dad to bring us here on his one day off per week.

*

Deep green Norfolk pines cover most of Laggery Point. Sitting like a crown in the centre is Trial Bay Gaol, its granite blocks pink in the lunchtime sun. We scramble up the verge and race around the polygon to the eastern wall where the gaol's sole entrance punches through. The iron gates are open, as are the inner timber doors. As a pack of five we run right through, then scatter inside to our favourite parts. My older brothers go to the guard tower, now a lookout with views across the bay; the younger ones look for kangaroos. I make for the inner core and enter under a broad stone arch. The sounds from outside diminish and distort and bounce off the stone in eerie echoes. The great gates here are gone, their hinges now just rusted stumps poking out of solid rock. The archway opens to the roofless central hall; there once was a kitchen with servery and a storage magazine. I imagine the clank of enamel and tin as mealtime plates are scraped. From the back of the hall, the space divides and two cell block wings unfold, like a giant capital Y.

Each wing is double storeyed, with sixteen cells on left and right. The roofs are gone and so are the staircases that stood at either end. These, like the gates, are now no more than rusting nubs of iron.

I try to imagine what it was like, for the prisoners and their guards. I can hear and smell the ocean. It's only metres away but can't be seen. Within each cell, a small rectangle of blue is visible high up in the wall. Other granite buildings, part of the prison compound, sit within the perimeter wall. The signs still say: 'Storeroom', 'Hospital/Dispensary', 'Bath-house' and, ominously, 'Solitary Confinement'. The wind whips through, pushing sand and pine needles into messy corner piles.

*

I hear my eldest brother yell and know it's time to return to Mum and Dad. He's corralled the other three and they shout at me to hurry. If we're late we'll be in trouble and they'll put the blame on me. When they see me they start to run, out the gate, round the outside of the perimeter wall, down the grassy bank and onto the beach. No way I can catch them but I'm happy to walk and have this final moment to myself.

Something about the place appeals. It's a place where things have happened; it has a life at its core. The pink of the granite is like the blood in a sleeping creature's veins. Who were the men who lived here? What were their lives and loves? What secrets does it hold?

I step down onto the beach and jog across the sand. I see my brothers arrive at the barbeque area and sit around on the picnic blanket. My father has my sister on his lap.

The gaol stays silent, holding its secrets tight.

For now.

*

Masculinity on Trial: This page is blank for printing.

Table of Contents

Certificate of original authorship	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Statement indicating the format of thesis	ix
Preface.....	xi
Table of Contents.....	xv
Abstract.....	xix
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter contents.....	3
List of images	4
1.1 Overview	5
About the men of Trial Bay.....	7
About the author	15
About homosexuality and sexual identity.....	17
1.2 Literature review.....	23
On masculinities	23
On German internment during World War I	31
1.3 Methodology.....	36
Definitions	39
Exclusions.....	41
1.4 Sources.....	44
Primary sources: What’s in the archive?.....	44
Photographs	45
Diaries and memoirs	49
Letters and other histories.....	52
Strengths and limitations	53
1.5 Thesis structure and chapter outline	55
Masculinity on Trial.....	57
Chapter 2: Home—Public and Private	59
Chapter contents.....	61
List of images	62
2.0 Smouldering Ruins.....	63
2.1 Introduction: Masculinities of space and the creation of place	70
About ‘Smouldering Ruins’.....	72
2.2 Home, gender and <i>Heimat</i>	73
<i>Heimat</i> , homeland, Fatherland	83

Into the woods.....	86
2.3 Recreating the ‘private’: Masculine experience and expectation.....	88
Accommodation	93
2.4 Recreating the ‘public’: Masculine experience and expectation.....	103
The contest for space.....	104
2.5 Conclusion: Public places, private spaces.....	112
Chapter 3: Work—Employment and Occupation	117
Chapter contents.....	119
List of images	120
3.0 Sunshine on the Avon.....	121
3.1 Introduction: Masculinity and the performance of work	130
About ‘Sunshine on the Avon’	135
3.2 Pre-occupation: Why did internees work?	138
Earning income.....	139
Reinforcing status and social privilege; relieving boredom.....	146
3.3 Occupation: Masculine identity through doing work.....	149
Private businesses	150
Voluntary work paid for by the camp	163
Voluntary/mandatory work paid for by the Australian government.....	166
3.4 Subverting expectations of work and labour.....	170
Organisation and action	172
3.5 Conclusion: Queering work.....	178
Chapter 4: Theatre—Diversion and Difference.....	183
Chapter contents.....	185
List of images	185
4.0 Shadow Players.....	186
4.1 Introduction: Masculinity and the desire to perform	197
About ‘Shadow Players’	200
4.2 Context of contemporary theatre	205
Female impersonation, cross-dressing and drag on stage	208
4.3 Choice of plays	213
Choices of inclusion.....	214
Choices of exclusion	219
4.4 Reception of plays.....	226
Expressing desire: Construction of woman in internment	228
4.5 Conclusion: On this phantom stage.....	237

Chapter 5: Body and Mind—Virility and Wellbeing	241
Chapter contents.....	243
List of images	244
5.0 The Bavarian Bull.....	245
5.1 Introduction: Masculinity and materiality	254
About ‘The Bavarian Bull’.....	258
5.2 Homosociality: Bodies and minds together.....	260
5.3 Sound of body	267
Virility	270
5.4 Sound of mind.....	286
Wellbeing	288
5.5 Conclusion: Failures of body and mind.....	297
Chapter 6: Conclusion	301
Chapter contents.....	303
List of images	304
6.1 ‘Farewell Trial Bay’.....	305
Beyond Trial Bay	310
Where to and what next?.....	314
6.2 Reading between unwritten lines	317
6.3 Masculinity on Trial	320
Epilogue	323
Trial Bay 2020	323
Appendices	327
Appendix 1: Glossary.....	327
Appendix 2: Maps	329
Appendix 3: Daily schedule at Trial Bay.....	332
Appendix 4: Timeline.....	333
Bibliography	343

List of tables

Table 1: Number and origin of internees at Trial Bay Internment Camp, 1915–1918.	8
Table 2: Work clusters and jobs supported by camp funds.....	164

Abstract

Between August 1915 and May 1918, over five hundred and eighty men were interned at Trial Bay Gaol on the mid-north coast of New South Wales. The group comprised both German-Australians of many years standing and German nationals, such as those detained from German ships in Australian ports or expats from the British and German colonies in Asia-Pacific.

Although in many respects heterogeneous, the group had certain defining characteristics: they were generally white men from middle- and upper classes and professional, moneyed and/or educated backgrounds. Their enforced mobility and homosociality occurred in the context of German imperialism as Kaiser Wilhelm II sought territorial and military expansion. The Wilhelmine ideology of *Deutschtum* [pride in being German] pushed other social and cultural expressions of Germanness across the globe including expectations of masculine behaviour. These, both conventional and counter, caused pride and resistance in equal measures, both inside and outside the German diaspora.

'Masculinity on Trial' contributes to two fields of scholarly inquiry: the first, and principal contribution, is a *cultural history* of the masculinities of the Trial Bay cohort. While the conditions and politics of internment have been examined elsewhere, interrogation through a prism of masculinity has not been previously considered. These men—at this place and time—provide an intriguing cohort for such a study. The project examines photographs (particularly those of the internee Paul Dubotzki), letters, diaries and secondary archival material to identify masculinities performed in four key sites of expression: Home; Work; Theatre; and Body and Mind. I am particularly interested in tracing counter-hegemonic expressions of masculinity—such as effeminacy and homosexuality—to understand the emerging sexual discourse and proto-queer identity.

The second area of inquiry is *methodological*. My entry to the project is as both an historian and a creative writer, two positions that are often in historiographical tension. The creative component of my thesis straddles these connected fields. I argue the merits of a hybrid form where each of the four 'pillars' (chapters) of empirical research is supported by a 'buttress' of illustrative fiction (a short story). By presenting my thesis in this form, I contribute to debates on the role of fiction in the writing of creative histories and disrupt the unhelpful polarity between the two historiographical forms.

Ultimately, 'Masculinity on Trial' questions enduring narratives of masculinity to allow for greater complexity in the way Australia writes its social and sexual histories.

Masculinity on Trial: This page is blank for printing.