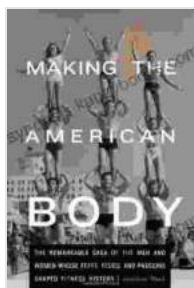


# Making the American Body: A Deeper Look into the History of Physical Culture

The human body has always been a site of cultural meaning and contestation. In the United States, the body has been shaped by a variety of forces, including Puritanism, capitalism, and the rise of the modern medical profession. As a result, the American body has become a complex and contested site, embodying both the ideals and the contradictions of American culture.



## Making the American Body: The Remarkable Saga of the Men and Women Whose Feats, Feuds, and Passions Shaped Fitness History by Jonathan Black

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 2782 KB

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Word Wise : Enabled

Print length : 264 pages

Lending : Enabled



In her book, *Making the American Body*, Susannah Wilk explores the history of physical culture in the United States, from the colonial era to the present day. Wilk argues that physical culture has been a central force in shaping American identity, and that it has played a major role in the development of American values, beliefs, and institutions.

Wilk's book is a comprehensive and well-researched history of physical culture in the United States. She draws on a wide range of sources, including medical texts, popular magazines, and personal diaries, to provide a rich and detailed account of the ways in which Americans have sought to shape their bodies.

One of the strengths of Wilk's book is its interdisciplinary approach. She draws on insights from history, sociology, and cultural studies to provide a nuanced understanding of the complex relationship between the body and American culture.

Another strength of Wilk's book is its focus on the everyday experiences of Americans. She shows how physical culture has been shaped by the lived experiences of ordinary people, and how it has affected their lives in profound ways.

*Making the American Body* is a valuable contribution to the scholarship on physical culture in the United States. It is a well-written and engaging book that will appeal to a wide range of readers, including historians, sociologists, cultural studies scholars, and anyone interested in the history of the body.

## **The Colonial Era**

The Puritans were the first group to have a major impact on the development of physical culture in the United States. The Puritans believed that the body was a temple of the Holy Spirit, and that it should be treated with respect. As a result, they encouraged exercise and other forms of physical activity.

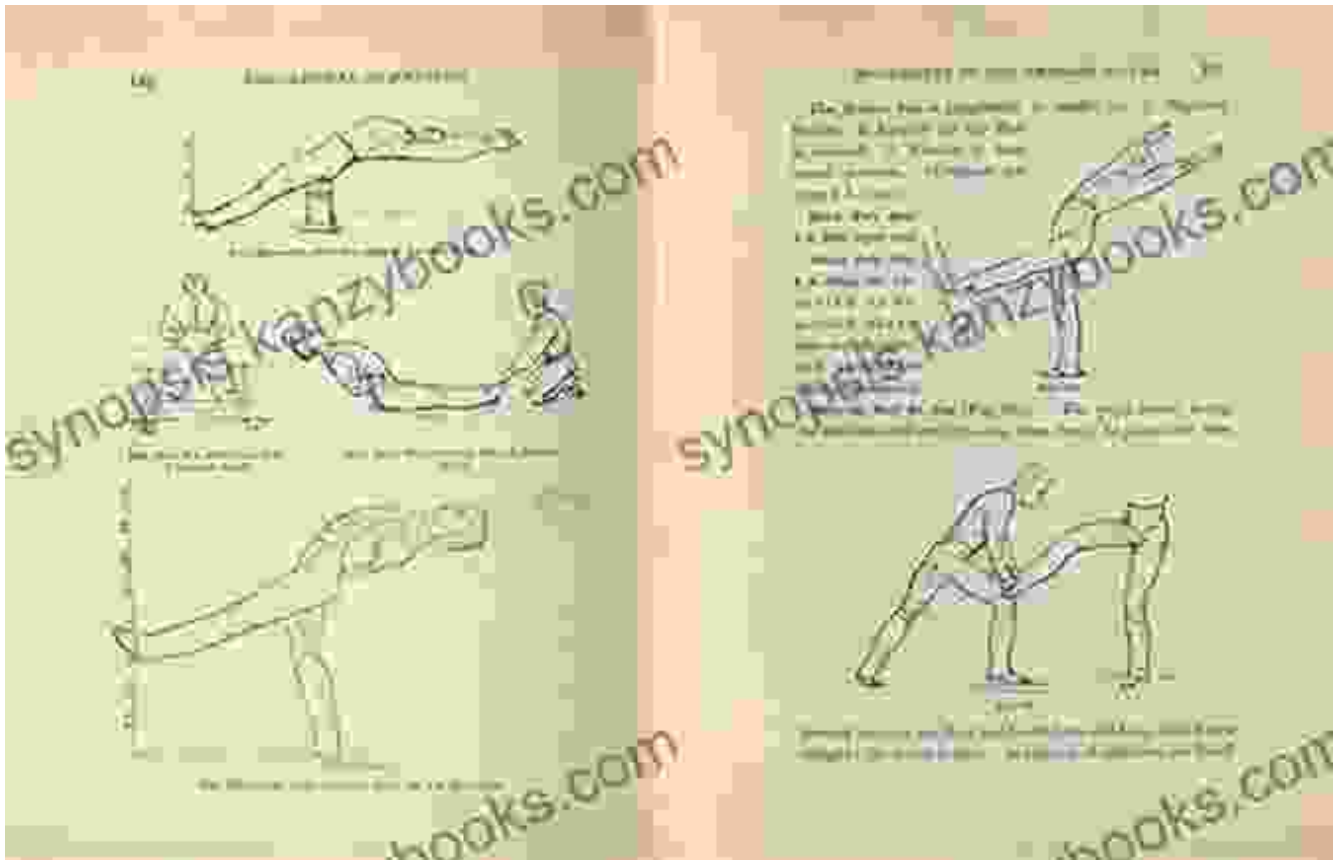
However, the Puritans also believed that the body was a source of temptation, and that it should be controlled. As a result, they discouraged certain forms of physical activity, such as dancing and swimming.



## **The 19th Century**

The 19th century saw a major transformation in American physical culture. The rise of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution led to a new emphasis on efficiency and productivity. As a result, Americans began to place more value on physical fitness and exercise.

This new emphasis on physical fitness was reflected in the development of new forms of physical activity, such as gymnastics and calisthenics. It also led to the rise of the modern medical profession, which began to promote the idea that exercise was essential for good health.

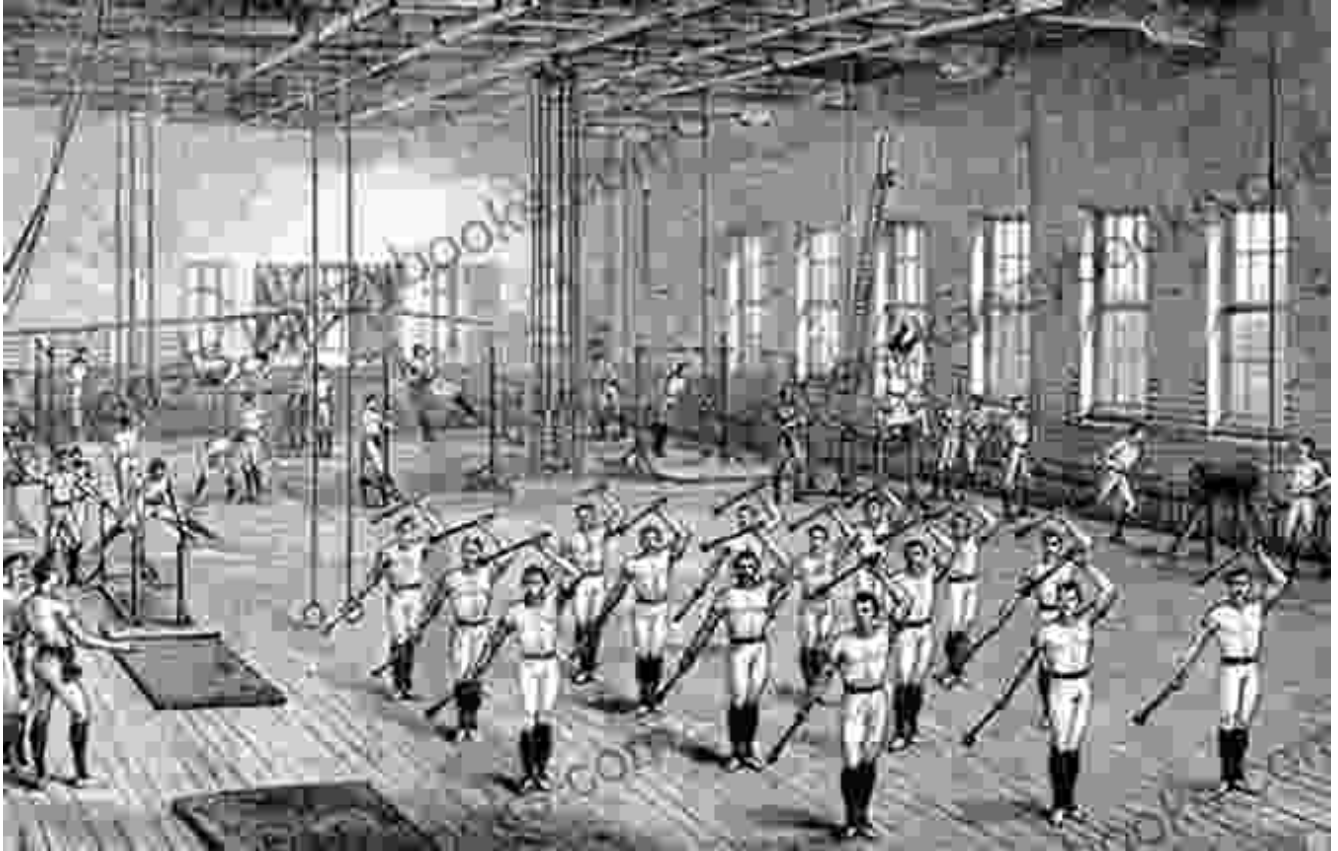


The 19th century saw a major transformation in American physical culture, with a new emphasis on efficiency, productivity, and physical fitness.

## **The 20th Century**

The 20th century witnessed the continued rise of physical culture in the United States. The development of new technologies, such as the automobile and the television, led to new forms of physical activity, such as driving and watching sports.

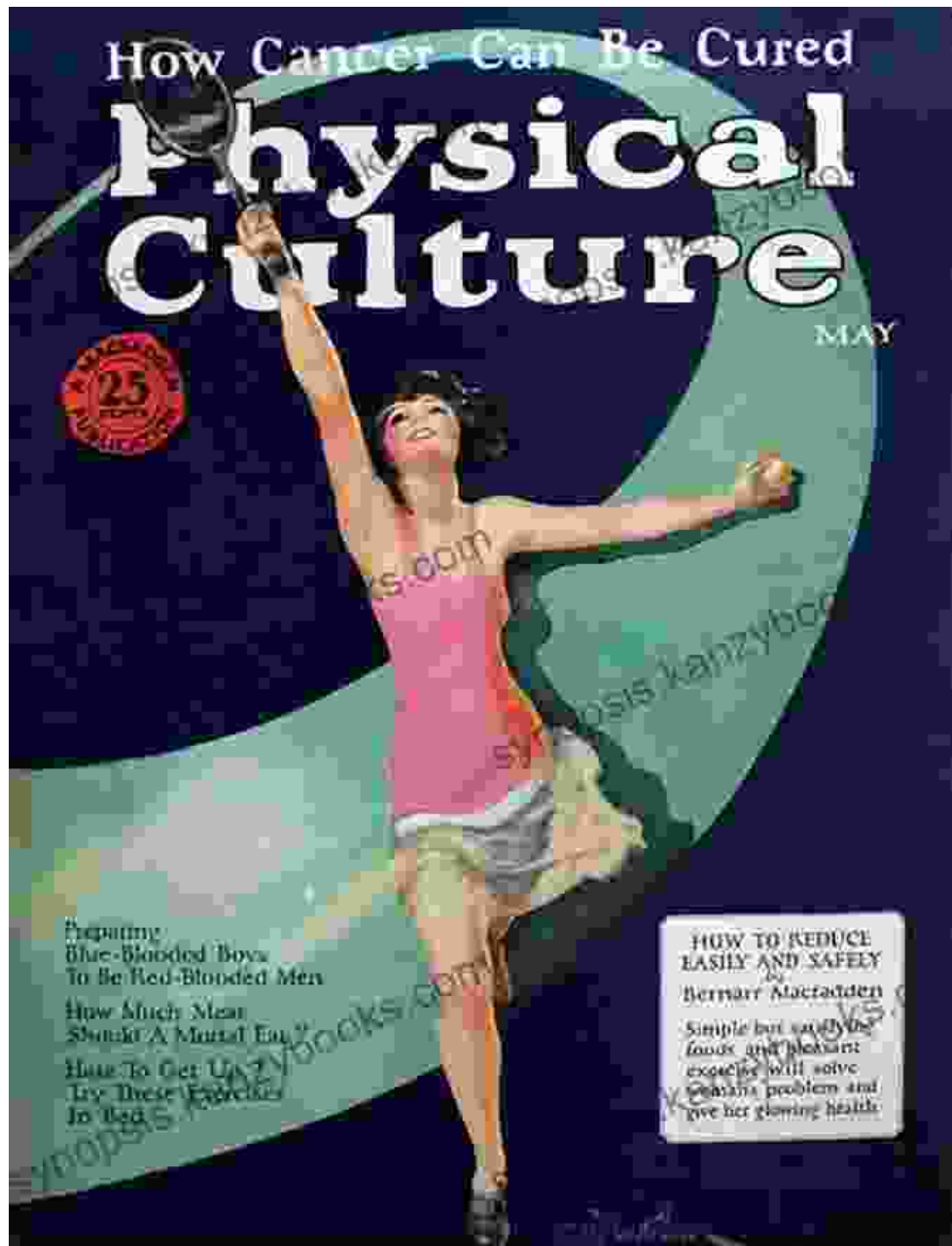
The 20th century also saw the rise of the modern fitness industry. This industry promoted the idea that everyone could achieve a perfect body through exercise and diet.



## **The Present Day**

Today, physical culture is more popular than ever before. Americans are spending more time and money on exercise and fitness than ever before. However, the American body is still a contested site, embodying both the ideals and the contradictions of American culture.

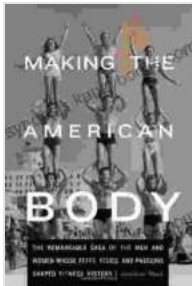
On the one hand, the American body is a symbol of health, fitness, and beauty. On the other hand, the American body is also a symbol of inequality, consumption, and environmental degradation.



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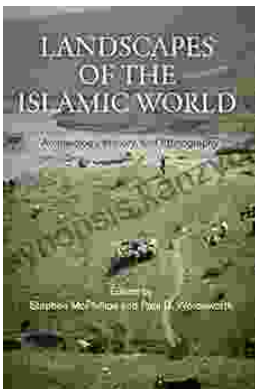
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