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Haunts of the Black Masseur is a dazzling introduction to the great swimming heroes: Byron leaping into the surf at Shelley's beach funeral, Hart Crane, swallow-diving to his death in the Bay of Mexico, Ulysses, Leander, Weismuller and many more. In lively prose bursting with anecdote, Charles

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Sprawson leads us into a watery world populated by lithe demi-Gods -- one that has obsessed humans from the ancient Greeks and Romans, to Yeats, Virginia Woolf, F. Scott Fitzgerald and David Hockney.

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Informed by the literature of Swinburne, Goethe, Scott Fitzgerald, and Yukio Mishima; the films of Reifenstahl and Vigo; the Hollywood “swimming musicals” of the 1930s; and delving in and out of Olympic history, Haunts of the Black Masseur is a celebration of swimming that explores aspects of culture in a heretofore unimagined way.

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musicals” of the 1930s; and delving in and out of Olympic history, Haunts of the Black Masseur is an enthralling assessment of man—body submerged, self-absorbed. It is quite simply the best celebration of swimming ever written, even as it explores aspects of culture in a heretofore unimagined way.

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to the great swimming heroes, from Byron leaping into the surf at Shelley's funeral to Hart Crane diving to his death in the Bay of Mexico.

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surf at Shelley's beach funeral, Hart Crane, swallow-diving to his death in the Bay of Mexico, Ulysses, Leander, Weismuller and many more. In lively prose bursting with anecdote, Charles Sprawson leads us into a watery world populated by lithe demi-Gods - one that has obsessed humans from the ancient Greeks and Romans, to Yeats, Virginia

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Woolf, F. Scott Fitzgerald and David  
Hockney.

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Great trivia knows no decline. Sprawson has a genius for bizarre bits of water lore, a talent that makes Haunts of the Black Masseur compulsive, almost guilty

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reading. Of course it's useless to think how one would have done this thing differently. The truth is, no one but Sprawson would have done it all.

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stories of diving, drowning and even  
some boating. There are chapters

designated to swimming in Germany,  
America and Japan. These chapters  
contain references to movies featuring  
swimming. I was disappointed that  
Australian swimming did not rate a  
chapter.

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