Poolspace:
A deconstruction and reconfiguration of public swimming pools

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Abstract

There are over 200 council-run public swimming pools in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The *Local Government Act* (2002) provides for public swimming pools as 'core services' in the same vein as libraries, museums, reserves, recreational facilities, and other community infrastructure (Department of Internal Affairs, 2010). Egalitarian, utilitarian discourses underpin the provision for public swimming pools, or 'aquatic facilities'. These discourses implicitly promise that public swimming pools will remain features on the cultural landscape for all New Zealanders. However, this ideal is apparently under threat; several media reports have even claimed that pools currently face extinction. Consequently, community groups across the country are fighting to 'save their pools' (for example, 'Friends of Edgeware' and 'Keep the Bluff Pool Open'). As well as sparking debate, impending and proposed pool closures beg numerous questions: Why do we hold pools dear? Why are pools worth saving? What assumptions underpin the loss and saviour of public swimming facilities? What is the 'cultural' cost of preserving/losing public swimming pools? In this thesis I consider the plight of public swimming pools. I adopt a loose framework which is centred on deconstruction and reconfiguration. In particular I use the guiding concepts – representations, foundations, and subjectivity to make the pool, something that appears ordinary and certain, extraordinary and uncertain. In Chapter I, I look to historical and contemporary representations of swimming to describe and deconstruct some of the ideas that surround swimming, and why we might consider swimming to be part and parcel of 'culture'. I argue that representations advocating the usefulness of swimming and thus the need for public swimming pools (re)produce taken-for-granted cultural knowledge and logic that privileges particular ways of knowing. In Chapter II, I deconstruct the pool as it is represented and 'objectified' as a distinct object in several representations and historical narratives, and move toward a more fluid conceptualisation of public swimming pools – pool space. In Chapter III, I describe my

analysis of pool space. To this end, I draw on ‘fragments’ of pool space collected from a range of sources from visits to pools, films, novels, news media and websites. I analyse these fragments by way of engagement. My engagement is centred on the principle of ‘becoming’, and performed through the processes of ‘disrupting’ and ‘feeling’. In Chapter IV, I further tackle the problem of representation, and propose a montage method to re-present my engagement of pool space. My montages are shaped by my reading and interpretation of theories of deconstruction and postmodern aesthetics (reconfiguration). The method is also my attempt to reconcile critiques of work that are wholly deconstructive, with a productive approach to knowledge making. Through the four montages – Everything in its Right Place, Saturated Pleasures, Dead Water and No-bodies, and It’s a Matter of Time – I invite readers to *feel* pool space. In light of the four montages I ask readers to consider whether public swimming pools in their commonly ‘known’ form should, or need to, remain features on the cultural landscape.

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Contents

Overture

She looked like one of the boys at the school baths, who sits on a step, shivering, just like that, and wants to go in and yet is frightened. (Mansfield, 2006 [1923], p. 361)

Introduction

Public swimming pools are widely accepted as a social institution which has been part of the cultural landscape in Aotearoa/New Zealand since the late 1800s. There are over 200 council-run[1] public swimming pools in Aotearoa/New Zealand and the *Local Government Act* (2002) provides for public swimming pools as 'core services' in the same vein as libraries, museums, reserves, recreational facilities, and other community infrastructure (Department of Internal Affairs, 2010). Yet, notwithstanding the visibility and popularity of public swimming pools, talk of their extinction and disappearance is rife.

Concern over high drowning rates has exacerbated public anxiety over the fate of public swimming pools and raised debate around the cost of the 'disappearing' pool (Boock, 2010; 2011). In New Zealand talk of the demise of the public pool is touted as being a particular concern for children who live in an 'island nation' and who are all expected to know how to swim (Hess & Parker, 2009; Water Safety New Zealand, 2010). However, discussions and occasional political struggles over pool closures are not peculiar to New Zealand. For example, Mooney & Fyfe (2006) describe well-publicised cases of pool closures in Glasgow, Manchester and London. Furthermore, according to McShane (2009) swimming pools once represented "one of the most vigorous examples of infrastructure provision in Australia" (p. 195). Nevertheless, McShane goes on to point out that perceptions of seasonal, outdoor pools have changed over the last four decades:

[1] Some of these pools are fully managed and operated by local councils and some are jointly managed by councils and community boards or trusts.

> Seasonal pools once symbolised local progress, a cultural pre-disposition for outdoor, particularly aquatic recreation, and the social welfare role of local authorities. In recent years they have been portrayed as financial burdens, providing limited service to the local community, symbolising uncoordinated development within the local sector and, in some instances, guilty of unsustainably high water use. (p. 195)

While pool provision is currently a significant issue in recreation management in New Zealand research such as the articles cited above illustrate that the plight of the pool is not an isolated concern and similar debates exist in other nations.

Egalitarian, utilitarian discourses tend to underpin the provision of public swimming pools, or 'aquatic facilities' and importantly, even in the face of the possibility of disappearance, public swimming pools are normally framed extremely positively. In contemporary New Zealand, swimming pools make "good community sense" (Boock, 2011). Auckland mayor Len Brown's proposed initiative to provide free swimming across the city, following the success of free swimming in the suburb of Manukau, is a case in point (Aucklanders could get free pools, 2011; www.manukauleisure.co.nz, 2011). In Australia and England public swimming pools are also framed as inherently good 'leisure sites' that facilitate a wide range of physical and social benefits. According to McShane (2009), municipal pools are significant community facilities. Robinson & Taylor (2003) state that along with sports halls, swimming pools are "an important part of local authority leisure provision in England and their contribution to sporting opportunities has been significant. (p. 1.) Further, one study of swimming pools in two remote Aboriginal communities in Australia concluded that the pools "resulted in significant health and social gains" and that the cost involved in building and maintaining them was "a small price to

pay" to reduce chronic disease and improve health, educational, and social outcomes (Lehmann, Tennant, Silva, McAullay, Lannigan, Coates and Stanley, 2003, p. 418). And finally, according to Thomson, Kearns & Petticrew (2003) "health, mental health and social contact" contribute to people's perceptions of the pool as a "valued amenity" (p. 665). Public swimming pools exist in popular imagination and discourse as places to enhance health, facilitate social cohesion, and reinforce social values. The public swimming pool is apparently a place 'for the people' and unquestionably some people hold very strong emotional and political attachments to the pool. Indeed, it could be argued that people's attachments to the pool as a social good are intensified on account of the moral undertones that accompany the pool.

Despite the apparent benefits of public swimming pools two major factors are said to contribute to the possible demise of the pool. First, are the increasingly rigid guidelines about water control, and swimmer safety.[2] In this regard school swimming pools are said to be especially at risk with 239 school pool closures occurring between 2003 and 2005 (Boock, 2010; Water Safety New Zealand, 2010). While school pools might not technically be considered public pools, in rural areas, school pools also double as public swimming facilities (Reid, 2011). Second, the costs associated with the maintenance of pools for councils are cited as a major reason for the potential closure of public swimming pools (Thomson, Kearns & Petticrew, 2003). In some cases smaller pools are at the mercy of council decision makers who believe that fewer, larger, more centralised 'aquatic facilities' are more economically viable (Harding, 2009). In the context of a 'global recession' local governments are being forced to exercise constraint and provide only essential services. Thus in some areas the worth of public swimming pools is currently hotly debated.

[2] For example See Pool Safe guidelines – a conjoint initiative between Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC), Watersafety New Zealand and New Zealand Recreation Association (www.nzrecreation.org.nz, 2011)

In response to threats of pool closures, community groups in Aotearoa/New Zealand are fighting to 'save their pools' (for example, successful campaigns include 'Friends of Edgeware' and 'Keep the Bluff Pool Open'). These campaigns illustrate how seriously people take this issue. The Edgeware campaign, for example, sparked "bitter clashes" with Christchurch city Mayor and councillors (Conway, 2010). These local campaigns bear similarities to the 'save the lido movement' in Britain where there are apparently action groups campaigning for the restoration of every "derelict lido" (Smith 2005, p. 9; see also Mooney & Fyfe, 2006). McShane (2009) also cites examples of residents fighting to save their outdoor pool in the western Melbourne suburb of Sunshine.

Advocates for save the pool campaigns argue that public swimming pools 'do' more than just enable people to swim. Interestingly, in Aotearoa/New Zealand this type of rhetoric is accompanied by the belief that we have a 'right' to enjoy public swimming pools. Therefore there is an underlying assumption evident in save the pool campaigns that to lose public swimming pools would be a culturally significant loss. The political tension surrounding pool closures, whether deemed a real threat or otherwise, is interesting from a cultural perspective because it symbolises a struggle between local governments and particular citizens' wishes. However, this struggle also raises questions about what sites, objects and knowledge are deemed culturally significant? And subsequently, what a pool is, who it is for, and what might be its purpose?

In this thesis I explore public swimming pools from a cultural perspective. Rather than performing a fiscal or sociological analysis of the pool, I focus on the 'cultural' significance of

preserving/losing public swimming pools. To this end I examine the assumptions that underpin the provision of public swimming pools and 'save the pool' rhetoric; and attempt to evaluate our attachment to public swimming pools.

Approaching the public swimming pool

I have chosen to approach public swimming pools from a cultural perspective. My academic 'home' is physical education – a multidisciplinary school that broadly studies movement and movement culture(s). While physical education is predominantly a multidisciplinary area of study, with many physical education scholars working within sub-disciplinary silos such as sociology of sport, history of sport, biomechanics, exercise physiology, the area affords opportunities for interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary work. That is, physical educators can draw on literature and the theories of the natural sciences, social sciences and humanities to transcend sub-disciplinary boundaries. In this project I draw from a wide number of areas including cultural geography, historiography, cultural theory, leisure studies, sociology, and sports studies. I follow Nigel Thrift's (2008) approach and frame my project as one which is intentionally trans-disciplinary and "tries to avoid any particular disciplinary tradition in the arts and humanities and social sciences" (p. 20). As he comments, this is particularly important for work that delves into the 'ordinary' because "any politics of ordinary moments is bound to transgress these disciplinary boundaries since it involves so many different elements of discipline and indiscipline, imagination and narrative, sense and nonsense" (Thrift, 2008, p. 20).

While my approach may seem to reflect what might be expected from the field of cultural studies, here I want to make a distinction between a cultural studies project and a cultural approach from

within physical education. Cultural studies, as field of scholarship, first appeared in Britain in the 1950s. Concerned with the cultural 'practices' of everyday lives, cultural studies encompasses a wide range of disciplines, utilises many methods, and subscribes to a variety of (non)theoretical leanings. Ultimately, cultural studies challenges the accepted, conventional forms of culture by "placing the normal and the usual in a 'strange and disorientating new context' thus forcing us to see it again 'in a new way' as if for the first time, and so account for it and judge it anew" (Hall, 2002, p. 16). I certainly see this project as fitting within the cultural studies mandate cited above; public swimming pools are part of 'ordinary culture' and might be considered everyday objects, and I am certainly setting out to trouble this logic. However, much work in cultural studies has emerged from foundations in humanities, especially literary criticism and as such rather than framing the project as a cultural studies project per se, I think that my project is more appropriately situated as a physical education project that brings together several strands of work that could loosely be categorised as contributing to, and/or, emerging out of the 'cultural turn'.

The 'cultural turn' is a name often given to mark a general trend characterised by an increasing interest in, and employment of, poststructuralism, postmodernism, cultural theory and literary theory over a range of disciplines. Some of the major works that caught the attention of scholars outside of literary and cultural studies include those of Michel Foucault (2002a [1969]; 2002b [1970]), David Harvey (1991), Fredric Jameson (1991), Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984), Richard Rorty (1989; 1991), and Edward Said (1979). The turn toward these works necessitated a critique of the presumptions and claims to scientific rigor embedded in the dominant paradigms of disciplines such as geography (Anderson & Gale, 1992; Bell & Valentine, 1995; Dear, 1988; Gregory, 1994; Massey, 1994; Soja, 1989) and history (Jenkins, 1995; 1997; Munslow, 1997;

Poster, 1997; Rosenstone, 1995a; 1995b; White, 1990).[3] Following these disciplinary critiques, knowledge 'makers' 'opened up' the process of knowledge making to "linguistic construction, cultural difference, and historical contingency" which effectively "eliminated...appeal[s] to timeless, underlying truths, impartial epistemological methods, and the positive accumulation of uncontested knowledge" (Ethington, 2007, p. 467). Since the 'cultural turn', researchers have become more reflective, and in turn reflexive about the assumptions underpinning their knowledge-making practices.

In this project I set out to do two things – examine cultural conditions, through the context of public swimming pools and at the same time, explore and think about the ways that knowledge about culture is made and communicated. Therefore in approaching the plight of the pool, I am interested in the cultural logic employed in save the pool rhetoric but also in the processes and assumptions that underpin knowledge and knowledge-making. So in one sense this project is about 'culture' but it is also about deconstructing and reconfiguring knowledge about culture. I hope that the way in which I have conducted this project might be useful to researchers in a whole range of areas, not merely to those who work within cultural studies.

It is also important to note here that rather than seeing 'theory' as a set of definitive statements to be applied methodically I prefer to use 'fragments' of theory and literature that I find useful to help me to (re)consider cultural conditions and undertake a productive approach to knowledge-making. Reading, for me, is part of my everyday experience and my experiences of reading are not confined to scholarly work. I try not to hierarchise works that are labeled 'theoretical' and look outside of academic texts to make sense and meaning of my existence. Therefore I have

[3] History and geography are the two disciplines with which I am most familiar.

drawn on fragments of dynamic (or as I describe in Chapter III - continuously ‘becoming’) texts in their broadest sense rather than theories per se. Related to this idea is my acknowledgement of the impossibility of knowing how an idea influences other ideas. Therefore I have tried to avoid wherever possible a citing a deterministic relationship between a theory or ‘theorist’ and my own writing. Here I borrow the term intertextuality to represent the difficulties in ascertaining exactly where one text and indeed theorist begins and ends (Dixon & Jones, 2005). I do use quotations or fragments of people’s writings in places where I believe those words clarify my points or thinking/philosophising. In line with my thoughts about theory, rather than apply a so-called theoretical framework to, or in, this inquiry I have used two guiding concepts – deconstruction and reconfiguration to conceptualise and carry out this project.

Deconstruction

In the wake of the cultural turn numerous scholars have applied deconstruction as a method to their own fields, methods, and objects of inquiry. Rather than viewing knowledge as a product that reflects cultural ‘truths’, some deconstructionists might view knowledge as a representation of cultural logic. Cultural logic might shape, or (re)produce, what knowledge systems are valued and as such cultural logic is often embedded within representations. Representations then can be ‘deconstructed’ to reveal underlying assumptions, biases, and effects. Below I detail my interpretation of the three specific foci—representation, foundationalism and subjectivity—and discuss the relevance of these terms to my deconstructive approach to public swimming pools.

Representations

Deconstructionism is a term that has been interpreted from, and applied to, the work of Jacques Derrida who argued at length about the implicit political structures present in texts (Derrida 1978; 1998). One of Derrida's key arguments rests on the idea that the formation of a text—in deconstructionism all 'things' can be referred to as texts—possesses inherent potential to contradict the claims it makes (Rorty, 1978). Applying a method of deconstruction to a text can reveal or expose the oft-hidden strategies encoded therein. However, Derrida claimed that deconstruction is not something that is necessarily applied from the outside but rather is already there; deconstruction is at play by virtue of the very existence of a text (including objects) (Derrida & Caputo, 1997). For the purpose of this inquiry I see deconstruction as both. On the one hand, deconstructionism is the potential in a text to deconstruct the thing which, by its very existence, is already deconstructing. On the other hand, I also follow others' interpretations and applications of deconstruction in understanding that the formation of certainty may be illuminated, or made visible: texts can be read and written in ways that might reveal fractions of the process through which something becomes known (or written) as definitive truth. While the latter does not reflect Derrida's 'pure' philosophical deconstructionism, it is a useful process to explore the assumptions underpinning public swimming pool provision *and* the processes (expected) of cultural inquiry and communication.

I have adopted a deconstructive approach to exploring textual representations about swimming and swimming pools which troubles taken-for-granted assumptions and problematises the assumed justification for the existence of public swimming pools. In this regard I look to a number of historical and contemporary representations which detail the emergence of public swimming pools and their place in the (contemporary) cultural landscape. I read these

representations with a view to ‘deconstructing’ them. To this end I highlight or illuminate contradictions, inconsistencies and silences embedded in textual representations of and about public swimming pools with an intent to detail possible effects of foundational knowledge for how we might ‘know’, ‘do’, ‘feel’, and ‘be’.

Foundations

In this inquiry I take the position that there are no essential truths underpinning public swimming pools. However, I do accept that representations of public swimming pools are underpinned by particular foundational knowledge and this knowledge works to provide rationales for and against the provision of public swimming pools. I use ‘deconstruction’ to call into question the material foundations of a/the ‘pool’ and the (re)production of its ideological foundations in save the pool rhetoric.

Egalitarian values underpin promotion materials and newspaper stories about the *need* for pools as safe, functional community spaces (Boock, 2010; 2011). Both historical and contemporary representations seem to assume that the public pool possesses inherent qualities which make it a social good. The pool, according to such narratives is an object ‘for the people’, a ‘thing’ for all’. For example, Wiltse (2007) claims that public pools “allow ordinary and even marginalised members of society to participate in the production of public culture” (2006, p. 208). McShane (2009), in similar vein, claims that swimming is an activity that should be available to all and thus suggests that the provision or construction of man-made swimming structures is essential to the provision of equal opportunities. My approach to these ideological foundations includes questions such as: Can we even assume the presence of a coherent ‘public’ to make use of public swimming pools? As Cohen (1985) argues:

> Desired homogeneity and wishful total connectedness rarely ever materialises as sustained relationships between all 'members' of a community. By and large community is an unrealistic vision. (p. 69)

Cohen (1985) argues further that the idea of a community "conceals the reality of differentiation, and distinctions among… members" and privileges "unity over difference". He suggests that the notion of community generates social exclusions (p. 69). So, contrary to popular opinion, public pools are not inherently 'cohesive' spaces. Actually, the very fact that they are public spaces means that they are sites which have been open to political conflict and resistance (Deutsche, 1996). In other words, the idea of 'public' glosses over all of the people that may be privileged by, and left out, of public swimming pools.

At a practical level, exclusion from 'public' pools could be as simple as living too far away, not having enough money to pay the entrance fee, or being scared of the water. However, other cultural boundaries, such as the rules about what people can wear, what they can do, when they can swim, and what they can bring with them, also operate at the pool. The abundance of rules that attempt to govern acceptable and preferable ways to relate to, and with, others at public pools contradict the notion of an egalitarian object and, rather, provide barriers to the use of the pool. Often such rules and regulations also (re)produce other social norms and 'ideals' that might privilege particular behaviour and people over others. Thus the pool (with its loaded ideological meanings) performs 'boundary work' whereby particular cultural ideals are (re)produced. In other words, foundational knowledge shapes what and who the pool is for, and what it does and the presence of the public swimming pool reinforces obvious and subtle cultural logic. My interest here is in deconstructing the ideological foundations, or knowledge, which might

underpin the provision of public swimming pools and which, in turn, shapes how the pool is used and by whom.

Subjectivity

In attempting to 'get to' the truth of something, researchers often employ specific methods that are intended to ensure 'objective distance'. These methods are underpinned by assumptions that are based on an understanding of a privileged relationship with the 'thing' whereby the researcher can know the thing objectively or outside of their own bias and subjectivity. Indeed, 'good' 'scientific' practice has been founded on the notion of objective distance (Novick, 1988). However, objective distance fails to recognise the inevitable mediation that occurs between the 'observer' and the so-called objective knowledge that is produced. Deconstructionism reveals possible politics and biases that are invariably present in research methods and forms of knowledge representation.

When I am reading and deconstructing representations and considering foundational knowledge I am also considering the inherently subjective nature of the texts. The process of making knowledge involves making decisions. Therefore, I am also interested in looking at, or deconstructing what might inform those decisions. Moreover, I see knowledge-making as a highly subjective, rather than objective, practice. Hence, I am not undertaking this inquiry from a point of objectivity. My engagement with my research questions, the evidence I select and analyse and how I re-present my findings, are all a part of 'me'. In this regard I draw on a principle of becoming to help illuminate my personal engagement with the analysis. In sum, I see myself not as an objective researcher but as an author who *makes*, rather than reveals or discovers knowledge.

Reconfiguration

One effect of (re)thinking the foundations of 'scientific' truth has been for some researchers to explore how research practices and forms of re-presentation (re)produce certain 'knowledge' or knowledge of 'certainty'. Deconstructionism is a useful approach for this project because it allows me to explore the taken-for-granted assumptions that infuse public swimming pools, and swimming 'cultures'. It allows me to think beyond a fiscal or sociological analysis, and to 'do' cultural inquiry that is not bound to an ideal to 'find' or produce certainty. However, there are many critics of deconstructionism who denounce its alleged proclivity toward nihilism and dismiss it as apolitical (Bennett & Royle, 2004). I have been inspired by such critiques to produce a positive form of deconstructionism. As part of this project I set out to reconfigure the deconstructed as something productive. In particular I was inspired by Walter Benjamin[4]:

> The destructive character sees nothing permanent. But for this very reason he sees ways everywhere. Where others encounter wall or mountains, there too, he sees a way. But because he sees a way everywhere, he has to clear things from it everywhere. Not always by brute force; sometimes by the most refined. Because he sees ways everywhere, he always positions himself at crossroads. No moment can know what the next will bring. What exists he reduces to rubble, not for the sake of the rubble, but for that of the way leading through it. (Benjamin, 2002 [1931], p. 542)

As I detail in greater depth throughout the thesis, my goal in this project is not to destroy the pool or reduce it to 'rubble', but to deconstruct the assumptions underpinning save the pool rhetoric

[4] While Benjamin might not be categorised as a deconstructionist, as I argue in various parts of this thesis, my interpretation of his work has been highly productive in reconfiguring the deconstructed 'pool'

and also to re-present the findings of this deconstruction in a way that might enable a wider audience to engage with the plight of the pool. Specifically, I have drawn on some aspects of postmodern aesthetics to make a case for a project that is at once deconstructive and productive, through my use of the term ‘reconfiguration’.

Thesis contents

This thesis is rather unconventional in that it comprises four written chapters and four montages. The four written chapters all build toward the montages which I represent in place of ‘analysis’ chapters. These chapters include background information detailing swimming, the pool, the analysis and the re-presentation of the analysis as montage. The written chapters are intended to provide the conceptual and contextual tools for the reader to engage with the montages and to this end I describe the process I undertook in deconstructing and reconfiguring public swimming pools. However the intention of the montages is that anyone should be able to engage with them, therefore I knowingly afford control to the reader for interpretation and try to avoid giving too much away in the opening chapters. Rather than providing detailed analysis in the early chapters I provide snippets and questions that I have purposefully constructed to facilitate a particular type of engagement with the montages that will inevitably be different from someone who does not read the foregrounding material.

In Chapter I, I examine historical and contemporary representations of swimming to describe and deconstruct some of the ideas that surround it, and ask why swimming might be considered part and parcel of ‘culture’. In particular, I deconstruct discourses of naturalism—the human need to swim—and; functionalism —ways that prescribed swimming has been used as a form of social control—to illustrate the cultural constructs that inform some logic used in save the pool rhetoric.

I argue that prescribed swimming provides both the material and ideological foundations of public swimming pools which (re)produce and privilege specific forms of taken-for-granted cultural knowledge.

In Chapter II, I interrogate the material foundations of the 'pool', highlighting inconsistencies across both historical and contemporary representations of public swimming pools. I draw on elements of deconstruction to problematise the definitions and statements of certainty regarding what the pool 'is'. My goal here is to show the pool as an 'incoherent' rather than a stable, knowable structure. Subsequently I argue that moving towards pool space is a productive move particularly with regard to my attempt to evaluate cultural and personal attachments to public swimming pools.

In Chapter III, I describe my 'analysis' of pool space. Specifically, I discuss how I engaged with a wide range of 'fragments' of pool space, including visits to pools, films, songs, and council archives, to name just a few. To this end I also describe a principle of becoming, and two deliberate processes of engagement - disrupting, and feeling - through which I conceptualise and problematise my subjective involvement in analysing the plight of public swimming pools.

In Chapter IV, I detail the reasons behind re-presenting my analysis as montage. I explain the process of (re)configuring fragments of pool space to form poolspace[5]. I argue that montage was a means to re-present the analysis in a form that reflects my inclinations toward ambiguity,

[5] I use the term poolspace in Chapter IV, as opposed to pool space because it represents the 'gluing' of pool space fragments. My montages are a reconfigured arrangement of deconstructed and decontextualised evidence of the plight of public swimming pools.

incoherence, and fluidity set up in Chapters I and II and III, and is a form of representation with which a range of readers can engage.

Following Chapter IV, I provide an Interlude to transition from the written chapters into the montages. The four montages are titled as follows: Montage 1: Everything in its right place; Montage 2: Saturated pleasures; Montage 3: Dead water and no bodies; Montage 4: It's a matter of time.

In Chapter V, the final chapter, I move some way towards a conclusion about the state and value of public swimming pools as symbolic of contemporary cultural conditions. I discuss and illustrate the multiple ways that knowledge can be read/re-read and, rather than provide a definitive conclusion, I ask readers to contemplate the plight of the pool for themselves. The thesis ends with a Finale, a final fragment to close the thesis.

I

Chapter I: (Un)natural inclinations: swimming and cultural logic

The New Zealand Recreation Association (NZRA) (2010) defines a 'pool' as a 'water retaining structure' designed for recreational, training or therapeutic *swimming*. In this definition pools are designed *for* swimming, or at least for humans to 'be 'immersed' in water. Following these assumptions it might also be assumed that it is 'swimming' that is at stake if we were to lose public swimming pools. Therefore in this chapter I look to historical and contemporary representations of swimming to describe and deconstruct some of the ideas that surround swimming, and why we might consider swimming to be part and parcel of 'culture'. I argue that representations advocating the usefulness of swimming and thus the need for public swimming pools (re)produce taken-for-granted cultural knowledge and logic that privileges particular ways of knowing over others.

Swimming: some foundational knowledge

Most historical representations of public swimming pools are underpinned by an assumption that swimming exists before the pool: its function precedes its form. This is important because such an assumption establishes the apparent *need* for pools. Pools are things designed for a function that has, according to some historians, occurred since pre-historic times. Several 'myths' prevail about why humans have enduringly 'taken' to the water. I discuss representations of the relationship between humans and water in three ways. First I provide a general description of assumptions and conclusions offered about why humans swim; second, I examine how swimming apparently evolved into a prescribed movement, used for a whole range of benefits

(both physical and psychological), including competitive sport; third, I look to some more obscure references to the origins and values of swimming in the form of freedom, expression and politics. I also examine the cultural logic embedded in the provision of public swimming pools today. Specifically, I suggest that the reiteration of swimming as a medium for therapy, training, and (controlled) recreation is central to the persuasiveness of that cultural logic. In other words, prescribed swimming prevails as the most culturally appropriate and accepted form of immersion and/or movement in water.

Humans in water

According to Love (2007a) we may never know the precise date when humans began to swim, because, he argues, swimming leaves no physical traces or artefacts[6]. Even without proof in the form of cultural artefacts, historians suggest swimming has been an activity humans have engaged in for a very long time. There are several references to 'early' swimming that pre-date modern 'man'. For example, Cleary (2011) states that "swimming was practiced by civilisations going back to the Egyptians" (p. 51), and Wilkie and Juba (1996) point to Egyptian hieroglyphs that apparently provide proof that humans once propelled themselves in water with "alternating movements" (p. 1). Some historians have put forward an explanation 'for swimming' that rests on the assumption that humans first began to swim out of necessity. Some point to swimming as methods for hunting while others refer to the ways swimming was used for military purposes, protection and travel. For example, Wilkie and Juba (1996) state that "the need to hunt would certainly have been a reason to swim" (p.1). Wennerberg (1997) suggests that early swimming might also have been performed during times of abundant precipitation and out of a need to move

[6] Unlike other aquatic pursuits – surfing, body boarding, sea kayaking, sailing – swimming has no apparatus.

to drier territory: “In time of flood, swimming obviously means survival” (p. 17-18). Wilkie and Juba also state that swimming might have been utilised as a vehicle for militaristic advantage (Wilkie & Juba, 1996, p. 17). The latter is a point echoed by van Leeuwen (1998), who writes that swimming in rivers became of paramount importance to those tribes and nations whose existence was dependent on their success in battle. The authors above not only provide readers with ‘facts’ about the enduring nature of swimming, but by drawing on the ‘natural’ link between humans and their basic animal needs and making definitive statements about humans having to swim for their ‘line’ to survive, they also entwine swimming within Darwinian survival discourses.

Several authors also trace the emergence of swimming and pools to wild waters that is, ‘natural environments’ such rivers, oceans, and lakes (Deakin, 2000; Wilkie and Juba, 1996). In making reference to the earliest ‘swims’, these authors not only establish the logical, natural foundations for why humans swim, but they also reiterate the idea that swimming is a natural activity, because it strengthens the connection between man and the natural environment. For example, Strang (2004) argues that swimming in wild waters “permits people to feel that they are part of the orderly system that they observe” (p. 111). In a further example, Alain Corbin suggests that because the ocean is “irremediably wild”, swimming in the liquid element “represented the primitive state of the world” (1994, p. 60). Interestingly, in making these assumptions, authors such as Strang and Corbin imply that nature is orderly and that by being ‘in’ nature humans can come as close as physically possible to the ‘natural system’. Moreover, these representations reveal an underlying assumption that when a person swims they are ‘in’ a pure ‘element’. Despite this prevailing logic I consider it quite ridiculous to think that we could ever be ‘outside’ of nature. This is especially the case if nature is taken to be a cultural construct or merely a term we

have used to classify and understand our environments. That said, it is important to note that such knowledge and assumptions reinforce particular ways of thinking about our natural environment that privilege the biological sciences, and rationalism.

These types of statements and assumptions are far from conclusive truths about all humans, and are problematic. They, nonetheless, etch the inevitability of swimming as a 'natural pastime' onto the collective memory. Representations such as those described above reinforce the idea that people need pools to swim in because humans *need* to swim. When set up in this way, these kinds of narratives reproduce the assumption that swimming has *always* been a part of human existence. Moreover, if swimming is framed in naturalist terms it becomes difficult to refute it as a 'human good' and a worthwhile pursuit.

There are further contradictions regarding the biological foundations that apparently underpin the natural relationship between humans and swimming. Humans are basically ill-equipped to move in water and the supposedly alarmingly high drowning rates in New Zealand support this biological conclusion. In other words, humans aren't really built to swim - biological 'truth' disrupts the presumption that swimming is natural to humans. For example:

> The problem of human swimming could just as easily be approached as the problem of human drowning. The point is that swimming does not come naturally to man; it has to be taught. Without having been taught to swim, man is bound to drown. Everything he undertakes to overcome this condition could be explained as the continuous battle against what by nature he does best: sink. (van Leeuwen, 1998, p. 14)

In other words, despite claims about our innate need for immersion in liquid, our ability to survive in the water for any length of time is remarkably deficient (Maddock, Bone & Rayner, 1994). Indeed there is only one mammal that is less efficient at swimming – the mink (van Leeuwen, 1998). Similarly, Deakin (2000) envies "our mammal cousins who are so much better adapted to water than we are" (p. 5). In this sense, physiological explanations for swimming present an interesting contradiction between scientific 'truths' and cultural logic. Ironically, in some cases a discourse of naturalism is drawn on to explain this apparent contradiction. A popular explanation for how humans learned to overcome their aquatic deficiencies and swim is founded in naturalised assumptions about the animal world. For example, both van Leeuwen (1998) and Wilkie & Juba (1996) argue that while humans do not *naturally* know how to swim,[7] they have taken cues from other creatures, and made the best out of their biology. According to Wilkie & Juba (1996), "when early Man needed to move across water he probably waded, and then eventually swam by watching the example set by other primarily land based animals (p. 1).

As an alternative to the explanations regarding the animal world, Strang (2004), van Leeuwen (1998) and Deakin (2000) have all made reference to what might be described as psychoanalytic discourses as a means to explore the contradiction that exists in explanations of an innate human need to swim. For example, Strang (2004) describes the close affinity we have with water as an expression of the subconscious desire to return to the womb. Van Leeuwen (1998) asserts that swimming stimulates a "hydrophilic-genetic memory" activated in the foetal period, whereby "the infant is kept in a state of hydraulically controlled weightlessness in the amniotic water of the womb" (p. 15). Van Leeuwen expands on this argument when he states:

[7] Although, there does exist an argument for naturalised swimming in 'The aquatic ape hypothesis' which has been promoted by feminist evolutionary scientist Elaine Morgan. See for example, *The Aquatic Ape* (1982a); *The Scars of Evolution* (1982b); and *Aquatic Ape Hypothesis* (1997).

> By diving the swimmer retraces the explosion from paradise, brought about by birth, in the certainty that his fall will be broken by water… Once in the water, a state of weightlessness envelops the diver, who becomes the swimmer the moment he loses his postnatal anxiety and returns to the womb, where he regains his original state of intense wellbeing. (Van Leeuwen, 1998, p. 16)

In a further example, Roger Deakin (2000) writes:

> To swim is to experience how it was before you were born. These amniotic waters are both utterly safe and yet terrifying, for at birth anything could go wrong, and you are assailed by all kinds of unknown forces over which you have no control. (p. 3)

In the context of these assumptions, which explain the relationship between humans and water as belonging to subconscious desire and regressive tendencies to return to the womb, it is little wonder that we, as humans, have a tendency take to water. In other words, according to the preceding explanations, the need to swim does not reside in our biology however, psychoanalytic knowledge, in this sense, produces us as water-inclined.

While these representations regarding explanations for swimming might not, at first blush, seem to bear much resemblance to the current inquiry, in terms of the historical imagination, they are significant. The longer back the memory/activity can be traced the more entrenched the cultural logic might be. These kinds of representations (re)produce swimming as a natural and ordinary cultural practice that has existed for much longer than the pool per se. The arguments made regarding the longevity/ inevitability of humans moving in water further reinforces ‘save the pool’ rhetoric in terms of the cultural function, allowing people to continue to partake in a natural

and ancient ritual. The focus of the ‘historical’ representation of ‘early’ survival swimming – while on the verge of the un-representable –implies that we have probably ‘always’ ‘swum’. So, while pools may not be static objects, their function has always been there.

Prescription

Swimming officials, educationalists, and local government figures encourage learning to swim as a safety measure and all New Zealanders are strongly encouraged to learn to swim using prescribed techniques taught by qualified instructors (see for example, Swimming New Zealand, 2011; Swimsation, 2011; and Water Safety New Zealand, 2011). However, contemporary representations reveal that learn to swim initiatives have been promoted heavily in New Zealand not merely as an activity needed for survival, but as a purposeful activity with many benefits. Learning to swim not only also serves as a means to teach people the techniques and rules of competitive swimming, and water safety, but once someone has learnt to swim, they may swim to achieve broad fitness goals, training for other sports, or swim for the safe execution of other aquatic skills and activities such as underwater hockey, water polo, diving etcetera. Below I trace some of the ideas underpinning the notion that swimming is a purposeful activity to enhance life. Despite the slight shift in purpose of swimming, in these texts swimming is still portrayed as a natural and a ‘good’ activity and in ways that (re)produce particular knowledge and assumptions about bodies and health.

Some authors cite therapeutic bathing as the precursor to swimming for ‘health’. Therapeutic bathing was seen as an activity with the potential to alleviate a whole host of ailments (Corbin,

1994; Strang 2004). Alain Corbin (1994) argues that in the mid-19th century, physicians prescribed sea bathing and hydrotherapy in pursuit of whole wellness – to cure ailments of body, mind and soul and to foster long life. For some, the benefits of therapeutic bathing were so great, that the practice was positioned as a potential 'saviour' to human life itself. Indeed, Corbin (1994) maintains that therapeutic sea bathing was expected "to make rickety children straight and vigorous, to put colour back into chlorotic girls" and even "to restore hope to barren women" (p. 69). Nothing it seems escapes the reaches of the benefits of therapeutic bathing or swimming.

The discourse of beneficial bathing seems to emerge from prevailing scientific understandings of what is good for the 'body' and what activities might enhance and prolong 'life'. For example, Corbin (1994) traces the benefits of therapeutic immersion back to the mid seventeenth century and states that Sir Thomas Browne's publication of *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* was particularly influential in promoting the medical benefits for moving in water, which led to medical, therapeutic, scientised versions of bathing. Furthermore, Veronica Strang (2004) contends that immersion studies in the early 1800s helped facilitate the production of physiological knowledge that led to people taking to water for therapeutic reasons. In a similar vein to these representations of water as a substance with healing properties, the idea that water is a medium for promotion of cleanliness and hygiene is regularly reiterated in historical representations (Parker, 2000). Bathing was regarded as something that may prevent germs, disease and illness (Parker, 2000). Such examples support the argument that swimming has long been considered a physically and psychologically beneficial activity. I suggest that these ideas are also reproduced as cultural logic in contemporary representations of swimming, and employed in various texts which detail the benefits of swimming (pools).

There are multiple allusions to the remedial properties of immersion and movement in water, including those achieved via hydrotherapy and water-based exercise (Simple ways to exercise, 2011). Therapeutic swimming is a form of immersion and/or movement in water that is said to provide the 'swimmer' with physical and psychological benefits. These benefits might be gained from simply being in the water. In Dunedin, New Zealand, the Otago Therapeutic Pool is a case in point. The primary function of the 'Physio pool' is to provide clients with access to the healing properties of heated water. As McLean (2010) writes, people rely on the pool for "their general well-being". In this case the water is a medium that alleviates ailments or is simply something that facilitates particular movements for people suffering from disabilities, injuries, or illnesses. The presumption here is that water supports the body in ways that air alone cannot. In this way, therapeutic swimming (or bathing) facilitates the perpetuation of a popular discourse about swimming, that it is good for you. However, therapeutic bathing is a form of prescribed immersion in water which differs somewhat from competitive swimming and codified swimming techniques that enable people to move in water efficiently and safely.

There are prescribed and preferable techniques and behaviour for correctly, efficiently and 'safely' moving in water. The codified strokes and means for moving efficiently through the water are generally unquestioned and, unsurprisingly, in the present context, thousands of learn to swim texts are available for consumption. However, a uniform technique for moving in and through the water has not always existed as part of swimming 'culture'. Armbruster & Morehouse (1957) argue that earlier accounts, in Greek, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, and Scandinavian classics, dealt only with great feats of swimming prowess of the heroes of their day and left the type of swimming stroke used by these heroes to the readers' imaginations. The development of 'codified' swimming techniques can supposedly be traced as far back as the 16th century

(Armbruster & Morehouse, 1957; Cleary, 2011; and Wilkie and Juba, 1996). Specifically, Everard Digby's *De Arte Natandi* (1587) is cited as the first manual of swimming instructions. According to Wilkie and Juba (1996), Everard Digby observed "that the natural tendency of man in water was for the feet to sink but for the face to rise" (p. 8). He stated that people could "remain afloat without arm or leg movements but that they tended to drown because they used their limbs in a 'disorderly way'" (Wilkie & Juba, 1996, p. 8). These observations lead Digby to produce his early versions of a 'learn to swim text'. *De Arte Natandi* was intended to provide instructions detailing how to resist one's natural tendencies and to learn to move in water safely and efficiently. *De Arte Natandi* was translated into English by Christopher Middleton in 1595 as *A Short Introduction for to learn to Swimme* (Cleary, 2011). According to Cleary (2011), Digby & Middleton's texts were used as the basis for Melchisedec Thevenot's *L'Arte de nager* (1699) which became the definitive swimming text for the eighteenth century. Interestingly, according to van Leeuwen (1998), the techniques recommended in early 'learn-to-swim' texts most closely resemble modern-day breaststroke. In particular van Leeuwen (1998) describes the leg action of early swimming techniques as being derived from frogs, which again, reinforces the apparent natural link between humans and swimming.

At the time of publication of *L'Arte de nager*, swimming was still considered to be a "specialized skill lacking mass appeal" (Cleary, 2011, p. 51). Indeed, Cleary (2011) attributes the transformation of swimming into a popular activity to Benjamin Franklin who advocated for swimming as a "skill central to a full and meaningful expression of human possibility, a culturally regulated biomechanical event that integrated several mechanisms" (p. 51). The general educational recommendation of swimming as a "universal and universally useful art", as advocated by Franklin, became further popularised following the inclusion of learn to swim

instructions in ‘Young Man’s New Universal Companion’ and similar publications (Cleary, 2011, p. 63).

Under the auspices of medicine, hygiene, science and education, ‘purposeful’ movements in the water became further legitimised and inscribed into public consciousness (Daley, 2003; van Leeuwen, 1998; Wiltse, 2007). ‘An experienced swimmer’ (1849) states that “the art of swimming appears to be as natural to man, as it is useful, and, in some cases, necessary for the preservation of his life” (p.5). After the supposed ‘reinvention’ of the practice, swimming became part of the public domain. Daley (2003) explains that by 1900, the view that bathing and swimming were fringe activities and regarded by many as unsafe and unseemly was fast giving way to an acceptance of swimming. This was a shift that also coincided with greater importance being placed on the benefits of swimming for physical health (Daley, 2003). In contemporary representations swimming is frequently cited as an inherently ‘good’ activity, one that has health benefits (Vignal, Champely & Terret, 2001).

Armbruster & Morehouse (1957) argue that a proliferation of technical information regarding efficient movements in water boosted the competence of swimmers, and subsequently more and more people became better able to move further and faster in water. The increased attention afforded to the techniques for moving efficiently in water meant that, over time, swimming apparently became regarded as a sensible, systematic, rational form of exercise and a ‘sport’ (van Leeuwen, 1998). van Leeuwen (1998) argues, while swimming as a form of ‘training’ gathered public momentum, swimming for fun, with no particular goal, “was out of the question”: by this time the belief prevailed that “every exercise must have an object” (p. 38). This idea is also articulated by Winterton & Parker (2009) who refer to swimming as a ‘utilitarian pursuit’. Again

these historical representations detail the emergence of competitive swimming and swimming training and frame the 'practice' as a wholesome activity. For example, according to Stewart (1901):

> As is well known, *swimming as a sport has few rivals*. And probably no form of physical exercise combines so many estimable features as swimming in its cleanliness value, in physical power gained, and in the ability to save life. (p. 418)

Prescribed swimming also gave rise to competitive swimming[8] (Osmond, 2004; Parker, 2001; Winterton & Parker, 2009). A proliferation in the popularity of competitive swimming coincided with an ever increasing scientific interest in swimming. Kinesiologists specialising in swimming since the 1940s (in particular Armbruster & Morehouse, 1948; Counsilman, 1968; Firby, 1975) were instrumental in developing swimming training methods and procedures to further increase swimmers' speed, technique and endurance. In particular, the kinesiologists drew on scientific principles from physiology, biochemistry and biomechanics, and fluid dynamics to generate these methods. Presently, the fastest 'swimmers' in the world are determined through regulated swim meets such as at the FINA world championships and olympic games. Furthermore, swimmers who excel at swimming, who win medals in prescribed strokes over prescribed distances, are exalted as national and international heroes – for example - Michael Phelps, Dawn Fraser, Mark Spitz and Danyon Loader.

My point here is that historic and contemporary representations of swimming both (re)produce the idea that prescribed swimming is an activity that is 'good for you'. Knowledge that underpins

[8] In the first modern Olympic Games in 1896, four swimming events here held (Wallechinsky & Loucky, 2008).

this idea reflects and (re)produces contemporary and enduring discourses about health, wellbeing and exercise, moving the body, training and individualism.

Freedom?

I have, to this point, focused on the ostensibly utilitarian functions of swimming. However, the swimming pool is, according to NZRA (2010), also something that is provided for recreational purposes. So how does swimming for recreation fit within the 'logic' of healthful and beneficial 'swimming (therapeutic and training)?

Recreational swimming signifies quite a contrast to the medicalised or therapeutic and training purposes for swimming, however play is still often promoted and expected at public swimming pools. Indeed, since the 1980s aquatic 'facilities' and theme parks adorned with hydro-slides, wave pools and inflatables typify the contemporary swimming landscape. The term recreation summons meanings such as pleasure, stimulation, refreshment and amusement. And, leisure implies a sense of freedom to move the body through the water in ways the individual feels like. Therefore I am interested here in the relationship between recreational swimming at public swimming pools, and the notion of freedom, and moving in water.

Swimming has occasionally been historically represented as an activity, or form of movement that promotes freedom and artistic expression. For example, Charles Sprawson (1992) argues that during the romantic period, prior to the emergence of public swimming pools, swimming was a rather sensuous and political activity. Corbin (1994) echoes this sentiment when he writes that by

the middle of the eighteenth century, the shore "became reconnected with an ancient role, and once more a focal point for the past and origins of life" (Corbin, 1994, p. 97). Romanticism emerged as a series of reactions to increasingly prevalent ideas about reductionism and rationalisation. According to Sprawson (1992), wild swimming offered a "critique of rationalism and industry" and was a practice of counter-enlightenment. Swims in the ocean and rivers represented attempts to "escape the confines of urban sprawl, population growth, industrialism" (p. 101). Sprawson (1992) states further that among poets of the Romantic generation, bathing was a seriously passionate pursuit: "an expression of romantic protest against the bitter experience of life" (p. 161).

In these representations, the so-called 'romantic swimmers' are returning to classical understandings of water, or as Corbin (1994) suggests, facilitating the rise of the "aesthetics of the sublime" (p. 68). According to Sprawson (1992), Auden (1950) and Corbin (1994), the Romantic period saw a regeneration of passionate pursuits and poets and artists once again treated water with a sense of wonderment, dreaming, and imagination. This argument suggests that swimming for pleasure could be traced to 'romantic' swimming in the wild. By this definition swimming is a solitary pursuit which provides sensual pleasure and relief from the outside world (Cleary, 2011; Sprawson, 1992). Swimming in wild waters incites politics, produces sensuous experiences, and symbolically liberates humans who find 'being' in open water. Therefore, recreational swimming can also be read as constituting an extraordinary pursuit: inherently exciting, addictively intoxicating and wildly escapist.

According to Corbin (1994) immersing oneself in unpredictable and undomesticated water, swimming in the wild, simultaneously evokes fear and anxiety about death. In other words,

swimming brings people closer to the "horrors of the wild" (Corbin, 1994, p. 60). Thus, wild swimming is represented as an emotional, sensual and affective activity. Consider this example, in which swimming is said to potentially resemble "copulation".

> The female bathers held in the arms of powerful men and awaiting penetration into the liquid element, the feeling of suffocation, and the little cries that accompanied it all so obviously suggested copulation. (Corbin, 1994, p. 74)

Representations of experiences of swimming in wild water are varied, encompassing not just physical health benefits and 'pleasure' but a whole spectre of emotions and feelings, however, at the same time, swimming in open water symbolised uncontrolled eroticism and the destruction and waste of human morality. Swimming in wild waters, such as in oceans and rivers, was seen to be both dangerous and a threat to social values. As Corbin (1994) eloquently states, "metaphorically the *boundless* ocean posed serious concerns over morality and the souls of its citizens" (p.83). City officials saw the beach as "uncontrolled and uncontrollable", a "morally and physically dangerous zone where anything might happen" (Daley, 2003, p. 120). Indeed, leaving swimmers to their own devices in open, wild waters symbolised a deterioration of social and moral order.

Officials deemed that the excesses of wild water must be contained and therefore, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, many official decrees against swimming in natural waters appeared. In several countries specifically, the United States, England, Australia and New Zealand it became paramount to control aquatic experiences (Daley, 2003; Light & Rockwell, 2005; Love 2007a; Wiltse, 2007). Wiltse (2007) cites several instances where specific governance policies have been applied at various places, at various times across the world which

attempted to deal with the cultural disdain toward swimming – particularly towards working class swimmers.

> Anti-swimming ordinances, such as those in Boston, New York, and Milwaukee, were a common response to natural-water swimming and bathing during the nineteenth century. Throughout the nineteenth century, urban waters provided working-class males with public spaces to recreate and bathe, to articulate class-specific values and sensibilities, and to contest the prevailing cultural order. (Wiltse, 2007, p13)

The promulgation of swimming ordinances and regulations represents a very powerful idea. It represents a contrasting belief between the idea that water is pure (in that it can be used for good things such as therapy, hygiene, physical health) and the notion that water is a dangerous, deadly substance and one which falsely entices and allures. How could city planners and council officials advocate for the purposes and assumed functionality of swimming without encouraging adventurous, and apparently reckless, bathing? The answer lay in controlling the water. As Corbin (1994) and Sprawson (1992) suggest, for swimming to be considered a productive and purposeful activity, it needed to be controlled. Of interest here is that several historical representations trace the beginnings of the pool to the risks involved with wild swimming (Love, 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; Wiltse, 2007). According to some historians, it is the freedom associated with wild swimming that prompted the social demand to control and retain water. These shifts could be explained as symbolic of a move away from romantic chaos towards a rationalised, ordered and contained site for methodical and measurable activity.

There is a simple causal explanation offered, in a number of the swimming and pool histories, for the emergence of the form of swimming pools. Pools are said to have emerged as the result of a perceived need to increase control of water spaces, and swimming. In other words, historians suggest that limits needed to be placed on swimming so that the benefits thought to be associated with particular movements in water, could be fully realised without promoting aimless, narcissistic movement in wild, unbounded water (van Leeuwen, 1998; Wiltse, 2007). Like the barge placed upon the wild water, the pool imposed order upon the bather/swimmer. In sum, in these stories the curbing of freedom provides the ideological foundations of public swimming pools. However as I argue below, these are merely a set of assumptions, not necessarily cultural truths.

Cultural logic and the 'foundations' of public swimming pools

The representations I have cited above provide the foundations for the emergence of the pool. The foundations of public swimming pools can be read as symbols of cultural logic. Rational, objective inquiry might accept these as taken-for-granted assumptions however the approach I bring to the analysis of public swimming pools is that ideological foundations are representations of 'regimes of truth' that do not necessarily hold as truths for all people for all time. Below I tease this out further to illustrate the potential cultural 'bias' that is expressed in representations of swimming and the historical foundations of public swimming pools.

Swimming representations tell selective stories about what swimming, and the pool is, its origins and what, and who, it is for. The history of swimming, for most historians begins with water; they frame their narratives around knowledge of the human-water relationship and assume that

water is a resource *for* humans. Shifting concerns over morality and safety apparently lead to the construction of man-made facilities in order to control this aspect of human (and) nature. In other words swimming pools might be seen as the manifestation of a will to conquer and use nature, to control and contain it in a water retaining structure. Narratives that suggest there has been a linear, logical 'architectural' progression from open water to a solid 'pool' can be traced to particular knowledge(s) about the relationship between humans and water. In particular, I argue that these are westernised scientific and political discourses underpinned by rational understandings and attempts to control water.

As a Pakeha, of British and Dalmatian descent the knowledge about water that is accessible, and relevant to the way I have learnt to engage with and understand the 'natural world', predominantly comes from Europe. Having been born and raised in a British colony, educated in English-speaking government schools, predominantly accessed water under the control of the 'Crown' through regional councils, and swum in pools governed by city councils, I have come to know 'water' in English, through 'Western' ideas. In my 'worldview' the importance of water to physical existence is explained in rationalised scientific terms, through the descriptor H_2O. Therefore the idea that water is essential to life in physiological terms is not an extraordinary statement because it reflects the seemingly natural philosophies and subsequent 'attachments' to water that circulate in British settler consciousness in 21st century Aotearoa/New Zealand. Pacific writer Epeli Hau'ofa (2008) captures a different type of existential relationship between water and humans, however, he describes this relationship as - 'We are the ocean and the ocean is us'. In a rather simple statement Hau'ofa reveals a complex and distinctly different existential perspective about the centrality of water to human life, to the ideas I have presented in this chapter.

The above is an important distinction to make because if water, or the knowledge of water, holds different meanings, and the relationship between humans and water is conceptualised differently, this might have vastly different effects for how individuals, authorities, societies, and cultures 'deal' with the issue of humans in/and water. And, in turn, the plight of public swimming pools. Deconstruction is an important process because it troubles this taken-for-granted cultural logic. In making some of the contemporary and historical representations 'strange' I can highlight some bias in the foundational knowledge underpinning public swimming pool provision.

The assumptions regarding the pool, its cultural purpose and significance, are all inextricably linked with 'knowledge' - both in terms of official knowledge and individuals' knowledge and perception of their worlds. For example, the naturalism of swimming is, as (re)presented in swimming and pool histories, undisputable 'logic'. McShane (2009) illustrates the point. Describing swimming as a "*natural* Australian pastime", McShane (2009) also refers to the pool as some*thing* that can be built: "between 1950 and 1980 there were over 200 *pools built* in Victoria, Australia" (2009, p. [my emphasis]). In so doing McShane (2009) distinguishes between the natural and the man-made yet at the same time upholds the 'natural' as something worthy of resourcing. Interestingly, while underpinned by discourses of naturalism, in many ways the public swimming pool, forces people to become further removed from nature. Nonetheless, the function and assumed physical, psychological and social benefits of swimming are used to justify the existence of the public swimming pool.

Moreover, historical and contemporary representations of public swimming pools are predominantly about control. They depict an austere structure that was, and remains, intended to produce particular types of citizens. For example, among the many representations of the pool and of swimming, fun and the opportunity to 'play' are regularly cited as reasons to 'swim'. However, the political and artistic foundations or rationales for swimming are much less regularly cited[9]. While the NZRA (2010) definition allows for 'recreation' in its typology for swimming function, this type of movement in water is still regulated by rules, such as "No diving"; "only children allowed"; "no t- shirts" etcetera. Swimming pool rules and regulations often promote the pool, not only as something to be taken seriously, but, also as something that facilitates rational experiences, for example training and instruction – a form of functionalism.

Thus, not only is the notion of a public pool fraught and intertwined in the (re)production of cultural boundaries, but assumptions such as naturalism and social control too, expose hierarchies for knowing and being. My interest lies in how narratives such as these (re)produce a way of understanding the 'natural order of things'. The historical view that we need pools because we need to swim is only a story and a set of assumptions, yet the cultural power of naturalist and functionalist discourses have become entrenched in the pool. These discourses are not necessarily obvious from the outside, but rather, they circulate beneath the rhetoric about natural and necessary activities, thus reinforcing the inevitability of the 'pool', and underpinning the rhetoric of save the pools campaigns. Thus, the 'loss' of the pool, too, is connected to naturalistic assumptions about human beings, their relationship with water. Further, as I will explore in subsequent chapters, the foundational knowledge of the pool is one that favours deeply

[9] Except possibly synchronised swimming, however while certainly aesthetic and artistic, is still bound by very strict rules and regulations.

entrenched ways of thinking about ‘life’, biology, reproduction, and thus also gender, sexuality and family.

In the following chapter I start to mess with some of this cultural logic and ideological foundations underpinning the provision of public swimming pools, by disrupting the material foundations of the pool. That is I ask questions about the stable, solid structure that is assumed to ‘be’ a pool.

Chapter II: Un-grounding holes in the ground: moving towards pool space

In this chapter I interrogate the material foundations of the 'pool' as a concretised 'hole in the ground' and problematise the definitions and statements of certainty regarding what the pool 'is'. I do so in an attempt to expose the pool as incoherent and subjective, rather than as knowable and objective. In so doing, I raise a number of questions regarding the 'object' of my inquiry and, in light of my deconstruction, I contemplate an alternative way of knowing, or coming to know the plight of public swimming pools – that is, as pool *space*.

Knowable structures

Media reports detailing the possible demise of public swimming pools, and save-the-pool campaigns only make sense if the pool is a known object. That is, the pool is some *thing* that is at stake, and some *thing* that can be saved. Therefore, for the purposes of my inquiry, it is important that I discern what that 'thing' is. In this section I provide examples of representations of swimming pools that attempt to define the pool or, at least, make some assumptions regarding the material foundations of pools.

Many people believe there is an object called the pool that has a 'real' presence. Indeed, I am one of those people. Pools have always existed in my retrievable consciousness in some form or another: I know what it is like to go to the pool, to swim in the pool and 'be' at the pool. So, for me the pool has an undeniable physical reality: the pool exists as a known 'thing'. The 'pool' is also generalisable beyond the particular. For example, if I say I am going to 'the pool' people tend to know what I mean – the noun 'pool' is not necessarily tied to a specific location.

Various descriptions about swimming pools infer similar assumptions to mine. For example, in their study on drowning Schwebel, Simpson & Lindsay (2007) reaffirm the undeniable presence of the pool in public consciousness. Schwebel et al. (2007) explain that their study on the risk of drowning "took place at an outdoor swimming pool" and while they go on to explain where it is, who uses it, and how much it costs to use, they offer no further explanation (p. 368). In other words, the pool is knowable and definable and requires no further description. In another example, Thomas van Leeuwen (1998) clearly articulates that the pool is a knowable object with an undeniable and 'obvious' presence in the 'material' world when he states, "the pool is the architectural outcome of man's desire to become one with the element of water" (p. 2). Here van Leeuwen's (1998) use of the words "is" and "architectural" provide material certainty, leaving no doubt that the swimming pool possesses a physical reality: it *is*. Second, he clearly illustrates that pools are an 'outcome' or an end point, they are a 'thing' that we can know. Van Leeuwen's language provides certainty about the physical constitution of 'pool', and its purpose: pools were built so that people can be *in* water.

The sensual affects the pool evokes are also entwined with the conditions which allow the pool to be spoken about as a distinct, knowable object. For example, the following quote in Coyote's (2000) short story 'No bikini' — "that's the thing about pools, same smell, doesn't matter where you are" (p. 21) — illustrates that the pool has a 'smell' that produces a consistent affect regardless of its location. Because pools are seen, heard, felt and smelled, they possess a tangible reality, yet that reality is assumed to be generalised or generalisable to 'the pool' rather than to a specific location. All of these statements reinforce the idea that the pool 'is' something, with coherent, universal meanings that exists beyond the particular. Certainly they lend weight to the

material presence of the pool, yet these statements do not provide me with certainty, or even guidance, as to what the pool is, where the pool 'begins' and 'ends'; nor do they establish the boundaries of the 'object' of my inquiry. They merely alert me to the fact that the pool is knowable through experience, sense, perception, theorisation and writing. They tell me that there is a 'thing' to know, but not precisely *what* that thing is – for example would a roped off open water area with a lifeguard and rules comprise a pool?

The New Zealand Recreation Association's (NZRA) (2010), 'Aquatic Facility Guidelines' provide greater certainty over the material foundations of public swimming pools. Derived from NZS 5826 Pool Water Quality Standard and NZS 4441 Swimming Pool Design Standard, an aquatic facility is defined as any facility which includes a pool(s) which is defined as:

> any water retaining structure, wholly or partially of artificial construction and generally having a circulation and filtration system, designed for recreational, training or therapeutic swimming. (NZRA, 2010, p. 4)

The NZRA (2010) definition involves two key criteria regarding the physical form of a 'pool': it is a *water retaining structure* and it is partially or wholly *artificially constructed*. What is of interest here is that in terms of discerning pool boundaries, or where the pool 'begins', the first pools are said to have similar forms – an artificially constructed structure that 'retained water'. It is widely regarded among swimming historians that the emergence of the form of public swimming pools is representative of an 'architectural' shift, from wild, open water, to the demarcation or 'barging' of water space, through floating structures which then progressed to the digging of "holes in the ground" (van Leeuwen, 1998, p. 4). These stories about the origins of the

form of public swimming pools represent a grand narrative that follows a linear evolution from open water, to floating baths, to grounded, public bathing structures to solid water retaining structures for ‘swimming’ (Glassberg, 1979; van Leeuwen, 1998; Wiltse, 2007). My interest in this grand narrative lies in exploring the relationship between the emergence of the form of the ‘pool’ and definitions of pools which make claims that the pool is a knowable, solid structure.

The ‘floating’ baths are oft-cited as the precursor to the swimming pool (Buttenweiser, 2009; Daley, 2003; Sprawson, 1992; van Leeuwen, 1998; Wiltse, 2007). Van Leeuwen (1998) captures the general argument for the linear progression of the construction of swimming pools when he writes about the floating baths which emerged in France in the 1700s. Van Leeuwen (1998) describes the floating structures as the development of a “new type of amphibious architecture” (p. 38). Floating structures, on his account, were essentially barges which provided a swimming boundary in open water such as rivers and harbours. Sprawson (1992) too, cites the floating baths as significant structures in the history of swimming, stating that in London in the nineteenth century floating baths were moored at Waterloo and Westminster bridges for the summer months. Most floating baths are supposed to have resembled something half-way between a man-made structure and the natural element. The pontoon structures in oceans and rivers are good examples of the latter. They were enclosed wooden structures with wooden tanks submerged into the river that measured fifteen feet wide, twenty five feet long and four-feet deep (Glassberg, 1979; Stewart, 1901).

The floating structures, referred to above, were apparently quite popular and valued assets for cities (Wiltse, 2007; Glassberg, 1979; van Leeuwen, 1998; Buttenweiser, 2009). In part, this was

because they took advantage of natural conditions (open water), and also because of the low costs of materials used to build them (Glassberg, 1979). As van Leeuwen (1998) claims, "using or reusing public water and often recycling used barges" (p. 46) rendered pontoons cheap, viable and functional[10]. Floating baths were not without their problems however with some retaining unhygienic water which caused more ill-health and disease among the great unwashed than if they had failed to bathe at all. Indeed, according to Glassberg (1979), some residents described the baths as floating sewers because of the pollution that ran through them from the dirty rivers. Wiltse (2007) suggests that the floating baths frequently required maintenance because of their propensity to rot. These problems are cited as being the cause of the demise of the floating baths and, having "accomplished their pioneering work", they were replaced by fixed open-air and indoor pools (van Leeuwen, 1998, p. 44).

Following the demise of the floating baths, the new 'amphibious architecture' became more grounded, more solid, and thus, according to the narratives cited here, more permanent water retaining structures emerged (Glassberg, 1979; van Leeuwen, 1998; Wiltse, 2007). Wiltse (2007) claims that the architecture of the 'new' public baths took the form of concrete and steel rather than the wooden structures used in the floating baths, and resembled more closely the 'water retaining structures, designed for swimming' that we 'know' today. Interestingly, in his history of public swimming pools in America, Wiltse (2007) classifies his narrative as a "coherent story" (p.7). In this coherent story, Wiltse (2007) tells us that the "history of [American] municipal pools follows a very similar pattern" and that "what happened … in St. Louis and Chicago, or in Newton, Kansas, and Elizabeth, New Jersey, was all quite similar" (p.7). In these kinds of

[10] Glassberg (1979) states that the purpose of the floating baths was hygiene and thus the function was for bathing. However, there is some debate over the function of the baths, with some writers such as Buttenweiser (2009) suggesting they were for the elite and were luxurious forms of entertainment

accounts, all pools have the same purpose, and the same generalised history. Moreover, the grand narrative cited above is consistent with assumptions that underpin the knowledge of the pool as possessing an objective reality. The stories advanced are plausible and rendered justifiable in relation to contemporary framings of the pool (e.g. through reference to the definition in the NZRA (2010) guidelines, as a water retaining structure). The pool has been produced and framed as a generalised historical object – something that exists in the world – but that has not always been there. In this way the pool is demarcated from what came before – water. Swimming occurred before the pool was a 'known' structure, and herein lie the conditions to *know* the pool as a structure distinct from water, the medium for 'swimming'.

Many would argue that the pool, by virtue of its definition (at least, by that represented by the NZRA, 2010) is not porous. As a water retaining structure, it has solid foundations and boundaries – i.e. it can retain water. These criteria not only give the pool a material presence but also confirm it as a knowable object. There are additional features of the pool that work to produce the notion that a pool is a knowable thing. For example, fences and boundaries often surround pools, while entry is governed by fees or locked gates. Pamphlets about specific swimming pools and their facilities also reaffirm the presence of the object 'pool' as a knowable thing though the use of language and images. In other words, these examples imply there is some certainty over the form of a pool, its material foundations, and their origins.

Assumptions regarding certainty are significant to my inquiry because of how public swimming pools are framed in media reports detailing the demise of pools, and in save-the-pool rhetoric. Concern about the plight of public swimming pools draws on specific beliefs. A belief in the

beginning of the pool is required to understand that the pool is something different to water. A belief in the end of the pool is required to understand that the pool might disappear. To my mind, a belief in both the beginning and end of the pool provides the conceptual conditions for a crisis around the pool. However, the pool (as evidenced by the histories) has not always been an 'object', a 'thing' with determinable edges, a thing with the capacity to 'retain' water. Therefore the pool might not always 'be' a thing with these features. Re-thinking the coherence and objectivity of the form of the pool may have profound implications for how I understand the potential pool crisis, save-the-pool rhetoric and the cultural significance of, and personal attachments to, public swimming pools.

(De)formed foundations

In the previous section I illustrated several examples that might provide assurance as to the certainty over the material foundations of public swimming pools – that is, pools as knowable structures. However, a second reading reveals some incongruities in those texts. Deconstructing the material foundations of the pool raises questions about what it is that I can research in attempting to evaluate the cultural significance of public swimming pools. Below I highlight some of the troubling aspects associated with determining the boundaries of the 'pool', and ask a series of questions which problematise the 'nature' of the object of my inquiry.

Incoherence

Contradiction is implicit within representations that attempt to define a pool, and demarcate 'the pool' from what came before. Several historical representations suggest that, architecturally

speaking, swimming pools originated from liquid form. For example, van Leeuwen (1998) states that “the pool is the architectural outcome of man’s desire to become one with the element of water” (p. 2). However, water is almost impossible to grasp, to know. Hence if pools ‘begin’ in water, then it is actually very difficult, if not impossible, to pin point the exact emergence of the ‘pool’. Nonetheless, swimming pools are afforded material certainty as is evident in the NZRA (2010) definition of a pool as a ‘water retaining structure’, implying a rigid, stable form. Van Leeuwen’s (1998) description articulates this contradiction clearly:

> While the pool allows, even invites, intellectual wanderings, at the same time it prevents the wanderer from losing his way. However far his excursions may take him, the simplicity of the architectural object enables him to pick up the thread where he left off, leaving no room for confusion, bombast, or contrivedness. The architectural part – the artefact – is, from the outset, easy to define, whereas its contents – the natural part are highly complex. The container encloses but also retains, holds together, and keeps from spilling. While stirring the imagination, it also prevents it from rambling; the container both kindles and quenches. (1998, p.7)

Van Leeuwen’s reflection rests on his understanding of the pool as a man-made object, as static, fixed and knowable. He celebrates the architectural simplicity of the pool and describes it as being more intellectually accessible than the natural world. He revels in the uniqueness of studying a structure that ‘contains’ a natural element. Indeed, van Leeuwen speaks of the ‘introduction of the swimming pool’ as if that pool is something tangible, a starting point that relieves him of the anxious impossibility of tracing the relationship between humans and water. He contrasts this to the impossibility of ever being able to grasp, understand or interpret the depths of meanings of natural water.

The implication of this interpretation, in terms of conceptualising the pool as an object, is profound. If water is an undefined substance, then attempts to find the point of origin of pools are at best, arbitrary and, at worst, impossible or futile. If pools are water, then it is also absurd to imagine that we could ever find a singular, coherent origin of pools. If pools do not have an origin, then how might we know them as objects? If they cannot be delineated from what came before, or from what they are not, then how do I determine the boundaries of my inquiry? If it is this difficult to discern the beginning of the 'pool' then what might this mean for the troubling of the foundations of disappearing public pool discourse. Is it actually possible to know a pool – as a distinct, object – a water retaining structure designed for swimming? What does this mean for how I might 'know' what I am exploring as part of this inquiry?

As these examples testify, the fact that the pool is very difficult to define is, for me, due in part to the inextricable connection between the pool and water. It seems we cannot 'know' the form of the pool, without first knowing water. Moreover, even when water is taken out of the equation and we assume the concrete, stable 'water retaining structure' is a distinct knowable thing, confusion remains. For example, van Leeuwen (1998) describes the structure of a swimming pool as an "unpretentious hole in the ground" (p. 4). The logic implied here is that the structure itself is actually a hole, albeit concreted. In this way a pool might be defined as a form of grounded nothing, if so then what might this suggest about the possibility of disappearance?

Perhaps pools are easier to 'know' if we return to their function? Indeed, the way in which the NZRA (2010) defines pool depends entirely on the function of swimming. This appears logical from the outset because obviously not all water retaining structures are classified as pools; vases, cups and bowls also retain water, but would unlikely be categorised as pools. So swimming can

help define the pool. However, as I illustrated in the previous chapter, swimming does not have a stable, inherent meaning. Thus, I am left with the question, does the term swimming help set the parameters of my inquiry? Consider this paradox: if immersion in water, such is the case with therapeutic bathing, constitutes swimming, then is a bath a pool? Furthermore, what happens to the NZRA (2010) definition if the water retaining structure has no water? Is it still a pool? Or without water, is it an unknowable 'thing'? Is it nonsense? According to Borden (2001) skateboarders who skated in empty backyard swimming pools in California were called 'pool-riders' or 'pool-skaters'. Thus for Borden (2001) it is possible to know, and name, the pool even when it has no water and is used for purposes other than swimming. Could Borden's (2001) logic be extrapolated to my project? Are pools still pools without water, without swimmers, and without the function of swimming? Can swimming occur without water? What is swimming, and who decides? Clearly, there is an inextricable relationship between the form and function of the pool – but rather than illuminating what the pool actually is, questions about function further confuse the 'known' pool.

According to the historical narratives discussed above, floating baths were significant forerunners to the establishment of the swimming pool. There is no consensus among historians, however, as to the function of the floating structures. While the emergence of the form of the 'pool' can be traced to a particular floating structure, the lack of consensus over function illustrates how the origins of pools are not generalisable. For example, Van Leeuwen (1998) suggests that floating baths appeared in Paris, Vienna and Frankfurt thirty years before the emergence of floating pools but he claims that the sole purpose of baths (as opposed to pools) was medicinal bathing rather than pleasurable swimming. He claims that the first public floating *baths* apparently appeared in Paris (1761), Frankfurt (1774) and Vienna (1781), while the first floating *swimming pool* was

supposedly installed in Vienna in 1812. Ann Buttenweiser, a chronicler of New York City's floating baths, claims that the baths were constructed around 1817 as elegant, private pools for fashionable residents (1999). The debate over the function of the first pools/baths reveals that even within a single epoch, the meaning of swimming, and thus the definitional boundaries of the 'pool' is anything but fixed. How might I discern what came first – floating baths or pools? If it is the baths, then what is the relationship between the two functions – bathing and swimming? And more importantly if the first water retaining structures were designed for *bathing* then do they count as the early pools? If not, then is it possible that the ideological foundations for pools actually emerged out of pleasure as per Buttenweiser (1999; 2009) and consistent with Pussard (2007) and Smith's (2005) histories which provide a counter-narrative to the grand narrative? These questions lead me to wonder about the stability of historical foundations. Perhaps the fickleness of this grand narrative also troubles the material foundations of the concrete pool.

Objectification

Historians have written about the origins of the pool as though it exists outside of the 'subject'. That is, there is an assumption that there is a material reality to pools outside of perception and sense. As I have outlined in the introduction, textual representations are always mediated by someone. So, when origins are (re)presented as history, it is the historian who determines the 'point' of origin. That is, in the process of retrospectively determining, specifying and narrating, historians demarcate that from what came before. In short, the subject, or the historian, is integral to the production of historical representations and makes the object through this mediated process. I raise this because it leads me to a point about grand narratives detailing origins of any cultural 'object': origins are constructed. When historians write an object, such as the pool, into a

narrative they write of its origins, they reiterate their function, they fix it in time, and they demarcate the object from what came ‘before’ (in the case of the ‘pool’ there is a demarcation of wild water). It is through the use of particular empirical evidence, linguistic devices and technologies of time that pools become ‘knowable’ in historical representations. I argue that these techniques used by historians objectify the pool, in particular by demarcating it from what apparently came before (i.e. in this case water).

Historians such as Wiltse (2007) and van Leeuwen (1998) use a combination of historical techniques (i.e. primary sources, deduction, contextualisation and narrativisation) that enable them to write the origins of swimming pools. Through their writing they *objectify* swimming pools into discrete, yet uniform objects. In other words, the pool is objectified through the application of conventional historical methods and the re-presentation of the past as an unquestionably ‘true’ narrative. The swimming pool histories I introduced in the previous section are products of the “proper application of ‘historical method’” (White, 1990, p. 27). Such representations do not just tell stories about when and why pools came to be. They also perform an additional function. By using particular historical devices, the narrators—authors—(re)produce certainty about the object. I argue that the rules of good historical practice set up the epistemic conditions through which the pool may be produced as a distinct, knowable object. When these rules are deconstructed, the ‘beginnings’, and thus also possibly the ‘end’, of the pool appears in a different light.

Revisiting the logic of the narrative and returning to the concept of emergence, new questions arise: Does the pool come into being though the construction of the first floating bath or with the building of a more permanent structure? Or does the pool only emerge when its origins are

written in to being, as history, by an historian? Perhaps the logical architectural progression of the pool can be seen as narrative 'work' as much as it is a cultural truth. Following Hayden White's (1990) arguments regarding the 'content of the form', it might be the case that the form of the historical narratives produces the content – or the object, as a distinct, knowable 'thing'. In short, the form of the pool is not as simple as the NZRA (2010) definition or as the grand narrative suggests.

In sum, I have raised a series of questions which begin to problematise the pool as a stable, coherent, knowable thing with identifiable origins and a determinable 'destination'. This is not to suggest that are no material elements in a pool, but rather that the form(s) of pools possibly differs from their concrete definitions. In other words, knowing the pool is a challenging prospect. Further, my questions about the form of the pool help me to make a subsequent point about cultural inquiry: assumptions about objects and things shape the kind of knowledge that people 'do', 'make', and the way they interrogate the world. Rather than assume that the pool is an easily accessible object of inquiry, or a flat out 'impossibility', I wanted to explore alternative possibilities for knowing the pool. In the following section I propose that thinking about public swimming pools from a spatial perspective may be a more productive option than continuing to think of pools as knowable and fixed things.

(Dis)solution: the pool as/in space

My conceptualisation of 'space' acknowledges the 'made' aspects, the subjective aspects, the feelings, and range of possibilities of public swimming pools[11]. These elements are lacking in the

[11] This might be seen to reflect a trend in the social sciences and humanities termed the 'spatial turn'. See, for example, Aitchison, 1999; 2000; Cook, Crouch, Naylor & Ryan, 2000; Thrift, 2006; Warf & Arias, 2009. However, I

NZRA (2010) definition and many other representations of public swimming pools. Thinking about the pool as space, I suggest, opens up the pool as something more encompassing in its form (water retaining structure), and function (prescribed techniques for moving in water, with distinct purposes – the rules and regulations that define what constitutes 'recreational' swimming), and herein lies the logic for letting the apparent foundations of public swimming pools go. Dissolving the material grounding of the pool by focusing on the fluidity of its form moves us towards an understanding of public swimming pools, not as objects, but as fragments of a foundationless, fluid pool space.

Henri Lefebvre's (1991 [1974]) description of space is useful in understanding how I have set up pool space. While I am not using Lefebvre's spatial trialectic as a framework, his understandings of space can nevertheless inform the breadth of a particular inquiry, and afford guidance in considering what might make up pool space. Lefebvre's work also helps us understand why conceptualising the pool as pool space is more useful to this inquiry than thinking about the pool from an object(ive) perspective. Lefebvre (1991 [1974]) maintained that space must be understood not simply as a concrete, material object, but also as an ideological, lived, and subjective one. Drawing on Soja's (1996) notion of Thirdspace is also conceptually relevant and productive for my thinking about pool space. Soja (1996) describes thirdspace as "a world that is not only perceived or conceived but also actively lived and receptively experienced". Soja (1996) eloquently paraphrases Lefebvre's conceptualisation as follows:

> a knowable and unknowable, real and imagined life-world of experiences, emotions, events, and political choices that is existentially shaped by the generative and problematic

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argue that my approach is thinking 'through' the concept of space rather than attempting to understand (a) space per se.

> interplay between centres and peripheries, the abstract and concrete, the impassioned spaces of the conceptual and the lived, marked out materially and metaphorically. (p. 31)

Shields (2002) furthers this explanation by discussing the 'thirdspace' as transcending and potentially refiguring the balance of 'perceived space' and the 'conceived space'. Third space allows for conceptualising *between* the material and the metaphoric. According to Shields (2002) this bridge acknowledges the lived space of the imagination in which people dwell. By this account spaces are "associated with ritual, symbol, tradition, myth, desire, dreams" (Zieleniec, 2007, p.75). My conceptualisation of pool space closely relates to the third aspect of Lefebvre's triad - 'spaces of representation'. Spaces of representation afford the potential for challenging dominant spatial practices and perceptions through the imaginative use of space (Simonsen, 2005). Dissolving the pool in/to space is also productive for thinking about experiences that are not entirely material, such as imagination, memory, feeling, desire and the sensuality of moving in water (Pile, 2010). Framing the 'pool' in this way also allows me to account for the possibility that subjective experiences, memories, myth and the like might be what is at stake if public swimming pools disappear.

The NZRA (2010) definition of the pool states that the public swimming pool is designed for three types of swimming - therapy, recreation and training. However, I see that relying on the 'function' of swimming assumes a stable, universal understanding about swimming and its potential effects. That said, conceiving of swimming as a vehicle for therapy, recreation and/or training fails to account for the range of ways people experience the pool or are motivated to visit it. The pool and its function(s) are constructs mediated by swimmers, authors, historians,

community officials and leaders of save-the-pool campaigns. There are immeasurable ways in which public pools may be experienced by individuals and pool experiences are remembered, imagined and expressed in a range of different forms. Indeed, it is antithetical to the notion of 'personal' experience to assume that pools possess some inherent ability to provide *an* experience that is universally 'felt'.

So while the function might be for therapy, training and recreation, the realities of pool experiences are much broader and they are not necessarily always positive. For example, the New Zealand author Janet Frame writes as part of her autobiography, about both the glorified and the haunting feelings of her memories of the baths:

> At the end of the street I passed the Town Baths and felt again, held within the dull red colour of the rows of seats and their spindly uncomfortable slats, the sense of the old glory of being 'at the baths', and then I remembered after my sister Myrtle's drowning, the deliberate disentangling the excision of the baths from my life. (Frame, 1985, p. 56)

The quote suggests that pools imprint both pleasurable *and* painful memories—sometimes simultaneously. Moreover, my conceptualisation of pool space acknowledges the relationships between pool experiences, and desire and imagination. For me, an analysis of public swimming pools must go deeper and be more expansive than a fiscal or objective analysis permits. Conceptualising the pool as pool space is the means through which I can achieve this.

I am not arguing that all objects of cultural inquiry should be dissolved into 'space'. Nor am I arguing that pool space has no material substance. Rather, I am approaching the pool through a spatial lens so that I can frame the pool in such a way that it is not determined as an inevitable,

eternal, ‘obvious’ object. I liken pool space to Richard Bernstein’s (1985) description of ‘Cartesian anxiety’ where, in place of certainty, there is a kind of chaos “where nothing is fixed, where we can neither touch the bottom nor support ourselves on the surface” (p. 18). For me, the dissolution of the knowable pool in/as space is highly productive because it shifts the focus of the inquiry from looking at ‘holes in the ground’ to something much more abstract, yet no less significant. Further, doing so allows me to dissolve the distinction between objects and subjects. Therefore I can also acknowledge the inseparable connections between time, space and self – spatial subjectivities, experience, sensuality, imagination, desire and memory. This means that my exploration of the plight of public swimming pools is inextricably bound to my subjective, (re)imagined experiences. However, this raises its own set of questions: how do I know what I am looking at, or for? How I do I approach pool space?

Chapter III: Becoming fluid: an engagement with pool space

In this chapter I describe the indefinable ‘data set’ that comprises what I call pool space and discuss the processes I undertook to work with this evidence and the principles that informed those processes. In my definition, pool space has neither clear foundations nor boundaries and it is shaped by experience, feeling and memory. Approaching pool space, for the purpose of this project inevitably involves a subjective engagement. The title of this chapter, ‘Becoming fluid’, encapsulates the notion that space(s), subjects and indeed evidence are on-going processes, rather than static products. Therefore I discuss how subjects and space(s) might be seen as always in a state of ‘becoming’, and thus I trouble the notion that there is a straight forward, identifiable relationship between evidence and analysis. However, ‘becoming’ is also productive in that it provides the conceptual conditions to continue to ‘disrupt’ and ‘feel’ pool space fragments.

Pool space: no-thing and everything

My conception of pool space shatters the illusion that the public swimming pool has comprehensible material and ideological foundations. Pool space does not have definable limits. Pool space oscillates between the (perceived) real and the imaginary, the material and metaphoric. Pool space is everything and no-thing. It is impossible to ascertain exactly where the choices, decisions and thoughts about pool space came from, or go to. However, the analysis, or at least my recollections of the analysis, must start somewhere. So following Marcus Doel, “the beginning is never an origin. One begins where one finds oneself” (2008, p. 2634). So I find myself here.

As a conceptual staring point, I bring pool space into being in this text by starting with water. For me this move does not just trouble the notion of a progressively produced ‘object’ called a pool, but it also helps bring imagination, desire, dreaming and the sublime into the scope of the inquiry. This conceptualisation negates the rational foundations of the ‘pool’ and messes with some of the myths and assumptions underpinning the rhetoric which accompanies save-the-pool campaigns.

Van Leeuwen (1998) and Deakin (2000) both argue that humans cannot resist the subconscious desire to enter the water, to submerge. They argue that while water terrifies, the sensation of weightlessness also evokes a feeling of eternity, of something limitless and unbounded. This is particularly useful for my conceptualisation of pool space because it accommodates the idea of water inciting feelings, dreams, desires and, importantly, the imagination. According to Forrest (2007):

> imagination refers to a capacity which facilitates both a process of mediation between the outside world and one’s own experiences and memories, and an active, creative relationship to one’s environment that is neither circumscribed, nor hindered by the conceptions of the possibilities and limitations of the present maintained by the ruling status quo. (p.12)

My conceptualisation of pool space incorporates these ideas about the connection between water, imagination and moving beyond the ‘status quo’.

Gaston Bachelard, as part of his broader epistemological concern about the imagination, explored the connections and relationships between humans and natural things, and wrote about the feeling

of matter. In *Water and Dreams*, Bachelard considers water to be a particularly evocative medium – a source through which we "exercise our imagining powers" (1999 [1942], p. 1). Bachelard's argument is not anchored by the physiological need for water, but focuses more on a subliminal desire to dream. Veronica Strang (2004) echoes this sentiment and explains that water is a life-giving substance in its fullest sense. That is, water allows humans to not only exist but also to feel and dream – "water is essential for fantasy production" (p. 55). Spiegelman (2009) observes that when you swim "you move beyond yourself and leave no trace. Swimming frees you from the world" (p. 17). By incorporating such ideas I am able to intimately connect feelings, dreams and imaginings to pool space. However in so doing accounting for the totality of pool space is an impossible dream; totality is both unintelligible and unknowable. In the next section, I suggest that 'fragments' afford a way of coming to understand the parameters and meanings of pool space.

Fragments of pool space

My pool space is intentionally difficult to define. I cannot fully grasp, let alone capture, pool space. I accept the impossibility of ever understanding the 'whole' of pool space and embrace the idea that there are infinite possibilities regarding what I might draw on as evidence. While pool space may appear boundless and unattainable, I actually make use of this inaccessibility and adopt the conditions of impossibility. To this end I have employed the concept of the 'fragment' to explore pool space. Fragments provide evidence for what public pools might be, their (imagined) purposes, potential experiences and their potential fates. Fragments of pool space do not necessarily illuminate 'the whole' however, they are constitutive of the potential of the

whole. At the same time, dealing with fragments acknowledges the impossibility of ever really figuring out all there is to know about pool space.

My pool space is limited only by my imagination, in that I can decide what counts as a fragment of pool space. Fragments of pool space are not limited to swimming pools and may include a passing line in a novel or a poem, a picture in a health magazine, a scene in a film, a swimming costume, a memory or a news article - to cite just a few possible elements. My classification of a pool space fragment may appear loose but it suffices to arouse sensation, inspire political action or future experiences, stimulate memory or conjure hopes or dreams about the function of pools (e.g. swimming) or their form (e.g. a water retaining structure).

In this inquiry I collected and accessed fragments of pool space from a range of research 'sites'. These are places where I collected, experienced and remembered pool space. For ease of description, I categorised the sites into five types: official knowledge, pool sites/visits, web sites, popular culture, and others' recollections. While the collection was not conducted in distinct phases, nor necessarily in the following order, my categories help facilitate description. There is not scope to list or discuss every fragment that I dealt with for the inquiry, so I have selected a small range of fragments to give a sense of what it was I was working with in the name of pool space.

By official knowledge I am referring to academic literature, policy and officially held archival material. The academic literature included books and articles across sociology, history,

geography and urban design, architectural studies, cultural studies, film studies, sexuality studies, sports studies, and leisure studies that looked at swimming and swimming pools. Academic literature shaped not only the theoretical dimensions of this project but also the conceptualisations of space and my attempts to understand the 'knowledge' that underpins, and is reproduced by, academic writing on swimming and swimming pools. Keeping in mind that pool space is constantly in flux, the academic literature was central to my on-going (re)conceptualisation of pool space. In particular, many of the representations that I have drawn on in Chapters 1 and 2 are fragments of pool space.

I identified two types of swimming literature. The first of these take as its focus, the writing on swimming pools (e.g. Buttenweiser, 1999; Glassberg, 1979; Gordon & Inglis, 2009; Iveson, 2003; Love, 2007a, 2007b; McDermott, 2009; McShane, 2009; Pussard, 2007; Smith, 2005; Stewart, 1901; Terret, 2004; van Leeuwen, 1998; Wiltse, 2007). The second focuses on swimming more generally. These works describe the function and cultural significance of swimming (e.g. Cleary, 2011; Daley, 2003; Light and Rockwell, 2005; Love, 2007c; Osmond & Phillips, 2004; Parker, 2000, 2001; Phillips, 2009; Philips & Osmond, 2009; Scott, 2009; Sprawson, 1992; Sydnor, 1998; Wilkie & Juba, 1996; Winterton, 2005, 2009; Winterton & Parker, 2009). These sources were particularly productive in the initial phases of conceptualising pool space. While reading these sources early on in the pool project, I became increasingly aware of inconsistencies between the official representations of swimming and swimming-related knowledge, and my personal experience of swimming, and so I moved to broaden the range of sources through which I might conduct the pool inquiry. I came to wonder what alternatives there might be for framing and analysing the pool.

I was also interested in how the provision of aquatic facilities and services was framed in New Zealand, and in the relationship between provision, maintenance, governance and management of public swimming pools and the values communities place on the provision of public pools. I looked at several Ministerial documents and other official public information and I accessed documents from Department of Internal Affairs (2002) - *Local Government Act*; Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC, 2011) – *Active movement in Water*; Ministry of Education (2011) – *Handbook Supporting Documents and Policies: Section 7 Operational Policies*; Auckland City Council (2010) *Council Swimming Pool Strategy*; and Water Safety New Zealand (2010) – *Annual Report*.

I also accessed a small amount of officially archived material. I obtained this material from the Dunedin City Council archives and the Ōamaru museum archives. In particular, I was able to view architectural plans, old photographs, and council minutes. These fragments gave me some insight into the political processes, and community conflict involved in the building and maintenance of public swimming pools. For example, the Dunedin City Council minutes book contained detailed information about the support and opposition for the building of the Moray Place Tepid Baths, ledgers outlining the financial cost struggles to keep the baths maintained and a description of the eventual demise of the baths. Looking at the archival material led me to also explore the memorialisation of public swimming pools. The tepid baths no longer exist as a pool, but a small sculpture with an accompanying poem is situated in the car-park: a fragment of a pool that once was. For me, the baths, the memories that inspired the sculpture and the sculpture itself

are all fragments of pool space, and provide a good example of the interconnections between the tangible and intangible elements of pool space that I was seeking to explore.

My second research site comprised operational public swimming pools in New Zealand and memorial 'pool' sites in Ōamaru and the United States. I live in Dunedin, therefore the most easily accessible sites for me to visit were the council pools in the city. I visited three Dunedin pools as a 'regular' user from 2008 - 2010. As I swam or went hydro-sliding with my friend's son, thoughts about pool space circulated through my mind. In addition to visiting the pools as a swimmer, I twice observed the swimmers at the St. Clair pool from the adjacent cafeteria. The purpose of these visits was to get a sense for the rhythm of the pool, in terms of the time people spent there, and the comings and goings of pool users over an entire day.

In January 2009 I visited nine public swimming pools in southern New Zealand (Lumsden, Mossburn, Arrowtown, Mataura, Bluff, Tapanui, Cromwell, Wanaka, and Ranfurly) and in early 2010 I visited a further thirteen public swimming pools in the North Island (Onekawa, Hastings, Havelock North, Dargaville, Wellington (2), Tokoroa, Taupo, Waipukurau, Flaxmere, Clive, Auckland (2)). During my visits I collected promotional pamphlets and guidelines and regulations brochures. I also took a number of photographs at these sites which included entrances, signage, and sometimes pools without swimmers. Photography was at times difficult because of strict rules restricting, and in some cases prohibiting, the use of cameras. Once I had taken a photo it then became a (new) fragment of pool space. Thus further illustrating the fluctuating and fleeting nature of pool space. Sensual memories were also important and I occasionally made observational notes upon returning home from the pool, however mostly I just

I carried the ‘feel’ of my pool visits. In this way, the fragments that I gathered were a mix of tangible and intangible.

Three memorials also make up part of my evidence for the pool space inquiry. First, is the site where Janet Frame’s sister Myrtle drowned in Ōamaru which I visited in 2009. The memorial exists as a part of the Janet Frame heritage trail and is a point of significance on tourist brochures. I was again interested here in the multifaceted ways in which the pool might be experienced and expressed. That is, as a site of death of the sister of a famous writer, where again there is no longer a pool, only ruins of what once was. Yet a site, that is really no-thing, can still exist as part of a wider intangible ‘space’, pool space. The Myrtle Frame memorial was a useful fragment in terms of my continual conceptualisation of the breadth of relevant evidence for my pool space inquiry.

The second memorial is Ground Zero, Wall Street, NYC. When I visited in 2010 the memorial was still under construction and consequently, I could only view the construction and advertisements to the ‘virtual’ tour of the progress of the memorial pools (Fastco Design, 2010) rather than the ‘real’ thing. Apart from its obvious politics, Michael Arad’s design, ‘Reflecting Absence’ was also of interest to me because the construction of these pools generated extra controversy over the use of an adjacent site park51. Park51 is the proposed area for an Islamic cultural centre, which was to include an actual swimming pool. However many people feel that it is inappropriate to go ‘swimming’ in such a sacred area (Ratnesar, 2010). The memorial pools conjured anger, grief and hope, and their construction and associated fragments embodied the sense of pool space that I was looking to explore and (re)produce (McKin, 2008).

The third memorial was The Sutro Baths in San Francisco. These baths were envisioned and owned by the then mayor, Adolph Sutro, who believed all San Franciscans should be able to swim (Gray, 2006; Sinclair, 2004).[12] The Baths were expansive, once heavily populated and included a trapeze, bird aviaries, and were big enough to accommodate 10,000 swimmers (Smith, 2005). Visiting the Sutro Baths ruins afforded me an opportunity to clamber over the brick and stone that 'made' the baths, to touch the rusted pipes and to imagine what the baths used to be like in all their extravagance.

All three memorials are examples of fragments of pool space that are not currently used for swimming, yet each offer poignant symbols of the juxtaposition between pleasure and tragedy, an element of public pools that might not be acknowledged in some more 'rational' 'object(ive) accounts of the cultural significance of public swimming pools. At each of these sites I took many photographs, producing even more pool space fragments. Experience and aesthetics were central to all my visits to pool sites, and each site afforded me plenty of opportunities to touch, feel, see, smell and listen to pool space.

The third research site was the internet. My explorations of this site involved web searching and using web-based resources. I spent approximately 800 hours searching the web, watching YouTube clips, following up links and generally immersing myself in the virtual world of swimming. I frequently searched Google for blog sites, council pool sites and images for sites

[12] In addition to building the baths Sutro also ordered the building of a tram line directly to the Point Lobos location to enable widespread city use (Smith, 2005).

and information that I deemed constitutive of pool space. Through the internet I gained a sense of the boundless possibilities of pool space and the abundance of pool space fragments. The internet helped me find and become aware of pools and sites such as the Sutro Baths Ruins (www.sutrobaths.com, 2009); famous Australian baths (www.australia.gov.au, 2010): historic watering holes and swimming pools in Austin, Texas (www.texasoutside.com, 2009); Beijing Water Cube construction, and post-olympic use (www.water-cube.com/en/, 2008; www.cnngo.com, 2010); the Rotorua Blue Baths museum (www.hisotricvenues.co.nz, 2010); Andrew 'Boy' Charlton's Pool (www.abcpool.org, 2011); and the repository of world swimming artefacts - the International Swimming Hall of Fame, which features a virtual museum link and a historic pool of the week (www.isof.org, 2009). On the internet I also searched for other types of fragments such as artworks by David Hockney (www.hockneypictures.com, 2009) and Alex Katz (www.alexkatz.com, 2011; www.colby.edu, 2009). The internet facilitated my access to Hockney's works such as *A Bigger Splash* (1967); *Rubber Ring Floating In a Swimming Pool* (1971); *Portrait of an Artist (Pool with two figures)*, (1972); *Schwimmbad Mitternacht* (1978); and *A Large Diver* (1978) and Katz's *Olympic Swimmer* (1976); *Milly and Sally* (1984); *The Green Cap* (1985); *Swimmer* (1990); *The Swimmer* (1992); *Eleuthera* (1999) – works that I would otherwise have been unable to view. The virtual pool space fragments also allowed me to (re)consider the problems with thinking about evidence as 'static' without trying to distinguish between something real and imaginary. Through my exploration of pool space fragments on the internet I came to understand this binary distinction as arbitrary and unhelpful. These internet explorations strengthened my case for conceptualising the 'object' of inquiry as pool space.

In addition to searching websites, I also collected online news items. Over an eighteen month period, from January 2010 – July 2011, I performed a daily worldwide news search, using

Google alerts, for articles that contained the key words “swimming pool” and “swimming baths”. These searches produced close to 4000 articles ranging from bizarre to banal stories about swimming and pools. From the many pool closures in Britain, to heat waves and the importance of public pool provision in the United States, but also to stories such as a cow swimming in a pool (Topping, 2010), and a couple’s wedding ceremony in a pool (www.english.sina.com/china, 2010). I also conducted general web searches for news prior to 2010, specifically New Zealand news, and mostly that related to pool closures and drowning rates. The articles I sourced for this purpose dated back to 2007. Again the burgeoning number of articles appearing each day served to highlight the fluidity of pool space.

The fourth research site I have categorised as popular culture. It is here that I engaged with what I regard as the more creative fragments of pool space. As either settings or characters in their own right, pools have the ability to inspire creation: beyond the borders of the public pool proper, people’s sensual experiences, imaginings and memories of the pool are (re)created. Swimming pools are re-presented in a number of ways - as characters, and having character, as scenes where tragedies are played out, as settings for enacting desire, and as metaphors for life or death. Following Grossberg (1997), I deem popular culture fragments as “the articulation of affective investments to the social practices and sites of everyday life” (p. 31). These fragments of pool space offer some insight into the creative potential of swimming pools and the pools’ “power to inspire interpretation, analysis, fantasy, or just straight forward narration” (van Leeuwen, 1998, p. 4). In my exploration of pool space, this included searching for, collecting, reading, viewing, listening to, and engaging with a wide range of texts. I drew extensively on texts that were produced and published in New Zealand, Britain, USA and Australia. However, some fragments originated from France and Japan.

Two significant texts were anthologies – *Poolside* (Melcher Media, 2007); and *Splash! – Great writing about swimming* (Blossom, 1996). They provided me with a range of fictional and creative writing around swimming more generally. As starting points, these anthologies allowed me to immerse myself in the fantastic, wondrous and imaginative qualities of pool space. Finding and reading these stories and poems played a major role in my conceptualisation of pool space, and they were also used to cross-reference to other texts about swimming. Other written texts/novels that I consulted that profoundly affected my conceptualisation of pool space and worked as influential fragments of pool space came from *Swimming Pool Library* (Hollinghurst, 1988); *Alex* (Duder, 1989); and *Taste of Chlorine* (Vivès, 2011). I also sourced libraries and book stores for instructional swimming books for all levels ranging from beginners to elite, for example, *Total Immersion* (Laughlin & Delves, 1996); *Good as Gold* (Finch, 1989); *On Swimming* (Firby, 1975); *Froggy Learns to Swim* (London, 1997). As well as biographies and autobiographies of competitive swimming idols such as Mark Spitz - *The Extraordinary Life of an Olympic Champion* (Foster, 2008); Norma Williams – *Between the Lanes* (Williams, 1996); Dawn Fraser - *Gold Medal Girl* (Fraser & Gordon, 1965); and Esther Williams - *Million Dollar Mermaid* (Williams & Diehl, 1999).

Films also provided me with many pool space fragments. Swimming pools feature in hundreds of films. There are several reasons for this. According to Bradshaw (2008), swimming scenes are used for dramatic, atmospheric, and sensual reasons, however they are also “boringly normal”, he goes on to argue that the pool itself is “always an interesting, even a beautiful thing to shoot with its mysterious, Hockney-blue depths” (www.guardian.co.uk). There is also an inextricable

connection between swimming pools (particularly private pools) and the glamorous lifestyles of Hollywood, particularly in the post-war years (Williamson, 1996; van Leeuwen, 1998). While I initially concentrated only on viewing films or film scenes featuring public swimming pools, often pools, and swimming more generally, were useful in conceptualising and exploring what is/is not a public pool and what can/cannot be done in public pools. As fragments of pool space I accessed and watched a wide range of films:

- Feature length: *Dangerous When Wet* (Walters,1953); *Bathing Beauty* (Sidney, 1944); *Olympia Part Two: Festival of beauty* (Riefenstahl, 1938); *Waterboys* (Yaguchi, 2001); *Water Lilies* (Sciamma, 2007); *Little Children* (Field, 2006); *Kids* (Clark, 1995); *Swimming Upstream* (Mulcahy, 2002); *Alex* (Simpson, 1992); *It's a Wonderful Life* (Capra, 1946); *Swimfan* (Polson, 2002); *The Swimmer* (Perry, 1968a); *Pride* (Gonera, 2007); *Swimming Lessons* (la Hood, 1995); *Victor* (Ciccoritti, 2008); *Watermarks* (Zilberman, 2004); *Dawn!* (Hannam, 1979).
- Short film: *No Bikini* (Escanilla, 2007) *Swimming Lessons* (Scott, 2006); *Stroke* (Jeffs, 1994); *Donuts for Breakfast* (Morgan-Rhind, 2000).

Although not an exhaustive list these examples do reveal the breadth of fragments in the form of film.

The fifth and final research site refers to other people's memories, recollections and anecdotes about swimming. The nature of this project meant that it got people talking and so, while I did not deliberately set out to gather or collect fragments of other's swimming pool memories in a

conventional sense (i.e. interviews), friends and strangers inevitably shared with me their memories of swimming pools. During the three year duration of this research project, each person I have spoken to about my project, without exception, has discussed with me a memory, position, experience, or idea about swimming pools that they deemed useful for my thesis. And, the pool experiences of people I have spoken with all vary wildly. Recollections ranged from the ecstatic to the terrified. Most people who I spoke to had a vivid memory that they volunteered without prompting. These memories ranged from experiences of swimming in fountains because they could not afford to go to the public pool to recollections of the ways swimming profoundly affected their sexuality, the nature of their swimming changing room experiences, the ridiculousness of lane swimming; the fictional 'red dye' that was said to colour the water if one was to 'piss in the pool'; the weirdness about the pool being a site where people are basically 'walking around in their undies' and the importance of water to the Zen Buddhists. I considered these recollections as fragments and therefore I consciously and unconsciously added people's conversations to my ever shifting image and conceptualisation of pool space.

To summarise, sometimes I found the fragments and at other times the fragments found me. In this sense data collection was partly serendipitous. However, in order to actively seek out fragments of pool space, I accessed the five research 'sites' that I described above. It is important to emphasise that there was not an end point to the collection, and indeed some further collection occurred while I was engaging with the fragments. The process of data collection itself represents the fleeting, fluid and fragmentary nature of pool space. Below I detail the principles and processes that guided my analysis of the pool space fragments.

Engagement: principles and processes

Because pool space is subjective, it can only be apprehended through perception, experience and imagination. In other words, I recognise and embrace how inextricably entwined in the project I am. As such I frame the analysis as an engagement to acknowledge the relationship between myself and pool space, and pool space fragments. Further, my engagement with the fragments cannot be separated from my 'life' in pool space. Engagement however, is also a problematic assumption. Engagement relies on the relationship between me and pool space, but the assumed relationship or engagement is troubled when I ask, who is the 'I'? What is it that I am referring to when I speak of 'me' – creator and analyser of pool space? And this issue becomes further complicated when I ask: Who is the 'I' involved in the subjective engagement with the evidence? When does the engagement begin? Is it possible to know, and indeed articulate, this so-called engagement? Such questions prompt further consideration regarding subjective involvement in cultural inquiry. In this section I discuss, problematise and reconcile some of the conceptual issues raised by the notion of subject(ivity) and the use and articulation of 'subjective' forms of analysis.

Becoming engaged: retrospective speculations

Announcing one's personal investment and involvement in a project is now a common practice in cultural inquiry. Authors who are critical of claims to objectivism, often make statements regarding their 'bias' or offer explanations that defend their relationship with their evidence and the inescapable mediation between them 'selves' and their analyses. Indeed from the outset of this thesis I announced my desire to 'do' subjective work. I argued that, in light of deconstructionism and the 'cultural turn' a subjective approach to knowledge-making is not only

preferable, but the alternative an impossibility. I have acknowledged that 'I' am the creator of my own pool space. And that 'I' am inextricably connected to the analysis of the pool space fragments, and possibly always have been. However I have offered little in the way of content (or context) for these claims. To this end I provide a brief recollection of my 'life' in pool space below.

I have assumed a familiarity with pool space that has occurred through years of experiences at the pool, and my love for the water. Indeed, during my youth, I negotiated much of my world and relationships, with a towel wrapped around my waist. I watched swimmers in the pool and on television; I swam in lakes, rivers and the sea. I listened to, and grew to love *The Swimming Song* (Wainwright III, 1973); *Like Swimming* (Sandman, 1997); *River Guard* (Callahan, 1999); *Night Swimming* (Berry, Buck, Mills, & Stipe, 1992). The Christmas before I turned ten I received Tessa Duder's (1989) *Alex* – a novel about a fifteen year old swimmer who was trying to qualify for the 1960 Rome olympics. I was drawn to Alex as a fictional heroine; fifteen years before I had heard of Judith Butler, Alex taught me 'gender trouble'. I might have loved her. The same day that I read Alex for the first time I also competed in a swimming carnival. I placed second in my freestyle race and third in breaststroke. I earned a blue and a yellow ribbon. Later that summer my mother sewed those ribbons onto my swimming blanket. During these years the pool was normal for me - it did not appear to be profoundly influencing my sense of self - it was just a place where I swam. A place where I learnt to swim in straight lines and change with the girls, while Mum sewed my ribbons.

The paragraph above is an illustrative, albeit rather simple, narrative that articulates my (prior) relationship with my subject matter. The narrative is undoubtedly revealing in terms of its content. In my recollection of my relationship with pool space the reader is told things out about 'me' and my experiences. I have provided markers that the reader can use to make sense of the 'person' behind, or shaping the analysis. As a revelatory narrative it works. It contains information that alludes to 'my' gender, age, family, sexuality, place, cultural values and my experiences – indeed who I 'am'. In the short paragraph I have conveyed a message about my relationship with/in pool space.

In keeping with the deconstructive tone of the rest of the thesis, however, it is significant to note that the passage is also merely a narrative that too is deconstructing, or has the potential to be deconstructed. The narrative is my own construction, and I have either wittingly or unwittingly utilised conventional techniques of narrativisation to engage the reader in a coherent, yet suggestive, story. Indeed the recollection is an arrangement of ideas and memories, arrested into words, by me at a particular moment. I believe in the 'facts', or the content, of the narrative however the story, or form, of the narrative does not hold a 'whole' truth. That said if the narrative is a construction then what is its substance? As a text what other 'work' might it do? Moreover, if I return to the guiding concepts of this project - that is ideas that embrace the disruption of linear, coherent, permanent, grounded understandings of objects, subjects and knowledge - I am faced with a further problem. How do I know who this subject 'is' in my so-called subjective engagement with/in pool space?

Dissatisfied with my initial attempt to articulate my relationship with pool space above, I have chosen to employ the concept of becoming to acknowledge the centrality of the self in conceptualising and analysing pool space, yet also as a means of troubling notions of a coherent self. As an alternative concept to subject(ivity), 'becoming' embraces incoherence and blurs the distinction between notions of a real or essential, and a fabricated self. In other words, embracing the notion of becoming means that I accept 'I' is/am moving, contingent and fragmented. I am always in process: always 'becoming'. I use 'becoming' as a means to explore, and establish my awareness of, the (im)possibility of knowing, and representing the 'subjective' in subjective engagement. Rather than understanding myself as a stable, coherent subject that brings past experience and knowledge to the fragments, I see the relationship between 'me' and (pool) space as continuously evolving. Becoming also helps me to articulate the (potential) uncertainty involved in adopting meaning of, and for, my 'self'.

I have never been entirely comfortable with the expectation that I should be able to identify, and express, who I am and who I am not. However it was not until undertaking postgraduate study that I had the language to describe what this means in terms of subjectivity. Foucault's (2002b [1970]) discussion of classification of species in *The Order of Things*, although not directly related to this issue, provided clarification for me. That is, categorical knowledge - the knowledge of what unquestionably 'is' and definitely 'is not' provides the conditions of possibility for knowing one 'self' as some 'thing' or another. Knowledge of one self as something distinct or different from another requires knowledge that the self has boundaries: an end, at which it is possible to apprehend the whole of a subject and what belongs, and does not belong to 'it'. Further, in order to articulate what it is that 'makes' the subject, there must also exist a regime of

coherency, through which we learn what identifiable markers constitute (divisible) subjects, and classify our selves (and others) accordingly (see Foucault, 1982).

Such a regime 'makes known' what might be expected of me in announcing how 'I' have shaped my analysis in cultural inquiry, and how I have framed my 'self' in the narrative above. However, as Giffney & O'Rourke (2009) state, subjectivity is not to be "occupied, owned, protected, or rejected", but rather can be "resisted, revised, and elided on a moment-to-moment basis" (p. 6-7). Therefore, just as (pool) space is not concrete, I am not a stable, knowable 'subject'. I am not suggesting that 'I' don't exist but rather that writing myself as an interpretable, categorical subject assumes a regime of coherency that I have from the outset of this project set out to disrupt. The problem here lies in reconciling the subjective presence in doing cultural inquiry with the impossibility of articulating that presence.

In other words I acknowledge that while pool space is conceptualised through my experiences and perception – the writing of 'my' relationship or engagement with pool space can never really get to a singular truth. My engagement with pool space might have begun when I raced my first swimming race, or when I read *Alex* for the first or fifth time. Perhaps it began when the first floating bath was constructed, or when I read the news article about a cow falling into a pool. Acknowledging the unreachability of the 'truth' of my 'self', or my relationship with pool space does not mean that recognising the subjective elements in analysis becomes redundant. Rather, I see that doing so, opens up more possibilities. I see that the rejection of truth content affords the conditions through which I might bring to the analysis a retrospective speculation. The notion of becoming permits this productive approach to content, because through becoming I am accepting

that things might not have ever really 'been' – that is they may be fiction or they just might not have 'finished' or (started) being.

In this regard, the principle of 'becoming' is aptly described by Giffney & O'Rourke (2009) who state: "Becoming involves the shedding of the chimera of stability and certainty wrought through our attachments to objects towards an awareness and acceptance of the unrelenting dynamism that underpins the act of living itself" (p. 6). This is an important, albeit abstract process, in terms of my engagement with pool space and analysis of the pool space fragments, because it acknowledges and embraces the 'always emerging world' (Woodward, 2009). That is, as I have already discussed, pool space is a process whereby the fragments are always on the move, and are always up for grabs in terms of the meanings they might generate, and uncertain in terms of how they might be evaluated in relation to a public pool crisis.

In sum, by embracing 'becoming', I bring fleeting knowledge of the self and retrospective speculation to the analysis, rather than deterministic events and identifying facts. Furthermore, my 'self' and the fragments of pool space can always be re-imagined and re-interpreted, and evidence and thus, engagement is always becoming. I argue that 'becoming' also provides the conceptual conditions to permit disruptive readings of the evidence, and felt, affective responses. In the following section I discuss these principles in relation to my disruptive and felt engagements with my collection of pool space fragments.

(Non)sense and sensibilities

Above I have described the difficulties in articulating my involvement with/in my analysis. In those sections I was primarily concerned with experiences, thoughts, feelings and memories that were ancillary, yet certainly not irrelevant, to the inquiry. In this section I focus on two further, deliberate processes of engagement –disruption and feeling. Here I use engagement as a means to explain my processes of making sense and nonsense of the complex, contradictory and vast amount of pool space evidence that I collected.

Disrupting

In this inquiry my engagement with pool space is partly disruptive. Indeed, there are certainly similarities between my deconstructive readings of representations of public swimming pools in Chapters 1 and 2, and my engagement with pool space fragments. In keeping with the concepts underpinning pool space, embracing a multiplicity of possible meanings and interpretations of the fragments was important in this study. As I suggested in the previous section, when collecting pool space fragments, I was not trying to discover the 'whole' truth about pool space. Rather, in my collection of pool space fragments, I assessed the terrain for relevant and seemingly irrelevant evidence to premise my enquiry on. I was not trying to 'get to the bottom' of pool space. Neither was I trying to get to the bottom of the fragments. The meanings in and expressed through the fragments are not fixed. There is not *a* singular meaning in a fragment that can be deciphered. Rather, pool space and fragments have multiple potential meanings and as such they are open to multiple interpretations.

I may have collected and read a breadth of pool-related evidence, yet I did not set out to decipher a coherent message that revealed itself, but rather to collect them to make something of them. I was not concerned with authorial intention in these fragments. As Walter Benjamin suggests, the 'afterlife' of a text "go[es] beyond, and cannot be reduced to, the intentions and purposes of those who created them… the meaning and significance of a text are not determined by the author at the time of writing, but are contested and conceptualised anew as it enters subsequent contexts" (Gilloch, 2002, p. 2). During the 'disruptive' reading process not only was I reading the texts for dominant messages or meanings, but also for nuance, for silences and for inconsistencies.

Engagement with pool space fragments meant I was constantly reading for, disrupting or disordering what I deemed to be taken-for-granted natural assumptions. This is a process that can perhaps be identified in Chapter I through my deconstruction of the ideological foundations of public swimming pools. Indeed, it was in part the deconstruction of naturalism, biology and swimming that helped me to conceptualise pool space. When engaging with the fragments, I was continuously asking myself: what knowledge underpins the production and interpretation of this fragment of pool space? I was particularly interested in finding points and borders where normative social order is expected and/or controlled. Disruptive engagement, in this sense, might be seen as an exercise in discourse analysis, taking into account the power of particular words, phrases, images and assumptions (Giffney & O'Rourke, 2009).

My engagement with the fragments was guided by my understandings of what constitutes (un)natural and (il)logical knowledge, relationships, subjects and politics. Normalised notions of the function of swimming pools reinforce particular ways of understanding identity, social

relationships (arrangements), and a hierarchy of acceptable experiences (and accompanying emotions tied to desire). When I visited the pools, my engagement included understanding the layout of the pool complexes; the signage; and pamphlets and brochures and reading and potentially disrupting the seemingly most ordinary and 'normal' aspects of public swimming pools. In reading pool space in this way, I was actively seeking to disrupt, or, at least 'make strange', the foundational knowledge that is privileged in many texts about the provision, rules and regulations of public swimming pools. For example, reading pool space fragments in relation to normative ways of thinking about 'life', biology, reproduction, and thus also gender, sexuality and family, and asking what fragments reinforce heteronormative relationships and what fragments might resist those norms was an intentional strategy . I read in order to understand particular formations of 'knowledge', for example, the science of swimming, other instructional texts and the assumptions about the knowledge of pools and appropriate pool behaviour.

My engagement with pool space fragments also allowed me to disrupt some of the assumptions underpinning rhetoric used in save-the-pool campaigns. It permitted a disruption of the notion that public swimming pools are *ordinary* features of the cultural landscape and of the assumptions underpinning these types of discourses. In particular, my engagement encouraged a re-consideration of the naturalism, social control and cultural order implied in several representations detailing the provision of public swimming pools and in concerns over their potential demise. I read for evidence of contradiction, resistance, subversion of the naturalist assumptions about swimming necessity. A disruptive reading also included a de-privileging of rational, functional experiences and a desire to search for evidence of a wide range of reflections, imaginings and descriptions of what the pool might 'do' and why it might be worth 'saving'. In

particular, the popular cultural fragments were very useful for this aspect of the reading. So, in relation to novels and films, I read for desire and imagination and the connections between them.

Feeling

I have discussed, problematised and attempted to reconcile the notion of a subjective engagement the notion of an essential self, and posited the idea that fragments might be read in more than one way, however I also argue that there is a real affective aspect to my engagement. In this way I bring to the analysis, not simply, tools with which to deconstruct and scramble dominant meanings, but also a felt engagement. In other words, the engagement with pool space fragments is not solely about 'reading' and disrupting the content of the 'text' but also about embracing the feeling or 'texture' of the fragments, including my own recollections, memories, and desires.

I have adapted this aspect of my engagement from my readings of Love (2007) and Sedgwick (2003). In line with their commentary, I suggest that engagement is unapologetically felt. For example, despite how familiar I am with pool 'culture', and how seemingly comfortable I am at the pool, I still carry with me a felt strangeness. As such (re)engaging with pool space fragments produces feelings and future projections of love, pain, shame and doubt. If I think about the 'felt strangeness' as a form of becoming then I can use it productively to draw on past memories and feelings. In turn I might create, deconstruct and reconfigure past experiences and thus I see myself and the evidence of pool space (a form of spatiality) as a continuous process of becoming.

I also frame this aspect of my engagement in a similar way to how I would describe my own experience(s) with 'swimming'. Following Paur (2005), I attend to "intensities, emotions, energies, affectivities, textures, as they inhabit events, spatiality and corporeality" (p. 128). To this end, I return to the work of Charles Sprawson who writes about special "intimacy" between man and water. Much of Sprawson's (1992) work focuses on the sensual thrills and wild passions that swimming invokes, making reference to the 'literary swimmers' who were captured by the intoxicating sensuousness of water. For example, Sprawson cites French poet, essayist and philosopher Paul Valery:

> To plunge into water, to move one's whole body, from head to toe, in its wild and graceful beauty; to twist about in its pure depths, this is for me a delight only comparable to love. (Valery, cited in Sprawson, 1992, p. 101)

Indeed, much like how Sprawson describes swimming for the Romantic poets, I would describe part of my engagement with the pool space fragments as a form of "self-encapsulation in an isolated world, a morbid self-admiration, an absorption in fantasy" - "devoted to sensual, mystical, elemental sensations" (Sprawson, 1992, p. 171). In other words, my engagement involved intoxicating swims into pool space fragments.

For example, my engagement with the news was not performed rationally and dispassionately. The volume of news articles considered was immense so I had to first skim read and find articles that I thought represented the general plight of the pool – both positively and negatively. Some articles were selected because they were seemingly bizarre. They produced a reaction while I was reading them and I was interested in what prompted this consideration of them as bizarre or out of the ordinary and what that might also say about the function and fate of public swimming

pools. Other ‘feelings’ were evoked, for example, as I clambered over the Sutro baths ruins in the rain, in a different country. I was excited by being ‘there’ and after I got home poured over the hundreds of photos, re-visiting and re-imagining the excitement of my trip. My swims at Moana Pool, Dunedin too were also ‘felt’ while certainly not the level of excitement engendered by the Sutro Baths ruins – my swims produced what Stewart (2007) refers to as ‘affects of the ordinary’. That is, my swim would often occur on a ‘regular’ day fitted in amongst the routine of life. However swimming is also extraordinary in that the experience of feeling my heavy limbs as I move through the water, much slower than I had as a teenager, only happens when I am swimming. And nowhere else do I change as quickly as possible to get out of my damp, chlorinated togs. Moreover, when I watched films such as *Little Children* and *Water Lilies*, I was disgusted, amused, surprised and moved. In other words, my engagement was deconstructive and disruptive, but it also allowed me to bring my various sensibilities to the inquiry.

In sum, as foregrounded above, pool space is subjective and thus my conceptualisation of pool space and ‘analysis’ of pool space fragments reflects a personal engagement. I have not provided a prescriptive method for precisely how I engaged with the pool space fragments, because following Paur (2005), I see this engagement as a “speculative, exploratory endeavour” (p. 121). My immersion in the pool space fragments was not a linear method but a messy and complex process of reading, feeling, experiencing, analysing, remembering, imagining and swimming. In the following chapter I further explore the potential (and problems) for re-presenting an engagement with pool space and propose a montage method to re-present my analysis.

Chapter IV: Re-presenting fluid fragments: a case for montage

Cultural inquiry is generally dependent on two related processes – the collection and analysis of evidence (as described in the previous chapter) and the re-presentation of that evidence/analysis in a communicable format. The re-presentation, or communication of evidence is often given less consideration than the sources and methods for 'data' collection, however this process too, should honour the inquiry's questions, epistemic assumptions and political positions. In this chapter I discuss how I chose to re-present my analysis of public swimming pools. Specifically, I provide justification for a montage method as a means to re-present pool space, and describe the assumptions that underpin montage.

Montage: principles and processes

Walter Benjamin's writing on history, criticism and art (2002; 2007a; 2007b) inspired my montage method. His insights, specifically the presentation of his work in The Arcades Project (2002) informed both the decision to use montage method and the particular ways I have conceived of this process. However it is important to note that I am not making a claim that this 'is' a Benjaminian approach or framework, if there could exist such a thing. Indeed Graeme Gilloch's (2002) writing on Benjamin was particularly inspirational in my development of montage as a method for re-presenting the plight of public swimming pools because of his open and suggestive discussions of Benjamin's writings and how they might be useful in the contemporary context. Moreover, as Benjamin himself might attest, misunderstanding can be productive, and thus, whether or not I have 'read' Benjamin's writing 'correctly' is not an issue. Also as with all of my readings of texts, my interpretations are always on the move, and to write

exactly how I have interpreted and ‘used’ Benjamin’s work here is not only to my mind an impossible task, but an attempt to do so wold undermine the work I have tried to do elsewhere in this thesis. That said montage, for me, is a method of re-presentation shaped by my reading and interpretation of Benjamin’s work, together with my renderings of deconstructive and subjective inquiry as previously discussed. I have also drawn on what is broadly referred to as a postmodern aesthetic which embraces fragmentation, ambiguity, parody, pastiche and assemblage (Hoesterey, 2001; Hutcheon, 1989) to argue for a form of post-deconstructive representation that I have called reconfiguration.

Montage challenges conventional methods of representing research ‘findings’. In assembling montages, rather than writing up ‘chapters’, I have borrowed an artistic technique and applied that technique beyond the aesthetic sphere to re-present my analysis of pool space (Pensky, 2004). Montage is not artistic practice per se, but in using this method, I acknowledge, and indeed in some ways privilege, the aesthetics (or at least the political potential of the aesthetics) of knowledge making. Montage reflects an aesthetic attitude that disrupts, parodies, and challenges the logic of conventional signifying practices and representations. Montage also re-presents my disruption of coherent and stable objects and subjects.

Montage involves assembling a wide range of fragments. In placing these fragments together I attempt to produce a series of narratives that acknowledge and celebrate the incoherence of objects, subjects, knowledge (making) and culture. In this way, montage might most closely resemble a method of *historical* representation because of the emphasis placed on fragments and the assemblage of those fragments into ‘narratives’. Rosenstone (1995) argues that a historian

digs for the past and comes up with disconnected fragments that do not fit together into a complete and meaningful story" (p. 191). Rosenstone (1995) describes montage as the juxtaposition of unlike images to form new combinations of meaning – a meaning that we [as viewers], must work to achieve" (p. 192).

The montage method permits the elaboration of further questions about knowledge. The process of arranging the montages goes beyond the basic premise of deconstruction and toward cultural analysis, criticism and reconfiguration. Montage is a method and form of re-presentation that confronts its audience with an intersection or double-coding of critique (deconstruction) and creation (reconfiguration). Through montage I can ask: How do particular understandings about connections, attachments, and bonds cloud our imaginations, prevent us from thinking otherwise, or in other ways? I am proposing that while employing a more experimental and imaginative approach to re-presenting cultural inquiry might not produce *the*, or even *a*, truth about pools, it does allow a (re)consideration of the foundations of what constitutes critical and legitimate cultural inquiry. Montage illustrates how the modern project fails, but at the same time uses conventional techniques to confront the audience with some of those techniques so we might see them not as taken-for-granted, apolitical, neutral 'truths' but rather we might begin to see them 'anew'. I construct my montages through three conceptual hooks, decontextualisation, assemblage, and subjective absence.

Decontextualisation

In many deconstructive approaches to cultural inquiry, analysis is framed around the fragmentary conditions of the cultural world. However, frequently in such work, the 'realities' of the fragment are left as a 'given' and not explored in relation to how the fragment might actually be accessed, analysed and re-presented. I am not comfortable with announcing a belief in fragmentary cultural conditions that lasts only for the duration of evidence collection and my engagement with pool space. Rather, for me, the re-presentation of such an analysis must also reflect the fragmentary. In the process of engaging with pool space, I became interested in how I might, as a legitimate part of the cultural inquiry, exaggerate fragmentary conditions in their re-presentation. Adopting and adapting Benjamin's (and his interpreters and translators[13]) discussions of the fragment afforded a means to move beyond my initial engagement with pool space. In particular, engaging with his work prompted use of a montage technique that further exaggerates the fragmentary nature of cultural conditions by decontextualising the pool space fragments.

In taking the fragment as a basis for evidence, I acknowledge that the content of a text is necessarily multiple and fluid. According to Benjamin when some*thing* is blasted from its context the destructive character may then "clear things from it everywhere" (Benjamin, 2002a). I interpret the process of fragmentation as a process that permits 'clearing a way' through the totality of pool space. For my own purposes I primarily achieved fragmentation through the process of decontextualisation. That is, I removed the fragment, or "blasted" it out from its "embeddedness in a dominant, approved tradition of interpretation and reception" (Pensky, 2004,

[13] For further elaboration of what Benjamin's concept of the fragment looks like and means for other scholars see: Bullock & Jennings (1996); Caygill (1998); Cohen (1993); Eagleton (1981); Ferris (2004); Hanssen (2006); Isenberg (2001)

p. 192). The shocks and collisions of decontextualisation expose fragmented fragments of pool space.

Decontextualisation is crucial, for it is through this process that fragments can be removed from their position in a coherent story and potentially evacuated from the political intentions of the author. Scholars assume that context is a powerful explanatory tool and indeed context is a key concept for many scholars undertaking cultural inquiry. Placing an event or origin of some 'thing' in its context is assumed to produce rational, secure, causal explanations about the past and social life. Indeed as James Garbarino argues "it all depends" on context (1999, p.73.). But what is context? And who decides what context might be? Derrida (1988) rightly, I think, notes that context is "limitless" (p. 136). Dixon and Jones III (2005) capture this paradox well:

> Context fixes the relational field of meaning but it does so only by drawing upon previous contexts which are themselves embedded in still other contexts. (p. 243)

Being tied to context (an already imposed and socially constructed framework for understanding events and meaning) limits how I might see the fragments – the small pieces of evidence for assessing the plight of swimming pools. In most cases, actively 'decontextualising' the fragment enabled me to use the same fragment in multiple ways, to generate different effects and affects when the fragments were re-presented as montage. In a sense, decontextualisation can be likened to the experience and intents of Hannah Arendt's description of Benjamin as a pearl diver:

> Like a pearl diver who descends to the bottom of the sea, not to excavate the bottom and bring it to light but to pry loose the rich and the strange, the pearls and the coral in the depths, and to carry them to the surface, this thinking delves into the depths of the past –

> but not in order to resuscitate it the way it was and to contribute to the renewal of extinct ages. What guides this thinking is the conviction that although the living is subject to the ruin of the time, the process of decay is at the same time a process of crystallization, that in the depth of the sea, into which sinks and is dissolved what once was alive, some things "suffer a sea change" and survive in new crystalized forms and shapes that remain immune to the elements, as though they waited only for the pearl diver who one day will come down to them and bring them up into the world of the living as thought fragments. (Arendt, 2007 [1968], *Illuminations*, pp. 50-51)

The decontextualised fragments symbolise the idea that (pool space) evidence can *become* something else. Exaggerated fragmentation allows the evidence to *do* something else, say something that may be far from the reaches of the author's intent, or popular interpretation. Further, this process allows us to 'see' the smaller fragments of the pool space, possibly for the first time. In discussing Benjamin's conceptualisation of history as montage Pensky (2004) states, nothing is too arcane, nothing too marginal, to be ignored or excluded. The fragment, then, potentially permits us to *know* something we might not have considered. Therefore, my aim in decontextualisation is to release previously invisible, and seemingly irrelevant, words and images and re-present them in such a ways that they invite readers to contemplate the present/future plight of public swimming pools.

Technical process

All the fragments that I decontextualised for the montages came from the research sites: official knowledge, visits to public pools (photographs and pamphlets), the internet, and popular culture.

While memory and conversation certainly shaped the final montages, I reserve discussion of the role these fragments played for when I discuss assemblage and subjective absence, towards the end of this chapter. For ease of description I have further categorised the fragments into five specific 'types': Books, images, film, miscellaneous, and news.[14] In a practical sense, the process of fragmentation involved *capturing* and *cutting*. After engaging with the collected pool space fragments I selected fragments that were not already in a digital format, such as books, films and pamphlets and scanned these so that, if selected, they could then be decontextualised. In the case of films, I used the programme 'Frapps' to make digital stills, or images. This process involved me watching the films and 'capturing' images as they 'flashed up'[15] in front of me. With books and pamphlets, I scanned pages in their entirety.

After scanning, and making decisions about the types of fragments I wanted to decontextualise, I snipped sentences, passages, words and partial images using the Microsoft snip tool, to capture the precise fragment that might be used. Similarly, with news texts, I used the snip tool to capture fragments of the web pages that hosted the news stories. Following their capture, I 'cleaned up' some of the fragments using a Microsoft paint tool to ensure that no parts of the text detract from the aesthetic of the fragment. Once I had cut and cleaned the fragments I coded and filed them. I retained 1071 useable decontextualised pool space fragments which I categorised as books (312), films (200), images (129), miscellaneous (57), and news (373).[16] I printed the fragments as thumbnails and cut them into separate pieces for use in the montages.

[14] I have categorised these in this way merely for ease of description and so I could handle the data digitally.
[15] Like Benjamin's (2002) theses on history
[16] Full references are provided after each montage – detailing the source and appropriate credits of the fragments

A fundamental reason for keeping the fragments in their original form,[17] albeit digitised, was to retain the aesthetic qualities of each piece. I anticipated that this would enrich the effect when I eventually assembled the fragments as a montage. Given that I decontextualise my fragments, that is, blow apart and make the text into something else, critics may claim that I have retreated into a void of never-ending, textual interpretation. I reject this criticism and counter that we cannot deny the existence of the fragments. Fragments exist in the world, and the complexity of pool fragments comprises pool space. Indeed, it could be argued that it is the *form* of the fragments that legitimises them as evidence for pool space. That is the evidence is not embellished at all. In this way, the evidence itself might refute critiques regarding extreme relativism that critics often throw at deconstructive and postmodern approaches to cultural inquiry.

Keeping in mind the aim of the research is to analyse and re-present the plight of public swimming pools, in the following section I consider the elements of re-presentation that are central to my cultural inquiry. I pay particular attention to the ways I assembled fragments, and to how I used them to elucidate the cultural significance, purposes and potential fate of public swimming pools. Here it is not the "'encyclopaedic accumulation' which is important" (Gilloch, 2002, p. 67-68), but rather going beyond collection and paying attention to the combination and arrangement of the fragments in a form that can be communicated. Indeed, as Gilloch (2002) states, "the eclectic engineer juxtaposes disparate and despised artefacts, forms and media, with a view to generating an electrifying tension, an explosive illumination of elements in the present"

[17] If montage was to be used outside of the thesis, copyright issues would need to be addressed. However I want to signal here that my use of fragments in their 'original' form raises some interesting questions about ethical and legal implications of the use of 'evidence' in cultural inquiry, particularly in the digital age. Why might the fragments be considered more 'illegal' than say a series of re-typed quotations from other authors' texts?

(p. 68). By assembling fragments of pool space, the cultural attachments and potential fate(s) of the public swimming pool may be re-presented as/in montage.

Assemblage

Montage ultimately relies on the *placement* of fragments and I state outright that the order of the fragments in the montages is not random. In this section I outline how I made my own order out of the 'rubble' of pool space. I present several examples to illustrate the principles underpinning montage construction in an effort to portray "what is to count as a fragment, how it is to be secured, whether and in what way is it to be mounted, and above all, what other fragments it is to be juxtaposed to" (Pensky, 2004, p. 186). Rather than detailing the process in a formulaic fashion, I illustrate the general principles of assemblage. I focus on three techniques that relate to the *form* rather than the content of the montages: confrontational aesthetic, (juxta)position, and tone and rhythm.

Confrontational aesthetic

The first principle of construction is related to the aesthetic politics of montage. While this principle of construction does not involve a specific technique for the placement of fragments, it nevertheless underpins the aesthetic spirit or attitude I embraced when assembling the montages. The montage construction is informed by an assumption that the eventual product will produce a 'confrontational aesthetic'. I reiterate that I am not an artist and therefore the montages are not elaborate masterpieces. While the poolspace montage has aesthetic elements, the primary aim of

their construction (reconfiguration) is political. For me, montage is political because it re-presents or messes with concrete understandings of knowledge and subjectivity.

Following Gilbert (2006) more than just scrambling the dominant ideological images, I seek to fundamentally change them. This process can be likened to what Linda Hutcheon (1989) calls double-coding. Hutcheon (1989) notes that parody is a particularly effective means of representation to garner the double-coding effect. One example of this "double-coding effect" appears in my replication of a photograph of a sign that says "village pool". I write over the "l" in pool", replacing it with an "f" so that the sign now reads, "Village poof". Using a confrontational aesthetic technique renders the montage method both deconstructive and productive. It is deconstructive in that I call into question the very nature of evidence and how it is used in cultural inquiry by using accepted and conventional forms of evidence, assigning them status, and then ironically producing a confrontational politics of re-presentation via the placement of those pieces of evidence. Although the montages are in narrative format, a confrontational aesthetic encourages readers to interrogate the relationship between evidence and re-presentation in cultural inquiry.

(Juxta)position

On their own, decontextualised fragments might be regarded as meaningless. However, when placed next to each other in a new context, fragments that have no obvious relationship communicate with each other, potentially producing different meanings. In this way the technique of juxtaposition aligns comfortably with my discussion of disruption in Chapter III. (Juxta)position yields opportunities to disrupt normative frameworks and to understand what can

and cannot ‘be’ associated or connected with another. Further, drawing again on the concept of heterogeneity, juxtaposition favours multiplicity, repetition, contradiction, parody and self-referentiality. Fragments can be used over and over again. Moreover, I can position the same fragments in a different order to produce a different narrative. Doing so can illuminate disrupted linearity, disjuncture, and disarrangement.

Gilloch (2002) reiterates these ideas underpinning juxtaposition when he suggests that “in montage, images sounds, words, even individual letters, are recomposed in startling configurations. The distinctions and boundaries between things are sometimes accentuated, sometimes erased” (p. 109). In my montages I focus on (re)configuring textual relationships between the fragments. This requires re-working both textual and human relationships. A relationship is often defined as a logical or natural association between two or more things and, in conventional forms of analysis and representation, researchers generally aim to make logical associations between pieces of ‘data’. In my montages, however, there is nothing *essentially* ‘logical’ or ‘natural’ about the relationships forged between the fragments. Rather, I set out to place the fragments in ways that deliberately trouble ideas about what readers might consider should as legitimate. This strategy reflects the engagement that I advocated in Chapter III. To further explain the process of arranging fragments, I turn to Sara Ahmed, who uses the term “associations” to explore what can ‘be’ next to each other. Ahmed explains that a disorienting process “puts [objects] within reach, those that might, at first glance, seem awry”. Moreover, Davison (2006) argues that in terms of re-presenting knowledge, this process requires the author to become a “strategic saboteur” and “manipulate[s] textual and imagistic representations to spoil the taken-for-granted illusion of the fantasy of discovering, a singular true interpretation” (p. 145). For example, a simple word like ‘regenerating’ as a fragment of a larger pool news story

might not seem like much, yet when it is placed, or positioned next to another seemingly unrelated fragment, such as ‘relics’, a relationship is formed. This positioning might produce a new or reconfigured meaning about the plight of public swimming pools. In assembling fragments of texts I produce new relationships between those texts in potentially unexpected ways. Likened to Gilloch’s (2002) description of the polytechnical engineer, I was “dedicated to capturing, developing and preserving” images, with the view that “images in the incidental, the marginal and the neglected are disclosed and remembered, images which are to nourish the struggles of the present, images about to vanish.” (p. 197)

Tone & rhythm

I made some choices over the selection and ordering of fragments with the aim of eliciting particular emotive and affective response from the viewer/reader. I purposefully tried to disrupt the rationality which I anticipated most people would bring to my inquiry. In selecting fragments to assemble, I attempted to invoke humour, sadness, laughter, elation and despair (amongst other emotions) within and across the four montages. In one sense, I wanted to illustrate how narratives in cultural inquiry can play with our emotions, how they can connect with how we feel about ourselves, and our culture. In the case for swimming pools, I deliberately placed fragments together that would play on people’s real and imagined experiences of public swimming pools. For example, I hooked into the emotional connections evident in textual representations. I also re-ordered some of these to surprise the reader with unusual and unexpected connections between the fragments, which were intended to produce multiple responses. Again, in some parts of the montages, the same fragment was used repeatedly in different positions to build an emotional connection with that fragment, with the figures, and the voices of the montages. Sometimes

reordering was intended to elicit sympathy from the viewer and, at other times, I attempted to disconnect from emotional attachments to buildings, heritage and culture with a view to making things strange. While I made decisions regarding the placement of fragments and certainly there were reasons shaping the emotive aspects of the montages, my intention was not to ‘lock in’ a particular feeling. I hope that the montages evoke multiple, conflicting and compounding emotions.

Underpinning my attempts to disorder emotional connections was a desire to encourage readers to see public swimming pools differently which in turn derives from my engagement with pool space and drove the selection and ordering of pool space fragments. I selected images that would invite readers to connect on an emotional level with the montages, whether through sadness, humour, ecstasy, fear, anxiety, irony or even through ambivalence.

I also endeavoured to provide a rhythm to the montages to exemplify the idea that meaning is “perceptible and legible only fleetingly” (Gilloch, 2002, p. 39). With regard to form, I carefully considered the timing and pacing required for a viewer to process and contemplate the images and words. In some cases I isolate particular fragments, which, as well as directing the reader’s focus, enable a sort of ‘pause and affect’ effect. In the process of isolating fragments, I also use blank space as a means of articulation; the blank spaces act as an emptiness or silence which is just as important to producing emotional connections. At times, I interrupt or rupture this ‘silence’ by contrasting it with unexpected or potentially ill-fitting fragments. At other times, I combine words with images and long passages with short sentences or singular words, all in an attempt to direct the reader’s response, as well as provide a spectrum of possible readings.

Technical process

The technical process of assembling the montages was both complicated and time-consuming. After printing off thumbnail versions of all the fragments, I examined each category – images, films, books, news, miscellaneous – and physically placed selected fragments in the order I wished them to appear. To make this process more manageable, I categorised the fragments into separate montages, sections and pages, in a similar way to how one might approach a writing task. When digitally arranging the fragments, I continued to make changes in accordance with the look, feel and rhythm of the montage. These processes were undertaken, not only to render the montage visually interesting, but also in an effort to ensure that upon arrangement, each fragment, each page of fragments and each montage of fragments may be read in fresh ways which a heavily contextualised narrative may not allow for. Gilloch (2002) captures my ambition when he writes that montages juxtapose "mundane images and textual elements…with explosive (often bitingly satirical) effect" (p. 148).

I constructed the montages as a process of the ordering of pool space fragments and, at times, perhaps they portray an air of inevitability. Indeed, in parts, fragments seem to flow 'naturally' through the narratives, producing a sense that the narrative itself was just waiting to be found, or in research terms, the evidence was just 'there' awaiting assembly. This assumption is problematic, however, because it fails to explicitly acknowledge the subjective processes involved in all knowledge-making. As signalled above, many authorial choices were made in the process of assembling the montages, and in the following section I suggest that the final technique, 'subjective absence', works to create an air of inevitability. In other words, the

authorless narrative actually works to further emphasise the confrontational aesthetic that I was trying to achieve.

Subjective absence

Every author of a cultural inquiry has to make choices. As I detailed in the assemblage section, my choices around placement, rhythm and tone were underpinned by a politics of confrontational aesthetics and also by my engagement with/in pool space as described in Chapter III. What is missing from my commentary in the assemblage section is the fact that I deliberately set out to construct the montages *without* imposing a narrative voice throughout. Using the modernist technique of 'letting the sources speak for themselves' against themselves, I construct a narrative utterly reliant on sources. I attempted no layering of story-ing over the top, and inserted no voice between the fragments. Rather, my intent was that the fragments (and their placement) would 'be' the narratives.

The ordering and classification of the fragments is what holds the montages together and I have used the advantageous position of author to decontextualise and reconfigure the order of pool space evidence. To borrow a Benjaminian phrase, I decided which way to lead viewers out of the 'rubble'. In this way, I have acknowledged my "strategic position in the social relations of production" and taken advantage of the productive capacity of knowledge-making to reorganise and appropriate "the means of cultural (re)production" at my disposal (Gilloch, 2002, p. 148). Ironically, this is achieved through the 'absence' of an authorial voice. However, in the absence of an authorial 'voice', the fragments and their relationship with each other are foregrounded. Through the absence of a distinct authorial voice, an impression of presence is created which

ostensibly allows “the object to speak for itself and in its own words” (Gilloch, 2002, p.68). This process is a nod to Walter Benjamin’s reflections on the silent critic. As described by Gilloch (2002), “meaning is generated in the juxtaposing of individual fragments, rather than in theoretical overlay. The silent critic ‘shows’ in the skilful act of construction” (Gilloch, 2002, p. 39). It is hoped that the presentation and form of the montages exaggerates the authoring process of cultural inquiry through the absence of an authorial voice.

I reiterate, however, that despite my apparent absence in the montage texts, I am very much present. The montage construction was a wholly subjective exercise. There was an inseparable relationship between my ‘self’ and what I was seeing, reading, collecting, and assembling. For example, whilst collecting, reading and fragmenting the texts I started to get a ‘feel’ for which bits of evidence I wanted to place next to each other. My own experiences also shaped the assemblage. Fragments of hard work, joy and pain, often bubbled up as I researched and constructed the poolspace montages. Furthermore, my relationships with people in my everyday life necessitated conversation about my project and thus about public swimming pools. While these conversations do not appear as visible fragments in the final montages, in terms of shaping my placement of the fragments, people’s informal conversations with me about their pool experiences played a role in how I constructed the montages. These types of conversations each informed how I placed the fragments together.

So far, I have discussed the fragments as if they were disembodied pieces that exist outside of the people who engage with them. I have also described the montage process as necessitating a subjective absence. However, given the inseparability between pool spaces and people, and

indeed, cultural inquiry and people, I did not want the montages to be missing people altogether. With a view to bringing people explicitly in, I re-present several figures throughout the montages that embody the frustrations, tensions, and fragmentary cultures of public swimming pools. These figures reflect a position about the 'self' that emphasises fleeting moments of character rather than the discovery and illumination of a unified and fully knowable subject. The figures are created through the fragments but do not assume a coherent stable identity. That is, they are not eternal or real figures but rather, juxtaposed, partial, imagined figures that assist in re-examining assumptions that undergird the notion of a coherent identity. The characters are devices through which to explore experiences, memories and possibilities of pool space. They are complex and they are in flux.

Further, all of the figures featured in poolspace could potentially be me. Alternatively, they could be the readers of the montages. I used several assemblage techniques to achieve this 'figurative' ambiguity. One was the mixed/disordered use of gendered pronouns and another was the strategic juxtaposition of image and text. It is difficult to ascertain who is speaking, and to whom in the montages. Importantly, I make no assumptions about what the reader should read or expect to read, nor to presume what sorts of characters the readers might relate to. The 'I' could be themselves (or not).

Ultimately, the presentation of multiple, ambiguous yet poignant figures throughout the poolspace montage means identity/subjectivity is positioned at the crossroads between absence and presence. The figures enabled me to bring people, subjectivity, and being into my question

about the salvation of pools, culture and selves, yet their presence does not dictate identity through my own authorial voice.

Interpreting poolspace

The poolspace montage 'series' consists of four interrelated yet distinct montages: Montage 1 – Everything in its right place; Montage 2 – Saturated pleasures; Montage 3 – 'Dead water and no-bodies'; Montage 4 – It's a matter of time. The montages are not a complete, or comprehensive, story of the plight of public swimming pools and, I reiterate that the montages are creatively fictive. I cannot say with absolute certainty what is, and what is not, true about the montages. While there were clearly many choices made on my part, ultimately the montages will be interpreted differently by different readers. This is actually part of the point of the montage as a method, and integral to the form of (re)configuration. I wanted the montages to 'speak' for themselves, in terms of eliciting a response from a reader/viewer. The montages can be read in any order. Indeed, the pages might be read separately. There are many intended stories that I drew on when assembling the montages however, it is essential to the entire process and politics of the project that they be left open to multiple interpretations and (mis)understandings. According to Benjamin, misunderstandings can actually be productive in terms of the politics of an image space (Nagele, 2004).

While the montages do not have a singular message that I am trying to convey, they do contain a shared, central idea. Certainty keeps us from imagining: certainty keeps us from knowing otherwise. Each of the montages is an attempt to disrupt certainty, and an attempt to sculpt an otherwise. In embracing the possibility that the montages will produce multiple, shifting and

contradictory readings, I am simultaneously embracing ideas about the usefulness of research and the re-presentation of cultural inquiry. There is an expectation in cultural inquiry that a researcher ask themselves - Will what I find be conceptually and practically relevant? (Anderson & Smith, 2001). For the case of montage this could be adjusted to a question of - will what I *construct* be conceptually and practically relevant? Why deconstruct the public swimming pool? Why re-present the analysis of pool space into a reconfigured poolspace?

By re-presenting my analysis in the form of montages I have created situations that illuminate the political potential of deconstruction. I do this by re-orienting what constitutes 'political' work toward engagement and the opportunity to ponder. As such I work towards a politics that is not necessarily about fighting *for* something. Rather, it is a politics that seeks to produce something that people might be able to connect with, a politics that permits people to make their own minds up about the cultural significance of the pool. My intention is to afford poolspace the productive *potential* to inspire new, and multiple, thoughts, reactions, emotions, and actions. Because of its experimental nature I cannot be sure that the montages will actualise this potential, it will only become clear to me whether or not they are a viable strategy to do the political work I intended following conversations and dialogue with readers of the montages.

Furthermore my political intent for poolspace is to encourage reflection on what place pool space has in the readers' lives, but importantly, it also asks them to look at how the seemingly most ordinary 'object' might be transformed to make philosophical questions accessible and relevant. Poolspace does not merely challenge, critique and begrudge the old. It is not a simply a reactionary argument, but rather, a novel assemblage, purposefully composed to confront readers

with questions about culture, knowledge and their own existence. By re-presenting the pool space analysis in the form of montage I have also sought to render visible the complexity of/and the subjective elements of the production of knowledge.

The montages do not follow a traditional system of dialectical thinking (thesis, antithesis, synthesis). Rather, they are purposefully “suggestive, indicative and contingent” (Gilloch, 2002, p. 26). These three adjectives, for me, exemplify both the limitation and imaginative potential of knowledge-making and provide a place from which to interpret the montages. Hopefully the montages will achieve the dual aim of being evocative at the personal level and provocative from the perspective of re-presenting analyses. Whilst reading the montages I ask readers to consider their own ‘being/becoming’ in relation to the pool, swimming, water, and imagination, and to contemplate the depths of their culture, and their ‘selves’. To this end I offer some guiding questions: Are pools disappearing? Is the disappearing pool symbolic of something deeper, darker? Do you care about the disappearing pool? Why do you care?

Interlude

Although it allows the premises of the past, it starts something absolutely new, and this newness, this novelty is a risk, is something that has to be risky and it is violent because it is guaranteed by no previous rules. So at the same time you have to follow the rule and invent a new rule, a new norm, a new criterion. (Jacques Derrida, in Derrida & Caputo, 1997, p. 6)

Start to arrange, start to order, start to catalogue.

Montage One

Everything in its Right Place


SWIMMING POOL
ussex St
st

"A pool is full of potential,"

PUBLIC SPACES almost universally serve as great equalizers, but perhaps none so much as the public pool.

Swimming Pools are such marvellous places, expanses of water where kids splash and swim - a real asset to a school and community.

From taking their first tentative plunges in the waters to mastering their strokes and speed, the city's swimming pools have played a key role in the communities they serve for many generations.

It's not just a swimming pool but a meeting place where families can get together.

Community Swimming Pools—Make Friends While You Cool Down

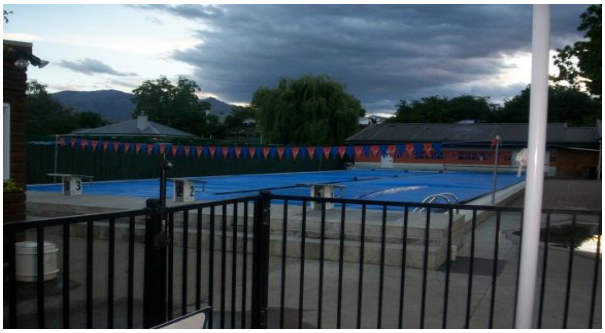
it is also invaluable to the community because it is a safe, well-supervised place for children to go during the day.

According to Shakespeare, death may be the great leveller. But swimming pools come close.

SWIMMING IS THE perfect way to have fun and stay fit. All you need to do is find out where your local pool is.


FIORDLAND COMMUNITY POOL


HEATED SWIMMING POOL




CLOSED
The Village Pool
Tepid Pool
PUBLIC HOURS


ENTRANCE

Into the water

In order to swim, you must enter a different element — water. It feels strange at first and it can be a frightening experience for some people. So remember never to force beginners into swimming against their wills. Never ridicule the fear of water — it's all too real. Time spent helping beginners to overcome initial hesitation pays off in later progress.

The best age to start is between six and 12 months old when baby is able to hold up his head and the level of alertness has increased.

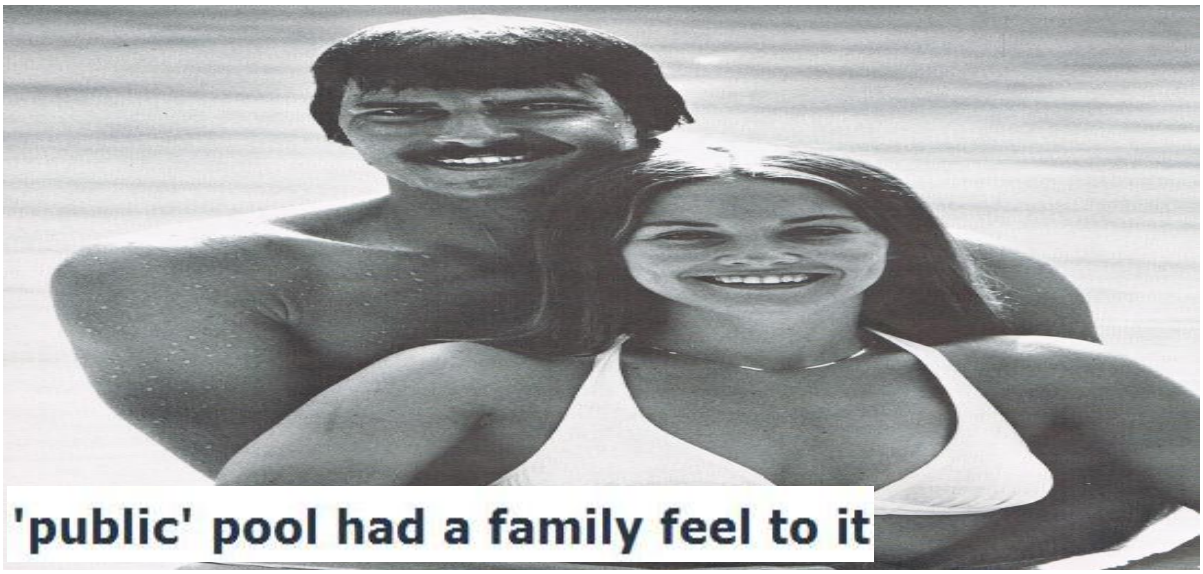
"It is important to get young kids used to the water and it is a lot easier to teach them because they are fearless," Dan Daniels, athletic director, Semper Fit, Marine Corps Community Services, MCLB Albany, said. "They are in the developmental phase, so the younger the better."

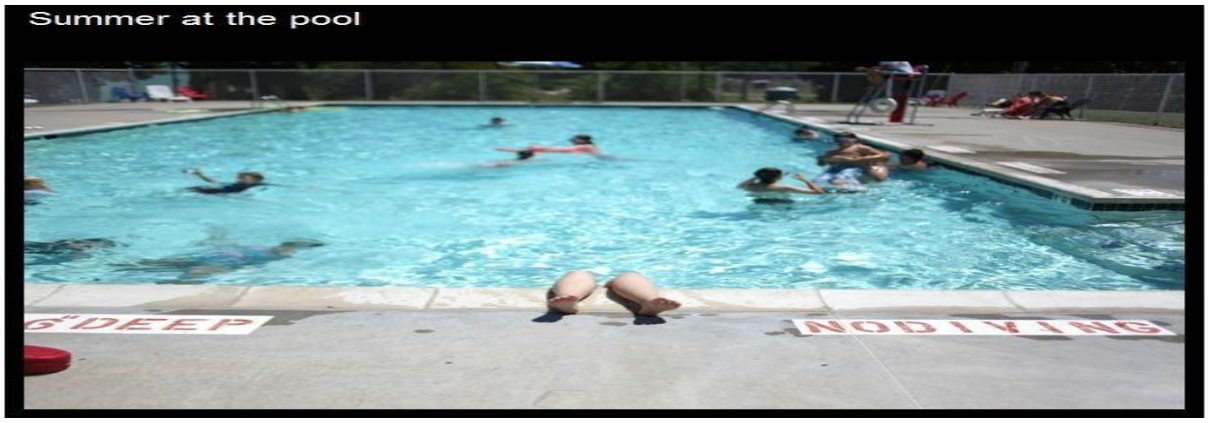
Although you can learn to swim in the shallow water at the seaside, this has many drawbacks, such as the weather, the temperature of the water and waves that will disturb your first strokes. The best place for the beginner is in the local swimming pool.

If you choose a reasonably quiet time or join a special class, you will be able to move about freely without getting splashed too much. The water is specially treated to keep it free from infection, and there will be specially trained attendants to keep an eye on your safety.

Dad had decided that I should be taught to swim. The logical place was the outdoor Olympic Pool, only a two-section tram ride distant from our house.

I spent most of those summer holidays at the pool, romping, diving, jumping, swimming for hours on end





Elderly ladies wearing lipsticks and flowered swimming caps; grey-haired men sporting creased anchors on their arms; a young mother with her infant, splashing about like a duckling, shrieking with glee; a couple of teenagers gazing into one another's eyes. Everyone is refreshed, rejuvenated.

POOL FOR THE PEOPLE

non-swimmer

YOUR FIRST VISIT

Before you go into the water there are a number of things you should do as a matter of routine.

1 Blow your nose. You should not swim with a cold or with catarrh.

2 Go to the toilet.

3 Do not go into the water for at least an hour after a big meal—and do not eat sweets or chew gum when swimming.

4 Have a shower before going into the pool, washing carefully your hands, knees and feet. You should not swim if you have any infection on your feet, such as athlete's foot, as it will only get worse and you will spread the infection to others.

5 Remember safety rules such as not running along the side of the pool, taking part in horseplay, pushing other people or pretending to be in trouble.

Dress Code

We prefer approved togs to be worn in the pool. However clean T-shirts and shorts may be worn over approved togs under special conditions. Underwear and jeans etc, are unacceptable.

A woman told to leave a swimming pool for wearing support tights to conceal her varicose veins said she felt angry and humiliated.

Pooled wisdom kept the sexes apart

She slipped off her clothes. Underneath, she already had her togs on.

I have worked out how to spend the least possible time undressed in the locker room: I put my bathing suit on at home, then sweatshirt and jeans, and I bring along underthings wrapped up in a towel. That way I just zip off my clothes to swim, and afterward I can rush back into them, only naked for an instant; no one has to see me. While I am swimming I leave the towel with the understuff wrapped up in it on the long bench at one side of the pool, and sometimes I have horrible fantasies of someone walking off with it; however, it is comforting to think that no one would know whose it was, probably.

as soon as he entered the crowded enclosure he was confronted with regimentation.

ALL SWIMMERS MUST TAKE A SHOWER BEFORE USING THE POOL.

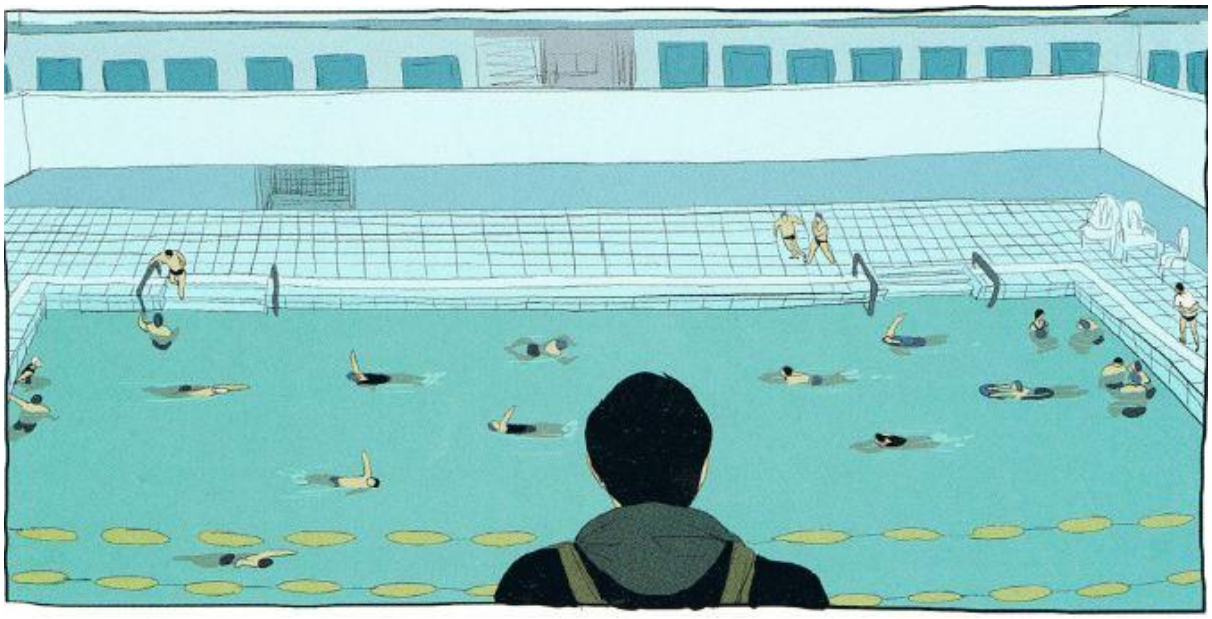
showering can make a difference. It really does cut down on the chances of putting germs in the water

Heat smacked Jimmy like a wall in the face as the swing doors opened into wet changing. Every noise was amplified. Music throbbing so loudly over the PA system that the tune was unrecognisable. Its beat made the floor vibrate under Jimmy's feet. Babies cried in relay behind cubicle doors and from the pool itself, frenzied shrieking rose and echoed to the rafters over the splash splash splash of water.

The pool is a system of movement. Here now there are: laps, splash fights, dives, corner tag, cannonballs, Sharks and Minnows, high fallings, Marco Polo (your sister still It, halfway to tears, too long to be It, the game teetering on the edge of cruelty, not your business to save or embarrass). Two clean little bright-white boys caped in cotton towels run along the poolside until the guard stops them dead with a shout through his bullhorn.

And the pool is a busy place. Except for certain mournful periods—early afternoons, Sunday evenings—there is a crowd: friends are racing, practised divers arch into the water making barely a splash, the agile avoid the slow, groups sit in a dripping line on the edge, feet flicking the water

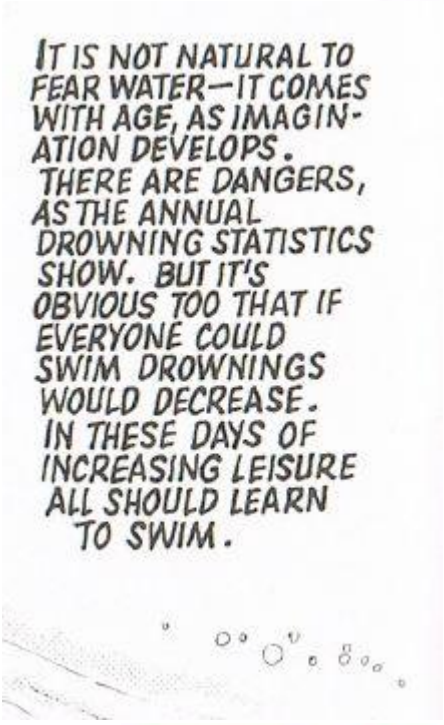
The pool is crowded for this late. Here are thin children, hairy animal men. Disproportionate boys, all necks and legs and knobby joints, shallow-chested, vaguely birdlike. Like you. Here are old people moving tentatively through shallows on stick legs, feeling at the water with their hands, out of every element at once.



why did so many people want to go in it? The pool was crowded.

Swimming pools and I have never got along.

She stood at the edge of the pool



Water and kids are a natural pairing

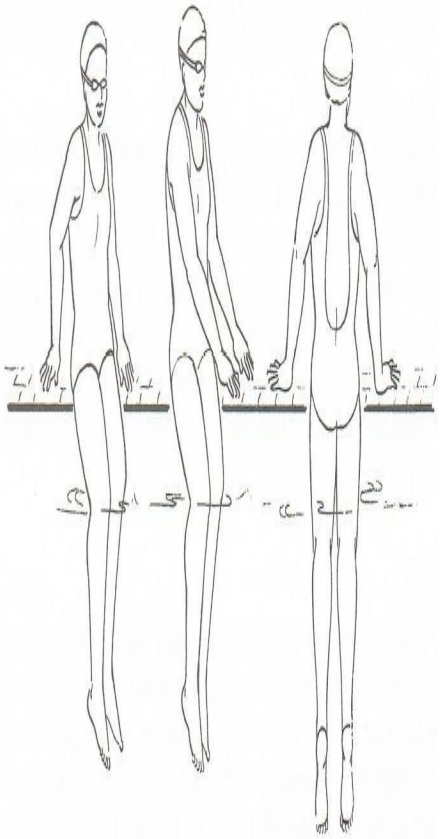
Children need to learn to swim

GETTING INTO THE WATER

On your first visit to the pool you will see swimmers getting into the water by diving or jumping, but it will be far better and safer for you to try either of the following two methods:

Use the steps and, standing with your back to the pool and holding the supports, place your feet carefully on each step until you reach the bottom of the pool with both feet.

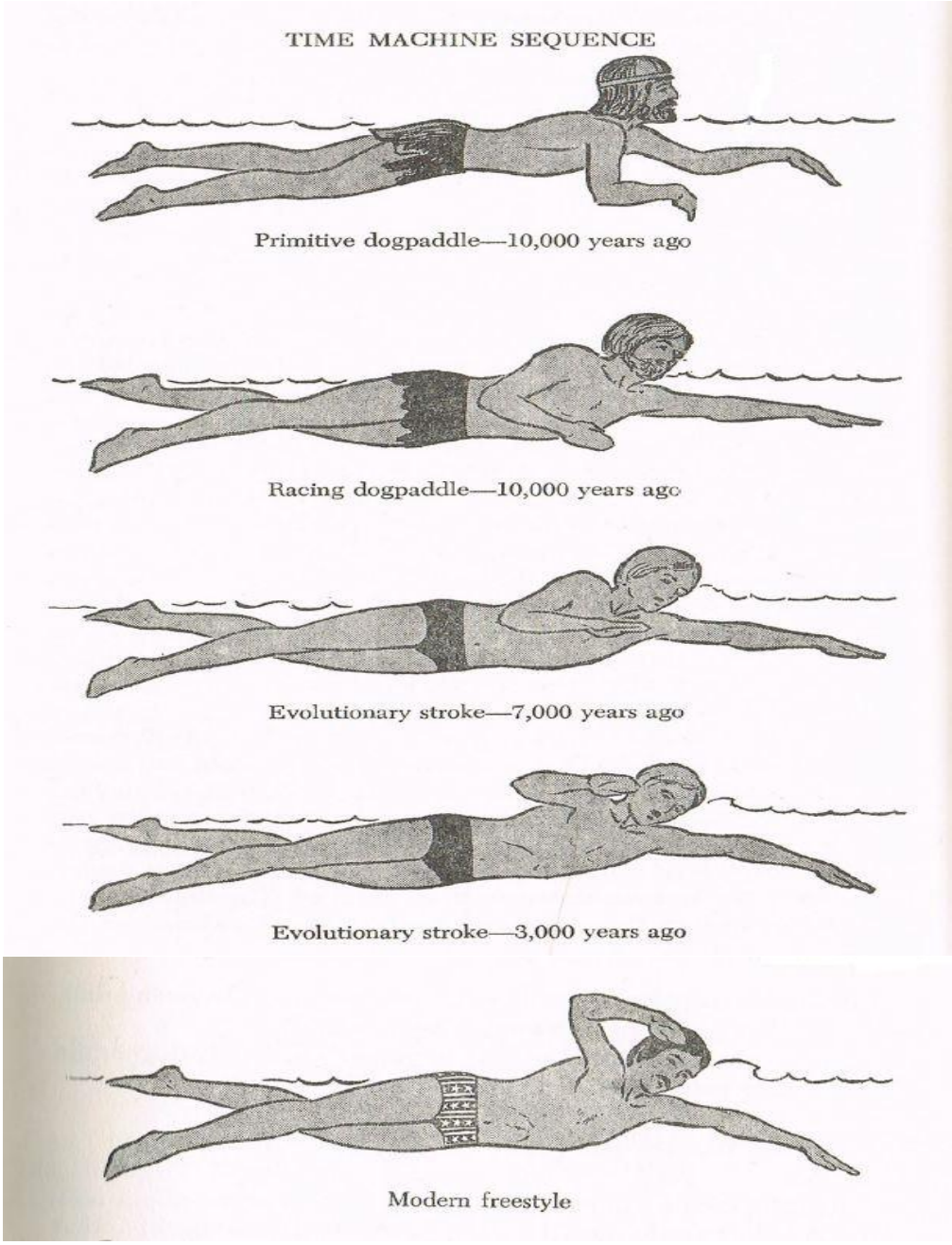
Sit on the edge of the pool, with both feet dangling in the water. Reach to one side and hold the rail firmly with both hands. Now twist sideways and slip into the water.



The entry into the water should be by the steps or by a slide in entry

Later, try jumping in.


NOTICE
BATHERS
5



And it all happens *naturally*. It's as simple as that.

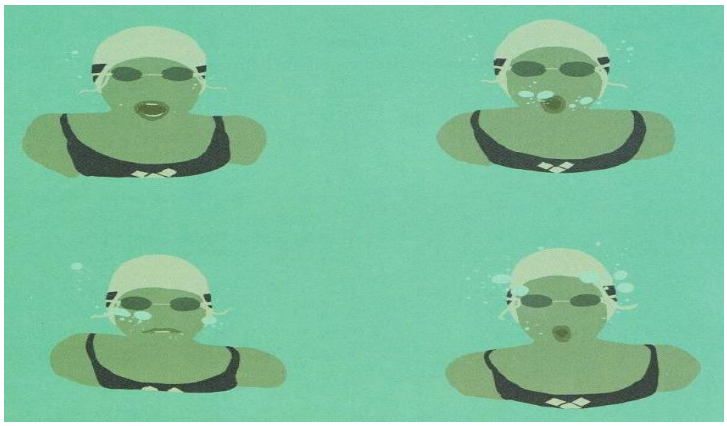
having made friends with water

Everything falls into place.

you're a swimmer

Instruction had liberated me

I returned to the pool as soon as I could.



POOL

swim learn play train

Most people learn to swim as a means of keeping fit or enjoying a pleasurable leisure-time activity, for safety reasons, or as a prerequisite for other water sports such as canoeing, sub-aqua, sailing or wind surfing.

Some are endowed with a high degree of natural ability and aptitude; once they have achieved a degree of proficiency in one or two of the four main strokes, they like to compare their prowess with others and so become attracted to competitive swimming. However, this is not an easy option; great dedication, self-discipline and motivation are required in order to reach high levels of performance.

The basics of lap-swimming are fairly simple. Two people can split a lane down the middle and stay out of each other's way. Once another person jumps in, the pattern automatically switches to circle swimming (that means stay to the right in a counterclockwise pattern). You can pass on the left after tapping the foot of the person ahead of you.

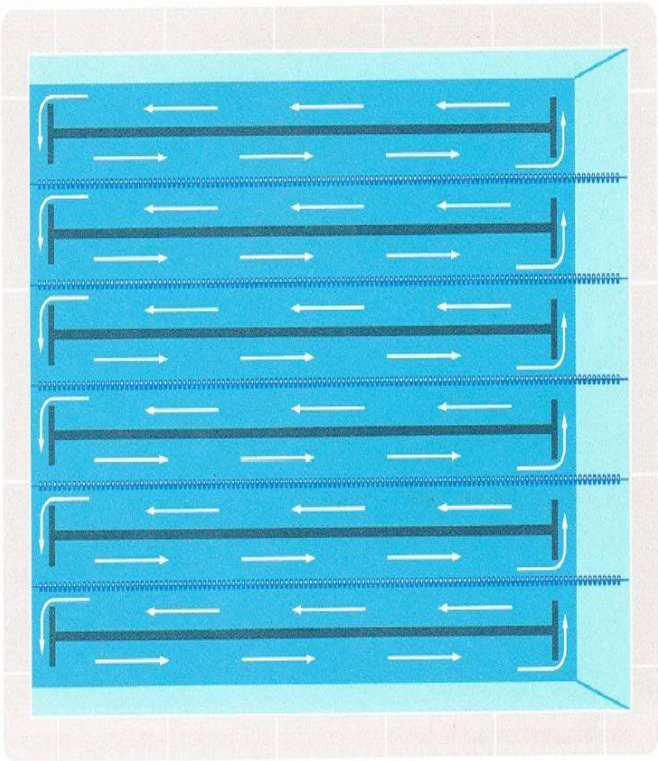


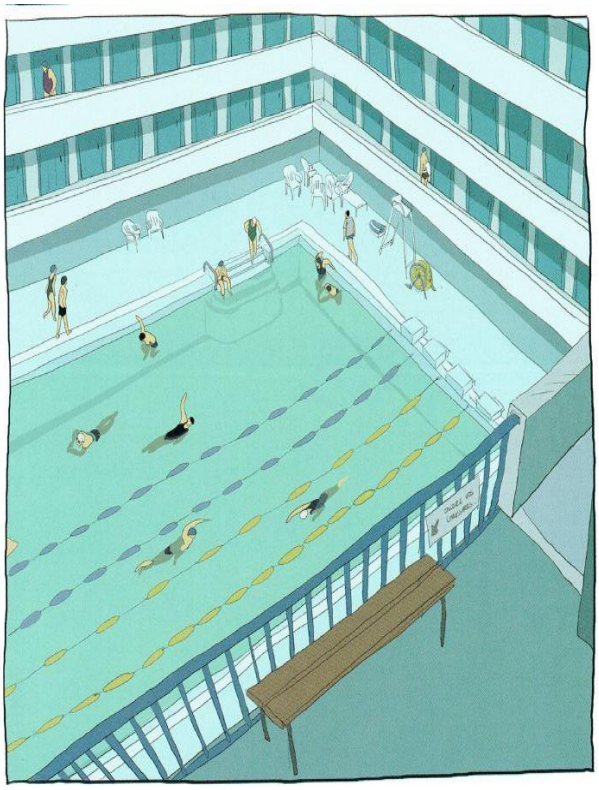
Figure 4.3 Traffic Patterns: If three or more swimmers are sharing a lane, they should swim in a circle, passing opposing swimmers on the right, similar to driving a car. To pass a swimmer going in the same direction, tap the slower swimmer on the foot. When the slower swimmer gets to the end of the lane, she should hesitate, allowing the faster swimmer to pass. If two swimmers share a lane, each swimmer can stay on the same side of that lane throughout the period.

Lane markers

Lane markers are used to stop people from swimming into each other's paths. Some are called anti-wave markers because they have discs which stop waves, or backwash, from spreading into another swimmer's lane.

Last summer I started off in Slow, and then I could not do many lengths at a time, 16 or 18 at most, and only sidestroke. But I liked it, the swimming and the calm, rested way it seemed to make me feel. And I thought that maybe, eventually I might get thinner, swimming.

Maya pushed off from the side of the pool, arms pointing and pressing her forward. She opened them wide apart, open across her chest. Her legs kicked in a quiet rhythm, open, out, open, out. She slid through the water. As she approached the far wall she turned, tumbling, not sure how her body knew to spin her around like that.



After a month or so I realized that I was swimming faster than most of the people in Slow, and that some people who could barely swim at all were in my way. For another two or three weeks I watched Medium, wondering if I dare try to swim in there. One day I forced myself, jumping into Medium, the middle lane. I felt very anxious, but that was hardly an unfamiliar or unusual sort of emotion; sometimes shopping for groceries can have the same effect. And actually Medium turned out to be okay. There were a few hotshots who probably belonged in Fast but were too chicken to try it there, but quite a few people swam about the same as I did, and some swam slower.

Your body is a fine-tuned machine. With proper maintenance it keeps going and going.

I'm going to have a swim: one must keep the body if not the soul together.

He set his water bottle on the edge of the pool then dropped like a stone. The instant his feet touched the bottom he plunged underwater and began to swim. Long, strong, steady front crawl.

Just a few lengths, Maya thought. To get back into it. Maybe just a couple. She backed up against the end of the pool and looked over at Kathy, sitting on the concrete step. She was like Mother, watching, watching that her children didn't drown.

I went to swim most days, sometimes after exercises on the mats in the gym or a shortish turn in the weights room. It was a bizarre occupation, numbing and yet satisfying. I swam fast, alternating crawl and breaststroke, with a length of butterfly every ten. My mind would count its daily fifty lengths as automatically as a photocopier

John began to grow weary of making way for those who swashed along heartily like Samuel, or swam with erect head and swan-like necks in order to avoid the merest droplet of water ruining their appearance.

You should be chuffed, he was thinking. Look at me. I'm different. I'm happy. I'm changing.

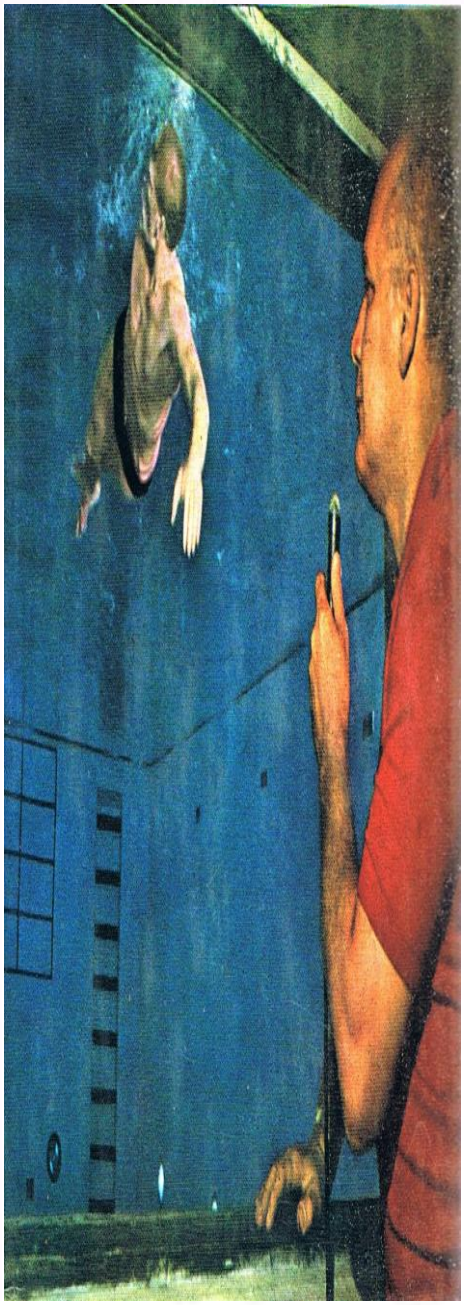
swimmer

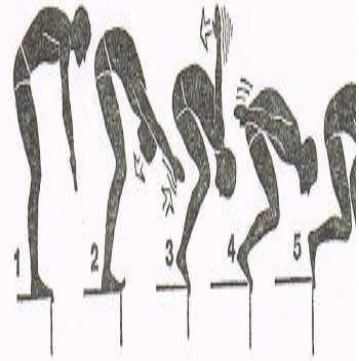
strength, flexibility, and power or speed of muscular contraction are needed in high degree to make world class swimmers

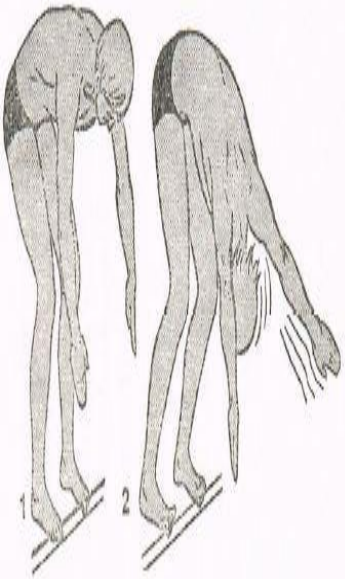
" If You Want to be a Swimmer You Must Swim "

As Aristotle is reputed to have said (please forgive any error in the text), " If you want to be a builder, you must build houses ; if you want to be a harpist you must play the harp," and if you want to be a swimmer you must swim

The disciplines of the sciences of physics, physiology, and kinesiology are continually being applied in attempts to improve swimming and diving performance. The application of the scientific method in testing new techniques is transforming swimming from an art to a science.







In short, an event is not just a swimming race; it's a start-swimming-turning race. The contestant should think of it as a challenge such as: "I'm here to prove I can beat you at starting, swimming, and turning."

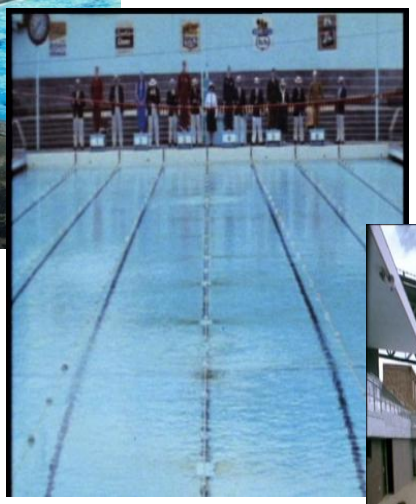
The drill was simple and ancient, like the building where we swam. You undressed in the dingy locker room with rusty lockers, you showered, you walked through a largely symbolic foot-bath, and there you were: six lanes, twenty-five yards long, in front of you. There may have been lane dividers—I cannot recall—but you simply found yourself a place and you dove or, like me, slid into the water and pushed off.

the rhythmic, soothing thrash thrash thrash of early morning swimmers – heads down, caps on – putting in their lap-fix before breakfast.

the swimmers loom up and down unaware of each other, crossing sometimes in the soft cones of brightness.

toughening-up :—

One morning at seven you were all gathered at the side of the pool, listening to Coach: 'Do your time, do your time! Don't look at the others. Don't even think about the others. Just do your time, do your time!' He made it sound as if you were prisoners, in for a long stretch, with no parole or pardon.



This was her moment of freedom. The split second between thrusting off from the block and slicing through the water. She wished she could freeze it.

Right arm left arm breathe, right arm left arm breathe. The pool was hundreds of metres long. The wall kept moving, sliding away just as she neared it. Twenty-five metres was the longest swim.

At the climax of a race your vision would always begin to fog: it was as if you were heading into a shimmering grey light – you'd reach out but it would remain tantalizingly just beyond your hand's final touch on the rail.

And then her fingertips touched the blue concrete and she brought her other arm over and slapped the wall with her hand. Her legs tingled, her chest heaved. She was exhausted. She had done it.

The exit is as important as the entry

When she pulled herself out of the pool, she felt awkward and unattractive; she regretted her freckled, friendly face, her strong muscular body: men liked her, but that was all.

Ned is not aware that he is being shouted at. He stumbles on, dizzy, half-blinded, and weak. Finally he grasps the ladder and painfully, gasping, pulls himself up.

I hadn't even
thought of it as a story before this, but now I could see that it
was actually a very exciting story, full of drama and chlorine

swimming

seemed the height of civilisation.

in the pool

he was world class

Who knows where he might discover utility?

swimming

it's a life skill we all need.

Montage One: Fragment index

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Montage Two

Saturated Pleasures

Although a community pool doesn't give you much in the way of privacy, members say it makes up for it in other ways.

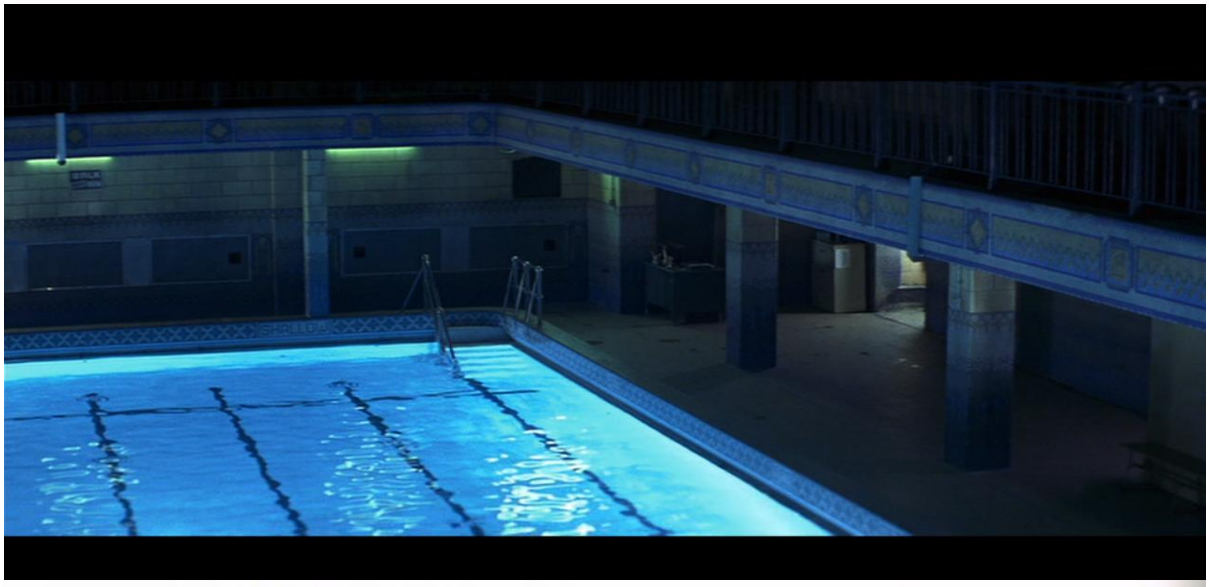
It can be such an attractive and enjoyable element for those confident in it

The ripples reflecting on the glass roof, the smell of the water

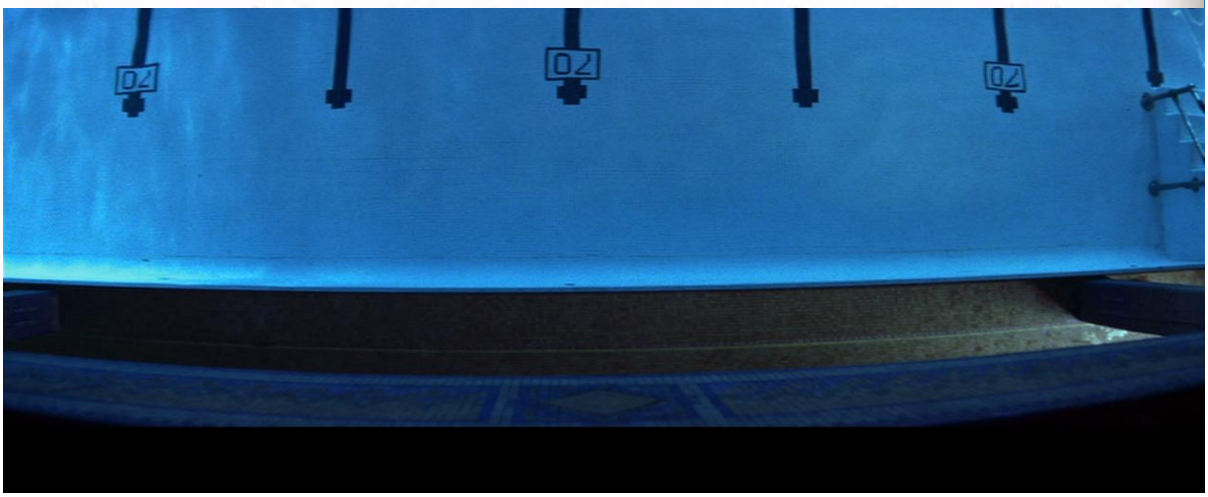
It's so atmospheric

suggesting all kinds of hidden depths.

The beauty of a swimming pool is in its graphic simplicity, framing the contrasting, exquisite complexity of the snaking, opalescent mosaic of wave-forms projected on the bottom. What you are seeing is changing so fast your eye can never quite catch up with it. In every way you are dazzled.



The pool was empty now as Jimmy walked around it. Unlit, the water looked inkier than the night sky, fathoms deep beneath a veneer silvered by tiny spotlights in the rafters. Jimmy paused, slightly dizzy as he stared into the still water.

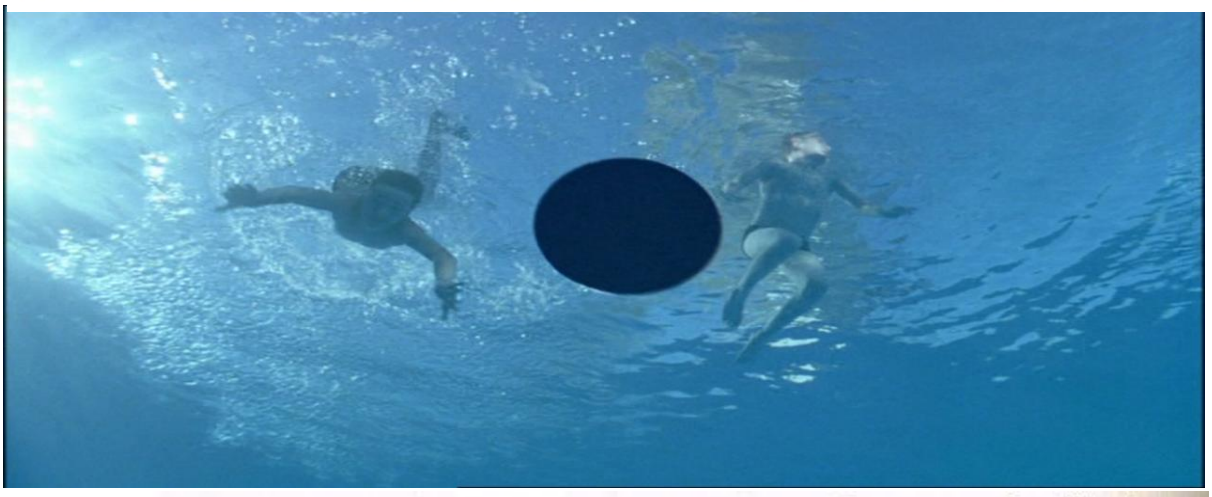


Swimming is all about moving in the water, so once you are in you should waste no time by standing still.

The luminous whiteness of the traditional swimming-pool is perversely avoided here: the swimmers loom up and down unaware of each other, crossing sometimes in the soft cones of brightness.

'Like to swim you know,' he said promptly. 'Floating around in lovely, lovely water.'

"the best part about swimming is gliding. When you're underwater, you feel like you're on a cloud."



Maya felt as if she was gliding – she was a leaf being carried downstream on a gentle summer current. Warm water washed over her face, her ears, blocking out the noises of the day. It was all around her.

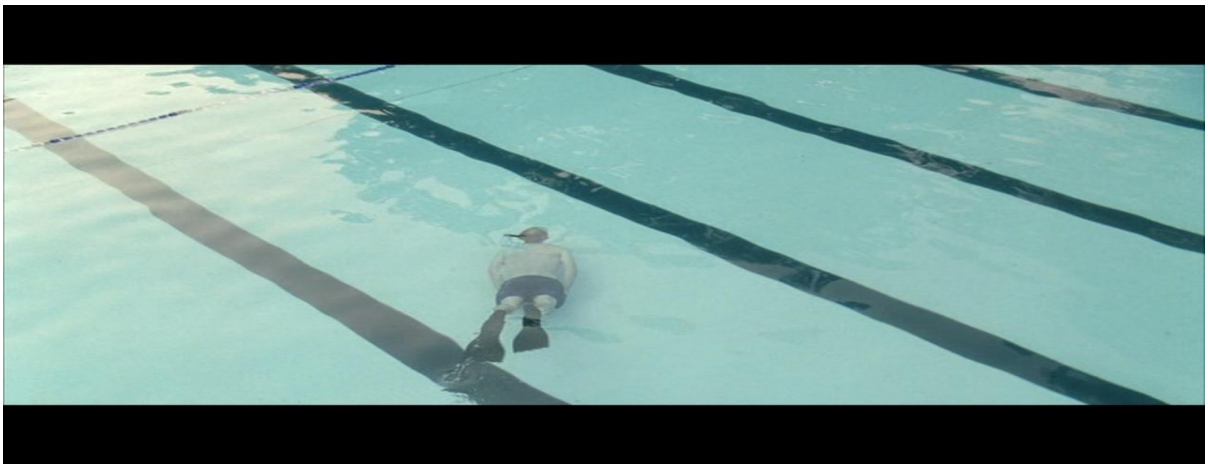
I want to stay here forever.

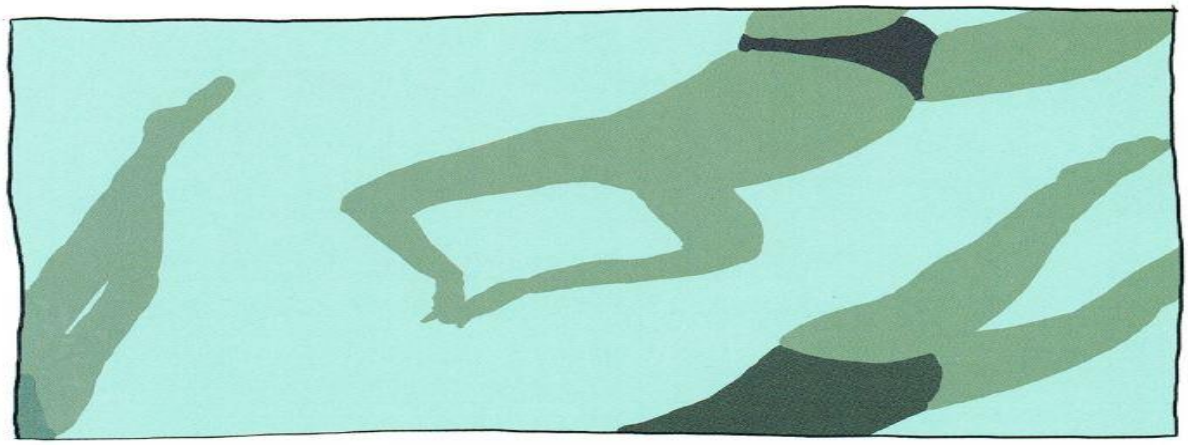
You began to live for the swimming pool. You'd always been awkward, always falling over, into or through things and supposedly inanimate objects went out of their way to cut and bruise you, but now that you'd found a truer element you felt like one of those gods that Dad talked about, who assumed human form to walk the earth. It was as if a sedulous shell fulfilled all school and family commitments, while your essence remained behind, safely submerged.

"I don't want to be a champion," he said. "I just enjoy the water."

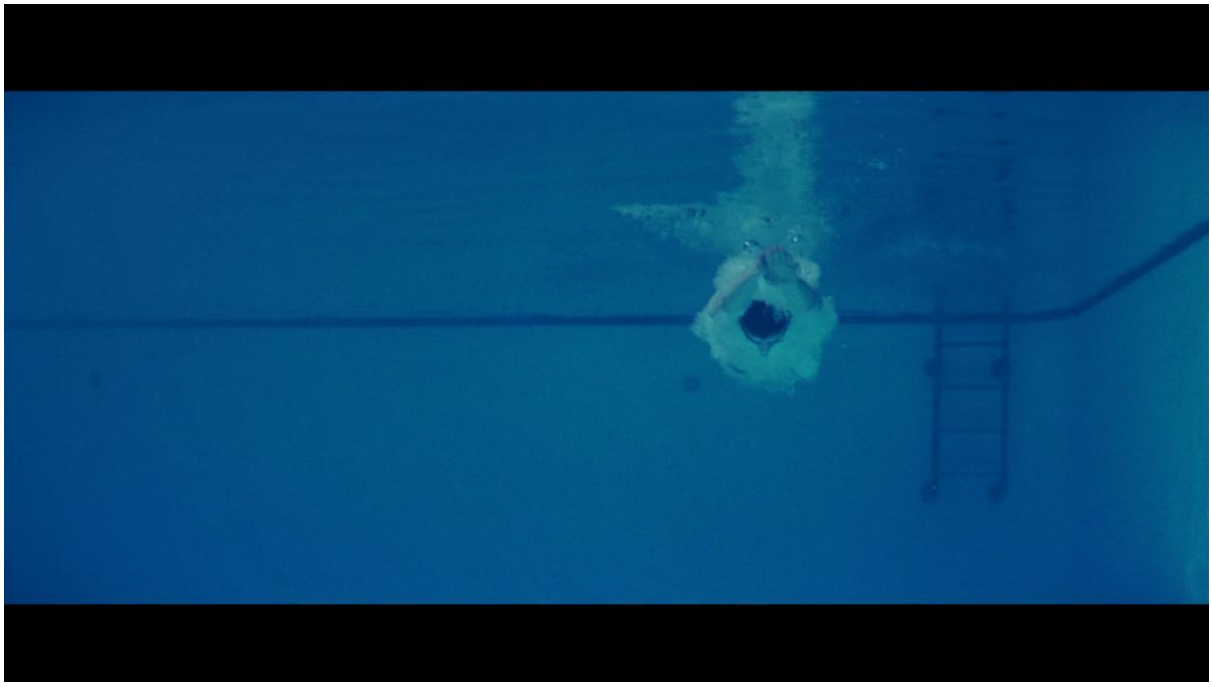
"Oh, so do I!" And so she did: she loved the buoyancy of her body in this murderous liquid, which healed and soothed when it didn't kill. Water was both adversary and friend: it parted in front of her, closed behind her. How powerful she was when she cleaved the water.

The desire is, pure and simple, to advance. Not merely to go faster, but to increase the thrill that comes from more grace and a deeper engagement with the water itself. To become a more aquatic mammal.

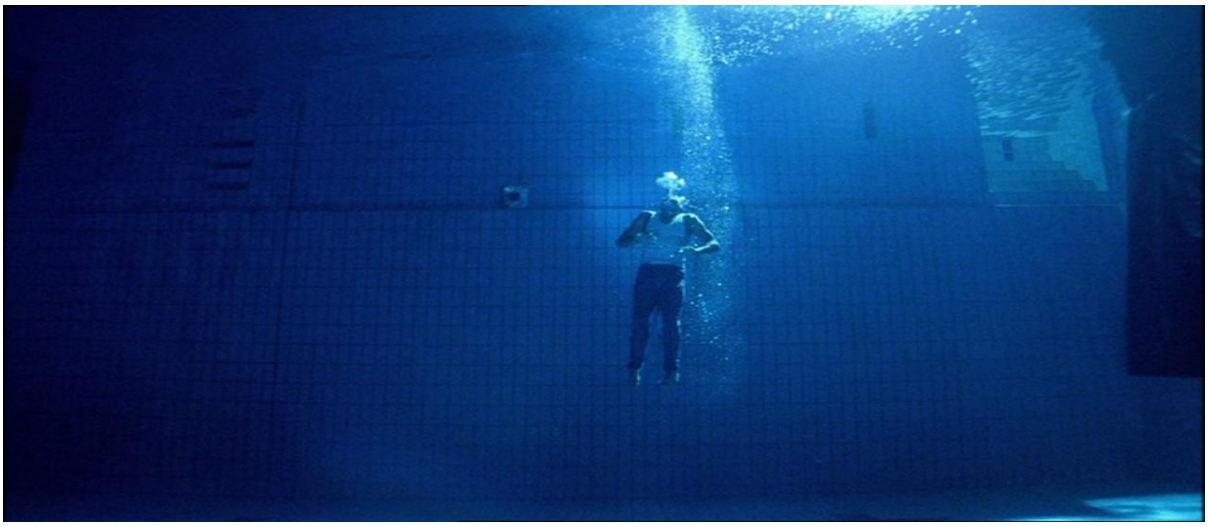




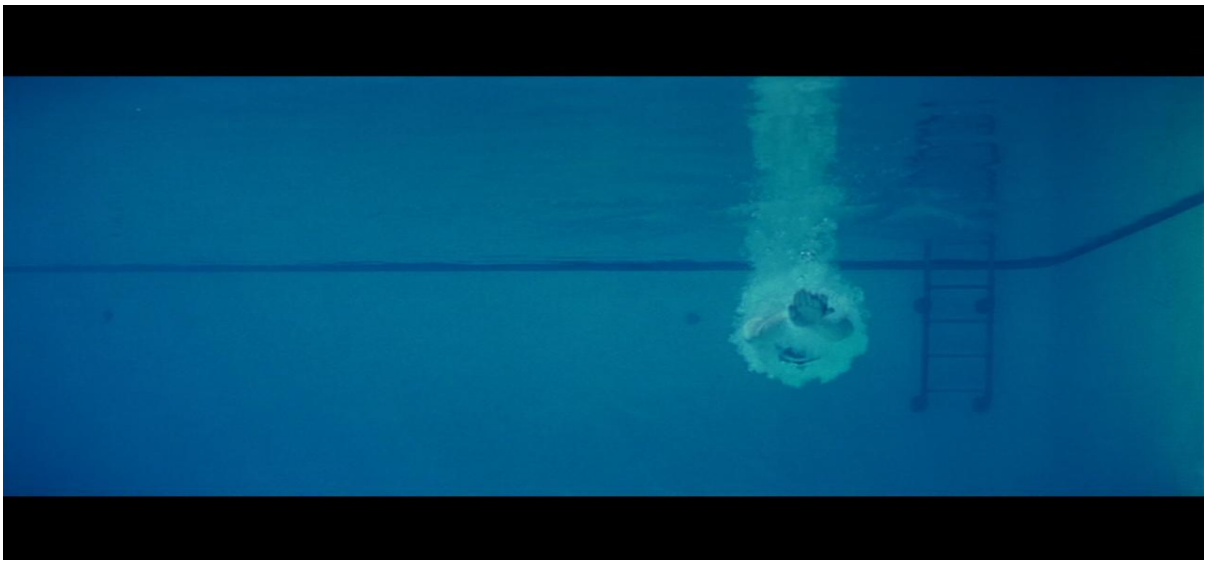
The deeper you are in the water, the less you weigh. Water's buoyant effects reduce the pull of gravity, so every joint is less compressed, and every part of your body weighs less, yet you are supported and cushioned from every direction, freer to move in the water than anywhere else on the earth's surface.



Of the senses, it is touch most of all that defines the swimmer's activity, and even "touch" is virtually metaphorical, because nothing solid exists as you pull, push, and otherwise make your way through a fluid medium.



Swimming, unique among physical activities, diminishes if not entirely eliminates the sense of sight, our primary means of engagement with the physical world. You see the sides of the pool, the bottom, the lane markers; you get momentary glimpses of the world as you breathe or raise your head above the water as you turn, but by and large vision is kept at a minimum. Mostly you witness the shimmer of light all around you.

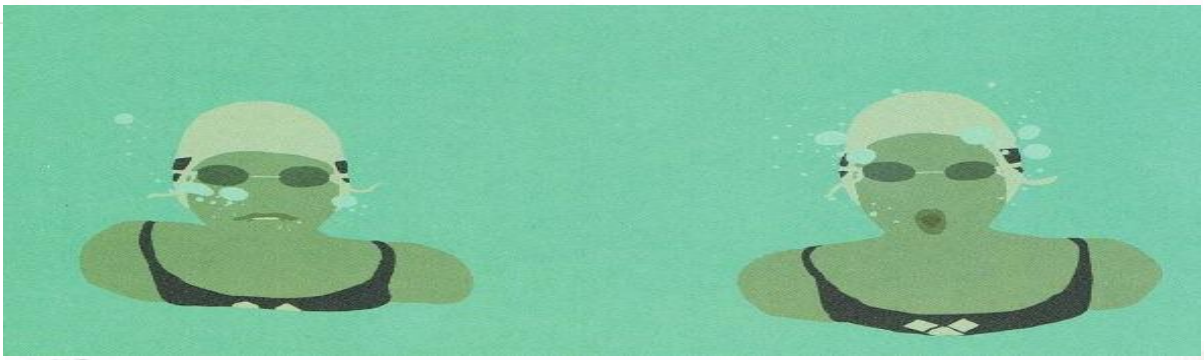


Feel of the water is heightened; this manifests itself in the swimmer's new understanding of the way water wants to be handled.

I knew I either had to go for a swim or go mad. I needed water to clean my mind, and stretch my aching body.

I put my track suit on over my pyjamas, and unhooked a pair of old racers and a towel from the clothes-line we'd rigged up by the window. My sandals made a flip-flop noise, so I carried them. In my very peculiar state, I had no idea where I could swim, but I just had to get my body into water somehow and feel the rhythm of the stroke that had carried me over so many thousands of miles over the years.

She opened her eyes, there, under the water, and the vision in front of her goggles was flooded. Her legs were pale under the surface, dead white. Bubbles of trapped air clung to her skin. She brushed them away with her hand. She felt as if she was moving in slow motion, an astronaut. She was being restrained by the press of the water against her. It was all there was holding her together. She was surrounded by it.



When swimmers talk of fast or slow water, this is the sort of thing they mean. The absence of wavelets, or other bathers, means you can breathe and move in perfect rhythm, so the music takes over. Mind and body go off somewhere together in unselfconscious bliss, and the lengths seem to swim themselves. The blood sings, the water yields; you are in a state of grace, and every breath gets deeper and more satisfying.

Maya pushed off from the side of the pool, arms pointing and pressing her forward. She opened them wide apart, open across her chest. Her legs kicked in a quiet rhythm, open, out, open, out. She slid through the water.

The great thing about an aimless swim is that everything about it is concentrated in the here and now; none of its essence or intensity can escape into the past or future. The swimmer is content to be borne on his way full of mysteries, doubts and uncertainties. He is a leaf on the stream, free at last from his petty little purposes in life.

Most urban public pools attract a
sweaty, polyglot crowd dying to escape

According to Mark Spitz, swimming is perfect for narcissists. Like the mind, the body is self-absorbed.

Swimming is often enhanced by company, and sometimes by solitude.

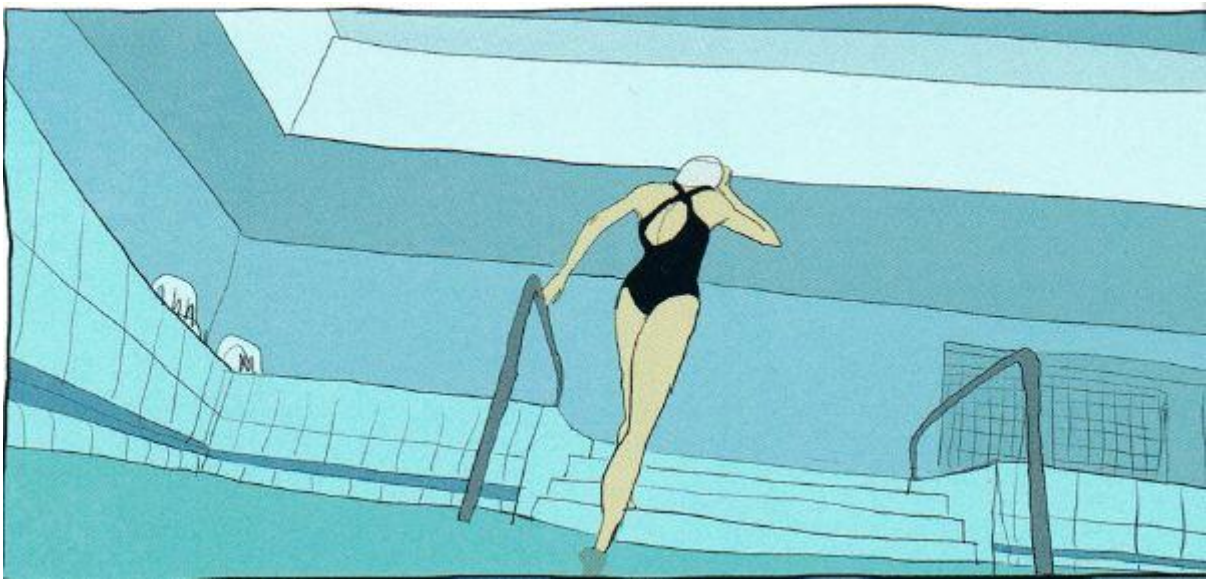
Those hours at the pool were my private indulgence

No discipline made me feel more free, or contained me and delighted me within its own element so much as swimming.

Life in the pool used to give me an enchanted, hypnotic, and transcendent escape

there's no-one there. I'm on my own and I realise I always have been.

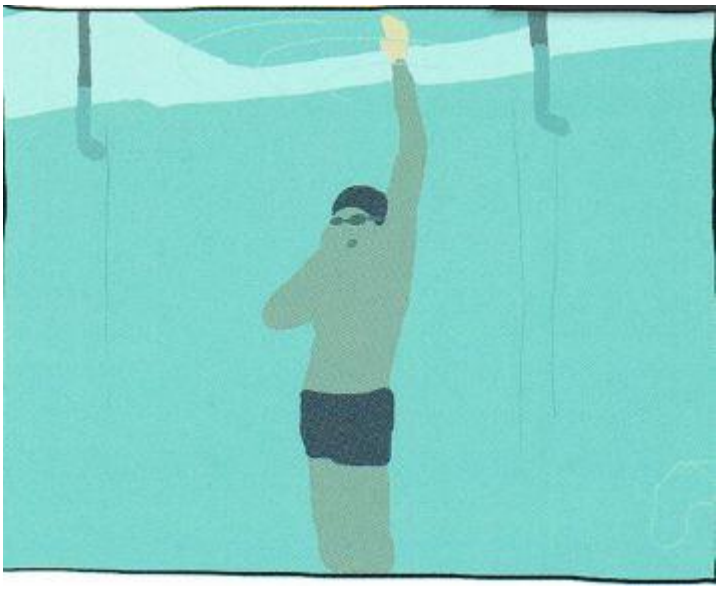
It's always warm here: I feel as though I've been swallowed by a huge animal.



Everything absorbed him and swallowed him up, and still he did not feel secure.

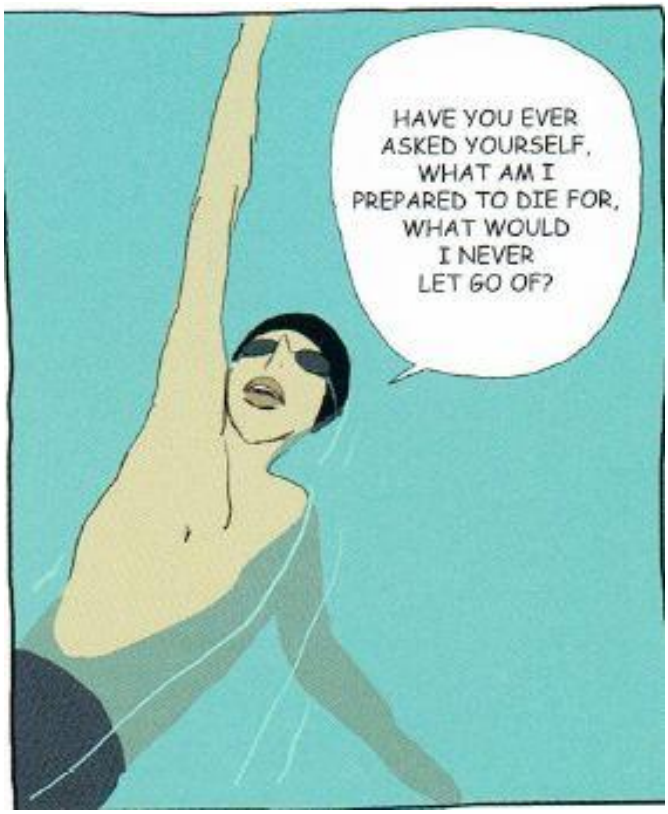
"There's nothing like swimming, is there? Your mind just *dissolves*."

in addition to its physical and quasi-religious aspects, swimming allows something else: the expansion of the mind in the act of contemplation. This it shares, of course, with long-distance running, and especially the meditative impulse of the mind thinking in the act of walking. But because of the sensory transformation inherent in water, the mind works even more abstractly when the body is submerged



Does swimming make you smarter?

This isn't about swimming



Even more than to narcissists, swimming appeals to obsessives and dreamers.

I started to dream ever more exclusively of water. Swimming and dreaming were becoming indistinguishable. I grew convinced that following water, flowing with it, would be a way of getting under the skin of things, of learning something new. I might learn about myself, too. In water, all possibilities seemed infinitely extended.

Swimming is an act of imaginative adventure: "The experience of swimming is both sexual and spiritual. The sensation of water flowing over the body is dynamic, erotic, enlivening, and yet it awakens, at every moment, our consciousness of the fragility of our breath." So said Australian swimmer and early film star Annette Kellerman. Water supports and resists, and there's no one lonelier, even a runner of the longest distances, than a swimmer. Sensory diminishment, or the transformation of the senses underwater, forces you in upon what inner resources you have. The imagination complements the body as you work through the water.

'You don't need to fly –' Dad was holding you unhurt in his arms '– that's what your imagination's for!'

Reaching, pulling, gliding through the warm blue chlorinated water, I am strong and lithe: I am not oversized, not six feet tall, weighing one eighty-five. I am not myself

At 13, I was more of a child still than an adolescent girl: thin, long-limbed, eyes too large and naked-seeming for my face and an imagination that rarely flew off into unknown territory but turned, and turned, and turned, upon what was close at hand and known, but not altogether known. Imagination, says Aristotle, begins in desire: But what *is* desire?

Everything falls into place. And it all happens *naturally*.

Chilling at the pool in the summer is a rite of passage, a drowse in the sun, and romance and culture rolled into one.

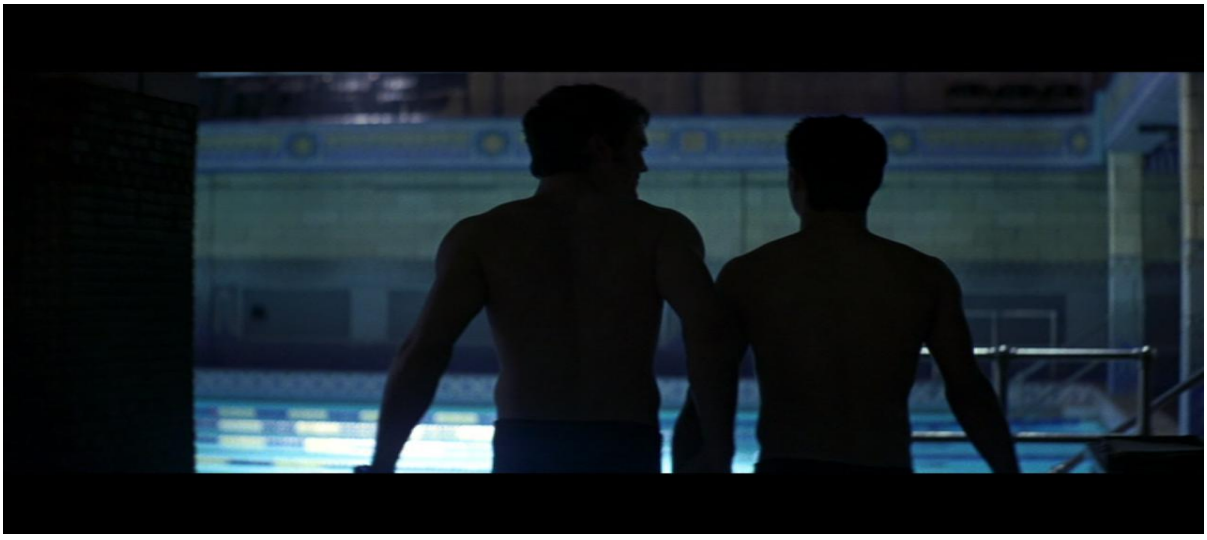
It was a place I loved, a gloomy and functional underworld full of life, purpose and sexuality.

My mind would count its daily fifty lengths as automatically as a photocopier; and at the same time it would wander. Absorbed in thought I barely noticed the half-hour—one unfaltering span of pure physical exercise—elapse. This evening I thought of Arthur a lot, running real and projected conversations through my mind as I tumble-turned from length into length through the cool, gloomy water.

Does Jun let his body float free at the bottom of the pool, like a fetus in its mother's womb? How I'd love to watch him to my heart's content as he drifts there, utterly free.

Gosling and Eileen collided underwater: he had to help her to the surface. His hand, firm upon her arm, seemed to transmit some kind of magnetic current: at any rate his touch acted like an electric shock. She squealed aloud and snatched her arm away in alarm; nearly sank. They touched again, tentatively. Again she let out a little yelp. That made him laugh. "We are seriously attracted to each other," he said

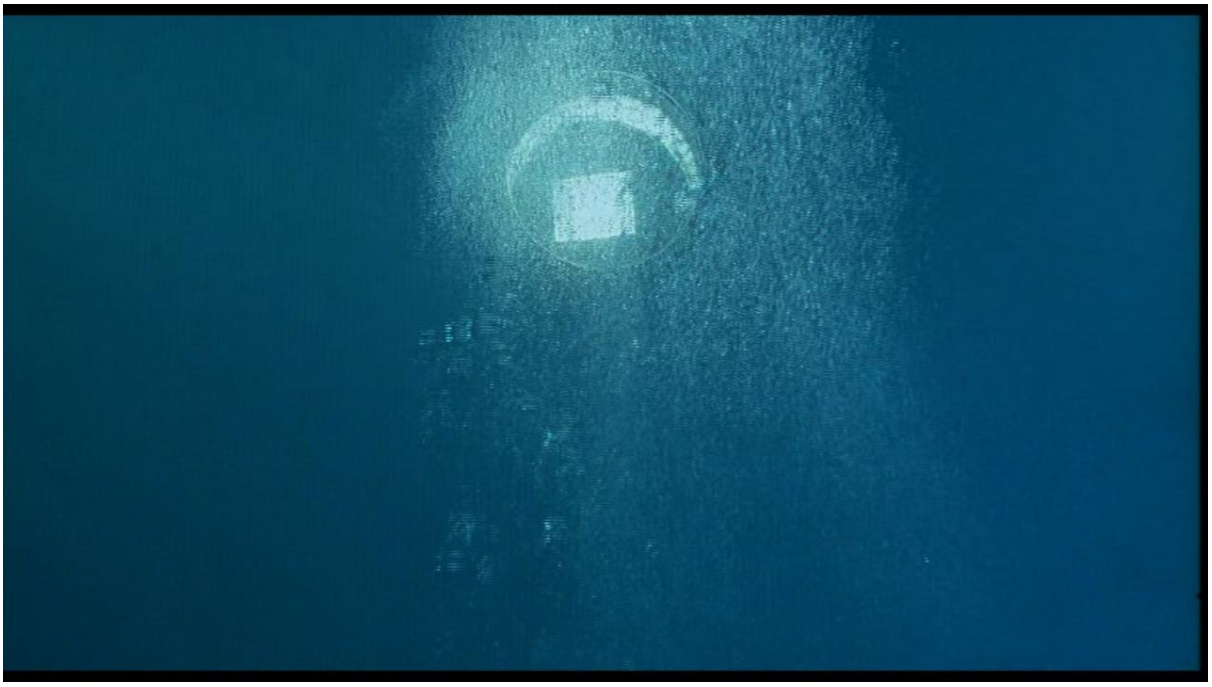
▼ *A happy first experience is the key to future success and enjoyment in the swimming pool*



The feel of the water

As his legs traced a perfect circle in the air, like a compass falling through space, I could feel his body in mine, caressing me inside, closer and warmer and more peaceful than any real embrace. Though he had never held me in his arms, I was sure this feeling was true.

Then I saw him give out his breath, the bubbles crowding from his mouth, flooding around his head and up towards the light with baroque exuberance. He himself shot up then and I followed a second or two later. We hung on our elbows to regain our breath.



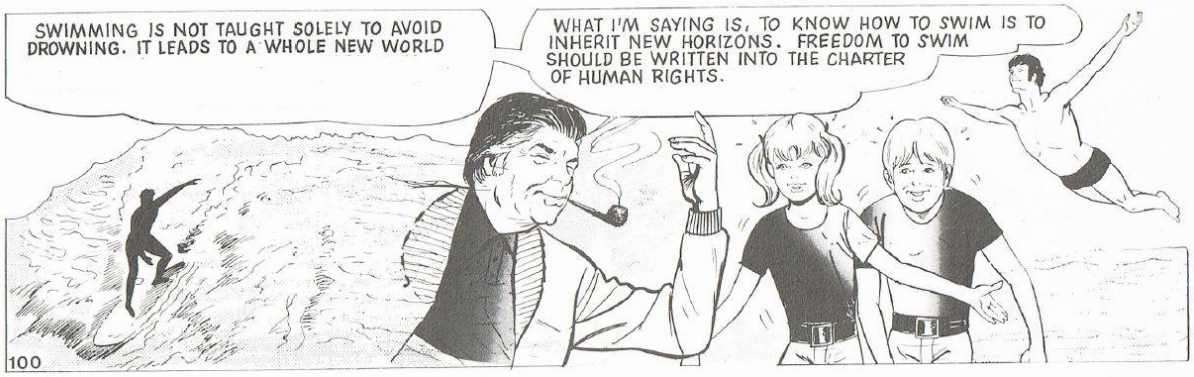
So steep and labyrinthine was the descent that it was impossible to know or see what was to come next.

The slippery blue-green wetness and smoothness of everything, and my near-nakedness

Isn't it heavenly!

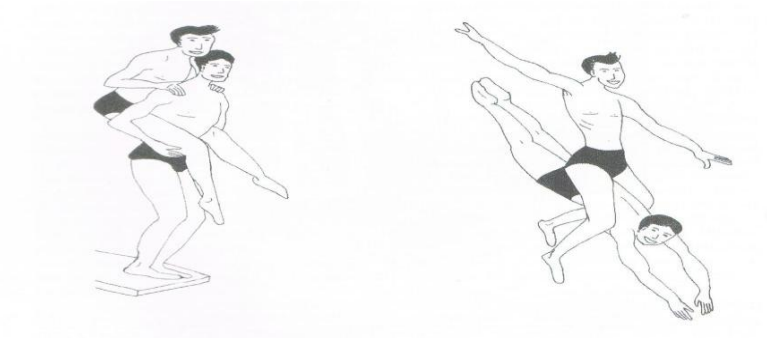
the pool, the prospect of swimming

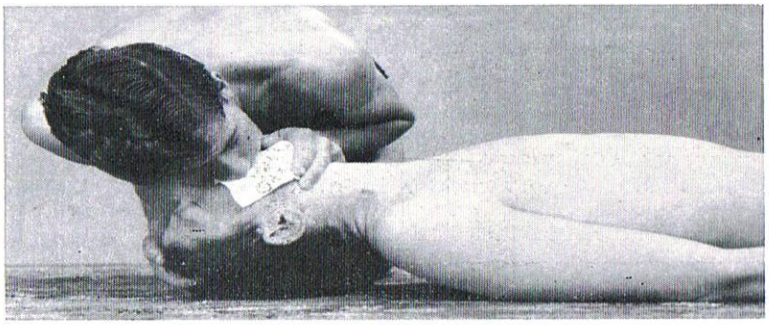
Swimming — new horizons



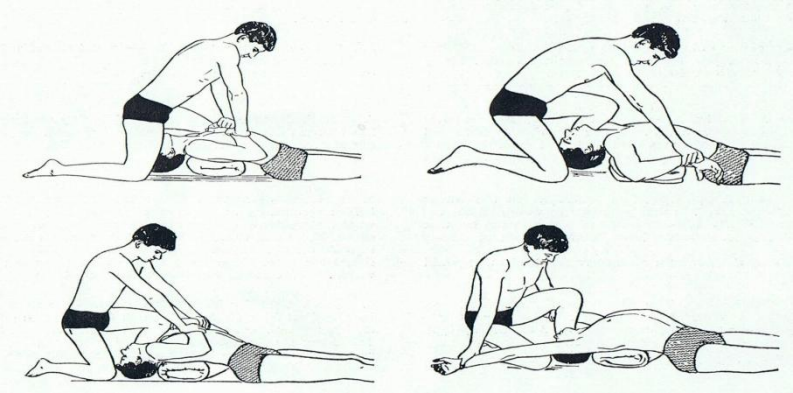
If you choose a reasonably quiet time or join a special class, you will be able to move about freely

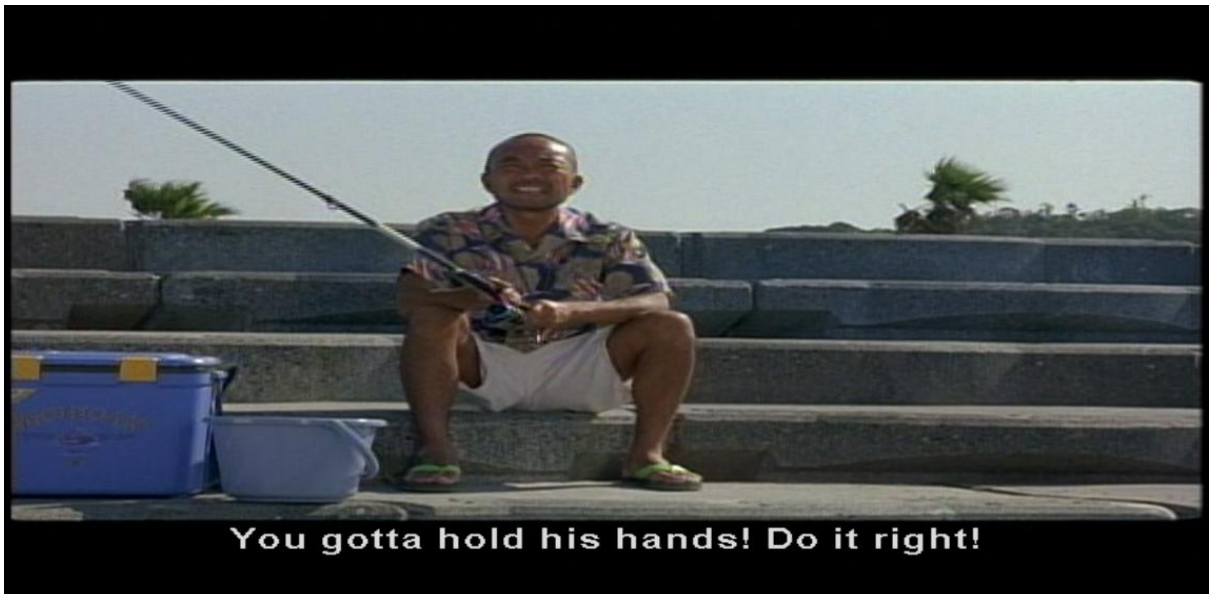

Watching, watching





If direct contact is objectionable, blow through a cloth.





I'm different. I'm happy. I'm changing.

Goldsmith gazed round at the other bathers. 'Pity this isn't family day so we could have some ladies present.'

Pooled wisdom kept the sexes apart

When the women dive, their hair flutters underwater as though lifted in a breeze, and they all look so peaceful, like children doing deep-breathing exercises.

Sometimes Leda's heart ached so much she thought she was having some kind of seizure. She could not distinguish physical from mental pain. Still she swam.

Her body slid under the tight surface. The water was warm but Maya shuddered slightly as her body was surrounded by it. She was propelled forward, felt herself slow and began to stroke through the water. Left arm right arm breathe. Left arm right arm breathe.

the rhythm of my stroke, which was so ingrained into every cell of me

It struck you again how stupid it looked – such ugly splashings about! – and how different from the way it had felt while you were doing it.

"Crawl is not a swimmer's stroke," he said. "It's the competitor's stroke. An antagonistic, angry sort of swimming. Nothing to do with water, just with doing down your fellow human beings. At best see crawl as the getting-somewhere stroke, not the being-someone stroke."

she didn't

know she was unusual and thought most people felt the same

Your body falling through space touches the deepest part of me. I murmured in my heart the words I could never say aloud.

Stroke, stroke, feet kicking all the time. Go and have your swim. Stroke, stroke. Go. No matter how many lengths she did – and today she pushed on past the point that she knew was enough – no matter how much water she bathed her mouth with, she still couldn't get the taste out.

every time you dived in – the classic spear entry came naturally to you – there was the vestigial hope that you might just hover, then ascend, slipping through the roof's retracted skylight and up into the blue, so that when you did hit the water it was always – much as you loved it – a slight disappointment.

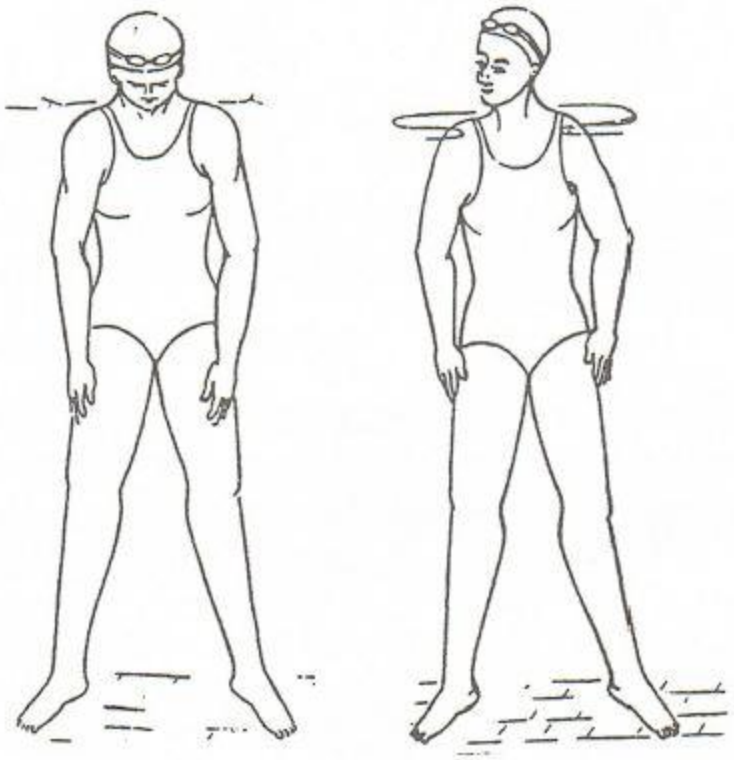
Not drowning, acting

I've a friend at her school who says it's no accident she always winds up being a male in their school plays. Apparently, she's always hugging the girls after races. And she's got this very special friend Julia at school.

So which is the lie? Hard or soft? Silence or time?

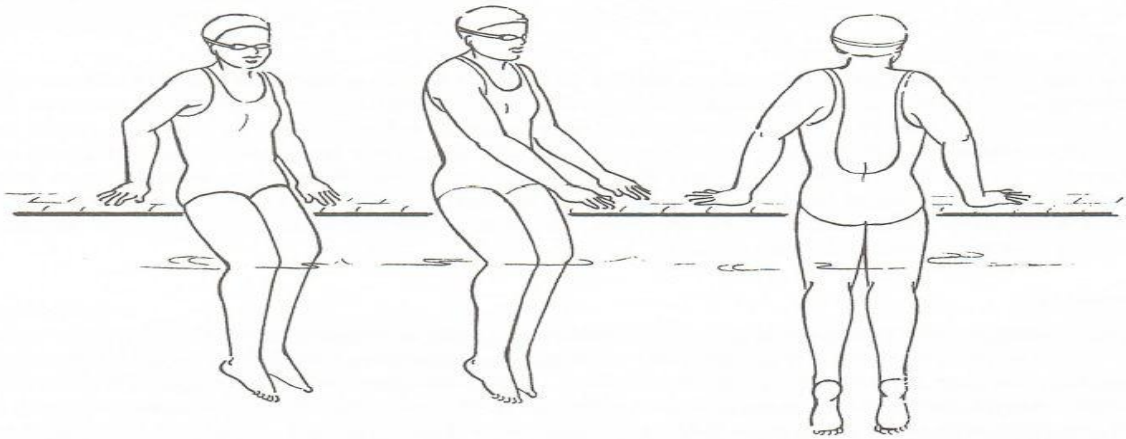
The lie is that it's one or the other. A still, floating bee is moving faster than it can think. From overhead the sweetness drives it crazy.

Disguised in an old swim-cap, you sneaked into small pools where no one knew you: being back in the water with normal people again was like swimming through a lunatic asylum. You even tried the Ladies' Pond at Kenwood, but a short-haired woman smiled at you and called you 'sister' so you fled in mortal fear of sapphism.



I fantasized that Joan Lunt came from a part of the world where people knew what they thought and announced their thoughts importantly to others. This struck me with the force of a radically new idea.

And we look at her and we see . . . Yes, really you're just a person. A person like us. And – why did we feel those terrible things all these years? Oh, it feels good to have let them go. And we notice how graceful her movements are



We must embrace her. We must love her. We must move forward and let go of the past and let go of the badness and move forward with our love for her.

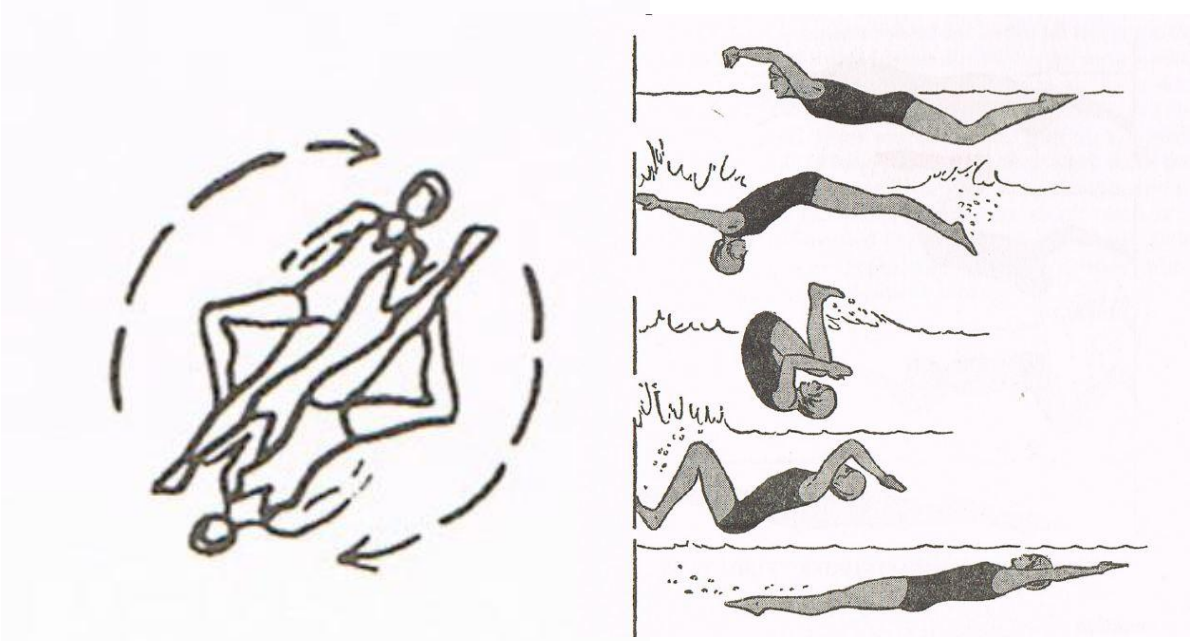
. "It's an amazing thing, she is so happy and free."

The pool is crowded for this late. Here are thin children, hairy animal men. Disproportionate boys, all necks and legs and knobby joints, shallow-chested, vaguely birdlike. Like you. Here are old people moving tentatively through shallows on stick legs, feeling at the water with their hands, out of every element at once.

Elderly ladies wearing lipsticks and flowered swimming caps; grey-haired men sporting creased anchors on their arms; a young mother with her infant, splashing about like a duckling, shrieking with glee; a couple of teenagers gazing into one another's eyes. Everyone is refreshed, rejuvenated.

the swimmers had to keep their own straight course

'Is the future still a straight line?'



She stood at the edge of the pool

"You never seem uncertain," I said, kicking my toe against the schoolbag I had left at my feet.

"There's no time for that when you're diving." He gripped the railing with both hands and raised his body, as if about to do a chin-up. "Maybe it's because there was something so uncertain and twisted about my birth, but when I'm up there on the board I just want to dive as straight and clean as possible, with no hesitation."

The board will nod and you will go, and eyes of skin can cross blind into a cloud-blotched sky, punctured light emptying behind sharp stone that is forever. That is forever. Step into the skin and disappear.

Hello.

you're a swimmer after all

the swimming and dreaming goes on.

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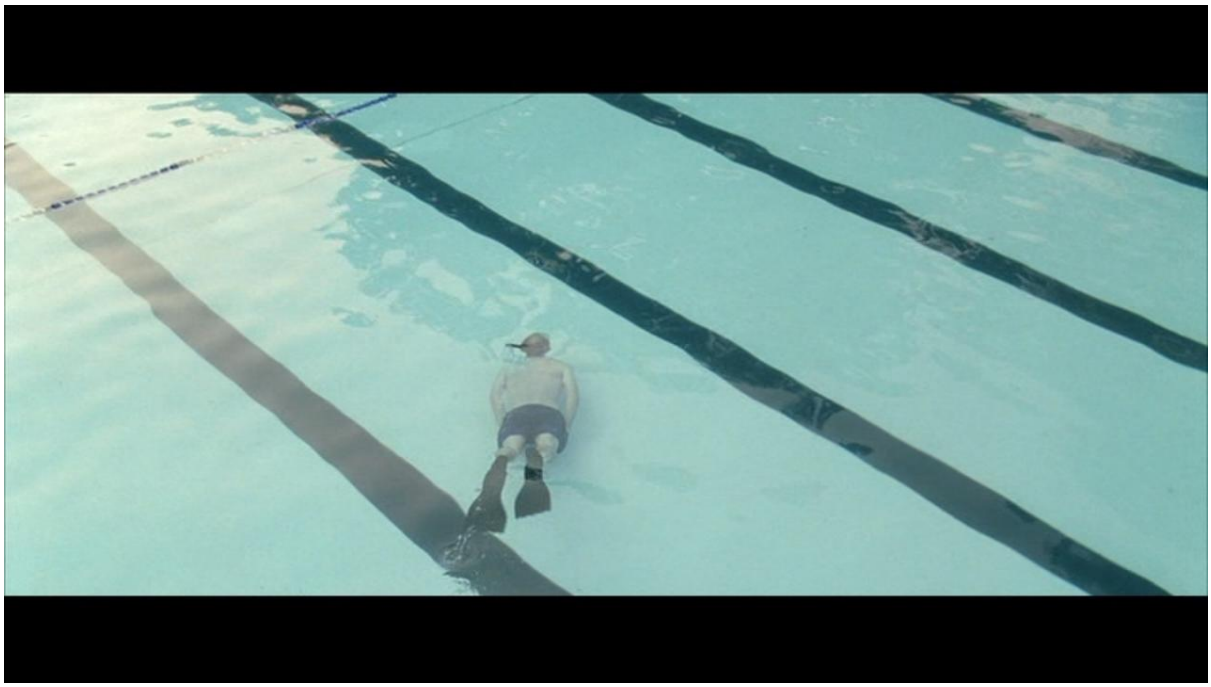
Montage Three

Dead Water and No-bodies

pool

a dangerous environment and one to be respected



Swimming pools aren't only to lie beside or dive into. They are potent symbols – both enticing and frightening

You notice it the moment you come through the turnstile. The screaming is just on the border between terror and ecstasy.

maintaining order and safety are paramount

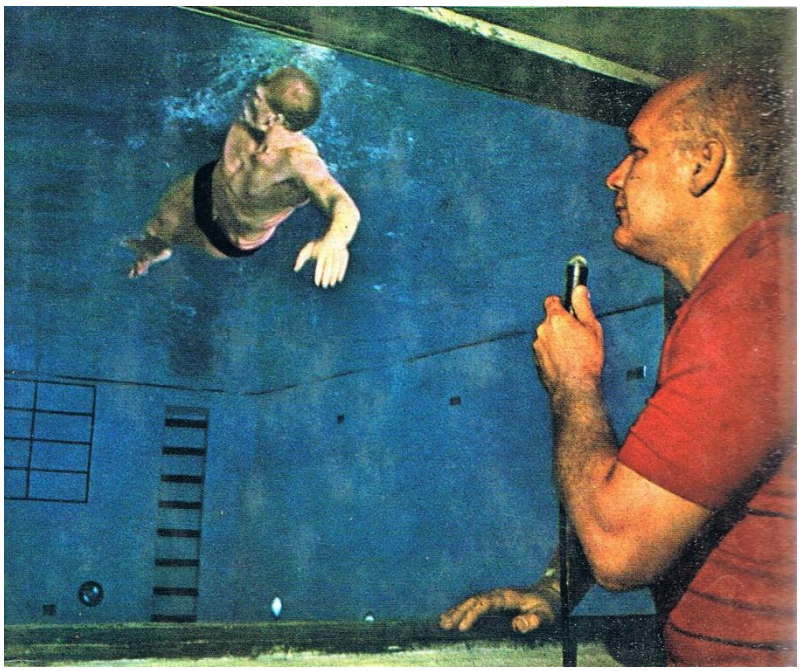
Incorrect operation and management can cause big problems.

the swimming pool could be better controlled

desire to control the bathing public remains

time to get

hysterical.



underwater observation windows have opened a new technique in the swimming world.

a man peered over the partition

"You hear about the pervert? He went swimming at the Town Pool."

there's no need to worry

it was not a criminal act but a
simple misunderstanding.

"It was just that one time. I don't think he came back."

poses a risk to the sexual safety of …

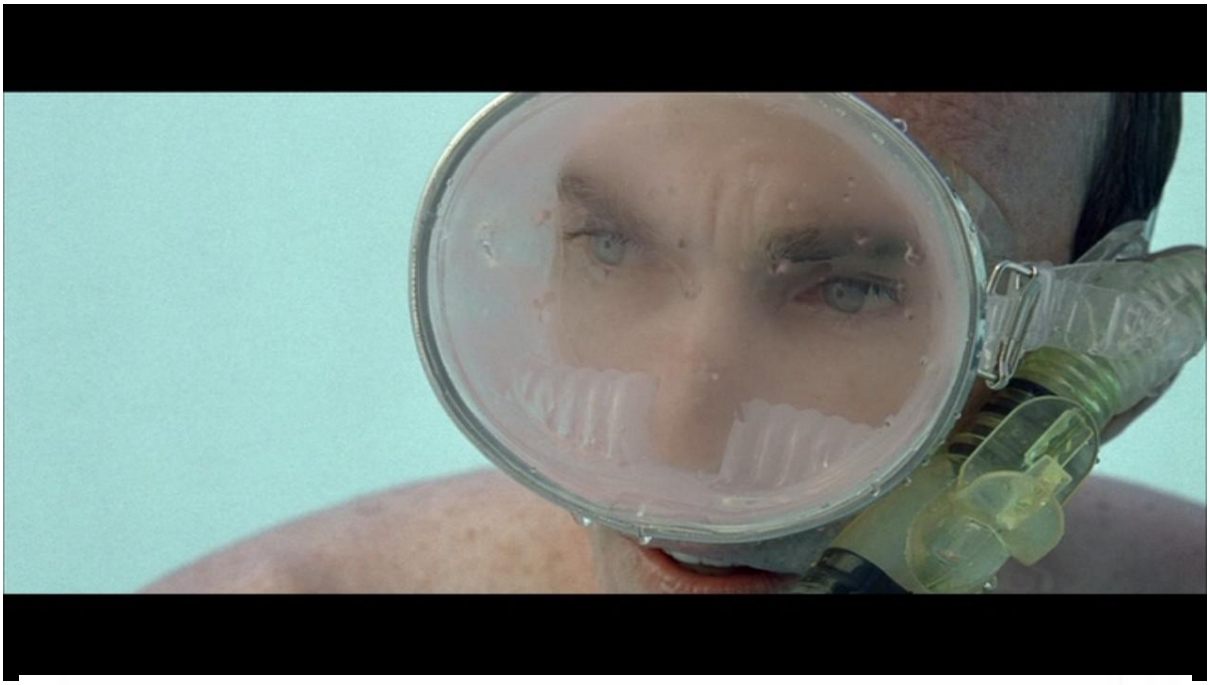
Pool-side changing

Christchurch: The "sad reality" of high-profile paedophilia cases means it is no longer appropriate to allow children to change into swimwear beside public swimming pools, Family First spokesman Bob McCoskrie says.

He was commenting after a Christchurch school was asked to refrain from letting children change by the pool at the city's Jellie Park Aquatic Centre, following a complaint from a pool user.

Mr McCoskrie said it was a sad reality of high-profile cases of child pornography and paedophilia that parents now needed to "err on the side of modesty". — NZPA

"You have to have your eyes glued on the kids all the time,"



Could he be a potential child molester?

I had never realized how insulting and insensitive a

swimming pool could be.

YOUR CHILD – YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

It is not 1950 any more. The statistics on child molestation, paedophilia and child pornography are so high these days, why would anybody risk it?

Gaywatch 'babes' get the boot

Why not ban all men from public pools?

Lifeguard tells parents their 'creepy' lifelike doll has to wear BATHING SUIT at swimming pool

SWIMMING COULD CAUSE DNA MUTATIONS

lessons can lull parents into complacency

even competitive swimming can be risky

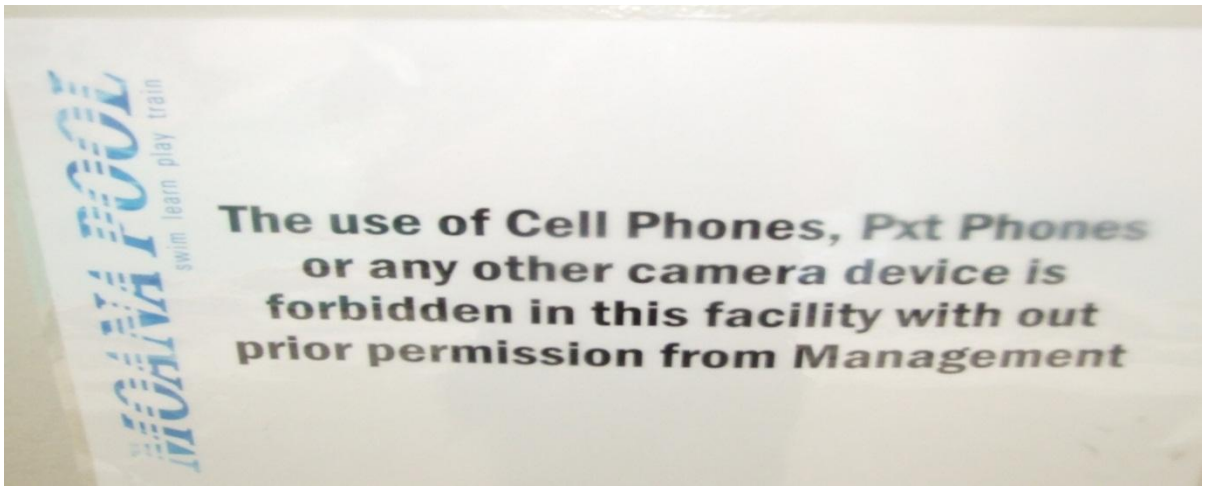
Don`t get too far from safety, too tired, too cold, too much sun or too much strenuous activity.

Pooled wisdom kept the sexes apart

it's the men who are feeling squeamish

'The council needs to modify these cubicles

People in the Black Country are angry that windows at a public baths have been covered up because some people do not want to be seen swimming.



We also have CCTV coverage throughout the building.

"It's stopping anybody perving on anybody in there really."

"I was appalled to hear recently of a young woman being subjected to being filmed whilst drying herself.

This strikes me as health and safety gone mad.

Lots of people, including myself, are put off using the pool because of this arrangement.

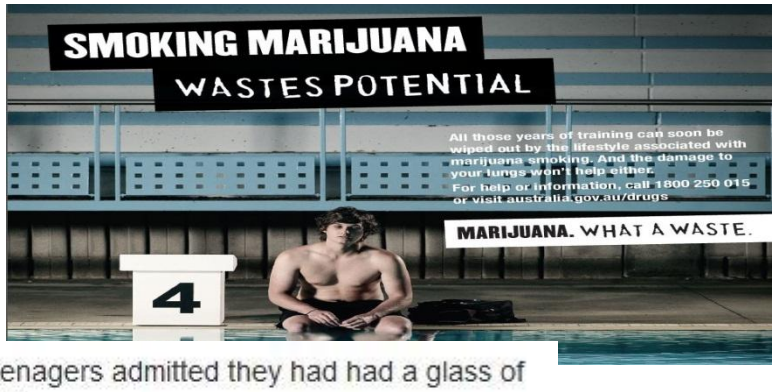
all this aquatic bureaucracy

: a symptom of how stressed out we've all become

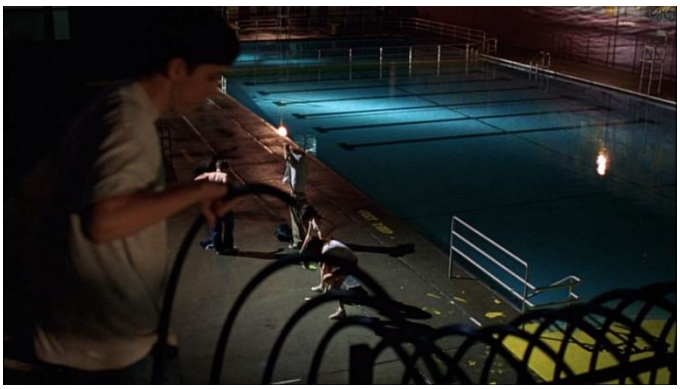
offending continued

The pool, located near 41st and V streets, has become a popular target for taggers. The graffiti can be found on signs, walls and even inside the pool.

Swim or sink: youth warned



one of the teenagers admitted they had had a glass of wine before going to the pool.



parents with young children in the pool

climbing over a shed or cutting the fence.

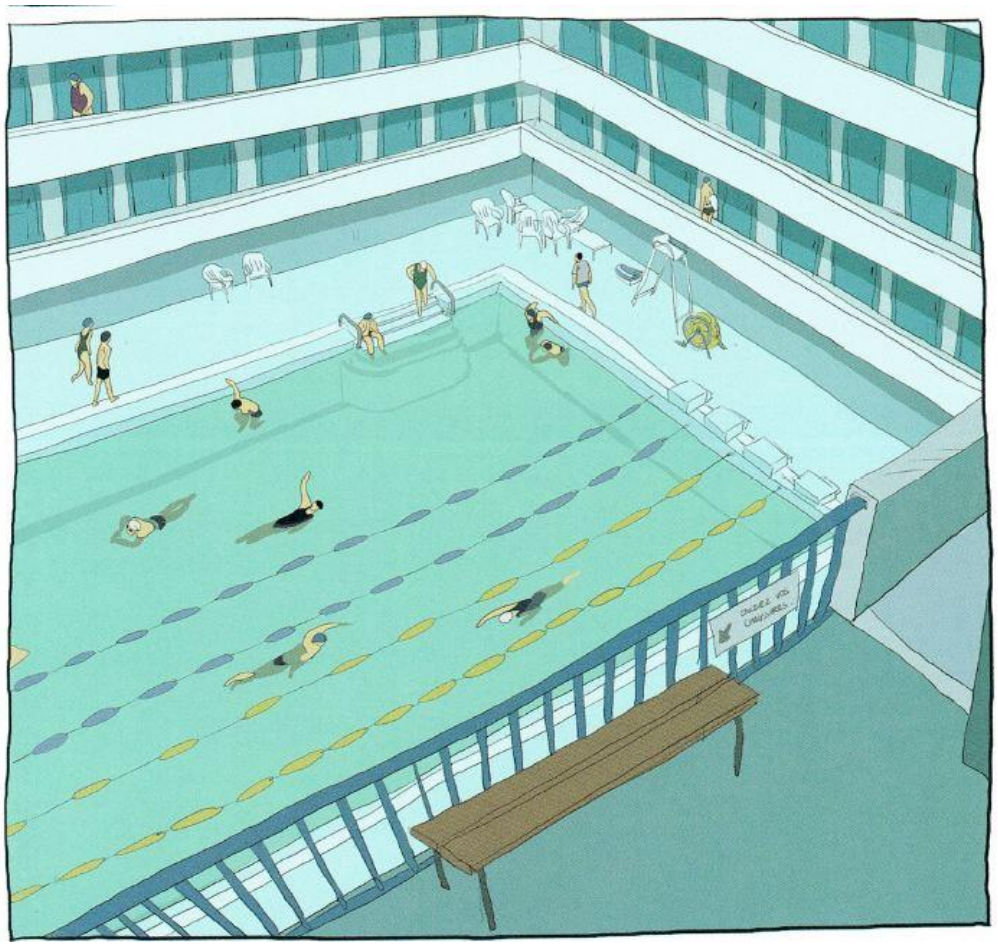
The city allowed all the pools to deteriorate over the years.

Sir-
Some elderly people cannot use Moana Pool because of the distress the highly chlorinated water causes their eyes.

How anyone can waste their time in swimming pools, I can't imagine. You know why your eyes hurt when you've been in them? It's other people's piss does the damage—not chlorine, as is commonly supposed.

"I call it the horse trough - that's all it is."

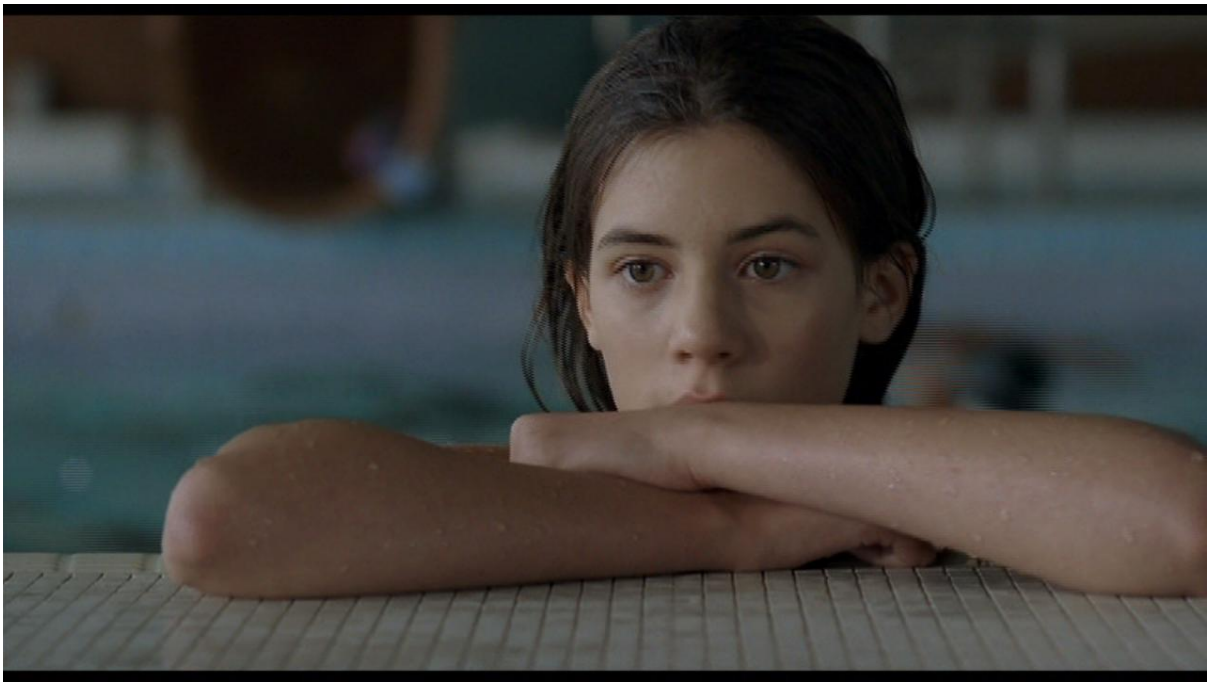
The staff at the swimming pool charged with monitoring the situation seem to have 'given up'



"Outdoor and indoor pools are both under serious threat,"

As he was pulling himself out of the water he heard Mrs. Halloran say, "We've been *terribly* sorry to hear about all your misfortunes, Neddy."

"My misfortunes?" Ned asked. "I don't know what you mean."

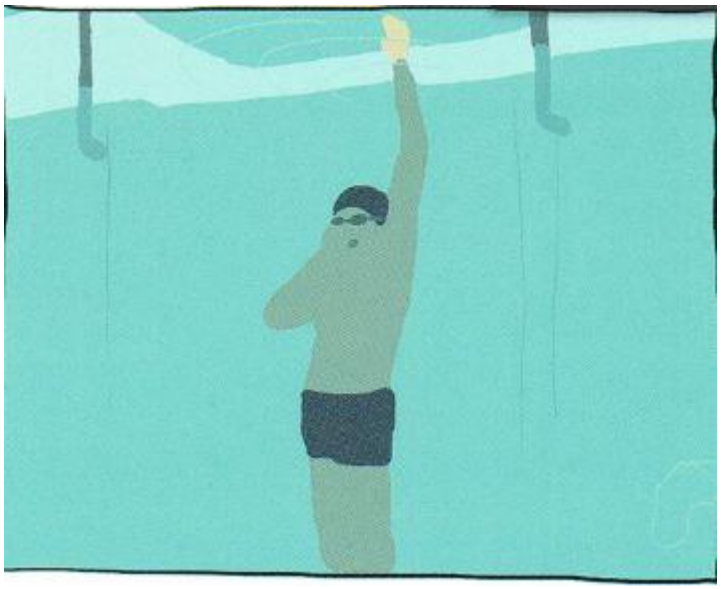


I felt keenly about the discipline of swimming, and then was suddenly bored by it, and by the taste of chlorinated water.

mortal fear

A WOMAN has described her terror at the thought of taking her daughter swimming again

a sinking feeling



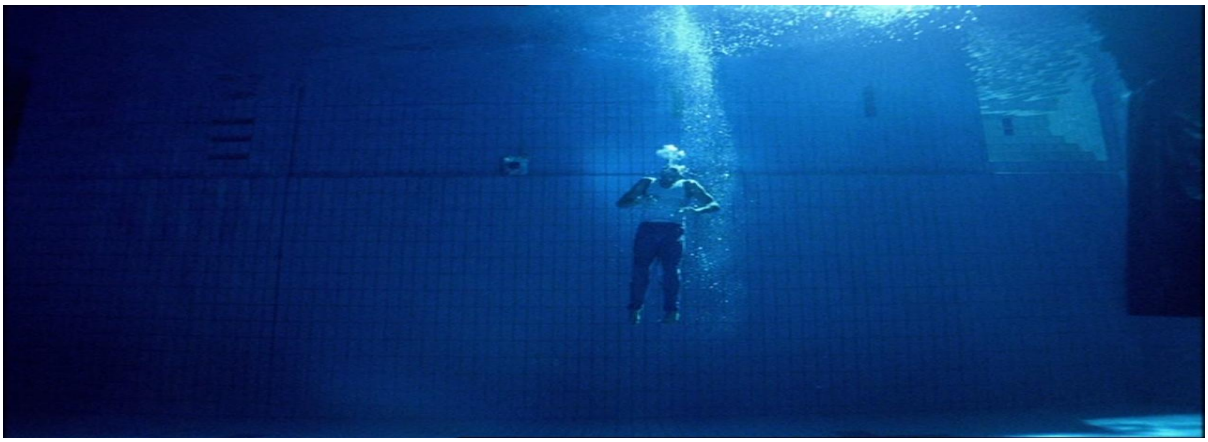
beyond the reach of

timely help

recognize the true warning signs

I changed in the shadows in about ten seconds, ran along to the starting end and dived into the blackness.

She wanted to conquer the water, cleave it, and enlist its help to do so: as a man about to be shot might be induced to dig his own grave.



I've never swum in the dark before or since. But I knew as soon as I hit the water it was the right thing for me, that night.

What are you doing to yourself Stop.
You'll drown.

The cracking of her body.

The harsh crack of her body against the concrete.

Then there was silence.

Then there was her groan and her squeal and her screams of pain.

For once, the swim failed to work its soothing magic.

She jumped into the pool and, for some reason, hasn't managed to surface.

She's been drowned.

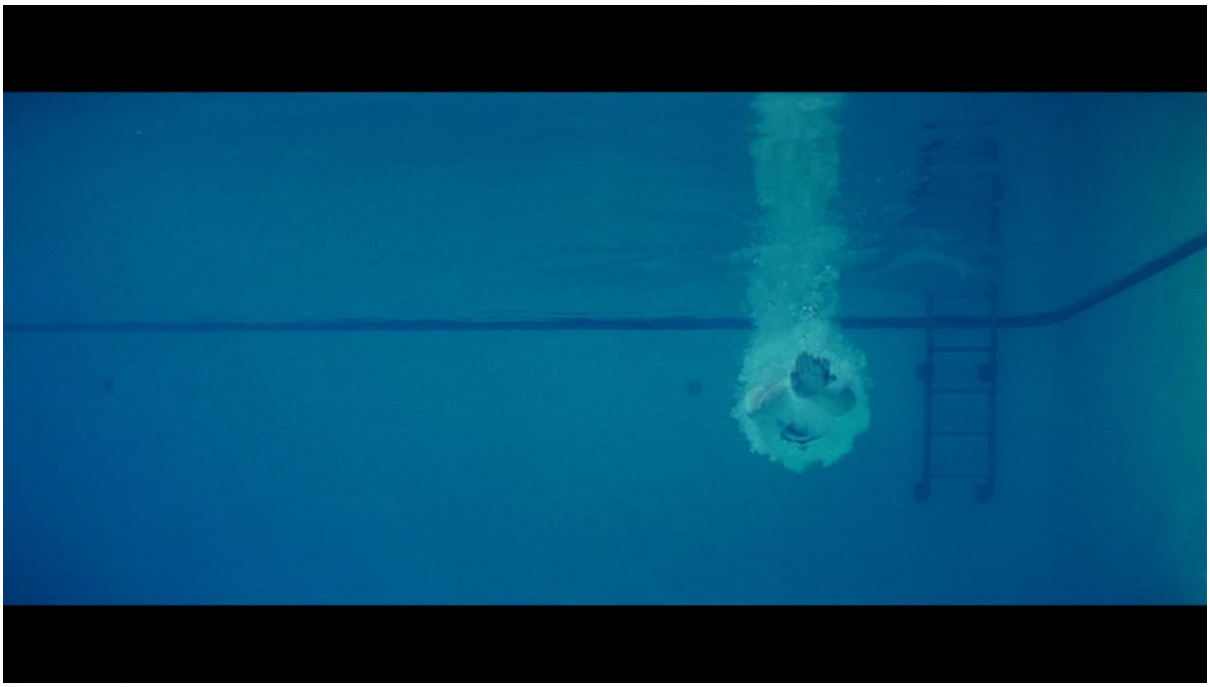
her body was hidden for two days in the deep end, unseen beneath 12 feet of murky water eventually floated to the pool's surface.

Her legs were pale under the surface, dead white.

when the doctor had delivered his news and gone, Mum herself spoke the word, for it had convinced her, too, that Myrtle had really died. 'They've taken her to the morgue,' she said.

this murderous liquid

How
dare you go swimming and not tell me.



Never again would you swim out of or back into your body – or anyone else's.

The water was bidding you a kind but impersonal farewell.

the saddest swim

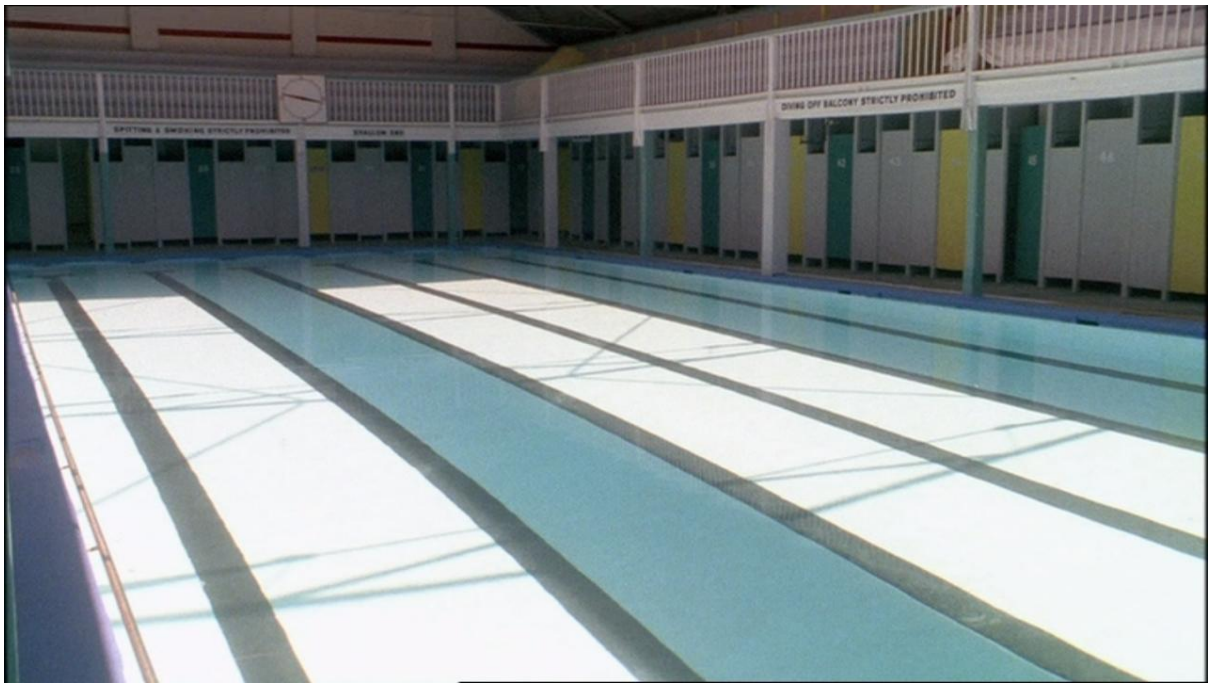
swimming.

The word had become bad, somewhere between sinning and shamming.

now a mildly subversive activity.

enough swimming

We should do our utmost to drownproof and waterproof children as soon as possible.



they've closed *all* the pools so *nobody* can swim

Everybody got out of the water.

The pool cleared in a matter of seconds

their sudden absences a little spooky.

pool's days appear
to be numbered

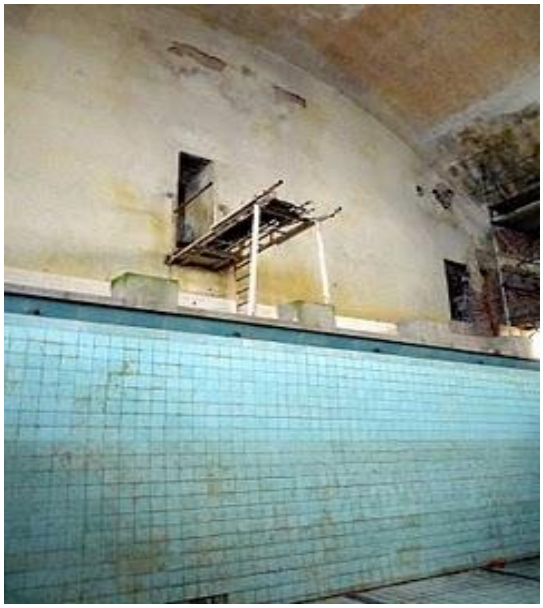
The lifeguards blamed the molly-coddling of indoor swimming and warm-water 'fun pools'

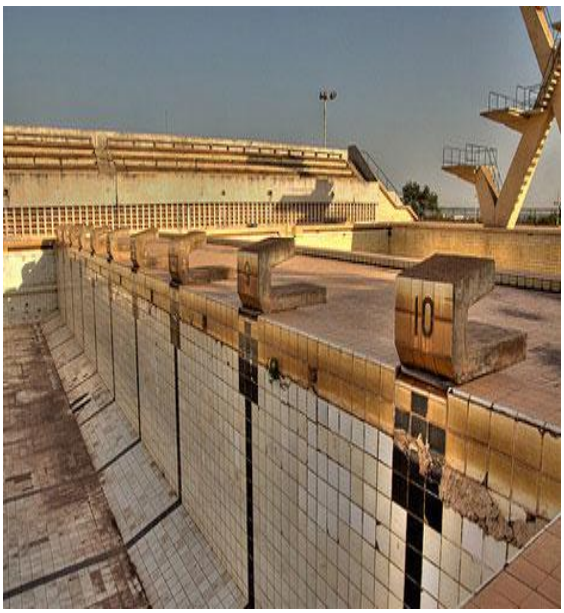
apathy on the

part of council and public alike has
led to its demise

Empty future? The mothballed Clyde pool.

mass of pool closures






DANGER DEEP END

No use going to the pool

People in Britain moan that when Margaret Thatcher sold off all the sports fields, their kids got fat. We concreted in our pools - what does that mean for our next generation?

"It's sinful to let that pool sit there like that."

Pool. No water.

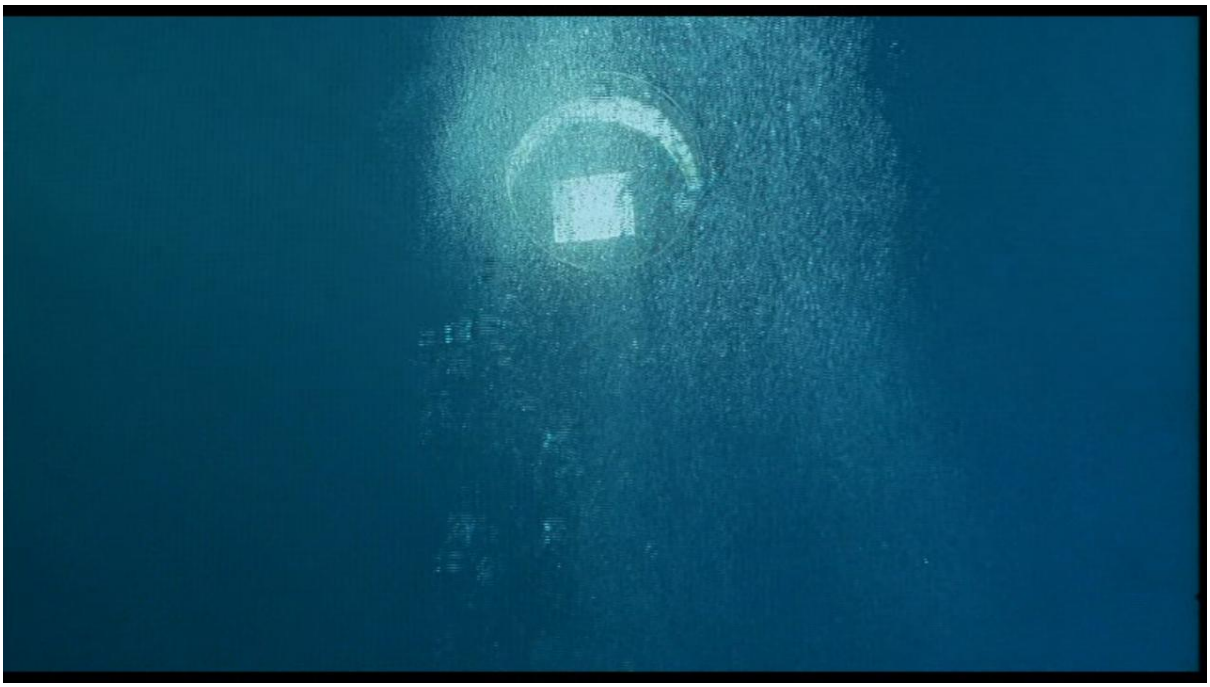
Just hints of water in a pool now drained.

Parents were terrified and their children had nightmares

A petrified child has invariably been frightened or put off earlier in life. Parents must guard against this.

Childhood should be a time of innocence, not anxiety.

I'm not sure all these people understand
It's not like years ago,
The fear of getting caught,
Of recklessness and water
They cannot see me naked
These things, they go away,
Replaced by everyday



Swim to me, he'd say, but she was too scared

This isn't about swimming

a

pool

seemed the height of civilisation.

To think that in a country of such affluence we must padlock the public pools is to wonder where the soul of our nation has gone.

we're completely out of our depth as a culture

a matter of neglect.

A catastrophe of our own making.

we have – oh – nothing

and we are no people

there was a pool

crowded

and then oddly deserted

the value of nothing

everyone seemed to forget about Isabel, and

where she had been and what she had seen.

You have decided being scared is caused mostly by thinking

Despite the very serious baths difficulties

we can forget the scandal that's
unfolding around our waterways and pools,

The pool is still there, lying empty.

future

There were some individuals who were in the park and who noticed there was a body in the pool

It's the body telling you : the pool doesn't want to die. It doesn't.

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Montage Four

It’s a matter of time

, the rediscovery and re-celebration of swimming

Oh let's leave hatred let's leave death let's leave that behind.
The poooooool.

you're a swimmer after all

I returned to the pool as soon as I could.

time to get

historical.

Just how far back swimming goes as a recreational or competitive sport is not known. However, early mosaics and drawings in the Middle East show men swimming; the Greeks and Romans were able swimmers and divers.

From the earliest days

Going to the baths was a vital part of growing up

Kids didn't have so many things to do back then. The boys either played rugby, cricket or swam."

From taking their first tentative plunges in the waters to mastering their strokes and speed, the city's swimming pools have played a key role in the communities they serve for many generations.

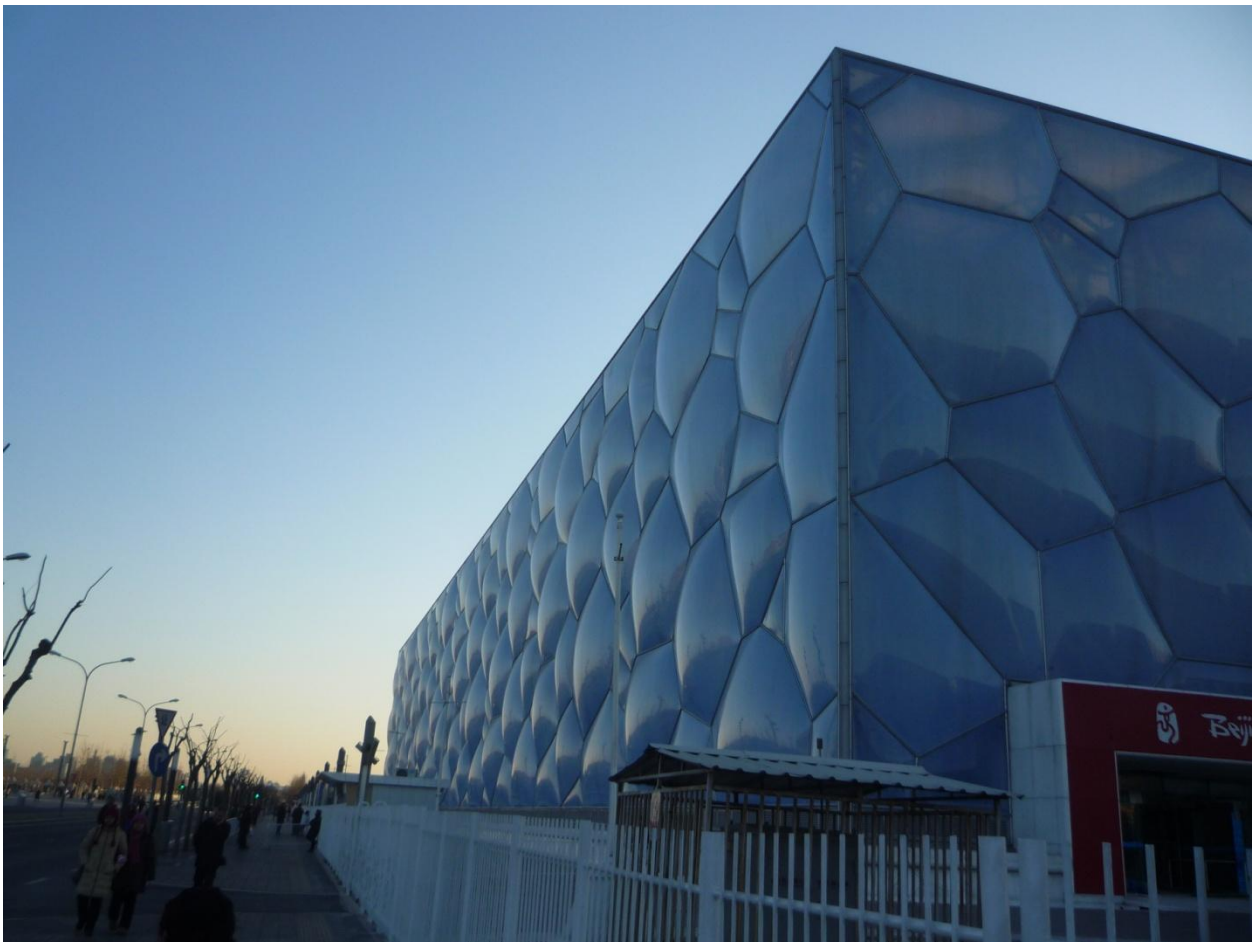
It seemed the height of civilisation.

The drill was simple and ancient, like the building where we swam. You undressed in the dingy locker room with rusty lockers, you showered, you walked through a largely symbolic foot-bath, and there you were.

I still remember the first time I went off the top board at the Watford Baths and, that same summer, at the Kenilworth Baths. Such moments were important rites of passage, climbing that extra set of steps, holding on to the rails with shaky hands you hoped no one would notice.

Almost as popular as the baths was the procession with wet togs and towel to a chipper on George's Avenue which kept body and soul alive until it was time to head home.

There was something special about the pool. It would be a shame if future generations did not have the same opportunity to create their own vivid childhood memories. Perhaps our children will be more successful at realizing swimming pools' full promise as public spaces. I hope so.



futuristic aquatic venue

Keeping the flame of memory burning bright

After years of speculation regarding the possible closure of Hilsea Lido by Portsmouth City Council a group of people joined together to try to put pressure on PCC and save the lido.

Campaigners fighting the closure of an historic Bradford swimming pool will hold a candlelit vigil to highlight their continuing battle to keep it open.

"Everyone is determined we are not going to lose it."

I have a great affection for the old building, I spent a great deal of my life there and want to see it put to good use.

If they fade from the landscape, gone will be a prime place for people of all economic classes to intermingle. Gone will be the thrill of mastering a new swim stroke. Or, for that matter, finally working up the nerve to flirt.

Much more than places to swim a few laps or cool off, these pearls of the past are full of history, character, artistry and atmosphere. They are living illustrations of the changing fashions of architecture and design.

its age, its beauty, its character ..

I want to stay here forever.

We must move

forward and let go of the past and let go of the badness and

beyond the hurt and destruction of the last few years, and start rebuilding for the future

of the children, families and schools in our community.

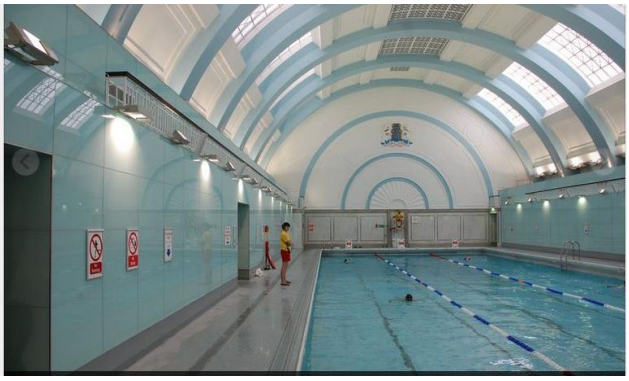
rebirth

I'm delighted we have

been able to restore this wonderful historic baths to its former glory.

returned to the purity it enjoyed in its heyday,

Regardless of what happens, the new installations are pretty much there to stay. These pools will not be drained again.



"Nowhere else do you really get the feeling you're swimming in an Edwardian pool. I have swum in historic baths all around the country, and this is the most important swimming pool of its type.

Once you've met your goals relax and enjoy.

the history that lies within –

It's so atmospheric you can almost picture for yourself the years of
lane-ploughing that have gone on here.

The lighting of this dingy, dignified underground bath is not in keeping with its décor. Originally, old photographs show, branched neo-classical lampadaries spread a broad glare over the water, whilst at the corners shell-shaped cups threw an orangey glow upwards on to the grandiose mouldings of the ceiling. Until lately you could buy in the foyer upstairs a postcard, dating from not long after the war, showing white young men in the voluminous, mildly obscene, unelasticated swimming drawers of yore, about to jump in, and the sleek heads of those who had already done so dotted down the crowded lanes.

regenerating relics

Sutro Baths started out as a vanity aquarium for 19th century industrialist Adolph Sutro. It got away from him, as home additions will, and ended up as seven swimming pools, a diving pool, an ice skating rink and a museum with a glass roof covering the whole works, before it all went bust.

Indeed, the Sutro Baths were the largest in the world.

The pool is still there, lying empty.

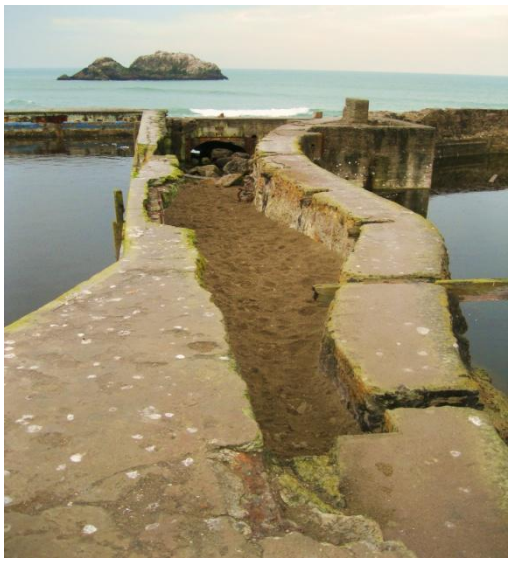
Sutro Baths

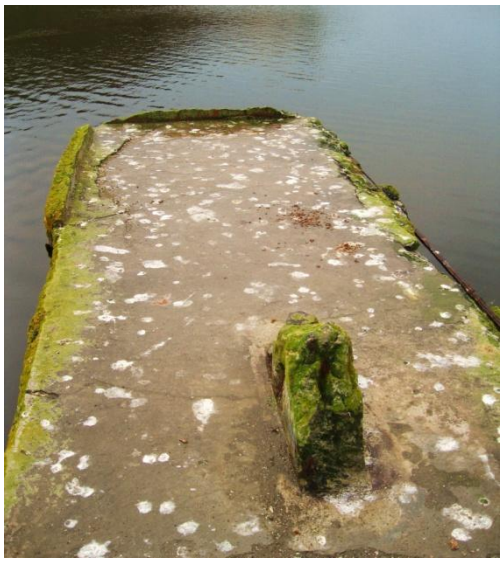
If you crave further adventure, cross Point Lobos and walk down to the remains of historic Sutro Baths, once the world's largest indoor swimming facility, later abandoned and finally destroyed by fire in 1966.

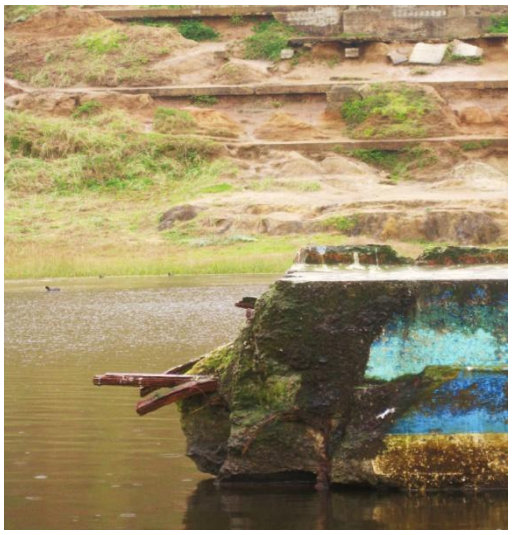
What were left are the finest ruins in the city, now part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. People still gather to imagine the lost grandeur. Anyone lucky enough to have visited the baths recalls unforgettable memories of one of Adolph Sutro's finest achievements.

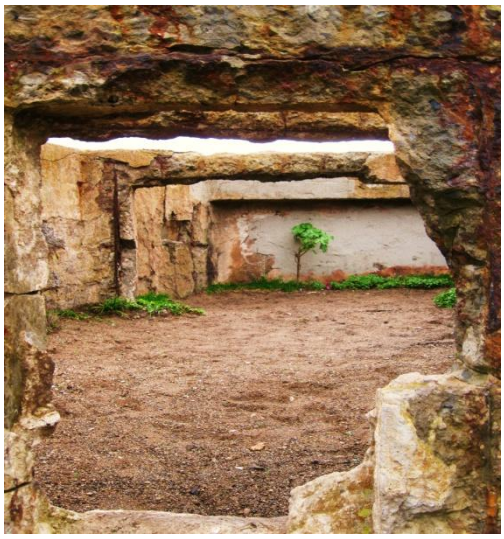
And we look at her and we see

– why did we feel those
terrible things all these years? Oh, it feels good to have let
them go. And we notice how graceful her movements are









Abandoned decades ago, it eventually burned down, leaving just a ghostly concrete footprint behind.

Pool. No swimming

Memorial Not a Swimming Pool

"The pain and suffering experienced by those who lost loved ones is unimaginable," Obama continued. "So I understand the emotions that this issue engenders. Ground zero is, indeed, hallowed ground."

" If You Want to be a Swimmer You Must Swim "

Local swimming groups
and parents staged a
"We Want to Swim"
demonstration outside
the baths on Monday.

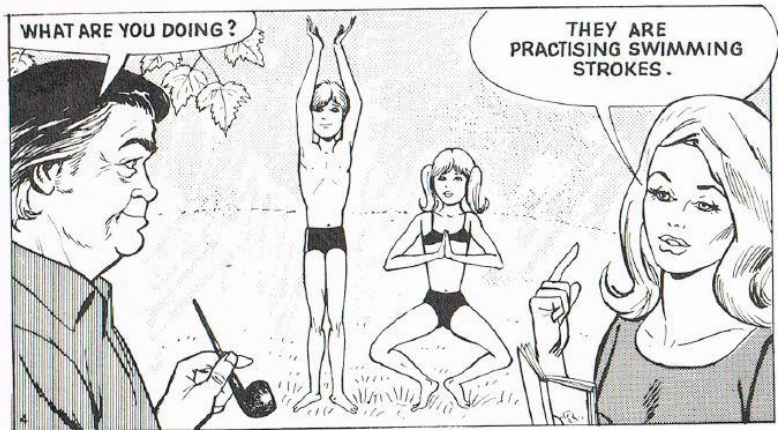
I can teach you how to swim. And we don't need a pool.

swimming no pools.

We met twice a week in my apartment. When they arrived, I had three bowls of warm tap water lined up on the floor, and then a fourth bowl in front of those, the coach's bowl. I added salt to the water because it's supposed to be healthy to snort warm salt water, and I figured they would be snorting accidentally. I showed them how to put their noses and mouths in the water and how to take a breath to the side. Then we added the legs, and then the arms.

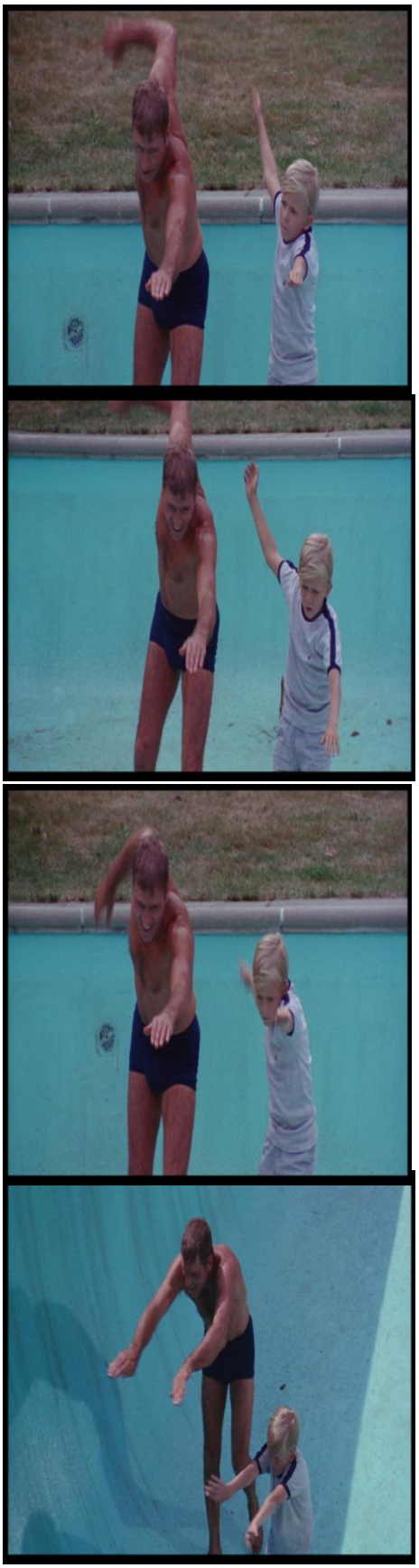
the swimmers
lie on the ground and thrash about as if in water!

You can't swim without water



There they fester on the floor of that empty swimming pool, four men in Speedos, past their prime. Once they were legion, but they have dwindled to these lucky (or unlucky) few, and their days pass in a blur of sun-bleached sameness. Yet after 20 years, they remain gripped by the same fever of anticipation.

I was the kind of coach who stands by the side of the pool instead of getting in, but I was busy every moment. If I can say this without being immodest, I was *instead* of the water. I kept everything going. I was talking constantly, like an aerobics instructor, and I blew the whistle in exact intervals, marking off the sides of the pool. They would spin around in unison and go the other way. When Elizabeth forgot to use her arms, I'd call out: Elizabeth! Your feet are up, but your head is going down! And she'd madly start stroking, quickly leveling out. With my meticulous, hands-on coaching method, all dives began with perfect form, poised on my desktop, and ended in a belly flop onto the bed. But that was just for safety. It was still diving, it was still letting go of mammalian pride and embracing gravity.



the prospect of swimming

So steep and labyrinthine was the descent that it was impossible to know or see what was to come next. The slippery blue-green wetness and smoothness of everything, and my near-nakedness, only made me more helpless, more like a baby. It was like a dream of being born.

I swam in and out of moonbeams.

swimming

triumphs

What you are seeing is changing so fast your eye can never quite catch up with it.

transformation

"What are we supposed to do, revert to the water hose and the plastic pool?"

Children cool off in a inflatable pool in an effort to beat the heatwave in the Brooklyn section of New York. (Jessica Renaldi/Reuters)

WaterSafe Auckland Inc (WAI) has thought outside the square. *Pools2Schools* is an innovative and effective solution to overcoming these challenges. The children in this pilot project now have the best possible opportunity to learn swimming and water safety skills.

Pools2Schools™ will provide:-

- a portable pool large enough to be used to teach swimming and basic water safety

a radically new idea.

Would you swim in a dumpster?

"The dumpsters turned out to make pretty good pools because of their size and their mobility," Belt said.

When water from the shower, dishwasher, or washing-machine is drained into the sewer-pipes, it's not just a waste of water, but a waste of the energy used to heat that water. In fact, the water in city pipes averages a temperature of 68°F--energy-produced heat that is simply wasted. This unused energy pestered folks in one French town so much that they decided to put it to good use... and now it heats their swimming pools.

"Sick" plans to use waste energy from a crematorium in Worcestershire to heat a council swimming pool have won a national award for being green.

Would townsfolk continue to patronize the sporting facility knowing that the swimming pool and aerobics rooms were heated in part by the town's deceased?

Perhaps, though, he should think of it in the same spirit that he thinks of organ donation. In this new era in which we're all supposed to just get along, regardless of our wealth or political persuasion, isn't it lovely that even the dead might have a burning need to give back?

. One minute there's

death, then the next there's pleasure.

transition : a gentler counterpoint to frenetic lane bashing.

Welcome to the
experiment that thinks it's a swimming pool

a swimming pool, a theater

Almost any activity can be enhanced with aquatics.

flowing, buoying, suspending

Swimmers pay attention to rhythm, much as dancers do.

move about freely

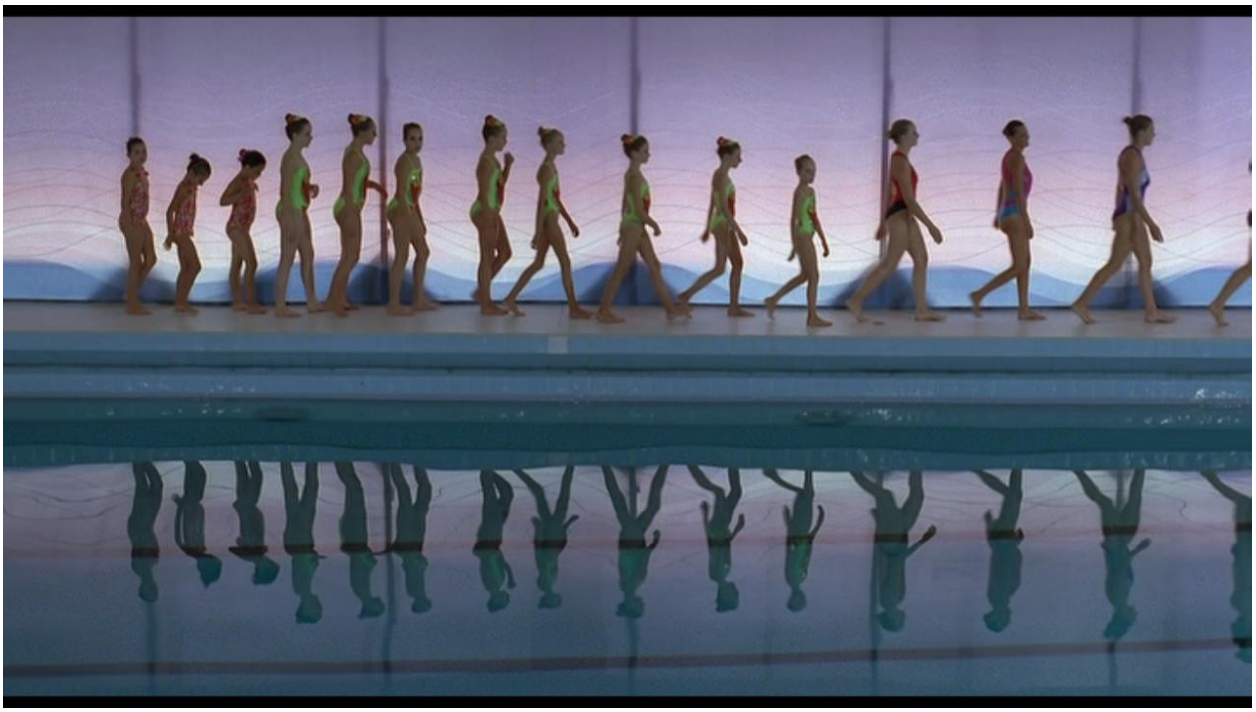
'Play with a purpose'

A swimming pool on stage adds depth - and some breathing difficulties - to a new play.

THIS week found me sitting in an empty Edwardian swimming pool, watching Jaws on a temporary cinema screen, eating Cinnamon Grahams. I've probably had weirder moments, but not many.

Tentstation

The abandoned swimming pool that serves as a dance floor for Tentstation in Berlin.



the illusion of brilliance and

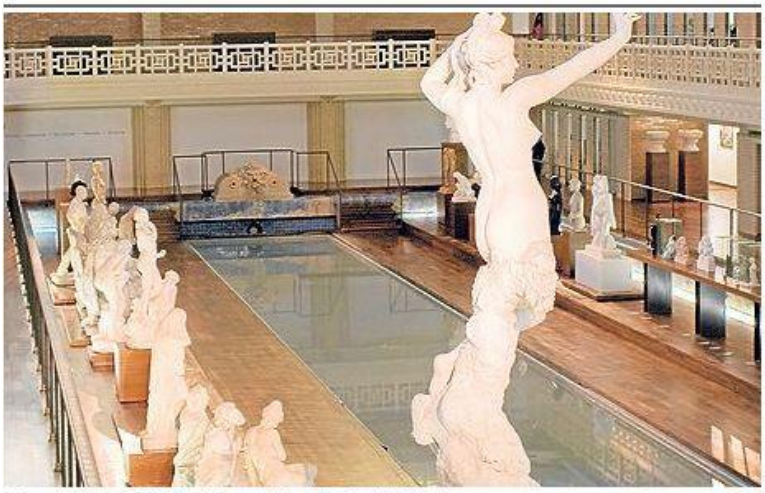
suspense, was the same here

imaginatively converted

Campaign to transform Buckley's baths could see it become a museum

Other people suggested using the building for performing arts as the town has a long held theatre tradition in the form of Buckley Amateur Pantomime Company with roots in the early 1900s.

L.A. Museum Installs Real Swimming Pool in Gallery

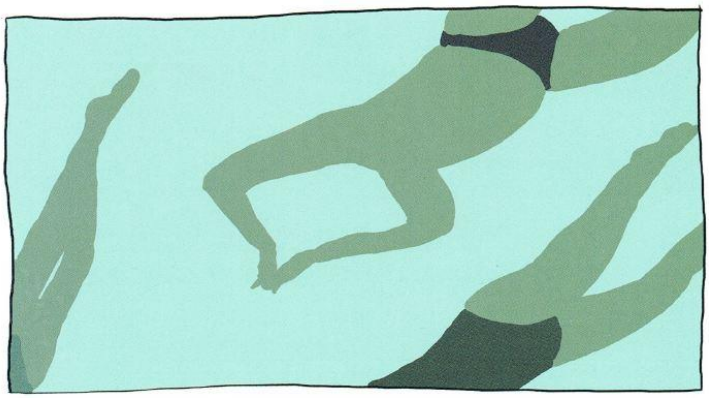


Splendidly eccentric: the Musee de La Piscine in Roubaix

Swimmers appear to stroke above submerged houses and skyscrapers in a pool designed to look like a flooded city.

suddenly you have this realisation that these people are inside a swimming pool

It began with a need



and a dream.

BROOKLYN — Designers have come up with an astonishing, floating, plus sign-shaped pool they hope to build in the East River, and an engineering company's feasibility report has confirmed that the pool is technically possible.

I'm different. I'm changing.

"I just assumed someone was going to come in and build something and the pool will be gone,"

Still she swam.

a surreal space

She stood at the edge of the pool

I had no idea it was going to be so beautiful.

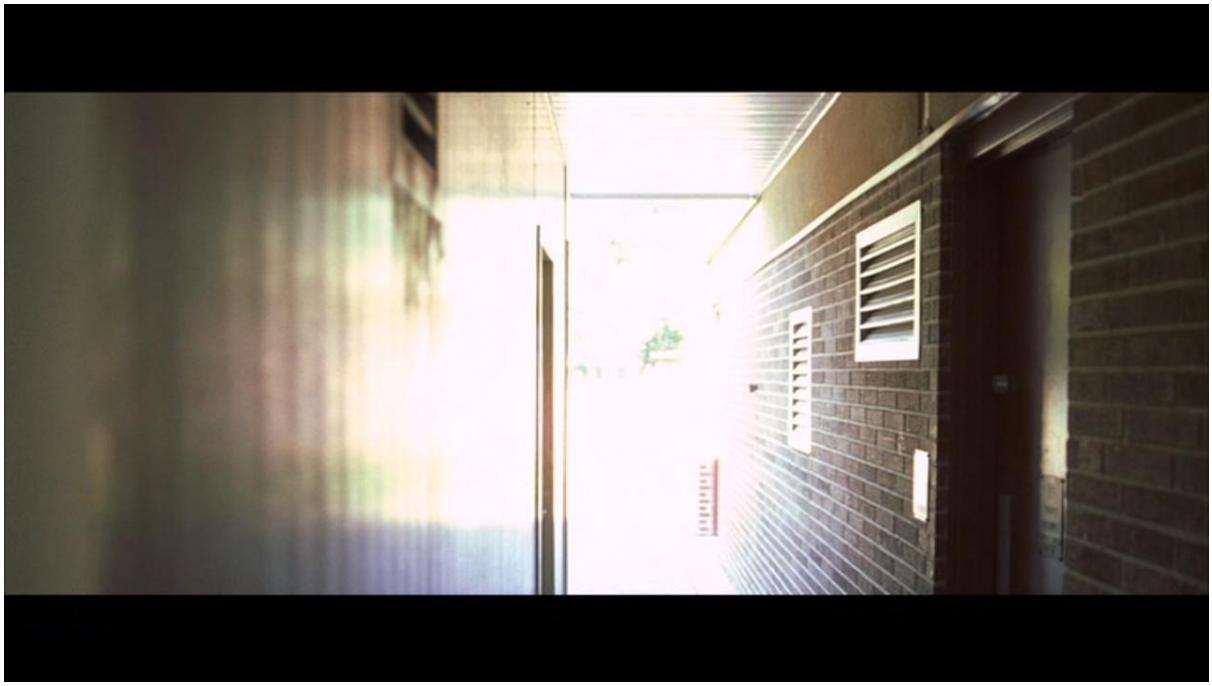
I could swim

all day, swim anywhere.

So which is the lie? Hard or soft? Silence or time?
The lie is that it's one or the other.

'Is the future still a straight line?'

'Is the **past** still a straight line?'



"A pool is full of potential,"

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Chapter V: Some conclusions

In the introduction to this thesis I proposed to ascertain the plight of public swimming pools which I presented as a seemingly ordinary feature of the cultural landscape. In constructing, framing and arranging this thesis I followed the spirit of Gaston Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space* in which he encourages his readers to look for the unexpected, surprising and uncommon "in ordinary ways" (1994, [1958] p.x). I invited readers to look at the pool in a new light to see it as something other than ordinary, obvious and 'given', and to approach it as something less tangible and possibly more evocative. The two broad aims of this thesis were to explore the pool as an aspect of culture and to use the pool as a means to explore cultural inquiry through the processes of deconstruction and reconfiguration. Ultimately, my intent was to stimulate thought about the pool, culture, and knowledge. In this chapter I return to these two broad aims to provide some concluding commentary about what poolspace might say about public swimming pools and 'making' knowledge.

Reflecting on trends in other disciplines, I have tackled the epistemic 'foundations' of knowledge-making and the political implications of (re)presentation. In this sense I engaged questions pertaining to reflexivity, de-stabilised truths, and the nature of evidence. I also highlighted the messiness, and strangeness of doing cultural inquiry, and 'making' knowledge. By assembling my analysis in the form of montages I re-presented my subjective engagement with pool space in a way that reflects and honours the personal and political investment in the analysis itself. I was not concerned with establishing a truth or series of truths about the world. While no single 'answer' can be gleaned from reading the montages, I have chosen to conclude

the thesis by discussing some possibilities that might be considered in light of the poolspace montages and my exploration of public swimming pools, and the place of swimming in contemporary culture.

Save our pools, save ourselves?

I began the thesis from a point of crisis, a crisis symbolised by the apparent disappearance of some public swimming pools in New Zealand. I argued that despite popular thought and conventional histories and policy documents, the pool is not necessarily a stable, knowable object. In fact I suggested that contemplating the plight of the pool required thinking much more broadly. Hence I extended the scope of the inquiry to 'space'; specifically I constructed the term pool space as a way of exploring the plight of the public swimming pool.

The transformation of the pool to pool space, which I detailed throughout this thesis, is *one* way of coming to know the pool 'crisis' and its potential effects. It is not an absolute way of knowing the pool and pool crisis. Below I offer three possibilities to consider, regarding the plight of the pool and its future.

The loss of 'water retaining structures designed for swimming'

The first possibility that I present is centred on the rejection of my conceptualisation of the public swimming pool as a fragment of pool space. This possibility rests on the assumption that the pool is indeed a water retaining structure designed for swimming. The pool exists, in a distinct form,

for a specific function. So, if the pool ‘is’ then it might have an end; the pool is a thing with a presence which has not always been and thus might well disappear. This interpretation would accept the possibility of the suggestion that public pools are in demise. Under these assumptions the pool can be viewed as a disappearing structure, no longer there for recreational, therapeutic or training swimming. There is evidence to support this conclusion, as pools are being closed and there are many examples of derelict pools rotting away (see Montage 3).

Indeed, the disappearance of public swimming pools might be described in terms of an object becoming obsolete. In the twenty-first century perhaps the pool will be rendered useless, or replaced by something else, something more culturally relevant. If the pool is nothing more than a water retaining structure designed for swimming then does it really need to be saved? ‘Swimming’ does not have to be performed in a water retaining structure; it can be performed in oceans, lakes, and rivers as I discussed in Chapter I, or even on the ground, as I alluded to in Montage 4. Moreover, the problem of drowning might provide justification that losing public pools is preferable to saving them. That is, if the pools are just a structure to swim in, and swimming can cause drowning then perhaps we should just let the ‘pool die’. Avoid the risks, ban swimming altogether, and save people. Or we could ‘waterproof and drown proof kids’ as I suggested in Montage 3.

The loss of culturally significant ‘structures’

This second possibility posits that pools might disappear and this disappearance constitutes a significant cultural ‘loss’. An acceptance of this possibility requires a strong cultural investment

in the idea of swimming. Again, if we accept the logic that swimming offers something more than preventing drowning when one is in, or moving in, water, it would be possibly, as I pointed out above, easier to discourage people from going in the water. But there is obviously something else about swimming that people hold onto. Something more than physical and health benefits which can surely be achieved through other potentially safer (and cheaper) means? Therefore to accept that losing the pools would be a culturally significant loss, one must believe in the pool as something more than a water retaining structure designed for swimming. However, what this also means is that it might not be the object per se that is at stake. Rather, if it is possible for public swimming pools to disappear then the thing that might be at stake is values, or ideological meanings attached to the object.

If we lose the pools, then we are also losing a site where water is treated, filtered and contained, and swimmers are ultimately controlled. If the public swimming pool is under threat, perhaps so too is our 'cultural order'. Is the disappearance of the pool symptomatic of something more sinister regarding contemporary cultural conditions? If we accept the demise of the pool, are we also accepting the dissolution of particular values? This might provoke apocalyptic visions. Perhaps the disappearing public swimming pool simultaneously co-existed in a time during which there was "dissolution of values, of the real, of ideologies, of ultimate ends" (Baudrillard, 2009, p. 21). Does the disappearing public swimming pool represent a declining civilisation, or the shattering of a cohesive, functional society? Should we give up our utopian dreams and instead accept the inevitability of destruction, where the demise of public swimming pools might be situated within a more general domain of crisis whereby the prevailing cultural logic privileges distress and dereliction?

The answers to the questions above might provide a compelling argument to ‘save the pools’. Indeed, the argument supports other cultural ‘logic’ about the ‘postmodern condition’ in which people are said to have become careless, wasteful consumers. Particular ways of thinking about culture – the ‘negative’ effects of postmodernity – assume that if something seemingly significant is gone that we are ‘doomed’. In this sense the pool as a deteriorating object is symbolic of a vacuous culture. What is interesting here is that all of these concerns are premised by an understanding that what we stand to lose is ‘better’ than what might follow – hence my troubling of the ‘progressive’ narrative of time, in particular in Montage 4.

Further, holding an unwavering belief in the ‘good’ of the pool privileges a particular cultural logic and thus ways of thinking and being over others. I have endeavoured to illustrate in my process of deconstruction, that neither pools nor their underlying cultural logic are necessarily always positive, for all people. What does it suggest about culture that it is expected that we have public pools, and that they should be accessible? Why do people believe so strongly that all children in Aotearoa/New Zealand need to learn to swim, or at least deserve the right to learn to swim? What is it about swimming?

Throughout this thesis I encouraged readers to ask themselves, what is a pool (for)? And how do we come to know the pool? What does a public pool ‘do’? And who is the public pool for? Before we assume that saving the pool is something worthwhile and necessary, we should also consider who are we saving the pool for? And if one believes, as I do, that the ideological

foundations of public pool provision are exclusive and privilege particular ways of knowing and being over others, then perhaps we might welcome the demise of the pool. Letting go of our attachments to the pool might enable us to see past dominant and dominating cultural logic and to consider alternative ways of conceptualising ‘swimming’, and thus the function of the pool that might not privilege discourses of naturalism and functionalism. For example, what alternatives might exist for water immersion and movement that are not tied to the prescribed codified versions of swimming? What kinds of alternatives might be more embracing of other ways of thinking about the relationships between humans and water? Do we need pools to ‘swim’? I think that depends on what you think swimming is, or for.

Framing the public pool as merely a fragment in the indeterminable, indefinable pool space allowed me to acknowledge experience, imagination, desire in addition to regular form and function (Gilbert, 2006). If the pool is actually intangible, then its effects extend far beyond the measurable statistics of physical health and social cohesion, and more into the creative imaginary sphere of desire, feeling and expression. The question becomes then, not one of whether the pools make “good community sense” nor, whether or not we need to swim. Rather, the question is whether we need to think more about our connections to water, to everything and nothingness? Do we need to feel, to dream, to imagine? Perhaps we do need to go swimming to do these things. But is swimming limited to the pool? Is swimming limited to our sense of doing laps, or learning prescribed techniques? Or, can we swim on the floor? Can we breathe into a bowl of salt water as Miranda July describes in the short story ‘Swim team’? The bowl could indeed be considered a water retaining structure designed for swimming. Should we ‘save the bowls’?

Fleeting moments in/of pool space

The way in which I have conceptualised pool space is such that pool space does not have distinct periods of past, present and future. Indeed my deconstructive, postmodern approaches trouble these very terms. Pool space can be seen as "a perpetual reconfiguration, as a mode of ceaseless becoming" (Gilloch, 2002, p. 35). Thus, I argue that the pool is a fragment of pool space, that does not ever really begin or end, but is merely a fleeting moment. Therefore, my reconfiguration does not have a 'real' beginning and end point. When I engaged with the fragments, and re-presented them in the montages I was not looking to ascertain the beginning or end of the public pool. Rather I played with concepts of time to allude to how our concept of time might shape how the form and function of public swimming pools are imagined, realised and expressed. In particular in Montage 4 I tried to emphasise the chaos of temporal representation as it is woven into the spatial fabric of past and future.

In my opinion, rather than focusing solely on 'saving public swimming pools' swimming activists might be better served by ensuring that the imagination is valued. The breadth, depth and potential of knowing and /or feeling pool space is made possible through the imagination. To keep swimming I think we should delve into the virtual pool and take 'intoxicating' swims with our friends and our selves. We should get lost, absorb the feelings of everything and nothingness, face our deepest fears and emerge happier, or not. Engaging with pool space might not seem 'useful', it cannot be counted, or timed. But it might help us to relate to our selves, to others and to our cultural environments. To believe in fleeting pool space is to accept that the material structure might disappear, or morph, or perhaps make a return to the floating baths. But

irrespective, faith in the imagination means that the "illusion of brilliance and suspense remains" (For example in Montage 4).

I do not want to make any definitive claims regarding the future of the pool, or the seriousness of the pool crisis. I encourage a range of readings and hope that the three possibilities I offer here provoke debate rather than achieve a consensus. Regardless of what actually happens to the pool, or how my analysis is interpreted, I see that contemplating the potential plight of the pool is productive. The public swimming pool debate prompts much deeper questions about existence, significance of nature, culture and life. The pool problem is revealing in terms of the various commitments people might have to cultural knowledge and ideals. In this regard I think swimming is certainly worthy of further thought. Swimming has incited in me philosophical questions about 'life', about others, and how we 'know', 'do', 'be' and 'feel'. The next step might be to consider how swimming aligns with, or facilitates our sense of ethics, whatever they may constitute.

Finding an end?

There are expectations that a project such as this should have a conclusion. However, I think that the grand conclusion is antithetical to this thesis. When we have concluded something we have synthesised it, we have decided upon its certainty, we have imposed limits upon 'it'. Rather than provide a conclusion I draw on Derrida, who suggests that in texts there is no such thing as an end. Indeed, if meanings always exceed the boundaries they currently occupy then it may be the case that I might not ever know what it is I have created, or where poolspace might 'go'.

Finale

Rotting like a wreck on the ocean floor,
Sinking like a siren that can't swim any more
Your songs remind me of swimming,
But I can't swim any more

(Welch, 2009)

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