

**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

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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.

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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.

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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- include photographs, such as those by internee Paul Dubotzki, many of which are previously unpublished and all of which contribute to the social and cultural milieu being described.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.

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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.

*

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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.

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Chapter 1: Introduction



Image 1.1: Trial Bay Gaol c.1915. Mt Yarrahapinni on western shore.
[Source: Dubotzki collection]

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1.1 Overview

The Premier has granted a request by the military authorities for the use of the old prison buildings at Trial Bay. The premises are required on account of the increasing number of detained Germans.

—*Macleay Argus*, 4 June 1915

The news was finally reported in June 1915. The old gaol at Trial Bay, empty since abandoned in 1903, was to be recommissioned—not as the prestigious naval college wished for in 1911, but as a site for additional internment of Australia’s ‘enemy aliens’.¹ With two weekly newspapers reporting the local news, few in the Macleay River valley would have been surprised. The *Argus*, published Fridays, had noted the Chamber of Commerce petition to the Department of Defence in 1914, with its patriotic offering of ‘Trial Bay prison [as] a suitable place for internment of prisoners of war’.² But the *Chronicle*, on Wednesdays, raised expectations by reporting the arrival of the national commandant of German concentration camps (G.C.C.), Major R. S. Sands, with a government engineer. They had come to inspect the site.³

By mid-1915, the long-term reality of the war was hitting home, even on the remote Macleay. The ‘War News’ columns in both the *Argus* and *Chronicle* were filled less with announcements of fresh recruits than with notices of the deaths of their older brothers and friends. Hopes the conflict might be speedily resolved were gone. And the search for new and longer-term internment options was evidence the government’s expectations had shifted too. Maintaining a national network of internment camps became more financially and administratively inefficient with each month that went by, so the decision was made to close the five state-based camps and relocate their occupants to the Holdsworthy super-camp, just outside Liverpool in south-western Sydney.⁴ Empty

¹ ‘Trial Bay Prison,’ *Macleay Chronicle*, 5 July 1911.

² ‘Kempsey Chamber of Commerce,’ *Macleay Argus*, 22 January 1915. The offer had been formally declined.

³ ‘Trial Bay Gaol,’ 1915, *Macleay Chronicle*, 14 May 1915. The division of the home-based Citizens’ Military Force responsible for guarding internees was the G.C.C. detail. Most G.C.C. guards were former reservists who, for height/weight or medical reasons, were unsuccessful in enlisting for overseas service with the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.). Others were members of the A.I.F. returned to Australia and no longer fit to serve. Universal military service for men over the age of 18 years had been mandated since 1910.

⁴ See Appendix 2: Maps of Trial Bay. German concentration camps had been established in military facilities at Enoggera in suburban Brisbane, Langwarrin in outer Melbourne, Bruny Island Quarantine Station outside Hobart, Torrens Island in the Port River near Adelaide and Rottneest Island off the coast of Fremantle in Western Australia. Up until World War II when the ‘d’ was dropped, the army training and internment camps at Liverpool were known as ‘Holdsworthy’. The contemporary spelling is retained.

goals at Berrima and Bourke had already been acquired to ease the overflow accommodation needs but an additional site to house incoming enemy aliens from the colonial Asia-Pacific was also required.⁵

In total, 6,890 mostly reserve-age men and community leaders—and a small number of their wives and children—were interned in Australian camps between 1914 and 1920.⁶ Seventy-five per cent of the total were ‘German’ but this number included 700 ‘naturalised British subjects’ and even 70 ‘native born British subjects’.⁷ Unequivocally ‘German’ were those nationals present in Australia when war was declared, such as mariners detained from merchant ships,⁸ and expats living in Asia-Pacific, in:

- German colonies: New Guinea, Nauru, Fiji and the Carolina and Marshall Islands
- British colonies: Malayan Straits (Singapore and Penang), Hong Kong and Ceylon, transferred at the request of the British government.⁹

Citizens of other Central Powers, e.g. Austria-Hungary, including Serbia and Croatia, comprised 20 per cent of the total internee population. Some citizens of Bulgaria and Turkey were also interned, but numbered fewer than 5 per cent.

In this thesis, unless otherwise noted, ‘German’ is used as an expedient shorthand—as it was at the time—to refer to general Germanic origin, disregarding individuals’ actual nations of birth, subsequent colonial experience, language or political allegiance.¹⁰

*

⁵ Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 229, 277. Four hundred senior naval officers were interned at Berrima, as were the wife and children of at least one; 199 family men, women and children were at Bourke.

⁶ Internment records reside in a number of files, primarily: Statements showing the number of enemy aliens interned: POWs and Internees, NAA: MP1565/3. It has been useful to cross-refer these against deportation records contained at: Register of World War I internees (Deportation Log), NAA: C440/1. I rely on Ernest Scott’s original analysis of the Australian War Memorial papers for ‘The Enemy Within the Gates,’ 115–116; and supplementary data such as ‘Attorney-general’s department memorandum for F. W. Henley Esq. re: War History (AWM, Bean papers). These data are cited in Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 77–81 (under their former ‘AA’ classifications); and Monteath, *Captured Lives*, 8. With the exception of 67 women and 84 children, all internees were men.

⁷ Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 77.

⁸ Scott, ‘The Enemy Within the Gates,’ 115. Eventually, there were 1,100 officers and sailors interned from German ships, indicating the dominance of German shipping in the South Pacific, e.g. Norddeutscher Lloyd (N.D.L.) shipping company.

⁹ Ibid. Within the first 12 months of war, 850 internees were shipped to Australia from the British colonies in Asia: 280 from Hong Kong; 270 from Singapore; and 300 from Ceylon. An additional 130 came from the German Pacific. Many of these men formed the core of the Trial Bay cohort.

¹⁰ Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 223. Prime Minister Hughes proudly proclaimed that Australia interned more enemy aliens per capita than the UK or the USA. Serbian nationals, technically Austro-Hungarian and therefore enemies of the Allied forces, were released from internment to fight with the Serbian Army against their imperial oppressors.

'Masculinity on Trial' contributes to two fields of scholarly inquiry: the first, and principal contribution, is a *cultural history* of the Trial Bay internees of World War I. While the conditions and politics of internment have been examined elsewhere, their interrogation through a prism of gender and sexuality has not. These men—at this place and time—provide an intriguing cohort for such a study. I seek to understand the currents and contradictions affecting masculine discourse in Australia at a critical time of change. The project is particularly interested in tracing counter-hegemonic expressions—such as effeminacy and homosexuality—which I will label 'queer' and which form part of an emerging Australian sexual narrative 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 format of my thesis straddles these connected fields. I argue the merits of a hybrid form where each of four 'pillars' (chapters) of empirical research is supported by a 'buttress' of illustrative fiction (a short story). By presenting my thesis in this hybrid form, I contribute to the discourse on the role of fiction in the making of creative histories and assist the dismantling of the unhelpful polarity between two valid historiographical forms.

About the men of Trial Bay

Once upon a time, there was this tiny place on Earth, far far away, almost at the end of the world. And many weird men lived there. They had a big strong fortress, wherein they lived in many, many small cells, always two men together.¹¹

At its peak, 580 'officers and internees of the better class'¹² were interned at Trial Bay, which operated for almost three years between 18 August 1915 and the camp's summary evacuation and closure on 19 May 1918.¹³ Known as the 'upper 500' by their compatriots, the Trial Bay cohort was comprised of a mostly professional caste, supposedly able to pay for a better internment experience.¹⁴ Big cohorts were transferred to Australia from detention camps in the British colonies of Ceylon, Hong Kong and the Malay Straits communities of Singapore and Penang, while an additional smaller number came from defeated German territories in New Guinea, Tsingtao (China) and the Pacific. One third of the total cohort had been arrested in Australia, but this number included

¹¹ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 14 October 1916.

¹² Papers relating to staffing of prisoner and internment camps, NAA: A11803, 1917.

¹³ Report on visit by Swiss consul, Mr Marc Rutty, to the German detention barracks at Trial Bay, 17 June 1917. See also, 'Local and General,' *Macleay Chronicle*, 18 August 1915; 'Unexpected Move,' *Macleay Chronicle*, 22 May 1918.

¹⁴ Letter from commandant of 2nd Military District, in: Monteath, *Captured Lives*, 59–60. See also, Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 248.

officers and passengers detained from ships in Australian ports in addition to individuals targeted in Australia's own German community.¹⁵ Wealth, education and/or social status, the same categories that determined so much of their socio-cultural experience before the war, were the same categories that determined their internment experience during the war, ensuring their separation from their generally working class and less fortunate compatriots at Holdsworthy. The following table indicates the points of original internment and approximate numbers:¹⁶

Interned internationally; transferred to Australia (Holdsworthy, then Trial Bay)

New Guinea/Pacific		52
Fiji	4	
Nauru	11	
New Guinea	37	
Singapore/Penang	133	133
Hong Kong		115
Borneo	5	
Hong Kong	110	
Ceylon	109	109
Total imported		409

Interned in Australia; transferred to Holdsworthy, then Trial Bay

Detained from the community		134
Qld	15	
NSW	77	
Vic	10	
SA	11	
WA	15	
Tas	6	
Detained from ships		64
Qld	14	
NSW	18	
Vic	13	
SA	1	
WA	15	
Tas	3	
Total Australian		198

Total **607**

Table 1: Number and origin of internees at Trial Bay Internment Camp, 1915–1918.

¹⁵ Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 250. See also, McIntyre, 'Making the Mid North Coast: A Migration Report,' 53.

¹⁶ See also, Appendix 2: Maps of Trial Bay. The first of two maps shows the Asia-Pacific region and internee mobilisation towards Trial Bay.

At peak capacity, there were 580 internees; on 19 May 1918, the date of departure, there were 567. Including those who died, were repatriated or transferred to another camp, an additional 27 internees have been associated with Trial Bay, bringing the total number to 607.¹⁷

The Trial Bay cohort presents an intriguing study of masculinity for three main reasons: the multiple origins and distances travelled through their colonial and internment mobilisation, their educated social status, and—notwithstanding the more fluid approach to its description now achieved—their gender.

Distance and difference

The policy of wartime detention embraced enthusiastically by Australia—both its government and general populace—targeted internment of men from many backgrounds and locations across urban and rural Australia and the Asia-Pacific region. By the time internees arrived at Trial Bay, all had travelled great distances and had made, in most cases, multiple stopovers on their migration, colonial and internment journeys.¹⁸ In so doing, they accumulated and contributed to local knowledge and culture, including different ways of performing masculinity. Yet, despite the differences in the group, there were powerful unifying features too. The German national psyche was frequently understood in terms of race and nation, anchored by centuries-long idealisations of *Volk* [the people] and *Heimat* [sense of home/homeliness].¹⁹ From this, a nationalistic *völkisch* identity had developed, often finding expression in the connection to a benevolent Fatherland or a desire to maintain a pure Germanic bloodline.²⁰ Pride in ‘Germanness’ [*Deutschtum*] was never far beneath the surface and easily invoked as nationalist sentiment, including by the Kaiser in the pre-war years.²¹

¹⁷ Register of World War I internees (Deportation Log). NAA (NSW): C440; Album of identification photographs of enemy aliens, NAA: D3597; Defence and War Service Records. NAA: B2455; Letter from Adjutant General to Commandant Langwarrin, NAA: MP16/1; Papers supporting transfer of German prisoners of war in Ceylon. NAA: A1 1916/15026. The table combines data from records held at the National Archives of Australia to approximate a more complete register of internees who were interned either permanently or temporarily at Trial Bay.

¹⁸ See Appendix 2: Maps of Trial Bay.

¹⁹ Conceptions of *Heimat* sat at the core of German national identity and thus are important for their role in shaping contemporary masculinities. *Heimat* relates to the imagining of home/homeland yet is a complex entanglement of cultural, social and literary meanings with gendered and temporal connotations. It is a distinctly German concept and will be explored in Chapter 2.

²⁰ Katharina Walgenbach (2005), cited in Barkhof, ‘German Prisoners-of-war in Japan,’ 256. Walgenbach discusses the German *jus sanguinis* test of citizenship. *Jus sanguinis*, Latin for ‘right of blood, recognises citizenship based on parental lineage rather than location of birth.

²¹ *Deutschtum* was a popular unifying feature, particularly in the German diaspora, manifesting in nostalgic cultural displays.

According to historian Peter Monteath, the social underpinnings of internment camps were reflections of the broader community.²² The prevalence of class necessitated civilian camps like Trial Bay, and its military (naval) equivalent at Berrima, to separate men of rank from the working class. The rationale for establishing the satellite camps gives:

- social reasons: ‘to separate aliens of superior education and training... from those possessing inferior qualifications’
- economic reasons: ‘a considerable number of persons of the wealthier class... would be only too willing to dispense with their pay and allowances provided they could be interned separately’
- security reasons: ‘to separate aliens... capable of causing trouble [if interned with] strong leaders’
- reasons of social cohesion: ‘These men, such as interned Singapore and Sydney merchants, have plenty of money, have never done a hard day’s manual work in their lives, and are a source of discontent amongst the workers owing to not being able to perform their fair share of same.’²³

The following internees’ experiences are drawn upon through this project. Their variety reinforces the many different routes travelled to Trial Bay and serve as a reminder of the difficulty of ascribing a single unifying experience to the cohort despite the frequent assumptions of commonality.²⁴ For example:

Wilhelm Woelber and Georg Boysen were German expats living in the British colonies of Singapore and Ceylon, respectively. When war was declared, enemy civilians were interned locally. In 1915, following petitions by the British colonial governors-general of Hong Kong, Ceylon and the Malayan Straits, Australia took on a role as a regional warder for the British Empire and agreed to receive groups from the Asia-Pacific.²⁵ At 44 years of age, Woelber was one of Trial Bay’s senior internees. A director of Behn, Meyer & Co. trading company in Singapore, Woelber was also the president of Singapore’s prestigious Teutonia (German) Club and custodian of its estimated 9,000-book library, around a third of which he was able to bring to Trial Bay. His wife and children were in Germany for the duration of the war. Behn, Meyer & Co. was the largest

²² Monteath, *Captured Lives*, 82.

²³ Colonel R. S. Sands (c.1915) in Monteath, *Captured Lives*, 59–60. Sands, the commandant of the German concentration camps, justified the need for existence of Trial Bay (and Berrima) camps.

²⁴ Register of World War I Internees in NSW (deportation logs), NAA: C440, 1. Analysis of the ‘Interned from’ location and ‘Date of internment’ categories provides a general indication of an internee’s origin. Where the occupation given for a man interned in an Australian state is recorded as a ship’s officer, marine engineer or steward or where an individual was a known tourist or temporary resident, I have assumed him to be a non-resident German national and excluded him from my count of ‘local’ German men. An additional 60 men fit these criteria. See also, Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 247–249.

²⁵ Papers supporting transfer of German prisoners-of-war, NAA: A1.

German trading and shipping house in South-East Asia, with offices and agencies in Singapore, Malaya, Thailand, Indonesia, Burma and the Philippines before war broke out. Boysen, a plantation owner from Ceylon, was one of the wealthiest men in the camp.²⁶ Woelber was among the first internees to arrive at Trial Bay in August 1915.²⁷

Friedrich Meier was one of the war's earliest internees, arrested on 18 August 1914 when the German ship on which he was fourth officer docked in Port Phillip Bay. The crew of the *Lothringen* had been at sea for 47 days since leaving Europe and, without wireless telegraphy on board, were ignorant of the escalation and declaration of war. The ship was impounded and crew eventually interned at Langwarrin outside Melbourne. A year later, on 19 August 1915, the Langwarrin camp was closed and all 300 internees transferred to Holdsworthy. Soon, senior officers were relocated to Berrima while Meier was one of seventy-five to leave Liverpool for Trial Bay, arriving after the overnight voyage on the *Yulgilbar* on Sunday, 5 December 1915.²⁸

Dr Eugen Hirschfeld was appointed to the Queensland Legislative Council on 4 July 1914, one month before the outbreak of war. For 24 years, since his arrival in Australia in 1890, he had been a leader, not only in the German community, but in broader public life, for example, as the German commercial consul for Queensland, a member of the boards of two Brisbane hospitals, of the University of Queensland senate and of Queensland's Legislative Council. On 6 August 1914, he resigned his position as commercial consul. He was compelled to resign from the Legislative Council on 31 October 1914, from the University senate on 14 December 1914, and from the hospital boards on 18 February 1916. He was arrested at home by members of the Queensland Criminal Investigation Branch on 14 February 1916 and interned at Enoggera in suburban Brisbane. He was 50 years old and had been a naturalised British subject for over 25 years. He was transferred to Holdsworthy a week later, on 21 February 1916, and to Trial Bay in March 1916. In and out of detention multiple times, he was eventually deported to Germany in October 1920.²⁹

Otto Wortmann was arrested and interned in Rabaul in German New Guinea on 23 July 1915 after nearly 12 months of occupation by the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force. He was one of 23 single men transported to Sydney on the *Morinda* on 11 August 1915. They were attended by 30 soldiers, 2 officers, a physician and the former deputy governor of New Guinea, and arrived in Sydney on 24 August 1915. While

²⁶ Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 249–250.

²⁷ Diaries of Wilhelm Woelber and Georg Boysen.

²⁸ Diary of Friedrich Meier, 18 August 1914, and forward.

²⁹ Goss, 'Eugen Hirschfeld: A Life,' unpublished PhD thesis, 200–237.

his diary does not note when he was relocated from Holdsworthy, it continues in Trial Bay on 23 March 1916.³⁰ He also was returned to Holdsworthy when Trial Bay was shut down and deported, unusually, to Indonesia in mid-1919.

Ships' officers Fritz Stegherr, Martin Trojan and Karl Lehmann were also interned in 1914 when their merchant vessels were detained in Australian ports. Stegherr, with 34 fellow officers and crew from the *Oberhausen*, was interned in Hobart and later on Bruny Island. When the Tasmanian camp closed in September 1915, Stegherr was transferred to Holdsworthy and then to Trial Bay. Meanwhile, Trojan and Lehmann, from the *Thüringen* and *Greifswald*, respectively, were interned on Rottneest Island until 24 November 1915 when the Western Australian camp was closed. Nine hundred Germans and Austrians, many of the latter being Slavic miners from the goldfields around Kalgoorlie, travelled to Sydney on the *Demosthenes* then by train to Holdsworthy. Trojan and Lehmann were shipped to Trial Bay as part of Meier's group of 75 men.³¹

Following the way that *Deutschtum* [the narrative of a unified and elevated 'Germanness' encouraged by Kaiser Wilhelm II]³² was able to make its way to the distant corners of the German world, 'Masculinity on Trial' seeks traces of the mobility of other social concepts—such as the new understandings of homosexuality 'discovered' in Germany at the end of the nineteenth century. The connection between the movement of people across the globe and the movement of knowledge is particularly worthy of exploration, in this case, where the people are German, moving to the most remote parts of the world in the biggest and fastest ships ever constructed; and then being relocated multiple times in increasingly intense homosocial environments.

Educated elite

The second reason the Trial Bay cohort presents an intriguing case study is for its general social rank and privileged status. Most were middle- and upper class white men. They were managers or professionals used to directing underlings—clerks, labourers or junior officers, and certainly domestic servants—in the spaces of work and home. As many continued to receive salaries or stipends from their employers or were otherwise independently wealthy, they had the funds to enjoy a better quality of internment experience. Community leaders, such as the commercial consuls of each Australian state,

³⁰ Diary of Otto Wortmann. See also, Letter from Otto Wortmann to his mother, 19 September 1916.

³¹ Ludewig, *War Time on Wadjemup*, 277, 284; Direen, 'War Precautions or Persecution', unpublished MA thesis, 32; Diary of Fritz Stegherr, n.d.

³² See also, Glossary at Appendix 1.

were also interned, along with diplomatic representatives appointed by the departing imperial consul general.³³ Also included in the cohort, for the sake of building the camp and its local economy, were selected tradesmen and artisans, labourers and stewards.



Image 1.2: Trial Bay consular set: De Haas (4740: imperial trade commissioner), Hirschfeld (5277: Qld), Dehle (4776: Tas, pre-1914), Noetling (4733: Tas, post-1914), Ratazzi (4731: WA), Adena (4735: Vic). [Source: National Archives of Australia]

Gender

Third, and the only characteristic to truly unite the Trial Bay cohort, was their gender: they were all men.³⁴ While their status as husbands and fathers may have differed, they shared the fact they were all equally removed from the gender-moderating influence of women and, to a lesser extent, children. This, of course, was the case in other camps, but was amplified at Trial Bay by the remote location and the presence of a similarly

³³ Correspondence regarding position of consular officials, NAA A11803. After it opened a formal imperial mission in Australia in 1879, newly federated Germany continued to support the network of honorary consuls that had operated across the colonies since the 1840s. When war was declared in 1914, the presiding consuls-general of Germany, Richard Kiliani, and Austria-Hungary, Herr. F. Freyseleben, left Australia for San Francisco on 29 August 1914, leaving local interests in the care of the (then neutral) United States diplomatic mission. Trade Commissioner Walter De Haas remained and became the most senior German imperial official to be interned. Trial Bay internees Eugen Hirschfeld, Fritz Noetling, Alfred Dehle, Wilhelm Adena and Carl Peter Ratazzi were all domestic consuls and/or trade officials. See Image 1.2.

³⁴ This assumption applies a narrow but contemporary view of gender to the cohort. While European notions of sexuality were in the process of changing, conceptions of gender, as we now understand them, were tied to a binary understanding of biological sex until at least the 1950s. 'Non-normative' sexual and gender behaviours were linked to understandings of degeneracy.

gender-defined population of Australian guards.³⁵ The absence of women and the reimagining of gender during the long internment years was, perhaps, the most affecting force on the masculinities at play in which this study is most interested.

Understanding these three features of identity—that they were educated and middle- and upper class; that they were from a multitude of German regional and cultural backgrounds and had travelled great distances en route to Trial Bay; and that they were all men—is central to ‘Masculinity on Trial’. While tagged with some commonality, certainly in the minds of the Australian administrators, they were a heterogeneous group. And Germany, a recently unified nation-state under Prussian hegemony, was itself coming to terms with its internal cultural and linguistic diversity. How internees negotiated the disruptions, deprivations and enforced homosociality of their circumstances provides clues to masculine ideals and hegemonies. But the project is also interested in whether these disruptions resulted in opportunities for men with same-sex romantic or erotic desires and whether such imaginings or access to previously unavailable spaces encouraged the shaping of new, ‘proto-queer’ identities.

The first cohort of internees travelled to Trial Bay on 17 August 1915 and comprised approximately 200 Germans/German-Australians and 15 Austro-Hungarians, all relocated from the Holdsworthy camp.³⁶ Setting the basic pattern for all who followed, the internees marched to the Liverpool train station to catch a train to the Sussex Street wharf in Darling Harbour, from where the North Coast Steamship Co. vessel *Yulgilbar* made its overnight voyage to the Macleay River wharf at Jerseyville.³⁷ The first glimpse of their new home for most internees was from the ocean by the light of the early morning sun. The light on the granite blocks was an impressive, if intimidating, sight. Max Herz’s arrival on the morning of Thursday, 28 January 1916 was described in a letter to his wife:

Seen from sea, our present abode looks like one of those Saracen castles near Amalfi—like the home of sea brigands. Inside it’s... just a heap of thick masonry: high walls, narrow lanes, a high pile of stone, with small slits as windows in the middle and a few terraced plots of grass. ... If all remains thus, we will get over it all.³⁸

³⁵ The Australian government’s policy was to not intern women or children and applications from wives seeking co-internment with their husbands were consistently denied. However, when some entire families were deported from Pacific islands, they needed to be accommodated. Thus, the camp at Bourke was established as a ‘family camp’. At least one internee’s wife and children were co-interned in Berrima, but not in the general compound. Families were relocated to a purpose-built camp at Molonglo in mid-1918.

³⁶ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 15 August 1915.

³⁷ ‘Shipping News,’ *Macleay Chronicle*, 27 January 1915, 4.

³⁸ Letter from Max Herz to his wife Ethel, c.28 January 1915.

‘Getting over it’ would prove difficult for all internees. Herz was not to know in January 1916 that the war would continue for nearly three years more or that, through his own prolonged internment, he would miss the first five years of his daughter’s life. Nor could he have imagined the vindictive professional treatment he was to receive from his former colleagues at the British Medical Association or the narrow avoidance of deportation. But, conversely, nor could he have imagined the satisfaction he was to receive from playing his cello in the camp orchestra or the creative pleasure and new skills he would acquire when he took on the directorship of the popular Trial Bay German Theatre. That, in later years, he could report that, ‘I spent the happiest years of my life in that gaol’ is suggestive of the complicated circumstances of internment experienced by all internees and the necessary reimagining of expectations of what it was to be a man.³⁹

About the author

For now we had to be content to look at the [site] because there were no keys to unlock the doors. With real Australian foresight, or you could also call it English, nobody knew where to find the keys. After some time, the caretaker...came with a bunch of keys, and luckily some of them fitted.⁴⁰

Finding a way ‘in’ has not always been easy.

I grew up in the 1970s in a white-collar working household on the NSW mid-north coast. One of six children—five sons born within six years, and one daughter born some years later—my childhood identity, like that of my brothers, was defined by country Catholicism, my father’s position as a local bank manager, my status as a white Anglo-Celtic coloniser—and being male. My adult self is able to recognise the privilege of a childhood where, in most things, my situation did not look too different from most other people I knew. But in issues of gender expression and, later, in sexual identity, I knew I was not the same.

As a child, I recall being constantly aware of a need to moderate my masculinity to some never-quite-articulated set of external expectations. I did not rationalise this at the time beyond the feeling I was frequently failing to achieve the expectations of my parents, older brothers and other boys at school. Being called a ‘sissy’ was a tool to change behaviour—my own or that of my younger brothers when I too sought to police their perceived masculine failings. We adopted a competitive approach to most things, registering when one performed well academically, socially or physically a reason to also

³⁹ Roy Hill, oral history (c.1988), in Carey, *Tales of Trial Bay*, 178.

⁴⁰ Diary of Fritz Stegherr, c.1914, 5.

do well, if not better. That we were separated on the sibling ladder, above and below, by single years meant that the zones in which we moved became guarded spaces for the precious expression of identity. The birth of my sister when I was 12 added new and much-needed complexity to those early lessons in masculine behaviour.

It is these recollections of formative masculine identity that provide fuel for this project. While I can now recognise the impact of assumed heterosexuality, birth order and the initial stirrings of a proto-queer identity as relatively benign underpinnings of my own masculine behaviour, I am intrigued by the recollection that, from the earliest age, I knew my masculinity was something to be negotiated carefully, a condition I have since been able to view in the context of other factors. Now, I have a language with which to describe the complexities of gender and sexuality and can appreciate that race, place, privilege, gender and sexuality are cultural constructions, moderated over time, in which experiences of the world occur. My adult awareness of identity markers—such as being a cisgendered, homosexual man—has encouraged the reflections on the past that led to this project. Of course, these are not the only markers of identity and seem less significant each passing year. Indeed, with new language and appreciations of gender and sexuality appearing even since this research began, such markers begin to seem old-fashioned. But for now, at a time when the rules of gender and masculine privilege are being contested and defended, they count. Much has changed and will continue to change. And that is a positive thing.

In applying this frame to Trial Bay during World War I, I seek a ‘queering’ of enduring narratives of masculinity to allow for additional complexity in how Australia sees its social and sexual past.

About homosexuality and sexual identity

Hirschfeld is, I do admit, in some things very right!
 But the world he sees is obviously bleak as the dark of night
 In everything he senses scandal
 In his eyes, who is normal?...⁴¹

Sung in Berlin cabaret bars in 1907, Otto Reutter's song 'Hirschfeld is coming!' was a parody of Dr Magnus Hirschfeld and his quest to discover the sexual practices of his fellow Germans. Hirschfeld, a pioneering sexologist and early homosexual rights advocate, gained notoriety when he distributed a psycho-biological questionnaire from which he is said to have collected over 40,000 responses to advance his doctrine of sexual intermediacy.⁴² By separating physical from psychological characteristics of sex, and decoupling the performance of masculine traits from men and feminine traits from women, Hirschfeld described gender and sexuality in a way that telegraphs current thought, over one hundred years later.

While his doctrine and scientific methods were not always admired by scientific peers, his work was known across the German-speaking world both because its controversial nature ensured it was well-reported in major newspapers and because the contemporary appetite for popular science ensured it appeared in other texts.⁴³ The Scientific-Humanitarian Committee he co-established in Berlin in May 1897⁴⁴ fought publicly for social recognition of homosexual, bisexual and what we now know to be

⁴¹ Reutter, 'Hirschfeld is coming!' The song was written and performed by Reutter in Berlin cabarets. It ridicules Hirschfeld for seeing queer or homosexual behaviour in everyday male–male interactions.

⁴² Charlotte Wolff (1986), cited in Higgins, *The Nineteenth Century*, 137. This also began the negative attention Hirschfeld received from the right-wing press for the rest of his career. In 1910, he published *Transvestites* (translated to English in 1991) followed by *The Homosexuality of Men and Women* (translated 2000).

⁴³ Azzouni et al., 'The Authority, Methods and Functions of Popular Science,' 13ff. Azzouni investigated the role of German writer/philosopher Wilhelm Bölsche in popularising the field of sexology and, specifically, the work of Hirschfeld and his collaborator Iwan Bloch. Bölsche's three-volume work, *Das Liebesleben in der Natur: Eine Entwicklungsgeschichte der Liebe* (1898–1903), was the first German work of sex education to disseminate the content of the founders of sexology.

⁴⁴ This was four days before Oscar Wilde was released from Reading Gaol.

transgender men and women, and against their legal persecution.⁴⁵ It was the first such organisation in modern Europe to do this and was, despite the subsequent critique of Hirschfeld's medical categorisation of sexual difference and his support for the field of eugenics, regarded as progressive and liberal.⁴⁶ Hirschfeld's ideas were present at a moment of significant disruption in global social and cultural life and were part of the resulting discourse around sexual identity. My research has been unable to place Hirschfeld's work directly at Trial Bay—for example, its presentation or discussion do not appear on any of the lecture programs advertised in the camp newspaper as other popular scientific works were—but there is an indirect connection.

Before the war, internee Max Herz was an international correspondent for the newspaper editor Max Harden, in whose newspaper *Die Zukunft* ['The Future'] Hirschfeld also regularly published. Harden, famously at the time, was the chief litigant in the widely reported Eulenburg and Moltke homosexuality scandal that had Hirschfeld called as a star witness. Thus, Hirschfeld and Herz both knew Harden. It is unlikely Herz would *not* have been familiar with Hirschfeld's controversial work, particularly where, as the camp's medical officer, he was confronted with and reported on the presence of homosexual activity in the camp and, as theatre director and co-creator of the on-stage feminine presence, he was a witness to the on- and offstage effeminacy and homosexual activity of some of the theatre folk.⁴⁷

A decade before the Eulenburg affair, other events and social circumstances fuelled knowledge of and attitudes to homosexuality. The 1895 trial in England of Oscar Wilde, for example, was widely reported and generated much public fascination, shaping

⁴⁵ Here I am using the language of the twenty-first century, however, the categories of sexual difference were becoming clear. Hirschfeld was both a scientist-sexologist and activist-provocateur who campaigned to decriminalise homosexuality. He also supported emancipation for many under-represented groups—primarily women but also 'transvestites' and people of sexual difference. The story of German homosexual emancipation, giving rise to Germany's 'invention of modern homosexuality', has been extensively written, such as by Beachy, *Gay Berlin*, 3–41. See also, Steakley, *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany*. In an Australian context, see Smaal, *Sex, Soldiers and the South Pacific*, 3ff; and Moore, *Sunshine and Rainbows*, 8ff. For the symbiosis between strands of 'first wave' German feminists and the work of sexologists, including the campaign against Paragraph 175, see Leng, 'Permutations of the Third Sex,' 228.

⁴⁶ The most recent Hirschfeld biography, written from a twenty-first century queer perspective, is Ralf Dose's 2014 *Magnus Hirschfeld*. It provides an important and accessible update to Charlotte Wollf's 1986 biography.

⁴⁷ Herz, 'Report about the Physical and Psychological Conditions of the Internees at Trial Bay,' 1–2. References to the homosexuality present at the theatre are explored in Chapter 4.

German opinion on homosexuality, particularly among the middle classes.⁴⁸ Australian newspapers also brimmed with coverage of the Wilde trial but continued to valorise an archetype of rugged, heterosexual ‘mateship’—catering to prevailing frontier narratives in the newly federated nation—to the further exclusion of effeminacy and homosexuality.⁴⁹ As Robert Aldrich notes in his history of colonial sexuality, settler societies like Australia ‘remained too preoccupied with taming the continent to provide a hospitable environment for a dandified coterie of aesthetes’.⁵⁰

German men in the Asia-Pacific diaspora were aware of the cultural collision between their own sexual experiences and expectations and the cultural practices they observed around them. While, for some, the expat experience may have generated minimal interaction with local people, for most, such as miners, plantation operators and Christian missionaries, subordination of indigenous workers or souls was the point of the colonial exercise. At the very least, the male/female and colonising/colonised demographic imbalances were explicit. The work of colonialism in mines, plantations, shipping offices and trading stations was, for the most part, transacted by notionally single, white men; the gendered operation was a part of the experience to be observed, accepted and dealt with in narratives that were well understood. Aldrich further notes that the colonies provided many possibilities for homoeroticism, homosociality and homosexuality—indeed, these were the lures that attracted many in the first place.⁵¹ But the colonising act provided opportunities for men from the colonised culture too. Certainly, the imbalance of genders, including where wives of colonial men elected to remain in Europe, created a context for situational male–male sex. This was not identity affecting and speaks, arguably, of a less complicated approach to sex and sexuality than that which was left behind in Europe. The Austrian philosopher and sexologist Otto Weininger wrote in 1903 that there was no friendship between men that did not have an element of sexuality in it, however implicit it may be in the friendship and however resistant men were to its expression.⁵² Homosexuality was often explicit, for instance, in

⁴⁸ Aldrich, *Colonial and Homosexuality*, 239. See also, Michael Hurley (1990), cited in Sinfield, *The Wilde Century*, 154. Through Wilde, ‘the public was given a new way of recognising male homosexuality’. See also, Beachy, *Gay Berlin*, 91. Beachy says that the net effect of the Wilde fascination was a poisonous one, in that it negatively affected deeper societal tolerances for effeminacy and homosexuality.

⁴⁹ Wotherspoon, *Gay Sydney*, 7. See also, French, *Camping by a Billabong*, 43–46.

⁵⁰ Aldrich, *Colonial and Homosexuality*, 238–239.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 2–3, 247. See also, Hiery, ‘Germans, Pacific Islanders and Sexuality,’ 307.

⁵² Otto Weininger (1903), cited in Higgins, *The Nineteenth Century*, 116. See also, Clark, ‘Boundaries of the Nation,’ 156. It was thought that ‘normal’ heterosexuals could not turn into homosexuals in all-male environments without an innate ‘tainted instinct’.

situational contexts at all-male local worker settlements of European-owned plantations.⁵³ Both Melanesian and Polynesian indigenous cultures had strong male–male sexual practices embedded, for example, in rites of passage to manhood.⁵⁴ But even where observation of actual homosexual behaviour by colonisers did not occur, the exoticisation of the South Pacific as sexually and homosexually liberal was achieved through the homoerotic writings of travellers and ‘sex-tourists’ like C. W. Stoddard and Herman Melville.⁵⁵ According to Jeffrey Geiger, colonial representations of Melanesia and Polynesia have always positioned gender and sexuality as agents that drive imperial narratives.⁵⁶

This is the root of the colonial problem: that many—if not most—indigenous Pacific cultures had complex practices in place, some involving male–male sexual or social acts, that were disrupted by the imposition of legal, medical or moral imperatives produced by colonial zeal.⁵⁷ This was so in each of the British and German colonies from which internees came to Trial Bay—Singapore, Hong Kong, Tsingtao, Ceylon, Malaysia, New Guinea, Fiji and Nauru. This project assumes that German men in the colonies, regardless of their sexual or social orientations, interacted with local cultures and were the products and probable beneficiaries of such exchange.

Research on queer masculinities in Australia has largely focussed on inter- and post-World War II ‘camp’ [that is, effeminate] and activist cultures and the progress toward a modern gay identity. But as Robert French writes, there is no doubt that homosexual subcultures were operating in Australia in the 1920s with their roots stretching back long before.⁵⁸ London’s Cleveland Street brothel scandal in 1889, followed soon after by the arrest and trial of Wilde in 1895, were key moments for increasing Australia’s awareness of homosexuality in the popular imagination but also for associating it with effeminacy and the upper class and for reinforcing its illegal status.⁵⁹ The Krupp suicide in 1902 and the above-mentioned Eulenburg-Harden libel trials in Germany in 1906–1908 were widely reported in English and German press in Australia and reinforced conceptions of illegality and immorality.⁶⁰ Hundreds of syndicated pieces appeared in Australian newspapers in the final weeks of November 1902. After first

⁵³ Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality*, 247.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 247, 262,

⁵⁵ Geiger, *Facing the Pacific*, 199. Stoddard’s semi-fictional work *South Sea Idyls* (1873) was responsible for romanticising the South Pacific.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁵⁷ Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality*, 246ff. See also, Geiger, *Facing the Pacific*, 192ff.

⁵⁸ French, *Camping by a Billabong*, 43. See also, Wotherspoon, ‘From Sodom to Sydney,’ 198ff.

⁵⁹ French, *Camping by a Billabong*, 44. See also, Bellanta, *Larrikins*, 158; Wotherspoon, *Gay Sydney*, 6.

⁶⁰ Beachy, *Gay Berlin*, 72–73. See also, Duberman, *Jews, Queers, Germans*, 7–11, 15.

reporting Krupp's death on 23 November, even small regional newspapers ran syndicated updates on the reported cause of death (apoplexy), the initial suspicion of suicide, the surfacing of blackmailers and, ultimately, his funeral, attended by the Kaiser himself. For example:

In connection with the accusations brought by German and Italian socialist newspapers against the late Herr Krupp of Essen of immoral conduct at Capri, the well-known pleasure resort, near Naples, which, it is believed, hastened his death, an official inquiry had been held at Capri.⁶¹

These events were all part of the social machinery that would eventually produce identities and communities based on sexual or gender orientation.⁶² After Foucault, those and other oppressed identities would become politicised in an age of so-called identity politics. But, where the markers of societal identities are constantly shifting, like a kaleidoscope, similar shifts in discourse need not be thought remarkable. More important is Garry Wotherspoon's invocation that, where identity is based on a sense of one's historical existence, one must connect the present with the past, whatever its problematic or opaquely expressed forms.⁶³ Thus, a critical part of the history-making process for modern queer Australians is the reclaiming of a long history of same-sex attraction and sexual dissidence, however hidden or oppressed.⁶⁴

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All this leads to the underpinning rationale of this research. Why bother?

Queer historians and social researchers, such as Garry Wotherspoon and Andrew Gorman-Murray, advocate for new histories to be written that decouple queer lives from their narrow associations with the illegal, immoral or medically inadequate. Wotherspoon argues that this can be achieved through the rereading of sources previously used to support a queer history of Australia that was predicated on what was deemed illegal or immoral.⁶⁵ That goal can also be achieved by considering other clues from new sources

⁶¹ 'A Victim to Blackmailers,' *Bendigo Advertiser*, 1 December 1902.

⁶² Stokes, *The Politics of Identity in Australia*, 6.

⁶³ Gorman-Murray, 'Gay and Lesbian Public History in Australia,' 11. Here, I acknowledge Andrew Gorman-Murray's questioning of what constitutes a 'usable past' in researching queer history.

⁶⁴ Garry Wotherspoon, Graham Willett, Clive Moore, Robert Reynolds, Yorick Smaal, Andrew Gorman-Murray, Robert French and Scott McKinnon are among those who have written on the emergence of queer male-male cultures, sensibilities and identities in twentieth century Australia. The oral history collections of Sydney's Pride History Group and the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives support these historical accounts.

⁶⁵ Wotherspoon, 'From Private Vice to Public History: Homosexuality in Australia,' 157. See also, Gorman-Murray, 'Gay and Lesbian Public History in Australia,' 32.

and spaces. Masculine narratives of internment among an unexpected and under-examined cohort hiding in the shadow of the Anglo-Celtic bushman/digger masculine archetype provide an opportunity to broaden the narrative.

1.2 Literature review

The people from Singapore had brought along their library. You see that we are lacking nothing in gaol.

—Otto Wortmann, 19 December 1916

On masculinities

The man of the future will acquire so-called feminine attributes just as we shall share in some of the qualities attributed to men. Why should a husband feel ashamed to sew on his own buttons or even his wife's? It is the woman's dependence on the man for support which makes so many marriages unhappy. How can this dependence be compatible with true romantic love...?⁶⁶

I am the man from Edith Ellis' future. I sew buttons on my own and my partner's clothes and feel no shame at all. While reimagining sex, gender and marriage in Australia feels quite new, Ellis here reminds us it is not. A century before the current contests for same-sex marriage, trans visibility and #MeToo-type disruptions of male privilege and power, challenges to gender, sexual and marital norms were appearing in modern Australia. But while the activism of Australian women had achieved (partial) suffrage, comparable cultural shifts for men, such as toward acceptance of effeminate or homosexual modes of masculinity, were stubbornly absent.⁶⁷

Two theoretical conditions of masculinity underpinning this project are multiplicity and hegemony. Working in the post-structuralist traditions of Foucault and Butler, sociologist Raewyn Connell theorised that many forms of masculine behaviour will operate in any given society at any given time; and that hierarchies will inevitably form to culturally exalt some forms over others.⁶⁸ Hegemonic, subordinate, and complicit masculinities vary from man to man, and group to group—and from time to time, and

⁶⁶ 'How to retain romantic love,' *The Advertiser*, 27 June 1914, 6. This was an article written by Mrs Edith Ellis, wife of sexologist Havelock Ellis.

⁶⁷ French, *Camping by a Billabong*, 43; Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality*, 239. This is certainly not to say there was not active pursuit of same-sex erotic and romantic desire on a personal and proto-communal level. For recent scholarship on contemporaneous activism by women, such as towards suffrage and representation, see: Claire Wright, *You Daughters of Freedom*. See also, Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism*.

⁶⁸ Connell, *Masculinities*, 77. See also, Barnett, *Reel Men*, 5. Chelsea Barnett applies Connell's framework to masculinities of Australian films in the mid-twentieth century.

circumstance to circumstance.⁶⁹ As a consequence of the participation of individuals and groups within them, it is also possible to see organisations and institutions—like internment camps—developing gendered characteristics. Trial Bay was characterised by its all-male composition as well as the diverse locations and experiences of gender from which its inhabitants came. History also plays a role in perpetuating the hegemony, such as when counter-hegemonic tropes—like effeminacy or homosexuality—are suppressed in the archive or otherwise delegitimised. Connell says masculinities may be observed as sets of behaviours, organised social practices and interactions—between and among men and, critically, women as well. Connell’s thinking shifts over time from an earlier understanding of a single form to her later understanding of multiplicity: there is not one, but many masculinities—operating simultaneously in complex patterns and variations.

In *The Trials of Masculinity*, historian Angus McLaren examines court-based actions against men who subverted conventional ‘norms’ of masculinity in the period 1870–1930. McLaren’s aim is to focus the turn of the century mapping of boundaries of masculinity to show that the norms of male heterosexuality were also not innate, but socially and culturally constructed. Building on Foucault before him, McLaren’s central argument is that professionals such as doctors, lawyers, journalists and sex reformers, exploited the stereotype of a virile, heterosexual and aggressive masculinity, producing and reinforcing the notion that there was very much a ‘right type’ and a ‘wrong type’ of manliness against which prevailing attitudes were logged. In British law, but flowing across the British Empire into its colonies, was the expectation that deviations from performed norms of manliness were not tolerated, particularly where the norms breached were sexual. Male prostitutes, pimps, vagrants and exhibitionists were flogged, a form of corporal punishment reintroduced in the late-nineteenth century after having all but disappeared with the rise of incarceration.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Here, Connell expands Antonio Gramsci’s (1971) description of cultural hegemonies, saying that masculinities are also multiple and hegemonic. The hegemonic form achieves its position of dominance through consensus rather than regular force, even if it is underpinned by force. See also, Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory*, 216–217. Reeser also writes about the instability of masculinity over time: how behaviours which conform with hegemonic norms in one moment may not conform with those in the next.

⁷⁰ McLaren, *The Trials of Masculinity: Policing Sexual Boundaries*, 13.



Image 1.3: “‘The Hun’ is now a very powerful figure’, *The Bulletin*, 27 November 1917. [Source: National Library of Australia]



Image 1.4: Recruiting poster: ‘The Strong Post’, 1918.⁷¹ [Source: Australian War Memorial]

⁷¹ A call to domestic expectations of gendered duty, the poster also carries a message of white, middle class, urban aspiration and is, as much, a demonstration to allies of Australia’s readiness and capacity to serve.

That it was only men who were interned at Trial Bay underscores the gendered nature of both the perceived wartime threat and the actual internment experience.⁷² Australian government and media propaganda increasingly depicted the German male as the monstrous, child-eating ‘Hun’ from whom women and children on the homefront, and perhaps the old and the sick, had to be protected. Likewise, it was images of men that dominated the public representation of the war—with a youthful, white, rugged, rural type becoming the icon of Australian masculinity being depicted as protector and hero, while an anti-war ‘other’ was portrayed as an effete, urban, lesser type of man. These tropes are illustrated in the preceding images: 1.3 and 1.4.

As with all impacts of war, disruptions caused by internment were not experienced solely by men. The lives of women were also deeply affected—for example, the wives of interned men, many of whom were not German but Australian-born British subjects. Left at home in an increasingly hostile social environment without husbands or those husbands’ incomes,⁷³ they bore the additional weight of being denied the benefits of the homosocial experience—such as they were—that were at least available to the men. For the cohort of Trial Bay internees I examine in this project, the camaraderie of association and opportunities for new imaginings were profound.⁷⁴ While sentimental claims must be treated with some suspicion, at their core is the reality that many men found within the monotony and deprivation of internment both happiness and opportunity. The diarist Otto Wortmann also notes:

Some people here don’t seem to mind, they like it just fine and would probably remain here forever! Well, it’s a matter of taste.⁷⁵

Strong in the established legal and medical discourses was the association of weak men and inferior masculinity with sexual perversion. Psychiatrists and sexologists declared themselves experts in understanding sexual and gender differences, including to authorise

⁷² Fifty-four women, as well as 83 children, were interned at NSW’s Bourke family camp from August 1915 until May 1918, when they were relocated to the new camp at Molonglo. Luise Hutzig and two small daughters elected to rent a house in the town of Berrima while their husband and father August (captain of the merchant vessel *Prinz Sigismund* in German New Guinea) was interned in the Berrima camp. These women and children were mostly German expatriates residing in German colonies in the South Pacific. No German-Australian women or children were interned.

⁷³ Monteath, *Captured Lives*, 14, 32, 34. See also, Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, ‘Appendix 1: The Internment of Daisy Mildred Schoeffel and Her Family,’ 315–322.

⁷⁴ See, for example, the memory of local man Roy Hill noted at footnote 39. In a late in life oral history interview (c.1988), Hill recalls having met internee Dr Max Herz when the doctor revisited Trial Bay in perhaps the 1940s or 1950s. Hill says the doctor had returned with his adult grandson. In reality, Herz’s only grandson was one year old when Herz died in 1948, so the memory is somehow skewed. Nonetheless, the kernel of the recollection is a nostalgia for the internment period. (It’s possible the nostalgia was the interviewee’s own nostalgia for his own childhood.)

⁷⁵ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 22 April 1916 (Easter Saturday).

the ways in which sexuality could be expressed or opposed and suppressed. The notions of manliness to emerge were less a product of what men aspired to be or become than what they feared and saw as ‘unmanly’. It was easier to identify and punish what was deviant.⁷⁶

But what are the implications for behaviour and hegemony when the variations in circumstances required resetting in an all-male internment environment? How does Connell’s ‘patriarchal dividend’ apply when there are no women to be subordinated?⁷⁷ When war was declared, conventional markers of hegemony in both homefront Australia and the Asia-Pacific colonies were radically disrupted. Where nation and class had been primary factors in privileging wealthy, white, German men in both British and German colonial settings, these markers lost currency throughout the war, threatening destabilisation and even reversal of formerly subordinated or complicit forms. Suddenly, being an ill-educated British-Australian guard had cachet. The rifle and bayonet assisted. Other hegemonic markers—such as wealth, gender and, in dawning White Australia, race—while affected, remained relatively stable.

Certainly, among the men of Trial Bay, there are multiple masculinities to be considered. Loss of cultural hegemony by the upper~ and middle class internees positioned them—notionally—as subordinate to the Australian military authority, transacted at Trial Bay by the mostly working class guards of the Commonwealth Military Force, German concentration camps (G.C.C.).⁷⁸ Naturally, resistance to such cultural subordination resulted in displays of nationalistic pride, such as singing of patriotic songs and performance of German music and theatre. However, it also provoked additional resistance to attempts to subordinate internees’ masculinities, leading to comparable displays of superior masculinity—thus the demand to be (or to perceive themselves as being) more honourable, more stoic and more resilient than the Australians in wartime conditions. There was also a need to portray the Australians as less cultured, less resilient and less honest. While so resisting their captors, the Trial Bay internees were also renegotiating hegemonies among themselves, as well as their compatriots in other camps. This demonstrates the complexity of masculinity, in both the multiplicity and hegemony

⁷⁶ McLaren, *Trials of Masculinity*, 11ff.

⁷⁷ Connell, *Masculinities*, 79.

⁷⁸ Dennis et al., ‘Citizen Military Forces,’ *The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History*, (online). In World War I, the Commonwealth Military Forces (after 1916 known as the Australian Military Forces) comprised full time soldiers (Permanent Forces/Permanent Military Forces) and part time soldiers (Citizens Forces/Citizens Military Forces) in addition to the internationally deployed Australian Imperial Force. According to Dennis et al., the citizen army that stayed to defend Australia was ‘the forgotten army’ of World War I. At war’s end in 1918, it numbered over 105,000.

of Connell's frame, with the inherent contest between competing forms amplified by the circumstance of internment.

Rachel Jewkes and Robert Morrell et al. complicate Connell's theory by exposing a paradox of the patriarchal state: that the hegemonic form, while actively promoted by its chief beneficiaries (white, heterosexual men), is often also advanced by those it oppresses (for the purposes of this study, heterosexual women and homosexual men).⁷⁹ This locates heterosexuality as the essential condition of hegemonic masculinity: it is defined by that which it is not—that is, not female and not homosexual. Clues to how hegemonies form where there are no women might be found where conventional heterosexual environments are disrupted. Yvonne Jewkes' research takes place in all-male prisons and looks at the concept of 'fratriarchy' in the establishment of hegemony. She makes two observations that are important to this thesis: first, where women are absent, men will tend to 'feminise' other men in a bid to weaken these men's authority and establish their own hegemony; and, second, that often extreme homosociality—homoerotic fraternising—may present itself in a club-like atmosphere. Remy extends the observation in saying that paradigms of fratriarchy are most likely to surface in situations where there are close relationships between notionally opposite-sex attracted men who are removed from their female partners and where there are no responsibilities for the raising of children.⁸⁰

Harry Oosterhuis and Hubert Kennedy document the fratriarchal kinship trope known as the Männerbund and its intrinsic links to contemporary homoeroticism among German men. Robert Beachy's more recent treatment extends the analysis to include the extrinsic political links that saw the Männerbund's various fragmentations along fault lines of homosexuality, nationalism and anti-Semitism.⁸¹ Coined by ethnologist Heinrich Schurtz in 1902, the Männerbund links the 'physiological friendship on which everything else rests'⁸² with the male-to-male social love of classical Greece.⁸³ With links to naturism and homoeroticism, it is comparable to other male bonding rituals in modern European

⁷⁹ Jewkes et al., 'Hegemonic Masculinity,' S-112ff. The example given is that where a heterosexual woman seeks a heterosexual male partner, she is likely to seek and reward and educate her children toward her preferred masculine characteristics. See also, Ricciardelli et al., 'Constructions and Negotiations of Sexuality in Canadian Men's Federal Prisons,' 1661.

⁸⁰ John Remy (1990), cited in Dowd, *The Man Question*, 33. See also, Higate, "'Drinking Vodka from the Butt-Crack",' 453; Jewkes, 'Men Behind Bars,' 48.

⁸¹ Beachy, *Gay Berlin*, 140–159.

⁸² Benedict Friedlander, 'Seven Propositions,' 219.

⁸³ Tobin, *Peripheral Desires*, 62. For a broader description of the Männerbund, its popularisation by Hans Bluher, and its subsequent divisions and links to pederasty, anti-Semitism and the so-called Aryan super-caste later co-opted by the Hitler Youth movement, see Beachy, *Gay Berlin*, 140ff. See also, Oosterhuis and Kennedy (eds), *Homosexuality and Male Bonding*, 119.

civilisation.⁸⁴ The abundance of sports, gymnastics and body-building clubs, heroic tableaux and nudism in the internment camps provides the opportunity to examine both the prevalence of fraternal association at Trial Bay but also the deeper impact of the *Männerbund* and its post-war political connections to nationalism, anti-Semitism and Aryanism.

For most Germans at the time of World War I, the Prussian military, personified by the Kaiser, provided the most visible ideal of superior German masculinity. In wartime, particularly for the bourgeois internees in detention at distant Trial Bay, the military archetype, the masculinity of soldierly aspiration, was the widely accepted hegemonic form from which others were to diverge.⁸⁵ In contrast to heterosexual relationships, friendships which embodied male solidarity tended to support a conservative bourgeois agenda by maintaining existing class and gender roles and male-centred claims to patriarchal power. During the war, male friendship in Germany acquired additional nationalist virtues when social narratives recast the soldier as hero combatting sacrifice and death. Comradeship in the trenches became an admirable trait, thus converting ‘friendship’ and ‘loyalty’ from feminine to masculine traits.⁸⁶ This compares directly with the emergence of the Australian digger/Anzac archetype and his strong association with the national virtue of ‘mateship’.⁸⁷

Schurtz further investigated various male-only phenomena, such as men’s houses or boys’ initiation associations, but his contemporary logic is equally applied to all-male internment contexts, such as at Trial Bay. His findings led him to claim that men had a stronger instinct for sociability [*Geselligkeitstrieb*] than women, and that boys required rites of initiation in order to correctly detach from their mothers and the matriarchal realm of the home and family. In this, a social hierarchy of older, more experienced men as cultural custodians and initiators of rites of passage for younger less experienced men is core to the *Männerbund*.

Upper class masculine behaviours in both Germany and Britain were characterised by the desire to serve as an example to the lower, working classes. Men at Trial Bay drove one another to endure the conditions with dignity and resolve as much

⁸⁴ Beachy, *Gay Berlin*, 155. Beachy uses the example of the *Wandervogel* nature-walking groups.

⁸⁵ Verheyen, *The German Question*, 17ff. See also, Duberman, *Jews, Queers, Germans*, 18–19.

⁸⁶ Crouthamel, *An Intimate History of the Front: Masculinity, Sexuality and German Soldiers in the First World War*, 16ff.

⁸⁷ Dyrenfurth, *Mateship: A Very Australian History*, Kindle: 80–83. Conservative forces first began to appropriate the myth of mateship from the industrial left around the time of World War I, when employed as a call to national duty in the conscription debate. All Australian soldiers, whatever their class, were suddenly mates and conservatives got their own grip on the legend. See also, Ward, *The Australian Legend*, 196–197.

for the example it would set to the internees in other camps as for the positive reflection on their own masculinity.⁸⁸ Restraint and self-control, including from male–male sex and masturbation, were seen as characteristics of a healthy body and elevated mind. Lapses by the upper class into laziness, depression, idleness or sexual compromise were understood as weakness. Rather than being perceived as the expression of genuine emotional or sexual need, the bourgeoisie often associated homosexual acts with the inability of lesser men to exercise restraint of the self.⁸⁹

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Increasingly from August 1914, pro-British wartime fervour appeared in the Australian social landscape. It facilitated the easy idealisation of the brave Aussie boys, and demonised what it perceived as counter. Those not immediately and stridently supportive, including men expressing other or ‘lesser’ masculinities, were seen to be against the war effort and were opposed, often forcefully. There was little room for the non-British or non-manly with the factors separating honourable from dishonourable masculine behaviours often based in class. For example, a duel between gentlemen had been esteemed as a positive performance of masculinity whereas a brawl between labourers was condemned. The working class defined masculinity differently. Distinction relied on the creation of an ‘other’ against which the preferred traits could be elevated. In the same way that the working class was the convenient binary opposition for the upper class, so too was femininity the convenient social post against which masculinity could measure its own importance.

The conventional markers of hegemony at Trial Bay, already disrupted through the subordination of nation, were disrupted even further by migration. Before the war, one’s wealth and privilege—possibly stemming from connections or education and invariably tied to race and class—contributed to one’s masculine status. While it was not true that all Germans living in the colonies were aristocratic, many were wealthy and members of the new German mercantile middle class coined the ‘*Bildungsbürgertum*’.

⁸⁸ Report by Dr Max Herz to the official visitor, 3 April 1917, 1–2.

⁸⁹ Crouthamel, *An Intimate History of the Front*, 17–18, 44, 159.

On German internment during World War I

[Trial Bay] presents a concentration camp that undoubtedly must be one of the most comfortable in the world.⁹⁰

In May 1919, as internees were boarding ships to be deported from Australia, the former G.C.C. guard Edmond Samuels published *An Illustrated Diary of Australian Internment Camps*. Barely 19 years old at the start of the war, Samuels was an ambitious junior officer who claimed to have served at three internment camps throughout the war: Holdsworthy, Berrima and Trial Bay.⁹¹ Of Trial Bay, he wrote enthusiastically. While it's hard to imagine the internees agreeing with his hyperbole, Samuels' text and photographs offered at least a partial vision of life inside the camps and appealed to a post-war audience often unaware internment had even occurred. There is no evidence the work was commissioned by the government, but it carries a statement of authorisation from the Department of Defence and conveniently served the needs of a government seeking the moral high-ground in the post-war internment narrative. At that time, the government was both preparing to receive interned soldiers and citizens back from Europe while deporting its own wartime population of internees. Uncritical newspapers promoted a revisionist line, agreeing that:

Altogether this little book shows that the life of those interned at these camps was anything but an unhappy time, and one has only to remember the ghastly treatment meted out to our men in the concentration camps in Germany to realise the tremendous difference.⁹²

For some time, Samuels' work was one of only a small number of personal accounts narrating wartime internment. Trial Bay internee Martin Trojan's book *Hinter Stein und Stacheldraht: Australische Schattenbilder* [*Behind Stone and Barbed Wire: Australian Silhouette*] was another.⁹³ Not surprisingly, Trojan took a contrary view:

The lean times during our captivity taught us however to put up with things and to consider life from a lower level than the one we had been on and to obey without

⁹⁰ Samuels, *An Illustrated Diary of Australian Internment Camps*, 31.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 30–32. While it's possible Samuels visited Trial Bay, there is no record he was posted there as part of his war service with the G.C.C.. The brief description of Trial Bay that appears in the work may have been written from hearsay. He writes with greater confidence on Berrima and Holdsworthy where there is evidence he *was* posted.

⁹² 'Australian Internment Camps,' *Daily Telegraph*, 21 June 1919. Samuels' book was well-intentioned but ultimately a vanity exercise. Some reviews alluded to this, stopping short of calling it naïve and over-reaching.

⁹³ Trojan, *Behind Stone and Barbed Wire*. The book was published for a German audience, which was hungry for information on enemy internment experiences. Parts of the book were translated into English in 2007.

questioning. We got inner strength to do this from our German spirit and our pride in being German!⁹⁴

A more authoritative but still problematic work on homefront internment was the Australian government's own narrative: volume XI of *Australia During the War* by Ernest Scott, published in 1936. The chapter 'The Enemy Within the Gates' identifies the German community in Australia at the time of war and notes the growing suspicion that characterised wartime attitudes of non-German-Australians to their German neighbours.⁹⁵ Scott's work was the first to publish important policy and demographic data on which subsequent scholarship—including this thesis—is based.⁹⁶

All who write the history of the German people in Australia, for instance Jürgen Tampke, reference Scott and the 'shadow years' of World War I.⁹⁷ Raymond Evans and Kay Saunders, writing more specifically on Queensland, also focus on the development and decline of the German community.⁹⁸ But, particularly since 1989 when he published *Enemy Aliens*, the work of Gerhard Fischer has become the most comprehensive history of World War I internment and—for the purposes of this thesis—the point from which subsequent works depart. Much of Fischer's purpose is to expose what he sees as an under-acknowledged cultural blindness in Australia's homefront past. *Enemy Aliens* reveals the 'negative integration' of the German community into Australian life,⁹⁹ and confronts the irony of 'Anzac' (that is, heroic) masculinity: that while mateship and sacrifice begat pride and purpose to become the foundation stones of a national narrative, at the same time civil liberties were trashed and non-British Australians treated poorly.¹⁰⁰ Fischer,

⁹⁴ Trojan, *Behind Stone and Barbed Wire*, 7.

⁹⁵ Scott, 'The Enemy Within the Gates,' 105. Drawing on data from the 1911 Census, Scott notes German origin was the most-reported nation of origin among settler colonists after British-Irish. Significantly, a majority of those who nominated German origin also reported they were born in Australia.

⁹⁶ See footnotes 13, 14 in this chapter.

⁹⁷ Tampke, *The Germans in Australia*, 116–126. No credible history of German people in Australia can ignore the impact of World War I on the community. Others to have written on this, besides Fischer, include Ian Harmstorf and Michael Cigler, *The Germans in Australia*, (Blackburn: Australasian Educa Press, 1985); Manfred Jurgensen and Alan Corkhill (eds), *The German Presence in Queensland*, (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1988); Alexandra Ludewig, *War Time on Wadjemup*, (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 2019), and Peter Monteath, *Captured Lives: Australia's Wartime Internment Camps*, (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2018).

⁹⁸ Raymond Evans, 'The Pen and the Sword,' 3–21 and Kay Saunders, 'Enemies of the Empire,' 53–72, in Jurgensen and Corkhill (eds), *The German Presence in Queensland*.

⁹⁹ Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 7. See also, "'Negative Integration" and an Australian Road to Modernity,' 452ff, in which Fischer reflects on Anzac Day becoming such an important day of secular celebration and the contra-projection of the stories of heroic soldiers overseas with the treatment of the German community at home. See also, Fischer, 'The Apology of Governor-General Sir William Deane to the German-Australian community in Queensland'.

¹⁰⁰ See also, Albinski, 'Enemy Aliens: Internment and the Homefront Experience in Austria [sic],' 590.

himself a German-Australian immigrant since 1977, challenges Scott's view of the government's justification narrative, noting that any attempts to substantiate an 'existential threat to Australia' must fail empirically, as there is 'no positive evidence of enemy activity in Australia, either attempted or actual'.¹⁰¹ Scott's narrative is occasionally problematic. Where he writes, 'The passion evoked by the outbreak of war was intensified when news came over the cables of the German invasion of Belgium'; or 'Often there was a touch of hysteria, more often malice, in the [public] reports sent to military headquarters', he under-states the direct and indirect actions of the Fisher/Hughes governments in creating that social mood.¹⁰²

The question that divides Scott's and Fischer's views—that is, whether the threat posed by Germans or German-Australians warranted the government's policies of internment and subsequent deportation—divides most historiography of World War I internment. Tampke and Colin Doxford align with Scott, while those rejecting the reasonable precaution argument, including Raymond Evans and Kay Saunders, align with Fischer.

Fischer revisits the same wartime records in the National Archives and the Australian War Memorial to rebuild the story. He looks at the German-Australian community as it had evolved on the eve of war in 1914 but includes many stories of the individuals involved to amplify the many German-Australian contributions in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Camp by camp, he documents the circumstances of their establishment and the chief characteristics and experiences of their occupants—while mapping the changing appetite for an experience of the European war. The early stages of the internment chronology are significant to this study because they reinforce the key dimensions of homosocialities at play: there were multiple movements, involving great distances travelled, and the various cohorts were mixed and split then remixed and split again, resulting in multiple layers of social heterogeneity. The net result is a history of Australian government policies leading up to and through the war, including the politics and reality of internment itself and the dubious social aftermath.

Fischer's work with Nadine Helmi, resulting in the recovery of internee Paul Dubotzki's photographic archive in Germany from 2004 is of immense significance to

¹⁰¹ Fischer, "Negative Integration" and an Australian Road to Modernity,' 454.

¹⁰² McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 150. McKernan writes that exaggerated public patriotism against the very visible German-Australian community was an inevitable consequence of 'manufacturing the war'. Norman Lindsay's *Bulletin* illustrations—e.g. the bloodlusting German ogre in Image 1.3—were included in Australian government recruitment packages and deployed to rural and metropolitan press. The media also participated in a 'sophisticated and targeted mass media engagement with the populace'.

this project and will be discussed in the following section. The contribution of Dubotzki's photos to understandings masculinities of internment cannot be overstated.

Of all of the feeder camps from 1914–1915, Torrens Island in South Australia has been most comprehensively researched.¹⁰³ Largely, this is because of the strong presence and history of German-speaking people in that state. Peter Monteath's most recent work is a general investigation of 'captive lives' during both world wars and also includes the internment of Japanese and Italian prisoners of war through 1939–1945.¹⁰⁴ His earlier collaboration with historians Mandy Paul and Rebecca Martin focuses specifically on the cohort interned in South Australia in World War I.¹⁰⁵ In the first internment phase, over four hundred men, including the photographer Dubotzki, were interned on Torrens Island, which quickly developed a reputation for its harsh location and brutal management. On the estuary lip of Adelaide's Port River, Torrens Island flooded during high tides. Independent researcher Michael Wohltmann has also interrogated the South Australian internment story.¹⁰⁶

Other than Fischer and Helmi, surprisingly few scholars have written specifically on Trial Bay as a site for World War I internment. This may be because of the exhaustive work of Fischer and Helmi in interrogating the available sources. The gaol's earlier incarnation, as an experimental public works prison, built to support the construction of the breakwall and coastal harbour facility, is also well documented by scholars of incarceration and prison history.¹⁰⁷ An exception is the chapter written by Jillian Barnes and Julie McIntyre for the *Palgrave Handbook of Prison Tourism*, a collection that speaks to the 'global ubiquity of former sites of internment as tourist attractions'.¹⁰⁸ Their focus is on the longer-term transformation of the gaol on Laggery Point from prison to tourist attraction but they necessarily reference the 1915–1918 German internment as a key

¹⁰³ General conditions of internment are outlined in Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, chapter 10. See also, Tampke, *The Germans in Australia*, chapter 6; and Harmstorf and Cigler, *The Germans in Australia*, chapters 11 and 13.

¹⁰⁴ Monteath, *Captured Lives*, chapter 11.

¹⁰⁵ Peter Monteath, Mandy Paul and Rebecca Martin, *Interned: Torrens Island, 1914–1915*, (Adelaide: Wakefield, 2014).

¹⁰⁶ Michael Wohltmann, *A Future Unlived*, (website).

¹⁰⁷ For instance, see John Ramsland, *With Just But Relentless Discipline: A Social History of Corrective Services in New South Wales*, (Sydney: Kangaroo Press, 1996); and A. W. Powell, 'The Trial Bay Project: An Aspect of Social Reform in New South Wales,' *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 61, no.3, (1975): 185–198. Works on Trial Bay and South West Rocks prepared by the Macleay River Historical Society, including Carey, *Tales of Trial Bay*, in addition to providing a history of the gaol also document the early development of South West Rocks and Arakoon. The history of the breakwall is outlined in Lenore Coltheart, *Between Wind & Water: A History of the Ports and Coastal Waterways of NSW* (Sydney : Hale & Iremonger, c1997).

¹⁰⁸ Jacqueline Wilson, Sarah Hodgkinson, Justin Piché and Kevin Walby (eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of Prison Tourism*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017): 1.

period of use. In doing so, they make a point that is useful for this project's study of masculinities of internment: the improbably spectacular site of the gaol *did* affect attitudes and possibilities. Given a choice of internment locations, few would have chosen Holdsworthy over Trial Bay. In this, Edmond Samuels' underplaying of the negative consequences of internment was not without substance.

*

'Masculinity on Trial' brings together the following two fields of critical inquiry: the circumstances and performance of contemporary masculinities; and the conditions and practices of World War I internment at Trial Bay. In so doing, the project develops new and deeper understandings of queer masculinities in Australia at that time. These findings are significant for how they can be folded into a new historical narrative, linking queer moments from the past with those of the present.

1.3 Methodology

In choosing our past, we choose a present; and vice versa. We use the one to *justify* the other.

—Hayden White, *The Practical Past*¹⁰⁹

In examining masculinities of German internment at Trial Bay during World War I, this thesis looks particularly for counter-hegemonic forms, such as homosexuality and effeminacy, and the conditions under which they were transacted or encouraged. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the ontological frame in which the project has evolved is relativist, with claims of knowledge and subjectivities supported by critical theory. To anchor my analytical approach, I have also borrowed tools of multimodal discourse analysis from cultural sociology and social semiotics. Charles Sanders Peirce, the founder of social semiotics and so-called ‘father of modern pragmatism’, was among the first to posit that making meaning from objects in the world requires a range of literacies learned in any number of cultural settings.¹¹⁰ Taking his lead, I have sought out multiple primary sources—newspapers, photographs, letters, diaries and artefacts produced by internees—and drawn on the work of various academic and creative practitioners to assist in finding meaning. One important example of the latter is the work of Gillian Rose, whose explication of visual literacies provides a framework for decoding the photographs of internee Paul Dubotzki.¹¹¹

But to the analysis of contemporary discourse I add an additional creative method.

Few historians would disagree that storytelling plays a vital role in history and that narrative technique is a vital tool. Paul Ashton, Anna Clark and Robert Crawford write of history as an inherently literary activity,¹¹² while Tom Griffiths describes it as a ‘high-wire, gravity-defying act of [creative] balance’.¹¹³ Joan Scott also notes the importance of storytelling for revealing the complexity of the human experience—especially where that experience exists on the margins of accepted histories or has been otherwise hidden.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ White, *The Practical Past*, 135 (original emphasis).

¹¹⁰ Charles Sanders Peirce (1958), in: Jensen, ‘When is Meaning?’ Peirce says that social semiotics has been most frequently applied to the decoding of constituent parts of verbal language, it further applies to any means of knowing about or representing some aspect of reality.

¹¹¹ Rose, *Visual Methodologies*. Rose’s approach to compositional and contextual interpretation is outlined in chapters 2 and 6. I am also interested in the subversion of the (white heterosexual) male gaze, articulated by Laura Mulvey and discussed by Rose in her chapter 5.

¹¹² Ashton, Clark and Crawford, *Once Upon a Time*, 2.

¹¹³ Griffiths, *The Art of Time Travel*, 2.

¹¹⁴ Scott, ‘Storytelling: Holberg Prize Symposium,’ 203–209.

Even Mark McKenna, among those most alert to encroachment of historical authority, does not deny the power of fiction to ‘embody a profound historical understanding of the world’.¹¹⁵ Others go further in their support of experimental narrative modes to illuminate history. Kerwin Klein advocates exploring ‘the very edges of historical form’ to map its ‘contraries, complements, cognates’.¹¹⁶

Perhaps unfairly to both, the tension between history and fiction is most often distilled to Inga Clendinnen’s critique of historical pretensions in Kate Grenville’s 2005 novel *The Secret River*. Clendinnen took up the frustration of others, such as McKenna, about the blurring of boundaries with historical fiction and the resulting ‘decline’ of academic history. She used the metaphor of a ravine to position the two literary forms on opposite sides of a gulf and remained unapologetic in her view of the authority of the historian—such as in earlier debates over frontier warfare.¹¹⁷ The ravine metaphor still sits heavily in the discourse, helpful for the reminder of the historian’s objectivity and distance from claims made, yet unhelpful for the oppositional relationship reinforced between the two and the lowering of expectations of what might arise from the creative interplay between the two forms. As one whose literary identity is both historian and writer of historical fiction, I am simultaneously drawn to this debate yet weary of its lingering chokehold. I am gratified that Camilla Nelson and Christine de Matos in 2015 noted that the debate is in its twilight.¹¹⁸

History, for me, has always been a writhing, multi-headed entity defying convention or easy description. So long as authors are honest in how they declare their work, then readers are able to—and *must*—exercise agency in separating so-called fact from so-called fiction. Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood* gave modern literature its first controversial taste of ‘narrative non-fiction’ or ‘reportage’, as Capote referred to the form he believed he had created. In doing so, he exposed the position of the author for what it is, no matter the genre: both an inevitable participant—in the Foucauldian sense—and creative architect. Ann Curthoys and John Docker describe the doubleness of historiography in the quest for historical truth and the contested ways in which it is achieved. They suggest there is ‘ample room for uncertainty, disagreement, and creativity’ in the space between the forms and that ‘perhaps this doubleness is the secret of history’s

¹¹⁵ Nicholas Jose, cited in McKenna, ‘Who Owns the Past?’ *Australian Financial Review*, 16 December 2005.

¹¹⁶ Klein, *Frontiers of Historical Imagination*, ix.

¹¹⁷ Clendinnen, ‘The History Question: Who Owns the Past?’ 34. See also, McKenna, ‘Who Owns the Past?’ *Australian Financial Review*, 16 December 2005.

¹¹⁸ Nelson and de Matos, ‘Fictional Histories and Historical Fictions,’ 3.

cunning as a continuing practice, an always porous, shifting, inventive, self-transforming discipline'.¹¹⁹

One way to break the impasse is via a hybrid literary form that juxtaposes creative text from either side of the ravine. Where independent yet thematically linked texts are read together, it is possible to co-produce a heightened historical understanding of the theme in question. In this duopoly, it is important the narrative style or structure allows the reader certainty from which side of the ravine the author is claiming historical authority and where that is being suspended in the pursuit of creative illumination. If this is unclear to the reader, then more overt signposting may be required. Tom Griffiths suggests the two interact as a tag team, sometimes taking turns, sometimes working in tandem, to deepen our understanding and extend our imagination.¹²⁰ The approach prioritises how readers choose, read, understand and are entertained by history over how professional historians choose to write or debate it. Notwithstanding the challenges to come, such a model might allow for new historical understandings to be achieved by readers of both historical fiction and historical non-fiction. It is the bundling of the two forms and their packaged presentation—a fictive curtain-raiser to evidenced history—that elevates the meaning of each chapter.

One work that employs a similar style is journalist Sarah Goldman's 2017 biography of Caroline Chisholm.¹²¹ Most chapters begin with a brief imagined vignette that positions Chisholm in the chronological section that follows. Goldman says her approach was based on a desire to go beyond 'what [Chisholm] said and what she did...in order to achieve a fuller view of her life and a sense of Chisholm, the person'. The archives from which Goldman substantially drew, and the two main biographies already written, she infers, managed successful but two-dimensional views of Chisholm's life. 'In creating the scenes,' she notes, 'particularly when writing about Caroline's interaction with named people, I drew on historical records.'¹²² The sources and a statement on research relevance are included in the endnotes. In this Goldman straddles what Donna Lee Brien would describe as the divide between speculative biography and biographically-informed fiction.¹²³ Both historian Babette Smith's review of Goldman's work in *The Australian*¹²⁴ and Michael McGirr's in the *Sydney Morning Herald*¹²⁵ comment on the success of the

¹¹⁹ Curthoys and Docker, *Is History Fiction?* 11ff.

¹²⁰ Griffiths, 'The Intriguing Dance of History and Fiction,' (online).

¹²¹ Goldman, Sarah, *Caroline Chisholm: An Irresistible Force*, (Sydney: Harper Collins, 2017): 4–10.

¹²² Holloway, 'Author Interview: Sarah Goldman,' *The Australian Legend*, (blog), 5 October 2017.

¹²³ Brien, 'Australian Speculative Biography,' 15.

¹²⁴ Smith, *The Australian*, 14 October 2019.

¹²⁵ McGirr, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 December 2017.

author's depiction of Chisholm, the woman. Yet, curiously, neither mentions the innovative hybrid style.

These are the rules of 'informed imagination' first articulated by Natalie Zemon Davis and since by Donna Lee Brien and Kiera Lindsey in relation to speculative biography.¹²⁶ Fiction is not included for its own sake but in the honest service of the past, elucidating and offering new possibilities. Nor is it included to simply fill a perceived archival gap. Historian Paula Hamilton refers to this as the 'deficit model' of historical fiction, where writing proceeds from the perceived limits of history rather than from its strengths. This model carries an assumption that the purpose of archives is to provide a certain quantity of evidence to the historical writer and when they don't they are in deficit.¹²⁷ While there are many legitimate reasons why an author might pursue a work of fiction rather than fact, when done as an exercise in deficit, it misunderstands the historian's relationship to the archive and discredits the craft and creative reach of solid historical practice.

By presenting this history as a hybrid work, I benefit from the best of both. The metaphor of 'pillar and buttress' serves to describe the relationship between the two but also infers there is an edifice (or central argument) to support. The imagery and language of construction—structure, solidity, substance and support—further serve the intrinsic interconnectedness: that one is better revealed and understood by the presence of the other. My use of a hybrid model feeds my speculation on the masculinities of internment at Trial Bay, allowing me to engage more honestly with the reality of queer lives and sensibilities present at the time.

Definitions

Throughout this work, I use the word 'homosexual' as an adjective to describe male–male sexual activity. I do not use it as a categorising noun—e.g. 'a homosexual'—which connotes an ahistorical mark of identity based on sexual orientation of men and women

¹²⁶ Natalie Zemon Davis (1983 but also 1988 and 1992), cited in Lindsey, 'Deliberate Freedom,' 2. See also, Mantel, *Reith Lectures*, 1: 'The Day is for the Living,' 17 June 2017; and 4: 'Can These Bones Live,' 7 July 2017; and Brien, 'The Facts Formed a Line of Buoys in the Sea of My Own Imagination,' (online); and 'Australian Speculative Biography: Recovering Forgotten Lives,' 11 ff.

¹²⁷ Paula Hamilton (2003), cited in Nelson, 'Faking It: History and Creative Writing,' (online).

in the early twentieth century.¹²⁸ This was a term that entered sexologists' vocabulary in the 1890s¹²⁹ and was initially used only within the medical profession to describe same-sex sexual behaviour. Foucault's contention and resistance to the work of early sexologists like Hirschfeld was that the moment the category was named was also the moment it became the object of oppression.¹³⁰ Throughout this work, I use the term 'queer', following Jeff Meek's lead, simply to describe individuals or behaviours which did not conform to dominant understandings of gender and/or sexuality.¹³¹ I recognise this, in the modern sense, may also be ahistoric, but use the term for the ease of reading and to conjure some of the contemporary sensibility.¹³² Even Magnus Hirschfeld, inventor of the term 'third sex' was uncomfortable with the emergence of the term 'homosexual' to define the category:

This expression [the Third Sex] was in common currency as far back as ancient Rome, and while I do not find it particularly suitable, it is at least better than the word homosexual (same-sex) which is so often used today, because this term gives credence to the widely-held assumption that wherever a number of homosexuals gather, sexual acts are in preparation if not in progress, an assumption that in no way accords with the facts.¹³³

It has proved an easy trap, when writing of colonialism and wartime internment, to treat the categories of nation, race, sexuality and gender in shorthand, as if they were stable entities and practices based on them as coherent. This is not the case and is antithetical to a work that celebrates the queer.

At times, German terms are also used that have no easy translation. These are included in a glossary at Appendix 1 and indicated in the text accordingly.

Up until World War II when the 'd' was dropped, the army training and internment camps at Liverpool were known as 'Holdsworthy'. The contemporary spelling is retained.

¹²⁸ Simes, 'Gay's the Word,' 303–309. While the new German words '*homosexuell*' [homosexual (adjective)] and '*Homosexualität*' [homosexuality] were used in diaries, elsewhere were also used the older German words for 'pederasts' and 'pederasty' [*Päderasten* and '*Päderastie*']. Among German sexologists at the end of the nineteenth century, the word 'Urning', translated as 'Uranian' by their British counterparts, had become commonly used. See also, McKinnon, *Gay Men at The Movies*, 15.

¹²⁹ Oosterhuis, *Homosexuality and Male Bonding in Pre-Nazi Germany*, 13. The words '*homosexualität*' and '*homosexual*' [homosexuality/homosexual] are traced to Hungarian advocate Karl-Maria Kertbeny in 1869. See also, Beachy, *Gay Berlin*, 31. The first known use of 'homosexual' in English is in Chaddock's translation of Richard von Krafft-Ebing's study on sexual practices, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1892) but its use was popularised throughout the 1895 trial of Oscar Wilde and the Harden-Eulenburg libel trials of 1906–1908.

¹³⁰ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1*, 3–13.

¹³¹ Meek, 'Risk! Pleasure! Affirmation!' 394.

¹³² Gorman-Murray, 'Gay and Lesbian Public History in Australia,' 32.

¹³³ Hirschfeld, *Berlin's Third Sex*, 14.

Exclusions

There are three exclusions from the scope of this work I feel the need to declare:

First, are the masculinities of the Australian guards. Over the three years of its operation, some 230 guards found themselves assigned to home defence duties at Trial Bay, including 11 commissioned and 42 non-commissioned officers, all serving under three principal commanding officers.¹³⁴ At any time, around 100 servicemen plus three officers and a commandant were stationed at the camp.¹³⁵ Prior to October 1916, guards were voluntary enlistees to the Citizens Military Force, assigned to the German concentration camp Guard at Liverpool and deployed on temporary rotation to the satellite camp of Trial Bay. Many had been unsuccessful in enlisting in the Australian Imperial Force or had returned to Australia sick or wounded, possibly suffering a venereal disease or what we now know to have been traumatic shock. But after 2 October 1916, the guard included conscripted single men between the ages of 21–35 years, and widowers with no children, who were required to enlist in citizen forces to bolster home defence.¹³⁶ At one point, the commandant, Lieutenant Max Bedford, advertised for local men to join the guard but ‘Only men not fit for A.I.F. [were invited] to apply.’¹³⁷

In many ways, the situations of the Trial Bay guards and internees were not dissimilar: all were compelled to be in a beautiful but remote location, without women and with few local entertainments to occupy them.¹³⁸ Off-duty guards were allowed to visit the nearby South West Rocks but the village was small.¹³⁹ At least the internees had their theatre, music, clubs, library and sports to entertain them and professional butchers, bakers and cooks to prepare their food. The British-Australian men of the guard were subject to other masculine forces, not the least of which was the hegemony of military

¹³⁴ Records of internment held at Trial Bay Gaol Museum, various. In addition to commandants Eaton, Bedford and Holborow, captains McKean and Morris acted temporarily.

¹³⁵ Samuels, *An Illustrated Diary of Australian Internment Camps*, 32. See also, Report on oral history interview with former guard Ellis Walcha Watts, Macleay River Historical Society.

¹³⁶ Stanley, *Bad Characters*, 235. See also, ‘To Arms!’ *The Advertiser*, 2 October 1916. Leading up to the first referendum on conscription on 28 October 1916, the *War Precautions Act 1914* was amended to authorise conscription ‘within the Commonwealth’ in the interests of home defence, commencing 2 October 1916.

¹³⁷ ‘Recruits Wanted,’ *Macleay Chronicle*, 21 March 1917.

¹³⁸ Carey, *Tales of Trial Bay*, 129. In November 1916, the population of South West Rocks was estimated to be 200, the increase [from 50] attributed in part to the presence of the wives and families of the Trial Bay Guard.’

¹³⁹ Oral history of Val Wilson, in: Carey, *Tales of Trial Bay*, 164. Wilson reports his father owned one of the area’s few cars and ‘used to take the guards...over to [South West] Rocks if they wanted a beer or something. He’d take the guards anywhere they wanted to go for a day out in his old car. Might go to Kempsey for the day for a few beers. He got on well with them.’ Films were screened one hour away at the Victoria Theatre in Kempsey.

rank. While intrinsically connected to the masculinities of the internees, theirs is a parallel study for another time.

Second, the voices of women, excluded for the simple reason that none were interned at Trial Bay. Nor is there evidence of the presence of British-Australian women as wives of guards and officers or workers, such as domestic servants or cooks. In remote Arakoon, over the years of operation, there were few interactions with women. For the men interned at a succession of remote locations, this may have meant up to five years of rarely seeing a woman, certainly without speaking to one. For an eight week period in the summer of 1917, internees' wives were permitted to visit their husbands for which the few guest houses at South West Rocks experienced a rental boom. However, this was soon discontinued for being disruptive to routine and logistically difficult to sustain. Gwen Kelly's novel *Always Afternoon* imagines meetings between a young internee and the daughter of the Arakoon baker but must contrive a moveable block in the granite wall to facilitate their rendezvous. But while women are absent in body, they are certainly not by inference. Women—wives, mothers, sisters, daughters and girlfriends—were the recipients of copious letters written by internees, the subjects of entries written in personal diaries and the objects of regard and desire sought out in the theatre. That this study examines gender performed in a single-sex environment further exposes the reality of its cultural construction.

Third, this project does not include the experiences of the traditional custodians of the Macleay estuary, the Dunghutti. The site on which Trial Bay Gaol is built, known as Laggars Point, was a site of social gathering for the Dunghutti for centuries before European colonisation.¹⁴⁰ Quoting Hodgkinson's survey of 1845, Paul Davies notes there were six separate tribes of 80–100 men and women (excluding children) visible on the immediate banks of the Macleay alone.¹⁴¹ Contact with white settlers was bloody for the Dunghutti, particularly on the Upper Macleay, where massacres or reprisal killings occurred at Kunderang Brook, Dourallie Creek, Sheep Station Bluff and Towel Creek.¹⁴² Dispossession of land occurred in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹⁴³ Former guard Ellis Watts also spoke of numerous Aboriginal people in the area, commenting on one man from nearby Pelican Island who wore a brass plate with the name 'King Billy'

¹⁴⁰ Histories of occupation and dispossession of traditional Dunghutti lands and waters are found in works by: Davies, *Trial Bay Gaol Conservation Management and Cultural Tourism Plan*, 11–17; Kempsey Shire Council n.d., vii–viii; NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, 8; and McIntyre 'Making the Mid North Coast: A Migration Report,' 15.

¹⁴¹ Clement Hodgkinson (1845), cited in Davies, *Trial Bay Gaol Conservation Management and Cultural Tourism Plan*, 13.

¹⁴² *The Guardian*, 'The Killing Times: A Massacre Map of Australia's Frontier Wars,' (online).

¹⁴³ Carey, *Tales of Trial Bay*, 70.

engraved on it.¹⁴⁴ However, it is nearby Kinchela, a deceptively beautiful area upstream from Pelican Island, where the Kinchela Boys Home operated as another site of ‘internment’ of children stolen from their families. Between June 1924 and May 1970, between 400 and 600 Aboriginal boys (as well as a small number of girls in its first years) forcibly removed from their families were housed there on behalf of the NSW authorities. While outside the scope of this project—in both time and place—the links of internment to dispossession, loss and trauma are real.

¹⁴⁴ Neil, *Trial Bay Gaol*, 4. See also, Carey, *Tales of Trial Bay*, 70.

1.4 Sources

Instead of searching for clear answers all the time, sometimes we can enjoy exploring the spaces in between what is known and what is not.

—Chris Brickell, *Mates & Lovers*¹⁴⁵

Primary sources: What's in the archive?

The main research lever of this project is archival analysis of a messy field of primary sources. This approach is consistent with the queer sensibilities at the project's core and the need advocated by Sam Freidman et al. for 'methodological pluralism' in cultural sociology.¹⁴⁶ When the object of the archival quest includes queer traces, the angle of entry is necessarily oblique, and sources must be read carefully for their text, subtext and context.¹⁴⁷ There are many odd and unanticipated elements to be considered here.

Sources for this project include internee diaries, photographs and letters in collections of the National Library of Australia, Australian War Memorial, State Library of New South Wales and Kempsey Museum, as well as the NSW National Parks and Wildlife's Trial Bay Trust. Government records, such as internee manifests and official photographs, have been digitised and made available by the National Archives of Australia¹⁴⁸ and evidence has been mined from other documents of internment, such as the programs of plays and Trial Bay's in-camp newspaper, *Welt am Montag* [World on Monday]. It is difficult to overstate the benefit of the National Library's Trove digital repository of historical Australian newspapers. It is an argument for another time but the impact of accelerating digitisation on the materiality of the archive, such as proposed by Ann Cvetkovich and expanded by Maryanne Dever¹⁴⁹ and Michelle T. King,¹⁵⁰ is worthy of notice. 'Getting one's hands dirty' or developing an affective relationship with the contents, or people, of an archive is a valued part of historical practice.

¹⁴⁵ Brickell, *Mates & Lovers*, 8.

¹⁴⁶ Freidman, et al., 'Cultural Sociology and New Forms of Distinction,' 6.

¹⁴⁷ Loftin, 'Secrets in Boxes: The Historian as Archivist', 51. For more on approaches and limitations to queer archives, see: Stone and Cantrell, *Out of the Closets, Into the Archives*. See also, DeVun and McLure, 'Archives Behaving Badly,' 121–130.

¹⁴⁸ All Trial Bay internees were photographed on 6 June 1917, as part of a broader attempt by the Australian government to improve internment record-keeping. The date therefore establishes a 'census' moment for internees. These 'mug shots' are now all held at the National Archives of Australia.

¹⁴⁹ Dever, 'Papered Over, or Some Observations on Materiality and Archival Method,' 65ff.

¹⁵⁰ King, 'Working With/In the Archives,' 13.

Photographs

A key archival source is the recently recovered collection of photographs of Paul Dubotzki.¹⁵¹

While doing research work with volunteer Friends of Trial Bay Gaol in 2004, Nadine Helmi connected the name ‘Dubotzki’ appearing on prints in the gaol’s collection with the home address left when the camp closed in May 1918.¹⁵² Improbably, while Dubotzki had died in 1969, his descendants still lived at the same address in the Bavarian town of Dorfen, near Munich. He had been a photographer all his professional life. More incredibly, both the collection and his original cameras were still stored in the family home. They had survived his deportation journey, as well as nearly ninety subsequent years, including the devastations of World War II.

The full collection of Dubotzki’s 1914–1919 images, comprising some 1,200 prints and glass plate negatives, documents not only the years of his internment at Trial Bay but his movement through Torrens Island and Holdsworthy camps as well. But it also features two remarkable wartime bookends: his pre-war travel through the Asia-Pacific and his post-war deportation journey on the *Kursk* in May 1919.¹⁵³ During his internment, Dubotzki used his skills and equipment to operate a commercial photographic business, hustling and taking photographs then selling prints that recorded the experience for both internees and guards. The images provide remarkable clues, not

¹⁵¹ Helmi and Fischer, *The Enemy at Home*. In 1913, at the age of 22 years, Dubotzki joined an expedition to Asia-Pacific as photographer. He travelled through Malaysia, Burma and Singapore documenting colonial sites and activities. He travelled with a German-built Goetz camera (c.1900) with a Steinheil lens (c.1908).

¹⁵² Nadine Helmi, personal communication with author, May 2017; and Tom Jones, personal communication with author, January 2019. Helmi triggered the work by local historians, overseen by Franz Striebl, that digitised over 1,200 images on behalf of the Dubotzki family. Ninety of these were exhibited in a 2011 exhibition and ancillary publication: Sydney Living Museums (Museum of Sydney), ‘The Enemy at Home,’ 7 May–11 September 2011.

¹⁵³ Internment card for Dubotzski [sic], Paul Frederick. NAA: D2375. See also, Monteath, *Captured Lives*, 62, 86; Monteath et al., *Interned*, 90; Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 194–198; and Helmi and Fischer, *The Enemy at Home*, 7–15. There is some mystery around Dubotzki’s wartime movements and motives. It is known he was initially interned at Torrens Island (assumed from early 1915 until camp closure in mid-August 1915) before transfer to Holdsworthy and then Trial Bay. His enemy alien registration and parole in Adelaide date from as early as 11 August 1914. Yet images of the mobilisation of German-Islander resistance to the Australian Expeditionary Force in New Guinea in September 1914 appear in his collection as do images from Berrima, Bourke and Molonglo camps, suggesting he travelled to these places as well. Other photographs from his pre-war travels in Asia have coded information written on the back. Further, his images of mistreatment of internees at Torrens Island contributed to the removal of Commandant George Hawkes, a situation likely to have had repercussions for his practice. These circumstances suggest at least some complicity with the administration and have fuelled speculation his work involved spying, whether for imperial agents before the war or as propaganda for the Australian government during the war.

just to the conditions of his internment but to the homosocialities at play in the camps, particularly at Trial Bay.

Few of Dubotzki's photographs were candid; most involve elaborate compositions and lighting set-ups inside the prison. Others are experimental, some taken outside at night. The self-portrait at Image 1.5 is an example of Dubotzki's craft in action: his attention to perspective, contrast and context—for example, the treatment of the cigarette smoke—are typical of his style and a technical competence not evident with mere enthusiasts.

While the images reveal much of life inside a number of the camps, the collection has not been read for what they reveal of masculinities performed. As such, many images not previously published are considered and reproduced here.



Image 1.5: Self-portrait of Paul Dubotzki in his studio and barracks accommodation at Trial Bay.

The origin of the photographs is assumed to be Dubotzki but is also imprecise.¹⁵⁴ Labour statistics published in the *Welt am Montag* in February 1918 suggest two

¹⁵⁴ The contemporary practice was to etch details onto the glass-plate negative—like the photographer's name—so that information appeared on all subsequent prints. However, as the war went on, Dubotzki did this less and less. He appears to have used his Goetz glass-plate camera throughout the war and a film camera for his deportation journey in 1919.

photographic studios were operating at which four men were employed.¹⁵⁵ Dubotzki's ability to operate his business while interned is intriguing, all the more remarkable for having to develop and print the works himself. This remained possible for him because he was using glass-plate technology. In attributing the ownership of the work, I have assumed his authorship unequivocally where etched with his name. Where there were unetched glass negatives or negatives with other clues in the digitised collection I received from Nadine Helmi, I have assumed Dubotzki to be the source and used the attribution: [Source: Dubotzki collection].

My analysis of Dubotzki's images draws on literacies of visual culture, such as those articulated by British cultural geographer Gillian Rose. Her approach to reading an image is to consider it as an object embedded in a wider range of social practices. Thus, the reading is not solely of the text of the image but of its subtext and the context in which it was taken—and in which it is viewed.¹⁵⁶

The way in which men posed in photographs has also received scholarly attention for what is revealed of physical and emotional intimacy. John Ibson observes a high-familiarity displayed between men around the years of World War I and an increasing physical distance and lower-exhibited-familiarity in later years.¹⁵⁷ Ibson argues that this parallels men's growing desire to suppress emotion, particularly between one another, which he matches to increased experience of misogyny reported by women and homophobia experienced by homosexual and effeminate men. Significant for this project, Ibson also warns of the danger of 'over-reading' the level of intimacy in earlier photographs where men are seen together. While I recognise the dangers of false or ahistorical ascription, it is also important to not deny the possibility of queer presences at Trial Bay by assuming heterosexuality and contributing to erasure of queerness from another historical account.¹⁵⁸ Chris Brickell, whose epigraph leads this section, dealt with a similar issue when he published *Mates & Lovers: A History of Gay New Zealand* in 2008. Using a similar approach to Rose in his reading of contemporary photographs, including the homoerotic photographs of Robert Gant, he notes the equivocacy and imprecision of

¹⁵⁵ *Welt am Montag*, 10 February 1918, 13. Only Dubotzki advertised in the newspaper, which he did as a sole trader.

¹⁵⁶ Rose, 'The Question of Method,' 542ff. It was important to see the full archive of 1,200 photos to make my own inferences and selections, rather than relying on the curation of Helmi and Fischer. Likewise, the reader of this work will 'read' an image as a piece of evidence, selected and positioned by me from an archive of potential alternatives in support of my agenda. All images have intentionally descriptive captions.

¹⁵⁷ Ibson, *Picturing Men*, Ch.4. Ibson studied photographs taken in the United States between the 1850s and 1950s in which there was more than one male subject.

¹⁵⁸ Stone and Cantrell, *Out of the Closet, Into the Archives*, 7, 8. See also, DeVun and McLure, 'Archives Behaving Badly,' 121–130.

reading masculinity from photographs: ‘The riddle that is their photograph resists their final untangling.’¹⁵⁹

Ambiguity is also found in readings of Dubotzki’s images.

While it was certainly not the case, the Trial Bay photos suggest a place that is as much a holiday camp as an internment camp. They reveal a privileged world—so different from his other photos from Torrens Island and Holdsworthy. Cafes, bars, clubs, newspapers, a theatre, a tennis court, a bowling alley, cottages and beach parties all suggest a relatively easy time. And here the context is critical. Rose would have us wonder: for whom were the photographs taken? And how, at a time and site of such extreme political sensitivity, where censorship was one of the main tools of control, was Dubotzki able to prevent his equipment being confiscated and keep his business active?

Even at Trial Bay, although censorship was less stringent and privileges more generous,¹⁶⁰ the context was one of suspicion. Dubotzki walked a tricky line with the camp administration. Any images that presented the camp in a negative light would have quickly resulted in confiscation. There was active scrutiny of camp conditions, not least because maltreatment of German prisoners in Australian camps threatened retaliatory actions against Australians in German camps. ‘Holiday camp’ photos, where happy and active men are seen enjoying social and physical health, suited the propaganda agenda of the administration.

More than benign snaps, Dubotzki’s photographs are politically charged. Regardless of the text of the photograph, the context typically involved one German internee recording a truth for another German internee. Not unexpectedly in a middle- and upper class cohort, they show well-dressed and ~groomed men, posing agreeably, even in their internee whites, in community contexts that seem ordered and civil.¹⁶¹ Where so much had been taken away, the decision to participate in a photograph was an important assertion of identity. A photographic record assisted to make sense of the time and place of internment, giving shape to an otherwise monotonous routine. Depicting themselves as loyal—to whichever side—and as a participant in the experience was a

¹⁵⁹ Brickell, *Mates & Lovers*, 8.

¹⁶⁰ Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 249.

¹⁶¹ This contrasts with the humiliating, enforced criminal-like ‘mug shots’ taken by the government photographer, some of which are reproduced in this chapter. Many show the anger or displeasure of subjects.

necessary assertion of masculinity and a ballast to the loneliness and loss often expressed in diaries and letters.¹⁶²

Photographs then, as now, were conduits of memory, linked to a particular time and place. A photographic record of internment symbolised a shared traumatic experience. When the camp closed in May 1918 and the cohort returned to Holdsworthy, Dubotzki's photographs took on new relevance to both individual and shared identity, playing a critical role in the collective memory of the uniquely disruptive experience. With the dispersion of their cohort at the end of the war and the further seismic disruptions to class- and nation-based identities, the context changed again, playing into global post-war narratives of emasculation, shame, trauma and loss.¹⁶³

Perhaps this is why Dubotzki kept the collection boxed in his store-room for the rest of his adult life?

Diaries and memoirs

Also among the State Library of New South Wales' World War I collection are diaries written by around 16 internees from Trial Bay. While the degree of censorship and enforcement of petty regulations was not so severe at Trial Bay, internees were still prohibited from keeping journals or diaries. The diary of Georg Boysen contains the draft of a letter in which he says to a friend:

My dear W, This letter is to go forward when the war is over and when there is a chance of these lines reaching you. As a prisoner-of-war, I am not permitted to write...what I think and feel and I must hide them in my cell until liberty is again restored.¹⁶⁴

Journals and diaries not able to be smuggled out were confiscated by the guards prior to deportation from Holdsworthy in 1919. Many were acquired by the State Library in 1919–1921 and are now held with other papers and memorabilia actively acquired

¹⁶² Additionally, yet mysteriously, the collection also includes images from the camps at Enoggera in Brisbane, Berrima, Bourke and Molonglo in the newly designated Federal Capital Territory.¹⁶² It is uncertain whether Dubotzki travelled to these other camps and took the photographs himself—and, if so, by what arrangements with the Australian guards—or acquired the images by other means, for example, from other photographers for artistic or comparative reasons. Because of this uncertainty, his movements and motives warrant scrutiny.

¹⁶³ While it is not within the scope of this project to follow the experiences of the cohort after May 1918 (Trial Bay camp closure), Jason Crouthamel, *An Intimate History of the Front: Masculinity, Sexuality and German Soldiers in the First World War*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); and Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War*. (London: Reaktion Books, 1996), track the post-war reintegration of soldier and prisoner-of-war cohorts (in Germany and Britain, respectively) for the impact on hegemonic masculinities.

¹⁶⁴ Diary of Georg Boysen, n.d.

since. Significantly for this project, the diaries of Trial Bay internees Friedrich Meier;¹⁶⁵ Philipp Wittmann;¹⁶⁶ Otto Wortmann;¹⁶⁷ Georg Boysen (partial)¹⁶⁸ and Wilhelm Woelber¹⁶⁹ are all available in English, having been translated and proofread by volunteers like Rosemarie Graffagnini by Miles Harvey. Those of Woelber, Wortmann and Meier are particularly valuable: they are comprehensive accounts of three very different but similarly observant men. They do not appear to have been connected to one another in the camp but their accounts often cross-corroborate events.

¹⁶⁵ Meier, the mariner from Hanover, was one of the first Germans to be arrested during the war. On 18 August 1914, the ship on which he was the 4th officer docked at Williamstown on Port Phillip Bay. The *Lotbringen* had no wireless telegraphy and had been at sea for 47 days so was ignorant of the escalation and declaration of war. The ship was disabled and officers interned, eventually at Langwarrin. On 19 August 1915, when the Victorian camp closed, about 300 internees transferred to Holdsworth. Captains, first mates and first engineers were separated for relocation to Berrima but Meier was one of 75 in the second tranche to leave Liverpool for Trial Bay, arriving after an overnight voyage on the *Yulgilbar* on 5 December 1915.

¹⁶⁶ A young employee of a German company operating in the Philippines, Wittmann was first interned at Hong Kong. Two hundred and eighty were transferred to Holdsworth and 96 to Trial Bay in February, the third tranche. Wittmann was included in a subsequent tranche transferred to Trial Bay in 1916.

¹⁶⁷ An employee of the plantation managed by Burns, Philp & Co. in Rabaul, Otto Wortmann was arrested and interned in Rabaul in German New Guinea on 23 July 1915. He was one of 23 single men transported to Sydney on the *Morinda* on 11 August 1915, attended by 30 soldiers, 2 officers, a physician and the former deputy governor of New Guinea. They arrived in Sydney on 24 August 1915 and went by train to Holdsworth. While his diary does not note when he was relocated, it continues in Trial Bay on 23 March 1916. Wortmann was one of the last to be deported after the war and, unusually, was successful in his application to be released to Indonesia, rather than to Germany.

¹⁶⁸ Georg Boysen, a plantation owner from Ceylon, is described as one of the 'millionaire internees'. He died of influenza and was buried in South Africa during the deportation journey after the war.

¹⁶⁹ 'Deutscher Lese-Verein Is No More: 9,000 Volumes For 'The Library,' *Malaya Tribune*, 1 April 1914. It is a key assumption of this thesis that the four anonymous volumes held as Items 56–59 in the collection are the diaries of Wilhelm Woelber. This assumption is made based on content clues, for example, the diarist's senior status as one of the Singapore cohort and custodianship of Singapore library books (Woelber was the president of Singapore's Club Teutonia at the time of his arrest) as well as references to the relocation of his wife Trudy and children back to the city of Karlsruhe in south-western Germany. The handwriting of the diary matches the handwriting and information in Woelber's known papers at Item 48 of the collection.



Image 1.6: Diarists: Wilhelm Woelber (5109), Otto Wortmann (5139), Friedrich Meier (5150), Philipp Wittmann (5191), Georg Boysen (5124), [Source: National Archives of Australia]; and Nyanatiloka Maha Thera (formerly Anton Gueth). [Source: Hellmuth Hecker]

Other diaries of Trial Bay internees remain untranslated in the State Library collection. A number of memoirs written after the war are also available, such as *The Life of Nyanatiloka Thera: The Biography of a Western Buddhist Pioneer* (2008) by the former Anton Gueth who took the name Nyanatiloka when he converted to Buddhism and became a monk, prior to his internment. Ship's officer Martin Trojan had his memoir published in 1922 as *Behind Stone and Barbed Wire*. The reconstructed diary of Fritz Stegherr, who spent time on Bruny Island and at Holdsworth before his arrival at Trial Bay, has recently been acquired by the Friends of Bruny Island Quarantine Station in Tasmania from Stegherr's family in Germany.



Image 1.7: Memoirists Anthony Splivalo (3725); Martin Trojan (4750) and Fritz Stegherr (5130) [Source: National Archives of Australia]

And although he was not interned at Trial Bay, the memoir of Rottnest/ Holdsworthy internee Anthony Splivalo is useful for its incisive latter-life reflections. Splivalo published *The Home Fires* in 1984; it is uncertain how long after deportation in 1919 he wrote the work.¹⁷⁰

Letters and other histories

The Macleay Valley Historical Society collected stories from former internees and guards in the 1960s and 1970s, including the intriguing character of Heinrich ‘Henry’ Wilcke¹⁷¹ and the Singaporean colonist, Max Matthiessen.¹⁷² Over 70 of Dr Max Herz’s letters to his Australian-born wife Ethel Jane (Cohen) Herz are also held in the State Library of NSW.¹⁷³ Written over the five long years of his internment, these letters provide a narrative arc of Herz’s own experience but also reveal much of the general desire among the populace to fight boredom and remain stoic and positive.



Image 1.8: Letter writers: Max Herz (4756), Max Matthiessen (4893), Heinrich Wilcke (5236).
[Source: National Archives of Australia]

¹⁷⁰ Splivalo, *The Home Fires*. Anthony Splivalo travelled alone from Dalmatia (Croatia) when he was just 13 years old to join his elder brother in Western Australia. When 16, he was arrested in Kalgoorlie and was transported to Rottnest Island in early August 1915. He was one of 900 Germans and Austrians to arrive at Holdsworthy on 24 November 1915 after the closure of Rottnest. Ships’ officers, like Martin Trojan, were relocated to Trial Bay but Splivalo remained in Liverpool. At 16 years, he was one of the youngest of all 7,000 wartime internees in Australia.

¹⁷¹ Diary evidence suggests Wilcke was homosexually active in the camp. He was controversial for also being a suspected thief and overly familiar with the guards. He used his familiarity with the guards to import illicit whisky into the camp for sale to internees.

¹⁷² Matthiessen had been a colleague of the diarist Wilhelm Woelber at Behn, Meyer & Co. and, also with Woelber, was a member of the executive of the Club Teutonia when war was declared.

¹⁷³ Clarke, *Dr Max Herz*, 65ff: Dr Max Herz, the renowned orthopaedic surgeon, was detained at Victoria Barracks Paddington on 19 May 1915 when his new daughter was less than one month old. He was permanently transferred to Holdsworthy in July 1915 and to Trial Bay in late January 1916. He was one of the last internees released in Australia on 9 April 1920. Herz was a literary man. He was a regular correspondent to German publications, the *Berliner Tagblatt* newspaper and *Die Zukunft* journal, and had published a book on New Zealand that he and Ethel had translated into English. For most of the war, internees were limited to writing two letters of 150 words per week. That the writers knew they were to be censored means they were more likely to be guarded in the thoughts they committed to paper.

The Herz experience typifies what was common for many internees and their families during the war. While class—privilege, education and wealth—was one of a number of factors that ensured all internment experiences were definitely not the same, all internees experienced disruption and dislocation and were required to renegotiate expectations of their place in the world. Necessarily, such renegotiation provoked a questioning of identity, which at the time was heavily influenced by class and nation, but also of masculinity.

Herz's circumstances and experience were certainly not as bleak as the majority of internees but the vicious anti-German—and, in Herz's case, anti-Semitic and professionally motivated—treatment received from former friends, patients and colleagues was not uncommon. That this personal renegotiation of one's masculine identity occurred in the hyper-partisan and forced homosocial environment of an internment camp, and at a time when conceptions of class and nation were also being radically redefined on a public scale, is core to this project.

Strengths and limitations

Arno turns back to Herr Herausgeber. 'Or think of it this way,' he tells Arno. 'You want to have legs that work like everybody else's—it's simple. Have Herr Dubotzki take a photo of you standing on the beach with the athletics club. You could be a runner. Forever.' Arno thinks about that. He nods his head once more and leaning heavily on his crutches makes his way back out into the corridor.¹⁷⁴

As archival research is the 'bread and butter...of many modern historians',¹⁷⁵ I am not alone in contemplating the limitations of archives for how they reveal their sources. They give the illusion of being truthful but, by omission and opacity as much as by occasional false disclosure, they lie. This is particularly so when seeking traces of queer lives. As Loftin notes, such traces have often been excised—whether by individuals who chose to self-censor their content or by hostile agents after the fact.¹⁷⁶ This suggests that Jewkes' injunction on hegemonic masculinities might also apply to archives: that is, archives will increasingly reflect the hegemonic form when subordinated collections are censored—including self-censorship or excision—because they do not meet desired expectations.¹⁷⁷

And finally, on my consideration of sources: As a non German-speaker, I have relied completely on the availability of works written in or translated into English.

¹⁷⁴ Cormick, *The Years of the Wolf*, 164.

¹⁷⁵ King, 'Working With/In the Archives,' 13.

¹⁷⁶ Loftin, 'Secrets in Boxes: The Historian as Archivist,' 51.

¹⁷⁷ Jewkes et al., 'Hegemonic Masculinity,' S-112ff.

Fortunately, translation initiatives by libraries and archives leading up to the centenary anniversary of World War I and the pursuit of ever-improving digital technologies—soon to include optical character recognition (OCR) rendering of handwritten works—have benefitted the project enormously. Even during the life of ‘Masculinity on Trial’, the digital history-making possibilities have advanced.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ Fritz Stegherr’s diary was handwritten in *Kurrent*, a now-obsolete script based on a late-medieval form. It has proven more difficult to decipher and translate than other diaries written in modern German script.

1.5 Thesis structure and chapter outline

We assembled in marching order and...marched down the dusty road and through the gate.

— Diary of Fritz Stegherr, c.1914

This thesis is presented as four core thematic chapters, or ‘pillars’, representing the spaces in which masculinities were transacted and new possibilities explored. But significantly, each pillar is supported by a piece of creative writing—a ‘buttress’—to explicate its theme. The interplay between the ‘pillar’ and the ‘buttress’ is part of the methodological reach of the work: that historical fact and fiction, when presented together, combine to create a greater historical understanding.

In Chapter 2: Home—Public and Private, I look first to the domestic space. Key social changes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw reorganisation of the home as a conduit of gender. During internment, internees were required to re-create—but also had the opportunity to reimagine—their domestic spaces. How they did this, whether they reproduced the homes from which they had been removed or reconceived these spaces around new opportunities, is revealing of the desire for home or ‘*Heimat*’ [sense of home/homeliness].¹⁷⁹ The construction of huts and cabins on the beach of Trial Bay is an important clue to the blurring of previously well understood spatial categories such as inside/outside, exterior/interior, permitted/forbidden but particularly those of public/private. The contest for space was an underpinning feature of the internment experience—indeed, the war in general. The first fictional piece, ‘Smouldering Ruins’, explores these tensions. It introduces a fictional character, Peter, whose construction of a home for himself is borne from a need and discovered ability to negotiate his new environment. The story is imagined from archival evidence of homosexual activity and prostitution but also reveals a paradox of patriarchy, cited previously from Jewkes: that the hegemonic form, while actively promoted by its chief beneficiaries, is also promoted by those it oppresses. Significantly, the story is set on the eve of the camp’s closure: Sunday, 19 May 1918. This serves as a framing device within the thesis and intends to disrupt any expectation of a chronological connection between the four empirical chapters: the four pillars bear the weight of the argument equally, drawing from sources across the full three year internment period.

¹⁷⁹ See Appendix 1: Glossary.

In Chapter 3: Work—Employment and Opportunity, I look to the role of work in the expression of masculinities and its significance to conceptions of masculine hegemony. The same social changes affecting men's and women's connection to the home also affected their participation in work. A popular epithet to describe the Germans' approach to work was '*Rast ich, so rost ich*' [If I rest, I rust]. The belief was that if one stayed busy, one would stay healthy in mind and body. Evidence of successful industry and commerce aligned with the internees' expectations for economic order and efficiency. It was important—for class, as well as nation—that the Trial Bay cohort set a good example for men in other camps, as well as the Australian guards, to show that their community leaders were organised and running a successful show. A Trial Bay Management Committee took over the running of the inefficient camp canteen while sub-committees were established to oversee education, the kitchen and bakery, as well as the post office, library, theatre and orchestra. Internment required the creation of micro-economies where modern markets and labour organisation were just occurring. The support piece, 'Sunshine on the Avon', introduces the reader to the important real-life character of Dr Max Herz. Herz was one of the most prominent identities and highest profile internees at Trial Bay who was appointed to the position of chief medical officer soon after his arrival in February 1916. He also took on the role of director of the Trial Bay theatre when it opened in August 1916. The story begins with the reproduction of a letter written to his wife but censored prior to delivery. Through an imagining of the offending censored text, the story confronts an essential weakness of the archive as historical source: literally, in this case, there is a gap in the evidence contained.

Chapter 4: Theatre—Diversion and Difference identifies the theatre as an important actual and symbolic site for 'performance' of masculinity. A constructed space in every sense, the theatre was a site where German nationalism and cultural pride were on display but also where 'women' could be seen and remembered. Under the direction of Max Herz, the German Theatre Trial Bay opened in August 1916 and sat nearly 300 people. A new play was performed every week and the choice of plays provided an opportunity to express pro-German and occasional anti-British sentiment. Opportunities for entertainment and community cohesion abounded. And while 'cross-dressing' to perform the roles of women was not unexpected in an all-male internment camp, nor a guaranteed marker of effeminacy, the chapter also explores the important reality for people of sexual difference that theatre provides escape and opportunity. The story 'Shadow Players' imagines the participation of one such fictional character, Arnold, who

discovers new possibilities and friendships through his connection to the theatre. It also uses diary evidence to locate effeminacy and homosexuality at the theatre.

The final empirical Chapter 5: Body and Mind—Health and Virility identifies the body as an additional site of masculine performance and the mind as a barometer of wellness. The distinctly German concept of *Naturverbundenheit* [being at one with nature]¹⁸⁰ took a new direction in Germany following nineteenth century industrialisation. The *Lebensreform* [life reform] counter-industrial movements promoted nudism and vegetarianism and idealised the purer living believed possible in places like the German South Pacific. There is an unmistakable homoeroticism in the classical depiction of the body beautiful, a trope also important to masculinist members of homosexual rights movements from Berlin in 1897. While more typically linked to the working class, the large presence of South Pacific colonists at Trial Bay means its ideals were also present, if not embraced by the hegemony. The chapter looks at the obsession with the classical form and the prevalence of diagnoses of nervous conditions like neurasthenia, resulting from developments in the new field of psychology. The buttress to this pillar is the story ‘The Bavarian Bull’ which combines real-life characters and events to signal new imaginings of the body brought about by the internment condition. Physical and mental strength were important masculine signifiers and one’s ability to remain strong was critical for survival.

A final comment on structure is to note the presence of a preface and afterword as creative bookends to the thesis. Their purpose is to orient the reader to the site of Trial Bay and the reading of this thesis. But the form is as important as the purpose: for me, history begins and ends with creative thought and action.

Masculinity on Trial

And so we begin.

While much work has been done in the fields of twentieth century masculinity, particularly around the Anzac archetype in post-war hegemonies, and the experiences and circumstances of interned Germans in the camps of World War I, these two streams have not been brought together. ‘Masculinity on Trial’ seeks to do this. In so doing, the project seeks a ‘queering’ of enduring narratives of masculinity to allow for additional complexity in the way Australia remembers its social and sexual past.

*

¹⁸⁰ See Appendix 1: Glossary.

Chapter 2: Home—Public and Private



Image 2.1: Unknown internee in front of landscaped private beach hut. Shutters, whitewash, roofline and window box reflective of Bavarian alpine style. [Source: Dubotzki collection]

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2.0 Smouldering Ruins

One guy openly maintains a ship's boy, built him a cabin within the compound, complete with a 'salon' where the darling services not only him but various other lovers as well, all payable in cash of course.

—Diary of Otto Wortmann, 3 January 1918



Image 2.2: Salon/interior of a beach hut.

Saturday, 19 May 1918

Peter pushed the door with his shoulder, angling the crate to ease it into the hut. He'd done well to claim it and carry it from the barracks by himself: it was heavy, even though empty at the moment, and he was slight and slender limbed. He waited for the door to swing back on its hinge before lowering the crate to the floor. The chaos of the camp receded when he shot the bolt back. Their hut was remote, discrete among the boulders on the ocean side of the breakwall, set some distance from the rest. He closed his eyes and listened to the sounds of Lagers Point, perhaps for a final time, pressing them into his mind as best he could: the surf as it rose and hit and receded from the rocks; seagulls wheeling over fish guts tossed from yesterday's twilight catch; wind, rattling down the corridor of huts, shaking flaps and window panes, whistling into crevices and cracks and

scratching over corrugated tin. Sounds he'd come to know but which, he knew, he would not miss.

The camp was in an uproar, reeling from the commandant's announcement at the morning rollcall: All internees were to be packed and ready to evacuate the camp at nine tomorrow morning, trunks and heavy luggage to the great hall by ten o'clock tonight. What followed had been hard to hear above the clamour, but Peter had pieced together the details: don't expect to be fed for a full day's forward journey so take food and drink in hand luggage. Twenty-five men to remain to organise luggage onto drays and droghers, clean the camp and prepare for decommissioning. They were dismissed in fewer than five minutes.

They were—to a man—dumbstruck. How could five hundred and eighty of them pack and depart in a single day their home of these last years? More astounding was the major's admission his original instructions had called for their evacuation in just three hours. Three hours! Even he had resisted that as military overstep. Disbelief had given way to apprehension, and apprehension to anger. Burkard, Wehrs and Wild had barely completed construction of their beach hut. It was not yet occupied and had cost them more than twenty pounds. Wortmann and Hayer had also spent a fortune renovating their cell. There was to be no compensation, not even where the administrators had known of the closure when accepting orders for materials. Their smirks confirmed their guilt: these Australians. What an honourless corps of reprobates. Injustice fuelled the current frenzy—they swarmed across the site like ants from a nest stomped on by a naughty child.

And what of their destination? Speculation was rife. Walter was convinced they were bound for Molonglo, where the Australian federal lands had been declared and a massive camp, he said, was being built. They'll consolidate, he said, like in '15 when they closed the regional camps. Täufert agreed it made more sense to have them all in a single place. Bourke, Berrima and Trial Bay, satellites of Liverpool, were too unwieldy to manage from a distance. Today's announcement was evidence of that. Others were hopeful the prisoner exchange had finally been agreed and they would soon be bound for Europe. But even Australian newspapers were reporting The Hague was stuck in the detail, unable to agree the terms, so that was unlikely too. Borck—as ignorant as he was optimistic—said the war was finally over.

The logical place was Liverpool. And no-one wanted that.

Peter took down the curtains from the landside window, heavy darkening drapes, and folded them into the crate. He remembered when he'd sewn them. He'd cried real

tears of frustration when they wouldn't hang flush so he'd ripped them down and started over. From the oceanside window he took the curtains down as well—these were pretty, cotton sheers of Kaiser blue. He'd spent a week with needle and thread stitching silver piping, seated in this very spot. And they had hung flawlessly. A flood of light filled the space illuminating details he'd forgotten, like the jam jar in the centre of the table. The flowers he picked from the hillside on Thursday had begun to wilt, their stems barely touching the slick of water at the bottom of the glass. Should he pack it in the crate? Would Walter want such an *objet* in their new location? He wondered if he and Walter were likely to remain together. He put his foot to the crate and pushed it to the door, screeching—wood on wood—as it scraped across the floor. So many questions. He sat on the chaise and looked around the room.

Yes, the gaol had become a home, of sorts, in these two long years. For the original inmates, it was closer to three. For others, elsewhere, it was more than four. Surely the war would not last beyond the year. But February 3rd 1916 was not a date he was likely to forget: he'd marched the six miles from the Jerseyville wharf, one of the ninety-four deported from Hong Kong. He knew he should be grateful to Walter for insisting he not be sent to Liverpool with the others of his class—then looking out for him since, in many little ways. When Walter had offered to share his cabin on Hong Kong's *Empress*, Peter was happy to escape the fetid hold. He was not naïve enough to think there'd be no price to pay. And then Walter insisted the bed was big enough for them both, more comfortable than the floor, and somehow a price was set and debt had been incurred. He told himself he was happy enough with the terms. They remained dockside on the *Empress* for a week til transferring to the *Yulgilbar* for the overnight voyage north. By then, the debt had compounded. And how thorough Walter was when managing his business.

He looked around the lime-washed walls of the hut Walter had bought for them both. Framed photographs tracked the passage of time. There was Walter at his Munich club in 1912. There he was with Sir Francis May, Hong Kong's erstwhile governor, in '13. There, in the lounge of Club Germania in Kennedy Road in '14. A single image of Peter hung unframed behind the door, taken in the Kowloon office not long after he had commenced at Walter's firm. He was caught at the side of the print, clutching his secretarial satchel and looking inwards to a group of seated diners, all of them looking out. He barely recognised himself in the photograph: he was nervously set, even for an active 20 year old, neat in a waistcoat and tie with long, blond hair pomaded back from

his high forehead. In the centre, of course, was Walter—sullen eyed and fleshy, something of his meal caught mid-slide down his crumpled suit.

While Walter had gone with his friends in search of their banker, Peter had run to the outbuildings where their trunks and suitcases were stored. He had snatched the abandoned crate and a coil of rope and then, with many of the others, headed to the beach to strip whatever might be taken away. The chair, the table, the chaise and shelving were impossible but the curtains, cushions and candles, the alcohol and cigarettes should be packed. What was still in the huts tomorrow morning would be in the houses of Arakoon by midday. The locals would miss their easy income if not its German source. Peter bristled at the thought of his space being torn apart by lecherous Australians.

A shift in the hubbub outside focussed his thoughts and he rose to look through the window. Back along the beach, Schiller, Rowe and Becker had stopped their packing and were pointing into the bay. The battleship, the *Brisbane*, which had steamed into the bay yesterday, black smoke billowing from all four stacks, was hoisting from its stern an unexpected sight: a seaplane. A seaplane! One of his guards had told him it was a sighting of this plane that excited the commandant's paranoia. They were convinced it was from the *Wolf* and that a raid off the coast was imminent. Fools, to not see it was their own naval defence! Schiller, as gullible as the guards, assumed a rescue was underway and had taken his bag to the beach. None had stopped to think *why* the *Wolf* would risk itself to rescue a band of fat colonists from the remote and distant Pacific. Here, at least, they were out of the way, housed at their own and the enemy government's expense.

Usually, rumours swept through the camp like summer southerlies, ruffling and unsettling the guards as much as the internees. But Peter had heard nothing of this, a possible camp closure. The sight of the *Brisbane* did not stir up the usual worry-mongers, as Peter might have thought. Not even the ship's searchlights playing over the gaol through the night shook suspicions of an impending evacuation. It still didn't make sense. The men who reclined in Peter's salon brought him all manner of information, and he'd learned to dissect and sift every skerrick—feigning total disinterest—to distil a probable truth.

On his hands and knees, he rattled a stub of floorboard under the chaise. When pushed at a certain angle, it flipped up to expose the sandy soil beneath. He reached down and moved a couple of rocks then dug in the sand til his fingers found the satchel wrapped in a silk scarf inner and oilskin outer, which he lifted into the room. He knew his money was safe but he counted it all the same, smoothing together the crisp paper corners and piling coins like turrets on sandcastles. The pocket watch he would take, of

course; the cigarette case as well—both gifts from admiring friends. Or at least that's what they'd said. But he knew as well as they knew these were claims made on his discretion. The English and German news-sheets, procured for him by another of his guards, he laid aside. They could remain. So too the postcards. Pornography, like everything else, was easy enough to acquire.

Peter had been intrigued by Hong Kong from the start, something Walter had no doubt observed from the delight in his exit from Europe. The stations in the Pacific had opportunities for men like him. He'd met wide-eyed versions of himself—Spanish, British, French and German—in Manila, Noumea, Hong Kong and Penang. In his first days at the company, Walter had taken him to the Kowloon den and insisted they smoke a pipe. He'd assured him that's what the best men did, that all German men in the territories had a favourite salon with velvet cushions and heavy curtains, filled with smoke and scents of burning spice. While most of the Kowloon *bua-yan jian*, flower-smoke rooms, featured local women in high-slit cheongsams, Walter's favourites did not. The drapes were heavier, the recesses darker. The smoke rolled in the air as peppered wisps.

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Peter reached for the lamp on the shelf above the chaise and the tin of paraffin oil beside it. He removed the glass chimney and placed it on the table by the jar. The flowers he now wore in a crown of the sort he made with his sister back in Berlin. He teased the brass wheel and watched the charred end of the wick extend, exposing the virgin cord beneath. He turned the wheel again, exposing more of the oil soaked thread.

With two determined twists, he separated the fount from the burner, placing the burner on the table with the chimney. The fount was full of oil. Walter had filled it yesterday from the newly opened tin, complaining again that Peter set the wick too high and burned the lamp too bright.

In later times, he would remember the exhilaration of the following moments.

He reached for the glass chimney, picking it up and turning it over in his hands before laying it on its side and rolling it with little flicks of his fingers towards the edge of the table. When it neared the edge, he flicked it one last time and watched it roll beyond. It fell to the wooden floor and broke.

He prised the lid from the tin of oil and picked it up in his left hand; in his right, he picked up the fount. Slowly at first but faster and faster he fanned his arms in the dragon dance Walter so admired. Paraffin slashed across the walls, the floor, the table, the postcards, the chaise, the crate and curtains and photographs, including the print of the

tentative boy, now also in torn pieces under the table. He threw the empty fount at one of Walter's photographs and the empty tin at another. Both clattered to the floor, taking their targets with them, sliding to rest in pooling oil and broken glass.

This war would not last much longer. He would make it to the end. There would be a life for his sister and himself back in Berlin. Meanwhile, wherever they were bound, there were still his gentlemen. There would always be gentlemen. And he would be free of Walter.

With the crate propping open the door, and his secretary's satchel over his shoulder, Peter lit a match and watched it flare, the sulphur tip burning and igniting the balsawood shaft. Along the beach, thick smoke billowed skyward; the yelps and hoots of comrades echoed around the granite blocks.

He flicked the match inside and felt the rush of heat.

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Image 2.3: Battleship HMAS *Brisbane* enters Trial Bay, c.Friday, 17 May 1918.



Image 2.4: Burning of the beach huts, Sunday, 19 May 1918.



Image 2.5: Internees march from Trial Bay to Jerseyville, Monday, 20 May 1918.

2.1 Introduction: Masculinities of space and the creation of place

So most of the owners decided to vent their frustration with a bonfire on the last afternoon. Between 3–4 pm, almost three-quarters of the 120 huts went up in smoke, and because some stoked the fire with tar, kerosene, etc., hardly a trace was left of most buildings. It was quite picturesque, and especially after dark, the still-smouldering ruins lit up the whole beach.

—Wilhelm Woelber, 18 June 1918

According to human geographer Tim Cresswell, ‘space’ turns into ‘place’ when it becomes invested with meaning.¹ At Trial Bay, such investment was prosecuted in myriad ways but was most pronounced where it involved a physical transformation—such as in the clearing of land or the erection of buildings, like Peter and Walter’s beach hut in the story ‘Smouldering Ruins’.² But so too was its elimination, such as in the burning of the huts on 19–20 May 1918, highly charged with meaning. Cresswell invokes the theoretical work of Henri Lefebvre by observing the inherently social and power-charged nature of any created place. In times of war, and in internment, the claims to place are more acute. The conditions Lefebvre argues in *The Production of Space* as constituting space are similar to those described by Raewyn Connell as constituting masculinities. For instance, where Lefebvre notes the multiple meanings that can be ascribed to space at any given time, Connell gives us ‘multiplicities’; where Lefebvre says that prevailing social values will determine a space’s preferred and principal use, Connell gives us ‘hegemonies’.³ The beach at Trial Bay is an example of a place where meaning was vested temporally and spatially. First, multiplicities are evident: the beach was simultaneously used and valued and given meaning by internees who fished, swam, built and utilised beach huts, played ball games, sunbathed or attended the gymnastic club [*Turnverein*]. Second, hegemonies emerged based on wealth and class, such as where richer, older men would occupy a preferred position in the Strand Café; or based on youth and virility, such as where the group of young men who called themselves ‘the

¹ Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*, 2, 7.

² See also, Davies, ‘Conservation Management and Cultural Tourism Plan,’ 1, 11–17 and Appendix F. I am mindful that perceptions of ‘space’ by European occupants were ignorant of perceptions of ‘place’ already existing among local Indigenous people. In preparing his heritage report, the heritage architect Paul Davies engaged with a number of Dunghutti advisers, including from the local Aboriginal community of South West Rocks, who noted the cultural significance of the area: ‘This area [Laggers Point] over a period of time was a gathering and meeting place for our people. Different tribes from the surrounding area would gathered [sic] and meet and then they would journey back home.’

³ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 26ff.

gladiators' would, often naked, run, swim and wrestle and dominate the limited space.⁴ Regardless, for each individual or group, the beach was a place where a chosen activity was practised and identity was forged. But the beach was also a place that was temporally marked: it was occupied by the internees between 9am and 6pm when the main gaol gate was open and they were permitted access. Outside these times, it was the domain of the Australian guards, horsemen or local people who may have chosen to occupy and ascribe other meanings altogether.⁵

Lefebvre's argument—that social production of urban space is fundamental to the reproduction of society and, therefore, of capitalism itself—reflects his broader critique of capitalism and his standing as a Marxist theorist. Central to such critique was the condition of living in a post-industrial, modern world in which expectations of the place of home had changed dramatically in the imaginations of most. Prostitution was a similar capitalist complication. For men whose professional choices had taken them to the other side of the world—as colonists, migrants or merchant mariners—conceptions of home had already been disrupted and reinvented at least once.⁶ Colonial life supported European counter-cultures as well as providing destinations for those seeking 'flight from domesticity',⁷ such as sexual or social 'others' escaping oppressive legal and moral states. The Pacific, for Europeans, had further acquired an exotic, sexual mystique which manifested variously across Polynesia, Melanesia, China, South-East Asia and Ceylon. The movements of internee cohorts en route to Trial Bay, characterised by multiple mergings and divisions of a forming mass, necessarily required and enabled shifts in conceptions of home as place.

This chapter interrogates how the all-male Trial Bay cohort modified and either liberated or denied masculinities in the important place of home. It examines how

⁴ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 25 March 1916. See also, Claudio Minca, 'Geographies of the Camp,' 74. Minca ponders a twenty-first century beach spatiality issue. On the Italian island of Lampedusa, European holiday-makers sunbake while asylum-seeking refugees arrive (or are washed onto the beach, drowned) and await detention at the nearby internment camp.

⁵ Kelly, *Always Afternoon*, 172–173: Kelly's novel positions the beach outside the gaol's walls as a place where lovers meet in the moonlight. The opening of the main gate was a further means by which the internees' ability to access the spaces of the camp could be controlled. While the gates were opened longer in summer, including an extra hour when daylight saving was introduced in the summer of 1916/17, the gates could be closed and locked as a punishment for adverse behaviour.

⁶ Lefebvre in Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*, 38.

⁷ Tosh, 'Home and Away: The Flight from Domesticity,' 575. See also, Tosh, *A Man's Place*, 170–194. Initially, Tosh's 'flight from masculinity' was grounded in responses of white, middle class Englishmen to changing social dynamics. He has since reviewed the premise and extended it to include white English working class and white bourgeois European men's responses to comparable social dynamics. Regarding the lure of colonial life in Asia and the South Pacific for homosexual men, see: Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality*, 246–275; and Smaal, *Sex, Soldiers and the South Pacific*, 3–6.

internees conceived and organised their domestic lives in order to make sense of their internment, and how relationships with the re-created space informed key expressions of their masculinity. Conceptions of class are critical to these displays, as are understandings of the private and public realms of being. Performance of masculine duty until that point, particularly where tied to earlier values, was subverted, demanding similar renegotiation. For some, class-based expectations of domestic comportment were expanded; for others, they were diminished. In examining these, the chapter considers the relationship between the subversion of notions of home and the development of proto-queer sensibilities and subcultures, such as were then being struck elsewhere in the world.

About ‘Smouldering Ruins’

The buttress for this first empirical pillar is the story ‘Smouldering Ruins’. The story imagines both a place and space created at Trial Bay by the fictional character Peter as he tries to make meaning from his internment experience. The space he occupies in the camp is liminal yet his desire for a space that is ‘home’, for him as well as his sister, is strong. For him, no less than other men in the camp, both physical and social boundaries are blurred, and require ongoing negotiation. The story places him in an occupation for which there is rarely archival evidence but which, in an all-male internment environment extending nearly three years, is an unremarkable reality: male prostitution. The starting point is Otto Wortmann’s diary entry of January 1918, suggesting the existence of a brothel (of sorts) within the camp, where a younger man was sold for sex by a richer, older one.⁸ The reference triggers questions unable to be answered except through speculation: What was the relationship between the two men? Under what circumstances was the younger man coerced to sell himself for sex? Why, in an environment where other evidence suggests homosexual activity was occurring and where the risk of blackmail was so substantial, would clients have chosen to engage a prostitute? The fiction allows this speculation through the invention of the characters Peter and Walter. Through them, it is possible to comment on the complexity of day-to-day survival in the camp as well as drawing attention to the instinct for internees to control what they protected as private and what they yielded as public.

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⁸ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 3 January 1918. This is, in fact, a remarkable piece of evidence. While there are some indicators of the individual’s identity and that he had some agency in the transactions, the evidence is inconclusive. He is therefore fictionalised as ‘Peter’.

2.2 Home, gender and *Heimat*

Dear Mother! ...

Our cell is 6 metres long, 3 metres wide... We bought ourselves a lot of timber and got working. We first built two bunk beds, one atop the other to save space, from timber and potato bags, then a table, chairs, a wardrobe and a dresser; lined all the walls with jute and bought mats for the stone floor (because it can get abominably cold and we both have had rheumatisms before), bought a lamp, a bucket, a washbasin, soap, a broom, a couple of paintings, and after spending a lot of money, labouring and sweating and swearing through a lot of hours, we have ourselves a reasonably cosy chamber (albeit a rather small one).

—Otto Wortmann, 19 December 1916

In the same way Max Herz's letters to Ethel evoke a quotidian family existence, so too does Otto Wortmann's letter to his mother say much about his domestic situation and expectations—both as they were and as he wanted her to think of them.⁹

First, his tone is buoyant, occasionally playful, as might be expected in a letter from an absent son to a family desperate for news of his well-being. This contrasts with the tone of his diaries wherein, across the five internment years that he wrote, his increasingly depressed state becomes apparent. His desire to allay his family's concerns over his predicament may also account for his exaggerating the size of his cell. The floor area he claims as 18m² (190ft²) is almost triple the actual cell size of 6.5m² (70ft²).¹⁰

Second, the content of his description reveals the priority he and his cellmate—fellow German New Guinea planter Paul Hayer—give to the (literal) construction of a new domestic space on arrival at Trial Bay.¹¹ This was the first of a number of refurbishments the pair undertook as their needs and wishes changed. But, at the outset, they had little choice.

⁹ Jungian psychology theorises the *Anima* as a core part of subconscious male identity and desire. Men will construct an idyll of feminine purity and goodness and project this onto their mothers, sisters, daughters and lovers. For men, women then become the carriers and embodiment of the idealised image, for example, representing the loyalty which a man must sometimes forego; being the compensation for his struggles and sacrifices, disappointments and failure; and the solace for the bitterness of his life.

¹⁰ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 30 August 1915. 'Our cells measure 7 ft by 11 ft and are 8 ft high; they have an iron door onto the corridor, which in the times of criminal inmates was locked at night but now remains open, and in the opposite wall a small barred window, as is usual in prison cells.'

¹¹ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 11, 14 July 1916. Wortmann, always struggling for money, is embarrassed he owes 50 per cent of the refurbishment costs to Hayer who 'financed the entire renovation'.



Image 2.6: Internees Max Herz (4756) and Oscar Plate (4949) from NSW; and Paul Hayer (5157) and Otto Wortmann (5139) from German New Guinea. [Source: National Archives of Australia]

The first cohort of 200 internees, including Wortmann and Hayer, walked the six miles from the Jerseyville river wharf on the morning of Wednesday, 18 August 1915.¹² But their initial enthusiasm at the sight of their future home, glimpsed as the *Yulgilbar* rounded Laggars Point and prepared to cross the Macleay River bar, was tempered by the discovery of its empty cells and inadequate infrastructure.¹³ What had not been sold and removed when the site was abandoned in 1903 had been simply left to ruin.¹⁴ Except for four chairless tables in the great hall and fresh whitewash on some cell walls, there was little evidence of preparation for their arrival.¹⁵ Commandant John F. K. Eaton's clear expectation was that internees would outfit and furnish their cells themselves, including either procuring or constructing beds, as most had already done in at least one previous camp.¹⁶ This was an inauspicious start to camp relations—that internees, and not the Australian government, were to finance their own incarceration. However, that the

¹² Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 20 August 1915. See also, 'Coastal,' *Daily Commercial News and Shipping List*, 19 August 1915, 4. Local people, dressed in Sunday best, had come for miles to witness their arrival.

¹³ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 20 August 1915. Internees were transported to Trial Bay via the North Coast Steamship Company's SS *Yulgilbar* which made a bi-weekly overnight voyage from Sydney. 'The next morning we found ourselves keeping fairly close to the shore until, around 9am, we drew level with what would be our next home. There sitting on a small peninsula was a large building with a roof of red grooved tiles which was our prison. Behind it several 4–5,000 ft high hills, and the whole landscape quite picturesque.' After Liverpool, the diarist refers to the gaol as a 'hotel', as the term 'prison' makes it sound 'too ordinary'. Max Herz also described the first glimpse of his future abode: 'Seen from sea our future abode looks like one of those Saracen castles near Amalfi, the home of sea brigands... [whereas] inside it was just a heap of thick masonry... a huge pile of stone.' Letter from Max Herz to Mrs Ethel Herz, c.20 January 1916.

¹⁴ Carey, *Tales of Trial Bay*, 46. See also, 'A Deserted Gaol, Trial Bay Prison,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 October 1906; and Neil, *Trial Bay Gaol*, 10–11.

¹⁵ Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 247. See also, Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 20 August 1915. Woelber notes there were 'neither tables nor chairs nor beds nor lamps in the cells, which all have concrete floors, so you can't even think of sleeping on the floor for any length of time with nothing but the provided simple palliasses and three blankets'.

¹⁶ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 20 August 1915. Woelber notes that the timber was delivered after eight days whereafter 'joinery and carpentry activities exploded all around so as to produce the necessary cabinets, shelves, tables and benches'. The internees submitted a £250 claim for the cost of the timber to the Department of Defence. It was ignored.

starting point for constructing their homes were empty cells with whitewashed walls—veritable blank canvases—enables analysis of how their homes were reimagined. Beyond meeting an immediate need for shelter, their choices in creating new domestic spaces from such bare beginnings reveal their priorities, tastes and desires.¹⁷ Wortmann's purchases—coverings for floors and walls, an oil lamp and decorative paintings—reflect homemaking beyond basic needs and an attempt to recreate a comfortable European drawing room.



Image 2.7: Remnants of German decorative frieze on whitewashed walls in Trial Bay cell. While most graffiti is from later in the twentieth century, evidence of internees tagging their spaces is also evident. [Source: author, 2019]

Third, the letter reveals that they had access to money—a defining characteristic of the cohort, despite the frequent logistical problems of converting credit to cash or the demands on many to also support families and business interests outside the gaol walls. Having money and remaining fluid in the camp economy were significant markers of masculine autonomy and resilience, no less so than in former times.¹⁸ The wealth associated with the Trial Bay cohort fuelled the shaping of hegemonic masculine forms within the camp environment. For example, some internees employed compatriots to serve as orderlies, standing in for the houseboys, cooks and servants they had retained in

¹⁷ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 15 July 1916.

¹⁸ See, for example, Diaries of Friedrich Meier, 23 October 1917; and Otto Wortmann, 17 December 1918. This will be discussed in greater detail in the following Chapter 3: Work, where I note that many internees employed in colonial enterprises or in the merchant marine continued to draw full or partial salaries against future earnings.

their former colonial compounds or bourgeois homes.¹⁹ Orderlies assisted with the daily domestic tasks of washing government-issued tin plates and cutlery after meals, keeping cells swept of sand and cleaning and mending clothes.²⁰ But beyond these, they fulfilled an equally important optical function of maintaining an imperial status quo, thus reinforcing the class and culture gap that separated the cohort from their Australian guards as well as amplifying differences among the internees themselves. For white colonial men in Asian-Pacific colonies, the home was a critical site for legitimising the colonial venture: by controlling the masculinities of indigenous workers, through feminising their work and physiognomies and positioning even grown men as ‘boys’, colonists sought to maintain dominion of the space and establish the superiority of their own white male masculine forms.²¹ Photographs such as Image 2.8 below reinforce the prevalence of class. The image shows the Hong Kong merchants Carl von Hofgaarden and Albrecht Berblinger with a third internee (Hans Ermekeil). In age, dress and position in the picture, the subordinate status of the fourth man (Vitalis Schaffgang) is inferred. Schaffgang’s occupation was listed as ‘clerk’ when he was first arrested in the British colony in Ceylon. It’s possible he had been an employee of a wealthier German who was also interned, but kept in service for the duration of his internment as a steward or orderly.

¹⁹ Diary of Otto Wortmann, September–October 1917. Journal 1, 7–9. In this section, Wortmann remembers ‘Kanak’ servants and Chinese cooks bringing food and drink to the enclosure fence for their interned German employers and frolicking in their new found freedom. Wortmann assumes that theft and insubordination by their servants were to be the inevitable outcomes of the internment of the Germans, rather than honesty and loyalty. See also, Lowrie, ‘White Men and their Chinese “Boys”’, 37; Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality*, 247–272, 287–290.

²⁰ The presence and activities of servants will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

²¹ Lowrie, ‘White Men and their Chinese “Boys”’, 55–56.



Image 2.8: Seated L–R: Carl von Hofgaarden; Albrecht Berblinger; Hans Ermekeil. Standing: Vitalis Schaffgang.

Without the presence of women, on whom middle class men had centred understandings of their contemporary bourgeois homes, the assurances of the status quo began to unravel. This became evident in simple things—for example, through a relaxing of expectations for domestic comportment and dress. In a creative journal entry he titled ‘We Live This Way!’, Wortmann writes an allegory of the spiralling loss of a distinguished masculine identity resulting from the absence in the camp of women. While his intention is rhetorical, his conveyed sense of something lost is real:

[Internees] forgot that outside their fortress people were dressed decently and no longer lived like wild animals... And so the men forgot that elsewhere in the world there were women and girls, pretty young girls one could love and cherish and kiss. They simply stopped believing that girls existed, just as one distrusts a fairytale full of fabled beasts.²²

²² Diary of Otto Wortmann, ‘We Live This Way!’ 14 October 1916, 138.

In projecting his own emasculation in these terms, Wortmann captures what, on one hand, is the debilitating truth of an internment where there is no end in sight: the inevitable confusion, if not collapse, of the pillars of one's social identity when one forgets 'who one is'. On the other hand, such chaos exposes the hollowness of identity markers like nation, race, gender and class, as well as masculinity and heteronormativity—all of which in current discourse are held to be socially constructed. This is what provides a toehold for other renderings of identity to be considered, including various forms of symbiotic male–male relationships between cellmates in the camp environment. Wortmann and Hayer, while both of a similar age and from the plantations of German New Guinea, were not close friends yet were able to negotiate a working domestic relationship.²³

The former status quo was also maintained through the nomination of men of wealth and corporate standing to the internees' central organising committee—such as the imperial trade commissioner and commercial attaché, Walter de Haas;²⁴ Dr Walter Pupke from the German-Australian Shipping Company;²⁵ and Oscar Plate and Hans Heineken,²⁶ key local figures from Australia's biggest German company, Lohmann & Co., regional agents for the grand German shipping line Norddeutscher Lloyd.²⁷ All were immediately nominated for roles on the central camp committee.²⁸

²³ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 29 March 1916. Wortmann notes, 'The relationship with my cellmate is, strangely, always a little tense, but neither of us really wants to know where the tension comes from.'

²⁴ Gaunson, *Fighting the Kaiserreich*, chapter 8; Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 101. After the German consul-general Richard Kiliani left Australia under diplomatic immunity at the beginning of the war, De Haas was the highest ranking consular official in the country.

²⁵ Pupke initiated the school for naval machinists in the Trial Bay camp. The school offered substantial training by interned officers of the merchant navy, up to and including Machinist Certificate First Class, the certification of which was recognised as a legitimate qualification after the war.

²⁶ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 18 January 1916. Heineken was the 24–25 year old son of one of the global directors of Norddeutscher Lloyd (N.D.L.). He worked in the export division of Lohmann & Co., which was the regional agent for N.D.L. managed by Oscar Plate.

²⁷ Gaunson, *Fighting the Kaiserreich*, chapter 8. Gaunson makes the claim that German shipping magnates Plate and Pupke were chief among the high profile Germans engaged in pre-war and wartime espionage [*Kriegsnachrichtendienst*], particularly against the Australian navy and shipping interests. He claims that De Haas was 'a major player in a secret, rare and dangerous game of covert intelligence gathering'. Plate maintained his innocence, occasionally going to extreme lengths to challenge perceived slights to his honour, e.g. 'Letter from Oscar Plate to Judge W. H. Williams, (Alien) Release Commission,' April 1919.

²⁸ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 18 January 1916. Most held the roles only briefly.



Image 2.9: Internees Walter de Haas (4740); Walter Pupke (4761) and Hans Heineken (5211) from NSW; and Albrecht Berblinger (4993) from Hong Kong. [Source: National Archives of Australia]

The internee from Hong Kong, Albrecht Berblinger, the owner of a trading company housed in Hong Kong and Canton, was elected multiple times as the president of the camp committee. While most concessions of significance were achieved under his direction, he remained a polarising figure, including for the frequently dictatorial approach he took to managing his presidency. For this, he was nicknamed the ‘Tzar’.²⁹ Even so, few disputed the benefits of his earliest win: transferring responsibility for the baking of the daily bread for internees and guards to German bakers using the restored camp oven, rather than purchasing it locally. The resulting savings were credited to the kitchen to supplement the rations with fresh fruit and vegetables.³⁰



Image 2.10: Albrecht Berblinger in a well-appointed salon, probably the hut dedicated to committee business.

²⁹ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 20 April 1917; 3 April 1918. When the unity of the camp community fractured in 1918, those loyal to Berblinger became known as ‘Royalists’ while those who rebelled were ‘Bolsheviks’.

³⁰ Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 251. See also, Diary of Otto Wortmann, 18 December 1916; and Letter written by Walter De Haas to German Foreign Office (Berlin) recommending the award of an Iron Cross with white ribbon for Berblinger’s service to the internees of Trial Bay, 7 June 1920.

Wortmann's letter to his mother also suggests the internees were able to source both required and non-essential items and have them delivered to their remote Trial Bay location. Certainly, the local economy benefitted immensely from the presence of the internees and the guards, even though there was some reluctance among the Germans to allow a benefit from their captivity to flow to the Australian community.³¹ But cell refurbishments were neither a financial possibility nor a priority for most internees in other camps. In Holdsworthy, displays of conspicuous wealth could attract unwanted attention from thieves or others who would extort it.³² Wortmann's inventory of purchases, presumably an agreed list for his and Hayer's enforced cohabitation, reveals no such fear of theft or extortion but a middle class expectation of comfort and cleanliness in the domestic space. Here, conspicuous displays of wealth were no less telling of social or professional status than they were before the war. The space in which Berblinger appears in Image 2.10, like Wortmann and Hayer's cell construction, reflects a comfortable bourgeois salon typical of what would be found in Europe, with books and floral soft furnishings and an abundance of photographs of women and children, presumably his absent family.³³ Here, again, the link between memory and identity is evident. Deborah Chambers argues for the significance of family photographs in the home: that they represent ideas about spatial identity and belonging. She notes that family albums in particular provide narratives that structure meanings over time.³⁴ Facilitated by the new age of popular photography, Berblinger's identity as a husband and father is assured by the photos of family with which he populates his new home. That he chooses this space as the setting for Dubotzki's portrait of him—a print of which he doubtless sent to his family, as Herz does in the story 'Sunshine on the Avon'—reinforces his ongoing command of the domestic space in which his wife and children still reside, albeit in photographic form.

The feminised, familial aspect of Berblinger's salon exemplifies what is also evident in Wortmann's extended letter to his mother, written in his journal over several months. That he addresses a description of his domestic arrangements so pointedly to his mother associates her—at least in his mind, as a woman and a mother—with the domestic space and as the central channel of familial connection:

³¹ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 19 February 1917. See also, Carey, *Tales of Trial Bay*, 130.

³² Diary of Georg Boysen, n.d. See also, Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 208–209.

³³ Smith, 'The German Speaking Community in Hong Kong, 1846–1914,' 44. While it's unclear when Berblinger arrived in Hong Kong, records indicate he opened his import/export trading business in 1908. A daughter Dorothea died in infancy in Hong Kong in 1913 and a son Georg was born in 1914.

³⁴ Deborah Chambers (2003), cited in Blunt and Dowling, *Home*, 70.

Listen, dear Mother, to what you will hear, first hand, about the paradisiac realm of Trial Bay, its residents and infrastructure, and carefully relate it to Father and the siblings.³⁵

Wortmann's bourgeois association of the home as a feminine space was common at the turn of the twentieth century.³⁶ Middle class boys like him, one of 23 bachelor merchants and planters deported from Rabaul,³⁷ grew into adulthood with a strong sense of their mothers' patriotism and the centrality of motherhood to both the sensibility of *Deutschtum* and the construction of *Heimat*.³⁸ His diary reveals his devotion to a strong and loving mother to whom his thoughts in internment frequently returned:

My dearest wish, my greatest dream, that of returning home one day and hug the best and dearest mother of them all, may not come true, could fail. How much would Germany, my country, be worth then? ...

To have to be in captivity with all the worries about one's dearest person, one's mother, with thousands of daily worries, without a job, without an occupation, is a never-ending and constantly gnawing pain.³⁹

While her son's diary makes his sentiments clear, the expectations of Frau Wortmann in relation to her world, her position in her home, her hopes or her attitude to her son are not. That he was interned on the other side of the world no doubt caused her—and his father—anguish; however, the chaos in Germany and that he was of military age and would have been conscripted into service had he been at home might have given some relief. His expectations of her are emblematic of the contemporary masculine view:

But I know my mother; she will bear her aches and pains in silence and pretend that all is well just to spare her loved ones any worry.⁴⁰

The letter to his mother is intriguing for one additional reason. Begun in December 1916 and completed in February 1917, the text comprises some 15,000 words and ranges across 70 pages in two separate journals. It appears it was neither sent to nor read by his mother but, rather, was confiscated along with his other papers prior to his deportation in 1920. His mother and family did not receive his detailed rendering of his domestic arrangements at Trial Bay, nor his account of life as a 21 year old plantation manager in German New Guinea's Kabakaul where, in September 1914, the Australian

³⁵ Letter from Otto Wortmann to his mother, 19 December 1916, 3.

³⁶ This is not to imply that the home was not also a significant site of masculine power and retreat from work.

³⁷ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 10–11. Date of writing appears to be Sep/Oct 1917, but refers to July 1915.

³⁸ In a similar domain as Australian Aboriginal connections to country, *Heimat* marks relationship with space and place, history and culture in a particularly German manner.

³⁹ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 7 January 1918.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Naval and Military Expeditionary Force captured the German wireless station at Bita Paka, bringing the war to remote New Guinea. The letter recalls his own arrest and internment in Rabaul before subsequent transfer to Sydney and Trial Bay and is separate from the extensive diary in which his routines as a young plantation manager were recorded. In an environment where the keeping of diaries was problematic and the number, length and content of letters were strictly limited, it's possible a 'letter to his mother' may have been an attempt to gain plausible deniability should he ever have been required to defend his writing as harmless. Regardless, he clearly associates his mother as a safe recipient of the information he seeks to record. Tropes of bourgeois European manliness at the time emphasised the positive role of mothers in instilling a moral manliness in their sons. Men's courtship practices were also scrutinised. Married men were urged to allow time and thought for their family relationships, while younger men were encouraged to negotiate the transition from the family home to independence, and how they should conduct their lives thereafter. Relationships of young men and their mothers were therefore critical.⁴¹

Marilyn Lake and Joy Damousi remind us that the history of war is intrinsically a story of gender and the role of 'the mother' is often problematically painted. The paradox is that war will both reinforce existing gender norms of masculine and feminine behaviour while fashioning fresh possibilities for men and women.⁴² This, as Wortmann's letter suggests, is true for histories of internment too.

In June/July 1916, Hayer and Wortmann renovated the cell space they had created from nothing on arrival a year earlier:

In the evenings, we also worked in our cell, renovating and beautifying it. A wardrobe separates the bedroom, consisting of a double bunk, from the lounge, reception or living room which has been fitted out not with a carpet but with panels of burlap that we fastened with rails. It really looks good and it makes for a change.⁴³

The project added variety to an otherwise dull routine for the cellmates. Again, two years later in April 1918, the pair embarked on yet another refurbishment project, this one more substantial, involving carpentry—making beds, tables and dressers—and drilling holes into the thick stone walls to suspend what they could below the high ceiling.

⁴¹ Tosh, 'The Flight from Domesticity: Revisited,' 561ff.

⁴² Lake and Damousi (eds), *Gender in War*, 1; Garton, *War and Masculinity in Twentieth Century Australia*, 86ff. The variously gendered conditions of war are well analysed, including by: Cooper et al. (eds), *Arms and the Woman*; Higonnet et al. (eds), *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*; and Cooke and Woollacott (eds), *Gendering War Talk*.

⁴³ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 7 July 1916.

They planed and oiled the new furniture and spent a full day painting the cell interior. The creation of a more private space is what most excited Wortmann:

As the makeover's pièce de résistance we built a podium across half the room, about one metre high, resting on poles and covered with floor-tiling timber, on which the new writing desk sits; this way I get a lot more light when writing at the desk during the day, whereas at night, Hayer resides in lofty heights and I sit at the old table below, so we enjoy a degree of separation and privacy. After an almost endless amount of sanding, painting, sweeping, etc., the new flat is ready and we greatly enjoy it. At least for the next few weeks the newness of it will keep us entertained. The only but major drawback is that the whole affair was ridiculously expensive and thus put me into debt.⁴⁴

After the expense and effort, the Trial Bay camp was summarily closed one month later on 18 May 1918 and all were returned to Holdsworthy. Wortmann and Hayer enjoyed the newness and benefits of their work for only six weeks.

Heimat, homeland, Fatherland

Although we do have a fair share of deserters and slackers in our motley crew of people, having been collected from various places in the East like Australia, Hong Kong, Tsingtao, Singapore, Saigon, Sumatra, Bangkok, (Colombo &) Ceylon, plus New Guinea, the vast majority of them is thankfully very patriotic. They are honest and worthy people who braved the winds, proved themselves as expatriates and gained admiration and respect; who long to return to Germany and be able to serve their country, who can and will be useful to Germany in many ways.⁴⁵

In addition to the role of the mother, the role of 'the father' in German nationalist narratives warrants exploration. The primary axes along which masculine identities were cast in the Trial Bay camp were of empire (that is, to which side political allegiance was given) and prestige (that is, how one's personal standing inside and outside the camp elevated the individual and contributed to the whole).⁴⁶ Social hegemony for bourgeois men was thus inextricably aligned with self and group conceptions of nation and class. While the personal political leanings of most internees will never be known, Wortmann's comment above confirms that support for the Kaiser and the German war effort among compatriots from across the colonial diaspora was an anticipated norm. German nationalist sentiment, if tepid among men outside Germany before the war, was

⁴⁴ Ibid., 3 April 1918.

⁴⁵ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 14 July 1916.

⁴⁶ This was not the case in other camps where the divide was more pronounced, e.g. with Slavs from the Hapsburg states of Austria-Hungary and Serbia. Splivalo, *The Home Fires*, 53. Splivalo says, 'The war had split the Slavs on the goldfields into two sharply antagonistic groups. One group sided with the Entente and the great mother Russia who, they deeply hoped, would rescue them from Hapsburg bondage. The other group favoured the continuation of the Austro-Hungarian apostolic monarchy.'

amplified as a consequence of the internment experience.⁴⁷ This speaks to the unsurprising yet powerful political reality of war: that diverse and disparate individuals are brought together when convinced of the existence of a common enemy. In a war of empire between belligerent nation-states, identities of both oneself and one's enemy were easily settled in contests of (performed) allegiance. For non-interned people, demonstrations of zeal, such as enlistment for service, purchasing war bonds and participation in friendly or patriotic societies, became important signifiers of patriotism—both genuinely felt or otherwise projected. But symbolic displays also affirmed identity e.g. the wearing of uniforms, ribbons and badges, the flying of a flag or being heard publicly denouncing the enemy. As noted by Maxwell and Davis, the experience of Germanness in diaspora communities followed different historical trajectories from the Germanness of Germany and central Europe.⁴⁸ For interned people in the Antipodes, for whom access to more tangible markers was denied, symbolic displays of allegiance took on greater meaning. Thus, the vigour of one's support for the Kaiser, the singing of nationalist songs, writing letters of complaint and the expression of German cultural orthodoxies were tools by which internees were able to affirm identity.⁴⁹ Among these expressions, a singular German ideal emerged as an imagined 'Fatherland', anchored in the earlier notion of *Deutschtum* and personified by the Kaiser himself as the benevolent, authoritative caretaker.⁵⁰ Adopting the Kaiser's tastes and hobbies as one's own—such as his fascination for military uniforms or his anti-modern artistic and design

⁴⁷ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 15 December 1915. Here, Woelber says, 'Many a one entered camp with...hardly a German sentiment, but is now up there with the best.' Being positioned as enemy aliens put internees in alliance with one another and in opposition to Britain and Australia. Kaiser loyalists were created from men who had sons fighting for Britain, who may have been born in Australia or naturalised as British subjects, who would otherwise not have imagined they could not support Australian interests.

⁴⁸ Maxwell and Davis, 'Germanness Beyond Germany: Collective Identities in German Diaspora Communities,' 1. These differences were compounded with multiple movements and mixing of internees.

⁴⁹ Here, I do not wish to ignore the complexities of national identity nor underestimate the internal opposition to war generated in Britain, Germany and Australia, including by the forces of communism and socialism or Irish nationalism. For discussion on the 'crazy quilt of little states and principalities' that comprised the German federation in the pre-war period, see Dirk Verheyen, *The German Question*, 16.

⁵⁰ Verheyen, *The German Question*, 17ff. See also, Duberman, *Jews, Queers, Germans*, 18–19. Duberman speculates on the Kaiser's actual personality, rather than the heroic version presented by sycophantic advisers like Eulenburg and von Bülow, listing the following unappealing qualities: 'his adolescent humour; his harshness; his inability to listen; his pretention to knowledge and wisdom he doesn't possess; his assumption of infallibility in all matters, including the artistic and the spiritual; his limited attention span; [his] limited compassion.' These are in direct contrast to the idealised paternal figure of the Kaiser.

aesthetic—were subtle ways of reinforcing both national and personal masculine identity. Many also groomed their moustaches in the imperial style of the Kaiser.⁵¹

The conservative and nationalist attitudes that tended to unite internees at Trial Bay sat in contrast to broader politics in the Holdsworthy main camp, where there was greater diversity of class, wealth, education and state of origin. Anthony Splivalo noted:

Herr Brandes vigorously attacked the Monarchy within easy hearing of other Germans whose opinions might have been poles from his. Yet, nobody got excited, nobody threatened him. What astonished me was not only the great variety of political thought among Germans, but the extent to which these differences were tolerated. The Germans, I found, were not at all faithful to the Kaiser. There were gradations of opinion from the most rabid monarchist down to the humblest socialist. There were loud arguments and discussions, but never blows over political divergences.⁵²

The expression of nationalistic tendencies at Trial Bay inevitably led to antipathy between the internees and their Australian guards.⁵³ Whereas in the smaller camps relationships were more personal, there was little opportunity or appetite for fraternisation in the bigger camps. At the temporary holding camp at Claremont in Tasmania, ‘There were rumours that the friendly relationships between soldiers and prisoners had become so intimate that the camp commandant had to intervene.’⁵⁴ However, for the men of Trial Bay, the true scrutiny came less from the guards than from other German internees, both at Trial Bay and at the other Australian camps.⁵⁵ Internees felt a need to justify their privileged position. In the same way white male hegemony was maintained in colonial settings, the distinction of social rank was thought to be served by a superior ability to organise, remain civil and civilised, present a unified, dignified front, and remain physically fit, clean, mentally stable and culturally engaged. In doing so, the men of Trial Bay were able to model personal and public Germanness and perform their patriotic duty to the Kaiser and Fatherland. Those fortunate to have been spared the harsher internment experience at the main camp had a vested interest in remaining at Trial Bay, where they enjoyed relative comfort, freedom, prestige and association with a ‘better class’ of man.⁵⁶

⁵¹ ‘Kaiser’s Moustache: Warlike Appearance Altered,’ *Evening Journal*, 27 May 1908. The article says that ‘Thirty million loyal Teutons, the estimated male population of the Empire, are directly affected, for to trim one’s moustache in the martial manner immortalised by the Emperor, has become an unwritten law of masculine patriotism throughout the Fatherland.’ This will be discussed further in Chapter 5: Body.

⁵² Splivalo, *The Home Fires*, 185.

⁵³ Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 263.

⁵⁴ Diary of Fritz Stegherr, n.d., 39.

⁵⁵ Report of visit by Swiss consul, Mr Marc Ruttu, 17 June 1917. Mail between camps was only allowed with the permission of the commanding officer.

⁵⁶ Diary of Georg Boysen, n.d., 14.

Because the experience of internment for all but a few internees was characterised by long periods of enforced isolation with minimal contact with society outside the gaol perimeter, cultural life occurred largely in a vacuum. Many of the internees engaged with no more of Australia than what they saw from the deck of a ship or the window of a train.⁵⁷ Nor did many have any interest, other than what was to be seen in the brief moments when they were being marched to or from a train or ship, particularly when the Australian populace would gather to stare and shout abuse.⁵⁸ For the three years at Trial Bay, even though the internal cultural life was surprisingly rich, there is little evidence of cultural exchange flowing in or out through the gaol walls. Individual guards benefitted financially and socially but, generally, there was little interaction between internees and a wider Australian community. This suited the internees for whom Australia and Australians held little appeal and adds an important socio-cultural element to the internment experience: insularity. In the absence of other influences, life was necessarily as imagined entirely by the internees themselves. Few of the economic, industrial, social or cultural forces that shaped either Aboriginal or colonial Australian development were relevant to the experience of internment at Trial Bay. It was as if, for the aberrant years 1915–1918, an outpost of the German empire existed on the Australian mainland.

Into the woods

What could be more beautiful than getting out of the walls and bathing in sun and nature?... We wandered into even denser bush. Around us, there were palms, eucalyptus, gum trees, grasstrees, with their long narrow leaves, and tall ferns, their huge fronds sloping downwards like a wedge. Everywhere, were creepers of all kinds, entwined wild vines. Occasionally, we could see orchid flowers shining through this thick, chaos of green. Here and there were giant, gnarled and ancient trees, erupting with their full foliage and floral jewellery.⁵⁹

In the internment memoir he published in 1922, internee Martin Trojan describes a work expedition to fetch timber for an arbor he wanted to construct in the Trial Bay camp. He and his workmates were so entranced by the sights and sounds of the bush behind Little Smokey, they abandoned their task to simply wander deeper into the woods. His Gothic-like description is reminiscent of a particularly German folkloric tradition of going ‘into the woods’, such as was told in tales for both children and adults by the Brothers Grimm. In this trope, for many German people, forests like the ancient Black Forest in

⁵⁷ Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 263.

⁵⁸ Splivalo, *The Home Fires*, 63. See also, Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 15 August 1915; Letter from Otto Wortmann to his mother, 19 December 1916, 7–8, 21.

⁵⁹ Trojan, *Behind Stone and Barbed Wire*, 69–70.

south-western Germany held strong cultural associations with an older, mythical, pre-modern world. Woods and forests were being written about as sites of sexual possibility and conquest by both literary theorists and psychoanalysts while, in other contexts, the mythical associations were being co-opted into nationalistic narratives of a wise German Fatherland.⁶⁰ The nationalistic allure of the bush was shared by Otto Wortmann who wrote that the sunny days and pristine air at Trial Bay reminded him of autumn days in Germany, ‘when it’s so wonderful to roam the fields and woods, and it makes you crave the freedom of your home country’.⁶¹ Fritz Stegherr, though less impressed with the Australian bush as a substitute for his beloved German forests, still recognised its power to inspire:

I never found the Australian bush (which is a forest [that] is still wilderness) particularly pretty. You cannot compare it to any of our forests, all the same, it still has its charm. Some of the giant trees here dwarf everything that we admire as huge when it comes to height and circumference.⁶²

Reactions against modernism had created a powerful counter-narrative wherein nature, nudism and vegetarianism amplified the appeal of non-urban life. The conception of idyllic natural environments in the South Pacific, in turn, lured to the German colonies others seeking respite from overcrowded and dehumanised urban spaces in Europe.

⁶⁰ Walker, *Jung and the Jungians on Myth*, 34–45. Jungian psychology holds that myths are the ‘textbook of archetypes’, which means that through their examination, an understanding of the underlying psychological life—of both an individual and a society—might be possible. The persistence of the forest as a place of darkness and danger in German myths is a response to the archetype of shadow. It is frequently understood as a metaphor of transition and transgression.

⁶¹ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 17 April 1916.

⁶² Diary of Fritz Stegherr, n.d.

2.3 Recreating the 'private': Masculine experience and expectation

[The original prisoner] had a room to himself [in which] for the most part of his captivity he was left alone, whereas two of us have to squeeze into a room of 5–6 square metres; it's awful to have to be considerate of someone even at night—if only it were somebody of the opposite sex. You're never alone, you're always within earshot of 4 or 5 neighbours. When doing your ablutions or changing your shirt or underwear, you always have 3 interested onlookers.

—Otto Wortmann, 7 March 1917⁶³

When diarist Otto Wortmann was sitting in his prison cell, passing the long evenings with friends, they would often compare their situation with that of the public works prisoners who had once occupied their Trial Bay cells.⁶⁴ The Germans concluded the prisoners were worse off in one aspect only: having a little less freedom of movement. In other ways, they thought the original prisoners had an easier time of it.

Few experiences of incarceration—if any—are the object of envy. It's doubtful that a public works prisoner locked within the granite walls of Trial Bay Gaol during the nineteenth century was in *any* way better off than Wortmann, his cellmate, Hayer, or their visiting, coffee-drinking comrades. More telling is the anguish of the internees. Of the many deprivations of internment—among them liberty, society, dignity and autonomy—perhaps the most profound for bourgeois men was the loss of privacy.⁶⁵

Here it's not even possible to be alone... I'm beginning to hate all these people around me, even if they too are here against their will. Oh, to be alone and able to meditate in peace and quiet for just one day! It's impossible here. Even in the privy, somebody sits to your right and to your left!⁶⁶

Mostly from a professional or managerial caste, if not from extreme wealth, the Trial Bay internees were used to making decisions and directing not just their own but the lives of many subordinates.⁶⁷ Through the internment experience, decisions directly affecting their health, wealth and well-being were being made by others and, worse, by men in whom they had little confidence or for whom they had little respect.⁶⁸ With the Kaiser's pre-war aspiration of *Deutschtum* promoting pride and connection to a German

⁶³ In his diary, as opposed to his letter to his mother, he correctly calculates the floor area of the cell.

⁶⁴ Carey, *Tales of Trial Bay*, 46. Trial Bay Gaol was built and operated as a public works prison for 17 years from 1886–1903. The history is further explored in Chapter 3: Work.

⁶⁵ On the loss of dignity and privacy in internment, see also, Bird, 'Control of Enemy Alien Civilians in Great Britain, 1914–1918,' unpublished PhD thesis, 143.

⁶⁶ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 17 December 1918 (from Holdsworthy).

⁶⁷ Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 248. See also, Letter from Otto Wortmann to his mother, 19 December 1916, vol.2, 1–3.

⁶⁸ Diary of Otto Wortmann, n.d., 4–5.

Fatherland, its ascendant maritime and military might, its art and culture, its science and philosophy, its industry and economy,⁶⁹ Trial Bay, by contrast, was distant, bleak and unremarkable.⁷⁰ And while the gaol on Laggery Point was not convict-connected, its granite blocks and littered remains of failed infrastructure only reinforced, from the patriotic German's wartime point of view, Australia's youth and inexperience and inferior achievement as a nation-state.⁷¹ Even with the creep of twentieth century modernity to the Macleay Valley—that is, telephone, electricity and rail—Trial Bay remained a remote and desolate part of New South Wales, at the cultural, social and economic as well as the geographic antipodes to western Europe.⁷² This created a duty for men of the German empire to create spaces deserving of German pride. As internees with reduced capability, the locus of control centred on the private space of home.

The quotes from Wortmann also speak of the occasional desperation for respite from the lack of privacy. It is Wortmann's fellow internees who annoy him most, their constant interruptions, their petty politics and relentless presence in a confined world where men used to greater comfort now lived—literally, at least for Wortmann and Hayer—on top of one another.

According to historian David Morgan, the European conception of privacy first became attached to the place of home during the late-nineteenth century periods of urbanisation and industrialisation.⁷³ The domestic space became feminised at this time also when changing labour patterns affected the relationship of both men and women to the home and family.⁷⁴ The enclosure of the intimate private household behind the formality of the public façade became typical of German bourgeois aspiration.⁷⁵ Likewise, contemporary architecture began to separate formal public spaces from domestic private spaces in the bourgeois home. The former were placed at the front of the house and

⁶⁹ Tampke, *The Germans in Australia*, 111–116. See also, Verheyen, *The German Question*, 20ff.

⁷⁰ Carey, *Tales of Trial Bay*, 23ff. The breakwall, built out from Laggery Point and perpendicular to the ocean swell, was continually compromised whenever there were storms or heavy waves. After yet another section of the wall was washed away in June 1903, the project was abandoned and the prison closed.

⁷¹ Trojan, *Behind Stone and Barbed Wire*, 29.

⁷² Carey, *Tales of Trial Bay*, 23ff. See also, NSW Migration Heritage Centre (website), 'Zivil Lager'; and Macleay River Historical Society (website). While the gaol and nearby Smoky Cape lighthouse had been connected to the Arakoon village post and telegraph office via a telephone wire in 1891, the first public telephone was not established in South West Rocks until 1910. Electricity had been connected in 1902 although the power-generation capability was sold off with other gaol assets in 1904. The north coast rail line eventually arrived to nearby Kempsey in 1917 and was the means by which the internees were relocated back to Holdsworth in July 1918.

⁷³ See also, Shute, 'Heroines and Heroes: Sexual Mythology in Australia, 1914–1918,' 23ff. For Shute, conceptions of home, family and domesticity, like gender and masculinity, are social constructions.

⁷⁴ Morgan, 'Family, Gender and Masculinities,' 226–227.

⁷⁵ Madigan et al., 'Gender and the Meaning of Home,' 629.

claimed by men, while the latter were found at the rear and relegated to women.⁷⁶ Housing design of the emerging middle class also distinguished the front from the back, public from private, and masculine from feminine. Even in modest households, a preference emerged for a sequestered front parlour for public show while the family lived at the back around the kitchen.⁷⁷ For the poorer working class, which replicated these design shifts as well, the public masculine domain was likely to be outside in the street or in neighbourhood pubs.⁷⁸ While most of the colonial Germans attracted to life in the Asian-Pacific colonies were single men or married men whose wives remained in Germany, they carried expectations of home which, like the similarly imagined Fatherland, carried a strong sense of (imagined) Germanness. For internees from the German naval *Musterkolonie* [exemplar or master colony] of Tsingtao in northern China, the creation of home carried additional pride due to their reputation for being clean, efficient and quintessentially ‘German’.⁷⁹

Image 2.11 (below) shows a refurbished two-person cell, similar to that described by Wortmann and depicted in Berblinger’s portrait at Image 2.10.⁸⁰ The overall impression is one of neatness and order, of domestic comfort, abundance and cleanliness. The parlour quality and readiness to receive guests convey a feminine domestic assurance. That it does not show the cell’s occupants renders it as much a public as a private image—that is, sent as a postcard, it demonstrates a general retention of civility and memory of *Heimat*—indeed, a coded endorsement of *Deutschtum*—amid the disruption occurring elsewhere. This was a useful message of resilience to convey to family and friends or to internees in other camps.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Francis M. L. Thompson (1982), cited in Madigan et al., 625–629.

⁷⁷ Madigan et al., 629.

⁷⁸ Stefan Muthesius (1982), cited in Madigan et al., 629. See also, Reagin, ‘The Imagined *Hausfrau*,’ 55. It is not my intention to suggest that women were neither participants nor co-creators of narratives relating to public space. Quite the opposite. Nancy Reagin is one who makes the case for recognising the marginalisation of women in historical discourse and the critical interplay of race, gender and class with nationalism during the colonial period.

⁷⁹ Groeneveld, ‘Far Away At Home in Qingdao,’ 65–67. Tsingtao was a proto-colonial experiment established at the peak of Germany’s late-nineteenth century *Weltpolitik* period [the expansionist policy featuring colonisation in Africa and the Pacific]. Tsingtao was administered by the German navy at a time when international maritime competition—particularly between the German and British merchant marines—was intense.

⁸⁰ The teapots and boxes on the shelves suggest the occupants may have been from the Straits colonies of Singapore or Penang or perhaps Tsingtao.

⁸¹ Diary of Georg Boysen, n.d., 13–14. The difficulty of lighting this photograph reinforces the skill of Paul Dubotzki. Boysen writes: ‘The light coming in through the grated little window up in the thick wall admits little light and even when outside the sun is shining brightly and the sky blue, in the cell it is dusky and it is straining the eyes to read and write.’ Without an additional lighting source, this image would have required a long exposure.



Image 2.11: Refurbished accommodation in gaol cell for two absent internees.

The iron hammock rings visible in Image 2.11 reveal the prison cell as a domestic palimpsest. That these appear to have been protected from the whitewashing of the walls and to be without purpose in the new cell design suggests the current incumbents had an ongoing consciousness of the former occupants. But the image also reveals the three sources from which furniture and furnishings were able to be procured:

- items issued by the Department of Defence, e.g. the lamp on the shelf, the blanket on the nearer bed and the first pillow on each bed
- items constructed by the internees themselves or commissioned for construction by the carpenters, e.g. the table, bench, bedframes, picture board and shelves
- items either brought or sent from home or purchased on the open or black market, e.g. the back bedspread, teapots, clock, books, coverings, second pillows.

The photograph also relates to German feminine bourgeois aspiration, as described by Nancy Reagin.⁸² Painstaking cleanliness, she notes, was also a marker of German ethnic identity abroad and a reminder of the homeland.⁸³ From the outset, Otto Wortmann's German pride was tied to his sense of order and cleanliness. He first

⁸² Reagin, 'The Imagined *Hausfrau*,' 81–83.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 83.

demonstrates this when on the *Morinda* sailing from internment in Rabaul towards an unknown future in Australia:

On these and other private errands we were always closely watched. We were told to clean our living quarters down in the hold every day, and thanks to German diligence, they were soon in better shape than ever before.⁸⁴

The importance he places on twice-daily housework to the running of an efficient and ordered domestic space at Trial Bay further underpins his association of cleanliness as a trait of national character:

Otherwise, the same old, same old here... We get up around 7am. At 8am the great parade [rollcall] followed by [breakfast]; then the great cleaning of the cell... At 9.30pm we sweep out the shack [again] and at 10pm we're off to bed, lights-out at 10.15pm.⁸⁵

Similarly, the Singaporean internee Wilhelm Woelber makes evident his connection of class with personal cleanliness when he describes one of the German Buddhist monks transferred to Trial Bay with the cohort from Ceylon:

Wrapped in his yellow priestly garb...he paces the same little path along the beach for hours on end, taking notice of absolutely nobody, but always the first to show up at the cauldrons at mealtimes. He seems to be constantly dreaming or pondering the most arduous problems, and one could be quite awed by this man if he weren't the epitome of uncleanness.⁸⁶

The mode of domesticity characterised by cleanliness and ordered housekeeping—and exemplified by Woelber's revulsion of his unclean compatriots—functioned as much as a signal of class as gendered national identity for the middle class in imperial Germany.⁸⁷ What united the bourgeoisie—both women and men, both the community and the individuals within it—was a set of shared values that provided an essential societal framework for living together. Reagin lists these traits as a manifesto for bourgeois behaviour: an emphasis on diligence, self-discipline, conscientiousness, achievement and thrift. Intrinsically linked to the manifestation of *Heimat*, these traits migrated to the edges of the German diaspora during the colonial experiment and provided a common language of manners for masculine performance during internment.

The participation of women in the public realm is also, paradoxically, evidenced by their occupation of space in private. Of course, German women participated in and contributed to national identity-making yet, according again to Reagin, frequently did so

⁸⁴ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 10–11. Date of writing given as Sep/Oct 1917, but refers to events of July 1915.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 25 March 1916.

⁸⁶ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 59–60, c.31 May 1915.

⁸⁷ Reagin, 'The Imagined *Hausfrau*,' 58.

using differing symbols, rituals, or vocabulary.⁸⁸ The efficient management of the household and the regimented performance of daily tasks—such as having children ready for school or serving a healthy meal for the family at a regular time—came to be the badges of national German identity that stemmed from the dominion of mothers in the home. As mentioned earlier, these domestic expressions of national identity, internalised by well-brought-up young German men like Otto Wortmann, came to be accepted standards of middle class comportment that resurfaced in Trial Bay.

Accommodation

The wings A and B of the main building accommodate 254 men, two per cell, who really have the best deal. The reserve officers live in two peripheral buildings. Then there are a few who live in yet another stone building and for the others they have built wood barracks, or are still building them. The hospital is in a smaller stone building and the canteen is located outside the gaol walls.⁸⁹

As more and more internees arrived after August 1915,⁹⁰ the compound became increasingly crowded and the need for additional permanent accommodation more acute. Prior to completion of wooden barracks in March and June 1916, those not accommodated in the cells camped problematically in army tents. The Dubotzki photograph at Image 2.12 (below) shows a second domestic situation in the newer barracks in which four internees share the space. Similar to the cell at Image 2.8, it depicts a refurbished living space with decorative wall and window coverings, books and shelves thoughtfully placed.⁹¹ The space is clean, an effect amplified by the white of the walls and the clothing worn by the internees. It is almost a caricature of domesticity, with the artful composition reminiscent of a still-life arrangement: the bottle of beer, the cigar being smoked by the internee at the table, the considered poses of all four internees. Friedrich Meier was one of the internees to inhabit the new quarters:

Yesterday we moved from the tent into the newly built barrack. It is [figure missing] m long, 2.75m wide, 2.6m high and divided in 7 units, 6 of them for 10 men each and one for 8 men... In the latter I live with [lists seven hut-mates]. Our unit (D3) is 6.4m long, the beds have to be stacked vertically so as to gain room for a table and chairs. The gaol wall

⁸⁸ Ibid., 57.

⁸⁹ Diary of Friedrich Meier, 18 February 1916.

⁹⁰ The dates of the arriving waves of internees are noted at Appendix 4: Timeline.

⁹¹ While the barracks had better access to natural light than the cells, Dubotzki would still have required the four internees to remain motionless for some time to achieve this successful image—thus, in addition to being thoughtfully composed and exposed, it is a heavily constructed image and tells a similar story of control in both private and public realms. Few of Dubotzki's photographs were candid.

Masculinity on Trial

serves as rear wall of the barrack, the front features a door and two wood-framed windows per unit, the floor is made from wood and the roof from corrugated iron.⁹²

Elsewhere, Meier describes the space as drafty and alternatively hot or cold. The millionaire planter from Ceylon, Georg Boysen, presumably used to grander accommodation, also writes:

[To] have a 'room' with one other only—well, that is infinitely better than to live in barracks together with a lot of them. In barracks, there is not a lot of privacy and all being without sufficient work... Trial Bay is perhaps the best camp in Australia. The people are almost all of the better class.⁹³



Image 2.12: Refurbished accommodation in constructed barracks for four internees.

The distinction of class and relative comfort of conditions at Trial Bay, even in drafty tents or barracks, made it preferable to the alternative. Because Trial Bay operated as an administrative sub-camp to Holdsworthy,⁹⁴ few internees had not first spent time at that main camp—and all would return to it in 1918 when Trial Bay closed. Meanwhile, return to Holdsworthy under any circumstances was a punishment to be avoided.⁹⁵ Those fortunate to have been spared the harsher internment experience had a vested interest in remaining at Trial Bay, where they enjoyed relative comfort, freedom, prestige and

⁹² Diary of Friedrich Meier, 5 March 1916.

⁹³ Diary of Georg Boysen, n.d., 14.

⁹⁴ Monteath, *Captured Lives*, 59.

⁹⁵ Letter from Mrs Mary Plate to Senator G. F. Pearce, minister for defence, 3 November 1917.

association with Boysen's 'better class'. Otto Wortmann suggests camp administrators used this as a form of social control:

Internally, we had a few storms in a teacup. On Monday, there was suddenly a list on the wall with 20 names of people that were to be deported to Liverpool...
On Friday, another 35 men are being sent off to Liverpool; if I'm destined to be one of them, I won't be able to buy a fall guy...⁹⁶

On his arrival to Holdsworthy from Singapore, the wealthy older internee Woelber expressed his horror at the prospect of living in a three-sided hut with a canvas fourth wall:

What we now saw, we had not imagined in our wildest dreams! Already in Singapore we were not happy with our quarters, but compared with these conditions, we had been living in a palace.⁹⁷

He then described the confusion of the main camp barracks and the limited space, also outlined by Tony Splivalo and shown in Heinrich Jacobsen's photograph at Image 2.13, below. Splivalo calculated there were nine tongue-and-groove boards of floor space to a man:

Privacy did not exist, but personal modesty, particularly among Dalmatians, contributed to a high level of decency among the men. Everybody had equal rights and obligations, which were almost instinctively recognised by all of us. We soon learned to be tolerant of one another.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 2 August 1916. Wortmann notes the internee Schmidt-Livko was able to bribe another internee £5 to take his place and return to Holdsworthy. The inflation calculator on the website of the Reserve Bank of Australia suggests a sum of £5 in 1915 would be worth about AUS\$600 in 2019.

⁹⁷ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, n.d., vol.1, 12.

⁹⁸ Splivalo, *The Home Fires*, 90–91.



Image 2.13: Refurbished accommodation in three-sided barracks for five internees at Holdsworthy. [Source: Dubotzki collection, photograph by Jacobsen]

Removed from homes and families and required to adapt to new domestic circumstances, previously private behaviours were placed in public view. All internee diaries reveal an unsurprising struggle to reconcile the performance of simple, daily actions as part of new public displays.

As a solution to the desire for privacy at Trial Bay, internees constructed beach huts and cabins in the rocks and secluded recesses of Lagers Point outside the western, north-western and north-eastern walls of the gaol. One internee wrote:

Since it looks like we'll be here for quite some time yet, various gentlemen have begun to erect small huts on the beach, from bush wood and empty crates, in which they can spend the day in peace. They are mainly those who have to live in very cramped quarters and whose need for some space and solitude is particularly understandable.⁹⁹

Eventually, some 120 cabins were built along with a housing market for their purchase and sale.¹⁰⁰ Images 2.14–2.22, below, show a number of the creative designs imagined by internees to secure some privacy in otherwise overcrowded lives. Both concept and design reflected the very typical German trend for small cabin dwellings on outer-urban garden plots. The practice of constructing *Gartenlauben* [garden huts] had

⁹⁹ Diary of Philipp Wittmann, 3 April 1918. Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 30 June 1916.

¹⁰⁰ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 10 June 1918.

developed in Germany and Austria at the end of the 1800s.¹⁰¹ It was one of a number of expressions of a desire to return to nature that characterised the reaction against the modern (post-industrial/urban) cityscape in which many of the working class found themselves living. Initially the so-called ‘pauper gardens’ were designed and regulated to enable the needy to meet their own demand for growing fruit and vegetables instead of receiving financial support.¹⁰² Unlike in other countries, for example the United Kingdom, local regulations in Austria and Germany rarely prevented occupants of *Kleingarten* or *Schrebergarten* [community gardens] from staying on-site overnight and thus a culture of hut building began. In the German allotment tradition, *eine Laube* [a hut] was usually a solidly built small house made of wood and in most cases with a pitched roof.¹⁰³ They were built by allotment holders, often with the help of fellow gardeners, a practice replicated by internees at Trial Bay in groups or syndicates.

A sketch in Friedrich Meier’s diary shows a small house featuring a door, two windows, a sliding gable window and a chimney. An annex is built around a tree. The accompanying text reads, ‘Owners and builders: W. Kamenz; E. Kreth; F. Meier. Roof: corrugated iron. Framework: tree logs. Walls: bush covered with loam.’¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Lorbek and Martinsen, ‘Allotment Garden Dwellings’. See also, Schmiedebach, ‘The Public’s View of Neurasthenia in Germany,’ 219–220. The promotion of healthy middle class living was also the focus of *Die Gartenlaube*, one of the two most influential weekly German magazines of the era, widely circulated domestically and across the German empire. By the time of the war, new ownership and a new conservative agenda had diminished its readership but it was still a vehicle of *Deutschtum* and popular in the colonies, contributing to nostalgia for the Fatherland. Schmiedebach notes the preeminence of articles and advertisements dedicated to the suppression of neurasthenia as

¹⁰² Günther Katsch et al., cited in Lorbek and Martinsen, ‘Allotment Garden Dwellings,’ S98–S99. Leipzig doctor Moritz Schreber had, in 1864, called for bringing children into greater contact with nature when overcrowding created urban ghettos. This was one of the practices that became collectively known as the *Lebensreform* [life reform] social movement and advocated vegetarianism/veganism, nudism, sexual liberation, alternative medicine, and religious reform and at the same time abstention from alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and vaccines. Elements of this will be discussed in Chapter 5: Body.

¹⁰³ Thiel, ‘Perspectives from the Point of View of the Associations’ (conference paper). See also, European Cooperation in Science and Technology program (website), ‘Urban Allotment Gardens 2012’.

¹⁰⁴ Diary of Friedrich Meier, 2. Date of writing unknown (page removed from diary and reinserted at back).

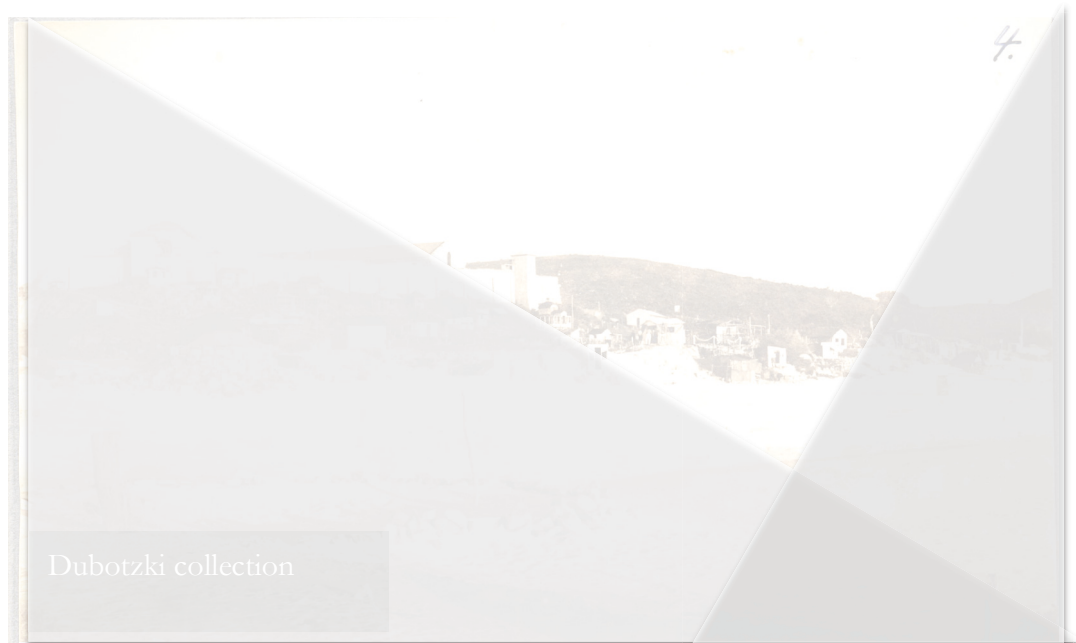


Image 2.14: Laggery Point from breakwall. Looking south-east across west-facing embankment.



Image 2.15: Laggery Point showing private huts. Looking north-east across west-facing embankment.



Image 2.16: Laggery Point with Strand Café (second from left) and private huts. Looking north-east across west-facing embankment.



Image 2.17: Inside the western perimeter wall: D barracks; Messes 1–7.



Image 2.18: Unknown internee in front of landscaped stone private beach hut.



Image 2.19: Private club house and Berlitz Language School (right). Western embankment.



Image 2.20: Landscaped and carefully constructed private beach hut. Western embankment and wall.



Image 2.21: Bathing carriage used as private hut/retreat. Strand Café behind (left).

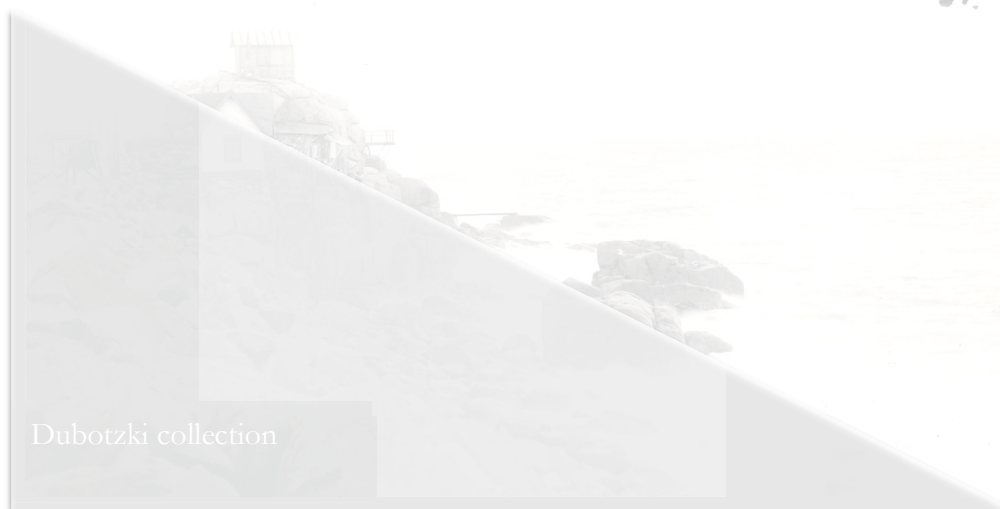


Image 2.22: Private huts constructed at end of Lagers Point and breakwall.

The images show the effort and expense taken by internees to build (or purchase) a beach hut. Diarist Philipp Wittmann said, ‘I organised some wood from the bush and built a fence, whereupon I laid some flowerbeds around the little house. It was a good deal of work but I am rewarded by the ongoing pleasure I get from the sight of flowers.’¹⁰⁵ While mere engagement with a creative project was an outcome in itself, the principal objective was the creation of a private space outside the oppressive interior of the gaol. For most, the huts were simply spaces to go during the long daylight hours when the main gates were open.¹⁰⁶ During these hours, internees were permitted to wander freely over the Laggars Point peninsula within the camp perimeter so the huts were places to read or sleep or entertain friends. Yet the fact that borders, fences, edges and extremes were so insistently marked can be read for their importance to personal boundaries too. As with Wittmann, personal expression took place inside one’s fence; identity was able to be clarified and advertised.

Image 2.21 is an example of a creative response to the desire for private space manifesting in a quasi-domestic form. And while the nature of the relationship between the pair at the window is unknown, it is clear they are friendly, perhaps entrepreneurial partners in the purchase of the hut but certainly brought together to enjoy the results.¹⁰⁷ This image is evidence of the homosociality enabled by the internment circumstance where, in the specific absence of women, new domestic relationships were able to exist between men.¹⁰⁸ Conventional qualities that signalled legitimacy and prestige in the masculine hegemony—such as ingenuity, independence, financial capacity and acumen—were joined by other qualities that had become less contentious in the new all-male environment, for example, male–male proximity, nakedness, performance of feminised tasks or roles, touch and the display of physical affection.

Homosociality and homosexuality existed on a continuum of desires and relations, thus the cabins were undoubtedly sites where sexual activity would take place.¹⁰⁹ Otto Wortmann writes of what was a known male brothel, established by one of the wealthier internees as a place to be with his younger lover.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Diary of Philipp Wittmann, 3 April 1918.

¹⁰⁶ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 14 September 1915. Diary (translation) notes date as ‘14/9/20’ but appears to be an error.

¹⁰⁷ The wheeled bathing carriage was probably acquired from Horseshoe Bay, the designated ladies’ bathing beach at nearby South West Rocks. The availability of bathing huts for women was advertised by local hotels.

¹⁰⁸ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1985), cited in Hammarén and Johansson, ‘Homosociality: In Between Power and Intimacy,’ 2–4.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹¹⁰ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 3 January 1918.

Evidence of sex between men in internment is neither exceptional nor to be interpreted here through a twenty-first century lens. Even though unsanctioned in the camp, the informal presence of prostitution invites questions of power, economy, culture and masculinity on a number of levels, and these will be addressed in the following Chapter 3: Work.

2.4 Recreating the ‘public’: Masculine experience and expectation

[We built or bought] 2 bowling lanes with a little cafeteria that sells coffee and alcohol-free beer, a theatre complete with stage and props, a piano, a big lamp for the hall, and two billiard tables, etc., and a few more things. We also built 2 tennis courts, bought some gymnastics equipment, and the people from Singapore had brought along their library... We have a perfect beach with wonderfully fine sand, a few hundred metres long.

—Otto Wortmann, 7 March 1917

The enforced homosocialities of internment at Trial Bay demanded fresh contemplation of what had once been considered—but was no longer—private. This affected conceptions of space, place and behaviour. For instance, the evolution of the public sphere, such as theorised by Jürgen Habermas and evidenced through the social, cultural, political and philosophical forces at the turn of the twentieth century, was very much grounded in place.¹¹¹ As Kaminski notes, the relationship between the two is always in dialogue, with occupation and primacy carrying different meanings for different societies in different times.¹¹²

Griselda Pollock defines the public realm as it came to be in post-industrial, modern Europe: the space of productive labour; political decision; government, education and law; and public service. The realm, she adds, was intrinsically gendered and, as a result of the forces of industrialisation and increased urbanisation in the late 1800s, became increasingly dominated by [white European] men.¹¹³ Certainly, gendered private and public constructs have been part of social arrangements for centuries but, in modern Europe and its colonial extremities, the connection between gender and space acquired another layer of social complexity.¹¹⁴ In its more literal sense, ‘public space’ can also refer simply to the physical ground upon which those transactions occur: the space upon which the group places its social footprint. In the camp at Trial Bay, both these nuances of the conception of a public realm applied and required renegotiation by internees.

¹¹¹ Kaminski, ‘The Public and the Private,’ 263. The idea that the public relates to the general interest of the community and the private denotes selfishness and irresponsibility emerged in the nineteenth century. In this vision, the public is typically positioned in response to the action of the state.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 263ff.

¹¹³ Pollock, ‘Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity,’ 94–95.

¹¹⁴ For example, Skinner, *Gender and the Rhetoric of Modernity*, 28. Skinner says that women’s relegation to the private realm was reconceived by women as its own form of participation in the public space.

The contest for space

A few days ago, the new commander of all Australian prison camps, Colonel Holman, visited here. Upon our request for extension of the boundaries and for escorted walks, he informed us that we were shortly to be granted day parole and freedom of movement within a 2-mile radius. They would also install an electricity generator to illuminate the camp and [extend] the barbed-wire fence that surrounds the camp area.¹¹⁵

The occupation of physical space. Whether measured in metres of territory gained in the battlefields of Gallipoli or France, or the maritime dominion of submarines and coastal raiders, this fundamental contest—more than ideology—has come to dominate narratives of World War I.¹¹⁶ Even incremental shifts in access to space, such as the perimeter for parole at the Trial Bay camp, generated conflict between internees and guards. Often proxies for themes of broader gain and loss, space and place are thus important surrogates in this study of masculinity.

The expansion of the zone of parole promised by Colonel Holman in November 1916 and noted above by Meier was just one moment in an ongoing tussle.¹¹⁷ Edged by ocean on most of its polygonal sides, Lagers Point gifted a logical zone of containment for the Australian guards. That the landward precinct had been earlier cleared of trees and scrub rendered it even easier to secure within the original half-mile perimeter of the gaol approach.¹¹⁸ The extension would open the seaward side of the hill behind the gaol—from which a spectacular view of both bay and ocean was possible—but would require the placement of substantial lengths of barbed wire fencing and multiple additional sentry

¹¹⁵ Diary of Friedrich Meier, 1 November 1916.

¹¹⁶ Duncan, 'Acquisition Among Nation States,' 6, 26–27. When nation-states agreed to mutually recognise the Doctrines of Occupation, Cession, Prescription and Conquest as markers of territorial sovereignty, the way was cleared for an age of global imperialism. It provided the legal footings for European colonialism and seeded inevitable tension between nation-states, of which World War I was an unsurprising consequence. After the war, the League of Nations attempted to repeal the Doctrine of Conquest in favour of a Doctrine of Self-determination. See also, McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 5; and Bean, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*, III, chapter 2, 19–43. Bean details the battle for Stormy Trench during the French winter of 1916.

Australian troops won and lost the trench multiple times with great loss of life. It was one of the battles that came to symbolise the absurdity of warfare, that is, lives lost relative to incremental gains.

¹¹⁷ The extension was not a 'two-mile radius' (a distance almost halfway to Jerseyville) but selected pockets within a one-mile radius, including the eastern (ocean) side of the hill behind the gaol and gaol approach.

¹¹⁸ Davies, 'Trial Bay Gaol: Conservation Management and Cultural Tourism Plan,' 5. The clearing of the peninsula's native bush covering had occurred in the period of gaol construction and earliest operation.

points.¹¹⁹ Faced with the additional costs and logistical complexity, newly appointed camp commandant Max Bedford reneged on Holman's grant.¹²⁰

The internees had minimal powers to defend their gain nor protest what was perceived to be an unfair loss.¹²¹ They were entirely dependent on the favour of a series of young and inexperienced commanding officers, whose authority to command was rarely recognised.¹²² Writing letters of complaint was a familiar recourse for which the Trial Bay cohort had already gained a reputation for being 'a troublesome and disagreeable lot'.¹²³ Complaints could be directed to three recipients only: the ministry of defence, under the minister, Senator George F. Pearce;¹²⁴ the official visitor of German concentration camps;¹²⁵ and the consular representative of the designated independent nation.¹²⁶ Complaints or overt negativity in letters to any other recipient resulted in censorship or

¹¹⁹ Helmut Sauerbeck, 'Complaints Against Authorities at Trial Bay,' 22 June 1917. The extension exposed both the guards' barracks and two hillside munitions stores to the internees' zone of parole. See also, Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 26 December 1916. Hermann Adam was the first of five internees to die during the internment period and was buried on the hill on Christmas Eve 1916. He developed sepsis from a cut to his foot.

¹²⁰ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 28 March, 2 April, 10 April, 25 April 1917. The reversal of the parole extension occurred on Anzac Day 1917, less than two weeks after it had been granted by Holman.

¹²¹ Labour organisation and strikes were important strategies of protest learned from the contemporary labour movement. These will be discussed in Chapter 3: Work.

¹²² Defence and War Service Records, National Archives of Australia (NAA), 1914–1920. Over nearly three years of internment operation, four men occupied the office of the camp commandant at Trial Bay: Lieutenant J.K. Eaton (July 1915–September 1916); Lieutenant M. E. Bedford (September 1916–September 1917); Captain A. McKean (interim: Sept/October 1917); Colonel G. A. H. Holborow (October 1917–May 1918).

¹²³ Letter from American consul-general to internee committee, in response to letter of complaint, 18 February 1916; See also, Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 252. Fischer notes that Trial Bay internees, literate and bored, were prolific writers of letters of complaint. In his letter of response to the internees' management committee, dated 18 February 1916, the American consul pleaded for relief from the constant letters, noting: 'But I beg to call to your attention the fact that the requests from Trial Bay are more numerous than those from all of the other Concentration Camps in Australia combined.' A parallel letter-writing campaign occurred when the local Catholic parish priest, Father John Fitzwilliam, invoked the Lismore diocese's Bishop Carroll to also petition the Ministry on behalf of the twelve German Catholic missionary priests interned from Ceylon. 'The Internment of Priests: Sadness of Camp Life.' *Freeman's Journal*, 23 March 1916. See also, Kienzle, *The Architect of Kokoda: Bert Kienzle*, chapter 2.

¹²⁴ Pearce was also the acting prime minister in Hughes' absence, including from January to August 1916. As minister of defence, he was served by an efficient acting secretary Thomas Trumble. Trumble, from a civilian rather than military background, most often received and responded to the letters of complaint received from Trial Bay. See: Hyslop, 'Thomas Trumble,' *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, (online)

¹²⁵ The official visitor to German concentration camps was a role performed by junior justices of the NSW Supreme Court, Sir John Musgrave Harvey, Sir David Ferguson and Sir Philip Street.

¹²⁶ Until it entered the war on 6 April 1917, the United States was the independent nation with responsibility for the interests of German internees in Australia, exercised under consul-general Joseph I. Brittain. From then, the Swiss government's consul Marc Ruty was the designee.

return of a letter to its sender and possible admonishment.¹²⁷ Max Herz, in his role as internees' medical officer, appealed to the then official visitor, Mr Justice Harvey, to assist in reversing the decision on the internees' behalf. Beyond the importance of physical exercise, especially for those unlikely to swim or use the gymnasium or tennis courts, Herz argued for the importance to mental well-being of relief from the monotony of a familiar and featureless space:

Another mile or two added to the camp limit would enable all to maintain a walking tour into the green bush, to see plants new to them, giving them that which is wanted, opportunity to stretch their limbs, giving relaxation of eye and mind and a change of surroundings, when the [conditions] are grating on thin nerves... With all the seriousness my pen is able of, I wish to plead our case. For the danger exists in all its grim and terrible reality, that the great majority will leave this camp broken in body and mind.¹²⁸

Contests for space, both inside and outside the gaol's walls, continued throughout the entire internment period. Of all, the final commandant, Major Grantley A. H. Holborow, was most sensible to the low risk of escape and eventually carried the internees' campaign for space to his Ministry of Defence superiors. The landward perimeter was finally extended 'to the Thompson House'¹²⁹ in the village of Arakoon in September 1917, enabling the internees to occupy space between the first and second hills to construct for themselves a large and profitable vegetable garden and a sports and athletics ground.¹³⁰ This added access and interest outside the prison walls to a space that already included, on the oceanside, three tennis courts built into the old public works quarry, a bowling alley and an increasing number of communal and private huts on the

¹²⁷ Internee Oscar Plate once had a letter returned four times which he insisted was uncontroversial. At the fourth return, the censor scrawled 'Are you dull of comprehension?!' in red across the envelope which resulted in an official protest by Plate. The protest was upheld but did not win for Plate any sympathy.

¹²⁸ Report by Dr Max Herz to the official visitor, 3 April 1917, 1–2. A copy of this report was included in an additional plea made to the local member of parliament: Letter from president, Trial Bay German Committee to the Federal Member for Cowper, 16 December 1917, 1.

¹²⁹ Report on visit by official visitor, Mr Justice Harvey, 28 June 1917. See also, 'Captain Thompson Dead,' *Macleay Chronicle*, 18 April 1917; Carey, *Tales of Trial Bay*, 43. The Thompson house, built as a hotel and used as a guest house, is (still) the historic 'Arakoon House, occupied by the family of Captain Magnus Thompson from 1895–1923. It was fictionalised as the home of the Kennon family in Gwen Kelly's 1981 novel *Always Afternoon* in which internee Franz Mueller meets the daughter of the house, Frieda Kennon.

¹³⁰ See also, Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 5 November 1917. The valley between the hills was also the site of the Shotover Dam, the fresh water source for the original gaol. The internees cleared and repaired the clogged site to supply the gaol with fresh water. A letter from the acting prime minister to the governor-general in mid-July 1916 confirmed the water issue had been resolved. See: Letter from Mr G. F. Pearce to Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson, 18 July 1916.

embankment above the beach.¹³¹ In Holborow, the internees believed they finally had a commandant of the military rank and experience and masculine bearing they deserved.¹³²

The symbolic value of metres of public space gained or ceded in the tug-of-war between protagonists was not dissimilar to the pursuit of empire, transacted most aggressively by Britain, Germany, Austria and Russia and so significant in the lead-up to war.¹³³ The French too sought territory—to reclaim Alsace and Lorraine from the German (Prussian) annexation of 1870–1871—as did Japan in China and the Asia-Pacific.¹³⁴ While the prosecution of ideology featured in wartime rhetoric, no more so than in Australia where a profound cultural and emotional attachment to the United Kingdom underpinned the sense of nation,¹³⁵ conceptions of a physical nation-state were central to individual and national identity. Secondary to the iconic Anzac himself, Australian narratives of World War I continue to elevate the quest for territory: what hill/ground was able to be gained at Gallipoli; or how many metres between trenches were taken or ceded on the western front.¹³⁶ War is perhaps the ultimate bid to claim both territorial and ideological hegemony, where dominion over space gives the right to proclaim one's *Weltanschauung* [theory of the world and place of humanity within it].¹³⁷

¹³¹ Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 250. Eventually, over 100 huts were constructed on the embankment.

¹³² Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 5 November 1917; Defence and War Service Records, NAA, 1914–1920. Holborow was the only one of the Trial Bay commanding officers to have seen active military service. He had been medically retired from the A.I.F. (Australian Imperial Force) following a knee injury and subsequently accepted the commission to the Commonwealth Military Force (C.M.F.) detail at Trial Bay. He replaced Bedford who, like Eaton before him, and McKean temporarily after him, all resigned to enlist with the A.I.F..

¹³³ Beaumont, *Broken Nation*, xxii.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, xxi–xxii.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹³⁶ For example, see Bean, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*, I–II (Anzacs at Gallipoli); III–VI (in France); and VII (in Sinai and Palestine).

¹³⁷ Duncan, 'Pragmatic Considerations Regarding Territorial Acquisition Among Nation-States'. This article analyses the methods by which modern nation-states have come to acquire land, noting that it was hegemonic Western European traditions (e.g. law-making) over the past five centuries that attached territory acquisition to conceptions of nation. While not core to 'Masculinity on Trial', it is impossible to separate issues of colonialism, militarism, imperialism and nationalism from issues of class and gender which created the 'public/private' and 'masculine/feminine' tropes of World War I era Australia. For more on *Weltanschauung*, see Appendix 1.



Image 2.23: Internal parade ground Trial Bay Gaol.

In writing about the geographies of ‘the camp’ through the twentieth century, Claudio Minca traces the particular conditions and contradictions of the concentration camp¹³⁸ to colonial origins, defining it as an ‘experimental laboratory for the new technologies of political control and exploitation’ implemented by colonial regimes.¹³⁹ By the outbreak of war in 1914, the use of concentration camps had already been discredited after their brutal introduction by the Spanish in Cuba (1896), the United States in the Philippines (1901) and the British in South Africa (1900–1902). In 1904, Germany adopted a similar strategy against rebellious Herero and Nama tribes in its South-West African territory, forcing them into the desert, hunting down survivors, chaining them together and delivering them to labour camps.¹⁴⁰ Yet, through World War I, mass detention of civilians was again a common practice, legitimised by each of the key protagonists.¹⁴¹ Such intent to control and diminish the ‘other’ population—in Australia, the ‘enemy at the gates’—¹⁴²necessarily affected internees’ access to and the operation of public space but the push to occupy and control public space occurred in other ways as well. Soon after arrival at Trial Bay, while also constructing their private spaces, the internees built one of their first overtly public spaces, the Strand Café, reflecting the style

¹³⁸ Minca, ‘Geographies of the Camp,’ 74. Internment camps in Australia during World War I were known, formally and informally, as German concentration camps.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁴⁰ Pritzer, *Lapham’s Quarterly* (website), ‘Enemy Aliens’.

¹⁴¹ Murphy, *Colonial Captivity During the First World War*. See also, Pitzer (website), ‘Enemy Aliens’.

¹⁴² This phrase became popularised as the title of the internment chapter of Ernest Scott’s Vol. XI of C. E. W. Bean’s *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*. See also, Brett Holman, ‘The Enemy at the Gates,’ chapter 5.

and utility of their former world. They later rebuilt the café by the beach, again re-imagining their former world.



Image 2.24: The original *Strand Kaffé* [Beach Café], soon after arrival, late 1915.



Image 2.25: The rebuilt and renamed Artists Den Café, c.1917. Ornamental lattice is in the Bavarian style.

Paradoxically, private lives lived within the gaol walls all existed very visibly within the public domain. Thus, the huts across Lagers Point, while havens of privacy and solitude, were also public symbols of the very absence of privacy and solitude. The construction of public space in internment included the early establishment of high-culture German public institutions such as theatre and *Vereine* [clubs/societies]. Subscriptions to social clubs and associations had been a central feature of German public life, serving to reinforce the distinctions of class and/or cultural affiliation. This continued at Trial Bay with the establishment of many *Vereine*, generally requiring financial subscription for admission and securing for the member both social and personal identity.



Image 2.26: The Trial Bay Gymnastics and Boxing Club.

German-Australian public institutions had developed along particularly pro-Australian lines during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Lutheranism provided a stable basis for Germanness in the diaspora and was a cultural heart of local German-Australian communities. Significantly, the separation of church from state—articulated by Luther as the notion of the Two Kingdoms—similarly delineated the public from the private realm and was reflected in German social organisation, newspapers, clubs and schools.¹⁴³

The German sense of cleanliness and order—demonstrated above in the private space—was also a feature of expectations for the public realm. This was the case especially in the exemplar colony of Tsingtao, whose reputation for being clean, efficient and quintessentially German attracted tourists from throughout the colonial diaspora.¹⁴⁴ The description of the (then) German New Guinea capital of Rabaul further reflects a preference for order in the public realm:

Rabaul: the capital city, the seat of power, the pride of the colony, with its jetty, proud buildings, parks and restaurants, and with proper streets flanked on both sides by tall eucalyptus or casuarina trees, all of it surrounded by steep mountains and spent volcanoes that are densely overgrown with jungle up to their craters. As each of the clean, white houses is surrounded by a garden, the place is probably best compared to a European

¹⁴³ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism*, 39–50. Luther's Two Kingdom thesis proposed that God ruled the world with two hands: with the right hand, through the gospels, to seed the world with grace, and with the left hand, through the work of earthly laws and rulers, to preserve safety and keep order in society. He saw these as separate yet complimentary ways in which God provides and protects humanity.

¹⁴⁴ Groeneveld, 'Faraway at Home in Qingdao,' 66–67.

residential neighbourhood or villa precinct, and yet there is a constant buzz of activity, of restless German energy, of German stamina.¹⁴⁵

The image of the ordered white house surrounded by untamed and dangerous jungle is a powerful metaphor for colonialism itself.

The war can be seen as the ultimate manifestation of public aspiration—both literally, in the quest to expand territorial boundaries, and imaginatively, in the attachment of such expansion to notions of assumed authority. For many men, the public realm was the environment where manliness and masculinity were validated and becoming men made possible.¹⁴⁶ Thus, masculine status and dominion is tied to the ownership and occupation of space and exerts a more demonstrable claim than the struggle for—or repulsion of—ideology. In its broader context, the war—as well as the imperial experiment that was at its root—could be reduced to being a contest for territory, whether physical or ideological.

¹⁴⁵ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 9ff, Date of writing appears to be Sep/Oct 1917, but refers to events of July 1915.

¹⁴⁶ Whitehead and Barrett (eds), *The Masculinities Reader*, 141.

2.5 Conclusion: Public places, private spaces

Yet Arno knows, like all the internees know sooner or later, that they are as human as each other. For so very few of them have ever looked at another man on the beach, and suddenly felt as giddy as if a wave had tipped them sideways. There are so many emotions and passions locked up inside the men, all locked up in the old prison.

—Craig Cormick, *The Years of the Wolf*¹⁴⁷

In connecting the emotions and passions of internees at Trial Bay to the gaol itself, Craig Cormick's 2019 novel hints at important themes of emerging homosexual identity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: the condition of space, particularly the space of home, and the access to it enjoyed by men who were beginning to think of themselves as non-heterosexually inclined.¹⁴⁸ That Cormick makes this connection symbolically in his fiction as well as through his historical research is of interest to the historiographical reach of this thesis.

In his study of how gay men in the middle and late twentieth century connected to the home, Andrew Gorman-Murray notes the dual potential of the home for many non-heterosexual people as both a supportive place of belonging and an oppressive place of alienation, a condition that was similar for people of social difference at the century's start.¹⁴⁹ He contends that while the assumed heterosexuality of domestic environments hinders non-hetero sexualities, such spaces can be appropriated and used in ways that resist heteronormativity and affirm different sexual identities.¹⁵⁰ This is made possible when the substance of the space is transformed.

This was the case at Trial Bay, where multiple subversions and reimaginings were forced on all internees throughout internment journeys. As many men attempted to recreate the space of their heteronormative, nationalist domestic ideal, the absence of

¹⁴⁷ Cormick, *The Years of the Wolf*, 46. The novel is a Gothic horror/fantasy that attributes the deaths of a number of internees (for example, Horst Eckert, Conrad Peters, Hermann Adam) to a malevolent wolf-like presence. Both physical and psychological, the novel speaks to the mental anguish and loss of identity caused by internment. Arno Friedrich disappeared in the Trial Bay surf on 26 June 1917. While he was seen disappearing and assumed to have drowned, his body was never recovered. Cormick's book hints he may have escaped instead.

¹⁴⁸ See, for example, George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940*, (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Robert Beachy, *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014); Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); and Garry Wotherspoon, *Gay Sydney*, (Kensington: New South, 2016).

¹⁴⁹ Gorman-Murray, 'Homeboys: Uses of Home by Australian Gay Men,' 54. Andrew Gorman-Murray looks at Garry Wotherspoon's collation of autobiographies of Australian men written in the 1980s to make conclusions about gay men's connection to home. See also, Gorman-Murray, 'Masculinity and the Home: A Critical Review and Conceptual Framework,' 367ff.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 55–56. Essentially, this is the act of 'queering' a space.

women and children exposed the artifice of the task. With no women or children present, their roles as husbands, fathers, breadwinners and heads of house demanded reconsideration. Some men, such as Max Herz, continued as before, issuing instructions to his wife via multiple weekly letters and asserting household authority from afar. Others, like Albrecht Berblinger, surrounded himself with photographs and homelike trappings and disappeared into the task of chairing the management committee. Younger single men like Otto Wortmann and Paul Hayer tried multiple times to create a domestic space that worked for them, renovating and refurbishing as their needs and wishes—and resources—allowed. They, like others, began by replicating the attributes of their German and colonial homes previously coded as ‘feminine’: ordered, clean, contained, covered walls and floors, softly furnished with *objets d’art*, flowers and window boxes. But, in the same way Gorman-Murray asserts that gay male spaces have become characterised by a bleeding of the private and public domestic edges—that is, where the private space extends from the physical home into other public domains—internees also looked to external sites to extend their definitions of home. Thus, cabins, cafés or clubhouses—or, indeed, the beach itself—were incorporated into their notions of home.

The conflation of public/private and internal/external spaces in the history of emerging queer cultures is further advanced by George Chauncey in his history of queer New York. He notes that same-sex attracted middle class men were able to draw upon changing social norms among working class men who were increasingly able to occupy public and semi-public spaces such as parks, docks, beaches, bath houses, theatres and cinemas. Through encounters in these spaces, same-sex attracted men managed to develop both a culture and an identity we now know as ‘gay’, supporting Chauncey’s central argument that, for this group, ‘privacy could only be had in public’.¹⁵¹ This was also the case in London and parts of Germany, particularly Berlin, where the activities of Magnus Hirschfeld and other advocates of law reform were gaining attention and queer people being increasingly drawn.¹⁵² Homosexual men, according to John Tosh, were also drawn to colonial life when oppressive legal, moral, social and familial expectations encouraged the flight from European domesticity.¹⁵³ The push from Europe was matched by the allure of the Asian-Pacific colonies, where sexual society in new and non-conventional urban settings spurred colonial growth.

¹⁵¹ Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 179ff.

¹⁵² See, for example: Beachy, *Gay Berlin*; and Houlbrook, *Queer London*.

¹⁵³ Tosh, ‘A Man’s Place’. See also, Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality*; and Wotherspoon, ‘From Private Vice to Public History,’ 148ff; and ‘From Sodom to Sydney: History and the Chimera of Identity,’ 194ff.

The Trial Bay camp operated as an urban space in all but name. While remotely located and occupying a small geographic footprint, it contained the defining elements of a much bigger urban space. Five hundred and eighty internees and over one hundred guards lived entangled lives in inherently urban activities, such as co-located work, commerce, cohabitation, local governance, entertainment and multi-cultural expression. The camp canteen, hospital, great hall and beach café, and later the theatre, tennis courts and sports ground, were all coded as public spaces and became vital assets where citizens would meet and interact. While neither the war nor the internment experience provided male homosexuality with greater legitimacy, it did provide greater opportunity.¹⁵⁴ Chauncey, Beachy, Houlbrook and Wotherspoon agree that where established narratives of space changed as a consequence of increased urbanisation, queer cultural possibilities emerged.

*

This chapter has examined masculinities displayed in the Trial Bay internment experience in the important space of the home. The masculinities identified reveal the prevailing hegemonies as well as giving clues to the underlying social order. In investigating the ways internees adapted to their new circumstances, building and occupying new domestic spaces and reimagining expectations of public and private space and comportment, the chapter also observes the truly constructed natures of gender, sexuality and normativity. That these were able to be reinvented, when the circumstances of enforced detention demanded it, demonstrates they are, indeed, socially fabricated.¹⁵⁵

The space of the camp is intriguing. The remote location of Trial Bay and its history as a public works prison, the minimal interaction with outside communities, the government's decision to not report internment issues to the wider community, the restriction of access and censoring information of that which was allowed, and the general disinterest of internees in engaging with Australia outside the prison walls, were factors that combined to create an unusual social circumstance in the life of Australia. While certainly operating within the legal and military framework of the Australian wartime homefront, the connection to Australian life was muted. Thus, insularity is a condition of the Australian internment story that has not featured previously in narratives of

¹⁵⁴ Bongiorno, 'The Two World Wars and the Remaking of Australian Sexuality,' 101.

¹⁵⁵ Skinner, 'Gender and the Rhetoric of Modernity in Spanish America,' 27. Skinner describes them as enactments, enforcements and subversions of accepted spatial practices—in this case domestic practices.

homefront history. In many ways, the space operated like an aberrant outpost of the German empire on Australian soil.

*

Masculinity on Trial: This page is blank for printing.

Chapter 3: Work—Employment and Occupation



Image 3.1: Max Herz (right) with his orderly (standing) and three patients in the camp hospital.
[Source: Dubotzki collection]

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3.0 Sunshine on the Avon

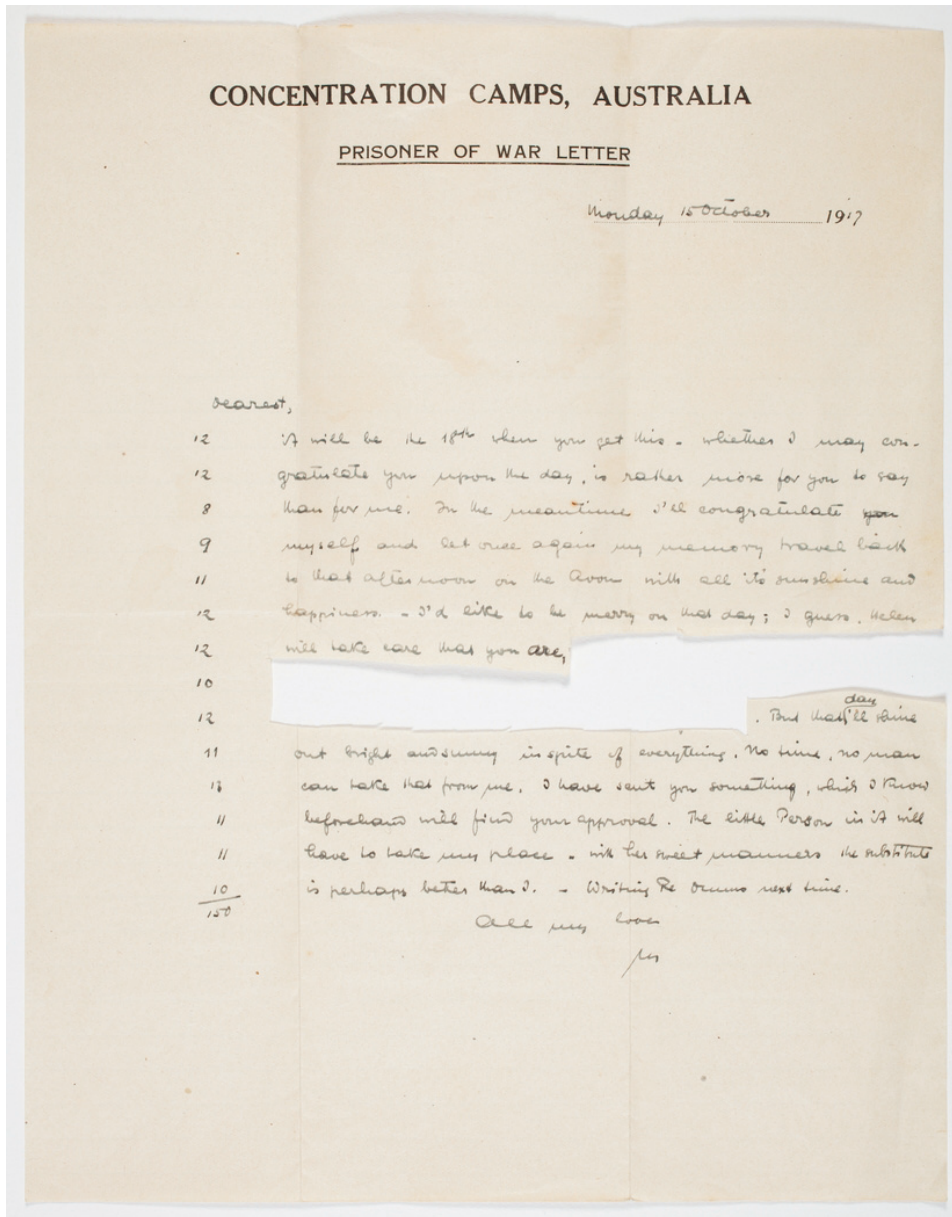


Image 3.2: Censored letter sent from Max Herz to his wife (Ethel), 15 October 1917, (transcription on following page). [Source: State Library of New South Wales]

Masculinity on Trial

CONCENTRATION CAMPS, AUSTRALIA PRISONER-OF-WAR LETTER

Monday 15 October 1917

Dearest,

It will be the 18th when you get this, whether I may congratulate you upon the day is rather more for you to say than for me. In the meantime, I'll congratulate ~~you~~ myself and let once again my memory travel back to that afternoon on the Avon with all its sunshine and happiness. I'd like to be merry on that day, I guess. Helen will take care that you are...

[25 words censored]

...But that day'll shine

out bright and sunny in spite of everything. No time, no man can take that from me. I have sent you something, which I know beforehand will find your approval. The little person in it will have to take my place, with her sweet manners, the substitute is perhaps better than I. Writing Re [*indecipherable*] next time.

All my love,

Max

Trial Bay, 15 October 1917

The usual idlers from the morning sick parade had been seen and sent on their way. Max had little time for malingerers. Physically, they were well, even those who queued daily at the infirmary just to hear him tell them so. An improving diet helped, and a parole area that now included the foreshore as well as the beach gave opportunities for all to walk and swim, including those unlikely to be seen near the tennis courts or bowling lane. At least in that he felt he'd had success.

Ailments of the mind concerned him more.

He looked at the ledger on the table. Klein, such a model of efficiency, had completed the report for the commandant so there was little for Max to do but add his signature. He signed, a tight, spider-like scrawl, the curse of medicos the world across, he thought, then placed it in the tray. The room was spotless, of course; the empty beds made and their meagre supply shelf neatly stacked. 'Ja, Klein!' he nodded to himself. Typical Prussian; clearly from the north. There was time to write to Ethel. And he must finalise her gift. He glanced at the calendar on the wall, 'Mon 15' was the first square to appear without a thick black cross slicing across the diagonals. While a parcel would now not make it to her by the 18th, a letter sent today could pass the censors in time for tomorrow's *Yulgilbar*. He placed a sheet of writing paper on the table, dipped the pen in the inkpot and began to write:

Monday, 15 October 1917

The ink sat on the shiny surface, pooling where it failed to gain purchase. Cheap government paper, he tutted to himself—and he had nothing he could use to blot. He tapped the pen on the side of the pot and managed to shake a drop back into the well. How many calendar squares had he crossed since 'Wednesday, 19 May 1915'? How many letters to Eth? He'd long since ceased to count, but writing the date forced him, at least, to confront another passing day. Like Trial Bay tides, they rose, they fell; they cycled with the moon. A year would pass and the pattern begin again. Helen, little Helen, just two months old then, had had her second birthday, and would soon be having a third. In the early days, at Victoria Barracks, up the road in Paddington, he hadn't bothered to include the month when writing out the date, just a day of the week and an ordinal: 'Wednesday 19th' and 'Saturday 22nd'. That was when everyone, even the guards, had thought it all a mistake and that he'd soon be back at home. 'A bit of a lark,' these Australians said.

Another expression that made no sense. He was, after all, Doctor Herz, a surgeon of some renown; a naturalised Australian, married to a British wife.

He began to include the month when transferred out to Holdsworthy. 'Friday 16th July.' And the year in 1916, when relocated here. 'Thursday 20 January 1916.' There had been no mistake. He leaned over the table and blew gently, watching the black words harden on the page. He continued:

Dearest,
It will be the 18th when you get this. Whether I may congratulate you upon the day is rather more for you to say than for me.

With each completed line, he counted the words and tallied them down the side. Twenty-eight words. One-twenty-two remaining. What did he need to say? He was forcing himself to be conscious of the censor, an intrusion he still found barbarous. The quality of his hand, his spelling and expression, the banality of the content and the number of his words—these English words—: all calculated to not provoke this unseen, unknown referee. So far, Ethel said, his letters had arrived to her unassailed. It was important to him that this continue.

Celebrating the anniversary of their engagement had been the commandant's idea. In an odd moment of amity between the two, he and Major Holborow discovered they were both fathers of infant children. So too were they men of professional standing, leaders of subordinates and heads of households from which they were presently separated. The major had enthused about observing many such moments in his marriage as a concession to his wife's patience and sacrifice. Max imagined the commandant's wife, perhaps not so different from his own.

Yet Ethel was nothing if not resilient. Such a good girl. She worked continually to protect him from himself, it seemed, and his tendency to sabotage their antipodean life. She had helped translate his book on New Zealand, typing hundreds of pages and working on every one of those to soften what they both knew was his brusque, abrasive tone. It was this and not his analysis that had caused the outcry. 'Ach!' he heard himself say. Was he really pompous? The reviewers thought him so. They focussed on his criticism of New Zealand's intellectual and cultural life and the femininity of the women. Max knew he had not called anyone ignorant, but that was what they'd said. His point had simply been to wonder how such a young and modern culture could hope to compare with one like his own, with century upon century of literature and music: Goethe, Schiller, Beethoven, Bach, Strauss, Brahms, Wagner. I mean, really. But he had not meant to offend.

The timing of the translation had been unfortunate as it coincided with the rise of anti-German feeling in both New Zealand and Australia. Like water in a boiling pot, the temperature had begun to rise. The very air had seemed to swell with people—his patients—determined to find fault. Nor had his outspokenness endeared him to his medical colleagues in New South Wales. No one wanted an ungrateful Hun. His reputation as aloof had stuck.

Since Max had been away, Ethel's resourcefulness continued to impress. He depended on her entirely now. If they had known then, by the Avon in Christchurch in 1904, that this wretchedness lay in their future, would she have agreed to marry him? How could she now have no regrets? He had left her without an income, caring for their dearest one and running an expensive house. He shuddered at what he'd made her endure. Of what his world would be like without them both.

It had been particularly difficult for Ethel in Greenoaks Avenue. The mentions in the papers had worn relationships with their neighbours thin, like acid drips down a limestone plinth. But that his arrest had happened at the house was a humiliation she might never forgive. He thought of the tight-lipped women as he was led away, watching from Greenoaks' grassy verge, Ethel with Helen behind the parlour curtain. Her letters no longer talked of bridge and luncheon parties or conversations had regarding Helen's antics. And they had all been so supportive when she was born. Most of Ethel's stories now connected Helen to Jean and spoke of adventures in the backyard where she played with Twist. He pictured their former friends, as unlikely now to acknowledge Ethel, even Jean, pushing the carriage as to inquire after its tiny occupant.

The internees' knowledge of what went on outside the camp was built on a thousand nuances scratched from letters and newspapers, then shared across the camp. Notwithstanding her discretion, Ethel's letters said a great deal in that they said so little. While he now knew that Mrs Mullin had begun delivering the post since her husband had been called up for training, the news still made him wonder. He looked at the government-issued envelope into which he would fold his letter, its 'Prisonniers de Guerre' advertisement blasting out their shame. He imagined Ethel's embarrassment as Mrs Mullin placed it in her hand. Yet her letters spoke only of the smile on the face of a woman pleased with her pitiable income and refusing to countenance her own humiliation. A wife's dependence on her husband was a complicated thing. Ethel certainly had that in common with Mrs Mullin. He tried to imagine a satchel across his wife's shoulder while she delivered post through Darling Point and reddened at the thought. Thank goodness for her parents. And loyal Jean. They were fortunate she stayed;

fortunate she continued with a family so maligned. Max knew they all suffered more than Ethel's letters let on. He hadn't thought it possible that the spell cast on Australia's common sense would have affected Darling Point as well.

He took a breath and touched the pen to the pot. They needed to be resilient for one another. There was nothing to be gained from letting the desperation fester, so he, for both of them, needed to help her to forget. That was the least he could do. All the more reason to remind her how much their family—she and Helen—meant to him in his exile:

In the meantime, I'll congratulate ~~you~~ myself and let once again my memory travel back to that afternoon on the Avon with all its sunshine and happiness. I'd like to be merry on that day, I guess. Helen will take care that you are...

He paused to contemplate the feeling and let his memory wander. It had been a magnificent day. Of course, they had been and would again—all three of them—be:

happy.

That day was more alive to him than yesterday's sick parade.

He had hired a punt and taken her on the Avon, poling down its gentle braids past pretty riverside fields. They changed from wheat to grazing grass to herbs to sunflowers. In the distance, the snow-covered Southern Alps rose from the green plains like brides on a chamomile lawn.

Sixty-nine words. Almost halfway through.

Few who came to the infirmary left without hearing about his project and to everyone he showed the snapshots of his daughter. All of the men had been happy enough to look but were embarrassed when he cried.

He knew he had a reputation as an eccentric in the camp, something tolerated here in a way it was derided outside. There was no doubting his professional standing. His expertise had won him the role of medical officer, a role he took most seriously, and which elevated him in the men's esteem. He was committed to their health and despaired at their ennui. That it brought him ten pounds monthly—money he could transfer to Ethel—was not the heart of its importance. What was he without his work? Without people who depended on him? But his presence also amplified the viciousness against them felt in the wider community and some in the camp resented him for it. His reputation for outspokenness and ingratitude tainted them all. And continued. Without Ethel, his reports and pronouncements were still misinterpreted as slights on his adoptive home. Harsher than he intended.

But things were not without hope. With perhaps indiscreet enthusiasm, he wrote:

I believe the new commandant, a Major Holborow, will make good his promise to renew family visitations, such as yours to me in March.

The meeting with the new commandant had gone well. He seemed like a reasonable man, more senior—a major—and better educated than either Eaton or Bedford, his youthful predecessors. And he was open to the idea of recommencing family visits to South West Rocks. It made no sense that the families should be the ones to suffer. Ethel had travelled up overnight on the *Yulgilbar*, as he himself had done, but with Helen—still a toddler—and Twist. They'd stayed a week at the Pacific in South West Rocks, and met for picnics halfway along the beach. Helen had been shy and unrevealing. No doubt she found it hard to connect the Daddy of her mother's stories to this odd man who would cry as soon as look at her.

But the guards were unimpressed by the idea. They had found the presence of the wives at South West Rocks chaotic and the situation difficult to control. For eight weeks, the camp routines were broken, which the other men—and the guards most of all—had resented. There was a new layer of prestige among the men for which all had been unprepared. Most of the women, like Ethel, were Australian born and not at all inclined to follow instructions coming from Australian guards. All of them were angry their government had taken away their husbands, the fathers of their children and, certainly in Ethel's case, their only means of support.

Max was hopeful:

But that day'll shine out bright and sunny in spite of everything. No time, no man can take that from me.

While it had meant the world to him, he was torn between his desire to see Ethel and Helen and the pressure it placed on them. It was a difficult journey—expensive too—and Helen's aloofness heartbreaking. He'd watched the *Yulgilbar* out of the Macleay and around Smoky Cape, waving a towel above his head, until it disappeared from sight. He needed to be strong for both of them. For all of them:

I am sending you something, which I know beforehand will find your approval. The little person in it will have to take my place, with her sweet manners, the substitute is perhaps better than I.

At the thought of his gift, he brightened. Max pushed the letter and inkwell to the far side of the table and laid out the photographs he'd been collecting. On the left he set the trio of portraits from Dubotzki, all mounted on solid board. Impressive that

Dubotzki could source such stock from inside the prison. He stared at the man in the images, barely recognising the fellow as himself. He was thinner than he imagined, his hairline further receded, his moustache not so full, more streaked with grey. He wore his tweed suit with a waistcoat, collar and bow tie but they sat wide on his neck and shoulders. It was as if he'd shrunk within them. His round spectacles were the only familiar link to his pre-war self. The man he was in Christchurch, punting in the sunshine while looking for a grassy bank on which to picnic.

On the right he placed the two sets of images received from Ethel after his repeated requests: the first were images of her with Helen in the garden, taken by Jean on the Kodak camera he'd given Ethel for her birthday. They showed the garden at the rear, his wife and daughter, smiling as they played. Helen was hardly a baby anymore. Her little legs had stretched. She poked around the yard, exploring the edges of her green-walled world. Twist was there too with a ball in his mouth, his tail wagging so hard it seemed to not be there at all. But these were snapshots printed on already curling paper, with pin-pricks of dust spoiling the print. And their size was not what he wanted to match the portrait of himself. So, he'd instructed Ethel to send the second set and these had duly arrived, mounted on professional board with 'Morrisons of Edgecliff' etched in cursive script across the bottom of each. In these, he saw his wife and daughter formally dressed and seated on a studio chaise, a Grecian scene behind. Helen's hair was curled and tied in bunches, the satin bows voluminous. Ethel's expression was hard to read—the dress, he recognised at once, was her older favourite, from before their marriage—and his daughter's brow was creased, as if she was wondering why Twist had been left at home. Poor Eth. Perhaps these were more than she could afford. Another mess he'd made. But the size was just as he'd requested and the image now matched the scale and seriousness of his own portrait.

In the middle of the table was the frame he'd commissioned from the workshop. Schreiber, a carpenter, had done the work beautifully, better than Max had thought him capable when he'd described what he remembered from the store on the Kurfürstendamm. It was a twin-piece in cedar with rosewood inlays forming a diamond-shaped border that travelled across both halves. He had even acquired two delicate hinges so the frame could be opened like the covers of a book and closed with a thin brass clasp.

The selected photographs slid easily into the frame: he on the left and Ethel with Helen on the right. He opened and set it on the table, looking at the three of them: united, yet divided.

He tried to picture ‘Bimini’ and its happy, leafy street. He had known every brick and step and flagstone when he oversaw it being built. But there now were things he found more difficult to recall. How many oaks were in the garden? And were they oaks or pines? On which side of the lychgate had they fought to place the postbox? What else was on the mantel in the parlour where the photograph frame would sit? The images were unclear.

He quickly shut and clipped the frame and wrapped a sheet of brown paper around it, tying it loosely with a long piece of string. The censors in the parcel office would want to look it over to satisfy themselves the cedar frame was not a threat to the nation’s war effort. Who knew how long that would take, but Eth would not receive it on the 18th. He considered folding a shilling into the wrapping to aid its passage but resisted the urge outright. Instead, he reached for the letter and carefully signed it off. He tallied the words again: exactly one hundred and fifty.

He watched the ink settle and again blew gently to hasten it drying. He read the letter through, trying to see it as the censor might and deciding it was unlikely to cause concern. Its most indicting feature was the black banner at the top: ‘Concentration Camps, Australia— Prisoner-of-War Letter’. Hostile and incriminating. Beneath such a mark, all his words felt foreign.

The folded page slipped easily into the envelope, sliding across the cheap gloss skin and landing dull and square. There was nothing to do but seal it shut. He dipped the pen and tapped the pot until the nib was dry. The final words felt most foreign of all:

Mrs Max Herz
 ‘Bimini’
 Greenoaks Ave
 Darling Pt
 Sydney



Image 3.3: Prisoner-of-war envelope sent from Max Herz to ‘Mrs Max Herz’ (Ethel), with censor’s stamp. [Source: State Library of NSW]

3.1 Introduction: Masculinity and the performance of work

Our views regarding the importation of German immigrants [are such that we are] satisfied of the superiority of one shipload of honest, frugal, hard-working Germans, over a whole fleet of ticket-of-leave Pentonville men; and if we are to be subjected to the maintenance of the latter, the former will be found to be by far the cheapest labour for the colony, [for if] the principal outlay [is] the cost of passage, [then] this outlay...would be amply repaid through the industry and saving habits of the Germans.

—*The Inquirer*, 14 November 1849¹

By the turn of the twentieth century, Germans in Australia had built a reputation for being hard-working, abstemious, clean-living and desirable neighbours.² Compared to other European sources, migration from German states through the nineteenth century was characterised by higher numbers of accompanying women than single men, indicating the preference of Australian colonial governments for families when paying bounties to entice prospective workers.³ Hard work, frugality, a ‘*Rast ich, so rost ich*’ [If I rest, I rust]⁴ approach to employment and occupation, and a preferencing of family and community over individual identity were part of an agrarian idyll to which large numbers of post-industrial Germans subscribed.⁵ Central to the discourse was the work of German sociologist Max Weber—and, earlier, of Karl Marx—who dominated contemporary thinking on work and labour in Germany and across the German diaspora.⁶ The interplay of modernity, capitalism and empire complicated how both men and women saw their places in the world, including geographical place, and how they—both men and women—constructed masculine identities.

New employment possibilities in the diaspora elevated the masculine expectation of supporting one’s family back in Europe. Anthony Splivalo, who migrated alone as a 13 year old in 1911 to meet his older brother in the Western Australian goldmines, noted:

Our family had no idea what my brother was doing in Australia. He sent money home irregularly and in small amounts. This created a lot of gossip in the neighbourhood. A

¹ “‘Occulta vitia inquirere’,” *The Inquirer*, 14 November 1849.

² Monteath, *Germans: Travellers, Settlers and Their Descendants in South Australia*, xi; Also Harmstorf and Cigler, *The Germans in Australia*, 15; Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 30.

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics 1911, p.3. See also, Tampke, *The Germans in Australia*, 14. The preference of settler states to recruit married/family men stands in contrast to the preference of trading, shipping and mining companies in exploitative colonies to employ single men.

⁴ This German proverb, reflective of the Protestant ethic of German capitalism, is associated in modern times with the German iron and steel magnate, August Thyssen (1842–1926).

⁵ Verheyen, *The German Question*, 14–20.

⁶ Berger, *Germany: Inventing the Nation*, 98–99. See also, Verheyen, *The German Question*, 223–224.

man's prestige and worth were judged by the amount of money he sent to his people, and nobody bothered to find out what kind of life he was living in the new land.⁷

It is not difficult to imagine the financial attractiveness of a life in Australia or colonial Asia-Pacific, particularly where the exotic appeal of von Bülow's 'place in the sun'—both literal and metaphorical—was so easily contrasted to the bleaker prospects of urban Germany.⁸ Otto Wortmann, an ambitious 21 year old, was unapologetic that he was in the Pacific colonies to make money. He was a plantation manager for a colonial trading company in German New Guinea, headquartered in Hamburg, and represented in Rabaul by Australia's Burns, Philp & Co. shipping and trading agency:⁹

After the war, if everything goes according to my plans, I just want to work and make money so that, after two or three years, I can return home with money in my pockets... All wishful thinking, it seems.¹⁰

Attitudes to work of the internees at Trial Bay are best understood in the context of such prevailing cultural influences. In 1905, Weber published *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, his controversial work on the role of Protestant Christianity in the development of German capitalism.¹¹ Weber had witnessed the effects of the industrial revolution sweeping across Germany: expanding cities breeding urban blight, the formation of new and vast companies, the rise of bureaucracy, and an emerging managerial elite with a taste for economic power previously wielded by the old Junker aristocracy. Capitalism's insatiable appetite for markets and resources easily fed the

⁷ Splivalo, *The Home Fires*, 11. Splivalo, one of the youngest internees in Australia during the war, was interned at Rottneest Island and then Holdsworth but not Trial Bay.

⁸ The origins of Germany's colonial agenda is traced to a Reichstag debate on 6 December 1897 during which German foreign secretary (later chancellor) Bernhard von Bülow famously said, 'We wish to throw no-one into the shade, but we demand our own place in the sun.'

⁹ *Deutsches kolonialblatt* 1915, p.51: Otto Wortmann deportation listing describes him as a 'Pflanzungsleiter' [plantation manager]. His friends at Trial Bay are also listed as having been deported on this day: Heinrich Stegmann, and H. H. W. Jerssen, 'Kaufman' [businessmen]; August Lembach, 'Schriftsteller' [writer].

¹⁰ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 14 June 1916. At the end of the war, Wortmann was one of the very few internees who was deported to Asia, rather than back to Europe. Early diary entries indicate his girlfriend in Munich, Rosa, was pregnant, eventually giving birth to a son. In subsequent entries, Wortmann reveals no curiosity about his son, admitting only to no longer having feelings for Rosa and, closer to the end of the war, that he has no interest in marrying her. For example, a diary entry for 23 September 1918 notes, 'Only Rosa is unhappy, she is angry that I don't want to get married. Picture me as a husband! It would be a farce, so grotesque and ridiculous as to perish the thought!'

¹¹ The work immediately drew critiques, such as from Weber's contemporaries Karl Fischer in 1907 and Felix Rachfahl in 1909, who thought the concept was simultaneously too wide (because it includes people who seek to acquire more than their immediate needs but are not accumulating capital) and narrow (because it includes motives that go beyond the acquisition of riches for its own sake).

Kaiser's desired narratives of *Weltpolitik* [international foreign policy] and *Deutschtum*, pushing Germany's colonial experiment deeper into China and the Pacific.¹²

The period also saw the emergence of a more gendered division of the labour market¹³ and adjustments of class that created additional social stratification—namely, the rise of the mercantile middle classes, like the *Bildungsbürgertum* [educated bureaucratic elite] and *Kleinbürgertum* [merchant class or *petite bourgeoisie*] in Germany.¹⁴ Differing social, cultural, political and economic origins meant that few groups of German nationals in the post-unification years preceding the war were homogenous—hence, the Kaiser's campaign of *Deutschtum* promoting a single ideal of Germanness.¹⁵ The 580 men from across the German and British empires, including Australia, who found themselves at Trial Bay 1915–1918 are a case in point. Certainly, they had their sex/gender in common but they were further united by a belief shared among themselves and the Australian administration that they were members of modern Germany's elite professional classes. This enabled—indeed, required—them to distinguish themselves from internees in other camps, as well as their Australian guards, and pushed other social and cultural differences from centre stage.

A characteristic of the middle class sub-strata was the increase in preference for scientific and technological solutions and a corresponding decline in traditional Lutheran religiosity,¹⁶ as evidenced by internees (i) Splivalo (at Holdsworthy) and (ii) Wittmann:

- (i) For a camp population of some five thousand inmates, religious activity was negligible. Most of the Germans were agnostics, especially the learned ones; many were outright

¹² Tampke, *The Germans in Australia*, 111–116.

¹³ See for example: Cockburn, *Machinery of Dominance: Women, Men and Technical Know-how*. Cockburn notes that, whereas men and women had typically worked side-by-side in pre-industrial agrarian communities, industrialisation brought massive shifts—not just in the type of work done but also in its gendered divisions. Tasks requiring greater physical strength, like iron work or coal mining, became thought of as men's work, while others like dressmaking, lacemaking or childcare, in a new working world where the home and place of work became further disconnected from the interests of men, were associated with women.

¹⁴ Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century: The History of Germany*, 359. See also, Edley, *Men and Masculinities*, 76; and Pleck and Sawyer (eds), *Men and Masculinity*, 94–95. The *Bildungsbürgertum* comprised an educated elite who saw themselves as enlightened and were committed to procedural rationality and the values of efficiency and predictability. Within the colonial empire, they had the qualifications of German civil servants and shared the discourse and common intellectual framework of the Prussian-German bureaucratic elite. These were the labour models that accompanied waves of emigrants from Britain and Germany in the mid–late nineteenth century.

¹⁵ Verheven, *The German Question*, 7–8, 17. The elements that united Germans from the patchwork of cities, states and principalities in 1871 were easily equalled by those that made them unique. When these distinctions are considered with the additional cultural differences stemming from an extra-German life in Ceylon, South-East Asia, Melanesia, Polynesia or Australia, a single, homogenous point of view is unlikely to exist. The conservative ideal was strongly resisted.

¹⁶ Meskill, *Optimizing the German Workforce*, 20. See also, Eyal et al., *Making Capitalism Without Capitalists*, 74; and Woodruff Smith, 'Contexts of German Colonialism,' 17.

atheists. To me, those without religion seemed to possess the more interesting and far-ranging minds.¹⁷

(ii) A few days ago, a missionary joined us who today, Sunday, celebrated the holy mass. Already last Sunday there was a church service, but very few attended, so now the soldiers have been ordered to attend.¹⁸



Image 3.4: Paul Dubotzki (4838), Anthony Splivalo (3725), Philipp Wittmann (5191), Wilhelm Woelber (5109), Otto Wortmann (5139). [Source: National Archives of Australia]

Conservative Lutheran pastors still preached that a Protestant ethic was core to one's sense of moral duty and personal salvation. The ethic held that rewards of hard work—namely profits—should be returned to the enterprise rather than taken out and spent on luxuries which were considered wasteful.¹⁹

Another important manifestation of the German Protestant ethic was the belief that, so long as an individual engaged with appropriate passion and vigour, all work was equal in the sight of God. Thus, the work of cobblers and carpenters was seen to be no less worthy than that of managers and magnates. This existential tenet could account for the fact that, for most of the Trial Bay internees, performing unskilled work in the camp environment that would have been done by servants or local workers before the war, did not compromise their self-identity. While the preservation of class distinction was important, so too was the need to perform—and *to be seen* to be performing—regular, honest and engaging work. Among the strongest themes in internees' diaries are those relating to work: having it, not having it, being paid for it, being paid insufficiently for it. About the various tasks he performs, Otto Wortmann is sanguine:

The past 3 weeks were dedicated to work. Each afternoon, Hayer, Stegmann, Schmidt and I would go outside and be road workers. My hands and the small of my back often hurt,

¹⁷ Splivalo, *The Home Fires*, 124–126 (from Holdsworthy).

¹⁸ Diary of Philipp Wittmann, 11 July 1915 (from Hong Kong).

¹⁹ Weber, *The Protestant Work Ethic* (trans.), 93ff. Weber calls this 'the disenchantment of the world'. This allowed for Protestant cultures, but especially Germans in their newly unified and modern nation, to look even more closely to science in the pursuit of capitalism, rather than to their religion, as tended to occur among Catholics. Prosperity wasn't to be thought of as something mysteriously ordained by God. It was the result of rational thought, honest action and hard work over many years. Without a worldview that included belief in miracles, people turned to science for explanations that encouraged scientific solutions.

and I shed quite a few beads of sweat, but it was good and healthy, and it helped me pay off my debts with Hayer.²⁰

This is not to say internees relished the notion of menial work. Not surprisingly, the wealthy Singaporean Woelber wrote of his distaste for the dirtier jobs:

The [lavatory] buckets are emptied twice a day and then tarred, a job for which we Singapore people were to be conscripted as well. After lengthy negotiations with the commander, we managed to buy ourselves out of the job for a fortnightly fee of £2/1/6, which we have to find somehow.²¹

His comment is a useful reminder of the ability of those with money to purchase a better quality of internment experience and the persistence of class. It was this engagement with the commandant in Holdsworthy in August 1915 that pre-empted the more favourable outcome to transfer wealthier men to the Trial Bay camp. Woelber was not to know that Major Sands had visited Trial Bay on 16 May 1915 to investigate its potential as an elite internment alternative and their relocation from Holdsworthy was imminent.²²

Prominent among the photographs of Paul Dubotzki are portraits of men at work at Trial Bay, many of which featured in the 2010 exhibition *The Enemy at Home*²³ and some of which are reproduced in this chapter. Apart from being a remarkable record of the occupational activity of internment, the collection is a reminder of Dubotzki's own impressive skills while operating in less than ideal circumstances. That internees were content to participate and have their employment recorded speaks of a pride in their work and a desire to have their internment occupation documented. *'Rast ich, so rost ich'*. Dubotzki applies his skills equally and generously to the portraits of tailors, cobblers, bakers and blacksmiths as he does to portraits of grander subjects—for example, portraits of wealthy internees like Berblinger and von Hofgaarden at Images 2.5 and 2.7.

These observations from Trial Bay are symptomatic of broader themes of worker enfranchisement then occurring outside the gates—across Australia, throughout the German colonial diaspora, and over industrialised and war-affected Europe—where the performance of work and the organisation of labour were defining, and frequently

²⁰ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 7 July 1916 (his birthday).

²¹ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, c. August 1915 (from Holdsworthy). Importantly, both skilled (tradesmen) and unskilled (orderlies) workers were included in the Trial Bay cohort to service the needs of the camp.

²² 'Trial Bay Gaol,' *Macleay Chronicle*, 19 May 1915.

²³ NSW Migration Heritage Centre at the Museum of Sydney. Ninety of the exhibited photographs were subsequently published in the book *The Enemy at Home* by Nadine Helmi and Gerhard Fischer.

divisive, issues. Indeed, a Marxist reading of the war says the ‘Great Slaughter’ itself was the ultimate capitalist incursion into the lives and futures of working people.²⁴

Thus, this chapter examines the performance of masculinities of work at a time of tensions over class and labour ideology. It asks which internees worked at Trial Bay and why, before exploring what it was they did. Specifically, it looks at moments where expectations were subverted and new imaginings of masculine potential made possible—for example, the 1916 strike action run by the internees to protest perceived grievances. The incident is an example of a subversive moment where the methods of labour organisation and activism employed by one class were co-opted and used against them by another.

About ‘Sunshine on the Avon’

Supporting this second empirical pillar is the short story ‘Sunshine on the Avon’. The intent of the story is twofold. First, it introduces the character of Dr Max Herz, one of the most eminent internees of the Trial Bay cohort, but whose presence was not without controversy and whose frequent demonstrations of attachment to his home contributed to a normalising of ‘feminine’ emotions among the men. Herz was the government-salaried German medical officer at Trial Bay but also took on the creative direction and administrative impetus of the German Theatre, two roles that kept him busy and assured his prestige within the camp community.²⁵ Since emigrating from Berlin in 1903, he had practised medicine in New Zealand (Christchurch) and Australia (Sydney), developing an international reputation as an orthopaedic specialist and surgeon.²⁶ But he was considered fussy and brusque among his professional colleagues at the British Medical Association from whom he alienated himself through what was considered a difficult and outspoken manner. Comments in his 1908 cultural work *New Zealand: The Country and The People*—for example, where he questioned the efficacy of prime minister Richard Seddon’s popular socialist reforms—were interpreted as cultural and social slights in

²⁴ Faulkner, *A Marxist History of the World*, 180–190. For other analysis of traditional causes of World War I, see Macmillan, *The War That Ended Peace*; Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914*; Zinn, *On War*; and Hochschild, *To End All Wars: How the First World War Divided Britain*.

²⁵ That Herz, as creative director of the theatre, took on the task of instructing actors how to best portray women and girls when playing female characters is of great interest to this thesis and will be discussed in Chapter 4: Theatre.

²⁶ Clarke, *Dr Max Herz*, part 6: Trial Bay. See also, Clarke, ‘Max Marcus Herz (1876–1948),’ *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Herz had developed a successful non-surgical treatment for the congenital condition of *talipes equinovarus* (‘club foot’).

both New Zealand and Australia when the English translation appeared in 1912.²⁷ At that time, Herz was also a regional correspondent for the popular Berlin daily newspaper, the *Berliner Tageblatt*, a fact that created greater suspicion of his motives and loyalty.²⁸ Significant to establishing contemporary tropes of masculinity, Herz was an older German husband married to a younger Australian-born wife, Ethel, who had given birth to their daughter, Helen, just weeks before his initial arrest.²⁹

The story conveys the emotion borne out in his letters: a strong attachment to a traditional role of husband and father and a deep sadness at being separated from his family at such a critical moment. In many ways, the masculinities of Herz's approach to the world were old-fashioned, hearkening to the Prussian military ideal of former 'Iron Chancellor' von Bismarck or the popular fictional character, Major von Tellheim.³⁰ For Herz, as for all internees, his identity as a husband, father, statesman and citizen were challenged by his forced removal from home and his need to remain connected to it. Despite the time and distance away from home—and the humiliation visited on them all by neighbours and former patients, among whom were those who refused to honour the credit he had extended to them in better times—Herz fought to remain head of the house and provide for Ethel and Helen.³¹

The secondary purpose of 'Sunshine on the Avon' is to stitch into the body of this thesis a demonstration of the simultaneous strength and precariousness of the historical archive. Over 80 of the letters Herz wrote to Ethel from captivity are held in the State Library of New South Wales. Ethel clearly received and kept them—although it is unclear whether there were others received and not included in the collection or written

²⁷ For example: 'A German View of New Zealand,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 March 1912. The original German version of *New Zealand: The Country and The People* was translated into English by Herz and his wife, Ethel—who is acknowledged but not named in the preface.

²⁸ Scrapbook of Herz articles published in *Berliner Tageblatt*, Max Herz papers, 1876–1948. In May 1914, Herz wrote an article on Australia's need to develop its own navy, in opposition to First Lord of the British Admiralty Winston Churchill's stated desire for Australia to remain dependent on Britain's expanding navy. Before the article reached Berlin, the Austrian archduke had been assassinated; two weeks after it was published in the *Berliner Tageblatt*, Austria declared war on Serbia. Despite the celebration of Australia's future at the core of the article, the timing of its publication served to reinforce his German origin and interests and positioned him both as political and anti-British among his critics.

²⁹ Clarke, *Dr Max Herz*, part 6. Herz had his 40th birthday in February 1916, days after his arrival at Trial Bay. As the age of German military conscription, a factor in the decision to intern, was 45, Herz was one of the older internees.

³⁰ Major von Tellheim is the quintessential Prussian military hero of Lessing's play *Minna von Barnhelm*. Herz directed two performances of this popular play at the German Theatre Trial Bay on 24–25 June 1917.

³¹ Letter from Max Herz to Mrs Ethel Herz, 9 April 1917. Max wrote, 'Do you wish to bring it gently to me that I am no more boss of the 'Erz show?'

by Herz but not received by Ethel.³² In examining comparable letters sent by German soldiers from the trenches of the western front to wives and girlfriends at home, Jason Crouthamel notes an additional challenge for historians who seek evidence from private correspondence: letters, being reflections on past action or emotion rather than live accounts, tend to reveal how men wished to represent themselves in relation to the events as much as what those events actually were.³³ Further, expected review by censors or other unknown readers demanded suppression of unedifying content. While letters sent from German trenches to the German homefront were subject to review,³⁴ letters from the German concentration camps in Australia were the subject of much closer scrutiny,³⁵ occasionally resulting in censorship as suggested by the letter reproduced as Image 3.2.

And this letter is especially intriguing. Why are 25 words missing? What was the fact or sentiment expressed that invoked the scissors of, presumably, the government censor? None of the other letters in the collection were censored in this way; generally, both prose and content are benign and sentimental—descriptors easily projected as the character of the man himself.

The censorship—literally, a hole in the archive—invites creative scrutiny.

³² The papers of Max Herz were donated to the State Library of New South Wales in 1977 by his daughter Helen (Mrs H. Hearst). Herz himself had died in 1948.

³³ Crouthamel, *An Intimate History of the Front*, 6.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 5. An estimated 6.8 million letters were sent each day from the German trenches, receiving only cursory review from the 8,000 readers tasked with censoring them.

³⁵ *Diary of Friedrich Meier*, 18 February 1916. While the regulation was enforced differently over time and between camps, typically, only two letters of 150 words each were permitted to internees each week. These were to be written in English if sent to an Australian address but could be in German if sent to an international destination. See also, Report from Swiss consul, Mr Marc Rutty, 17 June 1917; Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 181; and Letter from commandant, German concentration camps, to Association of Interned Australian-born Subjects, 4 February 1918. All letters written by internees were to relate only to private affairs or to business matters in which they had a personal interest. Complaints about treatment could only be directed to the ministry of defence, the official visitor or designated neutral consul. More significantly, censorship occurred in the Australian press where no reporting of camp operations was permitted at all. Consequently, few Australians were aware of the ongoing presence and plight of internees.

3.2 Pre-occupation: Why did internees work?

The biggest worry, as mentioned before, is the lack of money, and how to get through another day and night with decency!

—Otto Wortmann, 29 March 1916

Being a ‘decent’ man in Australia during the years of war meant different things to different people. For the young plantation manager Otto Wortmann, decency was a daily challenge to keep both personal and professional reputation intact among his fellow internees. Where the camp community potentially included one’s colonial employers, subordinates, clients, competitors and professional peers, with whom work relationships had history and were expected to continue after the war, reputation and comportment were important.³⁶ Wortmann’s ‘biggest worry’, the ‘lack of money’, apart from the inconvenience of being unable to purchase essential daily items or participate in the social life of the camp, could call into question one’s financial acuity or competence as a manager. A negative reputation gained in camp could prove problematic afterwards. Meanwhile, a positive and competent display could elevate one’s standing in the relatively small colonial community. The general feeling was that, when Germany won the war, opportunities would be plentiful for those who had proven themselves industrious.

But the monetary benefits of work, meagre as they were, were not the only rewards: work contributed to physical and mental health, presented a sought-after opportunity to leave the camp environs, facilitated a different form of contact with the guards and one’s compatriots, and bolstered new opportunities for identity and homosociality. Even wealthier internees, without financial need, chose to engage in work.³⁷ Consequently, the relationship between internees, masculine identities and work was complex.

Three reasons are evident for why internees chose to work:

- to earn an income and participate in the camp economy
- to reinforce social identities, status and privilege
- to relieve boredom.

Other motivations, such as to practise existing professional skills or to learn entirely new ones, also sparked internees’ engagement with work. And, in the same way the choices internees made in decorating their blank, whitewashed cell-walls were

³⁶ Diary of Otto Wortmann, n.d., vol.1, 10–12. Wortmann was one of 23 single German men transported from New Guinea to Sydney, arriving 24 August 1914.

³⁷ Report from Swiss consul, Mr Marc Ruddy, 17 June 1917.

indicative of how they chose to remember and reinvent their homes, their decisions and activities in engaging with work reveal underpinning notions of class and assumptions of employment and occupation.

Earning income

It costs money to play tennis, it costs to play bowls, and even the library now charges a fee; and then you have to pay your share to the entertainment committee, to the music society, to the kitchen and lavatory personnel, the table needs to be cleaned, and getting the laundry done costs more than anything. Add to this the debt I have to repay.³⁸

The price of internment was not cheap. Cigarettes, tobacco, matches and lamp oil were just some of the goods able to be purchased from the camp canteen.³⁹ Coffee and cake were available daily from the camp cafés, the daytime hubs of camp life, and wealthier men could dine at their very own restaurant, the Duck Coop outside the main gate.⁴⁰ Membership of the various clubs or associations [*Vereine*]⁴¹—an important link to pre-war Germanness and maintaining social connectedness—were subscription-based and also cost money. Not having money disconnected an internee from the life of the camp and risked tagging him—in the minds of his compatriots—as a lesser member of the Trial Bay elite, possibly better aligned with the milieu of the Holdsworth main camp.

At least in theory, Otto Wortmann went to the camp office on the third day of every month to collect 30 shillings sent from Burns, Philp & Co., the New Guinea (plantation) Company's Australasian agent.⁴² Despite the frequent delays or cancellation of his stipend,⁴² he remained one of the fortunate few who continued to receive at least

³⁸ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 15 July 1916.

³⁹ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 12 February, 31 October 1916. Price gouging resulted in sizeable monthly profits from the canteen for the Australian camp administration, for which reason the commandant was loathe to cede control. The internees were convinced they could better manage the canteen and should control profits to benefit themselves, such as to subsidise food and entertainment. They were temporarily successful in taking over the control from 1 September 1916. Their suspicions of corrupt management by the Australians appeared to be confirmed when they also inherited an operational debt of £193/10/–.

⁴⁰ Diary of Friedrich Meier. 18 February 1916. Meier writes, 'At the kiosk we can buy porridge for breakfast, 2d (16 Pf) a plateful, a cup of coffee costs 1d (8 Pf) and a cup of chocolate 2d (16 Pf), and they also sell non-alcoholic beverages, cigars, cigarettes etc.' See also, Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 250–251. The original Strand Café and subsequent Artist's Den are shown in Images 2.24 and 2.25.

⁴¹ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 16 April 1917.

⁴² Diary of Otto Wortmann, 6 April 1916. Waiting for anticipated funds to arrive was often tortuous. 'And more of the same, day in, day out. And still no mail, from anywhere, nothing new, and anyway, no money!'

partial company pay while interned, offset against his promise of future work.⁴³ Expat plantation managers or administrators involved in the shipping or colonial trade in German New Guinea enjoyed similar arrangements, as did company representatives, government workers, or plantation owners and managers from the regional British colonies. Others, such as officers and engineers detained from the German merchant marine, initially received stipends from the Australian government in addition to company pay.⁴⁴ Others, like Albrecht Berblinger, owner-entrepreneur of his own import/export enterprise in China, and Georg Boysen, a particularly wealthy plantation owner from Ceylon, were self-supporting.

This is not to say that well off internees did not also experience financial hardship. Even if access to one's bank account was not a problem, internees were not permitted to withdraw more than £5 per fortnight—thus, wealth without liquidity or credit may have been a problem in the micro-economy that formed.⁴⁵ The Singaporean cohort was thoroughly searched and all money and gold they carried in excess of £3–4 was confiscated on arrival at Holdsworthy. For all, this was an affront, even for those attempting to carry money secreted in belts, cigar cases or shoes.⁴⁶ Many German-Australian internees, in addition to losing their income, suffered the compounding setback of having their businesses dissolved or sold under increasingly onerous anti-German wartime legislation.⁴⁷ Many continued to support family or dependants. For example, even though he was a man of means, Max Herz had recently built an expensive home in Sydney's Darling Point and was forced to dissolve his successful Macquarie

⁴³ Diary of Friedrich Meier, 22 October 1914. 'According to a letter from Norddeutscher Lloyd (N.D.L.), we will receive full wages until 1st Nov. this year. It's probably money we won't receive until after the war is over.' N.D.L.'s regional agent Oscar Plate was also interned. He reduced payments over time until eventually, for single men with no dependants, they ceased altogether.

⁴⁴ Diary of Friedrich Meier, 5 March 1916. Meier writes, 'The Australian government has granted us ship's officers in Trial Bay 2s (2M) a week in pocket money and thus I received 22s today for the period from 5/12/15 to 19/2/16... As for salary, I received 17s (17M) today.' As the war continued beyond expectation and anticipated expense, the internee stipend was discontinued. See also, Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 267–268. Destitute men, such as those who lost work in the anti-German climate, could volunteer for internment at the main camp. Wives were eligible for weekly welfare of 10s (raised to 12s/6d in June 1917) with 2s/6d per child. See also, Memorandum regarding access to money, NAA: A11803; and Aliens Instructions, 1914. Internees were allowed a minimal amount of money on their person, determined by commandant. Money received on behalf of internees was receipted and held in trust by the camp commandant.

⁴⁵ Report from Swiss consul, Mr Marc Rutty, 17 June 1917.

⁴⁶ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, n.d., 11. The internees were eventually able to have receipts issued. The amount confiscated was in excess of £4,500.

⁴⁷ Tampke, *The Germans in Australia*, 118–121.

Street medical practice when not in a position to direct it.⁴⁸ The sudden loss of income immediately affected and created financial distress for his wife Ethel and newborn daughter Helen, requiring Herz to initiate legal proceedings from inside the camp against patients who reneged on paying their bills.⁴⁹ Of all the Germans interned across Australia through the war, few were better placed to steer a course through such difficult circumstances—Herz had prestige, language, connections, righteous motivation and the law on his side—yet he and Ethel were still to experience a bewildering array of problems and anti-German sentiment.⁵⁰

Most others, particularly in other camps, had no expectation of financial support and depended on their own entrepreneurial initiative or opportunities for in-camp work to generate an income.⁵¹

Trading one's cell was a creative option for raising money at Trial Bay. The earlier tranches of internees, assigned in pairs to the gaol's 128 granite cells, were in the relatively fortunate position of having a saleable asset when later tranches arrived. Even after a number of new barracks were built to alleviate overcrowding, a 'rather profitable trade' in the preferred cell accommodation emerged.⁵² One wooden barracks was completed on 4 March 1916, at which point internees who had been living in tents enjoyed a move to underneath a solid roof.⁵³ Still, prices for the cells ranged from £5 to £10. Even though considered exorbitant, none remained unsold.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Clarke, *Dr Max Herz*, part 6. See also, Clarke, 'Dr Max Herz,' *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Initially, Herz was permitted to leave detention to attend his patients. This became difficult when he was transferred to Holdsworthy and impossible when transferred to Trial Bay.

⁴⁹ One opportunistic former patient successfully complained to the Department of Defence, refusing to pay the German doctor. This further action resulted in bureaucratic non-payment of money owed to Ethel from Herz's government salary from his work as Trial Bay medical officer.

⁵⁰ Dr Max Herz, Statutory Declaration of Loyalty to Australia, 1914. On a rare occasion when Herz allowed his normal level-headedness to lapse, he wrote an angry entry in his diary and a letter to the government seeking release to support Germany's medical crisis. These cemented his reputation as anti-loyal and resulted in his prolonged internment, narrow avoidance of deportation, and being one of the last to be released in April 1920, nearly five years after his initial arrest.

⁵¹ The three types of income-bearing work available in the camp economy—private business, government-funded work and camp-funded work—will be discussed in Section 3.3 of this chapter.

⁵² Diary of Friedrich Meier, 3 February 1916. Even worse than the experience of the first internees, no accommodation had been prepared for the Hong Kong arrivals in January 1916 who were forced to sleep on the bare stone paving of the main dining hall. See also, Diary of Otto Wortmann, 8 and 12 April 1916.

⁵³ Diary of Friedrich Meier, 5 March 1916.

⁵⁴ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 30 June 1916. This meant the amount of money spent on refurbishing a cell could conceivably be made back.



Image 3.5: Adolf Schlichting (5016, perhaps the gambling tailor?), Hans Ermekeil (5070), Heinrich Wilcke (5236), Wilhelm Woelber (5109), Victorian Consul Wilhelm Adena (4735).
[Source: National Archives of Australia]

Borrowing money from friends was possible or from moneylenders like Heinrich Wilcke. An office employee of Oscar Plate at Lohmann & Co. in Sydney, agents for the shipping line Norddeutscher Lloyd, Wilcke managed to have a £500 bank loan approved on which he would then draw smaller increments to offer loans to his fellow internees.⁵⁵

Otto Wortmann, one of the last internees to be deported, considered borrowing from a moneylender when in Holdsworthy awaiting release:

I, and others, have to borrow the money that we need here and have to repay it with usurious interest or work it off later in back-breaking labour, whereas the vagabond is being subsidised.⁵⁶

One of the few remaining options for cash was to gamble, which Wortmann often did with his friends but with rare success.⁵⁷ Until lights out most evenings, he would play pinochle, poker or whisky poker with the friends pictured in Image 3.6. His cellmate Hayer occasionally loaned him money, as did compatriots Schmidt and Westphal, but indebtedness to friends who were, presumably, experiencing similar financial precariousness was not ideal. For Wortmann, concerned with being perceived as someone able to manage his own financial affairs, this was a source of shame. He justified his actions by saying he was a single man with no family to support. His lifestyle in New

⁵⁵ Letter from Heinrich Wilcke to Macleay River Historical Society (MRHS), March 1964, 3. While he says he was able to circumvent the £5 fortnightly access limit by ‘transferring it’, it’s more likely he bribed the guards. Wilcke’s internment experience was nothing if not colourful. Other than offering retail loans, he was a known and active homosexual and possibly the ‘cabin boy’ on whom the short story ‘Smouldering Ruins’ is based. He smuggled whisky into the camp through his association with the guards, for whom he also ran a laundry service. The repayment of the £500 bank loan had an unfortunate postscript: Wilcke says he was repaid only £100 of the £500 by the internees to whom he issued loans. The rest was lost through the rampant post-war inflation. He had to repay the bank an equivalent of £4,865.

⁵⁶ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 18 December 1918. The vagabonds are the destitute men who could voluntarily enter internment in exchange for a weekly 10s payment (later 12/6) paid to wives.

⁵⁷ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 15 April 1916. Wortmann estimates that by February 1917 his debt has grown to about 1,000 Marks (£1,000). It is assumed, however, that this enormous amount reflects primarily the debt he has accrued with his employer. The stakes for his gambling and loans from his friends were for relatively petty amounts, e.g. the price of a cup of coffee or tin of cigarettes.

Guinea involved much drinking and carousing with other single men. While this was a core part of his colonial masculine identity, he remained concerned for his parents and younger siblings in Germany.⁵⁸



Image 3.6: Otto Wortmann's card playing friends: Johann Broadbelt (5176), Julius Jessen (4884), Hermann Duncker (2485), Paul Hayer (5157, cellmate), Erich Usadel (4923).
[Source: National Archives of Australia]

But while Otto Wortmann's gambling appears to have been relatively minor, elsewhere in the camp more serious gambling was occurring with amounts wagered in games of poker said to be as high as £50 on any given evening.⁵⁹ Such sums led to distress for those who could not afford to lose it:

The gamblers are a rather mixed lot, from tailor and shoemaker to the chairman of the committee. The tailor recently lost all his hard-won savings and next day demanded, in tears, that the committee reimburse him. Hopefully, he has come to his senses now and will stay away from now on.⁶⁰

The committee chair at the centre of at least some hard gambling was Hans Ermekeil, a plantation administrator from Singapore.⁶¹ The dishonour brought by his involvement in gambling was seen as scandalous by fellow Singaporean elder, the diarist Woelber, as well as other conservative internees.⁶² But compounding the dishonour was that he—and his friend and subsequent committee chairman Berblinger—also participated in the sly grog (whisky) trade. This was supplied by Heinrich Wilcke through his black market connections with the guards.⁶³ In addition to his involvement in gambling, Ermekeil was 'a clear-cut alcoholic who because he [couldn't] hold the booze very well was drunk more often than not'. He had 'disgraced himself' on many occasions, both at Trial Bay and in Singapore, but an incident where he 'decided to relieve himself in

⁵⁸ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 6 May 1916. One of Wortmann's younger brothers (Edy) died from tuberculosis during the war.

⁵⁹ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 31 May 1917.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ See Image 2.8.

⁶² Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 31 May 1917.

⁶³ Letter from Heinrich Wilcke to Macleay River Historical Society (MRHS), 2–3. Guards would purchase whisky for 6/– per bottle and sell it to Wilcke for 10/– per bottle. He would then onsell it to internees and make his own profit on top.

the hallway on the first floor' forced a motion that he should disappear from public life for having taken one step too far.⁶⁴ According to Wilcke, the Victorian consul Wilhelm Adena, agent in Melbourne for Norddeutscher Lloyd, was another heavy drinker, 'prescribed one bottle of whisky [per week] for medical reasons'.⁶⁵ Woelber writes:

One could maybe turn a blind eye if they stayed in their cells and wouldn't show themselves all foggy... It's a scandal that the committee doesn't do anything against it.⁶⁶

One final option for acquiring cash was to simply steal it. But theft among internees was not anticipated at Trial Bay in the way it was at Holdsworthy, where extortion and theft were rife. Petty crime was associated with the working and lower classes. Honesty among brothers was another way internees were able to distinguish themselves from both the guards and their compatriots at Holdsworthy and affirm their social superiority.⁶⁷

[A]t least half the men [at Holdsworthy] were tramps or some even criminals who had fled Europe, others were mine workers, harbour hands, pimps, etc.,... [Y]ou can imagine to some extent the mood and manners in Liverpool, even if you could never conceive of the full brunt of vulgarity and villainy. Brawls and theft occurred routinely. Any decent man was being vilified. The basest characters even formed a gang called 'Black Hand', which extorted money from the rich inmates or beat them...if they refused.⁶⁸

For this reason, it was all the more confronting when a spate of thefts *did* occur at Trial Bay over a six-month period in 1916 and an internee or syndicate was suspected. Oscar Plate, chairman of Lohmann & Co., was one of the victims, as were Dietrich Döhle, a clerk from Ceylon, and the outspoken recent arrival from Holdsworthy, Sydney ore

⁶⁴ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 1 December 1917.

⁶⁵ Letter from Heinrich Wilcke to MRHS, 1. See also, MRHS notes from follow-up interview, 1.

⁶⁶ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 1 December 1917.

⁶⁷ For example, see: Miller, 'Social Class and Crime'. Recent research focuses on the relationship of crime to socio-economic conditions, e.g. poverty, coming from a disadvantaged neighbourhood, the culture of poverty, and the very structure and enforcement of laws and the legal system.

⁶⁸ Letter from Otto Wortmann to his mother, 19 December 1916, 1, 16–17. See also, 'A German Black Hand,' *The Age*, 3 May 1916; and Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 208–210. The Bland Hand was a Mafia-style group of 30–40 thugs operating at Holdsworthy from c.January 1915 through to 19 April 1916 when other internees rebelled, attacked and violently ejected members of the gang. Six were thrown over the seven-foot fence to the watching guards; one of them, Hans Portmann, died of injuries sustained. On 25 May 1916, Lieut. Street (G.C.C., Liverpool), W. H. Richardson-Clark (Parramatta district coroner), M. Williams (deposition clerk) and Police Constable McGrath arrived at Trial Bay to take the deposition of Ernst Frankfurter (former chair of Holdsworthy committee, Jan–Feb 1916) relating to the death of Portmann.

merchant, Louis Burkard.⁶⁹ One of the thieves, caught in February 1917, was a former Plate employee who was elsewhere reported to have been ‘one of the sadly growing numbers of homosexuals’ in the camp who ‘probably needed the money for his indulgences’.⁷⁰ This is an allusion to the cost of blackmail, the scourge of homosexual men of the time, in Germany as well as Australia and Britain.⁷¹ While the identity of the thief cannot be confirmed, it’s likely it was Heinrich Wilcke—the moneylending, bootleg-liquor importing, guard-fraternising internee.

Where it occurred, as it did, petty theft was assumed to have been perpetrated by the guards, in whom there was little confidence and of whom larceny was thought to be a standard practice. It was one of the main complaints of the internees. Rarely believed and difficult to prove, an allegation was unlikely to result in the recovery of property. The internee Woelber was often incredulous at the ungentlemanly behaviour of the Australian soldiers:

Before the gentlemen were led away, their luggage etc. was searched whereupon the soldiers found some chocolate that was handed over to the officer in charge of the investigation. That one, you won’t believe this, was not too embarrassed to divide [the chocolate] up among him and his soldiers, and to eat it too. For German standards, that’s hard to believe! Furthermore, Dressel lost a valuable golden cigarette case on this occasion and is not likely to ever see it again.⁷²

Woelber’s comment leaves little doubt of his belief in the moral superiority of his German compatriots; he has little expectation of honour from the Australians. Nor does he entertain the thought of Germans dishonouring their Germanness, even at this time of war. This he believed to be a point of collective masculine pride. The issue presented a recurring source of tension in all camps—that is, that the lax, frequently corrupt, approach to administration of the camp by the guards was never to the advantage of the Germans.

⁶⁹ Diaries of Otto Wortmann, Friedrich Meier and Wilhelm Woelber, various dates. Burkard had also been chair of the Holdsworthy committee and was well regarded for having declined an initial offer to relocate to Trial Bay so he could pursue his committee work on behalf of the Holdsworthy internees. Ironically, his persistent protests and internee organisation were said to have been the reason for his eventual transfer to Trial Bay. Whether for his politics or his money, he had also been targeted by the Black Hand gang and arrived at Trial Bay around 3 May 1916 with a black eye. Burkard continued his political activism and was at the centre of the ‘Bolshevik/Royalist’ schism that cleaved the Trial Bay cohort in 1918.

⁷⁰ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 31 May 1917, 2 February 1918. The unknown thief described by Woelber as a former steward who had worked as an accountant for Plate and defrauded him by ‘every trick in the book’. He was jailed before being deported to Holdsworthy for a criminal trial.

⁷¹ Beachy, *Gay Berlin*, 70–82. See also, Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 31 January 1918. When his homosexual behaviour was eventually brought before the committee and he was threatened with deportation to Holdsworthy, Wilcke counter-threatened that he would expose the names of all those men with whom he had had sex. The committee quickly dropped its inquiry.

⁷² Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 1 June 1915 (at Holdsworthy).

Reinforcing status and social privilege; relieving boredom

Oh boredom! My God, how boring can it get in this world! I have now reached a point where I start writing in the middle of the afternoon. But I'm too unmotivated and brain dead to study or do anything else! I wish I could just sleep through to the end of the war... Christ almighty!⁷³

For most, the greatest daily challenge came from the enforced idleness of internment. Men who had led active working lives outside the camp had little to meaningfully occupy them, feeding frustration and ennui. Thus, many for whom financial recompense was not a concern welcomed the opportunity to pass the time performing some kind of physical activity and to leave the confines of the camp.

The older Singaporean Woelber enjoyed the relief outside work brought from the monotony of his life as well as access to the impressive ocean views but remained fearful of the Australian soldiers whom, he believed, would 'prod him with a bayonet' if they thought he worked too slowly.⁷⁴ Such a fear was not altogether unfounded. Paul Dubotzki had infamously photographed and smuggled out of the Torrens Island camp evidence of internees being bayoneted in 1915.⁷⁵ The entire Australian soldiery was easily tagged by the internees as lazy, larcenous and brutal as a result of persistent stories of appalling performance. Amplifying these incidents and demonising their captors' masculine honour further served the internees' desire to elevate their own superior manhood, nation and class.

The German merchant navy and colonial venture, of which many of the Trial Bay internees were unapologetic champions, represented the German empire at its apex. Underscored by *Deutschtum*, the German sensibility was one of superior class, culture, nation and manhood, reinforced by evidence of Australia's lack of legitimacy to sit among modern, civilised nations on the international stage. Infrastructure not sold or salvaged in 1903 was simply abandoned and still littered the precinct 12+ years later. And, paradoxically, the gaol itself—a NSW Government 'public work'—was another

⁷³ Diary of Otto Wortmann, Trial Bay, 10 April 1916.

⁷⁴ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, n.d., but presumed September 1915.

⁷⁵ Monteath, *Captured Lives*, 86. See also, Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 195. The evidence resulted in the dismissal of the brutal South Australian Commandant George Hawkes. But such incidents were neither forgiven nor forgotten by internees who came to believe Australians capable of anything. At least 12 internees at Trial Bay, including Dubotzki, had previously been interned at Torrens Island.

monument to Australia’s failure as a nation of modern men to manage labour, resources and capital and succeed at work.⁷⁶ The evidence lay, literally, all around them.



Image 3.7: Abandoned quarry and construction infrastructure, future site of tennis court.

The appeal of work varied across the cohort and across the period of internment. Naturally, some jobs were less appealing than others, particularly if the meagre payment—one shilling per four-hour shift—was factored across each strenuous hour and compared to the relatively generous Australian soldier’s basic pay of six shillings per day.⁷⁷ As many of the Trial Bay cohort were astute merchants and colonial operators who had practised the dubious recruitment of, for example, Melanesian workers for plantations in New Guinea, they both recognised the value of their own labour to the Australian authorities and, though sensible of the ways they described it, knew what war profiteering and labour exploitation looked like.

As the war progressed, internees’ enthusiasm for work can serve as a barometer of their increasing ennui. While a lack of desire to get out of bed on rainy winter mornings to fetch bread is not surprising, entries such as the following cannot be read without a sense of increasing malaise and a twenty-first century awareness of the symptoms of depression and declining mental health:⁷⁸

I like to read and I write, sometimes even gladly; I like to dress up, except that I have no clothes; I like to smoke and drink and absolutely love to spend money, if only I had some. The inclination to work, physically or mentally, is small however, and lately, to be honest,

⁷⁶ Neil, *Trial Bay Gaol: ‘The Breakwater’*. The work to which prisoners’ labour had been directed was the ambitious breakwall and harbour facility intended to provide refuge for ships on the treacherous voyage between Port Jackson and Moreton Bay.

⁷⁷ Australian War Memorial (website), ‘Anzac Voices: Recruitment’.

⁷⁸ The prevalence of ‘barbed wire fever’ will be explored in Chapter 5: Body.

has hit rock bottom. There are no aberrations from the monotony to report, because generally all it what is was a year ago.⁷⁹

Some men worked for the benefit of the greater community, some merely for the occupation of their time, some worked to find social engagement and interaction, some—for instance, those who toiled in the vegetable garden—worked to find peace of mind, solitude and contentment. The tennis courts, the bowling alley and eventually the theatre were built from volunteer labour and funded by profits from the cooperative fund. While individuals received no income, the work contributed just as importantly to a sense of personal and collective ownership of the space:⁸⁰

People scatter into the four corners; sports ground and vegetable garden keep about 50–60 men busy every day, the others are bustling for the good of the community or for themselves, and those who don't either play cards or talk politics.⁸¹

And:

'Work is a burgher's delight.' Well, I don't think this includes the toil and drudgery here, paid so handsomely with 1 shilling. But even though it's an insult, it has its positive side. First, the time goes faster; and second, I'm blissfully tired in the evening.⁸²

Access to employment and occupation motivated both national and masculine pride: to exercise the perceived German trait of hard, productive work and resilience was to affirm one's Germanness and to participate in the war, albeit from afar and without the grim reality of being conscripted to active service. In drawing another point of distinction between themselves and the inferior Australians, meaning was to be found and identity built.

⁷⁹ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 10 April 1916.

⁸⁰ As discussed in Chapter 2: Home.

⁸¹ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 5 December 1917.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 21 June 1916.

3.3 Occupation: Masculine identity through doing work

Business sense seems to slowly get hold of many here. Many are running out of money and you can't really blame them for wanting to earn something.

—Wilhelm Woelber, 14 November 1915

One-third of the internee population was engaged in income-generating labour in the Trial Bay camp—that is, approximately 200 of the 580 internees.⁸³ This does not include the greater number, noted above, who chose to work for other reasons. Those who did not work directly in producing a good or service played an as-important role as consumers of those products and in generating the camp economy.

Income-producing work in the camp could be found in three forms:

- private businesses, including subordinate work paid for by another principal
- voluntary work paid for by the central committee from the cooperative fund
- voluntary or (occasionally) mandatory work paid for by the government.

Significantly, new skills could be learned on the job or in a classroom when the *Polytechnikum* (vocational college) and Berlitz (language) *Schule* were opened.⁸⁴ In addition to weekly programmed lectures,⁸⁵ those with expertise gave business classes in subjects such as accounting and stenography or taught other skills such as pastry-making.⁸⁶ As mentioned previously, of note was the Machinist Class 3 naval engineering certificate established by Dr Walter Pupke of the German-Australian Steamship Co. and taught by interned master mariners, successful completion of which was recognised by the German merchant navy after the war.⁸⁷ Otto Wortmann was constantly at the school, as much to alleviate his boredom or to socialise with friends as for the learning of new skills. He attended language classes, determined to improve his English, as well as lectures on the *Havarie Gross*,⁸⁸ stenography, chemistry, surveying, astronomy, philosophy, horse care and

⁸³ Address book of former Trial Bay internees at Holdsworthy Eastern Compound, 1919. See also, Fischer and Helmi, 'Internment at Trial Bay during World War I: An Illustrated Report Prepared for NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and Migration Heritage'; Helmi and Fischer, *The Enemy at Home*, 36ff.

⁸⁴ Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 254–255. See also, Meskill, *Optimizing the German Workforce*, 121ff.

⁸⁵ The upcoming program of public lectures was published each week in the *Welt am Montag*.

⁸⁶ Helmi and Fischer, *The Enemy at Home*, 190; Monteath, *Captured Lives*, 70.

⁸⁷ Diary of Friedrich Meier, 23 October 1917. See also, Helmi and Fischer, *The Enemy at Home*, 189–191; and Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 255.

⁸⁸ The principle of general average is the practice and formula used in international shipping to determine the relative risk shared by all parties to a shipping venture. In the event of ship or cargo loss, it assists in establishing the relative cost-to-benefit of salvage operations.

rubber plantation management in South-East Asia.⁸⁹ According to David Meskill, vocational training in emergent modern Germany was a cornerstone in the development of the German ‘skills machine’.⁹⁰ This was directly observable at Trial Bay in the speed and passion with which skills acquisition was prioritised.

Private businesses

Three young men from the Straits have opened up a laundry, Edelweiss, and two others have begun a dish and cutlery-cleaning service, Spick and Span... Besides these businesses, there also are 1 shoemaker, 2 photographers, 2 barbers and several carpenters, all more or less useful enterprises, useful for the general public and for the owners.⁹¹

An entrepreneurial spirit was an asset to both economic and psychological survival in the camp. When an internee started a private business, he either utilised skills and knowledge acquired prior to internment—such as when workshops and stalls were established by ticketed barbers, photographers (e.g. Paul Dubotzki), shoemakers and carpenters—or transferred expertise and initiative from previous employment into new occupations—such as when former accountants, clerks and colonial administrators established cottage industries like Edelweiss, Spick and Span and the camp newspaper.

Edelweiss and Spick and Span were clever business ventures. Boosted by affordable prices, they serviced the needs of internees who no longer had domestic servants to take on domestic tasks or who aspired to upper class comforts. Both advertised in the camp’s weekly newspaper *Welt am Montag* [World on Monday], giving them commercial legitimacy and notification to 260 subscribers.⁹² Edelweiss was one of four laundries in the camp that, in total, came to employ 23 internees.⁹³ That they offered ‘washing, starching and ironing of all kinds of laundry’ as well as ‘cleaning and ironing of gentlemen’s wardrobes’ suggests the priority given by both the service and the served to pre-war expectations of masculine comportment and to maintaining the distinction of class. Likewise, six men were eventually employed at the dishwashing service.⁹⁴ That these

⁸⁹ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 16 May 1916, 25 April 1918.

⁹⁰ Meskill, *Optimizing the German Workforce*, 121ff. See also, Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*, 71. Technical and vocational training was not left to private provision, as was generally the case in Britain, but pursued as a national and state priority.

⁹¹ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 14 November 1915. See also, Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 254.

⁹² Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 254, 256. The Edelweiss Laundry is seen in Dubotzki’s photograph at Image 3.9 and Spick and Span at 3.10.

⁹³ *Welt am Montag*, no.1, 1 October 1917. See also, Helmi and Fischer, *The Enemy at Home*, 36.

⁹⁴ Helmi and Fischer, *The Enemy at Home*, 36.

businesses proved lucrative caused some resentment among other internees, suggesting also a competitive element in the micro-economy and envy among peers.⁹⁵

Welt am Montag was a collaboration between a company representative from British Hong Kong who became its editor, chief writer and publisher, Bruno Steinhorst, and Max Cohn, a manager from Singapore who became a journalist and critic of theatre and music. Initially published sporadically but then weekly, 42 issues averaging 16 pages each were published between 1 October 1917 and 22 December 1918, even after the camp had relocated to Holdsworth.⁹⁶ Wilhelm Hamann, an associate planter from China, was listed as a contact point for subscriptions⁹⁷ and Adolf Widmann, ‘our foremost camp strategist from Hong Kong’, wrote weekly updates on the progress of the war based on any intelligence received by internees, such as when smuggled into the camp ‘via vegetable tins and cigar boxes’ in November 1917.⁹⁸ The newspaper, thus, took on an important institutionalising role: it unified internees and reminded them how they should transact both their nationalism and their masculinity. The editorials offered unwavering support for the German war effort and positioned the Kaiser as the patriotic German’s hero: ‘a distinctively marked manly type, the strongest living patron and safeguard of the idea of monarchy’.⁹⁹ Internees rallied to these themes, finding fresh opportunities to assert a belief in their own superior masculinity, by distancing themselves again from the honourless Australians—the guards, who continually withheld newspapers from them, and Australians generally, for complicity in the printing of such blatant propaganda:

When one has read these German newspapers—the concise, precise and factual reports from the High Command, the reports of government intervention, be it food regulation or requisition of metals, or the articles from reporters at the various fronts—one has gained a clear picture of the conditions at home and the absolute certainty that this war can be won only by our people. Such organisation, such discipline, and the complete subordination to the one goal of ending this war as victors, does not exist in any other country of this world. It fills one with pride to be a German... This weekly paper therefore offers us some reprieve, and information that the individual may not have garnered otherwise, and we should express our gratitude to the publishers, Messrs Cohn and Steinhorst.¹⁰⁰

The role of one of the Bauer brothers—Franz-Josef, an insurance officer from Ceylon, who appears in Paul Dubotzki’s photograph at Image 3.11—is unclear but with

⁹⁵ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 14 November 1915.

⁹⁶ *Welt am Montag* collection, State Library of NSW, 1 October 1917–22 December 1918. See also, Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 255.

⁹⁷ *Welt am Montag*, no.1, 1 October 1917. Deadline for each Monday edition was the preceding Wednesday.

⁹⁸ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 5 November 1917.

⁹⁹ *Welt am Montag*, no.17, 27 January 1918 (Kaiser Wilhelm’s birthday), 1.

¹⁰⁰ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 5 November 1917. Woelber here fails to acknowledge the possibility of the German High Command and complicit newspapers printing similar wartime propaganda.

the volume of writing being done by Steinhorst and Cohn to meet weekly deadlines it's likely he provided administrative support, selling advertising, managing subscriptions with Hamann and assisting with typing and printing.¹⁰¹



Image 3.8: The *Welt am Montag* team: Bruno Steinhorst (5142), Max Cohn (5387), Adolf Widmann (5056), Walter Hamann (4984), Franz-Josef Bauer (5115). [Source: National Archives of Australia]

For all five men, publishing *Welt am Montag* was a career pivot: none came from newspaper backgrounds yet all were able to redeploy their interests and expertise to the business at hand. That Steinhorst, Widmann and Hamann came from Hong Kong, Cohn from Singapore and Bauer from Ceylon, indicates collaboration occurred outside and across colonial cohorts of origin.



Image 3.9: The Edelweiss laundry.

¹⁰¹ *Welt am Montag*, no.1, 1 October 1917.



Image 3.10: The Spick and Span dishwashing service.



Image 3.11: *Welt am Montag* workers Franz-Josef Bauer (left); Max Cohn (centre) and Bruno Steinhorst (right).



Image 3.12: Barbers: unknown (left) and Fritz Behrnt (right).



Image 3.13: Kurt Wiese (5075), Hans Overbeck (4981), Fritz Behrnt (5051), Rudolf Heidrich (5052).
[Source: National Archives of Australia]

Welt am Montag was printed on a hand-cranked spirit mimeograph machine.¹⁰² It was funded via a standard newspaper business model, namely a mix of subscription and advertising revenue. Subscribers paid sixpence per copy (or four issues for 1/6) and the last two pages of each issue were dedicated to advertising of available goods and services.¹⁰³ Image 3.14 below shows one such page of advertisement while Image 3.15 shows the translation.

¹⁰² *Welt am Montag* collection, State Library of NSW. See also, Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 254–258. The mimeograph process, requiring a ‘type-cut’ stencil placed on a rotating ink-filled drum, was relatively easy to sustain in the internment context. The technical problem would have been the inevitable deterioration of the stencil over multiple rotations of the drum.

¹⁰³ Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 255.

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werden sauber und gewissenhaft ausgeführt.
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WAESCHEREI " EDELWEISS"	o	SCHUHE !! STIEFEL !! SANDALEN !!
empfiehltsich zum	o	NUR BESTES MATERIAL.
WASCHEN - STAERKEN - BUEGELN	o	Anfertigung saemtlicher Schuhwaren
aller Art Waesche sowie zum	o	nach M a s s unter Garantie
REINIGEN und AUFBUEGELN	o	fuer tadellosen Sitz .
von HERRENGARDEROBE .	o	REPARATUREN GUT UND BILLIG!
x - x - x	o	L. Prinke

W E R K S T A E T T E	o	B I L L A R D - H A L L E .
fuer	o	(Besitzer:H.Borchert)
BILDMAESSIGE PHOTOGRAPHIE.	o	2 - Erstklassige Billards - 2
Aufnahmen von	o	RUSSISCH POOL ! TEUFELS POOL !
Visitgroesse bis zu 40/30 cm	o	SNOOKER.
VERGROESSERUNGEN JEDER ART.	o	Geoeffnet von:
P.F.Dubotzki	o	morgens 8 Uhr bis abends 9.30

B e k a n n t m a c h u n g !

Meinen werten Kriegskameraden mache ich hiermit bekannt, dass die Ordinationsstunden fuer Zahnleidende wie folgt festgesetzt sind:

Vorm: 9 Uhr - 11.30	Sonnabend: 9 - 12 Uhr
Nachm: 1.30 - 3.00	Sonntag : geschlossen.
Poliklinik fuer Unbemittelte:	Dienstag & Freitag: 2 - 3 Uhr.

Preise: Fuellungen7/6 Kronen von £ 1.5.- an
(Porzellan & Amalgam) Extraktionen1.6

KUNSTLICHE GEBISSE und BRUECKEN-ARBEITEN nach Uebereinkunft.
Kukulus & Pap.

Image 3.14: From Trial Bay newspaper *Welt am Montag*, no.1, October 1917, see Image 3.15 for translation. [Source: State Library of NSW]

<p>FROEHLICH & SETHMACHER Watchmakers & jewellers. Repairs & new production executed cleanly and conscientiously. Large stock of gemstones, watches, etc.</p>	
<p>LAUNDRY "EDELWEISS" is recommended for 'washing - starching - ironing' of all kinds of laundry as well as for Cleaning and Ironing of gentlemen's wardrobes. x - x - x</p>	<p>SHOES !! BOOTS !! SANDALS !! Only best material Production of all footwear Custom made under warranty for a perfect fit. Repairs good and cheap! L.Primke</p>
<p>SPECIAL WORKSHOP For pictorial photography Recordings of visit size up to 40 / 30cm Enlargements of every kind. P.F.Dubotzki</p>	<p>BILLIARD HALL (owner: H. Borchert) 2 - First Class billiards tables - 2 Russian pool ! Devil's pool ! snooker. Open from: mornings 8 o'clock to evenings 9.30</p>
<p>N o t i c e ! I am hereby announcing to my worthy war comrades that the opening hours for those in need of dental work are as follows:</p> <p>Mornings: 9 o'clock - 11.30 Saturday: 9-12 o'clock Afternoons: 1.30 - 3.00 Sunday: closed</p> <p>Polyclinic for the unemployed: Tuesday & Friday: 2 - 3 o'clock</p> <p>Prices: Fillings: - / 7 / 6 Crowns: from £1 / 5 / - (porcelain and amalgam) Extractions: - / 1 / 6</p> <p>Artificial bites and bridge-work after overexposure.</p> <p>Kukulus & Pap</p>	

Image 3.15: Translation of Image 3.14, *Welt am Montag*, no.1, October 1917. [Translation by author]

The barbers, Rudolf Heidrich and Fritz Behrnt, also cooperated to offer a single monopolistic service for haircuts and shaves.¹⁰⁴ Like the dentists, Kukulus and Pap, their coming together enabled the sharing of limited resources and maximised the potential for a mutually advantageous enterprise. And also like Kukulus and Pap, they had different points of origin: one was from British Ceylon and the other from within Australia.

Dubotzki's series of work-related photographs includes portraits of blacksmiths, butchers, bakers, shoemakers, tailors, cooks, watchmakers and jewellers.¹⁰⁵ In addition to the remarkable record of labour activity in the camp,¹⁰⁶ the images reveal the extensive range of tools and equipment to which the workers had access as well as the

¹⁰⁴ See Image 3.12. A pragmatic solution for internment was the one they modelled themselves: a shaven or close-cropped head, although this was a fashion that had links to the lowest working or *lumpen* class.

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, Images 3.18–3.20 in this chapter.

¹⁰⁶ The presence at Trial Bay of men interned from various locations, such as Wilhelm Kopshoff (bootmaker, NSW), Heinrich Rieckhoff (baker, NSW), Wilhelm Sprenger (blacksmith, WA), Adolf Schlichting (tailor, NSW), Leonhard Beuermann (tailor, Tas), Max Heinz (butcher, NSW), Emil Kuhl (mechanic, NSW) indicate a working economy was anticipated and men were targeted for their skills. Not all internees were from the bourgeois caste.

photographer's affection for the competencies of tradesmen and the pride they took in their work. Dubotzki himself is an example of a skilled worker who was able to eke out a living from his apprenticed trade. Both internees and camp administrators had reason to perpetuate the propaganda of self-motivated internees being seen to be engaged in productive industry.

Privately operated enterprises, such as those advertised in the *Welt am Montag*, represented the bulk of paid work done. Fischer and Helmi report that 90 internees operated or worked in businesses established within the camp. Other services to list in the *Welt am Montag* included carpentry workshops, a chair factory, a workshop for interior furnishings and fittings, a masseur, a lamp cleaning service, a shoe-shine service and a yoghurt factory.¹⁰⁷ There were also an auctioneer, a bookbinder, cafés, a pastry shop, an apothecary, Dubotzki's photographic studio and a typing office. The carpentry shops, grindery and workshop specialising in furniture finishes—varnishing and painting—serviced the ever-present demand for furniture and household appointments.¹⁰⁸

Disruption of internees' careers was not without ancillary benefits. For example, the redirection of Kurt Wiese's skills at Trial Bay was to impact the rest of his professional life. Wiese, a colonial trader, was captured by the Japanese in China in 1914 and turned over to the British for internment in Hong Kong. Transported to Australia in January 1916, he was one of the cohort to arrive at Trial Bay on 3 February 1916. During his internment years, Wiese developed his talent for drawing into a professional craft, producing most of the program covers for the German Theatre Trial Bay, illustrations for the *Welt am Montag* (see Image 3.17) and numerous caricatures which he sold by commission or gave away, for example, as a trophy to the winner of the tennis tournament.¹⁰⁹ Wiese went on to a successful post-war career in the United States as a commercial artist, book illustrator and animator.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Helmi and Fischer, *The Enemy at Home*, 37.

¹⁰⁸ Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 254. See also, Helmi and Fischer, *The Enemy at Home*, 33ff, 69, 123ff.

¹⁰⁹ Diary of Philipp Wittmann, 3 April 1918.

¹¹⁰ 'Kurt Wiese, 87, Illustrator of Children's Books Dies' (obituary), *New York Times*, 29 May 1974. See also, Monteath, *Captured Lives*, 74. Wiese wrote and/or illustrated over 300 children's books, many conceived during his internment in Hong Kong and Australia e.g. *Karoo the Kangaroo* (1929). Karoo is a kangaroo that learns about other Australian animals once he leaves his mother's pouch, inspired by Wiese's time at Trial Bay. In 1923, he illustrated a German children's story by Felix Saltern, *Bambi, A Life in the Woods*, the English translation of which was the basis for the Disney animated feature film *Bambi* in 1942.



Image 3.16: Kurt Wiese in the theatre preparing an illustration.



Image 3.17: Caricature of 'the Tzar' Albrecht Berblinger by Kurt Wiese appearing in the Gallery of Famous Men, *Welt am Montag*, 1 October 1917. [Source: National Library of Australia]

Likewise, Hans Overbeck's occupation at Trial Bay profoundly influenced his post-war life. Based in Singapore from 1904 and the Dutch East Indies from 1908, Overbeck travelled extensively through the Malay archipelago as the general agent for German mercantile house Behn, Meyer & Co., a company and role he returned to after the war. A committed orientalist, he was an acknowledged expert in the language, culture and zoology of his adopted home. In this, he provides a refreshing contrast to the more usual image of colonial exploitation. While at Trial Bay, he completed a two-volume German translation of the Malay language literary classic *Hikayat Hang Tuah*. According to researcher Robert Taylor, Overbeck's interests in indigenous language and culture led him to also study Aboriginal language while at Trial Bay, implying that internees had some access to local Dunghutti people.¹¹¹ However, it was his amateur interest in entomology that led to his most profound contributions. His long collaboration with Dresden entomologist Hugo Viehmeyer resulted in descriptions of many new ant specimens collected while Overbeck was in Australia. An entire new genus *Peronomyrmex*, with type species *P. overbecki*, was described by Overbeck while at Trial Bay.¹¹²

The number of cottage businesses run by the internees speaks to the breadth of innovation in the micro-economy of the camp. Other more boutique businesses advertising in the *Welt am Montag* confirm the depth. For instance, the Duck Coop restaurant, operating in its own building outside the gaol's main gate, was available for those with funds to dine.¹¹³ The Warm Bath Company also advertised sauna and massage. The snooker hall, at first located in a tent, came to operate in a purpose-built timber hut. It was a private club operated by the former ship's steward Hans Borchert where one could play pool and snooker on 'two first class billiards tables' from early in the morning until late at night.¹¹⁴ According to a description in the *Welt am Montag*, it was the meeting place of the '*jeunesse d'oree*' ['golden youth'] of the camp.¹¹⁵ This is further evidence of the complex social structure in which distinctions based on former conceptions of class and privilege were sustained as well as catered to.

¹¹¹ Taylor, 'The Orientalist Hans Overbeck,' 43. See also, Boellstorff, *The Gay Archipelago: Sexuality and Nation in Indonesia*, 47–50. Boellstorff suggests that Overbeck, the Malay language and cultural expert, and the Malay writer Sucipto were certainly friends but probably lovers, in the period 1919–1927. Sucipto's autobiographical work tells of his life as an indigenous Indonesian man with homosexual proclivities. This manuscript, written in poetic Malay, is considered the first homosexual autobiographical text in Indonesia.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 40. Forty-five new ant species/subspecies were described during Overbeck's Australian internment. Of these, 24 carry a type-locality descriptor (place of capture/observation) of Trial Bay. The other 19 species' type-locality indicators were for Liverpool.

¹¹³ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 3 January 1917. See also, Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 251. It operated a regularly changing menu and was supplied by fresh produce from the camp as well as from outside.

¹¹⁴ *Welt am Montag*, no.1, 1 October 1917.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, no.11, 16 December 1917.



Image 3.18: Hans Borchert, centre-front, in the relocated billiard hall.

But no greater entrepreneurialism was shown than by Heinrich Wilcke, the Sydney accountant already mentioned for his dubious relationship with guards, his selling of bootlegged whisky and his moneylending, his indiscreet homosexuality and his probable involvement in the theft of money. Before his internment in November 1915, he worked for Oscar Plate at Lohmann & Co., the managing agents for the Norddeutscher Lloyd shipping line in NSW. In a letter he wrote to the Macleay River Historical Society (MRHS) in 1964, Wilcke claimed his deportation was punishment for his attempt to smuggle ‘harmless letters’ out of camp via a friendly guard whose name he would not give away. His narrative, however, is inconsistent with the recollections of others and it’s likely his removal was connected to other behaviour.¹¹⁶

Wilcke returned to Trial Bay under equally mysterious circumstances in early 1918 but was shunned by the other internees and denied the salary support from Lohmann & Co. to which he might have been eligible. He says the guards took pity on him and he was able to start Henry’s Laundry, a washing service catering exclusively for the guard population. Other records held by the MRHS include a report of an interview conducted with a former guard and transport driver, Ellis Watts, whose role included overseeing the

¹¹⁶ Wilcke’s 1964 letters include two other stories that must be treated with scepticism. First, in Holdsworth, he claimed the reason for his being in possession of a revolver and live ammunition was that he had stolen them from another internee to ‘avoid a shooting affray’ he thought would be the consequence of a planned mass breakout (of which there was no evidence). His action, he said, was the reason he was rewarded with a return to Trial Bay. The second story also involved Wilcke being in possession of a guard’s revolver. He claims to have been invited to join a guards’ shooting game on the Trial Bay back beach where guards were shooting at bottles but which resulted in him shooting a guard in the hand. Wilcke says he and the guard concocted a story for the commandant that a stray bullet had fallen into the fire and caused the injury. Perhaps this story is true. Regardless, Wilcke was a shadowy presence in both camps with unusual proximity to the guards and to criminal or dubious activity. It’s possible he acted as a spy, passing information and being moved for his own protection. Suspicion of this would account for his being ostracised at Trial Bay.

daily cartage of water—including to ‘Henry’s Laundry, situated at the back of the gaol near the watchtower and hospital’.¹¹⁷

But it’s Wilcke’s overt homosexuality that is of particular interest to this thesis. As introduced in the story ‘Smouldering Ruins’, one of the services supplied in the camp was sex. While same-sex activity is unsurprising, the reference to prostitution is intriguing.¹¹⁸ The arrangement enables a number of important conclusions: that a market existed where men would choose to pay for sex; that a sexual relationship developed between a munificent older man and a somehow complicit younger one; that the arrangement included the sale of a lover’s sexual services; and that it was openly known around the camp. Otto Wortmann also suggests a wider prevalence of prostitution while linking it to the absence of women:

One wish though I’d like to see fulfilled, to be out of here really soon, see something else for a change, see women, because gradually one forgets that there is another gender out there besides men. Which is why there are so many male friendships and love affairs here in camp, the [indecipherable] rascals who shamelessly sell themselves like whores! Outrageous and revolting!¹¹⁹

Histories of modern prostitution inevitably link it to the forces of capitalism—urbanisation, industrialisation and exploitation.¹²⁰ Robert Beachy notes the complexity of male prostitution in Berlin in the early twentieth century, saying it has been a feature of all modern same-sex erotic subcultures. It needs, though, to be considered in a broader context, such as whether a commercial sexual transaction necessarily excludes a long-term, possibly loving, relationship or material dependency. In Berlin, following World War I, where up to a third of male prostitutes were heterosexual, prostitution was simply a source of income when work was scarce and more lucrative than menial labour.¹²¹ Where homosexuality was illegal, such as in freshly federated Germany under Paragraph 175, the criminality was compounded by the prevalence of blackmail.

Generally, attitudes to both homosexuality and prostitution in the camp were negative but resigned. Like Wortmann above, the elder from Singapore, Woelber, said it was distressing that homosexuality had become ‘so rampant’ that the committee, which in

¹¹⁷ Macleay Valley Historical Society, interview with former guard Ellis Walcha Watts 1968, 3.

¹¹⁸ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 3 January 1918.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3 January 1917.

¹²⁰ For example, Fletcher, ‘Unsettling Settlers,’ 80. Yaël Simpson Fletcher applies Walter Benjamin’s critique of urban decay to post-colonial France, saying the ‘emblematic urban figures of (male) worker and (female) prostitute, almost interchangeably despite the sexual difference, each embodied the effects of a voracious and dehumanising capitalism’.

¹²¹ Beachy, *Gay Berlin*, 188–189.

the beginning had turned a blind eye, had lost the power to stop it. Heinrich Wilcke is again implicated:

The main instigator, who apparently makes no bones about it, is a certain Wilcke, a former employee of Lohmann & Co. From what I hear he was recently called before the committee and told that if he continued on his ways, he'd be shipped to Liverpool. The guy very cynically responded that if the committee acted on its threat, he'd be naming all the culprits and there would be names in there that nobody would have guessed. He said it wasn't just young people, there were some older gentlemen involved as well.¹²²

Wilcke's threat to expose the names of senior men was effective; the committee, which at that point still included Ermekeil and Berblinger, dropped the matter.¹²³

¹²² Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 31 January 1918.

¹²³ Soon after this incident, Wilcke was deported to Holdsworth, as described earlier.

Voluntary work paid for by the camp

We have to pay the kitchen staff, the dishwashers, [bakery hands] and the medics ourselves, and that's 2 shillings per month. We might have had to pay more, but since November last year the cafeteria in the hallway is being run by the camp. The profits are being shared by the whole camp and some of it goes towards buying vegetables for everybody.¹²⁴

The second work type was labour that benefitted the entire internee population and so was organised and paid for through a number of sub-committees, or *Kommissionen*, operating within the main committee structure. A subscription-type mechanism was devised by which eligible internees could contribute to cooperative funds and share in the cost of required positions.¹²⁵ The *Kommissionen* oversaw education, library, theatre, music, kitchen, bakery, post and, most importantly, the canteen.¹²⁶

The issue was contested because of the profit-making potential of important services, namely the bakery, the café in the hallway—referred to by Meier—and the camp canteen, through which purchasing was centralised and a monopoly guaranteed. In the hands of the Australians, pricing was inconsistent and exorbitant. Further, management was inefficient (at best) and grossly corrupt (at worst). An early victory for committee chair Berblinger was taking over the baking of bread and pastries in September 1916. Previously, internees like Otto Wortmann had awoken early each morning to collect fresh bread from local bakers.¹²⁷ The savings made by the Germans doing the baking themselves were able to be redirected into the committee's coffers. The camp oven produced fresh cakes and bread rolls every day, as well as the dark bread preferred by the majority of Germans twice a week, at a substantial overall saving from the previously purchased bread.¹²⁸ Four internees were employed in baking bread and pastries, including the pastry cook from Hong Kong, Max Boy (seen in Image 3.19).¹²⁹

¹²⁴ Diary of Friedrich Meier, 18 February 1916.

¹²⁵ Fischer and Helmi, 'Internment at Trial Bay during World War I: An Illustrated Report Prepared for NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and Migration Heritage, NSW'.

¹²⁶ Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 254–255.

¹²⁷ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 3 April 1916. This unusual daily meeting of local people from Arakoon and the internees was the device used in Gwen Kelly's novel, *Always Afternoon* to connect internee Franz Muller and Frieda Kennon. The daughter of a local baker, she helped her father deliver bread.

¹²⁸ Diary of Friedrich Meier, 15 September 1916.

¹²⁹ Helmi and Fischer, *The Enemy at Home*, 36.



Dubotzki collection

Image 3.19: Pastry cook Max Boy in front of restored Trial Bay camp oven.

A labour inventory published in the *Welt am Montag* identified 85 positions supported by camp funds.¹³⁰ They can be grouped into the following clusters:

Cluster	Area of work	#Employed
Camp management and <i>Kommissionen</i> administration	Cooperative	19
	Canteen duty	7
	Rations coordination	1
Kitchen/Dining/Food	Kitchen staff (undercooks and bench-workers)	11
	Vegetable garden	3
	Dining stewards/service	7
	Bakery	3
	Cake shop	1
	Bread counter	2
	Sports-related work	Swimming place
	Tennis court	2
	Athletic fields	1
Entertainment	Library	1
	Theatre	4
	Orchestra	16
Camp services	Sanitary service	2
	Postman	1
	Policemen	2
Total:		85

Table 2: Work clusters and jobs supported by camp funds.

¹³⁰ *Welt am Montag*, no.19, 10 February 1918, 13.

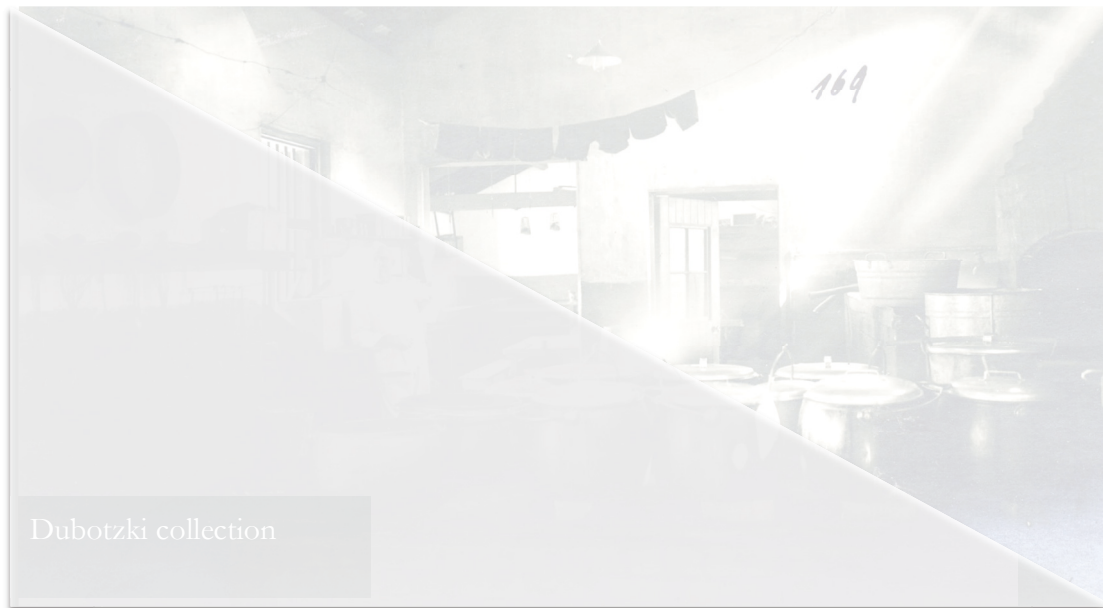


Image 3.20: Cook in camp kitchen (possibly Kurt Reichenbach).

It's not surprising that the largest concentration of workers in the camp services worked for the cooperative itself: the bureaucracy. A further feature of Germany's entering the twentieth century was the 'technocratic fascination with centralised knowledge and control'.¹³¹ The emergence of the *Bildungsbürgertum* [educated middle class] and its occupation of the German civil service inevitably led to the shaping of government and colonial bureaucracies.¹³² More than other camps, these bourgeois-caste bureaucrats found their way to Trial Bay and immediately began to effect change. In the same way that contemporary German narratives of science, royalty, politics, nation, empire—and even photography—were conscripted to the narrative of *Deutschtum*, the desire for a single, centralising control dominated notions of governance and bureaucracy.¹³³

¹³¹ Meskill, *Optimizing the German Workforce*, 20. Meskill adds that the roots of that fascination lay deep in the nineteenth century and that they were able to be observed in all advanced countries. 'Especially for the Protestant-educated middle class (*Bildungsbürgertum*), among whom traditional religiosity was eroding, science was becoming an ersatz faith.'

¹³² This new cavernous bureaucracy was the subject of Kafka's critique in *Der Prozess* [The Trial], 1914.

¹³³ Berger, *Germany*, 6–8.

Voluntary/mandatory work paid for by the Australian government

Who would have thought that I'd end up as a voluntary road labourer!¹³⁴

The third type of labour enabling internees to earn an income was work recruited by the Australian government. After the initial uncertainty over whether civilian internees could be required to perform mandatory work, the 'utilisation of labour of prisoners of war according to their rank and aptitude' was limited to volunteers.¹³⁵ At Trial Bay, about 30 positions were available in two daily bush details—gathering firewood, carting water or working on roads—while other groups performed occasional works within the camp, for example, constructing new barracks or working in the censor's office. For this, workers were paid the standard rate of one shilling per four-hour shift. Specialist work, such as that of the camp medical officer, was a commissioned position for which Dr Max Herz had successfully applied and was paid a salary of £10 per month.¹³⁶

In addition to the work of the domestic orderlies, who were included in the cohort for kitchen and cleaning jobs, the need for unskilled labour to collect wood and fetch water was constant.¹³⁷ The camp needed firewood to fuel the daily heating, baking and cooking needs of what became a community of over 500 internees plus up to 100 guards. From day one, timber was also required for the construction of fittings and furniture. The Macleay Valley had been famous for its rich supplies of timber and, despite the gross denudation of Laggery Point and the Arakoon foreshore, stands of littoral rainforest in the southern valley had escaped the nineteenth century's timber purges.¹³⁸ This work was welcomed by those without company stipends or other means of support as well as those seeking respite from the relentlessness of life inside the internment

¹³⁴ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 30 September 1916.

¹³⁵ Hague Convention 1907, Chapter II, Article 6. Before the centralisation of internment operations in mid-1915, the Australian Manual of War Precautions was not always applied consistently. The Manual was informed by the *War Precautions Act 1914* (Cth) and Regulations, the Hague Convention 1907 and British Army rules. Initially, civilian internees were not distinguished from combatant prisoners-of-war. Thus, whereas Chapter II of the Convention allowed belligerent nations to require prisoners-of-war to perform certain work, this did not extend to civilians. The informed internees were quick to oppose any lax interpretation of the Convention.

¹³⁶ Clarke, *Dr Max Herz*, part 6: Trial Bay.

¹³⁷ Diary of William Woelber, date of writing unknown but possibly 30 August 1915.

¹³⁸ Graham and Neil, *Macleay Valley Heritage*, 24, 93. It was the stands of cedar that had first lured settlers to the upper Macleay in the 1830s, resulting in the plunder of 'red gold' in the following decades. The rich alluvial flood plain of the lower Macleay and river estuary also had rich native timbers. Local hardwoods such as ironbark, grey and red gum, and red and white mahogany, brush box, turpentine and tallowwood and soft woods such as cedar, rosewood and beech were all shipped from the Macleay.

precinct. The interest was great, especially from the men from Ceylon who waited months to access money they'd had confiscated.¹³⁹



Image 3.21: Work brigade of 15 internees, carrying saws, adzes and axes, heading out to fell trees.



Image 3.22: Second work brigade heading out under guard, possibly to complete roadwork.



Image 3.23: Work group of Catholic priests from Ceylon on firewood detail.

¹³⁹ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, n.d. Non-receipt of these confiscated funds was the cause of the strike that is discussed in this chapter at 3.4. The woodcutters departed at 8am and returned at noon. See Images 3.22–3.26.



Image 3.24: Group of internees and guards on felled tree, including photographer Karl Lehmann (standing centre bottom, behind stump) and entomologist Hans Overbeck (seated centre top, knee raised). [Source: Dubotzki collection, photo probably Lehmann]

Former guard, Ellis Watts, recalled his work as a transport driver, carting timber and fresh water from the reservoir to the camp under the supervision of a Corporal A. Robinson. His responsibilities put him in daily contact with internees who volunteered for work. While most would only ‘work a week at a time in order to get sufficient money to buy tobacco’, one internee from Hong Kong—Christian Mathiessen—worked regularly with him and the two developed a particular friendship.¹⁴⁰ Watts’ interview included the story that Mason [sic] told him in confidence in 1918 that a German raider was off the mid-north coast with plans to mount a rescue mission of scientists among the internee cohort. Watts says Mathiessen wanted him out of harm’s way when the moment

¹⁴⁰ Report of interview conducted by Macleay River Historical Society with former guard, Ellis Watts, 2 June 1968. Watts was posted to Trial Bay as a transport driver and attached to the ‘bush party’, a section of the transport team supervised by a Corporal A. Robinson comprising: two drivers and two permanent internees as well as 13 horses, one general service wagon, three water carts and one spring cart. One of the permanent internees was Christian Mathiessen, the gold worker from Hong Kong, with whom he developed a particular friendship.

arrived so told him of the plan.¹⁴¹ But Watts immediately reported the conversation to the commandant and the camp evacuation was triggered.

Watts' story and Dubotzki's photographs at Images 3.25 and 3.26—which may include Robinson, Watts and Mathiessen among the other men—support the notion that the guards and internees were more cordial when circumstances allowed.¹⁴² Not surprisingly, relations that were stiff and unfriendly inside the camp were more likely to be relaxed outside the camp gates. Guards as well as internees sought respite from the tedium of their remote lives and looked for opportunities to fraternise.



Image 3.25: Internee work group with guards on horse and cart.



Image 3.26: Internee work group with guards in casual pose.

¹⁴¹ Report of interview with Ellis Watts, 2 June 1968, 2. While the camp was evacuated in May 1918 because of the feared presence of the raider *Wolf*, it turned out there was no raider and no credible plan for rescue. It is uncertain whether the error here is in the information Mathiessen had access to in 1918 or in how Watts' remembered the story in 1968.

¹⁴² Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 251. Generally, relations between internees and guards were fractious. Fischer suggests this is due to the constant protesting by the internees feeding underlying tension. The internees' rejection of the guards' honour and honesty did not endear one group to the other.

3.4 Subverting expectations of work and labour

If a German housewife or cook were given a chance to look in cell A30 yesterday afternoon, she would have had a major shock. Five of us—Broadbelt, Lembach, Hayer, Stegmann and I—were totally absorbed in making pancakes. Each had his chore, all of us smoked one cigarette after another...but the main thing: the pancakes turned out a treat and for once we felt well fed.

—Otto Wortmann, 12 October 1916

Despite the geographic, social and cultural isolation inherent to the internment experience, changes to gender and labour market practices then occurring around the world still found their way inside the granite walls. Men in the colonies had needed to become used to new and different expectations of gender-related work. Certainly, expectations for a successful life in exploitative colonies demanded an ability to thrive in a heavily masculine environment where relatively few European women chose to venture. Or were wanted.¹⁴³ Still, the absence of women meant that men needed to suspend many of their expectations for the performance of certain tasks and be prepared to either take on these roles themselves or recruit assistance.¹⁴⁴ Such was the experience of Otto Wortmann when he, along with 22 other colonial Germans arrested in New Guinea, were told they were to be transported to Australia:

On this occasion, most discovered that during the famous, afore-mentioned house searches most of their belongings had vanished, and the rest was scattered all over the place in messy heaps. Under these circumstances, it would have been a worthy task for a brilliant housewife to pack together enough sensible stuff for a lengthy journey in just 10 minutes; none of us 23 bachelors managed to do anything remotely useful. And so it happened that we all departed Rabaul the next day with hardly a warm piece of clothing and would, both on board and later in Australia, be often miserably cold and suffer frequent bouts of fever.¹⁴⁵

This speaks to Wortmann's expectations of a gendered division of labour, with women competent custodians of the domestic space and middle class men the hapless interlopers. As colonial bachelors, however, they needed to be adept in the household, if only to manage a staff of indigenous male household workers. At the time Wortmann was writing (July 1915), patterns and opportunities were changing outside the camp, as

¹⁴³ Levine, 'Modernity, Medicine and Colonialism,' 36. See also, Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884–1945*. Wildenthal argues that the enthusiasm of many German women helped shape the colonial venture, despite often being excluded from it. Opportunities to participate appeared most readily in missionary activity, which enabled women to participate and to add nationalistic and moral inflections to emerging colonial discourse e.g. discouraging interracial marriage.

¹⁴⁴ Levine, 'Modernity, Medicine and Colonialism,' 36. Male immigration to the British colony of Singapore was unrestricted; in 1911, men outnumbered women by eight to one.

¹⁴⁵ Diary of Otto Wortmann, date of writing unknown, referring to events of July 1915

Australian women looked for ways to express their patriotism. New opportunities arose, accelerated by women's organisation, emancipation and escalating participation, triggering shifts in masculine identity in the process.¹⁴⁶

Wortmann's tone here is still that of a wealthy boy going off to summer camp. The reality of what was to be World War I was only just becoming known, even though the expectation of war as 'man's business' was deeply ingrained. From Wortmann's point of view, women were peripherally involved in colonial life, their domain of influence limited to offering stoic support to their sons and husbands and assisting them to pack their socks.¹⁴⁷

In the internment camp, without wife or mother to assist, new expectations for the completion of tasks considered women's work needed to be found. All internees needed to take on or become used to seeing other men in previously feminised roles. In describing the division of labour among their band of six from Singapore, the internee Woelber says:

Franzen was the housewife, because he did a lot of the cooking and grilling and was very mindful of good food and ample provisioning. We had organised a hot plate for cooking eggs, etc., and lately a pancake stall and a meat kiosk had sprung up in camp, which we gladly patronised. For the dishwashing and the scouring of the barrack we retained [home help] for 1/– [shilling] per man and week.¹⁴⁸

It is not clear whether Franzen enjoyed the task of cooking but it is implied its designation was collaborative and that, where necessity dictated and assignment based on gender didn't matter, the logic of the situation prevailed. Alexander Franzen was a merchant from the Straits settlement at Singapore and, like the diarist, 'exempt from physical work because of age or illness'.¹⁴⁹ Of the wealthier and most senior group of colonial internees, it's unlikely he didn't have a cook and a houseboy as part of his

¹⁴⁶ McKernan, *The Australian People During the War*, 65–67. McKernan notes that even though female paid employment increased throughout the war, the growth was gradual and occurred mostly in areas in which women already worked. But voluntary work, such as for the Australian Red Cross and comfort societies, provided new opportunities for women to direct themselves and one another in creative—if unpaid and ultimately patriarchal—occupation. See also, Meskill, *Optimizing the German Workforce*, 75. Meskill adds that, in Germany, women and youths were increasingly drawn into factories to make up for the loss of workers enlisted to fight.

¹⁴⁷ Angela Smith, *Gender and Warfare*, 2. Women, of course, have always been very much involved in war. Smith notes that while 'men are the ones who fight and die, ... women have been involved in warfare on multiple levels since the earliest civilisations'. See also, Damousi and Lake (eds), *Gender and War*.

¹⁴⁸ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 5 August 1915. Here, Woelber reflects on the Holdsworth experience prior to relocation to Trial Bay. He was pleased to have been paired with Franzen to share a two-man cell at Trial Bay.

¹⁴⁹ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, date of writing unknown but presumed early 1915 (from Holdsworth).

domestic staff. Certainly, the new circumstance for Franzen provided an opportunity to explore new interests and develop new skills within an environment where creativity, resilience and duty among men were all rewarded.

Woelber's comment also reinforces how access to money ensured a better quality of internment experience and how there was both a market for the supply of labour as well as a wage-setting mechanism. One shilling was the standard government-prescribed payment received for a four-hour shift in cutting wood or working on the roads.¹⁵⁰

According to social researcher Bryan Ganaway, the production and consumption of toys is a useful indicator of prevailing attitudes and gender normativities of the Wilhelmine middle class. Whereas the majority of factory-made toys clearly assumed that the German man was physically fit, at ease with technology, a citizen-soldier, and the head of a household, the production of hand-made toys provided a counter-cultural way for men to exercise a nurturing and creative masculine face.¹⁵¹ This was the case at Trial Bay where many men, in addition to or instead of producing toy soldiers and replica battleships, elected to produce domestic miniatures suitable, such as that in Image 4.10.

Organisation and action

The political role of the labour bureaucracy is to negotiate the terms of exploitation in the workplace or to secure social reforms in parliament. In performing this role, they work with representatives of the ruling class. Theirs is a mediating role between capital and labour... The labour bureaucracy embodies the normal, everyday reformist consciousness of workers: the lowest common denominator of left politics.¹⁵²

The organisation of labour within the camp and the recognition of collective rather than individual protest action mirrored what was happening outside the gaol walls as well—across Australia and, indeed, across the world. To a curious extent, the internees organised and operated by principles borrowed from working class labour movements. Capitalist-class internees at Trial Bay were not ignorant of the benefits of such a model: the German labour movement, in particular, unified workers via a range of strategies, including activities outside the workplace, funded by union membership. David Blackburn notes that there were not just unions and cooperatives to organise on the jobsite, but 'choral societies, drama groups, lending libraries, educational courses, cycling

¹⁵⁰ An unskilled labourer outside the camp might make 5 shillings per day whereas the rate paid to enlisted soldiers was 50 shillings per week. This was a good wage for a labourer and thus enlisting was seen as a financially as well as socially lucrative opportunity, less so for a skilled person e.g. a fitter/turner.

¹⁵¹ Ganaway, 'Consuming Masculinity: Toys and Boys in Wilhelmine Germany,' 97.

¹⁵² Faulkner, *A Marxist History of the World*, 188.

and gymnastic clubs'.¹⁵³ For the working class, the labour movement was simultaneously a source of stability, identity and self-improvement in a dramatically changing world. It is not surprising that men of the *Bildungsbürgertum* or capitalist caste, in a differently but no less dramatically changing world, also sought stability, identity and self-improvement and, when required, turned to familiar strategies of organisation and resistance.

Workers' organisation and action surged during this period. Strikes became more frequent in the years leading up to 1914 as workers took advantage of boom conditions and sought to share the benefit. On average, 200,000 German workers would go on strike in each of the years between 1905 and 1913, with over 400,000 striking in the peak year of 1912.¹⁵⁴ The Hamburg waterside workers strike, for example, which lasted from 21 November 1896 to 6 February 1897, was one of most significant strikes in Germany in the nineteenth century.¹⁵⁵

Oscar Plate, the Sydney agent for the massive Norddeutscher Lloyd (N.D.L.) shipping company,¹⁵⁶ was the son of the recently retired N.D.L. board chair Georg Plate (1892–1911), who had represented the interests of N.D.L. during the 1896–1897 strike and again in the subsequent action of Hamburg dockworkers in 1907.¹⁵⁷ Both father and son had been at the centre of these major industrial actions and the negotiations with the union that ultimately ended them.¹⁵⁸ Likewise, Hans Heineken—who worked for Plate at Lohmann & Co.—was the son of Philipp Heineken, then the general global director of N.D.L. The eventual closure of the Lohmann offices and internment of these wealthy

¹⁵³ Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century*, 361.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 360. While the German economy was expanding in the *Kaiserreich* years between unification and war, the associated economic conditions of unemployment and inflation destabilised progress. Further, the battle between capitalist interests and workers continued. For instance, in this period, the employer lockout became a common response to strike action; in 1910 alone, nearly 250,000 German workers endured almost 1,000 separate lockout events.

¹⁵⁵ Grüttner, 'The Rank-and-File Movements and the Trade Unions in the Hamburg Docks from 1896–1897,' 115. The strike was a turning point in that it represented a breakthrough to a mass organisation of skilled/unskilled and permanently employed/casual workers, whose interests previously had proven difficult to unify. An outcome of the strike was the employers, including Norddeutscher Lloyd, began to restructure the organisation of work on the Hamburg docks, and reduced the casualisation in the workforce. This was in recognition of the fact that casual dock workers had not only organised the strike but had, chiefly, sustained it over its 11 week duration.

¹⁵⁶ Annual Report of HAPAG-Lloyd 2017, 3–19. The report states that, in 1914, Norddeutscher Lloyd was the second largest shipping line in the world. It had 22,000 employees worldwide, a fleet of 93 ocean-going vessels plus over 50 smaller and river-going steamers, had just constructed its massive head office in Bremen, had won the tender to provide a mail service between Germany and Australia and Asia, and established a substantial presence in the region. By the end of the war, its entire fleet had been surrendered as war reparations.

¹⁵⁷ The 1907 strike is described as one of the most significant examples of syndicalism and labour market re-organisation in European history.

¹⁵⁸ For a history of the Norddeutscher Lloyd shipping line leading up to and including World War I, see Edwin Dreschel, *Norddeutscher Lloyd Bremen, 1857–1970: Volume 1*, (Vancouver: Cordillera, 1994).

and influential men in 1915 was a triumph for the campaign by Australia's nationalist media to intern 'dangerous men' and a blow for German maritime interests in the Asia-Pacific.¹⁵⁹ However, what may have resolved a public relations issue for the government outside the camp created a problem for the administration inside the camp by introducing Plate's substantial skills and managerial expertise to the camp community.¹⁶⁰ On arrival, he was immediately nominated to the committee.¹⁶¹

While the specific role of Plate—and possibly Heineken—in N.D.L.'s strike-breaking activity in Hamburg is unknown, it is unlikely both emerged without a strong sense of the power of collective bargaining and the withdrawal of labour. This was the knowledge applied in the early weeks of 1916, when already tense relations between the internees and camp authorities deteriorated further, and erupted in a 14 day strike.

The issue came to a head because funds, confiscated from the cohort of Ceylonese internees on their arrival at Liverpool months earlier, had still not been returned. Ferdinand Gerbrecht, one of the Ceylonese colonists and an outspoken member of the new camp committee, successfully rallied internees to win a vote demanding a visit by the American consul. Gerbrecht had arrived with a reputation as an agitator and conflicted with others who favoured more moderate means:

Gerbrecht of the *Kaiserbrauerei* Bremen [the Imperial brewery of Bremen] is among [the Colombo cohort] and of him they say: 'God Almighty knows everything, but Gerbrecht knows it better.' He talks like a torrent.¹⁶²

The issue escalated when Trial Bay's Commandant Eaton insisted that Gerbrecht be removed from the committee—which he was. To the frustration of all, including those on the committee hopeful of a less adversarial and more diplomatic relationship with the administration, Gerbrecht continued to agitate from outside his committee role and convinced sufficient internees to vote to demand a (second) visit by the independent American consul. A petition was sent to the commandant on 28 January. The following morning, Gerbrecht was told he had one hour to pack his bags for deportation back to the Holdsworthy main camp.

¹⁵⁹ 'Our Huns. Herr O. Plate. Another Internment,' *The Mirror*, 18 December 1915. See also, Overlack, 'German Commerce Warfare Planning,' 17ff. Overlack contradicts Gerhard Fischer's negation of German naval aggression in the Pacific region from 1900–1914, saying that a build-up of capability and intelligence had been occurring in the Asia-Pacific region during this time and a network of intelligence officers, including Oscar Plate, reported through Walter De Haas to German High Command.

¹⁶⁰ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 18 January 1916.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 18 January 1916. Plate declined the nomination.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 5 August 1915.

Gerbrecht's Colombo cohort decided to down tools and strike. Because their money had not been released and they needed to work for whatever daily wage was available, they had become a core of the daily work gangs. They included carpenters and woodcutters, both of which were crucial to the daily life of the camp. The commandant escalated the incident further by closing the gates (always left open during the day), thus limiting the day parole area to the inner compound with no access to the beach. Friedrich Meier noted additional penalties:

He also had all lamps, cooking stoves and petroleum cans removed, we no longer get the newspapers or the mail and are not allowed to write. The turrets and alcoves along the prison walls are now manned by guards, and the wall is illuminated at night, which makes it look as if we had mutineered. Today the commander forbade us to speak German at the meetings, and no more than 12 people are allowed to gather. The kitchen staff, the woodcutters, the cleaners and the medics continue to work.¹⁶³

And Otto Wortmann noted the human cost:

During our strike...they managed to incarcerate 500 men for 14 days. 500 men had to make do with a 3-metre-wide corridor around the block for their constitutional, like wild animals in captivity! They went even further and confiscated all the lamps, petroleum and drinking water that we had bought with our own money and made us sit in the dark. There was no tobacco etc. because the canteen was closed. The most desperate among us smoked tea, which was probably more bearable for them than for their fellow inmates. In the last few days, people collapsed to the right and the left.¹⁶⁴

The relationship between internees and their guards was explosive, but so too was that between internees, resulting in a series of crisis meetings. The chief demand became the return of Gerbrecht from Holdsworth, a concession Eaton refused to make. The camp did not accept this and resented the perceived capitulation by a 'soft' committee. A breakaway faction of internees elected a separate strike action committee to oversee a general strike and negotiations with the commandant. The commandant refused to deal with this committee.

Another general meeting was called at which members of the original committee all resigned to be replaced, effectively, by the members of the strike action committee, which put them in the formal negotiating role. The new head of the committee charged to organise the general strike was Oscar Plate.¹⁶⁵

For the following two weeks, a ban on all government and camp sponsored work was put in place. In response, the canteen remained closed and evenings were dark with

¹⁶³ Diary of Friedrich Meier, 30 January 1916.

¹⁶⁴ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 15 July 1916.

¹⁶⁵ Letters from Oscar Plate to the official visitor Mr Justice Ferguson, 18 May and 7 June 1916. After the event, Plate insisted his name be cleared of any allegation that he had started the strike action.

no oil for lamps. As a further penalty, internee meetings were banned and only permitted with the commandant's agreement, and only then if conducted in English.

Finally, on Sunday, 13 February, the impasse was broken with the sudden arrival of the American consul. Commandant Eaton's declaration that the internees' insubordination had been punished enough and that the gates and the canteen would reopen was recognised as a face-saving gesture and internees felt they had won the victory. Thus, the strike was terminated and work resumed.¹⁶⁶

Thank God, the strike is over. Today the American vice-consul was here, listened to our complaints and promised to intervene on our behalf. In the afternoon, a general assembly was held and it was decided to resume work. Everything should revert back to how it was before the strike, only the newspapers will be withheld for the time being...but prisoners of war seem to have little choice, even if work is voluntary.¹⁶⁷

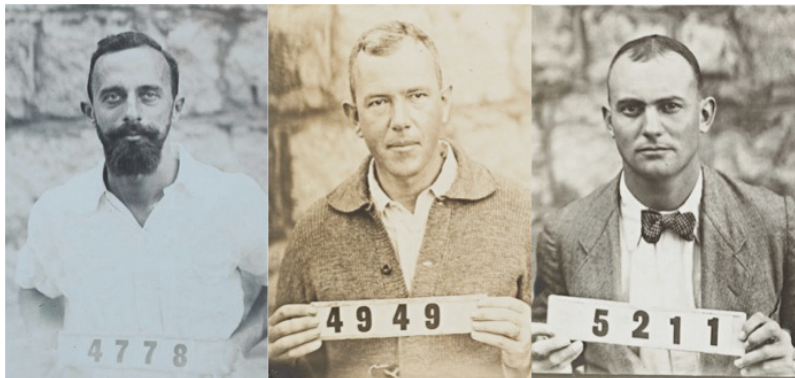


Image 3.27: Ferdinand Gerbrecht (4778), Oscar Plate (4949), Hans Heineken (5211).
[Source: National Archives of Australia]

The Trial Bay strike is an example of a mass reversal of class roles in the internment experience. That the, typically, working class officers and soldiers of the Australian guard found themselves in positions to dominate the wealthy, educated and powerful capitalist class of men could not have been lost to them. Nor could the internees have ignored the fact that, where there was oppression, two of the few remedies available to the oppressed were collective organisation and the withdrawal of labour.¹⁶⁸ All experiences of the 'other side' were instructive, on some level, of the possibilities open in

¹⁶⁶ Diaries of Wilhelm Woelber, Otto Wortmann, and Friedrich Meier: The victory of the internees in the strike action was short-lived. When the official report arrived two weeks later, chastising the internees for their strike action, the commandant forced his advantage and said he would no longer make any concessions to that present committee. Thus the strike committee members had no choice but to step down and yet another new committee was elected. The unity of the internees, if indeed it had ever been present, was damaged and Gerbrecht remained in Holdsworthly.

¹⁶⁷ Diary of Friedrich Meier, 13 February 1916.

¹⁶⁸ Letter writing was another of a limited number of protest actions available to the internees. Trial Bay internees gained a reputation in Australian government bureaucracies for the number of letters written. The 580 internees at Trial Bay, representing just over 8 per cent of the total internee population, wrote more protest letters than all the other camps combined.

a changing world. Clearly having had more to lose, the internees were constantly trying to establish an organised base from which to reclaim and exert some semblance of lost power. Yet the often inconsistent and needlessly provocative actions of the camp administration ensured that power, as they had previously known it, was illusory. Friedrich Meier's comment that there was 'little choice' available to prisoners of war was accurate. And the daily reminder of Gerbrecht's return to Holdsworthy—that bleak, crowded and dirty place they had all, at least briefly, experienced—served as a grim reminder of the price of future offence.

3.5 Conclusion: Queering work

When homosexuals have asked my advice, I have always maintained the following: regular, intensive work, whether manual or intellectual, is the most important condition for their well-being. There are several reasons for this. First, any useful activity fills the existence of a person, it is an aim in itself; then it makes him forget his problems; further, he can prove his usefulness to himself and his family. And work is an anchor; if anything detrimental should happen, it gives one the inner strength needed, the belief in one's importance.

—Magnus Hirschfeld, *The Homosexuality of Men and Women*¹⁶⁹

In prescribing the benefit of work to the physical and mental well-being of his homosexual patients, Magnus Hirschfeld recognised the intrinsic sameness of 'sexually normative' and 'third sex' people. In this he saw no difference. Meanwhile on the other side of the world, his Berlin-trained medical contemporary Max Herz also reported on the 'physical and psychical conditions' of internees at the Trial Bay camp and the need for meaningful labour. Twelve months into his role, Herz was professionally and personally concerned at the mental decline he was witnessing. He reported his daily observations of irritability, listlessness, restlessness, heart palpitations and sleeplessness—behaviours that were still some years away from being classified as 'barbed wire disease' or depression.¹⁷⁰ Without the clinical evidence he would have preferred, he could only invoke 'all the seriousness my pen is [cap]able of' to claim that 'psychic changes and mental alterations grow too easily and quickly' among civilian men who had formerly been occupied at the top of their professions, and who had held responsible community positions:

The internment has torn them away from their occupations, men who have been used to work which they loved have been thrown idle; from useful citizens they have become men who have to pass their days as best they can... They feel useless; their former energy begins to dwindle... The only remedy is work. Work for the mind and the body.¹⁷¹

That he believed work—for mind and body—to be the solution to mental malady is of deep interest to 'Masculinity on Trial'. It locates work and occupation at the centre of conceptions of healthy masculinity while speaking to the risk to mental health of having them disrupted.

¹⁶⁹ Hirschfeld, *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes* [The Homosexuality of Men and Women], 162.

¹⁷⁰ Ohry and Solomon, 'Dr Adolf Lukas Vischer (1884–1974) and "Barbed Wire Disease"', 16–17. Nowadays, there is greater awareness of and ability to diagnose the clinical conditions of trauma and depression.

¹⁷¹ Report by Dr Max Herz to the official visitor, 3 April 1917, 1–2.

The disruption of local, national and international commerce was one of the intended consequences of the internment exercise. Paradoxically, as German colonial structures were dismantled and its commerce was interrupted, a new micro-economy and labour market were constructed. Fresh demands for skills and expertise resulted in new conceptions of personal and collective identity. Internees were required to contemplate anew their status, caste and prestige in an environment where the measures by which they had previously understood these constructs had been removed—or, at the very least, curtailed.

The purpose of Herz's report was to invoke the official visitor's assistance in extending the perimeter of the day parole area around the gaol grounds, a source of discontent between internees and camp administration for the entire internment period.¹⁷² While many activities in the camp helped to stimulate mental engagement, Herz's main concern was the limited opportunities for the equally important engagement achieved through physical work. Older men, in particular, who were deprived of their identity-giving occupation but unsuited or unable to volunteer for available work, were vulnerable to the observed mental decline. But the gravest symptom of the parlous mental state of the internees, according to Herz, was the prevalence of sexual activity among them. Situational male–male sexual activity—not necessarily indicative of homosexual identity, although not to be excluded—was rampant:

The sexual side has also been touched and has at times shown ugly features. When I mention self-abuse and perversity, you will recognise that the danger has made a real appearance.¹⁷³

The language Herz used is as much personal as professional. The association of non-(hetero)normative sexuality with perversity was strong in the discourse of Freudian psychosexual analysis. Yet, with the work of Herz's Berlin-based medical colleagues—for example, Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Magnus Hirschfeld, as well as Havelock Ellis and Norman Haire in the British context—a powerful counter-narrative was stirring. Herz's embarrassment at having to report the 'real appearance' of homosexual activity among his compatriots stems from their inability, as gentlemen of the upper classes, to control their sexual urge, as much as from the nature of the urges fulfilled.¹⁷⁴ Effectively, he was admitting to the enemy a failure at the centre of his compatriots' German masculinity. Such a failure had repercussions for the legitimacy of the Trial Bay cohort being perceived

¹⁷² This was discussed in Chapter 2: Home.

¹⁷³ Report by Dr Max Herz to the official visitor, 3 April 1917, 1–2.

¹⁷⁴ Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century*, 370. Blackbourn notes that, 'Male honour was still central to [German] bourgeois society.'

as socially superior to the interned German men of lower classes at other camps. The latent mistrust of the bourgeoisie by the working class was fanned by perceptions of idleness, entitlement and moral inconsistency.¹⁷⁵ That Herz felt compelled to report it is evidence of the sincerity of his concern and his belief in the value of employment and occupation to its remedy.

The psychological and physical benefits of ‘walking tours into the green bush’ believed by Herz to eliminate the sexual decline, for most men was an opportunity and licence to increase it. Men sought cover for a range of illicit activities—but, in this case, men seeking space and opportunity to have sex with other men.¹⁷⁶ Going ‘into the woods’—as earlier described, an activity riven with meaning for German people—has also represented much to homosexual men. Regardless of the contested perimeter, excursions into the bush for the purposes of performing work—such as tree-felling—created other opportunities for internees who volunteered. Dubotzki’s photographs demonstrate moments of familiarity which appear spontaneous and unproblematic: the easy homosociality revealed between internees and their Australian guards is unlikely to have occurred inside the prison walls. Returning to the literal prison necessitated a return to the metaphorical prison of established sensibilities and expectations. There, the relationship between guards and internees remained tense. Outside, in the lush rainforest of Smoky Cape, it was possible to believe the war didn’t exist.

One of the dominant themes in the historiography of emerging homosexual identity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is the condition of space and the access to it of various social groups.¹⁷⁷ Thus, the notion of going ‘into the woods’ is relevant to considering what space was being claimed by same-sex attracted men. As discussed in the previous chapter, access to space—and the constitution of that space as public or private—was a key ingredient in the growth of a proto-homosexual identity. The work of George Chauncey was earlier considered for problematising the ability of middle and upper class homosexual men to meet one another and create their own private spaces in the urban setting. He notes that same-sex attracted middle class men were able to draw upon changing social norms among working class men who were

¹⁷⁵ Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century*, 360–361, 363.

¹⁷⁶ Report by Dr Max Herz to the official visitor, 3 April 1917, 1–2. And, for example, see also, Continuation of Report from Lieutenant-Commander Bavin, 25 April 1918. Bavin, the naval radiography-expert, relates information supplied by an unnamed informant about the illicit activities of four senior internees, Marcks, Pringheim, von Fetter and Dietrich. ‘The informant further stated that the contents of the wooden box referred to in my last report, were not a wireless set, but an apparatus for heliographing [using the sun to flash signals at an offshore ship].’

¹⁷⁷ See, for example, Chauncey, *Gay New York*; Beachy, *Gay Berlin*; Houlbrook, *Queer London*; and Wotherspoon, *Gay Sydney*.

increasingly able to occupy public and semi-public spaces such as parks, docks, beaches, bath houses, theatres and, as the medium became more popular, cinemas. Through encounters in these spaces, same-sex attracted men managed to develop both a culture and an identity we now know as ‘gay’, supporting Chauncey’s notion that, for this group, ‘privacy could only be had in public’.¹⁷⁸

This chapter has examined masculinities displayed in internment via a lens of work. In the same way that labour and occupation are important vehicles for analysis of class, they are also important indicators of changing expectations and performances of masculinity—none more so than where the environment is defined fundamentally by the gender of its participants. The evidence reveals that many conceptions of masculinity were challenged, leading to opportunities for self and collective identity being reimagined.

*

¹⁷⁸ Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 179ff.

Chapter 4: Theatre—Diversions and Difference



Image 4.1: Actors playing female roles Kurt Holzheuer (left) and Hermann Lehmann (right).
[Source: Dubotzki collection]

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4.0 Shadow Players

The theatre is great fun. Grimme ('Nanni') is the new *prima donna*. The 'ladies' proliferate, not only on stage. Homosexuality is rampant. ...

Some of these guys behave rather coquettishly, their gait and gestures womanish, and fiery handshakes and kisses are no rarity. How much of it actually reflects their sexual preference I dare not judge.

—Diary of Otto Wortmann, 3 January 1918, 12 April 1918



Image 4.2: The group is in costume and dressed as mated heterosexual pairs. The 'ladies' appear to be the female impersonators from the German Theatre: Holzheuer (sitting on Captain's lap, front left), Karrer (gypsy woman, front centre), Surmann (upper class wife, back left), Drews (sailor, back centre) and Pruetz (Asian wife, arms extended, rear) and possibly Vierich (mop cap, centre right). Possibly also Doctor Herz (seated, centre right, in dark coat leaning into the mop cap).



Image 4.3: Christmas Night 1916 in the Great Hall with musicians, *Tannenbaum* and dancing couples.

December 1916

I

The three of them filled the tiny room.

‘Christine, *cherie!* “Have you seen the photograph of Fritz in uniform?”’

Mizi’s line, Arnold knew, was from the supper scene in Act I. He giggled as he tugged the satin stays and let the gown drop to the floor. He placed the wig on its block.

Kathi called across him, ‘I want the photograph with Fritz *out* of uniform.’

‘Hush, Kathi, you cabbage! You’re boiled, of course. Beyond recognition or taste.’

‘Well, naturally, Mizi dear, but don’t you know our “Fräulein Christine is not the kind of girl to walk with gentlemen at night!”’ Kathi’s line was from Act II, delivered onstage in earnest sisterly support. But here, it sizzled with innuendo. She exaggerated a look of scandalised modesty as she slapped open a ballroom fan. Painted eyes wide in her still powdered face, she fanned herself dramatically.

Arnold considered the scene: the two women tease Christine about her philandering beau. It is a hopeless case: Fritz is a Prussian officer in love with a baron’s wife; Christine, his innocent distraction who believes he is in love with her. The audience knows what she does not: his photograph is the only part of him her heart will truly know.

Arnold laughed, and patted his bosom. “Goodness, she’s in a giddy mood!” His line from Act I.

The three of them crumpled in laughter.

Doctor Herz pushed aside the dressing room curtain. He rolled his eyes at their slow progress undressing but they could tell he was pleased, even as he shook his head. Holzheuer and Lehmann were popular with their audiences but Mizi and Kathi were sensations.

‘Lovely job tonight, ladies.’

To Arnold, his latest pupil in the arts of invented femininity, he applauded soft claps with the tips of fingers.

‘And you, *mein kleines Fräulein*. Wonderful!’

II

Ordinarily, Arnold would have stayed inside the barracks on such a day. An Arctic whaler would have done the same. He looked at the low slung, rolling clouds. Angry, fat and grey. His makeup would be ruined. Though just a dusting of powder, feathered with

his shaving brush, and two tiny spots of colour rubbed beneath his cheekbones, he did not have the time to do it all again. The company met at ten o'clock the morning after a final night—Doctor Herz no longer bothered pinning a notice—and Arnold did not want to be late.

Liebelei had been a triumph. Schnitzler himself would have approved of the second curtain call and genuine applause. They had connected with their audience; their comrades left the theatre with chatter they certainly hadn't brought with them, full of praise for their improving troupe. Doctor Herz had told them this could happen: the right performance of the right play, presented when the audience was in the right mood to receive it. Schnitzler's *Liebelei* proved the point. Like his *Anatol*—which they'd performed last month—it showed real people's real lives. And, Arnold had been pleased to discover, relatable sex lives too.

When he explained his choice to the cast, that Arnold would play the lead role of Christine, Doctor Herz talked of the tensions at *Liebelei*'s core: the social rules that men and women must follow and the courage of going against. The perils of class. The limitations of sex. We must all, he said, choose to accept or reject the expectations placed upon us. For some it is more difficult than others.

For Arnold, the success of *Liebelei* came from a deeper place. For the first time as a member of the company, he had put on dress and wig. Not just the evening gown donated by Mrs Herz, but underclothes too, hand-made by the tailor. Beautiful work: *broderie anglaise*, tabs and tapes, the cotton cool against his skin. With help from Mizi and Kathi, and actual lessons from Dr Herz, Arnold was learning how to be a woman. How to walk, how to talk, how to sit, how to smile. How to love. He thought of Christine with affection. Like her, he was a romantic who wanted to follow his heart where it led. But he envied her ability to live her love so openly, her freedom to dream aloud. Christine, to Arnold, was a familiar. Instead of holding the *Liebelei* script, he felt he was holding a mirror. He wished he could muster her courage: she displayed her honest self like a standard on a battlefield.

Arnold looked again at the sky. The clouds now pushed into the bay on the rising southerly squall. Sheets of rain covered the camp, water sluicing from the rooves and filling all manner of vessels positioned under the eaves. At least E-5, the newest of the barracks, had a guttering of sorts. For them, the problem was not so much the water-curtain off the roof as the thunderous din on the tin. The barrels under the downpipe stubs were filling fast and would soon be overflowing. He was left with little choice. Pulling a scarf across his hair and shoulders, clutching it tightly under his chin, he leaped

as gracefully as his Plimsolls allowed from patch to patch, staying under awnings where he could. Someone behind him whistled but he had no time to stop.

III

The wind caught the theatre door as Arnold struggled with the latch. He was hurled inside by a sudden gust as much as by his own hand. In spinning to close out the rain and wind he slammed the door hard. The crash echoed around the wooden walls and under its pitched roof. He laughed as he turned, more wet than dry, more dishevelled than not. ‘Well, there’s an entrance! I must look a fright.’

The rest of the company stared, some fifteen or twenty men, silent with grave eyes. Many were also recovering from the rain, looking like they’d made recent dashes too—if perhaps less dramatic entrances. Preutz was towelling dripping hair and Holzheuer was in his singlet, a wet shirt airing beside him. Doctor Herz, normally the most buoyant at these morning meetings, was subdued. Rainwater pooled beneath his sandals and his glasses were misted and streaked. He had the look of bewilderment becoming familiar among them as the internment months dragged on. Arnold’s eyes found Lehmann.

‘It’s Hermann,’ said Lehmann softly. ‘Hermann Adam. He died this morning.’

What Arnold had taken to be streaks of rain on Lehmann’s face, he realised then were tears. His hand moved instinctively and covered his mouth; the wet scarf in his other dropped to the floor. Arnold didn’t know Herr Adam well, other than that he was a friend of Lehmann from the Hong Kong group, the manager of some banking or trading firm. He’d been in the infirmary when he cut his foot while swimming but Lehmann had said he was fine. He’d declared himself cured and left.

Arnold’s gaze skimmed the faces in the room. None were as miserable as the doctor. The poor man. As the theatre’s creative director, Doctor Herz had their confidence and trust—but as their medical and infirmary leader, they depended on him entirely.

‘He was a damned fool,’ said Lehmann. Holzheuer squeezed his shoulder and leaned over towards Arnold. He was treated by Doctor Herz and the specialist from Kempsey. Against the advice of both, Adam refused to believe he was still in peril and went back to swimming and playing tennis. The wound developed sepsis and he was dead within the week. It was a simple accident that could have happened to any of them.

The remoteness of their life at Trial Bay had distanced them from death. Softened them. How different for their brother comrades. While he tried otherwise, he could only

think of the war as an act in another theatre. Characters dressed in khaki costumes fought on sets painted to look like farmland in France. Each account of the war was no more real than the summary of a play they might read for performance merit. Does it speak to the German spirit? Is there a hero whose strength and vigour is charming? Will their comrades be diverted? Newspapers, when he saw them, carried such distortions of truth it was easier to believe them fiction. Could they stage a production? Hermann Adam was not a character in a play but a flesh and blood man. Not a holiday guest at a summer resort but an interned prisoner-of-war. Does it sound like fun? He was the first of their group to die.

Arnold's instinct was to put his arms around Doctor Herz, as much for his own comfort as the doctor's. Instead, he placed a stool as quietly as he could and, like the others, sat in troubled silence listening to the rain.

IV

Arnold's sense of himself had shifted when the camp had built the theatre. As odd as he knew it sounded, he felt more hardy and substantial—like he owned more of the space in the world through which he moved. As he looked back through the pages of his journal, he could see the content had changed. Earlier entries counted the passing of each day—unvarying on the beach, in the cell, lining up for rollcall, for meals, to make purchases at the canteen, to use the latrines. And how could he have had so much to say on Schneider's nightly snores? As he flipped the pages forward, days and weeks and months flew by.

Since the theatre opened, his pencil raced to record the weekly parade of cabaret evenings, concerts and plays. Occasionally he noted the lectures, classes and church services, though he rarely attended those. Each week in his diary looked very different. Sometimes slabs of days went by and a single entry spilled forth a fortnight's worth of news. He was fortunate to be on the payroll, paid by the camp for his service to the theatre. And now he was an actor, there were other duties to perform—and, for these, he was rewarded an additional shilling per week. But the theatre provided other opportunities as well. His friendships with Lehmann and Holzheuer had formed—both theatrical types, through and through. While none of them knew what the future would bring, Arnold couldn't imagine it without those two. Holzheuer—Mizi—had fled from Friesland to Singapore in 1913. Something about fresh air and not looking back. Also in 1913, Lehmann had followed opportunity from Bavaria to Hong Kong. He'd learned to disguise his accent, along with his hairy chin and chest, when he took to the stage as

Kathi. Together, all three had shaved the hair from their arms and legs. Stockings now slid across their skin like satin on a tabletop.

‘Imagine we are to be here for yet another Christmas.’

‘Who would have thought it would be one, let alone two?’

‘For us it is Number #3 behind barbed wire. For many others too. You are luckier than you know, Christine.’

‘Ach, I cannot pass another like the last. The heat. The flies. They will be the end of me! If desperation does not get me first.’

‘And that we are forced to wear ill fitting dresses and shoes?’

‘And this is your bigger gripe? The war is turning you soft, Mizi.’

‘The audience did not seem to mind. Certainly, Steinhorst did not.’

‘Can you imagine Steinhorst at the Christmas ball at The Mikado?’

The three of them laughed again. While none of them had even been to Berlin, let alone its legendary bars and cafés, they knew enough to know a Berlin ball would be of little interest to Steinhorst. Arnold remembered the last time he’d played a role in wig and dress—how could anyone not at least begin to appear as feminine? He shook his head. But Steinhorst dressed for the laughs and their comedies were better for it. When he undressed after a performance, it took him barely a minute. His characters strayed no further than the dressing room whereas Kathi and Mizi and, tonight, Christine had all walked out among the departing audience, playing to the whistles and stares.

‘The thing I miss most about Christmas is the snow. How can you not? New South Wales is no Bavaria,’ said Kathi.

‘You can keep Bavaria. Give me any day my Friesland.’

‘Ah yes, your Friesland. I’m sure you miss the cows. Tell me, is your girlfriend doing well?’

Arnold disagreed with them both. ‘You can keep your Friesland and, you, your frozen mountains! I prefer it here. Don’t you just adore the sun? And tinsel looks just as pretty on Norfolk pine as on spruce.’

They had to agree. And this year at least they had a *Tannenbaum*, a sapling the committee had trimmed and placed in the Great Hall.

‘But what shall we do to save ourselves? We need a Christmas ball of our own to shake the mood. What say we treat them to a pageant?’

‘Why not take the girls out to dance? We can open up the place. Kathi, give us your plaits and dirndl and a polka. And you, Mizi, teach us what you teach your cows.’

The mood in the Great Hall was sombre at the start. Despite their determination to not repeat last year's grim affair and the fun of decorating the tree, yesterday, Christmas Eve, they had buried comrade Adam. The procession to the graveyard on the hill had unsettled the entire camp. But, to his credit, the Tzar had appealed to Commandant Bedford, insisting another Christmas as bleak as their first would be bad for ongoing morale. And so, every internee was permitted to purchase a bottle of Christmas cheer. The attitude immediately lifted. And when bottles of beer and wine were opened, along with Wilcke's whisky, so too did the noise. Those not drinking wandered the trestle rows selling their ration to enthusiastic bidders. And because, for many, so long had passed since alcohol was tasted, the meager drops soon stimulated. The Great Hall became like a beer tent in the middle of Munich's Wiesn festival.

At eleven p.m. when the din was at its peak, Herr Bensel climbed on top of a table, banging the bottom of a saucepan with a metal stirring spoon. He was dressed in tropical linens with a straw boater and a bright orange scarf around his collar. From somewhere, he had found a monocle that, on his right eye, gave him the look of a circus ringmaster. Conversations stopped as the men turned to see what was happening. A high school teacher from Hong Kong, Bensel had a schoolyard voice that he projected with a schoolyard volume, 'Gentlemen, *Herren, Messieurs*—your attention please! For your Christmas pleasure this evening, the Trial Bay "Preserve Officers" wish to present a South Seas celebration of our glorious German Fatherland.'

From out of the servery where the company was gathered, some ushers appeared and began to move the tables. They pushed the forms against the walls as a half-dozen musicians—four guitarists, a mandolin and an accordion player—arranged stools in front of the *Tannenbaum*.

'Remember, gentlemen. All you need to make good preserves is some *sugar* and some *spice*. And don't forget the *fruit*!' As the men applauded, the band played the opening chords of a popular Thuringian folk dance. A cheer went up from the men from central Germany. 'Gentlemen, we give you those aboard the barnacled tub, the *S.S. Trial*...'

Meier, dressed as a ship's captain, was the first to enter the hall, searching high and low for something through a rolled-up paper telescope. He spied what he was looking for back in the servery and returned, to emerge holding the hand of Arnold, dressed as his wife, who fluttered her eyelids at the audience over the top of a ballroom fan. The audience erupted and Bensel bellowed, 'Meet courageous Captain Meier and his beautiful wife—*Christine*!' At Christine's name, another cheer went up. Meier twirled

Arnold to the music and to the claps and whistles of the men. Arnold swished his petticoats as they made a wide circuit of the room before stopping in front of the musicians.

Two by two, the company entered and paraded the hall, all as matching mated pairs. Mizi was with Hoffmann, and dressed as a tavern wench. They promenaded the hall throwing fiery kisses at the catcalling audience, before positioning themselves behind Christine and Meier. Kersten, with an inked exotic Chinese moustache, and Pruetz, in an oversized sunhat, brim pinned back by a crêpe paper rose, wore matching Japanese longcoats. Cohn and Eckert entered, an aboriginal man and his mate, covered completely in black boot polish. Last to arrive were Doctor Herz and Kathi as the mayor and lady of The Idiots' Village, waving to the crowd as they too promenaded the room.

When all were in place, the musicians played a dramatic chord for the gentlemen to bow to the ladies and the ladies to curtsy to the men. The dance began.

VI

Arnold thought of the social rules that men and women must obey. We must all choose whether to accept or reject the expectations made of us, Dr Herz had said. But how could he choose? For some a choice is impossible. He was in love with Meier and Meier could never know.

They were packing away the Viennese drawing room, the Act I set for *Liebelei*, while the incoming cast blocked the stage for next week's Sudermann. He touched the pocket of his shirt. The photograph of Meier was there. His hair was oiled and combed, his uniform cleaned and pressed for the session in Dubotzki's shed. When they'd danced together at Christmas, Arnold had barely been able to breathe. In the end, Dubotzki had given him the print, no payment required and no question asked. Kathi and Mizi would tease him when they saw it. Would demand to see a photograph of Meier without his uniform too.



Image 4.4: Trial Bay Gaol, showing the Deutsches Theater within walled gaol precinct, beside main cell block. [Source: F.W. Collison c.1916, Macleay Valley Historical Society collection]



Image 4.5: Front of theatre during construction, 1916.



Image 4.6: Rear of theatre. The extensions house the stage wings and work/dressing rooms.



Image 4.7: Internal shows bench seating for 250–280 audience members. Set for *Minna von Barnhelm* has been painted by Bauer from Ceylon;¹ Dressing table is modelled on Herz's memory of his wife Ethel's dressing table.²



Image 4.8: The German Theatre company, possibly the image presented to Dr Max Herz (centre front row ie #3) to honour him on the first anniversary of the theatre. Key members: 1: Kurt Wiese (artist); 2: Theodor Mueller (musical director); 3: Max Herz; 4: Hermann Lehmann (*prima donna*); 5: Bartholomaeus Bauer (sets painter); 6: Bruno Steinhorst (female impersonator, editor of *Welt am Montag*); 7: Kurt Holzheuer (female impersonator, 'leading lady').

¹ Trojan, *Behind Stone and Barbed Wire*, 87. See also, Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 31 October 1916.

² Letter from Max Herz to his wife Ethel, 29 March 1917.

4.1 Introduction: Masculinity and the desire to perform

On Saturday, 12th of August, our newly built theatre was inaugurated. A song recital was organised that was very nice. The theatre was built from timber paid for by the government (canteen profit). But we had to come up with backdrops and sceneries and costumes ourselves. The theatre is 40m long and 8m wide and seats more than 250 people. Tickets are 1s/–, –/6d, –/3d and –/1d. Every performance is repeated so that all camp inmates can see it. Variety shows alternate with comedies, two events a week.

—Friedrich Meier, 29 August 1916

The opening of the new *Deutsches Theater* (German Theatre)³ at Trial Bay in August 1916 created—literally—a central site of interest for the internees.⁴ Located in the middle of the walled enclosure, on space once occupied by laundry-lines and tents for new arrivals, the ‘massive barn-like structure’ immediately became a physical and psychological meeting point for the entire internee community.⁵ From the inaugural Schubert song cycle on 12 August 1916 until the final performance on 17 May 1918, days before the camp was summarily closed and evacuated,⁶ the theatre was in constant use. Sixty-seven separate plays were performed—a new one (nearly) every week, performed twice to give all who wanted the opportunity to attend.⁷ Concerts, musical evenings or variety nights [*Bunte Abende*] were also staged on one or two nights per week or special occasions like the Kaiser’s birthday, presented by the camp’s orchestra or others offering musical talent.⁸ Additionally, lectures, classes and occasional religious services were held during the day.⁹ When it began publication on 1 October 1917, the *Welt am Montag* camp newspaper published a popular *Wochenplan* [weekly schedule of events] as well as reviews or ‘teaser’ articles on upcoming plays. Thus, the arrival of the theatre ushered in a new

³ Officially: the ‘*Deutsches Theater Trial Bay*’ or ‘DTTB’. This name created a sibling status with theatres in other camps at Liverpool and Berrima but, more significantly, established child status to the famous *Deutsches Theater* in Berlin (1894). Under inaugural director Otto Brahm (1894–1904) and then Max Reinhardt (>1904), the *Deutsches Theater* gained a reputation in modernist Europe as one of the world’s foremost naturalist theatres.

⁴ Captain Emil Dery locational map, Trial Bay Museum collection.

⁵ Trojan, *Behind Stone and Barbed Wire*, 77. See also, Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 258ff; and Helmi and Fischer, *The Enemy at Home*, 148ff.

⁶ The final play was *Kabale und Liebe* [*Intrigue and Love*] (1794), an ambitious drama by heavyweight playwright Friedrich von Schiller.

⁷ Concert and theatre program collection, Australian War Memorial; and Programs of theatrical productions at Trial Bay Camp, SL NSW. See Appendix 5: Plays performed.

⁸ Concert and theatre program collection, Australian War Memorial, PUBS002/007/002/001, Item 002. The first event was a recital of a Schubert song cycle performed by the Hong Kong business owner and amateur opera singer Hermann Plücker, accompanied by Dr Walter Pupke.

⁹ See *Wochenplan* in *Welt am Montag*.

period of not just cultural engagement but also new forms of social cohesion and anticipation in the lives of the internees.

The building itself was significant. First, as discussed in Chapter 2, where incremental gains of territory and the occupation of space came to exemplify broader narratives of the war, the theatre's place and size were a visible reminder of a German imperial presence, particularly as it rose amid the ruins of a public works and prison reform failure. And that the building bore the provocative name of 'German Theatre Trial Bay' only trumpeted the internees' success in negotiating and completing its construction. Second, its presence was a symbolic reminder to the internees of German cultural potency. Like an embassy in a foreign land, the theatre represented the richness of German culture, thus connecting to contemporary narratives of *Deutschtum* [sense of shared Germanness] and *Heimat* [a sense of home and homeliness], especially for those so far from home. In evoking cultural pride and patriotism, the theatre also facilitated a sense of a contribution to the German war effort, in which more active participation had—for better or worse—been curtailed.¹⁰

Given the logistical difficulties and expense of construction, it is telling the internees did not simply create their desired performance space in the Great Hall of the main building or outside the gaol's walls. As outdoor and improvised performance spaces were a popular emerging form, the quarry or beach, where a natural amphitheatre might have been easily found, would have made a far easier option. That their German Theatre required a dedicated building, along with naturalistic props, sets and costumes, was indicative of the bourgeois model of literary theatre they aspired to create.¹¹ The images at 4.4–4.7 show the size and location of the theatre, while Image 4.8 shows the permanent company of thirty-nine members.¹² In these respects—namely, that it had its own purpose-built venue; that its focus was firmly on performing the modern classics; that it relied on the donated talents of (mostly) non-professional enthusiasts; that it sold four separate classes of ticket; that it operated as a cooperative; and that it rarely staged a play

¹⁰ For discussion on the fears of emasculation that were part of the narratives of German masculinity in World War I, both collective and personal, see: Crouthamel, "Comradeship" and "Friendship": Masculinity and Militarisation in Germany's Homosexual Emancipation Movement after the First World War' and *An Intimate History of the Front: Masculinity, Sexuality and German Soldiers in the First World War*. See also, Hirschfeld, *The Sexual History of the World War*, 205.

¹¹ Alter, *A Sociosemiotic Theory of Theatre*, 10.

¹² Internees whose contributions are relevant to themes discussed in this chapter are identified.

that was not well-attended by its supporters if not sold out—the German Theatre of Trial Bay was one of the best resourced and most successful amateur theatres in Australia.¹³

The creative director and administrative driver of the project was the very busy Dr Max Herz, the camp's chief medical officer. Herz produced the first production, von Moser's *Der Herr Senator* (1894) on 18 August 1916, and continued until he retired from the role in April 1918.¹⁴ His knowledge of the modern German and British repertoire, of leading actors, directors and styles, was built from years of theatregoing while a student in Munich and Berlin, and from his and his wife Ethel's more recent theatre patronage in New Zealand and Sydney. This made him a confident choice for the task.¹⁵ Ethel's ability to expand the store of costumes and props—in response to Max's frequent requests of her and their friends—contributed directly to the theatre's ability to stage realistic productions.¹⁶ While his letters to her included elaborate requests for stockings, blouses, dresses, or specific items like 'an elegant evening bag' or 'the mauve evening dress with the flower vase around the neck', her letters to him suggested a cheerful if dutiful compliance. For example, Herz wrote:

Heartfelt thanks for everything. Well, if you relegate such a dream gown to an [old clothes] basket, I shall have to see to things. Actress and actresses in ecstasy! Eth, would you purchase for us: 42 yards of dark blue cloth, colour as sample #1, about 30" wide. 6 yards red cloth, colour as sample #2. Cloth material as sample #3 or cheaper. If width more than 30" then fewer yards accordingly. 20 yards gold braiding 1/2" cheapest. 25 yards cotton lace 5" wide, 10 yards cotton lace 3". One ballroom fan, nice, cheap.¹⁷

Jean sent us a parcel full of sweet things: violet evening dress, white frock, silk violet stockings (brand new!!), a silk bag, camisole and blouse – they'll create a sensation, I'm certain! Would you just get us two white skirts and half a dozen napkins (cheap) and 1/2 dozen fretwork-saw blades?¹⁸

¹³ Brisbane, 'Amateur theatre' in: Parsons and Chance (eds), *Companion to Theatre in Australia*, 38–45: Amateur theatre, then not carrying the pejorative association since acquired, was the form by which local repertory societies distinguished their production of serious plays from the popular, frequently international programs of 'professional' theatre companies.

¹⁴ Clarke, *Dr Max Herz*, 97. It is uncertain why Herz retired from the role. Coincidentally, however, his departure occurred mere weeks before the camp was unexpectedly closed and evacuated. Herz is in the centre of the front row of the company picture at Image 4.8 ie #3. He also played the cello in the camp orchestra. While not presiding on the central committee, Dr Max Herz was a moral core to the camp.

¹⁵ Clarke, *Dr Max Herz*, Ch. 4–5.

¹⁶ *Welt am Montag*, no.39, 10 November 1918, 16. This issue profiled the theatre, reporting it had forty regular theatre workers, thirty-five different sets in store as well as sixty historical costumes and much contemporary clothing by which to mount naturalistic productions. However, this was after the relocation to Liverpool in May 1918 and it's uncertain whether the theatres of Trial Bay and Liverpool merged their resources and whether all resources were successfully transferred from Trial Bay. Regardless, the preferred entertainment was, by then, the cinematograph (ie movie projector) purchased by the new committee. This did travel with the internees from Trial Bay when they relocated to Liverpool.

¹⁷ Letter from Max Herz to his wife Ethel, 2 July 1917.

¹⁸ Letter from Max Herz to his wife Ethel, 19 April 1917.

The quality of the costumes and sets was a source of pride at Trial Bay, as was the depth of talent among contributing internees appreciated by the compatriot audience. The quality was thought to elevate their productions above those of the bigger, longer-established theatre at Liverpool—reinforcing a desired point of distinction between the two camps.

Décor and costumes are better here, too, because there's more money. The curtain and the backdrops have been painted by a Mr Bauer from Colombo and are outstanding. Indeed, the theatre and its output show how many diverse talents exist among a group of people like ours.¹⁹

Understanding the importance of theatre to the masculinities of internment should begin with an examination of how theatre at the time was experienced—both as a feature of pre-war social life and in the radically altered context of internment. Expectations of all varied, but can be usefully observed as a function of nation, urban/rural/colonial locale as well as class divide. Therefore, this chapter will consider the various contexts of contemporary German and Australian theatre, the selection and omission of plays for performance and their reception by internees, and the portrayal of women by female-impersonating comrades to identify how images of masculinity were disrupted or reinforced. These are all useful indicators of how men saw themselves and one another and of how they creatively accessed meaning in their internment experience.

About 'Shadow Players'

The buttress for this third empirical pillar is the short story 'Shadow Players'. The story imagines a fictional character, Arnold, as he discovers new outlets for his effeminate masculinity—both onstage, performing his first female role; and offstage, through his friendship with leading 'ladies', Hermann Lehmann and Kurt Holzheuer.²⁰ Their relationship conveys what is rarely explicit in accounts of contemporary queer experience, particularly those of effeminate men: it could be a lot of fun! At the time of World War I, effeminate men in metropolises like Berlin, Munich, London and New York were already establishing connections with one another that would soon evolve into complex urban subcultures, increasingly recognised as part of a broader sexual identity. Reflecting the centrality of the theatre to its origins, such men in interwar Australia would identify themselves and one another as 'theatrical' or 'musical'—and later as

¹⁹ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 31 October 1916. Bauer appears in the company picture at Image 4.8 as #5.

²⁰ Holzheuer and Lehmann are seen in Image 4.1 smoking cigars in masculine stances while dressed in women's underwear. A wonderful image, it is provocatively constructed to amplify a masculine/feminine contradiction. Their characters are also fictionalised in the story.

‘camp’—while developing a language and social code for what it may have meant to be ‘homosexual’.²¹ It’s important to acknowledge that identity based on sexual desire in the early twentieth century was far less certain than it has become in later moments.²²

Without a large and more public culture and community, many homosexual men had no means of conceiving of an identity based around their sexual desires. Degrees of effeminacy, rather than sexual interest, were the more insistent signifiers of gender identity and informants of the masculine hegemony. A common practice among effeminate men, also referenced in the story, was the use of ‘female attributes, female names, and female attitudes’ to claim a desired social identity.²³ This had long been a facet of queer social behaviour. Not surprisingly, internee diaries suggest it was also frequent and affectionate at Trial Bay, for instance:

Ah yes, the one and only ‘Kathi’, the star of our stage, never fails to shine in every role she’s in!²⁴

The theatre is great fun, Grimme-Nanni is the new *prima donna*. The ‘ladies’ proliferate, not only on stage.²⁵

‘Shadow Players’ takes for its setting the company’s production of Schnitzler’s *Liebele* (1894) in late December 1916²⁶ while the camp is preparing for a second Christmas interned and while grappling with the death and burial of their comrade Hermann Adam, the first of their group to die.²⁷ The story recognises what many diarists noted, that Christmas was a time of particular nostalgia for absent families and where the heat and sand of Trial Bay only accentuated the distance from winter-based Christmas traditions in Europe. It also acknowledges the particular fascination for Christmas by homosexual men referenced in Robert Beachy’s *Gay Berlin*, for example at the late night bar, The Mikado, which planned its Christmas Eve festivities months in advance so that men without families, often dressed as women, could sing Christmas songs under a

²¹ Samuels, *If the Cap Fits*; and *Why Not Tell?* (novel), 24; Pride History Group, *Camp as a Row of Tents*, 11.

²² For example, see, Wotherspoon, *Gay Sydney*, viii–x.

²³ mFrench, *Camping by a Billabong*, 10–11. See also, Wotherspoon, *Gay Sydney*, 4–8.

²⁴ Trojan, *Behind Stone and Barbed Wire*, 82.

²⁵ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 3 January 1918.

²⁶ Appendix 5: Plays performed by German Theatre Trial Bay, 18 August 1916–17 May 1918.

²⁷ Adam was the first of five from the Trial Bay cohort to die in internment. He was buried on the hill behind the gaol on 24 December 1916. The German Monument erected to the memory of the five was completed in April 1918 (and destroyed in an act of vandalism in July 1919).

decorated *Tannenbaum*.²⁸ Berlin in the pre-war and Weimar years was the site of lavish balls attended by hundreds of men (and women), up to half of whom may have been cross-dressed. It allows Arnold, Lehmann and Holzheuer to connect with one another using a language, shared subversive knowledge and aspiration to be part of the Berlin scene.

The images at 4.2 and 4.3 show two internees covered in black body paint, probably boot polish, as they celebrate the Christmas pageant. Such expressions of racial stereotyping and subjugation—known as ‘blackface’—were widespread in imperial times, frequently manifesting deep in colonial cultures and psyches, such as in the Dutch Christmas tradition of *Zwarte Piet* [Black Pete], the English golliwog ragdoll and American-led mammy and minstrel traditions of the vaudeville stage. While primarily a tool used to reinforce perceived white racial superiority, blackface was also deployed to counter native masculinities. By portraying indigenous men as ignorant and uncivilised, white European colonisers were able to justify their colonial presence and oppression of native populations.

The story is also able to incorporate fictional imagining of actual internees Max Herz, the director, and Bruno Steinhorst, the newspaper editor who acted in numerous female roles that were considered neither pretty nor feminine, such as seen in Image 4.10.²⁹ This demonstrates an underpinning circumstance of female impersonation on the Trial Bay stage: female impersonation occurred in two categories. The first was the portrayal of a clown-like character, often in the trope of a female shrew, such as by Steinhorst, playing for laughs with no intended challenge to audience expectations of gender norms. Marjorie Garber would categorise this performance as that of ‘a man

²⁸ Emil Szittyá, cited in Beachy, *Gay Berlin*, 61ff. Szittyá was a contemporary avant-garde art critic and journalist. See also, Hirschfeld, *Berlin's Third Sex*, 57–61. Magnus Hirschfeld's work of 1904, part of his campaign to repeal the anti-homosexual Paragraph 175, targets the importance of Christmas to homosexual people. His emotional rationale posits his observations of Christmas as the ‘gravest’ time of the year when alienation from family is felt most strongly and suicide ideation is most prevalent.

²⁹ Steinhorst was the editor of the *Welt am Montag*. He played the lead in Shaw's *Mrs Warren's Profession*.

playing a man playing a woman'.³⁰ Here, there was no nuance: the performance remained self-consciously masculine and intended to convey comedy to the audience rather than femininity. On other occasions, such as by Arnold in dramas like *Liebelei*, the female roles required the audience to suspend all belief in their actor-comrades' masculinity and project instead a normative gender expectation and possible heterosexual desire for the proffered female character. Here, the performance required enormous nuance: this was a man wanting the audience to believe he was not a man, but a woman: as Garber says, 'a man playing a woman'. The conceit was permitted and applauded within the space of the theatre. Some female impersonators, through an expertise of looks and manner, enjoyed and sustained the illusion better than others.

'Shadow Players' provokes a final question to be taken up further in this chapter: how was the audience's suspension of gender-belief affected when 'girls' like Kathi, Christine and Mizi appeared offstage and outside the sanctioned theatre space?



Image 4.9: Company wig-maker Eberland von Ascheberg.

³⁰ Garber, *Vested Interests*, 8. Garber uses the Hollywood films *Some Like it Hot* (1959) and *Tootsie* (1982) to make her point. The characters of Jerry/Daphne and Michael Dorsey/Dorothy Michaels are always understood by the audience to be men playing men-who-are-trying-to-pass-convincingly-as-women. See also, Halladay, 'A Lovely War: Male-to-Female Cross-Dressing,' 21–23; and Laugesen, 'Australian Soldiers as Entertainers and Audiences,' 235. While Halladay's focus is ultimately on the Canadian experience in World War II, both she and Laugesen refer to the dual tropes of female impersonation in World War I. Both types of performance were expected and successful. Halladay distinguishes the two, noting the use of flamboyant gestures, deliberately slapdash costumes, the absence or clownish application of makeup, and visible body hair to reinforce comedy but elaborate costumes and feminine preparation 'from head to toe' for dramatic purpose. In such productions, performers 'conducted themselves demurely, took up little stage space and amplified what at the time could be said to be the most appealing "womanly" characteristics of the female persona'.



Image 4.10: Director Max Herz (rear) and Bruno Steinhorst (centre) with two unknown actors (possibly Carl Drews and Gustav Vierich) in comedy mode.

4.2 Context of contemporary theatre

But it may truthfully be said that virtually every adult German in the large cities knows the points of a good actor, and is a lover of the theatre.

—*Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 July 1909³¹

While travelling in Europe in 1909, the theatre critic Carlyle Smythe wrote a series of articles for Australian newspapers entitled ‘Modern Germany: Through Australian Eyes’. Instalments included his pontifical reflections on things that inspired his interest: the ignorance of the British about Germany and its people; the Kaiser and the imperial family; and the unusually central place of theatre in the lives of German people.³² Smythe’s theatre interests made him curious about the role of theatre in defining a German national identity and how metropolitan and regional appetites compared with those in Australia. His travels convinced him that ‘dramatic productions of the highest excellence abounded in at least a dozen cities’ and that the appetite for art and culture among the German populace had produced a palate ‘far more eclectic and cosmopolitan than that of the Frenchman or Briton’. His comments were echoed by influential British actor and theatre manager, Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree:

One thing I noticed about the German theatre was the great importance the theatre takes in the national life in Germany. I do not think that as yet we in England approach the theatre in the same spirit of seriousness which obtains in Germany, where every little town has its State or municipal theatre.³³

Attachment to theatre was definitely part of the German cultural psyche. Few regional towns or cities at the turn of the twentieth century did not have a centuries-long tradition of travelling shows or permanently-located companies supported by municipal funding or even upper class theatre patronage by local aristocracy. With Goethe and Schiller lauded at all tiers of German society, theatre was considered an essential part of intellectual life, not just by the bourgeoisie but by the middle and working classes as well.³⁴ For some, it was the German playwrights, more than its musicians and other

³¹ Smythe, ‘Modern Germany: A Nation of Playgoers,’ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 July 1909

³² Smythe, ‘English ignorance of Germany,’ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 June 1909; ‘A nation of playgoers,’ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 July 1909; ‘The Imperial Family,’ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 July 1909. See also, ‘Mr Carlyle Smythe; Death in France,’ *The Argus*, 18 December 1925.

³³ ‘Musical and dramatic,’ *The Register*, 17 June 1907.

³⁴ For example, as articulated by Federal Republic of Germany Chancellor Willy Brandt on 17 September 1972 in his opening address to a series of discussions on the relationship between theatre and politics. The association between Goethe and Schiller inspired the pre-modern literary tradition of Weimar Classicism.

artists, who provided the ‘source of German strength and how [we Germans] view the world’.³⁵

Meanwhile, in Australia, theatre-going was shedding its nineteenth century reputation for being disorderly and disreputable. Vaudeville and music hall entertainment, following European and American tropes, was often raucous and targeted working people’s social and political interests.³⁶ Towards the century’s end, this began to change—both in the type of material performed and the venues in which it was staged. The modernist forces behind the European surge in theatre-building and which brought theatrical naturalism into being soon also appeared in Australia.³⁷ Entrepreneurial super-agents like J.C. Williamson aggressively promoted local and international acts, touring new romantic comedies, Shakespeare and light operas in theatre chains they either owned or leased.³⁸ Boutique companies like Brough-Boucicault targeted the tastes of an expanding middle class, staging fashionable naturalist works in smaller, purpose-built theatres, designed to be intimate and elite.³⁹ New repertory companies also appeared, staging works in their own theatre spaces, such as by literary British modernists George Bernard Shaw and Walter Pinero. The plays of Oscar Wilde bridged the theatrical class divide, depicting old world class and gender on the one hand while parodying it on the other.⁴⁰ At the same time, activist and unionist theatres thrived, recognised for the potential for disruptive thought and action.

In addition, for German-Australians, language, community and culture were strengthened—if also confined—by the activities of local cultural clubs and German associations. In constructing these buildings, investing their capital and labour in cultural permanence, immigrants were also constructing personal and communal *Heimat*. So too

³⁵ Former chancellor Willy Brandt, ‘The Political Significance of the Theatre,’ 22. See also, Smythe, ‘A Nation of Playgoers’.

³⁶ For a comprehensive history of Australian theatre, see: Kirby-Smith, *The Development of Australian Theatre and Drama, 1788–1964*. See also, Waterhouse, ‘Audiences’ in: Parsons and Chance, 65ff.

³⁷ Fotheringham, ‘Acting’ in: Parsons and Chance, 17.

³⁸ Dicker, ‘J.C. Williamson’ in: Parsons and Chance, 643. Williamson, in various partnerships e.g. with Garner and Musgrove ie ‘the Triumvirate’ (1882–90), Garner (1890–91), Musgrove (1892–99), Tallis and Ramaciotti (1904–11) and Clarke and Meynell (1911+) was responsible for replacing early-colonial theatre experiences with a standard of international professionalism preferred by Australia’s emerging middle class. He famously toured British acting sensation George Titheradge in 1883, as well as Sarah Bernhardt in 1891.

³⁹ Fotheringham, ‘Brough-Boucicault Comedy Company’ in: Parsons and Chance, 107–108.

⁴⁰ Thorne, ‘Theatres’ in: Parsons and Chance, 594. See also, ‘Adelaide Literary Theatre,’ *The Advertiser*, 30 May 1910. Amateur groups, like the Adelaide Literary Theatre Society formed in 1908, frustrated by the absence of contemporary dramatic writers from their local stages. The Adelaide group found they were frequently looking for larger halls in which to stage their productions because of a growing interest in modernist theatre ie ‘the presentation of poetic and symbolic dramas, plays bearing directly on the actual problems of life, translations from the works of French and German dramatists, and plays by Australian writers’.

did expats living in the British colonies of Ceylon, Hong Kong and Singapore built *Heimat* through increasingly sophisticated club buildings in which German theatre and music were performed. The concert halls of Hong Kong's Club Germania and Singapore's Teutonia Club hosted local and touring theatrical and musical events for their resident communities,⁴¹ while colonial expats from the plantation colonies in German New Guinea, Nauru and the Pacific, like Otto Wortmann, with less access to European fare, participated in local culture like attending indigenous 'sing sings'.⁴² Residents from the German model colony of Tsingtao had access to local Chinese theatre which tailored some of its repertoire to suit its new European audience.⁴³ But as was the case in other settings, colonists also produced their own amateur versions of German works.⁴⁴ Celia Applegate has linked participation in German culture to colonists' and immigrants' building of *Heimat* in two important domains: the immediate locale where roots were first put down, buildings built and a German sensibility brought to bear in everyday associations within the local space; and in the belief that such nationalistic behaviour connected to an imagined broader, networked community.⁴⁵

This summary intends to amplify the diverse experiences and expectations of the group that came together at Trial Bay. In as much as any single narrative can be drawn, modern German culture in the age of empire and *Deutschtum* was extensive and persistent. And what is consistently evident in sociological studies is that theatre was a cultural agent that reflected—and affected—the society in which it occurred. According to Michael Bronski, the problem for social moralists in relation to the accelerated theatre growth during this period was not just the fanning of old fears of links to prostitution and immorality, but that theatres were intrinsically understood as 'places where imagination flourished'.⁴⁶ That the stated goal of theatrical naturalism was to challenge previously under-acknowledged realities would inevitably cause tension. But the climate of social liberalism gave the avant-garde confidence: theatregoing would be transformed and theatregoers would be inspired.

An example of the provocation is found in the increasing agency of (white, European) women. At the same time (these) women were recognising the shifting social

⁴¹ Smith, 'The German-speaking Community in Hong Kong, 1846–1918,' 3–5.

⁴² Letter from Otto Wortmann to his mother, 19 December 1916, 2, 38.

⁴³ Steinmetz, 'Qingdao as a Colony,' 17.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 44. See also, Groeneveld, 'Far Away At Home in Qingdao,' 74. Sinophile colonist Richard Wilhelm advocated for the theatre as a site of cultural exchange rather than cultural imperialism, thus some Germans and Chinese would come together to share theatre in Tsingtao.

⁴⁵ Celia Applegate, cited in Groeneveld, 'Far Away at Home in Qingdao,' 65–66.

⁴⁶ Bronski, *A Queer History of the United States*, 104–105. Bronski's reference is to moralism and theatre construction in the United States but similar panics were evident in Europe and Australia.

currents and demanding better social contracts, theatre was representing the ‘new woman’ very differently: as in Magda’s revolt from patriarchal tyranny in Sudermann’s *Heimat* (1893, German); Kitty Warren’s social and financial independence achieved from a career in prostitution in Shaw’s *Mrs Warren’s Profession* (1893, English); and Nora’s stunning decision to abandon her marriage and children in Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* (1879, Danish). A flotilla of diverse and different characters took to the stage, increasingly performed by women actors.

Female impersonation, cross-dressing and drag on stage

To cross-dress on stage in an all-male context ... is a way of asserting the common privilege of maleness. Borderlines like officers/[enlisted men] or gay/straight are both put into question and redrawn or reaffirmed: ‘woman’—the artifact made of wig, makeup, coconut breasts and grass skirt or sailor’s ‘frock’—offers a space for fantasies that are at once erotic and misogynistic.⁴⁷

There was nothing unusual about seeing cross-dressed performers on stage in colonial Australia. Despite the persistently aired fears of social moralists about the destabilisation of established gender norms, Australian audiences continued to attend and applaud gender disrupting acts.⁴⁸ French artiste Sarah Bernhardt, the most famous stage celebrity of her generation, brought a number of iconic ‘trouser roles’ to Melbourne and Sydney on her rhapsodic 1891 tour. A decade and more later, female impersonators were popular turns on vaudeville and music hall circuits with star-billed performers like Ray Lawrence delivering sold-out shows.⁴⁹ And while he did not tour Australia himself, the most successful variety artist of the age, American female impersonator Julian Eltinge, had appeal and influence across the Australian cultural landscape. Eltinge was said to be so popular, ‘his bookings were made seven years in advance’. In his physical absence, the silent films he made in the earliest days of Hollywood fed the public fascination.⁵⁰

Eltinge’s stage persona and career are instructive for what they reveal of contemporary bourgeois masculinity, including: what attributes did middle class men project to serve as the object of their own heterosexual gaze; how female impersonation

⁴⁷ Garber, *Vested Interests*, 58.

⁴⁸ Men playing the roles of women in theatre is as old as theatre itself and certainly on Australian colonial stages, female roles had been played by men or professional actresses. By 1910, the acting profession in Britain had become more respectable due largely to success of London theatre and royal patronage. Meanwhile, in Australia, many theatrical societies comprised only men because the stage was still considered an inappropriate career for women.

⁴⁹ For example: ‘Man or Woman? Ray Lawrence at the Kings’ (review), *The Mail*, 17 August 1914.

⁵⁰ ‘Julian Eltinge: The Boston Boy Who Plays Girl,’ *The WA Sportsman*, 28 June 1918. It is more likely the claim of a seven year scheduling window was part of Eltinge’s media hype. See also, Casey, ‘Cross-dressers and Race-crossers,’ unpublished PhD thesis, 78–153.

managed to remain acceptable in the face of morality-based opposition; and how female impersonating men like Eltinge affected upper class women's views of themselves, including notions of beauty and fashion. Eltinge's success directly influenced how female impersonators took to the stage, especially in the performance of upper class, white femininity evident in the schooling of actors in the arts of feminine behaviour at Trial Bay. Other than a talent for what he did, Julian Eltinge's incredible success, like Bernhardt's, was in part due to his ability to manage the narrative of his offstage self. For Eltinge, his origin story—including his name, class roots, education and entrée to the profession—and entire offstage identity were fabrications devised to elevate his class and assure audiences of his respectability. Few Eltinge scholars would suggest he was not a closeted homosexual man, even in his later life when language and lifestyle allowed for greater clarity of the identity. Yet he distanced himself totally from his onstage personae and was critical of other performers who allowed their onstage femininity to slide into offstage effeminacy. He curated his image carefully:

Although he sustains feminine parts with wonderful skill, off stage he is one of the most masculine of men, an expert oarsman, a boxer with a 'thousand pound punch', as more than one stage-hand has discovered by taking liberties with a skittish remark. ... Three months in every year he takes a vacation, leading an open-air life on his farm, tree falling, boating, and the regular daily rounds of a backwoods man.⁵¹

This description can be read as Eltinge's understanding of the prevailing hegemony and his own complicated relationship to it. While not overt, the masculinity is patently white, upwardly aspirational and heterosexual. Being convincing as a feminine woman required him to be also convincing as this masculine man. Other actions reinforced the image, like providing financial support for his mother (which he made sure his audience knew about), being photographed with women and being seen smoking a cigar, a symbol of the privileged white, male caste he aspired to join. Eltinge's life, onstage and off, was a complex set of cultural performances. Yet, in this, according to Judith Butler's assessment of the intrinsically performative nature of gender, his pursuit of the hegemony involved no less performance than all other men, including actual boxers, farmers and men who genuinely lived in the American backwoods.

The deliberate juxtaposition of manly male and womanly female traits is also evident in Dubotzki's excellent photograph, reproduced here as Image 4.1. The female impersonators Holzheuer and Lehmann appear in petticoats and underwear in what seems a manufactured scene. The problematic masculinity in the text of the picture—that is, of men appearing in female garb—is dismantled by its subtext: the masculine stance,

⁵¹ 'Julian Eltinge: The Boston Boy Who Plays Girl,' *The WA Sportsman*, 28 June 1918.

their position in relation to one another and the cigars they have casually in their mouths, all signal an underlying acceptable masculinity. The problematic femininity—that is, of women appearing sexually available—is also acceptable because it is a middle class, white femininity being signified by play-acting white, middle class and heterosexual men. By appearing in their underwear in an offstage dressing room, the image signals the sexual promiscuity, prostitution and sexual availability associated with nineteenth century theatre culture—the nightmare of the social moralists. It is a particularly clever photograph whose net impact serves to confirm the safely white, bourgeois, hetero-normative masculinity comfortably present at Trial Bay.

The way female impersonators of the era chose to construct their onstage characters conflates a preferred notion of femininity with upper class, white women. Most obvious were performers' choices of costume, which were invariably expensive and elaborate gowns. But it was more subtly expressed through their use of makeup.⁵² Makeup, and especially powder and rouge, was a critical component of the artifice without which an actor would not have thought himself ready to be convincing. Visible makeup, no less than dress and wig, was a primary signifier of femininity for an audience of (white, bourgeois) men. Whether lavishly or lightly applied, powder contributed to the illusion of a woman's presence before the actor moved or spoke. But, more so, that powder is a lightening agent, it served to signal the primacy of light skinned women and to distance the wearer from notice of having spent time, indeed labour, outdoors. Thus, it was a marker of class as well as race.

Where dress and wig comprised the more obvious part of the feminine illusion onstage, they were not easily worn offstage without declaring the actor's effeminacy—additionally problematic in many jurisdictions where cross-dressing in public was an illegal act. But, as Arnold does in 'Shadow Players', it was possible to take a 'light dusting of powder' or an artfully madeup face offstage without unwanted notice and still remain in an acceptable masculine realm. The amount of makeup applied gave men an ability to control the degree of effeminacy they wished to convey—for example, as a loud and provocative proclamation achieved by a heavy application or a personal affirmation from a softer hand.

⁵² Casey, 'Cross-dressers and Race-crossers', unpublished PhD thesis, 79. Female impersonator Julian Eltinge used so much whitening powder that, in 1910, he launched his own line of 'whitening' beauty products, sold to women through his own magazine, the *Julian Eltinge Magazine of Beauty Hints*.



Image 4.11: Dresser Fritz Behrnt and actor (poss. Hans Grimme?) applying makeup to play a female role.

Nor was the expectation of seeing men onstage dressed as women during the war an unusual sight. Touring soldier and civilian concert parties, like *The Anzac Coves* and *The Boomerangs*, included female impersonators, modelled on exaggerated music hall and vaudeville tropes.⁵³ Laurel Halliday notes that ‘a stage rendition of anything outside the white/male/heterosexual normative was considered comedy’ by soldiers in World War I.⁵⁴ Few prisoner-of-war or civilian internment camps of either the Allied or Central Powers did not establish theatres along the lines of the German Theatre at Trial Bay. Theatres at Berrima and Liverpool staged similar literary repertoires for which the same conventions of female impersonation, drawn from similar pre-war expectations and tropes, also applied. Camps for both German-civilians on the Isle of Man and British-civilians, for example, at Ruhleben outside Berlin, also developed sophisticated theatres

⁵³ Laugesen, ‘More than a Luxury: Australian Soldiers as Entertainers and Audiences’, See also, Djubal, ‘Troupes: Digger Field Theatres and Concert Parties,’ (website). Variety shows were performed at the front or behind the lines by touring groups like *The Anzac Coves*, *The Boomerangs*, *The Blue Dandies*, *The Co-ees*, *The Sentimental Blokes* and *The Kookaburras*. Shows included skits or longer pieces with female impersonators like Private Lindsay Kemble from *The Sentimental Blokes*. After 1919, Kemble returned to Australia and briefly toured his own variety company before joining the *Mademoiselle Mimi Diggers*. In the late 1920s he also teamed up with fellow female impersonators Tiki Carpenter and Charles Holt in the reformed *Smart Set Diggers*.

⁵⁴ Halliday, ‘A Lovely War: Male-to-Female Cross-Dressing’, 21.

and programs by their internees.⁵⁵ Like Trial Bay, they were institutionally important, as much for the perpetuation of nationalistic sentiment as for being places where diversion was found and the internment experience normalised through the presence of ‘women’. Alon Rachamimov has written about theatres in forty-six prisoner-of-war camps on the eastern front in Russia. There, particularly in the officers’ camps where salaries were paid and labour was not mandated,⁵⁶ ‘inmates established highly elaborate theaters and relied on the talents of hundreds of female impersonators from among the [German-speaking] POW population’.⁵⁷ Of his experience, internee Hermann Pörzgen wrote, ‘This was the golden age of the female impersonator, when unfulfilled eroticism ... reoriented the fantasies of the mass [of prisoners] toward a new object and channelled love, sorrow, adulation, and critique’.⁵⁸

For many internees and prisoners-of-war, the sight of females onstage reaffirmed their sense of masculine power and, for bourgeois men, their sense of their own sexual superiority. Paradoxically, the fundamental gender disruption at the heart of their imagining was the feature that also shook heterosexual normalcy to its core, allowing new homoerotic intimacies to surface and even providing a language to describe it. Unsurprisingly, this appealed to many men who felt at odds with prescriptive sexual and gender rules and who could live—for these moments, at least—outside the hegemonic paradigm.

⁵⁵ Murphy, *Colonial Captivity during the First World War*. Murphy’s work considers global sites of internment of both German civilians and prisoners, particularly in the colonial realm. Analysis notes the comparatively high cultural output of Japanese camps in which c.4,627 soldiers and civilian volunteers who had defended Tsingtao lived out the war in around fifteen camps (later consolidated to six including the purpose-built constructions at Bando and . See also, Barkhof, ‘German Prisoners-of-war in Japan,’ 255.

⁵⁶ As per the Hague Convention guiding treatment of Prisoners-of-War.

⁵⁷ Rachamimov, ‘Disruptive Comforts of Drag,’ 362–364. The majority of prisoners-of-war in these Russian camps were from the Austro-Hungarian army. After the Russian revolutions of 1917, stipends paid to officers as well as conditions and resources became more uncertain.

⁵⁸ Hermann Pörzgen, cited in Rachamimov, ‘The Disruptive Comforts of Drag,’ 363. Pörzgen was a journalist who wrote of female impersonation among interned German officers in prisoner-of-war camps in Russia. See also, Köhne *et al.*, ‘*Mein Kamerad, die Diva*’ [‘My Comrade, The Diva’].

4.3 Choice of plays

If we would not feel the necessity to provide some wanted diversion and relaxation, we would not play theatre, although I am proud to say that our repertoire gets better.

—Max Herz, 5 April 1917

Max Herz's reasons for establishing the theatre at Trial Bay align with rationale of other prisoner-of-war and internee camp theatres during World War I. Historians like Rachamimov, Andrea Pitzer and Mahon Murphy have written that, whether in camps of the Allied or Central Powers, in Europe, Africa or Australia, an overwhelming imperative for staging theatre was to provide 'therapeutic diversion from mental and physical decline'.⁵⁹ But there were other reasons too from which individual and group benefits easily flowed. At Trial Bay, the theatre was an institutional core: it brought internees together every week, physically and emotionally, by providing a shared viewing experience. For the audience, attendance was a statement of ownership, an endorsement of the camp's cultural venture and a commitment to group and national status quo. Eighteen months later, an article in the *Welt am Montag* reported the theatre's purpose by then was not solely about diversion. 'We are not only an institute of entertainment! We also aim to have the wonderful poems and plays of our German writers ignite a spirit in the hearts of all, especially those who might have had little or no contact with [the classic German canon].'⁶⁰

By staging plays from a mostly recent and familiar catalog, a mechanism was provided by which pre-war identity—such as in social caste and masculinity—could be remembered and reclaimed.

The selection of plays—either by inclusion or exclusion—was the first step in achieving these goals. Plays were mirrors for the internees, affirming not only their culture and history, but contributing to a cultural belonging and, with that, personal and group identity.⁶¹ Sixty-seven separate plays were performed at Trial Bay between 18 August 1916

⁵⁹ Rachamimov, 'The Disruptive Comforts of Drag,' 364. See also, Murphy, *Colonial Captivity during the First World War*, 106; Pitzer, 'Enemy Aliens,' *Laphams Quarterly* (website); Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 258–261.

⁶⁰ *Welt am Montag*, no.39, 3 November 1918, 16–17. This article, written from Holdsworth, probably quotes Fischer, the incoming director after Herz's retirement in April 1918.

⁶¹ This exemplifies the earlier discussion on second tier imagined community *Heimat*, as described by Applegate at Footnote #538.

and 17 May 1918.⁶² While there are many reasons why programming decisions may have included or excluded a particular work, trends of origin, type, trope and theme reveal the sentiments at play, as determined by Max Herz, feeding the appetite of the theatre-hungry audience. Plays were performed in German language without apparent censorship by the administration.⁶³ To the contrary, privileges enjoyed by the ‘Upper 500’ at Trial Bay included fewer restrictions of content, form and language, including in writing, and less invasive censorship than in other camps.⁶⁴

Choices of inclusion

My theatre position keeps me fully occupied. Have to select plays, cast them, read, rehearse them...⁶⁵

Have been reading a lot of plays lately to see whether they suit, cast them etc. [Could you] have a look whether we have Shaw: *Major Barbara*, *How He Lied To Her Husband*, etc.⁶⁶

It’s not surprising that, after fulfilling his duties as medical officer and playing the cello in the camp orchestra, Max Herz’s role as theatre director kept him ‘fully occupied’. Along with selecting, casting, reading and rehearsing new plays every week, Herz translated a number of works for the troupe—most notably Shaw’s *Man of Destiny* (1897) and *How He Lied to Her Husband* (1904), both staged in mid-June 1917, and Pinero’s recent London hit, *The Second Mrs Tanqueray* (1893), performed a month later.⁶⁷ A part of his role he appears to have enjoyed was ‘teach[ing] men who have almost forgotten what a lady looks like, how these dainty creatures walk, speak, behave’.⁶⁸ Herz’s expectations of women and the men who played them—a hint of which might be gleaned from his reference to ‘dainty creatures’—dictated broader thought. His ability to influence the opinions, morals and moods of the men of the camp through his theatrical choices and personal politics—as well as their physical wellness through medical diagnoses—was substantial.

⁶² See Appendix 5: Plays performed at Trial Bay. A report in *Welt am Montag* no.39 suggests there were fifty-six separate plays in 1917 alone. This includes some reprise performances and other stage events.

⁶³ A feature of many naturalist works, like Ludwig Thoma’s *The Medal* (1901) and Gerhart Hauptmann’s works, is being written and performed in local dialect.

⁶⁴ Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 255.

⁶⁵ Letter from Max Herz to his wife Ethel, 12 October 1916. Herz also played the cello in the orchestra.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 19 October 1916.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 24 May 1917.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 12 October 1916. See also, Image 4.11.

Availability of fresh material was an ongoing challenge in an environment where each week a new offering appeared. As director, Herz was continually scouring the limited sources available—the internees' library,⁶⁹ his bookcase at home in Rushcutters Bay (accessed with Ethel's aid), or as sourced from further afield, as in: 'We got 8 plays sent to us from USA, all in blank verse, in historical costumes. They are slightly overtaking our capabilities.'⁷⁰

Of the sixty-seven identified works, all but twelve were original German texts. And of the dozen non-German works, two were translations from Norwegian, Ibsen's *Enemy of the People* (1882) and *The Pillars of Society* (1877); one from French; one from Hungarian; and eight from English, including five by George Bernard Shaw and one by the only American and only woman playwright of the sixty-seven, Margaret Mayo, for her successful Broadway farce *Baby Mine* (1910).⁷¹ All the non-German and most of the German works had been recent stage successes in many theatres across Germany. Some, such as Sudermann's *Heimat* (1893, performed in English as *Magda*), were also widely performed in Australia in the decade preceding the war.⁷²

Herz's selections were mostly modern, literary comedies—skewing toward the bourgeois fare familiar to German literary audiences and certainly at the national theatre in Berlin.⁷³ The comedies were escapist, allowing internees temporary relief from the relentlessness of camp life, 'to make the evenings go by faster'.⁷⁴ Military comedies, written by former Prussian officers like von Moser, Schönthan and Trotha, both amused and played to a desire to see German military might and manhood triumph. These, of

⁶⁹ Report of Swiss consul, Mr Marc Ruty, 17 June 1917, 2. See also, Diaries of Wilhelm Woelber, 20 October 1915 and Otto Wortmann, 28 March and 17 July 1916. An 'ample collection' of 2,500 'high-quality books' had been brought by the *deutsche Vereine* from Hong Kong and Singapore (ie the Germania and Teutonia Clubs) and established as a borrowing library. Books were able to be borrowed on a subscription basis for 1s/–.

⁷⁰ Letter from Max Herz to his wife Ethel, 7 June 1917.

⁷¹ *Baby Mine* had successful runs on and off Broadway and was made into two early films. It is a farce in which a newlywed couple try to acquire, rather than procreate, a baby. It was scandalous for its approach to family but loved for the depiction of a husband who wanted to have a child and a wife who didn't.

⁷² Smythe, 'Modern Germany: A Nation of Play-goers,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 July 1909. The celebrated American actress Nance O'Neil toured Australia as Magda in 1900 and 1905—although the Australian critic Carlyle Smythe noted that O'Neil's performance 'bore no family likeness to the East Prussian Magda of Sudermann'. Like Hauptmann, he said, Sudermann was 'thoroughly provincial,' he wrote largely in dialect. This meant that while O'Neill's tour resulted in Sudermann and *Magda* [*Heimat*] being known in Australia, it was a different work because of the nuance lost in translating out of East Prussian dialect.

⁷³ Appendix 5. Two-thirds of plays identified (46/67) were comedies: farces, romantic comedies, morality plays/fables, or tragi-comedies. The remaining 21/67 were literary dramas or tragedies.

⁷⁴ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 31 October 1916.

course, were desirable themes in war and in internment. Others were farces, *Posse*, *Lustspiele* or *Schwänke*.⁷⁵

An example of the farcical humour of a German *Schwank* was the English *Charley's Aunt* by British playwright Brandon Thomas (1892, translated as *Charley's Tante*), performed in October/November 1917⁷⁶ and one of the most popular comedies performed on an English, Australian or German stage. Yet not all internees shared Herz's enthusiasm or tastes. Max Cohn, the theatre reviewer for the *Welt am Montag*, said of *Charley's Tante* that as she had 'visited us so many times in other places, her visits no longer surprise' and that her appearance at Trial Bay 'did not cause us much excitement'. He was also critical of the production, saying that while the leads tried all sorts of antics to 'make the soufflé rise' they were not well enough supported to succeed so the first evening's performance was sometimes boring.⁷⁷

Cohn's comments speak to the expectation that internees, even those from remote plantations at the extremities of the German empire, would be familiar with the modern canon. Even in internment, they had expectations of pre-war levels of production and performance quality. Importantly, this suggests the internment existence was being constructed as an extension of the colonial experience—that the camp was just another far-flung space to be colonised with culture, cleanliness and order. Such was the construction of *Heimat* across the colonial diaspora.⁷⁸

Also intriguing is that in addition to works by leading modern German dramatists—like Sudermann, Hauptmann and Thoma—Herz's repertoire included comparable works by British modernists—like Sutro, Pinero and Shaw. This was a source of some controversy where more nationalistic internees saw the performance of British or Australian culture as an affront to the German prosecution of a total war. The obsession in rejecting the cultural expressions of the enemy existed on both sides of the war. In November 1914, an action to ban German composers and compositions from London stages gained worldwide momentum, inspiring similar populist debate in Australia and

⁷⁵ *Schwänke* and *Posse* were products of eighteenth and nineteenth century German *Kömedien* and could involve storytelling and improvisation. *Lustspiele* were comedies of manners/bourgeois social comedies.

⁷⁶ *Charley's Aunt* is a farce in three acts by the Brit, Brandon Thomas. It was one of the most successful plays of its day, achieving almost 1,500 performances on the London stage alone (a record), before successful productions in Germany and Australia. It sees a ridiculous English youth, Lord Fancourt Babberley, persuaded to impersonate the aunt of his friend, Charley. The comedy arises from the arrival of the real aunt and the attempts of a fortune hunter to woo the imposter. The play concludes with three pairs of young lovers united, along with an older pair, Charley's real aunt and Jack's widowed father.

⁷⁷ Trojan, *Behind Stone and Barbed Wire*, 82. See also, *Welt am Montag*, no.4, 29 October 1917, 13.

⁷⁸ Groeneveld, 'Far Away At Home in Qingdao,' 67.

counter-action across the Central Powers. But the debate also produced resistance to militaristic ideology while serving to catalog just how much German music, art and theatre was enjoyed by British and Australian audiences. The contribution of William Archer, the British writer and theatre critic, was widely circulated:

But is a war against militarism a war against German art? ... One day this war will be over. From the true soul of Germany we were never estranged. ... And when we turn to the great classics, we find no trace of swaggering Bismarckianism. Schiller, the poet of the human ideal, would certainly have detested it; Goethe is rather to be reproached with lack of patriotism than with chauvinism. As for Heine, he abhorred the Prussian eagle and riddles it with shafts of scorn.⁷⁹

Herz adopted a similar approach, separating and elevating the art over the politics. In a letter to his wife he confessed, ‘Thank goodness we have preserved our broader view of life, as it should be. But many seem to have forgotten that commonplace.’⁸⁰ Despite his attempts, the politics of the performance occasionally failed to suit the temper of the audience, such as in the depiction of an English aristocrat in the English play, *The Second Mrs Tanqueray* (1893):

Although played well, *Tanqueray* didn’t take too well. May be that conditions of English society were too strange to many, may be the younger men, forming our majority, lost patience with the mildness of Mr Tanqueray, preferring a bolder action. Some were overheard advising a sound thrashing of with of the couple.⁸¹

An audience being provoked into action was a desired outcome of activist theatre then popular in working class and union contexts but it’s doubtful the company or audience members of bourgeois theatre at Trial Bay would have approved of similar subversion.

In August/September 1917, the company staged Sudermann’s popular and frequently performed *Heimat*. German theatre scholar William Grange attributes its success to two key elements: its witty and skilful construction; and the timeliness of its key themes.⁸² *Heimat* depicts a revolt against paternal tyranny and has an unconventional, self-assertive, ‘new woman’ in the hero’s role. In this, Sudermann’s play captured, not just through its name but its themes and structure, the appetite of the modern German audience for a deep and honest connectedness to home. Following the lead of Nora in Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*, Magda in *Heimat* presents additional possibilities for how a woman might occupy her home beyond the strictures imposed by men.⁸³ Thus, the gender core

⁷⁹ ‘Boycotting Wagner,’ *Maryborough Chronicle*, 18 November 1914.

⁸⁰ Letter from Max Herz to his wife Ethel, 21 May 1917.

⁸¹ Letter from Max Herz to his wife Ethel, 16 July 1917.

⁸² Grange, *Historical Dictionary of German Literature*, 212ff.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 212.

was rattled and masculinities from outside the hegemony, like effeminate men, occupied new space.

This is not to say the works selected were not intended to inspire conventional German pride or that there was not widespread resistance to British and Australian culture. The work most likely to appeal simultaneously to German nationalistic sentiment and bourgeois ideals of comportment was the play *Minna von Barnhelm* (1767) by Gotthold E. Lessing, one of the German language's most performed plays and a touchstone for a particular nostalgic trope of honourable military masculinity.⁸⁴ *Minna* was staged on Sunday 24 and Monday 25 June 1917 with resident *prima donna* Hermann Lehmann in the title role.

Lessing's play was usually presented as a comedy of social manners [*Lustspiel*] for its cast of familiar characters, contrivances of plot, and a happy, love-matched ending. But the balancing of other elements—like tension, pathos and melodrama, more common to more serious works—gave it additional interest.⁸⁵ Ongoing debate over Lessing's satirical intent further elevated the work. Did it condemn or condone the action of war? Conservatives tended to view the play as a nostalgic evocation of a former Prussian military grandeur while progressives saw it as a more modern positioning of the 'new woman'. The unusual step of having a woman as the eponymous central character, with financial independence and social agency, set the scene for what Ibsen did more radically for modernist theatre a century later.

However, while ostensibly placing Minna in the centre of the stage, the play is actually about von Tellheim, the male lead, and the hegemony of a preferred political, class and gender order. The play was valued and one of the German language's most performed plays for the themes of idealised Prussian masculinity espoused with its embodiment of love, valour, duty, abstemiousness, generosity, honour, loyalty and fidelity.

In this sense, Herz's selection of iconic German playwrights contributed importantly to the internees' collective *Weltanschauung* [world-view] and construction of *Heimat*—of what it meant to be 'German'—particularly by reference to the global

⁸⁴ Durrani, 'Love and Money in *Minna von Barnhelm*,' 638. See also, Grange, *Historical Dictionary of German Literature*, 46. *Minna von Barnhelm* was written in 1767 just after the global Seven Year War and at the height of Prussian chivalric militarism. An officer, von Tellheim, has been impoverished by the war and is, by chance, reunited with his great love, Minna von Barnhelm. His honour prevents him from marrying her while his prospects are low. His flaws are his generous nature and unshakeable honour. Meanwhile, Minna is wealthy and engineers a solution with the aid of her shrewd and loyal servant Franziska. In the final scene, wealth and class prevail; loyalty, honour and love within one's class are rewarded.

⁸⁵ Durrani, 'Love and Money in *Minna von Barnhelm*,' 638.

community, witnessing a fragmenting colonial diaspora during World War I. In *Minna von Barnhelm*, the ‘completely German’ values were duty, honour, and community, overseen by the father figure of Frederick the Great, whose munificence in the play was a direct allusion to the Kaiser himself and anchors the disparate constructions of colonial *Heimat*.⁸⁶



Image 4.12: Walter Hagemann as Tellheim, Kurt Holzheuer as Franziska and Hermann Lehmann as Minna von Barnhelm. Max Herz teaches ‘dainty female behaviour’ in the midst of an elaborate set.

Choices of exclusion

Once a week we have the theatre, but good heavens, why are they staging Schnitzler’s ‘*Liebelei*’ and ‘*Anatol*’? What’s next? Ibsen’s ‘*Nora*’? If it weren’t so asinine, one could laugh it off, but they don’t appreciate it if you laugh.⁸⁷

Wortmann’s reaction to the staging of ‘A Doll’s House’ (1879; translated as ‘*Nora*’, 1885) suggests he thought the mood of the camp and the talent of the company—and the limitations of credibility in seeing one’s comrades playing female roles—might have been better suited to comedy. Perhaps he was not wrong. But despite his doubts, twenty-one of the sixty-seven plays performed were dramatic works—drama, tragedy and *Schauspiel*⁸⁸—, something Max Herz clearly believed fitted the theatre’s aims.

⁸⁶ Koehne, ‘A Cultural Battlefield in the Total War: Theatre in Australian Internment Camps,’ 273. Citing Drude, Koehne says the characteristics of these ‘real’ Germans were that they were self-reliant, ‘honourable, true and pure’.

⁸⁷ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 24 November 1916.

⁸⁸ *Schauspiel* is a particularly German designation from the late 1700s for a work with characteristics of both tragedy and comedy. Typically, it’s a serious play with a happy ending in which the hero does not die.

That *Nora* was not among the twenty-one is surprising, given the ambitious repertoire chosen by Herz and the constant quest for new material. The play was famous, literary, popular, topical and available as a translated German script, all circumstances that might have guaranteed its selection. Herz selected many other comparable European dramas from the modern canon, including others by Ibsen and Sudermann's *Heimat*, often assessed as Norwegian *Nora*'s German twin. In April 1917, the company staged *Ein Volksfeind* [*An Enemy of the People* (1882)] and in August, *Die Stuetzen der Gesellschaft* [*The Pillars of Society* (1877)]. The camp's sibling German Theatre in Liverpool staged a production of *Nora* in 1916,⁸⁹ suggesting both their competence in mounting a production and a willingness to engage with the controversial 'new woman' at its core.⁹⁰

Modern drama is said to have begun with the premiere of *A Doll's House* in Copenhagen in 1879 when its strong and independent lead character Nora Helmer confronts her husband and famously walks away from her marriage, home, husband and children.⁹¹ Controversy over the final scene thrust the question of a woman's 'most sacred duties' into the centre of modern discourse, focussing attention on the plight and advancements of contemporary bourgeois feminism:

HELMER: But this is disgraceful. Is this the way you neglect your most sacred duties?
NORA: What do you consider is my most sacred duty?
HELMER: Do I have to tell you that? Isn't it your duty to your husband and children?
NORA: I have another duty, just as sacred.
HELMER: You can't have. What duty do you mean?
NORA: My duty to myself.⁹²

The same forces of modernity affecting attitudes toward women, children and family in the nineteenth century resulted in a more explicit distinction between male and female societal roles and the moral and sexual standards being applied to the sexes. The role of the wife and mother as educator and moral protector of the home for its

⁸⁹ Trojan, *Behind Stone and Barbed Wire*, 176.

⁹⁰ 'Nora,' Concert and theatre program collection, AWM PUBS002/007/002/002, Item 004. The internee population of Holdsworth did include a number of wealthy and/or educated men however its primary demographic was working class. It was also the site where impoverished German men volunteered to serve their internment. While there is no information on who comprised the audience of the *Deutsches Theater* Liverpool, it is unlikely to have included the impoverished set. The director of the Liverpool theatre was Ludwig Schroder who also edited the camp newspaper, *Kamp-Spiegel*. There is no evidence in Herz's letters that such collaborations or even interest in the theatrical offerings of other camps took place.

⁹¹ Fotheringham and Beith, 'Janet Achurch' in: Parsons and Chance, 15–16.

⁹² *A Doll's House*, Act 3, Lines 310–314.

vulnerable children required women to adopt the qualities of purity, gentility and sexual innocence.⁹³

Ibsenism raged in Europe and around the world⁹⁴ as the message inferred from literature's most famous closing door—that there might have been a choice for women in their liberation from oppression—took hold.⁹⁵ So controversial was *A Doll's House* that it was not performed in English until 1889 and, when translated into German as *Nora*, had the ending rewritten so the inference was reversed: Nora was assumed to acquiesce to her husband's expectations and stay in her marriage to mother her children. Literary conventions did not prevent the German rewrite, even though Ibsen made it clear he thought the changes a 'barbaric violence' against the core of the play and noted, 'I cannot possibly ... authorise any change whatever in the ending of the drama. I may almost say that it was for the sake of the last scene the whole play was written.'⁹⁶ A production of the German version opened in Flensburg, on the Danish border, in February 1880 and travelled soon thereafter to the bigger theatres of Hamburg, Dresden, Hanover and Berlin although, in the wake of protests and a lack of success, the original ending was restored. Another production of the original version, some rehearsals of which Ibsen attended, opened on 3 March 1880 in Munich. The English translator, William Archer, whose defence of German culture was noted earlier in this chapter, commented that 'If we may measure fame by mileage of newspaper comment, Henrik Ibsen had for the past month been the most famous man in the English literary world.'⁹⁷

Whereas the themes of honour and corruption of great men central to Ibsen's earlier works were palatable for the Trial Bay audience, the theme of a woman's sacred duty to her husband, home and children was apparently not one with which Herz wanted to engage. In the internment context, where so many of the internees were themselves married men separated from wives and children, it is entirely probable that a play which seemed to justify a married woman abandoning her maternal and sexual obligations to her husband to search for her own self-fulfilment might have disturbed the bourgeois sensibility.

⁹³ These issues have been discussed more fully in Chapter 2: Home.

⁹⁴ Osenton, 'Differently Equal: Ibsen's Nora, the New Woman...', 226. The way in which *A Doll's House* was received in Japan contributed to the redefinition of gender roles with resounding cultural effects.

⁹⁵ Campbell, '*A Doll's House*: The Colonial Response,' 192.

⁹⁶ Letter from Henrik Ibsen to Moritz Prozor, 23 January 1891. Rather than having anyone else rewrite the final scene, Ibsen chose to write the alternative ending himself, but was clear he preferred it not to be used.

⁹⁷ Archer, 'Ibsen and English Criticism,' 32.

There is little doubt Herz's own sense of family and fatherhood were rocked by his internment. Ethel had given birth to their daughter Helen less than three months before his arrest on 19 May 1915. Initially detained at Victoria Barracks, close to their home in Sydney's eastern suburbs, he was near enough to see his daughter and wife. However, largely as a result of campaigns by former professional colleagues, he was transferred to Liverpool in July 1915 and then to Trial Bay in January 1916. Herz and his wife's correspondence reveals a loving relationship but which was built on conventional expectations of class and gender:⁹⁸

Now I want to thank you and scold you and find the situation embarrassing. Did I not ask you not to send me cakes and tins etc? And yet? Do you wish to bring it gently to me that I am no longer boss of the 'Erz Show?⁹⁹

Yes, the tone is playful—and consistently so across the five long years of his internment.¹⁰⁰ His letters frequently include instructions to Ethel on managing their domestic and financial affairs, such as collecting outstanding fees from non-paying patients. Ethel's success in raising their infant daughter, essentially as a single parent while dealing with the stigma of having an interned German husband, is evident—yet her thoughts are unknown.¹⁰¹ His despondency at his situation rarely appears, suggesting the high value he placed on personal self-control and the responsibility he felt for being a bastion of optimism for his family through the internment experience.¹⁰² Rarely does he finish a letter without a sentimental reference to how much he misses his daughter:

Now to more delightful subjects: what an excellent photo. Hasn't she grown?! All her baby-doll face gone, replaced by a real face with character. I'm absolutely proud of her,

⁹⁸ Clark, *Dr Max Herz*, part 5: Trial Bay. Herz was an outspoken member of the NSW chapter of the British Medical Association in Macquarie Street, Sydney. As its name suggested, it represented the interests of a majority British membership and took it upon itself to exorcise itself of German interests.

⁹⁹ Letter from Max Herz to his wife Ethel, 9 April 1917.

¹⁰⁰ Clark, *Dr Max Herz*, part 5: Trial Bay. First detained in May 1915, Herz was released from detention on 9 April 1920 (four years and 11 months after his arrest, and one year and 5 months after Armistice).

¹⁰¹ Only a few of Ethel's letters survived Herz's internment but were not from the Trial Bay period.

¹⁰² This sentiment stands in contrast to his later-in-life comment to Roy Hill where he said, 'You know, I spent the happiest years of my life in that gaol': Oral history of Roy Hill, in: Carey, *Tales of Trial Bay*, 178.

carry the snapshot about with me and indulge in baby worship several times a day. Good to have this little sunshine in these days with their real and metaphoric clouds.¹⁰³



Image 4.13: Doll's house furniture carved by internees in Trial Bay Gaol Museum collection. [Source: Author, 2019]

A second surprising absence are the works of Oscar Wilde. Wilde's society comedies like *Lady Windemere's Fan* (1892), *A Woman of No Importance* (1893), *An Ideal Husband* (1895) and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) had been very popular on German and Australian stages and also aligned with Herz's preference for literary social comedy. *Salome* (1891),¹⁰⁴ Wilde's very different breakthrough play, banned from public performance in England until 1931, had other appeals for Herz. It had been famously produced by his idol Max Reinhardt in Germany during the 1903–1904 season. In addition to there being a German translation available, it was well known that attendance at a private performance in 1903 by the musician and German nationalistic hero Richard

¹⁰³ Letter from Max Herz to his wife Ethel, 24 September 1917. An ironic moment, given the absence of *A Doll's House* from the Trial Bay repertoire, is the gifts presented to him for Helen: a handmade doll's house complete with hand-carved doll's house furniture, all fashioned on the latest German designs.

'Eth, by this Saturday's *Yulgilbar* I am sending Helen another parcel, to be called for at the wharf. Two gentlemen of our theatre staff made it and gave me an absolute surprise – a doll's room – it's just beautifully made! Furniture [is designed from the Dresden catalogue]. You'll like it as much as she.'¹⁰³

¹⁰⁴ Wilde's one act play, written in French in 1891 and translated into English in 1894, tells the biblical story of Herod's daughter Salome's performance of the Dance of the Seven Veils in exchange for the head of John the Baptist. It had a private performance in London in 1895.

Wagner directly inspired his similarly controversial opera *Salome*, the libretto for which was based directly on the Wilde original.¹⁰⁵

Alon Rachamimov notes the high caliber of internment theatre across the forty-six German language prisoner-of-war camps in Russia, of which twenty, like Trial Bay, had dedicated buildings for performance. The Achinsk officer-camp's production of *Salome* starred 'Siberia's most famous female impersonator, Emmerich Laschitz' in the title role. Like *Nora*, *Salome* placed the 'new woman' on centre stage but also gave her an overt and dangerous sexuality. Paradoxically, and sustained by her own father's lustful stare, Salome became the object of the audience's similarly sexual gaze which served to remind men of the emasculating potential of unleashed female sexuality. This fed into the pre-war crisis of white male masculinity characterised by the assertion of the hegemonic masculine form, resistance to women's emancipation, suppression of effeminacy and homosexuality and, according to W. Eugene Davis, the demonisation of the erotic.¹⁰⁶

While the fanning of fears of emasculation may have accounted for Herz's decision against staging *Salome*, it does not account for his resistance to Wilde's other social comedies.

Performance and reception of any of the works of Oscar Wilde could not have occurred without awareness of his 1895 trials, incarceration and subsequent death in exile in 1900. In London, Wilde's plays had been withdrawn from the stage and, when gradually reintroduced, had had his name removed to 'dissociat[e] the plays... from their author's irredeemable behaviour'.¹⁰⁷ In Australia, Wilde's plays—already popular with audiences of the Brough-Boucicault set—had benefitted from the notoriety of the trial. The events were reported in most papers daily to satisfy a wide, salacious appetite.¹⁰⁸

Meanwhile, in Europe and Australia, reception of Wilde's plays took on a different hue. First, the presence and work of Magnus Hirschfeld's Scientific-Humanitarian Committee, established in Berlin in 1897,¹⁰⁹ had made issues of 'third sex' criminality and legitimacy more visible. And second, Germany's own homosexuality

¹⁰⁵ Davis, 'Oscar Wilde, *Salome*, and the German Press, 1903–1905,' 150, 152. Initially, *Salome* had also been banned in Berlin under a Prussian law banning the depiction of biblical characters. As in London, the first performances were also private until the ban was lifted on 29 September 1903. Then began *Salome*'s successful 111-performance run in Germany and Austria.

¹⁰⁶ Davis, 'Oscar Wilde,' 149. See also, Rachamimov, 'The Disruptive Comforts of Drag,' 370.

¹⁰⁷ Kaplan and Stowell, cited in Fotheringham, 'Exiled to the Colonies: Oscar Wilde in Australia,' 55.

¹⁰⁸ Fotheringham, 'Exiled to the Colonies,' 61. A survey of reviews of all four Wilde plays appearing in reputable publications in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane concluded that critics received both Oscar Wilde and his plays more favourably during and after the trials than they had before.

¹⁰⁹ Coincidentally, Hirschfeld's committee was established days before Oscar Wilde's release from prison. At the time of the Eulenburg trials, it had 500 members in twenty-five cities across Germany and Austria.

scandal, the Eulenburg trials of 1906–1908, where newspaper publisher Max Harden alleged homosexual activity of members of the Kaiser’s inner circle, propelled the science of sexology, knowledge of sexuality and debate on homosexuality across the German-speaking world.¹¹⁰ Unlike the Wilde trials a decade earlier, the Eulenburg scandal unfurled within a context of diminishing influence of religion and the literary popularisation of science. But, like the allegations of the Marquess of Queensbury against Wilde, Harden’s calls against Eulenburg and Moltke stemmed initially from objections to effeminacy, rather than from any explicit knowledge of homosexuality. For both, assumptions of acceptable masculinity had been transgressed.

Without hard evidence, it is impossible to know decisively why *Nora* and the works of Wilde were excluded from performance at Trial Bay. But it is probable Herz had concerns about the psychological welfare of the men for whom he also had daytime care, that is, as the camp’s medical officer. His report to the official visitor of German concentration camps, Mr Justice Harvey, on 3 April 1917 included a euphemistic comment on his concern for ‘the ugly side of the sexual question’ saying ‘self abuse and perversion have made a real appearance’.¹¹¹ It’s likely Herz’s unwillingness to introduce a body of work to the repertoire so fundamentally linked with homosexuality and moral uncertainty stemmed from his own moral discomfit and fear that Wilde’s plays would add to the moral and homosexual ‘crises’ already occurring in the camp.

¹¹⁰ Between 1906–1908, publisher Max Harden made a series of highly public allegations against members of the Kaiser’s inner circle, resulting in the suit of his closest confidant, Prince Philipp von Eulenburg.

¹¹¹ Report by Dr Max Herz to the official visitor, 3 April 1917, 1–2.

4.4 Reception of plays

Our performance of Ibsen went exceedingly, especially the second night. The public meeting was very lifelike with its roars, shouts, yells and the end when all slam up on anything they can get hold of and shout [out], 'People's enemy!' I'm sure Max Reinhardt could not have done it better.

—Max Herz, 23 April 1917

Saw Ibsen's 'An Enemy of the People' last night at the theatre. Nothing against Ibsen, but the acting was awful! 'The strongest man is he who stands alone' sounds just corny when spoken by Luhring!

—Otto Wortmann, 20 April 1917

The difference between Max Herz's and Otto Wortmann's thoughts on Ibsen's drama need not be too surprising. Herz talks up the performance of the play he directed, remaining positive and engaged in his communication with his wife while invoking his theatrical inspiration;¹¹² Wortmann's disappointment might be read in the context of an increasing testiness and disengagement appearing in his diary. But the pairing of these quotes is also a reminder of a critical component of modern theatre analysis: reception.

The theatre of naturalism, championed by Reinhardt and pursued by Herz, amplified expectations of the audience to participate publicly in characters' private worlds. New types of characters and theatrical tropes invited audiences to reconsider what the broader world was like and to empathise with other obstacles and challenges—especially those of women. Spectatorship theorists like Caroline Heim write about the power of live theatre to challenge and change pre-held perceptions and perspectives. Naturalist theatre in particular is an active experience: in choosing to go into the theatre, audiences choose to engage in the world-broadening and empathy-building process.¹¹³ Internee Trojan wrote of the transformational but very public power of theatre at Trial Bay:

And how, within these four bare walls, it changed us—both the mood of the whole camp and the condition of each of us within it. How many times did an evening in the old

¹¹² Max Reinhardt was the creative director of the world famous *Deutsches Theater* in Berlin. He and Herz had much in common. They were almost the same age (born in the mid-1870s), both German Jews and both artistic directors of *Deutsches Theater* companies. Herz's programming choices were inspired by Reinhardt's work in Berlin.

¹¹³ Heim, *Audience as Performer*, 20. See also, Sedgman, *The Reasonable Audience*, Ch.2. The construct that enables change has as much to do with these affective elements of reception as the text being presented. The action of coming together as an audience also produces a relationship with the space of the theatre, conditioned by other factors relevant to when the performance occurs. At Trial Bay, for instance, the time of day and time of year would affect whether the theatre was dark or light and hot or cold. Other factors like whether rain on the tin roof affected the ability to hear changed the audience experience.

wooden box with the beautiful stage scare dark thoughts away, when they threatened to push us to the ground.¹¹⁴

Trojan's memories evoke a particularly modern response to performance. The comfort brought by presence in the theatre speaks to the affective potential long recognised in the German culture of theatre-going.¹¹⁵ However, it is his use of the word 'us' that is most interesting: he sees the theatre-going experience as inherently communal; it is a shared as much as an individual experience, but wholly grounded with the 'four walls' of the physical space. Appropriately, Trojan's poetic language echoes Ibsen's thoughts on modern drama:

Every reader re-molds the work beautifully and neatly, each according to his own personality. Not only those who write but also those who read are poets. They are collaborators. They are often more poetical than the poet himself.¹¹⁶

While a Trial Bay audience was anything but homogenous, the theatre was a site where men of diverse and different origins literally and emotionally came together. This amplified the sense of a shared connection to one another as well as what was claimed as a single German culture across the broader German community.¹¹⁷ Performances were important political moments and a contribution able to be made by internees to the German total war, a way of preserving the ideation of a German Fatherland through the maintenance of cultural identity and staving off the emasculatory stasis of internment. The physical experience of the theatre catered to this as well:

The background is beautifully painted with the river, town and castle. When evening came, all the little windows of the houses and castle illuminated, which looked really pretty. A good many people, grey beards among them, took your way of enjoying things—with water in their eyes! I dare say not so much on account of the sentimentality of the piece as the homesickness it produced.¹¹⁸

Trojan's 'wooden box' diary entry is a rare gift in assisting understanding of the Trial Bay audience's affective connections to the works on stage. But it can be assumed that the mere act of going to the theatre, by virtue of it being a choice internees were able to make, was something a majority enjoyed. In this, the audience was also performing a part.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ Trojan, *Behind Stone and Barbed Wire*, 78.

¹¹⁵ For example, see: Blau, *The Audience*. Here, avant-garde theatre practitioner Herbert Blau examines the phenomenological relationship between an audience and a performance ie beyond the content, the particular context in which the seeing/listening is done. For other

¹¹⁶ Speech by Henrik Ibsen, Festival of the Norwegian Women's Rights League, 26 May 1898.

¹¹⁷ This patriotic sense of a shared German culture is *Volksgemeinschaft*.

¹¹⁸ Letter from Max Herz to his wife Ethel, 28 May 1917.

¹¹⁹ Heim, *Audience as Performer*, 20ff.

Expressing desire: Construction of woman in internment

With a little bit of talent for acting and some exquisite facial expressions, each man transformed himself into a lovely young maiden.¹²⁰

One of the important by-products of the theatre was the ability to see ‘women’ on the stage—albeit invented characters shaped by circumstance. For many, the mere reminder of what a woman looked like—how she moved, how she spoke, how she gestured—was an important normalising factor, an anchor point in the relentlessness of internment that linked to both a previous life and a possible future. Internee Wortmann wrote of his growing inability to remember simple details of a pre-war life:

When you think of home, you no longer have a vivid picture of the loved ones, the cities, the tramways, the women, etc. Schuh [?] recently wrote that he was getting married and I sent him my best wishes but also said that I could hardly summon the image of a sweet little woman anymore, try as I might.¹²¹

He continues by saying the idea of girls and women is no more real to him than an angel is to a Christian, ‘something very, very beautiful, but you can never be sure if they really exist’. This sentiment is expressed by other diarists and typifies the psychological impact of social deprivation compounded by long-term internment. Time and memory fused together and an element of reality—and thus, of identity—was lost. The inevitable return to family and society itself became something to fear, with loved ones—wives, girlfriends, mothers, daughters and sisters—reconstructed as impossible versions of themselves. While details of Wortmann’s postwar life are unknown, deportation records indicate he was shipped to Indonesia for a presumed return to New Guinea, rather than returning to Germany with the majority of his compatriots. His diary also suggests an increasing estrangement from his pre-war girlfriend in Germany, Rosa:¹²²

Only Rosa is unhappy, she is angry that I don't want to get married. Picture me as a husband! It would be a farce, so grotesque and ridiculous as to perish the thought!¹²³

Gerhard Fischer notes too the importance of seeing ‘women’ to ‘sublimate sexual tensions, of giving vent to feelings the internees had long been deprived of, by emphatically witnessing and sharing the emotional experiences presented on stage’.¹²⁴ As

¹²⁰ Trojan, *Behind Stone and Barbed Wire*, 87.

¹²¹ *Diary of Otto Wortmann*, 13 March 1918.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 30 September 1916. Wortmann hints Rosa had been pregnant with his child but does not indicate whether his presence in German New Guinea and Rosa’s pregnancy were connected.

¹²³ *Diary of Otto Wortmann*, 23 September 1918.

¹²⁴ Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 259.

the internment years rolled on, the need became even more acute. The internee Kersten wrote:

Our lady actors in particular have reached such a degree of artistry in costuming, make-up and performing that quite a few spectators are frequently entertaining naughty thoughts!! It is even rumoured that our first leading lady is supposed to have received anonymous love letters and other tributes of devotion.¹²⁵

The channelling of emotional need and heterosexual desire to female-impersonating compatriots was not unique to the men of Trial Bay. Love letters were written to the stage divas of Holdsworthy and, according to Rachamimov, the ideation of womanhood in officer camps in Russia was prolific. There, the young German officers who performed the roles of women onstage, often assumed feminine identities offstage too.¹²⁶

As introduced earlier, the most successful *prima donna* at Trial Bay was the leading lady ‘Kathi’ or Hermann Lehmann, a clerk employed at the Arnhold, Karberg trading company headquarters in Shanghai, who arrived to Trial Bay with the Hong Kong contingent in February 1916.¹²⁷ While, again, not much is known about Lehmann before or after the war, at Trial Bay he developed a reputation for conveying ‘how these dainty creatures walk, speak, behave’, according to Max Herz’s apprehension of women and femininity. Lehmann’s role as Kathi in the Meyer-Forester play *Alt Heidelberg*, performed 27–28 May 1917, is the performance where his characterisation took hold. Others quickly followed:

Ah yes, the one and only ‘Kathi’, the star of our stage, never fails to shine in every role she’s in! As Kathi in *Alt Heidelberg*, as *Minna von Barnhelm*, as *Pauline*, as Baroness Windeck in *Die selige Exzellenz*, as the school teacher in *Flachsmann als Erzieher* and as a striking figure of Shaw [Vivie in *Mrs Warren’s Profession*]...¹²⁸

Internee Wortmann, usually unimpressed with the theatre and sceptical of the blurring of masculine and feminine boundaries, also expressed delight:

The latest play *Kümmelblättchen* was quite nice and the *prima donna* Lehmann ravishing!¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Kersten papers: cited in Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 259.

¹²⁶ Rachamimov, ‘The Disruptive Comforts of Drag,’ 363.

¹²⁷ Address book of former Trial Bay internees, MLMSS 261, Box 7, Item 61. See also, Smith, ‘The German Community in Hong Kong,’ 26–30.

¹²⁸ Trojan, *Behind Stone and Barbed Wire*, 80.

¹²⁹ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 25 April 1918.



Image 4.14: The Trial Bay *prima donna*, Hermann Lehmann: as Raina in *Helden* [*Arms and the Man*] (centre), and (poss.) as Kathi from *Alt Heidelberg* [*Old Heidelberg*] (right).
[Source: National Archives of Australia and Dubotzki collection]



Image 4.15: Other ‘women’: Kurt Holzheuer (5014), Karl Karrer (4929), Rudolf Surmann (5205), Hans Grimme (1206). [Source: National Archives of Australia]¹³⁰



Image 4.16: Carl Drews (4930), Alfred Prutz (5032), Gustav Vierich (5170), Bruno Steinhorst (5142).
[Source: National Archives of Australia]¹³¹

¹³⁰ The number in parenthesis is not an indication of the total number of female roles played but of those roles played in the 30 shows for which cast lists are available in the Mitchell Library. Lehmann (14); Holzheuer (12); Karrer (11); Surmann (11); Grimme (2); Drews (10); Prutz (8); Vierich (7); Steinhorst (5). In addition to the nine internees shown here, Heintzel (2), Fischer (2), Kolloch (1) and Reinecke (1) played occasional roles.

¹³¹ Steinhorst, also the editor of the *Welt am Montag*, played the title role in *Mrs Warren’s Profession*. Lehmann played her daughter, Vivie.

Photographs of Lehmann dressed as his female characters transcend what would have served the need for documentary or theatrical promotion. Kathi's many languid poses in middle class, domestic surrounds were available for internees to purchase as postcards or framed souvenirs.¹³² These suggest a version of womanhood imagined and preferred by internees and realised by Lehmann: Kathi is white, middle class, domestic and demure. Physically, she is young, slim and pretty. She smiles serenely. Coincidentally, George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, written in 1912, premiered in German language theatre in Vienna in 1913. Although not performed at Trial Bay either, the connection between the construction of Kathi and her comrade-sisters and Eliza Doolittle is acute. It was within a man's power to construct and bring a desired woman to life in the theatre.

Lehmann and Max Herz must have collaborated in the creation of Kathi. Herz was complicit at least in so far as selecting the plays, casting and directing and instructing Lehmann's onstage performances. The dainty Kathi wears Herz's own wife's dresses and accessories in any number of productions;¹³³ sits at a replica of her boudoir dressing table in *Minna von Barnhelm*;¹³⁴ and admires a photograph of baby Helen Herz onstage in *The Concert*.¹³⁵ Even where Kathi reclines on a *chaise longue* and peers at the camera, there is no indication her gaze intends anything other than a nostalgic memory of bourgeois womanhood. It is as though she is posing for a painting rather than a photograph. There is something in the close-lipped pose, the angle of her head and the lay of her hand which is Mona Lisa-like in its femininity. The dutiful, loving, beautiful wife happily and comfortably reigning in a solid, domestic space is easily imagined as Herz's ideation.

Other internees also became familiar sights on stage playing female roles with varying degrees of success. See Images 4.15 and 4.16 above. Hans Grimme had been successfully playing female roles on the stage at Holdsworthy when he arrived at Trial Bay at the end of 1917. By 1918, Grimme-Nanni had become the 'new *prima donna*'.¹³⁶ Internee Wortmann was generally underwhelmed and wrote: 'In the evening, I went to the theatre with Stegmann... Granted, the good men try hard, but still, those girls, those girls!'¹³⁷ In his memoir, Martin Trojan also remembered the company's female impersonators fondly, saying, 'Holzheuer, [Fischer], Kathi Lehmann and Grimme, with their masculine-feminine charms, are the four leaves of our magical four-leaf clover.'

¹³² See Images 4.14 and 4.17.

¹³³ For example, Letter from Max Herz to his wife Ethel, 2 July 1917.

¹³⁴ Letter from Max Herz to his wife Ethel, 29 March 1917. Also see Image 4.7.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 19 October 1916.

¹³⁶ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 2 January 1918.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 14 October 1916.

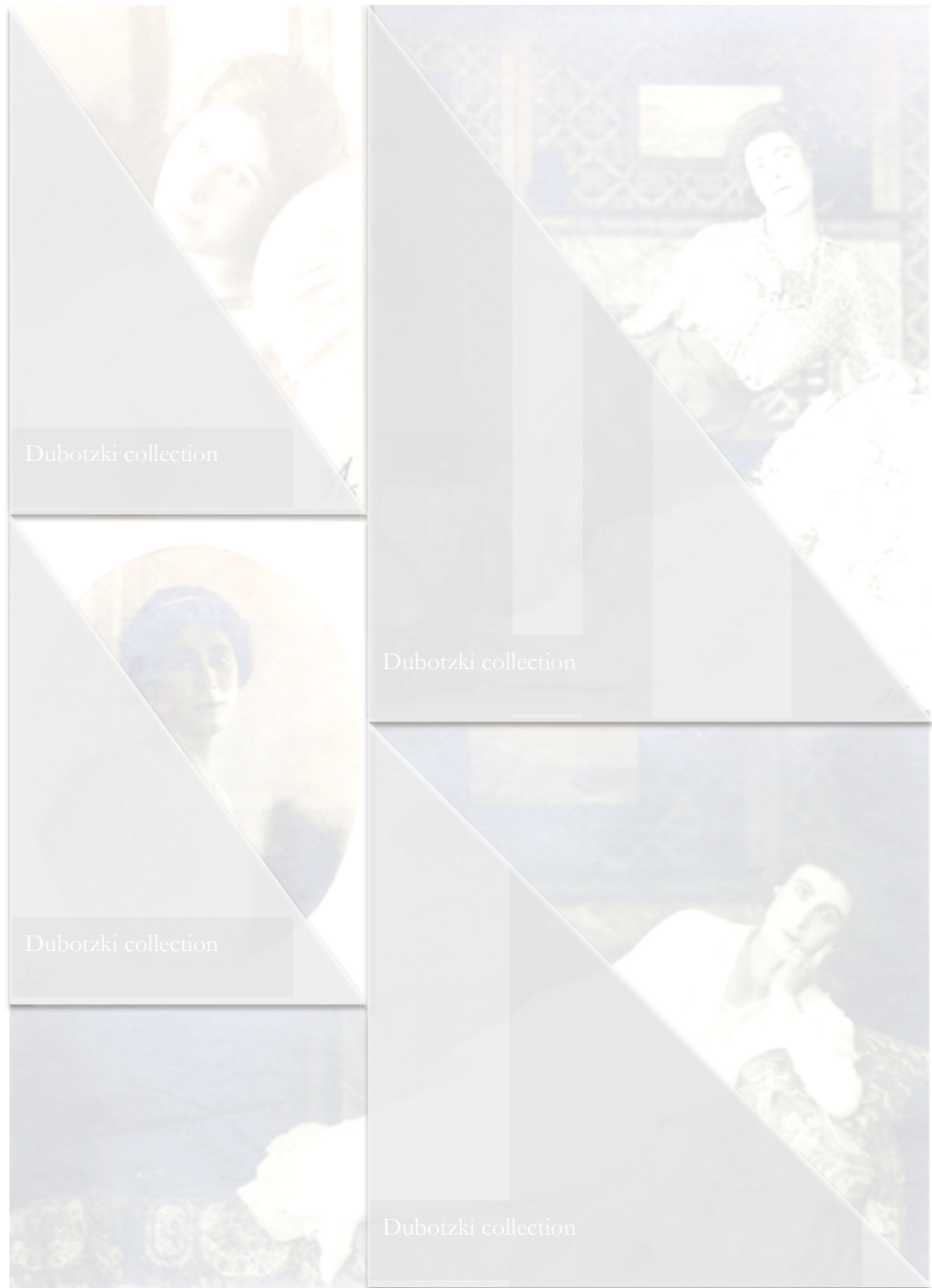


Image 4.17: Hermann 'Kathi' Lehmann.

The play-programs produced and distributed to play-goers also conveyed more than information on performance proceedings. Where women were illustrated, there was usually a subtextual element of masculine gaze, but also a desire to conjure a different type of woman.

The imagery in the program at Image 4.18 by the glass-painter from Ceylon Bartholomäus Bauer is unapologetically Romantic in its evocation of the rural German idyll where Schubert's *Miller's Daughter* song cycle is grounded.¹³⁸ This was to support the concert on the opening night of the Trial Bay theatre on 12 August 1916 for which the singing of amateur tenor Hermann Plücker was accompanied by Dr Walter Pupke. Nature, flowers, brook, mill and thatched cottages abound.¹³⁹ The effect is effortlessly 'German' and appeals to a sense of shared culture among the internees [*Volksgemeinschaft*]. However, it is the portrayal of the human figures—the journeyman and the miller's daughter—to which the eye is drawn: he is depicted emerging from the forest, actively seeking her out; she is the passive object of his manly gaze. Tendrils cross over both their groins with an open flower at hers. With her eyes closed and hands behind her head, the image conveys a sexual vulnerability reminiscent of Renaissance and early modern paintings.¹⁴⁰ Again, there is male ideation at the core of the depiction: the subtext is one of masculine sexual power and feminine submission.

The cover of a second variety-evening program at Image 4.19, completed by Kurt Wiese for a *Bunter Abend* [variety night] two weeks later in August 1916, conveys an even more sexualised ideation.¹⁴¹ It is unclear whether the illustrated woman is supposed to represent one of the variety night's characters or performers. The evening presented skits such as that performed by Fischer and shown in Image 4.20:

¹³⁸ There are twenty songs in Schubert's *Miller's Daughter* song cycle, which take the audience from cheerful optimism to despair and tragedy. The story follows a young miller as he wanders through the countryside. He comes upon a brook, which he follows to a mill, where he falls in love with the miller's beautiful daughter. But she is in love with a hunter. The wandering miller foresees his own drowning death in which flowers sprout from his grave to express his undying love.

¹³⁹ The *Naturmensch* trope will be discussed in Chapter 6.

¹⁴⁰ For example: Fuseli, *The Nightmare*, 1781, Detroit School of Arts.

¹⁴¹ Helmi and Fischer, *The Enemy at Home*, 184. Kurt Wiese's career after the internment experience is one of the better known and celebrated of all internees. Wiese was generous with his illustrations, giving them as gifts e.g. Ernst Dannemann's 28th birthday cartoon at Hunghom in Hong Kong, and publishing regular caricatures/woodcuts in the *Welt am Montag* e.g. the '*Galerie berühmter Maenner*' [gallery of famous men], prizes for the Trial Bay tennis competition. His craft developed after post-war deportation, where he pursued a long career as an illustrator/cartoonist, initially in Brazil but then in the USA where he illustrated over 400 children's books.

The best performance to date came from a Mr Fischer who staged a Japanese geisha skit. Scenery, costumes, etc. were so brilliantly done that they even won the admiration of those very familiar with Japan.¹⁴²

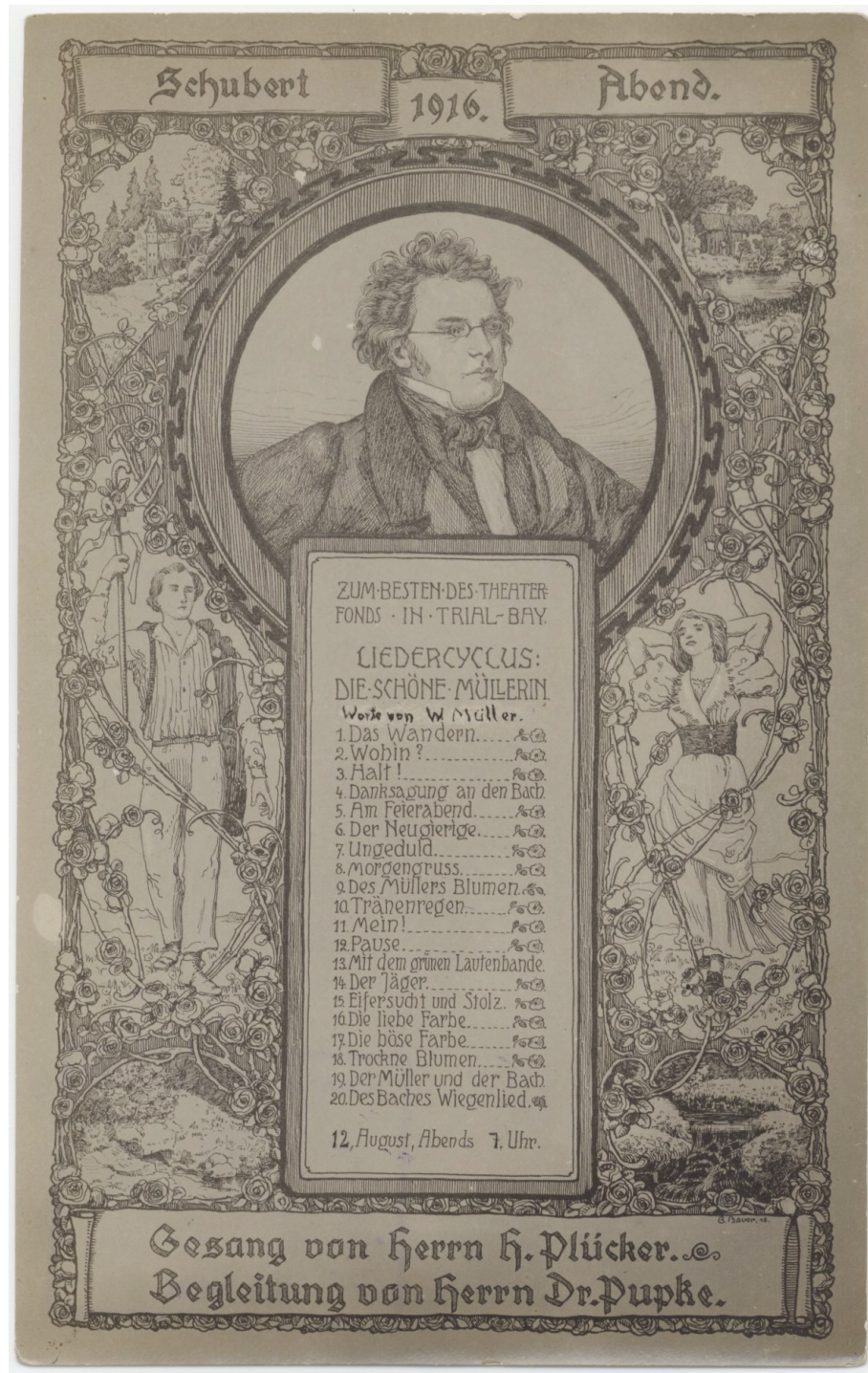


Image 4.18: Program cover for the inaugural musical evening. [Source: Australian War Memorial]

¹⁴² Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 31 October 1916.



Image 4.19: Program cover for a variety night in the theatre. [Source: Australian War Memorial]

The woman on Wiese's cover is young and attractive. She wears a modern (short) haircut and lacy underclothes and a dancer's shoes that could only be interpreted as very feminine. The theatre had an extensive wardrobe of women's underwear in addition to its gowns and frocks.¹⁴³ The woman in Wiese's illustration does not give the impression of being a chorus girl but middle class and white. There is a suggestion of purity in her clean, white clothes and innocence despite her improbable presence in the gaol compound. She is clearly the object of the sexual gaze of the imprisoned internees; the expressions on the faces of the men at the cell windows appear lascivious and lustful. The inference is sexual and connotes availability. The subtext of the image plays to the nineteenth century

¹⁴³ See also, Lehmann and Holzheuer in Image 4.1.

association of sexual availability to be found at the theatre while the text delivers a promise that the Trial Bay theatre is the place where such fantasies of beautiful and sexually available women will be fulfilled.

The covers also represent two extremes of diversion to be found at Trial Bay. First, the selection of the *Miller's Daughter* song cycle for the opening night reveals the skew to a Romantic/Classical high culture seen in the orchestra's programming of the co-weekly *Musikabende* [musical evenings]. And second, the *Bunter Abend* program nods to the opposite theatrical tradition of music hall and vaudeville, understood as low culture but also as legitimate. The artistic styles of the covers speak to associated design opposites.

All of the covers are, unsurprisingly, playful attempts by the artists to engage their audiences and add to the appeal of the event being staged. However, the women depicted, even when characters from the narratives being presented, served the same purpose as the purchased postcards of female-impersonating comrades: they were enlistees in the internees' quest to both remember and anticipate future worlds. The ideation of women and the affirming of heterosexual and bourgeois masculine identity was a major outcome of mens' engagement with the theatre.

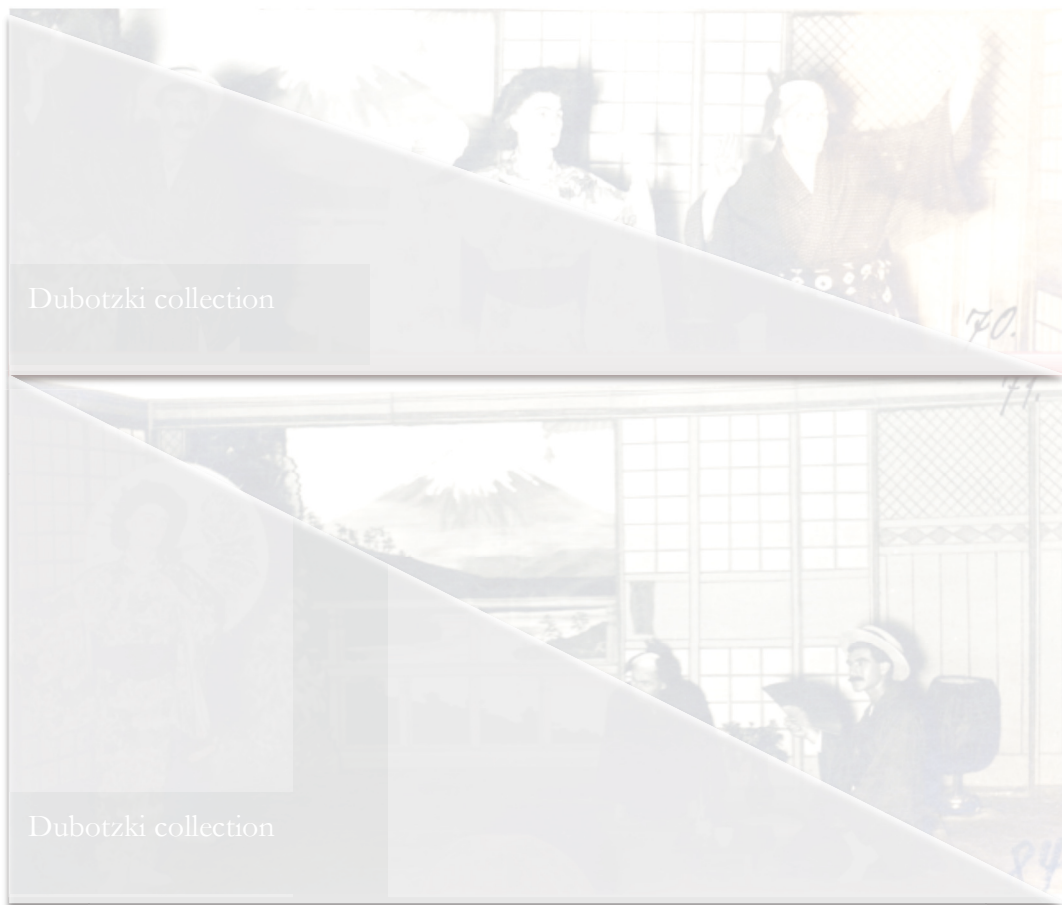


Image 4.20: (Probably) the Geisha skit performed by Fischer.

4.5 Conclusion: On this phantom stage

As the years rolled by, men who played female roles on the theatre stage acquired feminine mannerisms, both in speech and in movement. . . . The effeminacy of these hard working men excited much comment at first, but was gradually accepted as an inevitable development of their peculiar activity, and the players were regarded with gratitude for their most significant part in keeping the morale of the compound high.

— Anthony Splivalo, *The Home Fires*,¹⁴⁴

While not his intention in saying so, Splivalo here identifies three important conditions of masculinities of internment. First, he provides a reminder of the unequivocally performative nature of gender. An overt performance achieved by a man dressed as a woman onstage was no more substantial in its performance than that of a man in the audience who dressed and acted to effect a different gender note. It is the disruption not the performance that is significant. Second, it was transactional. Men learned how to modify their speech and movement to construct their gender presentation and chose to effect different presentations. Different modes, more or less conventionally masculine, could be presented as an individual chose. Thus, gender is learned and not innate. Third, the reception of the performance changed over time. Men in the audience, by Splivalo's account, also learned to expect, and respect, a problematic mode on the masculine spectrum, allowing for the possibility that not all men were so beholden to the hegemony so as to be unable to see beyond it. Thus, neither is gender, its performance or its reception constant over time. Yet Splivalo's recollection is generous in its nostalgia. While the men of the theatre were definitely appreciated for their onstage femininity, offstage effeminacy was only tolerated.¹⁴⁵ Rarely was a man's effeminacy thought unproblematic, particularly when other influences on hegemonic narratives became increasingly intense. That Splivalo wrote a memoir in the early 1980s rather than a diary during internment might account for his lavender-tinted view. By then, important progress had been achieved by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender activists in the United States, Europe and Australia and new conceptions of sexual and gender identity had taken root, bringing advancement and opportunity for many (white) gay men and

¹⁴⁴ Splivalo, *The Home Fires*, 139–141. Splivalo was interned at Rottneest Island and Holdsworth, not Trial Bay. His reference would allude to the female impersonators at Holdsworth.

¹⁴⁵ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 14 October 1916.

lesbians, if fewer for transgender men and women. Much of this change occurred in parallel to—and indeed was driven by—the achievements of women and feminism.¹⁴⁶

Traits associated with effeminacy, while not exclusive to either, have been spurned by both homo~ and heterosexual men. That internees could adulate their peers' effeminacy while they performed as women on-stage yet revile the same traits—and peers—when witnessed off-stage speaks to the problematic relationship between effeminacy and masculinity. The moral panic caused by disruptions to masculine and feminine expectations was disproportionately high.

And yet the theatre was a place where disruptions continued to occur.

Otto Wortmann did not agree with Splivalo. Effeminacy for him was as problematic as homosexual activity, which he also knew was occurring but was able to reconcile in his mind as a product of internment life. At the prospect of the camp's acquiring a movie projector, he says:

Above all, [I will enjoy not having] to watch the 'men-women' without any rage. 'Men-women' is probably the wrong term, because some of these actors who play nothing but women on stage might well become so effeminate that they no longer want to be men in their own life either; after all the saying goes '*semper aliquid haeret*' ['something will always stick']. But it's not just '*aliquid*' [something], it's a lot, a real lot.¹⁴⁷

The 'rage' he feels is matched by his fear that effeminacy, if too long practised in the suspended reality of internment, would not revert to a correct presentation of masculinity when the time came. The inference is that effeminacy, like that of Oscar Wilde two decades earlier, is an affectation one puts on for theatrical effect. And while probably not limited to the theatre, that is the site where, in his mind, effeminacy is located but not contained. Whether Wilde's association with theatre affected the perception of effeminacy's location is uncertain. What is clear is that the theatre has frequently been a site of appeal and security for homosexual men and other people of non-conventional sexual or gender identities.

One reason for this historical association, suggested by Alisa Solomon, is that homosexual men and women have been forced to be creative and to play roles from a very young age. Performance becomes part of a general engagement with the world because homosexual people learn from the earliest age to perform to 'other' societal expectations, namely heterosexuality. 'Gay people are good actors because of lots of

¹⁴⁶ Many of the social changes enjoyed by gender and sexual minorities in the twenty-first century have been won through the work of socially visible effeminate gay men, transgender women and men in drag, ie drag queens. For the purposes of this study, but not to dismiss its potent subversive potential, I have distinguished female impersonation from drag. Transvestism is another complex condition excluded from this description.

¹⁴⁷ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 12 April 1918.

practice.¹⁴⁸ Solomon here refers to the late twentieth and twenty-first century condition but the reality was also true for people in the modern era. Differences, if not understood, were tolerated with the result that theatre was where social and sexual transgression was expected to occur. These realities were not lost on people who saw themselves as ‘other’ and sought some form of acceptance and community or even temporary escape.

It is not accurate, of course, to characterise all acts of mens’ cross-dressing on stage—or off—as indicative of either homosexuality or what is now classified to be gender dysphoria. Nor was effeminacy necessarily a marker of homosexuality until the notoriety of Oscar Wilde at the end of the nineteenth century. But there was a strong connection. Dressing in women’s clothing and/or performing an imagined femininity and/or performing an effeminate masculinity in the relatively safe performative space of the theatre must have been appealing for some homosexually inclined men.¹⁴⁹ And there was clearly a sexual pretext:

The ‘ladies’ proliferate, not only on stage. Homosexuality is rampant. Both the committee and the commander are powerless in the face of the perversities. We just have to tolerate it all.¹⁵⁰

The contributions made by theatre and theatre-going to the development of a homosexual collective identity, individual subjectivity and community are not only those connected to the representations on stage, but also those connected to the audience’s experience of the spaces in which the performances were viewed. Research into the emergence of modern homosexual identities has associated them centrally with the co-emergence of new urban environments. Matt Houlbrook notes of the London situation, ‘It is in the modern city that queer lives have taken their modern contemporary forms.’¹⁵¹ Likewise, Garry Wotherspoon says of Sydney, ‘It is only in large enough cities that anonymity for those seen as different can be found. Such anonymity brings freedom.’¹⁵²

In many ways, the internment camp can be considered a microcosm of a modern urban environment, though without the anonymity prescribed in Wotherspoon’s model. Within the walls at Trial Bay, there was: an economy, operating by modern market principles of supply and demand and supported by a healthy labour market; a complex social structure, dictated both by the superior status of the guards over the internees but

¹⁴⁸ Solomon, ‘Homophobia and the Anti-theatrical Tradition,’ 9. See also, Howard, ‘Cross-dressing, the Theater, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England,’ 418.

¹⁴⁹ Howard, ‘Cross-dressing, the Theater, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England,’ 418.

¹⁵⁰ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 3 January 1918.

¹⁵¹ Houlbrook, *Queer London*, 4.

¹⁵² Wotherspoon, *Gay Sydney*, 54. Both acknowledge the city can also be alienating, disruptive and dangerous.

also by internal professional, militaristic, class, and friendship networks; a negotiated public/private domain, evidenced by the existence of clubs and huts constructed by the internees; and an artistic and cultural domain, containing art, music and education. In the centre of this was the theatre: the location of socially, culturally and sexually transgressive performance.

This chapter has argued that the presence of a theatre created a space in which social and sexual reimagining was not only possible but in which transition occurred. An active theatre culture is indicative of a mature society. And through empathising with the ‘other’, the mature audience is capable of reflecting upon itself. In the male-only internment context, with the mirror of femininity—as presented by women—removed, there were inevitable shifts in masculine expectations and performance.

Meanwhile, what of the theatre? The theatre went into a temporary hiatus in March-April 1918 to allow for a major renovation. This was partly to create more appropriate seating for film screenings from the newly purchased cinematograph ‘by replacing the wide central aisle with two side aisles to allow an unobstructed overview of the stage’ and gaining additional places by ‘moving the stairs leading to the gallery to the outside’.¹⁵³ The moment coincided with Max Herz stepping down from the artistic directorship¹⁵⁴ and the troupe inviting internees to vote for the performed plays they would most like to see reprised. Of the nine selected for reprise, the convincing winner was the classic German comedy *Der zerbrochne Krug* [*The Broken Jug*] by Heinrich von Kleist.¹⁵⁵ The refurbishment works, including construction of a removable dais for delivering lectures, were completed on 7 May 1918—three weeks before the closure of the gaol and relocation of all internees to Liverpool. While the troupe and theatre did regroup in Liverpool during the following year of internment, the loss of its precious space was shattering. But whether knowingly or not, it had provided immense cultural richness and social reimagining in the lives of the internees.

*

¹⁵³ *Welt am Montag*, no.31, 5 May 1918, 13.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, no.29, 21 April 1918, 13. See also, Diary of Otto Wortmann, 25 April 1918. Herz was replaced as artistic director by Herr F.S. Fischer (presumably Fritz Fischer from the Hong Kong cohort).

¹⁵⁵ *Welt am Montag*, no.29, 21 April 1918, 13. Nine plays (six comedies and three dramas) received sufficient votes for reprise.

Chapter 5: Body and Mind—Virility and Wellbeing



Image 5.1: Emil Hoffmann lifts a guard over his head. [Source: Trial Bay Museum NSW (NPWS)]

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5.0 The Bavarian Bull

The Germans, being keen sun worshippers, spent much time at the beach in the nude, sunning themselves for hours on the white sand and swimming. They were uninhibited nature lovers and glorified in the exhilaration of complete communion with air, sun and water. The Slavs, by contrast, abhorred nudity, considering it a sign of degeneracy. They were extremely shy and old fashioned in this respect.

—Anthony Splivalo, *The Home Fires*, 69.¹



Image 5.2: Gladiators in the surf. Otto Wortmann in centre (exposed torso). Beachfront position of Thompson House (aka Arakoon House) in background reveals substantially different shoreline to current times.

Trial Bay: 15 January 1917

The trick to sneaking out of camp, Dubotzki said, was simply not to sneak. He taught Hoffmann this soon after the big man arrived from Holdsworthy and was assigned the empty bunk in D-5. Walk like you have a place to go. And never check to see if you're being watched. The first time Hoffmann tried Dubotzki's trick, he had a bayonet thrust at his chest fewer than ten yards outside the perimeter. The guard reported him to the commandant who suspended his access to the beach and gave him latrine detail for a week. Without pay. Dubotzki had thrown his head back and laughed like stormwater

¹ The context for Splivalo's comment here is Rottnest Island, not Trial Bay.

down a drain. The trick to sneaking out of camp, Hoffmann decided, was to walk like he had a place to go—but to do so with Dubotzki.

*

Hoffmann began to observe Dubotzki's movements around the camp. The photographer and his camera moved like sea mist, so much part of the landscape that few seemed to question where he went or notice when he wasn't around. He knew the guards by name and rank and was always ready to talk, usually with a proffered cigarette and a willingness to open up his camera case to talk about technique—offers rarely made to compatriots. Guards have families too, he said. Friends and lovers wondering if they're well. Keen to receive a professional portrait. He could be lost for hours. As long as he drifted back for rollcall at the end of the day, no-one seemed concerned about where he'd been.

Hoffmann wasn't sure when he'd become Dubotzki's assistant, nor certain who was doing the favour. He wasn't to be paid, Dubotzki had told him casually. Perhaps if a commission was sold. But he knew better than to complain—if just for being out of the dust bowl down at Liverpool. A shilling here or there would be a bonus. His name had not been called for any of the government jobs and the committee's favourites had the in-camp work in their pockets. Not even timber-felling or work on the Arakoon bridge had come his way, labour his size and strength would surely have assisted. He thought this was why they'd brought him here, to build a workers' corps against the weight of so much soft colonial privilege.

A comradeship of sorts had developed between the two even though he suspected Dubotzki, like most, saw in him little more than the worker from his father's farm or the strong-man from the plantations. The Bavarian Bull they called him, which he knew to be a slur against his rural bearing as much as his size and strength. But useful when muscle was required: paddock-built arms, healthy chest, trunk-like legs. Dubotzki didn't seem to care—possibly because he was also Bavarian, but from the elegant Austrian borderlands. Not like Hoffmann's dairy sods.

He asked no questions when Dubotzki said to be at the barracks at the end of the day. He knew that meant five p.m. when the Australian summer brightness finally broke but there still remained an hour to complete a job before they closed the gates. He had no interest in another week of cleaning latrines even if Dubotzki was able to slip like sand around the rules. With time to spare, he strode through the alleys that led to their barracks.

He was waiting, the usual cigarette clamped between his teeth. They nodded to one another then Dubotzki gestured at the pile with a wordless tilt of his head. His crates of glass and potions and powders were ready at the door along with the three-legged easel—the tripod—he used to set the camera steady. Hoffmann's response was to unbutton and remove his collared shirt and hang it on a hook by the door. Hoffmann straining in his undershirt was now a familiar prelude to gathering up the gear. Already eyes had begun to turn. When he looked up, Dubotzki had started for the gates, carrying the camera himself, clipped tight in its timber case. Men were starting the end-of-day amble from the edges of the camp—the beach, the gardens, the huts—wandering in through the gatehouse like cows about to be milked. He soon had the tripod slung across his back and a crate in each of his hands. He shuffled as quickly as his sandals allowed to follow Dubotzki out. Two men stood aside to let him through, lifting their hats as he passed. He nodded an acknowledgment but rolled his eyes when one of them bellowed softly after him. Just loud enough for him to hear. He followed the line of the prison wall, around its angled bends and down the grassy slope. At the top of the rise, where he expected to see Dubotzki following the lime-washed stones down across the *Turnplatz* to the nearer beach, he watched him continue along the grassy verge outside the compound wall, behind the line of huts. This led to the end of the beach, the breakwall and the ruined pier. For the most part, the internees stayed away from this area when swimming, the submerged pier pylons in the lee of the breakwall were dangerous. It had gained a reputation as the place where the fringe dwellers gathered, the naturists, where nudity was not only accepted but preferred. It was popular with a predictable crowd. The ones who wouldn't try to hide their staring at his body. As they approached the end of the point, he watched Dubotzki skitter down the slope, across the pebbly scree and out onto the sand.

For the first time since they'd left the gate, Dubotzki turned to check that Hoffmann followed. He too made his way down the verge, running the last few yards, carried by the weight of the crates and the awkward slap against his heels. The contents rattled in their slots. Dubotzki raised his eyebrows and clenched his teeth in what Hoffmann knew was concern for the glass rather than himself. He was not used to people expressing concern where it related to anything physical. More usual was suspicion, whatever the task, and those endless ogling stares. Continually at Holdsworthy, men he didn't know would call on him to show his strength, to test it against their own, or goad him into boxing or wrestling or performing some stupid feat of strength. Often he was hit—without warning, and there were always two or three—to provoke his physical response. The Australian guards were little better, as bad at Trial Bay as they'd been down

south, forcing him to shows of strength to keep themselves amused. He'd allowed himself to be convinced that to stop these challenges he should join the boxing club and fight formally in the ring. At least, from then, his bouts were arranged and he saw a trickle of the cut.

They walked to the back of the beach where the last remaining section of the ruined pier stood stubbornly in the sand. The tide had turned and the pylons rose from shallow pools. Ghost crabs sidestepped here and there, rolling tiny balls of excavated sand. Here, the pier was most intact. Its pylons, massive timber trunks braced by iron rings, had been driven deep into the beach. Above, the crossbeams were still covered by fat hardwood planks, bolted immovably in place. They provided shade, one of the few shelters from the sun at this part of the beach. But as the pier stretched into the bay, the pylons, beams and boarding faltered, reclaimed by the ocean or salvaged by beach-combing locals. Storm by storm, boulder by boulder, yard by yard, both breakwall and pier had disappeared, a reminder of where the power at the bay truly lay. The pier now stood like Schneider's teeth, two lines of useless stumps, rising and rotting in intermittent damp.

The beach was emptying of their compatriots. Shadows were long across the bay and the sun would soon disappear behind the tip of Yarrahapinni on the western shore. The only men in the water were a group of gladiators further along the beach, all of them naked and lost in some noisy wrestling game. Some sat on the shoulders of others, jostling and charging to dislodge a rider from his mount. Others, waiting for a reset to the game, hoisted themselves to a diving platform fashioned from a plank across a pair of mooring posts. Hoffman watched one slither up the slimy pole, stand on the platform and wait for a surge in the water beneath. When the moment was right, he arched his back and dived. Hoffmann smiled, remembering the game he'd played with the native lads in the ocean off Rabaul. Four or five of them clambering over him at once, pushing and leaping from his shoulders when they'd made it to the top. Screaming in their pidgin creole to let them go again.

This section of beach was a twilight space—not fully controlled by the internees but neither ceded to the guards. The gladiators owned the space at the moment, for the final hour before curfew returned it to the enemy. Hoffmann felt a shiver of pleasure and closed his eyes to enjoy the sun on his skin. His face, shoulders, chest and arms bristled in the warmth and the soft movement of a breeze played across his body hair. When he heard Dubotzki speak, he opened his eyes and was surprised to realise it was not to him but to a man—the portrait subject, of course—who emerged from under the pier. He too

was completely naked and a man that Hoffmann did not know. So many compatriots in this crowded place. Not near the numbers at Liverpool but teeming nonetheless. Like the streets of Munich, the alleys of the gaol seemed always busy—always noisy, night and day. He was reminded daily of those boyhood trips to market when all he'd wanted was to be back at the farm. Now he hankered for New Mecklenburg, the empty rows of coconut palms and crushed coral sands of Kabakada.

Hoffmann was still embarrassed by the easy shedding of clothes by so many of the men. The gladiators thought nothing of being naked as they charged in and out of the surf. At Holdsworthy too there were those who flaunted their natural selves, in the bathrooms and around the camp. Sailors had tattooed images of naked women or serpents that writhed around their bodies and swallowed every limb. A rough solidarity existed between them that excluded other men. One sailor had tattooed on his abdomen a hand with its index finger pointing down. How different it was in Bavaria! Only a few of the Bavarians had tattoos and, if so, instead of serpents and writhing women, Bavarian tattoos would show the Virgin or the saints; crucifixes or crowns of thorns. At least the committee insisted the naturists restricted their play to this section of the beach. Gentlemen's rules applied elsewhere, when moving to and from the beach and certainly around the camp. As Hoffman had discovered, even a near-bare chest could provoke reaction.

It was when he arrived in New Guinea that he noticed his strength and size took on a new dimension. People—men and women, few women as there were—began to look at him differently. On the farm, his body had seemed unexceptional, a tool with which to herd the cows, dig out drains, shovel stables or split logs into firewood. A thousand different tasks. But on the plantation, as soon as he helped with the unloading of supplies or packing coconuts into crates, his torso was something to talk about. Was it his being shirtless like the natives? Or that he swam with them? Or that he knew their names, as Dubotzki knew the guards, that put people in such a state? Here too, at Trial Bay, the golden ones were unsure how to approach him. So they simply didn't. He was unsure of his body in a way he had never been before.

Dubotzki told Hoffmann to set the tripod, indicating a shaded space at the back of the pier. He followed Dubotzki into the dimness and placed the cases carefully on the hardened sand then watched the master secure the camera and contemplate the settings. It took a moment for Hoffmann to understand his intent but once he did he saw it well. The light from the setting sun bounced across the ocean and off the low tide sand; the subject was illuminated from the front as he looked across the bay. His back and buttocks

remained in shadow and his penis was concealed by his stance. The pylon and its crossbeam added a vertical and horizontal frame with their shadows fanning out behind at a pleasing set of angles. The dimness under the pier added extra contrast. The light was perfect, the setting too.

Hoffmann overcame his apprehension and looked at the subject directly, trying to see beyond his nakedness as the camera might have done. He appeared to be at least as old as the gladiators. Twenty-two or twenty-three. His hair was short and neatly cut but damp from being in the water. It was plastered to the back of his head. He had a line of hair across his top lip that might once have been regimental but now seemed not to be. His skin was smooth and hairless and his body soft—Hoffmann could think of no other word—not solid like his own, hardened by years of outdoor work. No doubt, he was an indoor man, a clerical type. A manager, perhaps. But without his clothes it was impossible to tell. There was no hint of who or what. His demeanour told them nothing: he carried himself with confidence, without hesitation, flicking his eyes across Hoffmann without recognition or interest.

Dubotzki barked instructions at the subject in his usual mix of English and German. Raise your arm, shade your eyes, hand on hip, reach and touch the pier. He was looking for the perfect set of angles, limbs and shadows. At one point, the subject's gaze fixed on the gladiators and he distractedly watched them move yet further along the beach. Hoffmann followed his line of sight. The game had dissolved into chaos. Most of the men now chased one fellow along the sand. Their shouts carried to the pier but distorted underneath—refracting, like the light, at odd angles, tucks and bends. The one they chased, having nowhere left to run, turned and fled to the water. But the others caught him and lifted him high, two on each of his limbs like a giant octopus. They carried him into the surf and began to swing him, higher and higher. One of the chasers cried, *Eins! Zwei! On Drei!* they let him go and he sailed over the crest of a breaking wave. But the wave then crashed on the chasers, knocking them over and washing them back up the beach like ninepins. The subject smiled and his shoulders relaxed. He spontaneously raised his hand to the pylon. Dubotzki opened the camera's aperture and captured the image he wanted.

The sound refocused the subject's attention and he looked back at Hoffmann and Dubotzki, even now detaching the camera and working with the crates.

‘That’s it? *Sind wir fertig?*’

‘That’s it. Yes, we are complete. Hoffmann? Get Sergeant Merrick’s uniform.’
Dubotzki indicated the neat pile of olive green serge on the grassy shelf at the rear

without shifting his gaze from his work. Hoffmann, suddenly uncertain, looked at the man anew. Merrick returned his gaze, this time amused but unconcerned. Item by item, Hoffmann helped him dress, passing first an undershirt and shorts then chevroned tunic-shirt and khaki trousers. Merrick shook out each garment he received, sliding each across his limbs and smoothing and tucking and buttoning his body back within. His Sam Browne belt lay coiled snakelike in the upturned cap while his boots—heels together, socks inside—sat on a nearby rock. Hoffmann brushed a grain of sand from the brim as he placed the cap in Merrick's waiting hand, then watched him square it on his head, settling it low and tight.

The last flicker of sun disappeared behind Yarrahapinni and the beach was suddenly in shadow. It stretched up the verge, across the huts and lapped the granite walls of the gaol. Merrick, the light also gone from his eyes, turned his laced and buckled boots and strode off towards the soldiers' barracks. Dubotzki had the tripod slung across his own back and the gear all neatly packed in the two awaiting crates. He offered Hoffmann the remains of his cigarette as they walked back up the hill.

*

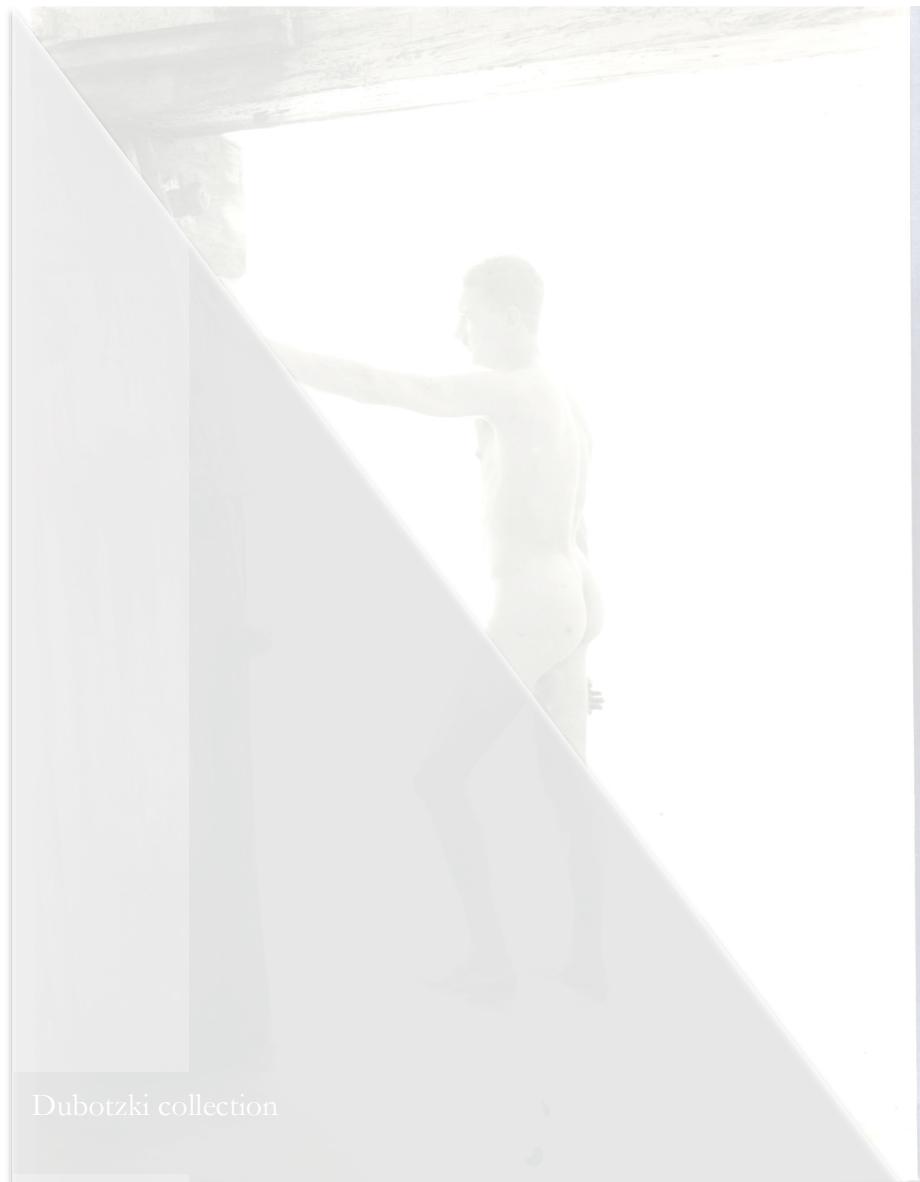


Image 5.3: Nude portrait, subject unknown.



Image 5.4: Internees Paul Dubotzki (4838); and Emil Hoffmann (4912).
[Source: National Archives of Australia]



Image 5.5: Homosociality on the beach at Trial Bay. Mostly unknown friendship group includes female impersonator Kurt Holzheuer (standing, 4th from left). The remnant of the pier is the same section as in Image 5.3 and 5.6, indicating the shift in sand on the Trial Bay main beach.



Image 5.6: Homosociality on the beach at Trial Bay. Mostly unknown friendship group. The pier stump on the left is the same as that in Images 5.3 and 5.5 showing shifting sands in lee of breakwall. Most of these men also appear in Image 5.5 suggesting this was a beach meeting spot for this group.

5.1 Introduction: Masculinity and materiality

Some Germans flaunted their nudity when under the shower. Many of these men were horribly tattooed with long and wiggly serpents that seemed to be crawling over their bodies and encompassing their massive limbs, but most favoured nude women. One fellow carried his depravity to an unbelievable extreme—tattooed on his abdomen was a hand with index finger pointing down, while directly above the hand were tattooed, in German, the words: ‘For ladies only!’ Most of the heavily tattooed men were members of the crews of seized German merchant vessels.

—Anthony Splivalo, *The Home Fires*

Anthony Splivalo was only 16 years of age when interned on Rottneest Island in 1915, making him one of the youngest internees in Australia throughout the entire war. Three years with his brother in the Slavic mining community of Kalgoorlie prior to his arrest did not prepare him for the ablutions blocks of Rottneest or, afterwards, at Holdsworth, where ‘differences in personality, belief and background were ... revealed’ by internees.² To the unworldly, young Dalmatian, the language, look and attitude of his German ‘compatriots’ were more foreign than anything he’d encountered in British-Australia, conveying nothing of the mighty alliance of Central Powers forged by their imperial leaders in Europe.³

His reaction to the bodies of the German sailors speaks to the concerns of this final chapter, as does the text of the tattoos themselves. In the same way the domestic, work and theatrical spaces of Trial Bay were sites of masculine performance, so too were the bodies of internees. Bodies were deployed as both the *subjects* of an embodied experience and as the *objects* of a novel gaze, to be read—literally, in the case of the tattoo noted above—by various audiences.⁴ Through the presentation of the internees’ bodies but also of their minds, masculinity was performed and observed; considered and confronted; and accepted or rejected.

In writing on the materiality of the body, Judith Butler notes its critical role in the performance of gender but also its particular relevance to the performance of masculinity.⁵ While assigned gender is performed through innumerable gestures, none are so scrutinised as those pertaining to the body. These are learned and enforced through similarly countless gestures within a gender system, a goal of which is its own perpetuation, achieved when individuals modify their own behaviour and enforce the

² Splivalo, *The Home Fires*, 59, 75–76.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ For a history of tattoos in Germany in the modern era, see Verena Hutter, ‘Only for Convicts, Loose Women and Sailors?’ unpublished PhD thesis.

⁵ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, ix–xii.

rules of required performance onto others.⁶ Post-industrial societies, Butler says, have been so thoroughly enmeshed in gender that people cannot look at a human body without immediately giving it sex and gender descriptions, distinguishing it from the mass and loading expectations of performance.⁷

Connell too critiques the notion that ‘true masculinity’ is almost always thought ‘to proceed from men’s bodies’.⁸ To some extent this is true. In internment, men lived, died, breathed, snored, ate, farted, smoked, had sex, aged, and developed and declined physically and mentally. These actions, of themselves, are useful to the cultural history. While the physiological functions are neither inherently masculine or feminine, the ways in which they are enacted, observed and interpreted become tools of masculine expression and, indeed, agents of the hegemony. Connell recognises the material significance of the body—‘Bodies, in their own right as bodies, do matter’—and takes up Foucault’s observation of the pathologising of the body (and sexuality) in scientific, medical and psychological discourses at the turn of the twentieth century.⁹ Her point is that the production of masculinity is all and none of these material behaviours without the semiotic framework in which the actions are given meaning. To understand one, we must consider the other.

The hegemonic masculinity of contemporary German society was deeply connected to the potency of the body. For instance, in pre-war Europe, physical size was positively associated with wealth and power.¹⁰ A military bearing was promoted among the upper classes, including for the reason that it reinforced the status quo at a time of civil and social uncertainty. The class-based institutions emerging from the 1871 federation—such as: the elevated Prussian monarchy; the subordinate tier of landed aristocracy; the army and developing navy; and conventions of boys’ and men’s education and national service through the gymnasias and universities—served to reinforce the trope.¹¹ Distinctions of class were preserved through embodied practices of dress, cleanliness, the presence and shape of facial hair, physical size and athleticism, virility and so-called manly bearing.¹² For instance, the Kaiser was the champion of the martial form,

⁶ Ibid. See also, Connell, *Masculinities*, 45–66.

⁷ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, xii.

⁸ Connell, *Masculinities*, 45.

⁹ Ibid., 51.

¹⁰ McLaren, *Trials of Masculinity*, vii. While Hoffmann is clearly muscular, size could also pertain to corpulence. Throughout the nineteenth century, many men made a point of becoming bigger and fatter to advertise their wealth and power. This occurred in Europe and the United States.

¹¹ Showalter, ‘Army and Society in Imperial Germany,’ 601. This included the Prussian Junker nobility.

¹² Brickell, *Mates & Lovers*, 9. Even headwear marked social status during the late-nineteenth century.

and believed himself to be so; famously, he owned around two hundred military uniforms, which he wore correctly and had maintained, and insisted on regimental traditions.¹³

The privileged status of the military was recognised at Trial Bay by the separate barracks and mess provided for the thirty officers of the reserve along with the civilian community consuls.¹⁴ New facilities were eventually constructed outside the main compound, but within the camp perimeter, overlooking the *Turnplatz* [outdoor gymnasium and exercise area] and the bay.¹⁵ Most men who were interned in Australia were of an age where a return to Germany would have resulted in military service, either voluntary or via the draft for able-bodied men under the age of 45 years.¹⁶ For this reason, age became a signifier of utility, with men over 45 years being relegated as ‘old’ for being less important to the German war machine. Of these senior men in the Trial Bay cohort, most had passed through the German university system in the 1880s–1890s, at the peak of the Wilhelmine era of educational reform and wherein the cult of fraternity directed many of their university experiences.

In the same way the tattoos observed by Anthony Splivalo at Holdsworthy and Rottneest signalled social semiotics of the maritime working class, the body marks of the German upper~ and middle classes were no less complex in their revelation of class. At Trial Bay, where the bourgeois cohort included many men educated in German universities through the 1880s–1900s, the ‘marks’ of class were less likely to be inked tattoos and more likely to be facial scarring resulting from the practice of academic fencing, known as *Mensur*.¹⁷

¹³ ‘2500 Uniforms,’ *The World News*, 19 April 1913. Australian newspapers frequently reported on the uniforms of Wilhelm II. A well-syndicated report in 1913 incorrectly numbered them in the thousands. See also, *Welt am Montag*, no.17, 27 January 1918 (Kaiser Wilhelm’s birthday), 1.

¹⁴ See Appendix 2: Maps of Trial Bay.

¹⁵ Diary of Friedrich Meier, 18 February 1916. See also, Appendix 2: Maps of Trial Bay.

¹⁶ Plans between belligerent nations to swap civilian internees older than 45 years did not eventuate.

¹⁷ No analysis exists of the cohort’s educational background but internees who are cited frequently in this thesis have university backgrounds. For example, Wortmann has memories of Munich and the Saxon university cities of Halle and Leipzig; Professors Fritz Graebner and Peter Pringsheim, interned while in Australia for the 1914 meeting of the British Association, were graduates and academic staff from Berlin and Munich, respectively; Max Herz completed his medical training in both Munich and Berlin, in which cities he also developed his knowledge of theatre and learned to play the cello; Eugen Hirschfeld completed his medical studies in Breslau, Würzburg, Munich and Straßburg; and Louis Burkard’s studies in metallurgy were completed at a number of universities in Germany, France and Belgium. Although the number of university students expanded at the end of the nineteenth century and included young men from the new lower-middle class, academic youths still largely came from the upper classes, for whom education, wealth and aspiration were primary expectations.

As much from its regime of daily practice, the character traits that the fixed stance *Mensur* were said to foster were honour, courage, self-discipline, fortitude and the willingness to subordinate self-interests to those of the community.¹⁸ And just as tattoos could embody desired tropes of masculinity for working class men, a *Mensur* scar signifying membership of a social and academic elite.¹⁹ According to his biographer, his granddaughter Roisin Goss, Trial Bay internee Eugen Hirschfeld had ‘a long scar on his left cheek’ which he wore with pride and which she assumes was incurred in a student duel.²⁰ Internee identification photographs in the National Archives collection (see Image 5.7) also reveal internees with facial scarring. While academic fencing cannot be conclusively cited as the cause, it is highly probable.



Image 5.7: Facial scars. Dr Fritz Noetling (4733: Tasmanian consul, geologist and collector of Tasmanian Aboriginal cultural artefacts); Eberhard von Kessell (4728: planter from Ceylon); Dr Arthur Jacob (4729: engineer from Ceylon); and Albert Mittelstein (5081: clerk from Singapore).
[Source: National Archives of Australia]

Otto Wortmann remembered fencing for its fraternity, as well as the drinking culture in a succession of beer gardens and the girls he met along the way:

¹⁸ McAleer *Dueling: The Cult of Honor in Fin-de-siècle Germany*, 120–126, 129. See also, Levsen, ‘Constructing Elite Identities,’ 150; and Jarausch, ‘Students, Sex and Politics in Imperial Germany,’ 285. Jarausch links the practice of duelling with drinking, gambling and ritualistic (hetero) sex. The actual practice of student sexuality was governed by the segregation of sexes (until 1896, when women were admitted as auditors) and by limitation of access to young women of appropriate class.

¹⁹ Zwicker, ‘Contradictory Fin-de-Siècle Reform,’ 26ff. The wounds were not intended to be serious, but to cause a ‘temporary inconvenience’ and leave ‘a perpetual witness of a fight well fought’. The swords used were so razor-like that they cut without bruising, ‘leaving no great disfigurement’. Sometimes, students who did not fence would scar themselves with razors or pay doctors to slice their cheeks.

²⁰ Goss, ‘Eugen Hirschfeld: A Life,’ 99. Hirschfeld’s photograph with his face angled to reveal rather than conceal the scar is also seen in the collage at Image 1.2.

... considering my past and those mad student years. Where are you, you countless tankards of Lichtenhain, where are you, you Kulmbachs, Würzburgs, Coburgs, Gose, you native brews from the Augustiner and Paulaner? Am I the one who once upon a time used to indulge in academic fencing in Bollberg and Leipzig, decked out in the corporation's blue-white-and-black and full of its bravado? ... Oh fencing and fraternisation! Lake Halle and the girls of Leipzig! And then Munich! ... It was such a great time!²¹

It should be noted that duelling outside the *Mensur* tradition, especially in the actual army as it modernised under Wilhelm II, was seen as a frivolous, obsolete and potentially ruinous pastime. If the duel resulted in the death of a protagonist, it would likely have further resulted in a murder conviction for the opponent, thus depriving the nation of two of its valued soldiers. True masculine courage could be more usefully observed in restraint and self-control.²²

Thus, this fourth and final empirical chapter of 'Masculinity on Trial' focuses on the performance of masculinity as witnessed through the body and as revealed through state of mind. It considers the general case of physical gender performance, the material things, by Connell's reckoning. But so too does it look to the body as a specific tool of masculine expression—for example, as sexualised through the inking of provocative tattoos or when venerated, such as through the countercultural, *Lebensreform* [life reform] narrative of naturism. The first section explores the relationship between physical proximity and gentlemanly propriety as a clue to understanding internees' ability to live with one another in circumstances of enforced homosociality. It then looks at the rise of muscular masculinity—idealised in ancient Greek and Roman statues and promoted by physical culture advocates like Friedrich Jahn and Eugen Sandow—as an embodied, virile masculinity. But more than just a soundness of the body established as the desired form, the hegemony demanded solidity of the mind. The qualities of rationality, logic, self-control and nerve represented a wellbeing, not tainted by degeneracy, ennui, nervousness or neurasthenic traits previously associated with the upper class—like idleness and apathy.

About 'The Bavarian Bull'

The buttress for this final pillar is the story 'The Bavarian Bull'. Its purpose is to introduce the body as an important additional site of masculine performance for internees at Trial Bay, but also to problematise the association of physical strength, physique and physiognomy with masculine worth. The story demonstrates how even hegemonic masculine expression required renegotiation in internment.

²¹ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 8 April 1916.

²² 'The Kaiser and Duelling,' *The Australian Star*, 27 November 1901. The story relates the Kaiser's opposition to duelling and his dismissal of a colonel under whose command a fatal duel occurred.

The strongman Emil Hoffmann is seen in Image 5.1 lifting an Australian guard above his head. However, the depiction of power is misleading: despite the clearly superior strength of the German, and the performative manner in which it is displayed, the masculine power still rests with the elevated guard. The photograph reveals Hoffmann as the more vulnerable of the two despite his embodiment of the hegemonic ideal. Outside the photograph are the soldier's rifle and bayonet, no doubt held by other guards, one of whom is the presumed photographer having goaded Hoffmann to perform his trick. The expression on Hoffmann's face does not suggest he is enjoying a moment that he, ironically, experiences as one of emasculation. 'The Bavarian Bull' imagines how tedious Hoffmann finds such carnival-like demands to demonstrate his strength.

Little is known of Hoffmann other than isolated references to his Bavarian origin, his physical strength and court records pertaining to his exploits in Friedrich Wilhelmshafen [Madang] while in the New Guinea plantations. In an oral history interview conducted in 1968, former guard Ellis Walcha Watts recalled the strong man who was first detained in New Guinea. According to Watts, 'He was able to perform incredible feats of strength. Among other things, he was said to be able to bend a steel bar in his teeth.'²³ There is no evidence this was ever attempted by Hoffmann. With no other knowledge of his personality, he is here fictionalised as simple and kind to draw additional attention to the hollowness of two-dimensional expectations of masculinity.

Finally, while the subject of Dubotzki's portrait reproduced at Image 5.3 is unknown, in 'The Bavarian Bull' he is imagined as a fictional Australian guard, Sergeant Merrick, rather than as a German internee. Hoffmann's ability to read the man's identity is diminished by Merrick not being clothed and he's confounded when it's revealed the portrait subject is an Australian. The story makes the point that clothing is another tool of masculine performance, as much for the observer as the wearer. Choices made by the subject—such as Merrick dressing in full uniform or Hoffmann undressing to his undershirt or even fraternity lads participating in Mensur duels—construct for the world a desired self. When the subject becomes the object of another's gaze, those same choices convey to an observer—such as the men who bellow at Hoffmann at the camp gate or nationalists who ennoble a Mensur scar—a comparable set of expectations based on social norms and anticipated behaviour. Without clothing, like a guard's uniform, as context, a significant slice of knowledge of the individual is lost.

*

²³ Interview with former guard, Ellis Watts, Macleay River Historical Society, 26 June 1968.

5.2 Homosociality: Bodies and minds together

Once upon a time, there was this tiny place on Earth, far far away, almost at the end of the world. And many weird men lived there. They had a big strong fortress, wherein they lived in many, many small cells, always two men together.

...But all the men had forgotten their past. Now, they roamed the beach without shoes and socks, wearing nothing but shorts, and if the sun deigned to shine in this remote corner of the world, they got tanned and many grew long beards or dug themselves into holes in the sand, growling like bears...

And all the men loved each other and looked out for each other.

—Otto Wortmann, 14 October 1916²⁴

Otto Wortmann's creative fable, 'The way we live!', speaks to three important elements of his Trial Bay experience. First is the intense physicality of day-to-day life. They were five hundred and eighty men, living together in increasingly crowded amenities: two to a cell, six to a tent, or eight to ten, if in one of the newly constructed barracks.²⁵ The visceral charge of accommodating, feeding, entertaining, exercising and keeping clean the collective body was a full-time project, barely managed by the Australian administration yet doggedly pursued by the internees—in whose interest its pursuit ultimately lay. The second is the function of memory and its connection to individual and collective identity. Over time, the strictures of class and gender related to an increasingly opaque and irrelevant world. Without active engagement to keep social proprieties alive, new norms of accepted behaviour and understandings of cultural and masculine hegemony arose. While the fable suggests a collective loss of memory, the loss was ultimately personal. For Wortmann, as days and weeks turned into months and years, and expectations of a speedy end to the war were abandoned, his identity as a New Guinea planter, as the son and brother of a middle class Bavarian family, and as the father of his girlfriend's recently born child, like the war itself, grew more remote.²⁶ The third noteworthy element is the inference to mutual concern and solidarity among the men: that they looked out for one another and had one another's interests at heart. Although a fable rather than an

²⁴ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 14 October 1916. Wortmann wrote 'The way we live!' nearly two years into his internment and a full year after arrival at Trial Bay. He was not to know he had more than two years of internment still remaining.

²⁵ Diary of Friedrich Meier, 12 March 1916.

²⁶ Wortmann's girlfriend from school days, Rosa, became pregnant with their child in 1913, around the time he moved to the South Pacific to pursue his career as a plantation manager with Burns, Philp & Co. It is unclear how the two events are connected. While he is interested in receiving letters from Rosa, he's dismissive of the idea of marriage (as she wanted) and eventually admits he no longer has feelings for her. He does not mention the child's name nor suggest he has any responsibility nor even a desire to see it.

observation of what was actually around him, these three elements can be considered for how they reveal the reality of living on top of one another in the Trial Bay camp—literally, for those in barracks with bunk beds.

The sensory assault of so many bodies in such proximity for years on end required discipline to manage. Wortmann’s description, ‘You’re never alone, you’re always within earshot of 4–5 neighbours; when doing your ablutions or changing your shirt or underwear you always have 3 interested onlookers’, was similarly described by Splivalo, in Holdsworthy, where more men lived in more crowded quarters:

War had forced [us] to sleep in tiered bunks very close to one another, to undress and dress, to snore, cough and sneeze and expectorate in one another’s presence, to sit on the commodes in the latrines so close to one another as to be touching, day after day, year after year, with no promise of escape from the awful trap.²⁷

As part of the renegotiation of expectations for privacy explored in Chapter 2, men living in confined spaces had to confront their feelings about engaging with other men’s bodies. For some these were based in fear; for most, frustration and uncertainty:

...[T]wo of us have to squeeze into a room of 5–6 square metres; it’s awful to have to be considerate of someone even at night—if only it were somebody of the opposite sex.²⁸

Proximity to other men—seeing, hearing, smelling and touching them in both the public and even the private spaces of the gaol—required new rules of propriety that individuals and groups had to relearn as part of renegotiating masculinity. For bourgeois men, proximity to another man while they were dressing/undressing usually signalled a lower~ or working class proximity, such as to a valet or a houseboy, for which depersonalisation was the appropriate social convention.²⁹ In ‘The Bavarian Bull’, Sergeant Merrick, standing naked in front of a stranger whom he knows to be Dubotzki’s German assistant, ‘flicked his eyes across Hoffmann without recognition or interest’. Suddenly, each man was either an observer or the observed—thus, active or passive in the masculine gaze while engaging in those private acts of social-self creation; both were potentially emasculating moments in the new domestic space.³⁰ Men had to be more

²⁷ Splivalo, *The Home Fires*, 188.

²⁸ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 7 March 1917.

²⁹ Straub, *Domestic Affairs*, 2–5. Straub notes the distinction between a domestic worker’s role and their identity in the family homes of the upper classes. Both were fluid, more so in the industrial and modern era when new opportunities and identities were being forged.

³⁰ Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945), cited in Hancock et al., ‘A Touch Too Much,’ 1716ff. This study looks at the connection between male proximity and touch in organisational settings by exploring the ‘phenomenology of perception’, as per Merleau-Ponty’s work. The phenomenological approach centres the materiality of the body in considering human subjectivity and its perceiving of the world around it.

forgiving of their compatriots and themselves in their day-to-day lives. Splivalo's solution was simple: 'We soon learned to be tolerant of one another'.³¹ Meanwhile, Wortmann's fable suggests that other circumstances—such as the psychological impact of prolonged internment—could also result in changes to previously held notions of masculine propriety.

Letters written from the trenches by German soldiers to wives or girlfriends at home provide a comparable example of men renegotiating their sense of propriety with comrades. Jason Crouthamel observes an increasing willingness to express conventionally feminine emotions as men sought to normalise traumatic wartime experiences. He points to examples of intimacy, compassion and nurturing of their fellow soldiers as evidence of a new desire to express and receive love, part of a feminised construct in their pre-war worlds. Release from the expectation of performing masculinity in a particular way allowed men to experiment with new emotional and sexual possibilities. For some, it affirmed homosocial and homosexual activity as natural, masculine, and even necessary for surviving the trauma of trench warfare.³²

While a soldier's experience of trauma in the trenches was likely to be much more acute than an internee's in internment, the need to normalise the experience and reconcile the absence of women was similarly felt. Where two men were sharing a gaol cell as their domestic space, particularly where the remoteness and ongoing duration of the war blurred the edges of memory and reality, the emotional ballast previously contributed by women was necessarily provided by themselves. How this equilibrium was established was a point of negotiation for each individual and each pair but the absence of women contributed to both new urgencies and opportunities for homosocial endeavour.

³¹ Splivalo, *The Home Fires*, 90–91. Splivalo as a very young man sharing a barrack with four older men from his home region in Croatia negotiated a different dynamic.

³² Crouthamel, *An Intimate History of the Front*, 1, 3–6.



Image 5.8: New opportunities for friendships, financial partnerships.

At other times in Australian colonial history—for example, in the early days of colonial settlement or on the goldfields in the 1850s—imbalances of sex and gender gave rise to familial pairings of men in domestic or otherwise co-dependent relationships.³³ Such relationships, shaped by the circumstances around them, were consensual and sensible. Given that many of the Trial Bay internees were housed in pairs, two to a cell, it was inevitable that those pairings should also work toward mutual financial, social and emotional benefits. Otto Wortmann’s cellmate was Paul Hayer, a fellow colonist from German New Guinea with whom he was able to negotiate a companionable cellmateship. Two years into their cohabitation, their relationship remained amicable:

[W]e spend 1–2 hours in the afternoon and from 7.30–10pm in here chatting away and forgetting the time. And over and over again we reminisce about our salad days in Germany or our adventures in New Guinea. By doing so we forget our misery and build the most formidable castles in the air. We are happy to sit together like this, as it relieves each of us of our little pains and worries.³⁴

That said, there is little evidence that the relationship was anything more than cordial. Wortmann occasionally borrowed money from Hayer and conscientiously paid it back. Hayer would join in, playing Pinocle [a card game] with Wortmann and his friends. Periodically, they redecorated their cell or acquired new furniture or fittings. But, over three years, Wortmann included nothing in his diary that exposed the personal or emotional life of Hayer in the way he did with other friends. Although both were from New Guinea, only Wortmann returned to Asia when deported; Hayer returned to

³³ Bongiorno, *The Sex Lives of Australians*, 30–32.

³⁴ Diary of Otto Wortmann, date unknown (but probably mid-1917).

Germany.³⁵ At one point, Wortmann said of their relationship, ‘The relationship with my cell mate is, strangely, always a little tense, but neither of us really wants to know where the tension comes from.’³⁶ He does not say why they had a falling out, but notes, ‘Nowadays, I associate almost exclusively with Lembach, Jerssen and Stegmann, maybe occasionally a word with Lorenz, or a few other, highly mediocre beings.’³⁷ He is pleased when Hayer and another compatriot decide to build a beach hut and leave him alone more often.

Eventually, his friend Jerssen became ‘quite priggish and intolerable’.³⁸ And soon, there is a spat with his good friend Stegmann:

Stegmann is still holding a grudge, [so I go for] a solitary sunbath, a solitary swim and a short walk, all in Adam’s costume. This goes on until noon.³⁹



Image 5.9: Otto Wortmann (5139) with cellmate Paul Hayer (5157), and gladiator friends Heinrich Stegmann (5140) and Julius Jerssen (4884), and August Lembach (5138).
[Source: National Archives of Australia]

Over time, cohabitating in cells originally intended for single occupants, tensions like that between Wortmann and Hayer inevitably surfaced and had to be resolved. One option when a pairing was irreconcilable was the sensible practice of swapping or purchasing a new arrangement. The staid diarist Woelber reported relocating when the relationship with his longtime cellmate and friend from Singapore, Alexander Franzen, soured over a trivial incident. A misunderstanding escalated and affected the friendship they had had since 1894:

Yet he repeated his insult, one word led to another, and his behaviour in the next few days became so unbearable that I seized an opportunity to move to another cell, whose inmates had also fallen out.⁴⁰

³⁵ Register of World War I internees (Deportation Log), NAA: C440. Hayer was deported to Germany via *Kursk* 29 May 1919; Wortmann was released to Java 23 February 1920.

³⁶ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 29 March 1916.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 11 July 1916.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 22 August 1917.

Woelber goes on to note there were ‘quite a few changes of this kind’ due to disagreements between cellmates and in friendship groups across the internment community, which were not surprising ‘because of the cramped conditions and the ongoing and unknown duration of their internment’.

In a space where the architecture and design so entirely reflected an awareness of the male body—its size and number, its movement, containment, sustenance and rehabilitation—it’s unsurprising that physical issues became prominent in the minds of internees and that the arrivals of subsequent waves were observed and discussed.⁴¹ Originally constructed for one hundred and twenty-eight public works prisoners in single cell accommodation, the crowded presence of five hundred and eighty internees in dual- or multi-share cells, barracks and tents accentuated the number of bodies and caused anxiety. But even with their public and private worlds in disarray, displays of aggression cannot be dissociated from expectations of gentlemanly conduct for educated men from the German bourgeoisie.

As more and more internees arrived to Trial Bay, internees’ sense of their physical selves and the way they occupied the site necessarily evolved. Woelber was particularly aware of the increasing numbers, noting each new cohort with alarm, and fretting how the limited space might be shared by increasing numbers of men. How one participated in both the public and the private realms was affected. Through maintaining awareness of proximity to others and renegotiating new proprieties to accommodate one another’s occupation of the space, dignity and ultimately identity were able to be affirmed.

*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 15 August 1915; 29 September 1915; 10 November 1915. Woelber’s concern at the increasing numbers is matched by a concern for the calibre of the men: ‘Among the recent arrivals are several inferior characters, I’m afraid to say, and our coexistence will suffer for it.’



Image 5. 10: Homosociality of internment. Older group includes Victorian consul Wilhelm Adena (seated 3rd from left); Tasmanian consul Fritz Noetling (4th from left); Captain Emil Dery (5th from left); Commercial attaché to Chief Consul Kiliani, Walter de Haas (6th from left); Dr Fritz Graebner (7th from left); diarist Wilhelm Woelber (front right, black shorts).



Image 5.11: Homosociality of internment. Coffee and cake on beach, in the lee of the breakwall.

5.3 Sound of body

There are at these barracks the finest tennis courts I have ever seen, and they are well patronised by the internees....There are many facilities for sport at Trial Bay, such as surfing, fishing, boating and all the internees have permission to utilise the beach and such places for these purposes. Hockey is played by them on the beach and generally the place presents as a concentration camp that undoubtedly must be one of the most comfortable in the world.

—Edmond Samuels, *An Illustrated Diary*⁴²

Beyond proximity as a determinant of masculine propriety was the expectation for virility as a determinant of masculine worth: internees strived to possess—and to be perceived as being in possession of—a healthy body and mind. Samuels' review, published in 1919, was an attempt to colour the post-war internment record and satisfy the curiosity of a public denied much knowledge of internment operations during the war. Approved for publication by the Defence Department's Deputy Chief Censor, *An Illustrated Diary* paints Trial Bay more like a South Seas health sanatorium than a site of sometimes psychosis-inducing incarceration.⁴³ The focus on physical activities, however, also seen in internees' letters and diaries and Dubotzki's photographs, was accurate and reflected a general belief in the value of physical culture.⁴⁴ For many Europeans, physical wellness was part of a post-industrial counter-narrative of life reform [*Lebensreform*]; for many German expats in the remote colonial diaspora, particularly in the idealised South Seas, belief in an elevated masculine virility also sustained—and was sustained by—belief in a colonial *Heimat*. The (imagined) sharing of a mutually conceived and understood masculine ideal was one of the ways German people on the remote edges of the empire were able to remain connected to one another and to the distant (imagined) Fatherland.

According to early modern European scholar Jonas Liliequist, 'virility' is a useful proxy for capturing the full meaning of 'manliness'.⁴⁵ While Liliequist's research relates to early modern European men, his definition of virility as a common denominator for social value applies equally to men of all classes in Europe and Australia in the early twentieth century. As the world went to war, the appetite for a virile masculinity was

⁴² Samuels, *An Illustrated Diary of Australian Internment Camps*, 30–31. While it's possible Samuels visited Trial Bay (perhaps while escorting a transferring internee), there is no record of him having been stationed there, as *An Illustrated Diary* suggests. For the entire war, he was either at Holdsworthy or at Berrima.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Herz, 'Report about the Physical and Psychological Conditions of Internees at Trial Bay,' 3 April 1917. The important place of sunshine, diet and exercise was understood by the internees and campaigned for by the committee. See also, Dubotzki's photographs reproduced as Images 5.2–5.3 and 5.6–5.8.

⁴⁵ Liliequist, 'Masculinity and Virility,' 77.

unequivocal, derailing the work of those who sought alternatives—for example, Magnus Hirschfeld and his quest for acceptance of non-hetero sexualities and effeminate masculinity.⁴⁶ Likewise, the momentum of contemporary feminism, including towards women’s suffrage in Europe and the United States, was disrupted by nationalistic and militaristic narratives emanating from the war. According to Clare Wright, the focus on militarism in Australia centred the male experience in the collective memory, a position from which it came to dominate the emerging national identity in the century that followed.⁴⁷ Where leading German feminist and homosexual rights activists—like Hirschfeld, Helene Stöcker and Hirschfeld’s own sister, feminist writer Franziska Mann—had built coalitions in campaigning for suffrage, abortion, inequities in the law and the decriminalisation of homosexuality, the alliances were lost in the social chaos of and after the war.⁴⁸ Hegemonic narratives overwhelmed the periphery, which fell apart under the weight of militarism, pacifism, maternalism and masculinism: there was little room for non-hetero sexualities or effeminacy when a generation of men was being obliterated on the battlefield. Oddly, though, while the histories of feminism and homosexual liberation have been elsewhere so intertwined, no comparable development of non-hegemonic masculinities was achieved in Australia at the turn of the twentieth century. To the contrary, the dominant narrative elevated a white, egalitarian and anti-authoritarian type who was ‘tall, spare..., clean and wiry rather than muscular, ... [and possessing a] certain refined, ascetic strength’ to the exclusion of most others.⁴⁹ Soon, the demand for masculine physicality came to include whether a man was even ‘man enough’.⁵⁰

Working class manliness in the post-industrial world had also become obsessed with factors of the body, such as physical prowess, strength, body shape or musculature

⁴⁶ Crouthamel, “‘Comradeship’ and ‘Friendship’,” 112–113. In 1897, Hirschfeld established the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee [*Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee*] in Berlin, in which emerging knowledge of homosexuality, activism for emancipation, medicine and psychology all came together. It, along with feminist activist groups, suspended activity during the war in response to the Kaiser’s call for domestic peace.

⁴⁷ Wright, ‘A Splendid Object Lesson,’ 23–24. See also, Wright, *You Daughters of Freedom*. Militarism, led for Australians by the Anzac experience, usurped the national origin narrative, displacing prior notions built around Australia as a laboratory of social progression. Wright notes the tension for first-wave feminists, between advocating for themselves, their sisters and daughters and their sons, husbands and brothers, although the two ‘were not necessarily mutually exclusive’.

⁴⁸ Dose, *Magnus Hirschfeld*, 21–22. See also, Crouthamel, “‘Comradeship’ and ‘Friendship’,” 112. These collaborations offer insights into intersections of feminist and gay politics throughout the twentieth century, indeed reveal the interconnectedness of all activism against social oppression, for example: Piccini and Stevenson, ‘Reading and Contesting Germaine Greer and Dennis Altman,’ 249ff. Here, the authors compare key Australian feminist and gay liberation texts from the 1970s.

⁴⁹ C.W. (Charles Bean), ‘Australia IV: The Australian.’ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 June 1907. See also, Cochrane, *Best We Forget*, 6–9.

⁵⁰ Liliequist, ‘Masculinity and Virility,’ 66. See also, Thompson, ‘A Crisis of Masculinity: Australian Military Manhood in the Great War,’ 133.

and competence at performing physical tasks.⁵¹ Among working class men, conceptions of virility became further linked to (hetero) sexuality and positioned in opposition to both effeminate behaviour in men and advocacy for feminism.⁵² In the predominantly working class main camp of Holdsworth, multiple sporting clubs emerged, offering gymnastics, athletics, boxing, weight-lifting and soccer to the swelling internee population.⁵³

Middle- and upper class manliness, on the other hand, while also lauding the physical, required its restraint and control as a distinguishing characteristic.⁵⁴ Unbridled sexual lust and promiscuity, for instance, were seen as weaknesses in men of the bourgeoisie and, in more extreme tropes—such as the misogynistic fringes of the *Männerbund*—were seen as evidence of the corruptive influence of women.⁵⁵

This surge of physicality as a core of the modern masculine hegemony can be traced to advances in scientific and medical knowledge in the mid-late nineteenth century and the tectonic shifts in social knowledge they triggered—specifically, the works of Charles Darwin.⁵⁶ Darwin's theory of natural selection was interpreted variously to legitimise nationalism and colonialism through decentering religion and positioning European advancement as the hegemonic cultural force to justify the exploitation of so-called lesser races. Strength, whether of the individual, nation or empire, was equated with survival in the struggle for dominance. The more fit individuals would rise to positions of higher importance, while the less fit would succumb to obsolescence, poverty and disease.

This attitude set the competitive tone of the age. For men, being of sound body and mind was critical to one's individual, national and imperial identities.

⁵¹ Connell, *Masculinities*, 45–66. Connell considers the important role of the body in providing guidelines for masculine performance. Sporting contests both define social relations among men (with typical default settings including competition and hierarchy, and exclusion or subjugation of women), and, through the physically-determined outcome, further serve as a symbolic proof of men's superiority over women. Visceral feats of the body, such as demonstrated via boxing, became symbolic representations of strength and power, and tools to suppress both feminism and 'lesser men' (non-hegemonic masculinities).

⁵² *Ibid.*, 55, 75.

⁵³ Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 203.

⁵⁴ Verhoeven, 'Pathologizing Male Desire,' 25–26, 44. The fear of degeneracy that affected middle class men and their sexual practices will be discussed later.

⁵⁵ Crouthamel, "'Comradeship' and 'Friendship,'" 113.

⁵⁶ The publication of Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) accelerated scientific knowledge. The fields of sexology, psychology and biology came of age in the Wilhelmine era, supported as part of the Kaiser's modernisation agenda. Among other initiatives, he founded the Kaiser Wilhelm Society (later the Max Planck Society) to complement the work of the universities and academies with research into the natural sciences and thereby keep Germany competitive in the international arena.



Image 5.12: Surf bathing/beach culture at Trial Bay. Looking south-west from the breakwall.



Image 5.13: Surf bathing/beach culture at Trial Bay; mix of nude and covered bathers. Looking north-west from beach near *Turnplatz*; Mount Yarrahapinni on western side of the bay; breakwall at extreme right.

Virility

But then we're off again to the beach, for a swim, roughly until 12.30pm, which isn't easy: first you need a sunbath, then you need some exercise like running or shot-put (with rocks), and then you run into the water to tackle the waves or to dive or race each other swimming, and of course you need to survive some fierce wrestling. It's the best part of the day. You forget the grief and the prison walls, and the beach rocks from all the yelling and howling, jumping and brawling, just like a schoolyard during the 10am recess.⁵⁷

Otto Wortmann's letter to his mother reads like a schoolboy's report from Edmond Samuels' summer sanatorium. While he could be expected to conceal some of the grimmer truths of internment—although he hints at its monotony, deprivation and emasculation—the focus on physical health is clear.⁵⁸ The wrestling and gladiatorial

⁵⁷ Letter from Otto Wortmann to his mother, 19 December 1916.

⁵⁸ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 2 May 1916. The sentiment is expressed well by Wortmann: 'Despite all, I do thank my fate for having led me out of Liverpool and to this blessed gaol. Apart from the climate and nature, it's not great here at all, but it's far, far worse down there.'

games described and featuring in the story ‘The Bavarian Bull’ are also seen in Dubotzki’s photograph at Image 5.2 and the sunbathing groups at Images 5.5–5.6. For all the many difficulties and deprivations of internment, the facility for physical exercise was certainly available to those whose internment experience took them to Trial Bay.⁵⁹

The Trial Bay precinct included a large *Turnplatz* [open air gymnastics area] on the flat ground above the high tide line outside the western wall. There was also a *Boxplatz* [boxing area], in the old quarry at the camp’s extreme eastern edge.⁶⁰ The *Boxplatz* was one of the most remote locations of the camp, enclosed in a rocky bowl at the bottom of a cliff some distance from the camp. Dubotzki’s photograph at Image 5.13, also showing the storage shed, depicts all but the front two men in middle class attire, presumably the club’s improvised dress uniform, with skipping ropes, medicine balls, clubs and boxing gloves consciously arranged. In 1918, the club had 65 members.⁶¹



Image 5.14: Trial Bay boxing club at *Boxplatz* at the camp’s eastern extremity. The Indian clubs (crossed at centre front) were a discipline of the *Turnverein* movement. The group includes diarist Friedrich Meier (white shorts, standing right of centre) and *Welt am Montag* editor and occasional female impersonator Bruno Steinhorst (in white, standing 5th from left). Club president Richard Andholz is shirtless, seated centre left.

While fencing was the contact sport most associated with the middle~ and upper class, boxing was the comparable sport of working class men where it had traditionally

⁵⁹ See also, Samuels, *An Illustrated Diary of Internment Camps*, 30–32.

⁶⁰ See Appendix 2: Maps of Trial Bay.

⁶¹ Address book of former Trial Bay internees, MLMSS 261, Box 7, Item 61.

been performed bare-knuckled.⁶² Historian Katherine Woodward has investigated the modern history of (male) boxing as a signifier of masculine belonging. She notes that participation in boxing can often be seen as a response to an unsettling world of transformation and change, especially in relation to gender roles.⁶³ When the unsettling event was outside one's ambit of control, such as the state of being interned, pursuit of a physical sport like boxing offered some security of understanding. One's masculinity could be referenced according to the strengths and limitations of one's own body—and those of similarly invested sparring partners—and transacted within the parameters of one's chosen boxing club subculture. However, bourgeois boxing—as opposed to bare-knuckled boxing—like many sports, had been codified in the mid-nineteenth century.⁶⁴

In line with Connell's description of body-reflexivity, boxing at Trial Bay can be viewed as a body-reflexive practice for the way it contributed to the making of meaning in the lives of internees.⁶⁵ The body was deployed as an object of such practice and acquired agency through the combination of endurance, strength, agility and speed required to excel. Participation enabled internees to express both individual and club identity but also demonstrated symbolic resistance to the Australian captors in their attempts to emasculate the internees. Sociologist Loïc Wacquant highlights boxing's inherent dynamic of resistance by acknowledging the sport's traditional social and economic context. Historically, it has been a sport in which an oppressed group has been able to transcend a barrier imposed by an oppressive hegemony. In later twentieth century history, it has enabled racial transcendence for men of colour, particularly black men. But at the time of World War I, it was a sport of class transcendence—not that the two categories were ever mutually exclusive.⁶⁶ Wacquant makes the argument that boxers are more likely to have only physical capital to invest in their attachment to the status quo and that, for many oppressed people, the body is the sole investment able to be made in the quest for a share of power.⁶⁷ This was the imagined case of Emil Hoffmann in the story 'The Bavarian Bull'. Hoffmann was first excluded from the hegemonic caste by his nation of origin but

⁶² Johnes and Taylor, 'Boxing in History,' 358. The authors claim more recent scholarship positions boxing as a broader signifier of notions of class, gender, race, neighbourhood and nation. Swords for fencing were hardly going to be permitted in an internment camp.

⁶³ Woodward, 'Body Politics: Masculinities in Sport,' 217.

⁶⁴ In England, the Marquis of Queensbury, coincidentally appearing elsewhere in this thesis as the man responsible for Oscar Wilde's demise, devised and popularised boxing's 'Queensbury Rules', which appropriated the sport from its working class roots and made it a palatable middle class pursuit.

⁶⁵ Connell, *Masculinities*, 59–64.

⁶⁶ See also, Thomas Page McBee, *Amateur*, (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2018). In McBee's memoir, boxing is also pursued as a benchmark of masculine capability in the transition story of a transgender man.

⁶⁷ Wacquant in Woodward, 'Body Politics: Masculinities in Sport,' 209.

excluded again among the internee community for his provincial roots, lack of money and perceived lower class and intellect.

Images 5.16–5.18, photographed in the *Turnplatz* by the bay, show *Turnverein* [gymnastics association] members in action, possibly performing in a demonstration event to mark the Kaiser’s birthday in January 1917. The 1918 board is shown at Image 5.15.

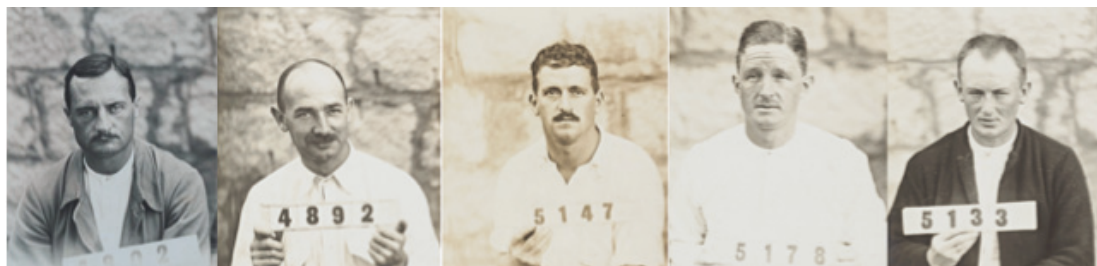


Image 5.15: *Turnverein* committee Dr Paul Bensel (club chair, 4802), Adolf Eggers (4892); Theodor Klinger (equipment maintenance, 5147); Theodor Lungershausen (secretary, 5174); Eduard Luehring (treasurer, 5133). [Source: National Archives of Australia]

While large numbers of European men embraced organised sports and physical fitness, the Turner tradition had special resonance with the German middle class, making inevitable its appearance as a core institution for the internees at Trial Bay. In Germany and across the German diaspora, the tradition of physical culture and gymnastics founded in the early 1800s by ‘*Turnvater Jahn*’ [‘Father Jahn’, the father of modern gymnastics] had become well established. Friedrich Jahn’s rejection of foreign influence, combined with his avid promotion of the German language and union of its speakers, politicised the movement from its earliest days; this both reinforced the interconnectedness of physical and social wellness and ensured the movement’s palatability to future nationalist agendas. The subsequent *Turnvereine* [network of Turner (gymnastic) associations] acquired a reputation for liberal sentiment through the 1848 anti-authoritarian uprisings and in the ongoing quest to federate the lands of German-speaking peoples—which succeeded with unification in 1871.⁶⁸ A quasi-militaristic system of training, complete with club uniforms and club loyalties, spoke to the homosocialities of masculine belonging and served to reinforce notions of racial and national (and gender) superiority. The ideal masculinity of the *Turnvereine* aligned easily with that of military service to both entrench the hegemonic trope and legitimise German nationhood as a power in the age of empire. Like, and often connected to, the German social clubs that characterised life in the German diaspora, the

⁶⁸ Berger, *Germany*, 66ff. Following the suppression of the 1848 liberal uprisings, many of the protagonists either emigrated or were exiled from Germany. Some took advantage of timely colonial immigration programs and came to Australia, bringing liberal ideas and traditions (like the Turner movement) with them. See also, Harmsdorf and Cigler, *The Germans in Australia*, 7.

Turnvereine continued to be understood as institutions of social, political and cultural association for German immigrants in addition to the practice of physical culture.

According to historian Stefan Berger, gymnasts believed that fit and healthy bodies of individual men, as idealised in classical Greek and Roman statuary, were a necessary precondition for a fit and healthy nation.⁶⁹ The Turner gymnastic tradition was a significant German cultural export in the nineteenth century, including to Australia where German immigrants were active in education, labour movements and local politics.⁷⁰ But at its heart was Jahn's method of physical culture, achieved through gymnastic disciplines like the balance beam, vaulting and pommel horses, high/horizontal bar, parallel bars and Indian clubs. It was sensible and predictable a well-subscribed club would form at Trial Bay. The club had a number of sub-committees, for instance a special program to engage *Alte Herren* [older gentleman] and in the practice of the German team-sport of *Faustball* [fistball].⁷¹



Image 5.16: Pommel horse (a discipline of the German Turner tradition) at a gymnastic event in the *Turnplatz*.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 13, 79. Berger's assessment is that 'Jahn was clearly a crank'. At this time, the masculinism of the *Turnvereine* became linked with Adolf Brand's version of the *Männerbund* and inherited a homoerotic, anti-feminist and anti-Semitic quality. In later years, its popularity in *völkisch* narratives was subsumed by the racial imperatives of extreme nationalism under National Socialism.

⁷⁰ Tampke, *The Germans in Australia*, 90, 105. This influenced its role in educating boys and men.

⁷¹ Address book of former Trial Bay internees, MLMSS 261, Box 7, Item 61.



Image 5.17: Parallel bars (a discipline of the German Turner tradition) at a gymnastic event in the *Turnplatz*.



Image 5.18: Horizontal/high bar (a discipline of the German Turner tradition) at a gymnastic event in the *Turnplatz*.

Adding complexity to the tradition of the *Turnvereine* in shaping muscular masculinity was Eugen Sandow's popular regime of body fitness.⁷² 'Sandow training' became an international phenomenon of 'resistance-based body-building' (that is, free weights), however the full system exhaustively marketed by Sandow through the 1890s–1900s claimed to be a holistic plan for masculine wellness that placed 'mental culture first, physical afterwards'.⁷³ Fear of weakness in a new age of virile masculinity made the program appealing to men which Sandow was deft at exploiting. Otto Wortmann did Sandow as much to alleviate boredom as develop strength:

⁷² 'What Sandow's Training Can Do,' *People*, 2 May 1903. He travelled to Italy where he was inspired by and began to pursue the classical masculine form.

⁷³ Sandow, *The Gospel of Strength According to Sandow*, 6.

Masculinity on Trial

[T]he sloth period got into full swing, where the day's work consisted of swimming in the ocean, eating, sleeping, walking, reading a lot and doing an hour of Sandow training.⁷⁴

As seen in Images 5.18 and 5.19, the internees improvised Sandow training on the *Turnplatz* by using barbells made from abandoned rolling stock from the original breakwall construction, and dumbbells fashioned from sandbags and stones. Strongman Emil Hoffmann led a *Schwerathletik* ['power lifting'] club of 12 members who pursued athletics in the Sandow style.⁷⁵



Image 5.19: Internee on the *Turnplatz* engaged in Sandow training.



Image 5.20: Improvised weight-lifting devices in foreground front and left.

Sandow, like Friedrich Jahn and others before him, had become fascinated with the masculine form as immortalised in classical Greek and Roman statuary. Born in rural Prussia in 1867, Friedrich Mueller adopted the stage name Eugen Sandow after emigrating from Germany as an 18 year old to avoid his military service. Eventually

⁷⁴ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 2 January 1918.

⁷⁵ Address book of former Trial Bay internees, MLMSS 261, Box 7, Item 61. This is the 1918 membership.

settling in England, he spent many years touring the world, especially the United States where he was discovered and successfully promoted by a new brand of showman, the young Florenz Ziegfeld. Ziegfeld taught Sandow well, creating ‘a society-approved celebrity out of a circus performer’.⁷⁶ Ziegfeld’s talent for bringing together high brow and low brow entertainment directly influenced Sandow’s use of working class (muscular) and middle class (classical) motifs which came to characterise his act and profoundly affected perceptions of ideal physical manhood across the ensuing century. An inveterate performer and self-promoter, Sandow exploited the physical turn in contemporary masculinity to appeal to men (and women) across the traditional class divide.⁷⁷ His shows presented him as the personification of the perfect man, with ‘his 400 phenomenally developed muscles’ in a series of poses (while dressed daringly in his trademark leopard skin loin cloth), tableaux of well-known classical Greek and Roman statues (such as the Discus Thrower or The Dying Gaul), and circus-like demonstrations of strength (such as lifting members of the audience above his head).⁷⁸ For a Tivoli circuit tour of Australia in 1902, he published a series of lectures promoting his method as achievable for men of all classes:

Take the field of manual labour. One man is strong and handy with the spade; another is quick and sure-footed with the hod [sic]; a third has a true eye for building a wall. But it is the all-round man who rises to be foreman. The same rule applies in the commercial, the social, and the scholastic worlds.⁷⁹

The cross-class appeal of physical culture was exploited by Sandow as he marketed his method successfully across the world, establishing his international network of ‘schools’—or ‘gymnasia’, as he called them—for the instruction of local men. The schools proved popular, cementing the classical form as the ideal masculine body and his ‘gyms’ as the sites where use of free weights and other Sandow devices made its development possible. His attainable physique satisfied the exponents of social Darwinism in an age where sexology and late- and post-Victorian prudery gave way to a public fascination for sex and sexuality. The mix of easy access to the outdoor *Turnplatz* and improvised weights did in the climate of Trial Bay what was unachievable in outdoor *Turnplatz* in Europe: year-round, open access to a range of cross-fit exercise disciplines. An equipment storage shed was built on the edge of the *Turnplatz*.

⁷⁶ Brideson and Brideson, *Ziegfeld and His Follies*, 17–23.

⁷⁷ Sandow, *The Gospel of Strength According to Sandow*, 1–8.

⁷⁸ ‘Eugen Sandow,’ Tivoli Theatre program, NLA collection.

⁷⁹ Sandow, *The Gospel of Strength According to Sandow*, 6.

According to Brideson and Brideson, Sandow became the first sex symbol as a direct consequence of the coincidence of these more liberal social attitudes and a technology which enabled mass reproduction of semi-pornographic photographs.⁸⁰ Both the photographer and model made money in the reprinting of these works for distribution through the camp. Clearly homoerotic, the availability of homoerotic images had a direct impact on the orientation of the male gaze, teaching men how to and giving them permission to objectify one another's physically fit bodies. Like the provocative 'For ladies only!' tattoo observed in the shower by Anthony Splivalo, the intended (hetero) sexualisation of the sailor's body was, ironically, intended for viewing by men. The sign and pointing finger were not so much an invitation to willing ladies to gaze upon his body as simultaneously an invitation and a command to men to not. The subtext of the tattoo entertained the possibility that men had or might be tempted to engage with his penis sexually.

A trend in studio photography emerged for classical tableaux, evident also in the Holdsworthy camp, such as seen in Image 5.20. Other than Dubotzki's nude portrait reproduced as Image 5.3 for 'The Bavarian Bull', no comparable studio photographs appear to have been commissioned at Trial Bay, despite these and others being part of the Dubotzki collection. Such photographs were popular in the late Victorian age where an appetite for classically modelled images of tasteful nudity competed successfully with opposition to their immodesty. The image on the left features the Holdsworthy internee Heinrich Steinborn in a pose made famous by Sandow, including the wearing of the modesty-protecting fig leaf.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Brideson and Brideson, *Ziegfeld and His Follies*, 20.

⁸¹ Steinborn was implicated as one of the members of the Black Hand gang at Holdsworthy, using his brawn to intimidate other internees.



Image 5.21: Classical tableaux photographed in a studio at Holdsworthy.
[Source: Dubotzki collection, photographer: (poss.) Jakobsen]

The blurring of class boundaries by Sandow providing new legitimacies for men of the middle class to appropriate yet another physical expression of masculinity from the working class.⁸² According to Sandow researcher Constance Crompton, Sandow's system directly appealed to the ideological values of middle class men while 'obscuring the production of their muscles through commodity fetishism'.⁸³ By this, Crompton refers to the contradiction of class that was part of Sandow's offering. While certainly presenting an elevated version of physical masculinity across the class divide, the system required purchases that only wealthier patrons could afford—for example, Sandow's own spring-grip dumbbells, which were to be used solely according to the charts that came with purchase and with a second purchased device, his developer or obesity reducer. 'Both these appliances are necessary to the attainment of the full benefit of my system.' The system also recommended the purchase of an albumen-based food additive called Plasmon.⁸⁴

Sandow undoubtedly influenced the muscular trope of internment masculinity, seen in the performative feats of strongmen like Emil Hoffmann, whose demonstration of strength in lifting a guard above his head echoed Sandow's flair, or Heinrich Steinborn (in Holdsworthy) whose classical tableaux with homoerotic allure were similarly Sandow-inspired.

Despite the popularity of his product, Sandow's credibility among German men was diminished by his emigration from Germany to England in 1885 and that he spent

⁸² Connell, *Masculinities*, 80.

⁸³ Crompton, 'Eugen Sandow,' 38.

⁸⁴ Eugen Sandow,' Tivoli Theatre program, NLA collection.

the war in the United States, even volunteering to train English and American soldiers to improve their physical prowess.⁸⁵ This slight affected his standing with German patriots whose ideals of the perfect man did not include one who had defected to avoid military service or who strengthened the enemy's force. Jahn's *Turnvereine* were seen as a more patriotic embodiment of German physical form. With narratives of war-heroism changing expectations of the perfect man, Sandow's influence diminished even further.⁸⁶

Nudity

As discussed in Chapter 2: Home, an important counter-narrative to emerge from Germany's experience of industrialisation were the *Lebensreform* [Life reform] movements, such as *Naturverbundenheit* [being at one with nature] and *Freikörperkultur* [free body culture, FKK] sects. Disillusioned with what was perceived as the ugly effects of industrialisation, the counter-culture imagined cleaner, healthier and more equitable ways of living. Proponents of *Lebensreform* resisted capitalism and sought a return to traditional values and lifestyle.⁸⁷ They believed that populations should live closer to nature, eat strict vegetarian diets, and rid their lifestyles of tobacco and alcohol. Amid the bleak, grey filth and poverty of rampantly industrial cities, it was easy to link such aspiration to an idyllic South Pacific: coconut palms, sunshine, sandy beaches and pristine waters. While these were part of the reality of the South Pacific, the imagery appeared as propaganda to promote migration and build a colonial base as much as healthier living.⁸⁸

The internment of 52 South Pacific colonists at Trial Bay—including from German New Guinea, Fiji and Nauru—meant the South Seas idyll was certainly alive in the camp, if not necessarily embraced by the hegemony.⁸⁹ Nudity was thought of as something that, in certain contexts, should be encouraged, as a means by which sexual curiosity and activity might actually be controlled and diminished. Dubotzki's

⁸⁵ Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan, and the Perfect Man*, 75.

⁸⁶ Ibid. The first appearance of Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan of the Apes* was in 1912. Its popularity in Australia added race, class and colonialism to an already complicated masculine narrative.

⁸⁷ Mönter, 'Following a South Seas Dream,' 31.

⁸⁸ Ibid. The most extreme example of the *Lebensreform* movements was the Order of the Sun, a sect founded by August Engelhardt on the island of Kabakon in German New Guinea in 1902. Engelhardt's vision, outlined in his manifesto, 'A Carefree Future' (1898), advocated a male-only, naturist community eating a diet consisting entirely of coconuts. About two dozen men and some women eventually made their way to Kabakon, all of whom either died from malnutrition, tropical disease or other unexplained circumstances or left disillusioned. Engelhardt was interned briefly locally during the war but was generally considered harmless and left alone. Surprisingly, he is not mentioned in the papers of the New Guinea internees at Trial Bay although he was known to the German New Guinea administration. He died in 1919.

⁸⁹ Thirty-seven were from German New Guinea, eleven from Nauru and four from Fiji.

photographs at Images 5.2, 5.11–5.12, 5.21–5.22, some of the most candid photographs in the entire collection, reflect this.



Image 5.22: Communal fishing activity: hauling, emptying and repairing the net.



Image 5.23: The whale, July 1917.

Internees surfed, played or worked on the beach in various degrees of nakedness, such as for the daily haul of fishing nets or the one-off adventure of harvesting meat and oil from a beached whale.⁹⁰ The nakedness of some and the near-nakedness of other internees normalised an unexceptional extension of beach culture. That an Australian officer also appears trouserless in contemplating the whale further suggests an element of complicity inspired by the unusual events at hand. But such behaviour was time and space dependent: while nudity was permitted and expected on the beach, it was not accepted in

⁹⁰ Diary of Friedrich Meier, July 1917, 97. Over numerous days, the internees harvested and attempted to boil the blubber of a whale stranded on the beach on 3 July 1917. However, after a few days, ‘the decomposing heap began to smell so horribly that nobody wanted to work on it anymore’ and ‘the reek from the carcass became so overpowering that we could smell it through the whole camp’. It attracted so many sharks ‘that swimming was almost impossible’. The project was abandoned and the carcass burned.

the camp proper, nor even on the grassy verge or beachside cafés. The beach huts and club rooms allowed men to change into appropriate camp or beach attire.

Conventions around formality of dress are a further example of the structural underpinnings of masculinity and how they were constructed in relation to women. Even in the all male environment of Trial Bay, how men saw and acted among themselves either directly or indirectly related to (the absence of) females.⁹¹ Behaviour internees were happy to accept among themselves—such as, in deregulating their standards of dress—would not have occurred with women present. Wortmann said it best:

At the moment it is summer, and because there are no women around our clothes consist of little more than a shirt and pants.⁹²

Shortcuts were taken and social rules amended when men felt unobserved. For some men this was an enjoyable part of the experience. However, rather than suggesting this gave women agency via an ability to affect the behaviour of men, although this is partially true, it suggests the intrinsic performativity of gender as posited by Butler, and of masculinity as shown by Connell. According to Connell, hegemonic masculinity is created not only by its primary beneficiaries but by those who it subordinates, including women, by the reinforcement of expected norms. Institutions, social practices and symbols of the hegemony—such as dress, musculature and comportment—were all complicit in ensuring the privilege was maintained.⁹³

Attitudes toward male sexuality were also affected by the embodied experience of internment. The prevalence of a homoerotic physical culture and the intensely homosocial relations described earlier in this chapter became important markers of personal and group identity. Because of the proximity and inevitable application of the male gaze, masculinity and male sexuality came to be defined in relation to other men.

Homosexuality

A number of sources report the rising prevalence of homosexual activity, although it is unknown whether this is actually evidence of increasing activity or

⁹¹ The broader gender implications of war have been interrogated elsewhere. See, for example: Damousi and Lake (eds), *Gender & War*. See also, McKernan, *Australians and the Great War*, 83–86.

⁹² Letter from Otto Wortmann to his mother, 19 December 1916.

⁹³ Connell and Messerschmidt, 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept,' 829ff. Expectations of masculine virility held by Australian women are explored by: Shute, 'Heroines and Heroes,' 23ff. See also, Lake, 'Mission Impossible: How Men Gave Birth to the Australian Nation,' 305; Damousi and Lake, *Gender and War*, 5ff; and Benton, 'Women, War and Citizenship,' 326. In reviewing Nicoletta Gullace's book *The Blood of Our Sons*, Sarah Benton notes women's valorisation of worthy men over unworthy men in Britain was part of the conflicted reformist/suffragist agenda.

diminishing interest in keeping it hidden. Certainly, it was being noticed. Max Herz's report to the official visitor first talked officially, if obliquely, of the appearance of sexual 'perversity' with its 'show [of] ugly features' in April 1917.⁹⁴ By 1918, just eight months later, the diarist Woelber reported that, 'It is very distressing that homosexuality has become so rampant and that the committee, which in the beginning turned a blind eye, has now absolutely no power to stop it'.⁹⁵ Wortmann too confirmed, 'Homosexuality is rampant'.⁹⁶ He further noted his surprise at the Australian guards' unwillingness to intercede to stop the growing practice:

Dalliances and homosexual misdeeds proliferate to an appalling degree, but the government reportedly does not prosecute such cases; maybe even the Australians ... consider it too harsh to condemn people to sexual abstention for years and years.⁹⁷

The misdeeds included prostitution, blackmail and overt theatrical effeminacy in the public sphere.⁹⁸ While these, in addition to the rampant sexual activity, were important components of Trial Bay's sexual landscape, there were not the entire picture:

Two guys who obviously felt unobserved, hugged each other, 'Oh I'm so happy! Are you still crazy about me?' Kisses, tears — and fornication. There's petting and buggery behind rocks and bushes ... It's hard to know if we should be outraged and wish hell and damnation upon them, or if we should just grin and bear it, which is probably wiser.⁹⁹

The overheard conversation is a stunning example of bodies caught at the intersection of public and private or intimate realms and exposes two important facets of the homosexual substrate. First, that even in the midst of the political, cultural, homosocial and even the rampant sexual chaos of internment life, romantic relationships formed and, for some men, became part of their broader internment experience. And second, the general homophobic tone and rhetoric of 'perversity' make it evident that such relationships, if perhaps not actively suppressed, were not welcome in the public realm. But there is also a grudging resignation to the inevitability of homosexual and romantic life and that it was easier to live with it than to oppose or deny its presence. It forced all internees to contemplate its meaning:

⁹⁴ Report by Dr Max Herz to the official visitor, 3 April 1917, 1–2.

⁹⁵ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 31 January 1918.

⁹⁶ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 12 April 1918.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 18 February 1918.

⁹⁸ Prostitution was discussed in Chapter 3 and in the story 'Smouldering Ruins'; and homosexual cliques of effeminate men at the theatre were discussed in Chapter 4 and in the story 'Shadow Players'.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3 January 1918.

I wonder if such things go on in other camps as well? It's hardly surprising, though, that men who have been in captivity for three years now and are surrounded by nothing but fellow men, would start having the queerest ideas.¹⁰⁰

And because homosocial or ~sexual activity in the camp occurred in the rarefied situation of internment, when men returned to their regular lives, further adjustments and negotiations needed to be made. Both Joanna Bourke and Jason Crouthamel argue that most British and German men, respectively, wished to return to heterosexual domesticity after the war. But the question of how their sexual relationships with other men needed to be reconciled.¹⁰¹ Wortmann had a similar thought:

Couples who indulge in regular sexual intercourse, or sometimes just in mutual masturbation, are however appallingly numerous; nor are male prostitutes who take money for active or passive pederasty all that rare. A truly idyllic state of affairs, which mostly, however, has its origin in the prolonged captivity and the concomitant sexual abstinence. Who knows if such propensities will persist after the war?¹⁰²

The post-war homosexual movement posed one of the most significant challenges to contemporary gender norms. Homefront societies dealt with the return of their physically and mentally traumatised men and all were required to resolve these fractured masculinities with the heroic narratives constructed during war. The surging hegemony of mateship in Australia and comradesly love in Germany suited homosexual and effeminate men who were able to benefit socially from new opportunities and expectations for homosociality.¹⁰³ Meanwhile, the Berlin-based reform movement, while fragmented by internal rivalries and theoretical differences on acceptable homosexuality, leveraged the post-war moment to define their own identity and agitate for social change, and oversaw unprecedented queer activity through the period of the Weimar Republic.¹⁰⁴ Women were similarly active, pushing for and achieving suffrage in Germany in 1918 and in Austria in 1919. Hirschfeld's study of the experiences of soldiers during the war provided a central ideal—comradeship—that would shape the definition of homosexual identity and aid the fight for the repeal of Paragraph 175. Indeed, the founding of Hirschfeld's remarkable Institute for Sexual Science in 1919 was a turning point for Germany's twentieth century homosexual rights movement.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 31 May 1917.

¹⁰¹ Thompson (writing on Bourke), 'Dismembering the Male,' 211ff. See also, Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 272; Crouthamel, *An Intimate History*, 148ff; Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*.

¹⁰² Diary of Otto Wortmann, 12 April 1918.

¹⁰³ Bongiorno, *The Sex Lives of Australians*, 126.

¹⁰⁴ Beachy, *Gay Berlin*, 160ff.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

As it became obvious the war was not going to end quickly and internment settled into a much more open-ended prospect, attitudes, expectations and proprieties were forced to change. What had initially been clearly defined hegemonies, including of masculine behaviour, became less certain. The precariousness of one's physical state created the need for internees to find ways of coping, surviving and thriving. But at the same time, it created opportunities to experience new ways of entering the world. A key part of the case made in this thesis is that the experiences of wartime profoundly affected many forms of masculinity, and that these experiences were overlaid by differences of class, region, nation, race, and many other factors.

*

5.4 Sound of mind

Even the conversations among the comrades are becoming more sombre and shrill, and the laughter doesn't sound spontaneous anymore. I'm lacking the heart and the vigour to tackle anything, be it physical or intellectual. I'm getting more and more listless, I'm practically withering away. I really can only hope for a fast end to imprisonment here.

—Otto Wortmann, 14 April 1916

Unfortunately for Otto Wortmann, his internment—by April 1916, totalling almost 12 months across three locations—was barely even a fifth of what it was to become. A 'fast end to imprisonment' was realised by very few internees, Wortmann least of all. He remained at Trial Bay until its sudden closure in May 1918 when he, with his compatriots, was returned to Holdsworthy camp at Liverpool. But even after armistice in November 1918 and the eventual deportation of his countrymen in mid-1919, Wortmann was not released until February 1920 when he was permitted to sail to Java.¹⁰⁶ His diary reveals the precarious mental underpinnings of the internment experience.¹⁰⁷ As the war continued, decline was revealed both through his documenting what he saw around him but also through his own obsessions and retreat—sometimes in melodramatic entries like the one above or in more complex ruminations like the one below:¹⁰⁸

Lately I have often stayed in bed until 10am, partly to avoid seeing people or even hearing them, partly because at night I find little rest from nervous tension and silly, abstruse dreams. I haven't had any news from Germany for more than 3 months. I'm worried and fret over the reason for it, probably a disruption of communications since none of the men here has had word from home for at least 2 months.¹⁰⁸

There is little doubt he suffered mental anguish with the state of his mind fully two years later suggesting the listlessness and fretfulness he feared had taken hold.

Meanwhile, Max Herz, as the Trial Bay medical officer, was more mindful than most of the need for maintaining mental balance. He drew energy from his enthusiastic involvement in the theatre but also from his regular correspondence with his wife, Ethel. The usual optimism in his letters reveals his desire to not add to Ethel's concerns as the mother of newborn baby Helen and mistress of their newly built home, 'Bimini', while deprived of her husband and income. Occasionally, though, his bravado faltered, such as

¹⁰⁶ Register of World War I internees (Deportation Log), NAA: C440.

¹⁰⁷ Schmiedebach, 'The Public's View of Neurasthenia in Germany,' 219ff. Neurasthenia was a nervous condition characterised by physical and mental exhaustion, usually with accompanying symptoms like headaches and irritability. No longer classified as a disorder, the symptoms tend to be diagnosed instead as depression or stress or, in more severe cases, chronic fatigue syndrome. For internees, the symptoms were among those that became known as 'barbed wire disease'.

¹⁰⁸ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 25 April 1918.

following the death of internee Horst Eckert in Sydney Hospital on 27 March 1917. While little is known of the circumstances surrounding Eckert's condition or transfer, ultimately, it was a condition Herz was unable to treat and a life he was unable to save. He mentioned nothing of the death in his letter to Ethel two days later but an uncharacteristically depressed state of mind was evident:

[T]he great monotony of this life has taken possession to the full again. I am filling the day with study and tennis. The nights belong to the theatre, but the artificiality of it all comes home to me often enough, then I turn over my memories and become content again for a while.¹⁰⁹

One of Ethel's few surviving letters, written to Max in 1919 during the long tail of his internment, suggests both the depths to which his spirits sank as he, like Wortmann, approached the end of a fifth year behind barbed wire and the role she took in keeping his spirits buoyed:

Max, you have made me feel very very miserable. For goodness sake don't lose yourself so completely. You did it in the beginning so please please don't do it now.... I know how you feel but you must be prepared to face anything and everything; it is the only way through these awful times...

And later:

Get some backbone now and cheer up!¹¹⁰

Ethel's letter reveals some of the tension she also felt at the punishment she and Helen were forced to endure in parallel. For her, there was the same amount of separation from a spouse and disruption to home and hope, with the added hardship of raising a child single-handedly without the benefit of theatre, tennis, camaraderie or lazy days on the beach.

While the benefits of reflective writing and cognitive behavioural therapy were unknown at the time, the actions of Wortmann, Herz and Ethel in so routinely confronting their innermost thoughts—if to dismiss them from a letter to a spouse—no doubt helped to make sense of a negative situation and assisted their mental health.¹¹¹ For gentlemen internees, an ongoing component of masculine presentation was a controlled mental state and a soundness of mind and spirit.

¹⁰⁹ Letter from Max Herz to his wife, 29 March 1917.

¹¹⁰ Letter from Ethel Herz to Max, 19 October 1919.

¹¹¹ Pascoe, 'Using Patient Writings in Psychotherapy,' 3. Pascoe examines recent studies where individuals writing has contributed to recovery from previous trauma. Her analysis concludes that expressive writing, as part of a broader cognitive behavioural intervention, is a promising approach to recovery from traumatic events and to other psychiatric disorders. While the benefits cannot be conclusively extended to writing in internment, the inherent routine and reflection attached to a regular writing practice are positive.

Wellbeing

The internment has torn them away from their occupations, men who have been used to work which they loved have been thrown idle; from useful citizens they have become men who have to pass their days as best they can. They feel useless, their former energy begins to dwindle and lessen.¹¹²

Days after the death of Eckert and the depressed letter he wrote to his wife, Max Herz also penned his special report to the official Australian visitor of German concentration camps, Mr Justice Harvey, on the declining physical and mental health of his fellow internees. In noting the disturbing increases in ‘psychical’ illness, he was drawing on his own parlous state. As noted in Chapter 2, Herz pleaded for the visitor’s intervention to extend the zone of parole to provide additional space for walking, with the stated benefit that it would enable not only physical exercise but mental relief from a space where ‘every corner, every stone, every blade of grass is known to him’.¹¹³ Older men who were unwilling or unable to engage in work parties or participate in the sports culture also needed physical and mental stimulation.

The deprivation of identity identified by Herz and articulated by Wortmann was both a symptom and cause of a fleet of mental maladies. These included restlessness, irritability, heart palpitations, fainting fits, notions of persecution, ennui, and great depressions triggered by trifling causes.¹¹⁴ The most frequent complaint was insomnia, exacerbated by the proximity of so many men in such a confined and acoustically unforgiving space. The noise in the cavernous, cold stone buildings was constant and wearing:

What’s noteworthy... is the noise, a terrible fidgeting all around. People are tense. You can hear in your cell what’s happening in the adjacent 6 cells. So one guy whistles, another one sings, a third one plays the violin, numbers 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 engage in shouting matches: ‘Silence!’ ‘Shut up!’ ‘Madman!’ ‘You’re crazy!’ ‘Loony bin!’ ‘Straitjacket!’ And all the while you would like to write, read, or study. I have tried hard to concentrate, but never for long.¹¹⁵ [Punctuation added]

Another internee, Wilhelm Daehne, also noted the rising tensions:

Causes for friction are popping up everywhere and you have to pull yourself together all the time in order to avoid confrontations. Things get easily out of dimension and people become irritable and touchy due to the long imprisonment. You just can’t avoid it. Some

¹¹² Report by Dr Max Herz to the official visitor, 3 April 1917, 1–2.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* See also, Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 252.

¹¹⁵ Otto Wortmann, letter to his mother, 19 December 1916.

days the mood is following the course of the war, one day there's high tension and then again one is doomed to wait and wait.¹¹⁶

But perhaps the most alarming evidence of mental decline is the testimony of Anthony Splivalo who wrote how certain men in the Holdsworthy camp lost hope completely. They gradually became strange in their behaviour and neglectful of their hygiene:

With overgrown, unwashed hair and beards, these abandoned souls walked about with the cuffs of their trousers inside their unlaced, wide open boots. Some would stand for long periods in front of their barracks, now on one foot, now on the other, drooling heavily. They stared into space and constantly described circles in the air, now with the right hand, now with the left. A pitiful, depressing sight. Eventually a separate barbed wire enclosure was set up for them some distance from the main compound; some of them died, some became insane, others committed suicide.¹¹⁷

Concern for an uncertain future was a constant source of anxiety for many internees and appears in diaries or letters from the earliest months of internment. By April 1916, almost two years into but only half-way through the war, fighting in France had barely begun. Yet rumours about a possible end to hostilities—and thus internment—were persistent. The more resilient internees learned to dismiss such rumours, as having one's expectations raised led inevitably to greater disappointments. Wortmann articulated his hopes and fears about an unknown future:

'In the future' means, at least for the moment, when I'm alone on a plantation. This would be my choice, but it may not necessarily become reality. Because there are many ifs and buts in the background. One of the things I'm wondering about with trepidation is if I will still have to do military service. But to have to be a soldier after the war, in Germany, and without any financial means, etc., that would really ruin my plans. I should and must not think of these things, it will drive me crazy, and yet, these worries continue to haunt me, over and over!¹¹⁸

That he was able to imagine an objective future at this stage of his internment suggests, at least, a hopeful state of mind. As noted earlier, this diminished over time.

Although they would not have known it to be the case, Herz's and Wortmann's observations at Trial Bay were paralleled in other internment camps around the world. Paul Cohen-Portheim, a German civilian interned in the similarly middle- and upper class camp at Knockaloe on the Isle of Man, wrote on the psychological effects he witnessed:

No one could stand staying in the hut for long; one soon developed a habit of rushing out every ten minutes or so. That habit became so much of a second nature that I found it

¹¹⁶ Diary of Wilhelm Daehne, 21 April 1918.

¹¹⁷ Splivalo, *The Home Fires*, 189.

¹¹⁸ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 26 March 1916.

very difficult to get rid of again in later years. ...[W]herever you went there were people just in front of you, just behind you, just beside you or just coming towards you, and they were always the same people. You could not talk to a friend without being overheard, you could not make a movement that was not watched.¹¹⁹

Cohen-Portheim, Wortmann and Herz all described symptoms of the nervous afflictions soon to be understood as ‘barbed wire disease’. The Swiss physician, Dr Adolf Vischer famously published his study of internment malaise, *Barbed-Wire Disease: A Psychological Study of the Prisoner-of-War*, in 1919, based on observations of Allied prisoners-of-war in camps in belligerent Germany and neutral Switzerland.¹²⁰ With his collaborator Robert Bing, he also published in *The Lancet*, where he described the condition formally as ‘neurasthenia *sui generis*’.¹²¹ Like Herz at Trial Bay, the symptoms he observed included increased irritability, suspicion and paranoia, restlessness, pathological fatigue and loss of concentration that manifested most acutely as a difficulty to settle and self-calm. Vischer and Bing likened the symptoms of internment to what had been observed among ‘crews of sailing vessels on long voyages, upon the members of Arctic expeditions held fast in the pack-ice throughout the endless polar night, and upon exiles in Siberian prisons’.¹²² Also then becoming understood were the symptoms of nervous anxiety among men who had experienced traumatic shock in the trenches of World War I—coined, of course, as ‘shell shock’.¹²³

Neurasthenia

Vischer and Bing noted three conditions of internment, common to all observed scenarios and thought to cause internment neuroses: the deprivation of liberty; the massing together of prisoners in crowded spaces; and the uncertainty of the duration of internment. Always more pronounced in some than in others, symptoms of neurasthenia were observable in most people interned for more than six months. In approximately 10 per cent of cases, the symptoms identified were extreme.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ Cohen-Portheim, *Time Stood Still*, 85–86.

¹²⁰ Ohry and Solomon, ‘Dr Adolf Lukas Vischer and “Barbed Wire Disease”’, 17. A significant finding of the study was the diminished psychological impact of internment in neutral nations compared to internment in belligerent nations.

¹²¹ Bing and Vischer, ‘Some Remarks on the Psychology of Internment,’ 696–697.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 696.

¹²³ ‘Shell shock’ was named for the initial belief it was a physiological trauma of the brain caused by proximity to an exploding shell. Early research produced a number of contradictory aetiologies and treatments while the return of affected men to the community made real the atrocity of new war technologies. For more on the psychological impact of war on soldiers, see Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (London, UK: Oxford University Press, 1977). See also, McLaren, *Trials of Masculinity*, 233–238.

¹²⁴ Bing and Vischer, ‘Some Remarks on the Psychology of Internment,’ 696–697.

Neurasthenia was then—and remains—a contested diagnosis.¹²⁵ In 1869, the so-called ‘father of neurasthenia’, American neurologist George Beard, brought together earlier understandings and presentations of nervousness in men under a single, catch-all condition.¹²⁶ Known as the ‘American disease’, Beard initially associated neurasthenia almost exclusively with white, middle- and upper class men whom he believed were responding to disruptions of race, gender and worklife in the American modern age. That it was not a common diagnosis for women, working class men or non-white men was seen as evidence of white male exceptionalism, and produced a parallel belief in an underclass of men, too weak to withstand the pressures of modern society.¹²⁷ Effeminate and homosexual men became easily corralled into this sub-category. But the presentation of nervous complaints was, in fact, far from limited to wealthy, white men and the perception of exceptionalism came as much from a diagnostic blindness as from opaque understandings of the condition itself. Similar symptoms in women were diagnosed as hysteria and in working class men as a type of male hysteria.¹²⁸ Beard further asserted a sexual link to explain masculine enfeeblement: a man’s natural but fixed reserve of vitality was able to be depleted by sexual excess—thus, non-procreative sexual activity, masturbation and spermatorrhea [excessive or involuntary ejaculation] became pathologised and medically and morally policed in bourgeois society.¹²⁹ Male exhaustion was understood as both a symptom and the cause of a range of sex-related problems: that is, a symptom of excessive or illicit activity and the cause of impotence and prostate disease.

¹²⁵ The cause, treatment and even the very existence of modern neurasthenic syndromes, like myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME) and chronic fatigue/glandular fever, are still contested. For a summary of recent debate, see ‘Chronic Fatigue Syndrome,’ *The Lancet* 367, iss.9507, (28 January 2006): 346–355.

¹²⁶ McLaren, *Trials of Masculinity*, 141–142. See also, Roelcke, ‘Biologizing Social Facts,’ 385.

¹²⁷ McLaren, *Trials of Masculinity*, 142. In the same way gynecologists were beginning to diagnose women as other than hysterical, men with nervous conditions were being seen as other than hypochondriacs or malingerers. Even so, the ‘discovery’ of male hysteria in the 1870s caused a furor in medical circles. For broad discussion on the European and North American experiences, see Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra and Roy Porter (eds), *Cultures of Neurasthenia* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 142–144. See also, Kirby, ‘Male Hysteria,’ 76–78. The neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot identified ‘the astonishing appearance of hysterical symptoms in very virile working class men’ in France in the 1880s. His expectation had been to find ‘hysteria among effeminate men of the idle class; the superior, hence more neurotically disposed beings of the more delicately constituted upper class’, but not among ‘strong, vigorous proletarians’. See also, Edward Shorter (1992), cited in Forth, ‘Neurasthenia and Manhood in Fin-de-siècle France,’ 329ff. Some fin-de-siècle men welcomed a diagnosis of neurasthenia simply because it was not hysteria, a diagnosis that would have feminised and emasculated them.

¹²⁹ Rosenman, ‘The Body Panic,’ 367–370. While spermatorrhea came to mean involuntary ejaculation or semen leakage, at the end of the nineteenth century it was understood to mean any non-marital release of semen, including masturbation. Rosenman notes it was ‘imagined into existence to embody historically specific anxieties’ and is thus an example of the contemporary medical and moral policing of male bodies. See also, Verhoeven, ‘Pathologizing Male Desire,’ 25ff.

The link between masculine enfeeblement, sexual ‘disorder’ and the particular concerns of wealthy, middle class men was made by Herz in his report to the official visitor:

Men who have shouldered heavy responsibilities without losing a night’s rest find themselves upset at the smallest bagatelle, find themselves awake night after night as sleep will not come to them... The sexual side has also been touched and has at times shown ugly features. When I mention self abuse and perversity, [you] will recognise that the danger has made a real appearance.¹³⁰

The solution proposed by Herz was to engage the mind as much as the body, for which the committee oversaw the provision of lessons, lectures, music, theatre and the impressive lending library. The activity schedules published in the *Welt am Montag* listed weekly lectures, frequently two, on topics ranging from sciences, social sciences, language and literature to interesting travel tales from those prepared to share them. Some lectures, particularly those by German-Australian Shipping Line manager Dr Walter Pupke on the German constitution, international law, and even insurance, were ‘very interesting and always so well attended that the theatre [could not] accommodate them all’.¹³¹ These were in addition to language courses offered through the Berlitz school, established by polyglot Heinrich Jacobsen, ‘in English, French, Italian, Russian, Polish, Turkish, Malay, Chinese and Hindustan; some of them very well attended’.¹³² A chess club, led by Arndt and Dreyer, had 50 members. Despite a general consensus on the importance of mental engagement and a willingness of internees to support their own and one another’s wellbeing, the general decline continued and remained the chief concern of Herz.

¹³⁰ Report by Dr Max Herz to the official visitor, 3 April 1917, 1–2.

¹³¹ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 5 November 1917.

¹³² Ibid. See also, Trojan, *Behind Stone and Barbed Wire*, 89; Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 254.



Image 5.24: The Berlitz language school. Founder and polyglot Heinrich Jacobsen at centre right.

Weariness of an effete bourgeoisie and a fear of nervous weakness were fuelled by new scientific knowledge in the wake of Darwin's theories, of which Beard's analysis was part. Evidence (and licence) for social Darwinism seemed everywhere.¹³³ For instance: observations of rising rates of crime, insanity, poverty and suicide; the increased visibility of homosexuals, radical elements of the working class and suffrage-seeking women; and the enormity of the non-white world glimpsed through the eyes of colonialists, were suddenly elements of the modern world that could be understood as part of a Darwinist counter-narrative. Chief among these were support for the theory of degeneration and a belief in the saving power of eugenics.¹³⁴ Degeneration had many strands—psychological, physiological and social—all antithetical to Darwin's actual theory for suggesting a *devolution* from a more perfect core, rather than an *evolution* to a current state.¹³⁵ In Germany, leading psychiatrist Emil Kraepelin first considered intergenerational psychological decline: that nervous weakness observed in the first generation would degenerate to mental alienation in the second; imbecility in the third; with the fourth

¹³³ Paul Weindling (1989), cited in Roelcke, 'Biologizing Social Facts,' 390.

¹³⁴ Roelcke, 'Biologizing Social Facts,' 393. Supporters of Kraepelin proposed that as criminal behaviour originated from the same underlying degenerative disposition as insanity, increases in rates of criminality were indicative of parallel increases in rates of insanity.

¹³⁵ McLaren, *Trials of Masculinity*, 141.

generation destined to suffer severe cognitive impairment.¹³⁶ For this reason, nervous weakness, the core of neurasthenia, sat uncomfortably in conceptions of wellbeing for otherwise fit and healthy middle class men. Poor mental health was understood by patients, doctors and society itself as a gateway to further decline.

This had implications for the general mindset of the bourgeois caste at Trial Bay. As middle class men of the German empire, belief in their racial and social superiority underpinned their colonial presence in the region—and, more immediately, justified their selection to the Upper 500 at Trial Bay. Not only was proper comportment and social success important for personal credibility, the need to maintain—or to be seen to be maintaining—the distinctions of hegemony underpinned the entire status quo. Maintaining their own superior position depended on finding examples of inferiority elsewhere while resisting inferiority when seen among themselves. Vilification of the enemy Australians was an easy way to achieve this. But so too was adopting a belief in the need for racial cleanliness and thus the expulsion of potential ‘pollutants’ was appealing. Anti-Semitism was a common default as was the medical, moral and legal opposition to mixed-race marriages.¹³⁷ The normally mild, older internee Wilhelm Woelber conveyed his outrage at the pro-British remarks of the German emigrant to Britain, Sir Carl Meyer:

[On] Dec 22 of this year, I saw an article on ‘the Jews and the War’ which I kept. It contains a declaration by Sir Carl Meyer that he, as a naturalised Englishman, abhors his erstwhile German homeland since the sinking of the Lusitania, etc. No doubt the statement is true and in that case, Germany can only be glad to be rid of the guy. Such characters, especially if they are Jewish, have no place in the German Empire.¹³⁸

He expressed a similar revulsion of three compatriots from the Ceylon contingent who were Buddhist monks, and continued the practice of their beliefs including wearing

¹³⁶ Ibid., 141. The theory of degeneration—as introduced into psychiatry by Benedict Morel (1809–1873)—was an application of Social Darwinism that presupposed the existence of an original healthy and moral state which degenerated physically and mentally over subsequent generations.

¹³⁷ Stoler, ‘Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers,’ 200, 205. The term *Verkauffierung* referred to the automatic assumption of social descent brought about by a white European cohabiting with an indigenous partner. The work of eugenicist Eugen Fischer in Africa led the ban on interracial marriage in 1912. Although the outcome affirmed non-white German citizenship, the outbreak of war in 1914 interrupted enactment of the decision and the loss of colonies after the war negated its relevance. According to Stoler, the rules of society in Germany were to also apply in the colonies, so that ‘adherence to middle class European sexual morality was one implicit requisite for full-fledged citizenship in the European nation-state’. Loyal citizens were created, and children had to be taught both their place and their race. In practice, in the Pacific colonies, this rarely occurred. For a discussion on the post-war concept of the *Volkskörper* (notion of the state as a ‘body’ comprised of the bodies of its citizens, see Sandra Mass, ‘The *Volkskörper* in Fear: Gender, Race and Sexuality in the Weimar Republic,’ in: Luisa Passerini et al. (eds), *New Dangerous Liaisons: Discourses in Europe and Love in the Twentieth Century*, (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010): 233–250.

¹³⁸ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 18 December 1915.

monks' robes while in the camp. Generally, they were ignored but thought of as absurdities:

I haven't met any of the three gentlemen personally, and never wish to either, because I cannot warm to Germans who go native like that. The Buddhist faith may have a lot going for it, but that doesn't mean one should debase oneself like these guys do. When among the natives, okay, maybe they can dress and live like that, but among Europeans they should revert to being European.¹³⁹

An impact of the advancements and popularisation of science was an increased pathologisation of the body and the belief, according to one analysis of contemporary British medical writing, in the sexual origins of most physical problems.¹⁴⁰ According to that report, the male body was 'wanting, degraded, [and] even diseased'.¹⁴¹ Symptoms like listlessness, lack of confidence or excessive self-consciousness were thought to be the result of hypersexual activity, namely masturbation. The internees at Trial Bay were not immune to the discourse regarding the perils of masturbation and its connection to individual and societal decline. Already precarious, the safeguarding of mental health was an important responsibility requiring ongoing vigilance.

In Australia, outside the prison walls, the seriousness of concerns over masturbation can be seen in the work of a Public Morality Committee lobbying the Queensland minister for education to educate adolescent boys about its perils. One member of the committee was convinced that unless some action was taken to prevent boys from masturbating, the negative situation would contribute to the 'downfall of the race, for in many instances it appeared that the community was deteriorating'.¹⁴² Because of the social taboos around masturbation, it's unlikely an internee would reference it even in a private journal. Nevertheless, Otto Wortmann's diary includes the following entry:

My health is good. Not weaned of O. Intervals of 5–6 days.¹⁴³

The coded reference to 'O' is presumed to be a reference to 'onanism'—that is, masturbation. It is intriguing for revealing Wortmann's belief that he needed to 'wean' himself from the practice and felt unsuccessful in his efforts to do so. It is easy to read his guilt into his thoughts but his honesty in committing even a coded revelation to a diary where its privacy was unassured makes the reference precious. So too, Max Herz's concern for pervasive 'self abuse' in the camp is also taken to be a reference to

¹³⁹ Ibid., 31 May 1917.

¹⁴⁰ Verhoeven, 'Pathologizing Male Desire,' 25–26.

¹⁴¹ Elizabeth Stephens (2008), cited in Verhoeven, 'Pathologizing Male Desire,' 26.

¹⁴² 'Dangers of Life: A Plea for Frank Discussion,' *Daily Standard*, 7 December 1917.

¹⁴³ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 18 December 1916.

widespread masturbation. His concern registers alongside his observation of ‘sexual perversity’ in his report to the camp’s official visitor in April 1917.¹⁴⁴ Clearly, he equates the two with moral decline.

One of Australia’s most experienced medical specialists, Herz was uncertain about the permanent damage to mind and body that the internment experience would render. But it’s clear he became increasingly desperate at the deepening and apparently inevitable malaise about the uselessness and fruitlessness of the artificial way of life. His concern was personal and spoke to the longer term:

[O]nly too often, [it] gets possession of all internees. For the danger exists in all its grim and terrible reality, that the great majority will leave this camp broken in body and mind.¹⁴⁵

*

¹⁴⁴ In the all male camp, it’s assumed the contemporary definition of ‘self abuse’, to which Freud had added *coitus interruptus* did not apply. Thus, self abuse is taken to mean masturbation. Group or mutual masturbation between men is assumed to be what Herz considered ‘sexual perversity’.

¹⁴⁵ Report by Dr Max Herz to the official visitor, 3 April 1917, 1–2.

5.5 Conclusion: Failures of body and mind

A comradeship of sorts had developed between the two even though [Hoffmann] suspected Dubotzki, like most, saw in him little more than the worker from his father's farm or the strong-man from the plantations. The Bavarian Bull they called him, which he knew to be a slur against his rural bearing as much as his size and strength.

—‘The Bavarian Bull’

In the two years he has been interned in the old stone prison, Arno Friedrich has shared many of the feelings of those men who live in close confinement about him—boredom, fear, anger, desperation—but he had never felt terror until the night Hans [sic] Eckert was murdered.

—Craig Cormick, *Years of the Wolf*

In the same way ‘The Bavarian Bull’ fictionalises the lives of internees Emil Hoffmann and Paul Dubotzki, Craig Cormick’s 2018 novel *The Years of the Wolf* re-imagines the lives—and deaths—of two others, Arno Friedrich and Horst Eckert.¹⁴⁶ Like the former, the latter tale speaks to themes of male embodiment important to this final chapter. Friedrich, actually a robust 29 year old farmer from Western Australia, is invented by Cormick as a young (like Splivalo), disabled outcast, defined by his disability and dominated by both his compatriots and the Australian guards.¹⁴⁷ The character compensates for the failure of his body with skills of observation that enable him to ‘read’ his compatriots’ fears and dreams, although it’s unclear whether it is Friedrich’s own psychosis playing out. The failure of masculinity in the camp—the anger, fear, boredom and desperation caused by prolonged internment—is represented as a wolf-like beast, likened to the cross-dressing wolf in ‘Little Red Riding Hood’. In this, the novel riffs on tropes of troubled gender writ deep in the German psyche by the Brothers Grimm; on the disappearance in the surf and presumed drowning death on 26 June 1917 of the real Arno Friedrich; and on the mistaken belief in the offshore presence of the German raider *Wolf*, which triggered the closure of the camp in mid-May 1918.

By taking into account the role of the body, it’s possible to see how conceptions of masculinity were contested and transformed by internees. Just as Cormick’s fictional version of Arno Friedrich places a mirror to his compatriots’ perceptions of their able-bodied selves, the death of a comrade was a mortal shock that needed to be reconciled by the internees. Friedrich Meier, who witnessed the event, was particularly shaken:

¹⁴⁶ Cormick, *The Years of the Wolf*, (Melbourne: IFWG Publishing, 2019). Cormick’s imagining is a Gothic-inspired murder tale.

¹⁴⁷ Ludewig, *War Time on Wadjemup*, 301.

While swimming, our company leader, Arno Friedrich, was swept away by a receding wave and carried far into the ocean. Although the incident was noticed immediately, the choppy waves and a fierce wind stymied all rescue attempts. Several comrades tried to swim out with a long life rope but were constantly thrown back by the strong surf. Within 30 minutes Friedrich was so far out to sea, we could not see him anymore... In the choppy sea, Friedrich, who was not a good swimmer, would not have kept above water for very long and drowned. The sea has never returned his body, so maybe he also fell prey to sharks.¹⁴⁸

The failures of the body—of Friedrich’s to escape the rip and his friends’ in mounting the rescue—made all more aware of intrinsic physical limitations. Internees had become complacent about the danger of the ocean, despite the evidence of its destructive power in the disappearing breakwall. They accelerated the purchase of a fishing and surf rescue boat.¹⁴⁹

Arno Friedrich was the third of five Trial Bay internees to die during the internment period.¹⁵⁰ His death was especially bitter for the fact his body was not recovered and that its tragic circumstances affected internees’ belief in the beach as a benign place of restful escape. Two others died from injuries randomly sustained in the surf: a manager from Hong Kong, Hermann Adam, was grazed; and a Ceylon hotelier, Conrad Peter, stepped on a stingray. Both men developed sepsis, died painfully and were buried on the hill behind the gaol.¹⁵¹ These deaths were confronting in a different way. There *were* bodies to be seen, dressed and buried, and one another’s trauma to be observed. The shock at Adam’s death on Christmas Eve 1916, especially that of Max Herz who was unable to save the life of his charge, features in Chapter 4’s story, ‘Shadow Players’. Horst Eckert, whose death from an unknown illness is reimaged by Cormick, was a planter from Ceylon who died in Sydney Hospital in March 1917. He was buried in Rookwood Cemetery.¹⁵² The deaths of Eckert, Adam and Peter compounded the sense of randomness of life and death and the vulnerability of the physical self.

However, the fifth internee death was shocking for exposing the vulnerability of the mental self. Not long before the closure of the camp, Heinrich Albrecht was in clear decline. A former ship’s cook for Norddeutscher Lloyd, he had managed the camp kitchens at both Trial Bay and Holdsworthy after transfer with the cohort from Ceylon. Woelber wrote:

¹⁴⁸ Diary of Friedrich Meier, 22 June 1917. In Woelber’s account, Friedrich was a good swimmer.

¹⁴⁹ Report on visit by official visitor to Adjutant general, 28 June 1917.

¹⁵⁰ Diary of Friedrich Meier, 31 July 1917.

¹⁵¹ War Graves of ex-enemy aliens who were buried in Australia, NAA: B741, V/7326. All five internees were commemorated by the German Monument, erected in 1918 (destroyed in 1919).

¹⁵² Register of World War I internees (Deportation Log), NAA: C440.

[Albrecht] has to be declared mad, I'm afraid. He is married, has a wife and children in Bremen, and by working during captivity has saved up a substantial amount, far exceeding 1000M [Marks]. ... He counts the rest of his money several times a day, so he seems to be suffering from a persecution complex. He is very untidy and extremely grotty, fetches huge amounts of food from the kitchen which he then lets rot away in his cell. He was recently brought to a hospital near Sydney and will hopefully be released and sent home fairly soon, which would be the best for him and his family.¹⁵³

Sadly, the day of Woelber's diary entry, 2 April 1918, was the day of Albrecht's death in Sydney's Gladesville Asylum. Woelber was livid that not even such an obvious display of deterioration shifted the Australian government's approach to detention. 'A lot of the men suffer from a high degree of nervousness and cannot face even small crowds, and some are physically disabled as well, and yet nobody is being released to Germany, not even after medical consultation. It's just deplorable that we can't do anything against such ruthlessness.'¹⁵⁴

This chapter considered both the soundness of the body as well as of the mind as twin components of masculine agency, expression and identity for the internees of Trial Bay. Participation in physical culture enabled men to engage with familiar body practices while also presenting opportunities for engaging with the unfamiliar. Whereas joining tennis, boxing, athletics or gymnastics groups perpetuated the familiar *Vereine* [club] culture, other opportunities, such as engaging with the Trial Bay beach environment, demanded fresh approaches to serve the new conditions. Continental Germans unfamiliar with Pacific beaches or Australian climate had to learn to cover/uncover and defend/protect the body from the elements at the same time as teaching it how to sense and enjoy the new experience. That the beach evoked an intensely physical response from many of the men, evidenced by their frequently naked wrestling, running and throwing games, reminds how close to the surface were ideals of Greek and Roman classicism and the enjoyment of body-based homosociality.

At the same time, these material moments were conducted in a broader social frame of gender, nation and class. How men marked their bodies with tattoo ink, fencing scars or sculpted facial hair revealed the underlying semiotics of embodied practice; as did their choices of physical activity reveal more than the desire for bodily health. The chapter also made a case for the relationship between proximity and propriety as a clue to understanding internees' ability to live with one another in difficult circumstances of enforced homosociality.

¹⁵³ Diary of Wilhelm Woelber, 2 April 1918.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

For at least some of the internees at Trial Bay, the intense homosociality of internment was neither unpleasant nor unwelcome. New friendships and new forms of relationship—homosocial and even homosexual—were not only revealed as possible but necessary to make meaning of the disaffecting experience. As Otto Wortmann observed:

Some people here don't seem to mind, they like it just fine and would probably remain here forever!¹⁵⁵

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¹⁵⁵ Diary of Otto Wortmann, 22 April 1916 (Easter Saturday).

Chapter 6: Conclusion



Image 6.1: Reunion of internees, date and location unknown. Walter Kersten marked.
[Source: Kersten family collection]

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6.1 'Farewell Trial Bay'

The sunny days are over, and instead of sitting in Trial Bay, we are back in horrible Liverpool.

—Wilhelm Woelber, 10 June 1918

Internment at Trial Bay ended abruptly on Sunday 19 May 1918.¹ The suspicion—never substantiated—that internees were communicating with a ship or submarine off the Trial Bay coast, sparked fears of the return to Australian waters of SMS *Wolf*, the notorious coastal raider.² When an internee informant added that an offshore rescue might occur between 15 May–6 June 1918, the selection of Trial Bay as a location for enemy internment seemed suddenly ill-conceived.³ A Royal Australian Navy radio technician sent to investigate the allegations reported his incredulity:

I feel bound to comment upon the extraordinary unsuitableness [sic] of the Trial Bay Camp.... It is some 200 miles from Sydney in a somewhat remote part of the coast. It has an ideal landing place, approachable in any weather, in the very heart of the camp. It is connected by a single telephone wire with Kempsey. If this were cut, all possibility of telephone communication with Sydney would be gone... The site of the camp is also an ideal one for the purpose of communicating with ships at sea.⁴

Suddenly the remoteness of the site and its extreme coastal position, initially among its chief appeals, were liabilities of embarrassing proportions. The order to evacuate was given almost immediately and, remarkably, achieved within 24 hours despite the shock to the internees, and presumably the guards, and the logistics of transferral.⁵

As discussed, the isolation of the camp was a key factor in defining its social milieu and the masculinities expressed within. On the one hand, the remoteness, the

¹ Letter from Adjutant general to Commandant of Langwarrin camp, 21 May 1918. See also, Memorandum from Department of Defence to Navy Office, 22 May 1918. The chaos of the final 24 hours is the backdrop to the story 'Smouldering Ruins' in Chapter 2.

² Guilliat, *The Wolf*, (Sydney: Heinemann, 2009). Famously, for 444 days over 1916–1918, the *Wolf* remained at sea. In its 64,000 mile voyage, it captured, stripped and scuttled more than a dozen Allied ships and laid mines that sank more than a dozen more. Over 400 men, women and children passengers or crew accumulated as prisoners on board. A seaplane spotted at Trial Bay was thought to be the 'Wolfchen' from the *Wolf* and added to speculation around the *Wolf's* return but turned out to be from Australia's own battleship, HMAS *Brisbane*. The *Wolf* had arrived back at its German home port on 24 February 1918 and not left local waters since.

³ Letter from Department of Defence to General Tellheim, 13 May 1918.

⁴ Report to Naval Establishments from Lieutenant-Commander Bavin, RANR, 17 April 1918.

⁵ Telegram from 2nd Military District Commandant to Department of Defence, 20 May 1918. Final tally indicates 547 internees left Trial Bay on 19 May with 20 others remaining to load the heavy luggage, finalise the camp and follow soon thereafter. The initial order to depart, giving internees only three hours notice to pack, was deemed unreasonable by Commandant Holborow.

restricted zone of parole, the minimal interaction with community or culture outside, the censoring of information coming in and going out, and the government's refusal to report on internment to the wider community, leading to a general ignorance of German presence, were forces acting from *without* to build internees' sense of general isolation. On the other hand, the lack of prior connection to Australia of the majority of internees and an unwillingness to engage, understandings of *Deutschtum* and *Heimat* embedded deep in the colonial psyche, skills and knowledge already gained in how to 'do' colonialism, and the appetite for and momentum of German culture, produced as a tool of survival as well as political resistance, were forces that generated solidarity, if not camaraderie, from *within* the prison walls. All combined to create an unusual moment in the social history of Australia: internment at Trial Bay operated like an aberrant outpost of German empire, but on Australian soil. For three years, the social and cultural activity was intense but absent of any ongoing resonance; at the end, the high water of German cultural presence receded quickly leaving very little trace.

Throughout this thesis, I have presented evidence of both the performance and subversion of hegemonic masculinities among the bourgeois caste of German men interned at Trial Bay, 1915–1918. In so doing, I provide an alternative to enduring heterocentric narratives and make a claim for additional complexity in the way Australia tells the stories of its social and sexual past. Analyses of archival sources—photographs, in particular those of internee Paul Dubotzki; diaries and memoirs, such as those of Otto Wortmann, Wilhelm Woelber, Friedrich Meier and Martin Trojan, among others; and letters, primarily those of Max Herz—have provided evidence of both multiplicity and complexity in the way men were able to organise and imagine their internment. Evidence was presented to substantiate the existence of male–male sexual activity and grudging tolerance, if not acceptance of homosexual practice. Heterosexual men hoped rather than knew for certain that engaging in same-sex activity in the camp would revert to 'normal' sexual practice outside. Yet, having been exposed directly or indirectly to new social, sexual and emotional possibilities in the camp, men's choices were affected as were the possibilities for how to transact their post-internment worlds. The eruption of queer

possibility, particularly in Berlin and Munich in the Weimar Republic, can be linked to the rejection of pre-Weimar social and sexual reticence.⁶

While the evidence of homosexual activity in camp does not infer homosexual proclivity, and even less homosexual identity, it is likely the case that men engaging in consensual sexual behaviour were open to the possibility of non-hetero emotional lives. In the same way, evidence of heterosexual activity is no more conclusive of heterosexual proclivity or identity. As Clive Moore says, it is one of the paradoxes of researching gay history: homosexual proclivities are suspected but there is rarely ever conclusive proof.⁷

The masculinities of internment at Trial Bay were observed across four core domains, which determined the architecture of this thesis:

In Chapter 2: Home—Public and Private, I looked at the ways internees replicated or reimagined their domestic spaces. The reorganisation of the home at the end of the nineteenth century led to corresponding shifts in gender expectations and the performance of masculinity among bourgeois and working class German men in Europe, in Australia and across the German colonial diaspora. These expectations were evident at Trial Bay in the ways internees refurbished and decorated their cells/barracks and built, occupied and policed public and private spaces within the zone of parole. The nostalgic construction of beach-head huts and cabins revealed the quest to separate the private from the public, a desire to maintain distinctions of class and the ongoing association of the home as a feminised space. Beyond the hegemony were opportunities for men to enter legitimate domestic partnerships or relationships with their cellmates, engage in feminine-coded practices such as home-making and hospitality, and dress and comport themselves outside previous conventions of gender, class and other social expectation.

In Chapter 3: Work—Employment and Opportunity, I interrogated the importance of work and its role in perpetuating masculine ideals, and noted that similar social changes to those affecting internees' connections to the home also affected their participation in work. The popular epithet '*Rast ich, so rost ich*' [If I rest, I rust] reflected the core belief that if one stayed busy, one would stay healthy in mind and body, and that this

⁶ Beachy, *Gay Berlin*, 163ff. See also, Crouthamel, *An Intimate History of The Front*, 154ff. Magnus Hirschfeld's Institute for Sexual Science became the epicentre for the study of changing sexuality. He observed that heterosexual culture was in a state of crisis as a result of the war and the trauma of returning soldiers, prisoners-of-war and affected civilians. Building on Freud's theories that the war stimulated pre-existing psychosexual neuroses, Hirschfeld's *The Sexual History of the World War* (1934) argued that it was an environment where normally repressed sexual drives were able to manifest in both soldiers and civilians. The greatest threat to post-war bourgeois sexuality was the increased incidence of violence that he linked to the psychological experience of combat. The end of censorship was probably the biggest single factor to encourage liberal sexualities.

⁷ Moore, 'That Abominable Crime,' 115.

was an important marker of masculine control. Evidence of successful industry and commerce also aligned with expectations of economic order and efficiency. It was important—for class, as well as national pride—that the Trial Bay internees succeeded and could demonstrate their success. This justified their elevated status to men in other camps, as well as to the Australian guards and compatriots elsewhere—notwithstanding few knew or cared about their presence. It also reinforced a sense of participating in and assisting the German war effort. The sub-committee that took over the running of the inefficient Trial Bay camp canteen and the other *Kommissionen* established to oversee education, the kitchen and bakery, as well as the post office, library, theatre and orchestra were manifestations of the desire to be organised, efficient and effective. Beyond the hegemony were opportunities for men to learn new crafts and feminine-coded occupations outside previously designated positions and trades, escape the normal camp perimeter, and confront previously held self-beliefs of independence, resilience and capacity to participate in the camp economy.

Chapter 4: Theatre—Diversion and Difference identified the theatre as an important actual and symbolic site for ‘performance’ of masculinity. A constructed space in every sense, the theatre was where not only German nationalism and cultural pride could be displayed but also where ‘women’ could be seen and remembered. And while cross-dressing to perform the roles of women was neither an unusual theatrical expectation, particularly in an all-male internment camp, nor an indicator of effeminacy, although this too was the case, the chapter made a case for the potential of theatre to subvert as well as divert. This is the premise of theatre historian Alan Read, who states, ‘Theatre is worthwhile because it is antagonistic to official views of reality’.⁸ Beyond the hegemony were opportunities for men to suspend previous expectations of gender roles, to play or participate—as perpetrators or observers—in gender illusion, and to desire or be desired by other men. This reinforces the historical importance of the theatre as a place of escape and appeal to people of sexual difference and its role in the development of homosexual identity and community.

Chapter 5: Body and Mind—Virility and Wellbeing explored the body as an important additional site of masculine performance and the mind as a barometer of personal wellbeing. Physical and mental health were important signifiers of masculine worth and men continued to have high expectations of hygiene, appearance and deportment of themselves and one another, although this was moderated in the absence

⁸ Read, *Theatre and Everyday Life*, 1.

of women. Sport and physical prowess were valued, particularly where the former hegemonic Prussian military archetype—exemplified by the wearing of elaborate uniforms, swordplay, marksmanship and horsemanship—was unavailable. There was an unmistakable homoeroticism in the focus on classical male beauty, which was embraced by both heterosexual and homosexual aspirations to hypermasculinity. So too was nudity accepted. More typically linked to ideals of the working class and to the counter-cultural *Lebensreform* movement, the large population of South Pacific colonists at Trial Bay had reconciled, if not embraced, public nudity. The beach was a place where nudity was accepted and where organised sport and spontaneous gladiatorial challenges were sought and enjoyed. Beyond the hegemony were opportunities for men to challenge their own and others' class-based expectations of homosociality and nakedness, challenge taboos around masturbation and homosexual activity, participate in the cult of the classical male form and, again, to desire or be desired by other men.



Image 6.2: Departure from the camp. Walking to Jerseyville wharf.



Image 6.3: Droghers from Jerseyville to Kempsey.



Image 6.4: Walking from Kempsey's river wharf to the newly built train station.

Beyond Trial Bay

The end of internment at Trial Bay did not mean the end of internment altogether. While all were returned to Holdsworthy, to a hastily constructed new Eastern Compound, fenced off from the main camp, the tedium of internment took a different direction. At least another 12 months were spent waiting for the increasingly inevitable end to the war and then, post-Armistice, for release. Dull and dusty Holdsworthy had little to compare with their superior beachside accommodation and the many expensive improvements they had been forced to leave behind. Nervously, too, they watched the arrival of the Spanish Influenza pandemic which routed the camp.⁹ Mass deportations occurred from May–September 1919 when all, except a small number who successfully appealed the deportation order or who were otherwise released into the Australian community, were returned to a Europe ravaged by social, economic and political upheaval.¹⁰

⁹ 'What Happened When Influenza Raged At Holdsworthy,' *The Freeman's Journal*, 18 March 1920. In a debacle of pandemic mismanagement, 94 internees died and perhaps half the cohort of 4,000 were reported to have been infected. Departing ships, including the *Kursk* on 29 May 1919 which carried most of the Trial Bay cohort, carried flu-infected deportees resulting in an outbreak on the Indian Ocean, prior to arrival in South Africa. Of 18 shipboard deaths, seven were from the Trial Bay cohort, including diarist Georg Boysen and female impersonator Alfred Preutz.

¹⁰ Fischer, *Enemy Aliens*, 280ff.



Image 6.5: Trial Bay internees who did not survive the deportation voyage back to Germany: Erich Schumacher (4998), Hugo Tobias (5053), Carl Bals (5041), Kurt Dehr (5229), Georg Bachman (5099), Alfred Preutz (5032), Georg Boysen (5127).
[Source: National Archives of Australia]

There is little that is known about the cohort beyond its post-deportation dispersal in Europe. Some, like Otto Wortmann, were able to avoid the general mandate for deportation to Germany and returned to Asia, although it is unclear whether he then returned to New Guinea, his point of colonial origin. With the introduction of new legislation in New Guinea following Australia's post-war takeover, it was difficult for Germans to return to their plantations and even to the South Pacific at all.¹¹ But why did he not choose to return to Germany to see his family and girlfriend and to meet his child (who was, by then, seven years old)? His cellmate Hayer was deported to Rotterdam on the *Kursk* with most of the Trial Bay contingent on 29 May 1919.¹² The entomologist Hans Overbeck did return to his colonial life in Java after deportation to Germany where he published his exhaustive taxonomy of ants he'd classified in Trial Bay and

¹¹ Register of World War I Internees in NSW (deportation logs), NAA: C440. See also, Murphy, *Colonial Captivity during the First World War*, 196. To further discourage the post-war viability of German business, British policy (obsessively supported in Australia by prime minister Billy Hughes) held that German colonial settlers would not be allowed to return to their plantations but would be shipped to Germany. It is unclear why this applied to New Guinea planters Hayer and Hoffmann but not Wortmann.

¹² Register of World War I Internees in NSW (deportation logs), NAA: C440.

Holdsworthy.¹³ Paul Dubotzki returned to Dorfen in Bavaria where he and then his daughter pursued careers in commercial photography. His only son was killed in action in World War II.¹⁴ The book Professor Peter Pringsheim researched and wrote at Trial Bay was published and became a seminal work in studies of phosphorescence.¹⁵ Heinrich Wilcke returned to Australia as soon as the ban on German migration was lifted at the end of 1925, only to be interned again at Tatura and Orange in World War II. His residential addresses place him in Bohemian interwar Darlinghurst and East Sydney until the 1960s.¹⁶ Max Herz, one of the final handful of nearly seven thousand internees to be released, narrowly avoided deportation in February 1920 when he refused to board the Dutch ship *Van Cloon*, the same vessel that was carrying Wortmann to Java. His re-return to Holdsworthy and the public agitation for his release forced an intervention from Prime Minister Hughes which prompted his release on 9 April 1920, almost five years to the day after his initial arrest. His daughter Helen was then five years old.¹⁷

Beyond these isolated snippets, many questions remain and present an intriguing opportunity for complementary future research. What were the internees' post-war relationships? How did their modified masculine ideals and conceptions of sexual norms transcend the disruption of internment? How did their perceptions of 'perverse' sexual behaviours—including homosexuality, effeminacy or displays of 'feminine' emotions—play out in the sexually liberal Weimar years? Did they remain in contact with one another?

The photograph at Image 6.1, showing a reunion of some of the Trial Bay group, is proof that some contact did occur and that, at least for this group of internees, a certain nostalgia existed. A sizeable and traumatic part of their lives had been passed together so this is not surprising.¹⁸ Wilcke's interview with the Macleay River Historical Society in the 1960s says he had had no contact with any of the cohort, although this is also unsurprising, given the allegations of theft, conspiring with the guards and homosexual blackmail.

¹³ Taylor, 'The Orientalist Hans Friedrich Overbeck,' 37ff. Also Benedict Anderson, 'First Love: The Opening of Soejipto's *Djalan Sampoerna*,' *Indonesia* 82, no.2, (October 2006): 39–74. Overbeck was able to live a homosexual life in the colonies of the Malay Straits where he became an expert linguist and translated hundreds of works from the local language. He is reputed to be the European lover of the early queer poet Soejipto, who wrote a remarkable account, called 'First Love'.

¹⁴ Helmi and Fischer, *The Enemy at Home*, 7–15.

¹⁵ Bowen, 'Dr Peter Pringsheim,' 1,158.

¹⁶ Papers pertaining to the internee Heinrich (Henri 'Willi') Wilcke, 1939–1945.

¹⁷ Clarke, *Dr Max Herz*, part 7.

¹⁸ The age of the men and cut of their suits suggests perhaps the 1930s or 1940s, sometime around World War II, which would have presented other difficulties. No details of the location or occasion exist, although fortunately there is a list of the names.

Isabel Hull's research has identified the connection between pre-war colonial military masculinities and post-war extreme groups like the para-militaristic *Freikorps*, and why these were attractive to many former colonists.¹⁹ As Germans from the colonial diaspora returned home in 1919, they found a broken and chaotic society defined by military defeat and traumatic experiences of the war. For returning soldiers, there were no parades of welcome nor infrastructure to demobilise; many retained their uniforms and military weapons.²⁰ For the internees and citizens returning from Asia and the Pacific, the experience of war was more easily aligned with the triumphal narrative of Germany's African colonies than of the German homefront. According to Sandra Mass, the colonial African realm entered the popular imagination for its wide open (borderless) spaces and its production of 'the most manly heroes' of the war.

One way or another, the internment experience had made new men of the Trial Bay cohort, indeed all internees and prisoners of war. At a minimum, it introduced new expectations and exposed all to new possibilities of how class, gender and nation might be performed. Reconciling these in their post-war lives—away from the performative pressure of the camp environment—was an opportunity to implement their new selves.

¹⁹ Hull, *Absolute Destruction*, 324ff. For a summary of the process of demobilisation and rise of the *Freikorps*, see also, Mass, 'The 'Volkskörper' in Fear Gender, Race and Sexuality in the Weimar Republic,' 233ff. Mass's chapter explains the loss of confidence in the Weimar government as a consequence of right wing propaganda, such as the 'stab in the back' conspiracy, suggesting the war was lost by the capitulation of the Social Democrats who signed the Treaty of Versailles, Jewish inaction in the armed forces and the hollowness of homefront support.

²⁰ Beachy, *Gay Berlin*, 200.

Where to and what next?

As I near the end of ‘Masculinity on Trial’, I recognise how the project sits within longer and wider narratives of Australian history. Part of the adventure has been recognising how my core themes—detention, race, class, masculinity and queerness—tangle and merge with other scholarship. And a surprising part of this has been realising how gaps identified demand to be filled.

At the project’s outset, I cited three excisions from my original scope of work which continue to present as important opportunities for further research:

First, there is an opportunity to investigate the masculinities of the Australian guards—specifically, the guard at Trial Bay, of which no comprehensive account exists. The Friends of Trial Bay Gaol have collected and display at the gaol museum various letters, government records, photographs and ephemera of the internment period highlighting the experience of the guards. At any one time, they numbered around one hundred conscripts or voluntary servicemen plus three or four officers serving under the camp commandant. These men, while on regular rotation to other camps, were just as isolated at Trial Bay as the internees—more so, in some respects, as they were without the internees’ wealth and had no (legitimate) access to the amenities constructed by the internees, like the library, the theatre, vocational courses and sports facilities. Because Citizen Military Force (C.M.F.) enlistees assigned to the German concentration camp (G.C.C.) Guard were typically men who had been unsuccessful in enlisting in the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.) or had been returned to Australia as sick or wounded and discharged—possibly suffering venereal disease or what we now know was traumatic shock—they were subject to other masculine forces, not the least of which was the hegemony of military rank. Surprisingly, in the tonnage of material written on the A.I.F., Anzacs and diggers, no comprehensive history of the G.C.C. Guard or even the C.M.F. has yet been written.²¹

²¹ Ernest Scott’s ‘Volume XI: Australia During the War’ of *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918* contains the seminal ‘Chapter VI: The Formation of the Armies’. However, typical of most Australian World War I histories, it contemplates the citizens’ forces more for their role as a recruitment pool for the Australian Imperial Force and the Expeditionary Force than as an entity in its own right. In other works, the operation of the C.M.F. is framed by the 1916 and 1917 conscription referenda. Summative histories of the Australian Defence Reserves over specific periods of the twentieth century have been sponsored by the Departments of Defence and Veterans Affairs and the Australian Defence Force. Craig Wilcox, *For Hearths and Homes: Citizen Soldiering in Australia 1854–1945*, (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1998) is an independent work.

The second group not included in this study but for which research potential exists is women, for example, in the experiences of British-Australian women married to interned German men. The intermarriage of English and German couples, most famously by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg Gotha, was neither uncommon nor unacceptable in contemporary Australia but presented a complication of class and patriotism in the status quo of war. While the social status of the middle- and upper class German men was diminished, this was not necessarily so for their British-Australian wives who were not subject to the same provisions under the *War Precautions Act 1914* (Cth). Their status was different again to that of German wives of German husbands and different again to German wives of British-Australian husbands, whose German origins could largely pass undetected. Mary Plate was a formidable woman. She grew up as the English daughter of an esteemed colonial Brit, Sir Edwyn Dawes, who had led the development of the Australian shipping industry in the nineteenth century, and whose experiments in refrigerated freight had revolutionised the viability of Australia's international trade. Three of Mary's brothers were fighting with distinction in the British Army. Mary campaigned for the release of her husband—Lohmann & Co. managing director, Oscar Plate—or to be interned with him, and for the right to reside at South West Rocks to see him regularly at Trial Bay. On all counts she was unsuccessful but rattled the military establishment. Likewise, Ethel (Cohen) Herz's resourcefulness in surviving the war was inexhaustible. She was the daughter of an established Sydney family whose situation was severely reduced when her husband Max was interned. She worked to recover debts from patients who refused to settle accounts and also resisted a spurious bid to acquire the beautiful home 'Bimini' she and Max had built in Darling Point. A phantom figure is the mysterious Jean, their household help, who appears as a name in their exchange of letters. Jean is intriguing for her apparent loyalty to the Herz household and care of Helen at a time when many servants abandoned posts with tainted or financially impacted families. Letters of these and other women are housed in the State Library of New South Wales and/or the National Archives of Australia and shed additional light on the homefront experiences of Australian women.

A longitudinal study of masculinities of concentration and incarceration could use the Macleay River estuary as a fascinating locum of inquiry and incorporate the third excluded cohort, Aboriginal people. Local first nation histories refer to Laggery Point as a meeting and ceremonial site for the regional Dunghutti, Biripi and Gumbaynggirr people. Concentration, if not active detention, of the Dunghutti occurred from the end of the nineteenth century when the New South Wales Aboriginal Protection Board established

reserves on the Macleay River's Pelican and Fattorini Islands. And the infamous Kinchela Boys Home operated nearby from 1924–1970, detaining and re-educating stolen Aboriginal boys with disastrous results. The earlier periods of the gaol (1877–1886) and breakwall (1886–1903) construction would anchor a local history of masculinities of incarceration. Male prisoners selected for participation in the public works initiative were in the final stage of sentences of hard labour, the sentence usually bestowed on men convicted of sodomy, buggery and other charges associated with male–male sexual activity. The study of this single geographic area offers unique insights to the masculinities of incarceration across time and culture.

In considering the Trial Bay internment moment within a broader study of detention in Australia, it is perhaps more ironic than prescient to note that recent sites for Australia's offshore detention of asylum seekers and refugees—Manus Island and Nauru—were both part of the German colonial Pacific. One hundred and thirty colonists were transferred for internment to Australia in World War I, including some to Trial Bay.²² A socio-cultural history, at a macro level, linking Australia's many instances of incarceration and detention, and the frequent appearance of island-based locations in its achievement, has not yet been attempted.²³

Scholarship in these fields will add additional depth to existing histories of Australia's homefront experience in World War I and of twentieth century masculinities.

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²² First introduced by the Howard Government in 1991, the Pacific Solution established offshore processing of undocumented, boat-arriving asylum seekers on Nauru and Manus Island in Papua New Guinea. This number represents the total number of internees in Australia from German Micronesia and Macronesia.

²³ Specific works at a granular level dominate the field, for example on: civilian internment in Australia during the two World Wars; state-based histories of prison construction and politics; and refugee and asylum seeker detention. Examples include: Peter Monteath *Captured Lives*, (Canberra: National Library, 2018); John Ramsland, *With Just But Relentless Discipline: A Social History of Corrective Services in New South Wales*, (Kenthurst: Kangaroo Press, 1996); and Behrouz Boochani, *No Friend But The Mountains*, (Sydney: Picador, 2018). There is no thematic history of internment, similar to Glenn Nicholls' history of deportation, *Deported: A History of Forced Departures from Australia*, (Kensington: UNSW Press, 2007).

6.2 Reading between unwritten lines

‘Think of it this way,’ the elder man says, ‘many years from now, when this madness has passed us by, we will be nothing but a curious memory... And the only thing they will know of us will be from the records we have kept. The photographs. The newspaper. And so on.’

‘But...’ says Arno, pointing at the photographs and the columns of type strewn around, ‘It’s not the truth. It’s not how it is.’

‘It’s one truth,’ says Herr Herausgeber. ‘And it’s a truth that we can create, not one that is created for us.’

—Craig Cormick, *The Years of the Wolf*²⁴

The second claim made by this thesis goes to the benefits of a hybrid approach to writing cultural history. In ‘Masculinity on Trial’, fact and fiction are co-deployed in the telling of the tale—with both rooted, to degrees, in historical speculation. As noted by Camilla Nelson, ‘all histories are a kind of fiction’, a sentiment reinforced in the meta-pronouncements of Herausgeber (a representation of the internee Steinhorst) in *The Years of the Wolf*, above.²⁵ The diaries, letters, documents, photographs, even Cormick’s novel, cited liberally through this thesis, all speak to the need for care to be taken in making claims to truth. In an age of blurred boundaries and fracturing confidence in institutional rigour, it has never been more important for historians to safeguard their craft, to not be sloppy when claiming truth, but to present those truths with creativity and generosity.

Through the juxtaposition of fiction and evidenced claims in this thesis, I make the point that these two registers of creative writing are not mutually exclusive and can coexist to serve each other’s purpose.²⁶ In this, they are truly symbiotic. The fiction introduces the reader to each new chapter via an oblique angle of approach but makes sure it is clear which creative register is being read, and which rules of readerly engagement are being invoked. This is assisted by the consistent position of the fiction at the top of each chapter, additional signposting text throughout, and use of the same third person omniscient voice, so as not to confuse or delegitimise the first person voices of the diaries and letters. I use a metaphor of ‘pillar and buttress’ to distinguish the form and purpose of each register, including their relationship to one another and their relative

²⁴ Cormick, *The Years of the Wolf*, 163.

²⁵ Nelson, ‘Faking it: History and Creative Writing,’ (online).

²⁶ White, *The Practical Past*, xii. Hayden White makes this point by urging historical writers (of history) and imaginative writers (of fiction) to cease making contrasts that negate or place works in opposition to one another.

literary heft, while the allusion to brick and stone conjures a grand and Gothic public building, perhaps a Victorian-era coastal prison.

On a functional level, the four buttressing fictions introduce, illuminate or invent characters to add depth and colour to the historical telling. For example:

‘Smouldering Ruins’, the buttress to the first chapter on Home, uses the first of two invented characters, Peter, to imagine the difficulty of choices needed to survive in difficult circumstances. The story is based on the diary references to prostitution and the stories and images of the burning of the internees’ property prior to their departure but imagined as a response to the imbalance of hegemonic power and the difficulties of class and obligation.

‘Sunshine on the Avon’ supports the chapter on Work. It sees the real-life character Dr Max Herz in his place of work but, as a new father of an infant daughter, contemplates his longing and sense of the loss of time. As its starting point, this story reproduces a censored letter sent by Herz to his wife Ethel on 15 October 1917 and speculates on the censored text. In this, it also considers the reality of the archive as historical source.

In ‘Shadow Players’, the support to the chapter on Theatre, I imagine another fictional character, Arnold, but place him among a group of actual internees, the female impersonators, as he discovers new possibilities through a connection to the theatre. In locating effeminacy and homosexuality at the theatre, I imagine for Arnold what I am unable to claim for Lehmann and Holzheuer.

The final buttress, ‘The Bavarian Bull’, supports the pillar Body and Mind. It too combines actual and fictional characters and events to signal new imaginings of virility and wellbeing brought about by the internment condition. Physical and mental strength were important masculine signifiers and one’s ability to remain strong was critical for thriving.

Even though written and photographic evidence accompanies all four stories, they remain, for the most part, examples of what Donna Lee Brien describes as ‘biographically-based fiction’.²⁷ James Vickers would also see these as ‘recognisably biographical...but ... imaginatively written’ and presented as fiction.²⁸ However, elsewhere in ‘Masculinity on Trial’, in chasing the ‘forgotten lives’ of internees, I use what Virginia Woolf described as ‘the novelist’s art of arrangement, suggestion, [and] dramatic effect’ to render historical characters. This literary gauntlet was picked up by Drusilla

²⁷ Brien, ‘Australian Speculative Biography,’ 15.

²⁸ James Vickers (2015), cited in Brien, ‘Australian Speculative Biography,’ 15.

Modjeska and Hilary Mantel in insisting ‘informed imagination’ is the starting point for speculative biography.²⁹ Brien also talks about the central role of ‘authorial interpretation’ in biographical speculation which gives me the licence required to imagine my protagonists’ lives ‘as [they] might have been lived.’³⁰

A lot of water has flowed through the ‘rocky ravine’ of Inga Clendinnen’s imagining following the ‘Who Owns The Past?’ turn of historiography in 2006.³¹ For better or worse, this conflagration has come to define the recent era of debate.³² Certainly all who engage in the space have had to, at least, position themselves in relation to the discourse. Tom Griffiths suggests that history and fiction are a tag team, sometimes taking turns, sometimes working in tandem, to deepen our understanding and extend our imagination.³³ Beyond debate of the superiority of either history or historical fiction to the rendering of the tale is the unremarkable supposition that both have unique benefits. Working symbiotically, fiction and evidenced history can support one another, as can the works produced elevate the form and promote wider—and more harmonious—engagement with the past.

And yet, the debate is ultimately surrendered to the reader whose task it remains to interpret, doubt, challenge, intuit and align a proposition with elements of prior knowledge. The author’s task, whether of the historical or imagined, is to present an honest case. As a writer of both, I take comfort in this and am amused, rather than scandalised, by Margaret Atwood’s advice to ‘construct plausible whoppers, [in the] hope [of inducing] the public to swallow whole’.³⁴

Across these stories, the form is as important as the function: for me, history begins and ends with creative thought and action. All authors and historians make creative choices and engage creatively in the writing of a work. The goal is in the service of the reader: to provide the best possible explication of the intricacies of the past.

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²⁹ Virginia Woolf (1927), cited in Brien, ‘The Facts Formed A Line of Buoys,’ 2. See also, Mantel, *Reith Lectures*, 1 and 4.

³⁰ Brien, ‘Australian Speculative Biography,’ 15.

³¹ For the defence of history by historians, see McKenna, ‘Who Owns the Past?’ *The Australian Financial Review*, 16 December 2005. See also, Clendinnen, ‘Who Owns the Past?’

³² Curthoys and Docker, *Is History Fiction*, 52. See also, Clendinnen, ‘Who Owns the Past?’ The debate is well written by many historians and writers of fiction set in the past and those who are both, whom Christine de Matos calls ‘fictorians’. See: de Matos, ‘Fictorians: Historians Who “Lie” About The Past, And Like It,’ (online); Nelson, ‘Faking it: History and Creative Writing,’ (online).

³³ Griffiths, ‘The Intriguing Dance of History and Fiction,’ (online).

³⁴ Margaret Atwood (1998), cited in Nelson, ‘Faking It: History and Creative Writing,’ (online).

6.3 Masculinity on Trial

With great pleasure and with a toast to my beloved, I have slowly let the wine roll down my throat ... After a prolonged abstinence even a small drop is stimulating. ... I at least was focussing more on the future than on the past. How I look forward to seeing my beloved family again!

—Wilhelm Woelber, 28 December 1916

The earliest kernel of interest at this project's outset was the thought that new knowledge on sex and sexuality produced in Germany in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries *must have* had resonance with an educated cohort of German men at Trial Bay during World War I. Surely, particularly as many were from the colonial Pacific, the known hotbed of colonial sexual otherness, those men were aware of and drawn to the region for the sexual potential offered. Even so, no-one was more surprised than I to discover first person accounts in diaries and letters of sexual activity that corroborated the suspicion. Evidence of the use of the words 'homosexuality' and 'homosexual' (the latter used as an adjective describing behaviour, not as a noun defining a category of person) revealed the internationalisation of a new word and concept.³⁵

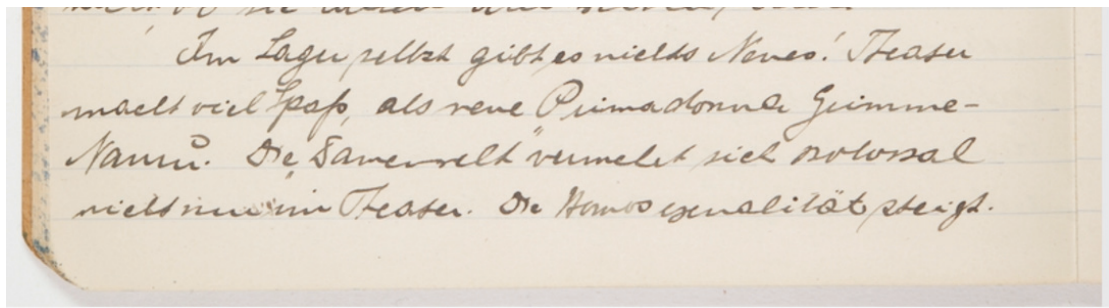


Image 6.6: 'The 'ladies' proliferate, not only on stage. Homosexuality is rampant.'
[Source: Diary of Otto Wortmann, State Library of NSW]

Evidence of queer lives is too often found in shadow: court reports record illicit behaviour and criminality, never consensual or non-sexual moments not resulting in arrest or sanction; psychological reports seek pathologies, so have no business with the healthy or happy; religious rhetoric speaks of the immoral but not the fulfilled and good. Queer archival research is also often hampered by self-censorship or, worse, erasure. The quest for queer is, thus, characterised by the hope for a trace and focussed on the

³⁵ Ibid., 31 January 1918. Elsewhere, the more conservative internee Woelber uses the words 'Pedasten' and 'Pedasterie' to refer to 'homosexual' (noun) and 'homosexuality'. But he does this in error, instead of using 'Päderasten' and 'Päderastie'.

elements not there. The challenge, as noted earlier, is to resist the temptation to frame the research in deficit.

Queer historians and social researchers, like Garry Wotherspoon and Andrew Gorman-Murray, advocate for new histories to be written that decouple queer lives from their narrow associations with the illegal, immoral or medically inadequate. Wotherspoon argues that this can be achieved through the rereading of sources previously used to support a queer history of Australia.

This is what I have achieved as subtext in this cultural history of masculinity. The presence of German internees at Trial Bay during World War I reveals a satisfying twist to the usual masculine narrative. It counters the contemporary hegemony—the ‘bushman digger’ and ‘Anzac’ archetypes—for its persistence in the national imagining. While the experiences and contributions of the soldiers of the first Australian Imperial Force should not be diminished, it is possible and appropriate to recognise other points of view. The question is one of honesty in advancing historical insights and of generosity in how Australia tells the stories of its social and sexual past.

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Epilogue

Trial Bay 2020

It is a Sunday in 2020 and once again I'm on my way to Trial Bay. This time, my partner is with me and we're staying in Arakoon for a week. I will do more research and he will sit and read his way through a pile of Christmas books. He's happy at the prospect. Sunshine. Ocean views. Pinot Gris. We say goodbye to my sister and her two sons in Port Macquarie but we'll see them at the end of the week. They are coming to Trial Bay too. They like to camp and the boys' dad gave them fishing rods for Christmas which they're keen to test. The boys enjoy running on the beach, scrambling over the rocks and swimming in the shallows behind the breakwall. Now, around the base of the gaol, on the spaces once occupied by internees' huts and cabins and tennis courts, a camping ground has grown. During summer holidays it is always booked out.

It's not lost on me my older nephew is the same age I was in 1975.

The Pacific Highway from Port Macquarie is a much improved road. Sleek and effortless to drive. The Kempsey bypass opened in 2013, elevating the roadway above the frequent floods of the mighty Macleay. But the Kundabung bypass has more recently opened, now offering dual-carriage motorway all the way from Port Macquarie to the Seven Oaks turnoff. It's my first time driving this new section. No more hairpin bends or being trapped behind a logging truck or caravan. While I cannot deny it's impressive, I feel a pang of nostalgia. For what, I'm not entirely sure.

We arrive at Lagers Point and drive through the campground at the base of the gaol. I understand at once its popularity. The camp-sites face north across the bay rather than east into the Pacific; in the lee of the gaol it's all protected. To my partner, I point out things I've learned through my research: this was the site of the Strand café, renamed The Artists' Den; there was the Berlitz school; here the whale washed up in 1917; that's where they built the hockey field.

Although still summer, school holidays have ended and the campground is emptying out. As we watch, two families secure their gear to racks on enormous four-wheel drives. The doors slam like vacuum seals and the vehicles lumber toward the exit. The Norfolk pines and other bush vegetation have grown. They shade and protect the campground and obscure, occasionally, the view of the gaol. But the building's looming

presence is unmistakable. We catch glimpses of its granite blocks, still pink in the lunchtime sun.

We leave the car in the campground and walk up the grassy verge. There's a kiosk around the drive and we decide to stop in there for lunch. It sits on the site where the officers' barracks were. Fewer trees then. My partner is patient and lets me prattle. He can see I'm excited and want him to be part of this. I point out the path to the top and we walk around the sides to the eastern face of the gaol. The entrance, foreboding and familiar, is there in the high perimeter wall. The double iron gates are open, as are the inner timber doors. A sign directs us to an office where we can purchase an entrance ticket.

*

Over the course of this project, I've visited the gaol on five separate occasions. On this trip, my final for the project, I also visit the Kempsey Museum where I'm again assisted by community historians from the Macleay River Historical Society. I'm delighted by their generosity and reminded of the depth of knowledge of the histories of this place. At the gaol itself, I have another day in the archive and museum where I'm hosted by Tom, a volunteer Friend of Trial Bay Gaol who's also a former employee of the custodian agency, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. Likewise, I'm humbled by his formidable knowledge and passion for the site, something he's happy to share. My research now feels more like a contribution than an encumbrance.

The sights and sounds and smells of the place continue to draw powerful childhood memories. The air underneath the gatehouse is still but, just as I had done as a child, I see the tips of the Norfolk pines over the top of the wall moving in the breeze. Dad nursing my sister. Mum calling us to lunch.

But such time warps shouldn't surprise. I think of the Dunghutti and their deep-time connection to this land and sea. Theirs was a chaotic and murderous meeting with settler colonials, here and along the Macleay. The land carries trauma and sadness for the savagery of Kinchela, just sixteen kilometres away. I used to think the pink of the granite was like blood in a sleeping creature's veins. Perhaps the blood was spilled when the creature was disturbed.

My partner walks on ahead and I'm struck by our difference from the families around us; mums and dads corralling tribes of kids and young straight couples unself-consciously holding hands. I reflect on the 'queerness' I carry at my core and which

connects me to the men of my project, one hundred years ago, and to a history of activism, celebration and determination that transformed the lives of people like me. In the same way I was ignorant of the Dunghutti's traditional ownership of what became Trial Bay, I was also ignorant of myriad queer lives and desires. This place oozes queerness. It only becomes visible if we think to look. I'm reminded that the stories we tell ourselves and our children are a fraction of the whole. If inconvenient truths threaten our security, we tend to lock them away.

*

It's time to head back to the house. The rental in which we're staying sits high among the eucalypts on the hill behind Arakoon. On the other side of the hill is the walking path from Lagers Point to Smoky Cape that passes the German monument. Kangaroos thump through the bush, we hear them before we see them. They nibble the native grass, metres from where we sit; they twitch and scratch and stretch and then move on, unconcerned.

I have a memory of my brothers running back to Mum and Dad and the barbecue and bassinette. I almost hear Mum shouting for us not to go too far, for us not to be too long. Her voice echoes down the centuries. How many mums have called their kids to lunch as they raced along this beach? How many dads sat on the rocks, wishing they could hold an absent infant daughter? The absence of my parents from my present world makes me sad. But I'm happy to be in this place. Always. I remain intrigued by the layers of human grit it conceals. Things have happened here; the place has a bleeding core—and the blood unites but implicates us all.

I am connected here too.

Appendices

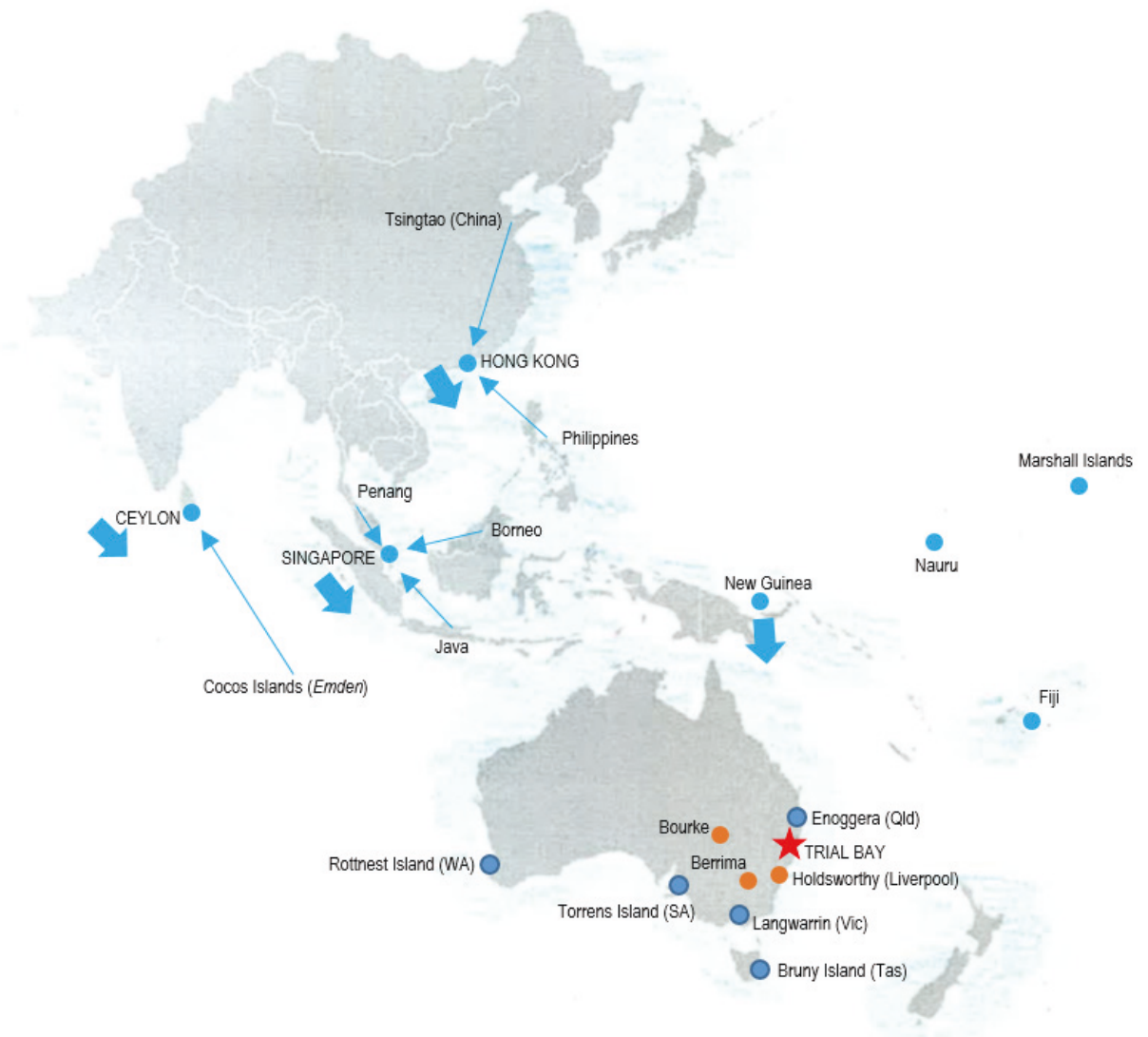
Appendix 1: Glossary

<i>Bildungsbürgertum</i>	The new social class of wealthy non-noble people that emerged in Germany in the mid-18th century. This group distinguished themselves through education in the humanities, literature and science, and involvement in state affairs. As such, they were often civil servants and shaped the bureaucracies of German modernism and colonialism.
<i>Deutschtum</i>	‘Germanness’ of character and spirit. ‘ <i>Deutschtumpolitik</i> ’ was the policy of advancing German pride, particularly in the colonial diaspora, pursued aggressively by Kaiser Wilhelm II as part of the imperial venture.
<i>Freikörperkultur</i>	The ‘free body culture’, or nudism, which emerged around the fin-de-siècle as a response to the restrictive wearing of clothing, such as corsets or harsh textiles
<i>Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft</i>	Generally translated as ‘community and society’, are two sociological categories that define one another. Max Weber, generally recognised as being a founding figure in sociology, wrote extensively about the relationship between <i>Gemeinschaft</i> and <i>Gesellschaft</i> .
<i>Gemütlichkeit</i>	A state of cosiness and warmth, marked by friendliness and friendship.
<i>Geselligkeitstrieb</i>	The gregariousness/sociability that supposedly exists more naturally between men than women. It is an underpinning supposition for the existence of the <i>Männerbund</i> .
<i>Gründerzeit</i>	The economic phase in central Europe in the mid-nineteenth century (before the stock market crash of 1873) in which Germany was at the peak of its industrialisation boom.
<i>Heimat</i>	Generally translated as ‘home’ or ‘homeland’, the word has a uniquely German connotation relating to German culture, society and specifically German Romanticism.
<i>Heldentod</i>	Tradition of soldiers performing heroically with courage and willingness to sacrifice their lives for the war effort. It associates surrender or capture with dishonour, cowardice or treason.
<i>Kameradschaft</i>	‘Comradeship’ but can have a homosocial/sexual inference.
<i>Kriegsnachrichtenwesen</i>	System of military intelligence supposedly operating in Australia and New Zealand, enabling espionage activity during World War I.

<i>Naturverbundenheit</i>	Sense of oneness with nature.
<i>Realpolitik</i>	Brand of politics or diplomacy based on given circumstances and factors, rather than ideological or moral and ethical notions. It shares its philosophical approach with realism and pragmatism. The term <i>Realpolitik</i> is sometimes used pejoratively to imply politics that are coercive, amoral, or Machiavellian.
<i>Sammlungspolitik</i>	This ‘bringing together policy’ aimed to unite the political parties and groups in favour of <i>Weltpolitik</i> and to diminish the Social-Democratic Party [SPD]. Most parties supported <i>Weltpolitik</i> but in 1909 the navy budget became controversial. Instead of choosing to tax the rich, the government chose to increase sales tax (and therefore increasing the price of goods), which led to its sudden loss of support from parties like the Zentrumspartei and the Liberals. In 1912 election, the SPD gained 112 seats, making it the largest party in the Reichstag.
<i>Verein</i>	Societies or clubs advancing German culture e.g. a <i>Turnverein</i> is a gymnastics club.
<i>Volksgemeinschaft</i>	The comradeship of soldiers, and honour which emerged in World War I. The ideal was co-opted by nationalist ideology.
<i>Weltanschauung</i>	A ‘world view’ or ontological orientation of an individual or society. The term is a union of the German words <i>Welt</i> (‘world’) and <i>Anschauung</i> (‘view’ or ‘outlook’).
<i>Weltpolitik</i>	<p>‘World politics’ was the imperialist foreign policy promoted by Wilhelm II to transform Germany into a global power—this the policy behind Germany’s colonial push. Though considered a logical consequence of the German unification, it marked a decisive break with the defensive Realpolitik of the Bismarck era.</p> <p>The origins can be traced to a Reichstag debate on 6 December 1897 during which Foreign Secretary (later Chancellor) Bernhard von Bülow famously said, ‘We wish to throw no-one into the shade, but we demand our own place in the sun.’</p>
<i>Weltschmerz</i>	An element of German Romanticism which describes something more than simple despair, disillusionment and world weariness. In other literature, it could be characterised as a spiritual emptiness e.g. a dark night of the soul.
<i>Zwischenstufenlehre</i>	The doctrine of sexual intermediacy developed by Magnus Hirschfeld stating that all human beings are intersexual variants, ie unique composites of different proportions of masculinity and femininity. Since proportions vary from one person to another and in the same individual over time, it is <i>Sensu stricto</i> (not possible to describe discrete sexual categories).

Appendix 2: Maps

Map 1: Asia-Pacific internment camps, and direction of internee mobility



Key to Map 2: Trial Bay Internment Camp

Map #	
1	Main gaol entrance Post office, Commandant's office, C barracks, Mess 1
2	Main gaol building Great hall; entrance to two wings: A wing (north), B wing (south)
3	Main camp kitchen and bake house
4	New wooden E barracks, Messes 1-8 (north), Mess 9 (south) constructed for the Hong Kong internees in 1916 (upper)
5	Theatre Three small buildings behind (L->R) are: billiard hall, hot bath house, latrines
6	Large building is C barracks, Messes 2-10 Smaller building is hospital
7	Officers barracks and mess, officers' orderly room
8	Turnplatz (outdoor exercise area)
9	Mechanic's school
10	Strand/Artists Den Café, huts and clubrooms
11	Breakwall
12	Bowling alley, canteen (front), Duck Coop restaurant (back)
13	Tennis courts (x3)
14	Boxing club and storage shed in old quarry
15	Guards' area: barracks (x2), latrines/washhouse, reading room, kitchen, dining room, garden, tennis court
16	Stables, vegetable garden Three small buildings (L->R) are: horse fodder shed, blacksmith, carpentry shed

Appendix 3: Daily schedule at Trial Bay

6.00	Gates open
6.30	<i>Reveille</i>
7.45	Sick parade
8.30	Breakfast
9.00	Roll call
10.30	Inspection of barracks
13.00	Lunch (main meal)
18.00	Gates close
18.15	Bugle call and rollcall
18.30	Tea
22.00	Lights out

* Note: the schedule changed multiple times between August 1915 and May 1918, including the number and frequency of rollcalls and the time at which the gates were closed. Daylight Saving time was introduced in New South Wales on 1 January 1917 which further affected the schedule, for example, the time of gate closure and lights out.

Appendix 4: Timeline

*Every three months, the official visitor would visit the Trial Bay camp; every three or four months, the commandant of German concentration camps would visit.

1914	
4 August	<i>War Precautions Act 1914</i> (Cth) becomes effective (although receives assent on 29 October), limiting freedom of movement and association of aliens and movement of money out of Australia, except on certain conditions
5 August	Australia declares war on Germany and Austria; Australian Lutheran Synod sends telegram to governor-general confirming loyalty of German-Australian community
10 August	Recruiting begins for Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F.); Introduction of requirement for registration of 'enemy aliens'
11 August	Censorship established
19 August	Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (A.N.M.E.F.) leaves Sydney for German New Guinea
August–October	Internment camps set up in all six Australian military districts. These were in addition to holding and/or transfer camps in most state capitals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District 1 (Qld): Enoggera—6km north-west of Brisbane city • District 2 (NSW): Holdsworthy—at Liverpool, 25km south-west of central Sydney • District 3 (Vic): Langwarrin—42km south-east of Melbourne • District 4 (Tas): Bruny Island—in the D'Entrecasteaux Strait, 80km south of Hobart • District 5 (SA): Torrens Island—in Port River estuary, 15km north-east of Adelaide • District 6 (WA): Rottneest Island (Wadjemup)—18km off the coast of Fremantle
5 September	Federal election: Australian Labor Party under Andrew Fischer defeats Joseph Cook's Commonwealth Liberal Party
8 September	Anti-German riots in Melbourne
12 September	A.N.M.E.F. captures Rabaul in New Britain; surrender of colonial government of German New Guinea
29 October	<i>War Precautions Act 1914</i> (Cth) and <i>Trading with the Enemy Act 1914</i> (Cth) receive royal assent, giving local authority to intern enemy subjects whose behaviour was deemed to be 'disaffected or disloyal'
1 November	First Australian and NZ troops leaves for Europe from Albany in WA
8 November	Fall of Tsingtao to the Japanese
9 November	German cruiser SS <i>Emden</i> disabled off Cocos Islands in Indian Ocean by HMAS <i>Sydney</i> , of the Australian navy. Of the surviving crew (243 of 376), wounded were sent to Australia and interned in Holdsworthy
3 December	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) formed in Egypt

1915	
1 January	'Battle of Broken Hill': German Club burned down by rioting miners after two Turks attack picnic train in Broken Hill
21 February	76 wounded reservists from Tsingtao arrive to internment camp on Stonecutters Island, Hong Kong
April	First internees transported to Australia from south-east Asia (Singapore Straits settlement) via Burns, Philp & Co. steamers <i>Montoro</i> and German New Guinea via <i>Morinda</i>
25 April	First A.I.F. lands at Gallipoli
May	Enemy Contracts Annulment Act 1915 (Cth)
c.6 May	Captains and first officers and engineers of merchant ships transferred from Holdsworthy to Berrima
7 May	Sinking of British Cunard ship RMS <i>Lusitania</i> by German U-boat off the southern coast of Ireland
5 June	Italy enters the war on the Allied side
23/24 July	Planters and traders (previously paroled) rounded up and interned in two houses in Herbertshöhe and Rabaul
July/August	Regional internment camps closed; internees transported to Holdsworthy
4 August	Arrival to Holdsworthy of 150 internees from Ceylon/Sumatra, including 30 from the <i>Emden</i> , 15 Catholic priests and 3 Buddhist monks
11 August	Deportation on <i>Morinda</i> of first 23 planters/traders from New Guinea
18 August	First internees arrive to Trial Bay via SS <i>Yulgilbar</i> : 200 merchants and plantation owners from East Asia, plus cooks, first-aid men and orderlies/other support (=200)
September	Arrival to Trial Bay of another 50 internees (=250)
26 September	Visit of the American Consul-General Joseph I. Brittain, Colonel E. T. Wallack (commandant of the 2 nd military district) and Major R. S. Sands (commandant of German concentration camps in NSW). Internee Gerbrecht speaks unflatteringly to Brittain in front of Sands and Wallack
27 October	Andrew Fisher resigns leadership of Australian Labor Party; William Morris ('Billie') Hughes assumes leadership and becomes prime minister
End October	Another visit by Major Sands
November	Arrival to Trial Bay of another 60 internees (=310)
23 November	Arrival to Trial Bay of 30 reserve officers plus 10 others, including Trade envoy de Haas, via SS <i>Yulgilbar</i> (=350); construction of new barracks
29 November	Arrival to Holdsworthy of 900 internees from Rottneest Island, including 45 from the <i>Emden</i>
3 December	Permission granted to receive morning newspapers (<i>Herald</i> and <i>Telegraph</i>)
5 December	Arrival of cohort of 75 ships' officers and engineers, including those from Rottneest cohort, via SS <i>Yulgilbar</i> . Includes Friedrich Meier (=425)
8–20 December	Evacuation of ANZAC troops from Gallipoli
15 December	Prime Minister Hughes publishes his 'call to arms'

1916	
January	Arrival to Trial Bay of Dr Max Herz (24 Jan); and Oscar Plate Arrival to Sydney of internees transported from Hong Kong on SS <i>Empire</i>
23 January– 13 February	General strike at Trial Bay
1 February	Lieutenant John K.L Eaton (commandant) promoted to Captain
3 February	Arrival to Trial Bay of 94 internees from Hong Kong group via SS <i>Yulgilbar</i> (=520)
4 February	North Coast Boomerangs (recruitment march) departs Kempsey for Cooperabung (16 miles)
13 February	Visit of American vice-consul, Eli Taylor; brings end to strike An off-duty guard swimming with friends got into difficulties; rescued by SWR's strongest swimmer, fisherman Gordon Young who was then sucked out by the undertow but was washed back up an hour later still alive
14 February	A.I.F. volunteers from Casula camp were joined by others from Liverpool camp (not G.C.C.) in a drunken riot in Liverpool. Soldiers commandeered train to Central where rampage continued. One private was shot dead.
March–April	Visits to Trial Bay of the official visitor, Mr Justice David Ferguson; the governor-general, Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson; the Hon. Hugh Mahon, acting attorney-general and minister for external affairs
4 March	Completion of wooden barracks to house overflow internees
20 March	ANZACs arrive in France to aid combat of German offensive at Verdun
24 April	Easter Uprising in Ireland
End April	Arrival of Burkard, former committee chair at Liverpool (resigned 1 Jan)
May	Definition of 'enemy alien' expanded to include Australian-born civilians Amendment to <i>Trading with the Enemy Act 1914</i> (Cth) allows forced closure of enemy companies and taking over property Prime Minister Hughes calls for closer ties with Empire
25 May	Lt Street (G.C.C., Liverpool), W.H. Richardson Clark (Parramatta district coroner), M. Williams (deposition clerk) and Const. McGrath arrive to Trial Bay to take deposition from Ernst Frankfurter (chair of committee Jan–Feb 1916) relating to Black Hand gang murder of Portmann at Holdsworthy
20 June	Seven internees escape via a tunnel dug out of Liverpool camp. Six were quickly recovered but Fritz Georgi (28, mechanic, aka Raddatz) remains free Opening of new guards' recreation hall
June	Completion of wooden barracks to house Hong Kong internees
July	Following June referendum (sparked by February riot), NSW pubs close at 6.00pm
18 July	Direction from a/prime minister to allow newspapers daily, subject to occasional prohibition of particular newspapers which are objectionable
21 July	Wartime price control established
July–August	Battle of the Somme (23,000 Australian casualties in 7 weeks)

Masculinity on Trial

12 August	Opening of new theatre building, built with profits from the canteen
28 August	Italy and Romania declare war on Germany
September	Reduction of rations to imperial rations
1 September	Internees take over running of canteen but also have to take on initial debt. Also the bakery cooperative took over the baking of bread and pastries, also at a substantial saving from the bread purchased by the Australians
12 September	Captain Eaton joins A.I.F. and departs for training (deployed to Europe on 22 December). Replaced by Lieutenant Max Bedford. (Interim commandant: Lieutenant Palmer)
October–December	NSW miners demand increased wages and reduced hours; strike ensues
28 October	First conscription referendum fails by narrow margin
October	Registration of enemy aliens extended to ‘all aliens, whether enemy or not’
End October	Visit by new commandant of German concentration camps, Colonel Holman (replaced Lt-Col Sands) who promised the extension of the zone of parole to two miles (rejected by Department of Defence in Melbourne). Saw a production at the theatre
14 November	Prime Minister Hughes walks out of Labor Party caucus; forms National Labor Party
November	Strike of coal miners on east coast of Australia
19 December	<i>Unlawful Associations Act 1916</i> (Cth) passed to combat left-wing unionism ie International Workers of the World (I.W.W.)
December	Discovery of still by newly arrived Lieutenant Palmer
	Departure for London by Prime Minister Hughes, leaving the government in the hands of the minister for defence, Senator Pearce
	Until December 1916, the camps were under the direction of the Headquarters General Staff, but after that date control was taken over by the adjutant-general.
24 December	Burial of internee Hermann Adam, a merchant from Hong Kong, (manager of the China Import & Banking Company). While bathing, Adam cut his foot; the wound didn’t heal and became septic. (First death of 5)

1917	
9 January	Nationalist Party formed with Billie Hughes as leader and prime minister
15 January	South West Rocks experiencing a boom in visits by families of internees; ordered construction of half-way house along the beach to facilitate meetings (for 8 weeks only before being cancelled)
14 March	Further amendment to <i>War Precautions Act 1914</i> (Cth): naturalised 'enemy aliens' disenfranchised for duration of war
28 March	Internee Horst Eckert (Ceylon) dies in Sydney hospital (second death of 5)
3 April	Camp medical officer Dr Max Herz writes a special report to the official visitor Mr Justice Harvey on the declining physical and psychical conditions of the Trial Bay internees
6 April	US enters war, declares war on Germany and Austria
c. 20 April	Resignation of camp committee, Berblinger continues with his own deputies Crusemann and Weinbrecher plus 17 elected others
April–May	Battle of Bullecourt (10,000 Australian casualties)
3 May	Daniel Mannix becomes archbishop of Melbourne and speaks out against conscription
5 May	Federal election: Hughes' Nationalist Party wins
31 May	Burial of internee and company commander Conrad Peters (general manager of the Galle-Face Hotel in Colombo, died 13 May), after he was stung by a stingray while swimming. Through negligence, the wound became septic. (Third death of five)
6 June	All internees are photographed individually holding a 4 digit number in front of them
17 June	Visit to Trial Bay by Mr Mark Ruddy, senior consul for Switzerland (in charge of German interests). Dined with internees and spent afternoon with Albrecht Berblinger (no officers present), plus petitioning internees
23 June	Visit of the official visitor, Mr Justice J.M. (John Musgrave) Harvey
26 June	Drowning death of internee Arno Friedrich; body never recovered (fourth death of 5)
June	Lutheran schools in South Australia forced to close
July	Surveying equipment permitted to be released for Capt. Emil Dery and team to make their map
3 July	The whale is beached; internees attempt to recover whale oil
July-August	Internees allegedly make radio contact with the nearby SMS <i>Wolf</i> and set up possibility of future communications with other raiders
4 August	Establishment of Trial Bay Gaol post office
August–September	General Strike: Strike of railway and tram workers in NSW expands to include dockworkers, miners and other workers: no mail to camp
September	Parole extension granted. Internees build sports ground and vegetable garden
September	Shift to imperial rations

Masculinity on Trial

17 September	Requests received by governor-general for Australia to accept 3,000 internees from China and 3,290 Germans and Austrians from German East Africa. Acceptance necessitates construction of new super-camp facilities at Pialligo on the Molonglo River, near Queanbeyan
17 September	Internee Oscar Plate leaves Trial Bay under military escort to attend a court case in Melbourne
24 September	Departure of Lieutenant Bedford to join the A.I.F. Engineer Officers School; arrival of interim commandant, Captain Alexander McKean
September–October	Battles of Ypres and Passchendaele
1 October	First issue of <i>Welt am Montag</i> published
14 October	Visit of Swiss consul, Mr Marc Ruty, to Bourke camp
22 October	Australian transcontinental railway link completed; visit of Swiss consul, Mr Marc Ruty, to Holdsworthy camp
31 October	Australian Light Horsemen capture Beersheeba in Palestine
Early November	Arrival of new commandant, Major Grantley A. H. Holborow
7 November	Bolshevik Revolution in Russia
8 November	German placenames in South Australia change with introduction of <i>Nomenclature Act 1917</i> (SA)
17 November	Final (alleged) communication with the SMS <i>Wolf</i>
3 December	North Coast railhead arrives to Kempsey
20 December	Second conscription referendum fails
22 December	Russia opens peace negotiations with Germany (Brest-Litovsk)

1918	
11 January	President Wilson's Fourteen Point Plan
March	Departure of the Colombo priests and Father Dicks (of New Guinea). All were eventually to return when they were unable to sail to the USA because the crews refused to take on German citizens
March–May	German Spring Offensive: unsuccessful
April	New super-camp facilities completed at Pialligo on the Molonglo River, ready for the receipt of internees from China and German East Africa. A protest and threat of reprisal against mass transfer cancels the plan
3 April	Internee Heinrich Albrecht dies in Gladesville asylum (fifth death of 5)
25 April	Herz steps down as theatre director; replaced by Fischer
April	Completion of monument to five dead comrades: 20 feet high and ten feet square. The committee hired a team of oxen (ten pairs) to haul the cut granite blocks to the site on the hill behind the gaol
19 May	Trial Bay camp closed; internees walk to Jerseyville, then punted to Kempsey to catch train back to Holdsworthy. Arrive Holdsworthy 6.35am. 450 internees are rehoused in Holdsworthy's newly constructed #4 (Eastern) Compound
27 May	200 internees from family camp at Bourke relocated to new Molonglo facilities
31 May	General Sir John Monash assumes command of Australian forces in France
31 August	Mass protests (Melbourne) against high cost of living
26 September	Visit to Holdsworthy of Swiss consul, Mr Olaf E. Pauss
16 October	Visit to Molonglo of Swiss consul, Mr Olaf E. Pauss
17 October	Visit to Berrima of Swiss consul, Mr Olaf E. Pauss
3 November	Mutiny of German fleet; workers and soldiers' councils established in Germany
9 November	Kaiser Wilhelm abdicates; goes into exile to The Netherlands
10 November	German Weimar Republic is founded
11 November	Armistice (at 11.00am) officially ends wartime hostility

1919	
January	First cases of influenza in Melbourne; fear of contagion to Holdsworthy
13 January	Peace Conference at Versailles
24 March	Protest demonstration against continuation of <i>War Precautions Act 1914</i> (Cth) sparks 'red flag riots' in Brisbane
May	Australian troops join British at Archangel (Russia) in attempt to defeat the Bolshevik Revolution
19 May	Broken Hill mines closed by strike (which lasts til 20 November); seamen's strike (lasts til August) halts much shipping around Australia
28 June	Prime Minister Hughes in Paris, signing Peace Treaty at Versailles
29 June	Striking meatworkers clash with police in Townsville
May–November	Deportation of 'enemy aliens' to Germany (total number of deportees: 6,150). Many Trial Bay internees depart on <i>Willochra</i> 27 May and on <i>Kursk</i> 29 May
June–July	Pneumonic influenza outbreak at Holdsworthy
3 July	German monument at Trial Bay blown up by disgruntled locals
19 July	Peace Day processions throughout Australia, followed by riots and clashes between returned soldiers and police in Melbourne
29 August	Max Herz's denaturalisation formally signed-off by governor-general
4 September	Max Herz' naturalisation revoked
10 September	Prime Minister Hughes declares Australian mandate over German New Guinea a triumph for 'White Australia'

1920	
23 February	Otto Wortmann deported to Java
3 March	Louis Burkard released back into NSW community, avoiding deportation
1 April	Max Herz refuses to board the Dutch ship <i>Van Cloon</i>
9 April	Max Herz released after intercession of Prime Minister Hughes (4 years and 11 months in internment)
5 May	German concentration camp at Holdsworthy officially closed

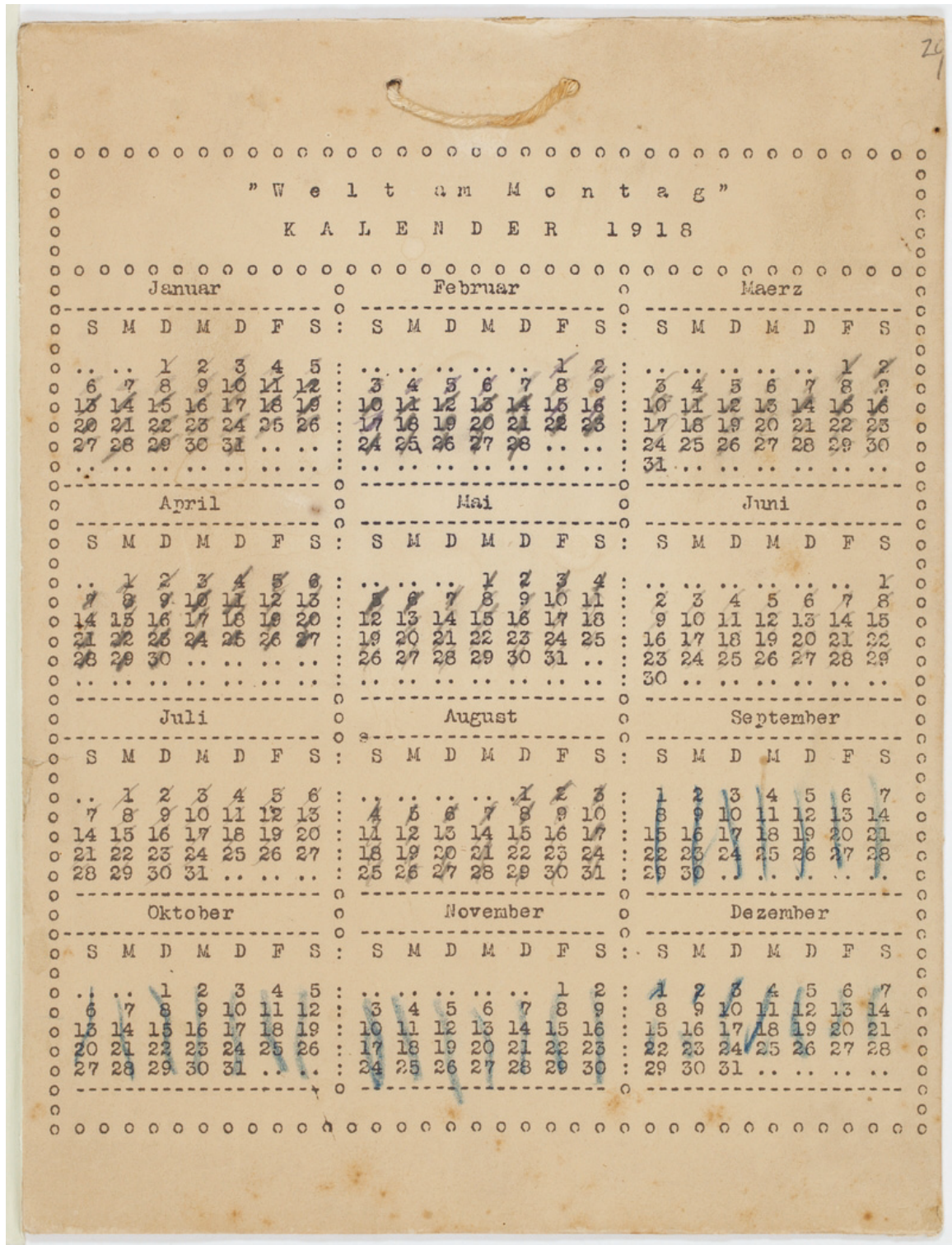


Image: *Welt am Montag* 1918 calendar, marked off day-by day [Source: State Library NSW]

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