

The New Super Woman: The Representation of Female Bodybuilding in Mass Media,
1986 – 1990

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ABSTRACT

The muscular female body made its way into contemporary American culture as an ideal body for females. This American bodybuilding subculture had the power to influence popular culture and eventually was adapted into the mainstream. This thesis posits that between 1986 and 1990 the aerobic, thin female body type seen in magazines and mass media gradually changed into a stronger, more masculinized female body type. Case studies analyzed within this thesis include the films *Pumping Iron I* and *Pumping Iron II*; the magazines *Cosmopolitan* and *Female Bodybuilding and Weight Training*; and popular music celebrity on the rise during the 1980s, Madonna. Through these case studies, I will analyze representations of the muscular female in relation to the theories of Judith Butler, Susan Bordo, Donnalyn Pompper, Pierre Bourdieu and Alan Klein.

Key Terms: women's bodybuilding, subculture, women's fitness, 1980s, gender performativity, femininity, deviance, popular culture, masculinization, mass media.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In my thesis I examine popular culture influences that took place during the 1980s of a gradual assimilation of a muscular female body into popular media. The purpose of this study is to examine visual representations of women in select popular culture mediums from 1986 to 1990 when the representation of the ideal female body gradually moved from thin to more muscular body physiques. The “ideal” female body from the 1970s changed from a thin and soft body (although advertised as “fit”) to a more muscular defined woman by the end of the 1980s. In the 1980s the visual representation of female bodies began to shift from the thin, slender, aerobic-exercising female to a more defined and muscular body type. Although this strong female body image was not new to history, it had previously remained confined within a more niche and subcultural group of bodybuilding. Even earlier female bodybuilders did not try to achieve a masculinized musculature. For example, Abbye “Pudgy” Stockton (1917-2006), known as the “Barbell of Santa Monica Beach,” was one of the first popular and well-known female bodybuilders in the 1930s and 1940s, weighed only 115 pounds, and was 5 feet 2 inches tall.¹ Although by today’s standards she was not lifting a tremendous amount of weight, it was still more than the general public was used to seeing. At the time it was inconceivable that a woman would be lifting weights with men at all.

The 1980s witnessed the first glimmer of a significant societal change of the feminine body type from slender to muscular as a niche area of bodybuilding competition gradually

¹ Eric Chaline, *The Temple of Perfection: A History of the Gym* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2015), 187.

trickled into mass media. This change continued as the 1990s brought a growing awareness to many eating disorder problems, including anorexia. Simultaneously, the late 1990s was also the peak of the female bodybuilding competition industry.² Following this peak in the industry, there was initially a drop in enrollment in competitions in the 2000s. However, instead of entering bodybuilding competitions as a once-in-awhile event, females, after 2010, began to adopt a mass weight training routine as everyday lifestyle.

In the 1980s and 1990s, bodybuilding began to be implemented into popular culture and were framed in a way that was advertised as a benefit to the greater good. During the late 1970s and 1980s Canada, Great Britain and the United States promoted better health and asked for its citizens to value exercise.³ This type of focus on healthy eating and fitness continued into the twenty-first century; however, the advertising for better health is remarkably noticeable in the 1990s, when smoking becomes taboo, when fast food begins to be known more for convenience rather than nutrition, and when Arnold Schwarzenegger was appointed to lead the fitness movement in the White House in 1990. Jennifer Maguire states that publications, which include the original Boston Women's Health Book Collective, *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (1973), promoted the idea of physical empowerment and general women's liberation on the basis of physical exercise being the main root to achieve this strength.⁴ The emphasis of strength was rooted in the feminist movement that started in the late 1960s and told women to take control of their own bodies and look at their own bodies. By the 1970s aerobics and using light weights were promoted as ways to gain strength. Therefore, the advocacy of building muscle and lifting

² Alan M Klein, *Little Big Men: Bodybuilding Subculture and Gender Construction* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 160-170.

³ Jennifer Smith Maguire, "Exercising Control: Empowerment and the Fitness Discourse," in *Sport, Rhetoric and Gender*. Ed. By Linda Fuller, (New York, NY. Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 122.

⁴ *Ibid.*

weights was introduced into the fitness regimen of women to overcome both personal and gender fragility. This lens of health promoted weight training and bodybuilding and was promoted by charismatic entrepreneur and bodybuilder Arnold Schwarzenegger and bodybuilder Joe Weider.⁵ 1984 witnessed expansion of leadership roles to females by the U.S. military and the successful yet notorious 1984 Olympics. As women became physically stronger the ideal female body type represented in mass media began to shift away from the Twiggy and Disco eras. The 1980s would be known as the “golden era of female bodybuilding.”⁶

To analyze the shifts in the body ideals revolving around the bodybuilding subculture, the following chapters focus on three specific mass media case studies. The first study is a comparison of the subcultural films *Pumping Iron* (1977) and *Pumping Iron II* (1985), which document male and female bodybuilding respectively. The second case studies are covers of *Cosmopolitan Magazine*. *Cosmopolitan Magazine* was chosen due to its high circulation, leading readership and its lengthy history (est. 1886). In 2017 it remains the top women’s magazine in the United States, accumulating over 50,000,000 readers annually.⁷ As Ellen McCracken states: “Hearst corporation [publisher of *Cosmopolitan Magazine*] was the country’s ninth largest media company and made an estimated \$1.3 billion in media revenues in 1982.”⁸ In my third case study I examine pop music icon Madonna. In the late 1980s Madonna was a rising star and repeatedly won awards for her music, and was an large influence on her younger fan base.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁶ Tanya Bunsell, *Strong and Hard Women: An Ethnography of Female Bodybuilding* (London: Routledge, 2014).

⁷ “Fun Fearless Female,” Cosmopolitan Media Kit. Accessed November 9, 2017. http://www.cosmomediamkit.com/r5/showkiosk.asp?listing_id=4785154&category_code=demo&category_id=77109

⁸ Ellen McCracken, *Decoding Women’s Magazines: From Mademoiselle to Ms.* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), 82.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Through my research, I found that most literature or theory interprets female bodybuilding very negatively. While I acknowledge the negative aspects of subcultural bodybuilding ideals for women, I also honor the dedication and hard work that is put into sculpting the body, such as dieting, routinely training, and sleep routines, as well as the independence that comes along with strength. That being stated, it should be noted that I heavily rely on literature written by contemporary scholars working within the category of Visual and Critical Studies as well as a few from the area of Gender Studies. These studies discuss how those who deter from normal popular culture “male” and “female” roles have to perform gender for other to receive acceptance. Without the element of performing the mainstream gender roles, lack of understanding or acceptance by people following societal norms will reject “gender outlaws.”⁹

Many contemporary women have written on the topic of female bodybuilding that focus on theorists such as Alan Klein and Susan Bordo. One book in particular has been extremely helpful for me make to connections between Foucauldian thought and female bodybuilding. *Building Bodies* (2015),¹⁰ edited by Pamela Moore, includes essays by Laurie Schulze (“On the Muscle”),¹¹ Pamela Moore (“Feminist Bodybuilding, Sex, and the Interruption of Investigative Knowledge”),¹² Leslie Heywood (“Masculinity Vanishing: Bodybuilding and Contemporary Culture”),¹³ and Anne Bolin (“Flex Appeal, Food, and Fat: Competitive Bodybuilding, Gender

⁹ A term coined by Kate Bornstein.

¹⁰ Pamela Moore, “Feminist Bodybuilding, Sex and the Interruption of Investigative Knowledge,” in *Building Bodies*, ed. By Moore (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 74-86.

¹¹ Laurie Schulze, “On the Muscle,” in *Building Bodies*, ed. By Pamela Moore (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 9-30.

¹² Moore, “Feminist Bodybuilding, Sex and the Interruption of Investigative Knowledge.”

¹³ Leslie Heywood, “Masculinity Vanishing: Bodybuilding and Contemporary Culture,” in *Building Bodies* Ed. by Pamela Moore (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 165-183.

and the Diet”).¹⁴ All of these essays provide different themes yet display positive and negative viewpoints of the bodybuilding culture as it relates to female bodies.

Sandra Bartky, has written many books within the fields of feminism and phenomenology. Two examples that I have found very helpful are *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance*,¹⁵ and *Femininity and domination studies in the phenomenology of oppression*.¹⁶ These two writings link theories from Foucault, Klein and Bordo with the topic of female bodybuilding. In her book, *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance*, Bartky, expands on gender construction through bodybuilding as she points out the threat that strong women have on the definition of masculinity.¹⁷ Although there are societal misgivings about the hyper-masculine aesthetic of female bodybuilding—because women are discouraged from becoming too strong—most women get involved with strength training or bodybuilding because of the independence and societal liberation from gender norms that come along with strength.¹⁸

Two other literary scholars that I reference are: Lianne McTavish,¹⁹ professor of the History of Art, Design, and Visual Culture at the University of Alberta, and Tanya Bunsell,²⁰ PhD recipient and Lecturer in Sport Sociology at St. Mary’s University College in Twickenham (U.K). Both McTavish and Bunsell include their own personal experiences within the culture of

¹⁴ Anne Bolin, “Flex Appeal, Food and Fat: Competitive Bodybuilding, Gender, and Diet,” in *Building Bodies*, Ed. by Pamela Moore, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 184-208.

¹⁵ Sandra Lee Bartky, “Foucault, Femininity and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power,” *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance*, (Northeastern University Press, 1988), 25-45.

¹⁶ Sandra Lee Bartky, *Femininity and Domination Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*, (New York: Routledge, 1990).

¹⁷ Sandra Bartky, “Foucault, Femininity and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power” in *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance*, (Northeastern University Press, 1988), 35-6.

¹⁸ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay About Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York, Columbia University Press: 1982), 70.

¹⁹ Lianne McTavish, *Feminist Figure Girl: Look Hot While You Fight the Patriarchy* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2015).

²⁰ Tanya Bunsell, *Strong and Hard Women: An Ethnography of Female Bodybuilding*, (London: Routledge, 2014).

bodybuilding and give insight on its positivity that can be implemented within society. They also reference Bordo, Foucault, and Klein.

Another literary scholar I have found helpful for my research is Eric Chaline, *The Temple of Perfection: A History of the Gym*,²¹ which considers the bodybuilding history from the Greeks to the contemporary period. Chaline includes a focus on female bodybuilding within this book that helps me link some theoretical thought about bodybuilding along with the history of when women began to body build. *The Temple of Perfection* is helpful in filling in the blanks of the most influential people within the category of female bodybuilding. Chaline also overviews the films *Pumping Iron* and *Pumping Iron II* with his notes about the differences as well as the gender performativity that he links to Butler.

I use Foucauldian discourse theory to analyze the case studies in my thesis. Theorists and scholars that I have found to be most helpful reference Michel Foucault, and their secondary interpretations of Foucauldian ideas apply to my contemporary study. Michel Foucault focuses on power relationships in society and how they are expressed through languages and practices in his book *History of Sexuality*. His analysis focuses on the mediums used and how they are presented to the public. Feminist rhetoric in particular uses Foucault's theories on power relations and the oppression of women in Western culture. Since I analyze the popular culture vehicles *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, the films *Pumping Iron I & II*, and the music icon Madonna, the Foucauldian methodology fits well within my analysis of the images, because Foucauldian discourse analysis allows for case studies to compare and contrast what is occurring in social contexts across multiple mediums.

²¹ Chaline, *The Temple of Perfection: A History of the Gym*.

Another theoretical approach that I use focuses on the category of subculture and its influence on broader, mainstream culture and utilizes the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Alan Klein. The groundwork for examining a subculture and its influence on society was pioneered by Pierre Bourdieu. In “Sport and Society,” Bourdieu focuses on socio-economic status and the ability to give people the opportunity to move up in the hierarchy of economic status based on accessibility. Bourdieu links access to class, race, and gender. Bourdieu’s discussion of gender brings up power relations that explain how woman can have less access to specific success based on the definition of woman, which is as he states: “a woman is, what a man is not.”²² Bourdieu also states that subcultures have their own cultural, political, sexual norms and values.²³ Over time, these norms and values, according to Bourdieu, have the opportunity to be adopted by “dominant” or mainstream culture. Bourdieu explains that subcultures can be adopted into more popular culture due to socio-economical norms, depending on who is presenting these subcultural norms to the popular (dominant) culture.²⁴ In relation to Bourdieu, Klein uses this exact idea of the implementation of bodybuilding into dominant culture in his research. Klein is the first theorist to analyze and dissect the subculture of male bodybuilding. In his book *Little Big Men*, published in 1993, Klein discusses gender construction through the subculture of bodybuilding within the 1980s.²⁵ Klein focuses only on male bodybuilding with some minor acknowledgements of the female bodybuilding culture in his writings a later date. However, all of my sources reference his ideas as creating the groundwork for the study of female

²² Faye Linda Wachs, “‘Throw Like a Girl’ Doesn’t Mean What it Used to: Research on Gender and Power,” in *Sport, Rhetoric and Gender*, ed. by Linda Fuller (New York, NY, Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 43-52.

²³ Pierre Bourdieu, “Sport and Social Class,” *Social Science Information* 17, no. 6 (1978), 835-38.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 839.

²⁵ Klein, *Little Big Men*.

bodybuilding culture, but so far no one has written a theory of female bodybuilding. Klein links bodybuilding in males to hyper masculinity due to insecurity.

The analysis I use focuses on gender performativity and the unattainable body as explored by Susan Bordo and Judith Butler. Susan Bordo discusses the new phenomenon of women that has been introduced in the twenty-first century in her book *Unbearable Weight*.²⁶ Although the muscular woman may seem like a new aesthetic, it was introduced well before the twenty-first century as this study will show. Bordo claims that female bodybuilders offer a male-like “phallic” confidence, but they combine it with an allure of the female.²⁷ Many scholars, including Bordo, refer to the bodybuilding culture as a link to narcissism because of the perpetual cycle of improving the body.²⁸ Bordo understands this aspect of narcissism, but also recognizes the hard work and dedication that bodybuilding presents. However, she focuses her analysis on the unattainability of this ideal body type for most women and the destruction that may be caused for women who attempted to achieve it.²⁹

Judith Butler, whose scholarship in *Performing Gender* deepens the study of the performativity of female bodybuilding competition, is a theoretical framework that is taken into account in my study. According to Judith Butler, insecurity is the motive for women to participate in bodybuilding. Butler’s focus on gender performativity and construction has been used extensively in this thesis for analyzing images of female bodybuilding. Bodybuilding competitions are linked to the presentation of a strong woman in complete feminine attire, which

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 171.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 171.

²⁸ Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2013).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 172.

can be considered an example of the “heighted experience of the femininity as masquerade.”³⁰

To provide links to mass media, I use feminist visual rhetoric theory as developed by Donnalyn Pompper in *Rhetoric of Femininity*. Pompper explores how popular culture itself shapes women’s identities and hobbies based on what they are constantly seeing and hearing.³¹ Mass media is powerful in the way it functions with repetitive imagery according to Donnalyn Pompper.³² The repetitive nature of mass media is able to expose society to the same ideas in multiple ways. As Pompper explains, if humans read a text over and over they would begin to understand or at least subconsciously become familiar with an idea. Just as in a text, the visual image works in the same way, yet the definition of what is represented in the image can shift as the visual form changes throughout time.³³

According to Ellen McCracken, a literature theorist, the repetitive occurrence of similar images will cause adaptation of new trends within individuals and this will influence society as a whole to shift gradually. The idea of repetitive imagery is how advertisers utilize mass media.³⁴ Imagery that initially shocks consumers will eventually become normalized overtime due to desensitization. McCracken states that the desensitization of imagery causes individuals within society to begin to view these once shocking or abnormal images as normal or even boring, thus changing the overall attitude of society gradually.³⁵ The idea of the repetitive readings of an image is linked to Bourdieu and how the unconscious adapts new ideas and norms and is similar

³⁰ As cited in Lianne McTavish, *Feminist Figure Girl: Look Hot While You Fight the Patriarchy* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2015), 33.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, 79-88.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Ellen McCracken, *Decoding Women’s magazines: from Mademoiselle to Ms.* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), 40-82.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

to a mental habit. A mental habit is also called “cultural unconsciousness” or “Habitus,”³⁶ terms coined by Bourdieu to explain changes in society that occur without recognition by individuals. This theoretical framework helps me analyze the positioning of images within mass media and how it can impact society.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

My thesis is organized in order to analyze in depth three specific case studies I have selected. I selected both *Pumping Iron* and *Pumping Iron II: The Women* to analyze because they were both a breakthrough for the subculture of bodybuilding that began to see mass media coverage. I chose *Cosmopolitan* Magazine to analyze because of its assimilation of the bodybuilding cover in its July Issue in 1988, as well as *Cosmopolitan* Magazine being one of the largest literature readerships for women during the 1980s. Madonna was analyzed as another case study because during the 1980s she was on the rise as a celebrity and was seen everywhere within mass media and popular culture.

In Chapter Two I compare the films produced by George Butler and Robert Flore, *Pumping Iron* and *Pumping Iron II: The Women*, created in 1977 and 1985 respectively. The films *Pumping Iron* and *Pumping Iron II* were created as ways to market the bodybuilding subculture and were the first subcultural films to gain recognition by mass media. Although the films depend on gender roles, they also promoted bodybuilding in a way that was attractive to, and digestible by, ordinary Americans.

Pumping Iron starred Arnold Schwarzenegger and other professional bodybuilders. The film follows Schwarzenegger around as he prepares to compete in Mr. Olympia, a male

³⁶ David Swartz, *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 100.

bodybuilding competition (fig. 1). As Klein describes it, the film pairs the hyper masculinity of Schwarzenegger and other men with hyper femininity of the women. The women featured in this early film are not usually given names or even minor roles; but exist as accessories for the men.³⁷ The women in *Pumping Iron* portray the ideal body image of the time, which was typically shown as petite and thin.

Pumping Iron II: The Women was created by the same producers and was released in 1985. *Pumping Iron II: The Women* focuses on Rachel McLish and Bev Francis as they prepare for Ms. Olympia in 1984 (fig. 2). Bodybuilding competitions that were open to females prior to this film, still heavily depended on the traditional notions of femininity. In other words, the competitions resembled masculinized beauty pageants. Although women in competitive bodybuilding were much more muscular than the average Western female, they still had to dress like a bikini model.³⁸

There are many differences between the two films, but George Butler and Robert Flore's main objective was to advertise this new subculture, that now accepted women to compete in its shows. The second film is highly sexualized, but it made the subculture more attractive through traditional ideas of beauty and "sexy" attributes. *Pumping Iron II: The Women* presents a contradiction: female bodybuilders have a size and muscle mass that challenge dominant gender norms, but the accessories in the competitive show brings back a sense of femininity that seems rooted in the past.³⁹ I examine the film's use of visual rhetoric in defining the category of "woman" and explain how the very definition of woman could affect popular culture and expectations placed upon women

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

³⁹ Rose Weitz and Shari Dworkin, *The Politics of Women's Bodies: Sexuality, Appearance, and Behavior* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Chapter Three analyzes a popular culture medium, *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, and its adaption of the strong female body. A comparison of the front covers of *Cosmopolitan Magazine* indicate a significant change in the visual representation of the ideal female body that occurred between 1984 and 1988. *Cosmopolitan Magazine* situates their model in outfits or in positions that appear to be related to the subculture of bodybuilders. These poses and particular articles of clothing are further exaggerated by lighting, stance, editing and even skin complexion, which can be directly compared to magazines suggest the bodybuilding subculture. Although the bodybuilding subculture for females was not accepted initially by popular culture, through these subtle representations in popular culture vehicles (mass media), the sport becomes accepted slowly and adapted into a more mainstream female culture.

I analyze the body language and fashion that is displayed on the cover of the 1984 *Cosmopolitan* issue (fig. 3) and will compare and contrast the differences between this cover and the 1988 issue (fig. 4). I will also relate these images to the niche magazine, *Female Bodybuilding and Weight Training* (fig. 5), which was released a year prior to the 1988 *Cosmopolitan Magazine* cover. It is important to recognize these niche bodybuilding magazines, as they pioneered this new body ideal, which in turn was adopted into popular culture as a norm. The comparison among these images include an examination of the stance, the bikini style, the material of the outfits, and residual qualities portraying femininity (jewelry, long hair, make up, etc.).

In Chapter Four I analyze Madonna and her body image changes that occurred specifically from 1986 to 1989. In *Unbearable Weight* Bordo discusses Madonna, the changes in her persona throughout the 1980s and their impact on her fans. She explains the impact an icon or celebrity has on the next generation, and the future attitudes created by such influences. Bordo

states, “Her [Madonna’s] wannabes are following suit [...] studies suggest that as many as 80 percent of nine-year-old suburban girls are making rigorous dieting and exercise the organizing [discipline] of their lives.”⁴⁰ Madonna’s body composition shifts from a small, petite and frail girl in the late 19870s, to a strong, sexual yet more defined muscular body in the 1990s. In the years 1989 to 1990, her body composition (and her persona on stage) changes from a thin waif-like performer to a performer who owns her sexuality and literally flexes her muscles on stage for her fans to see. As her fans are exposed to this new, active and strong female, they too are influenced to adopt this new body image and thus change cultural norms.

This analysis and research are important because there is a lack of theory and study focused on female bodybuilding culture. Such a study is essential to understanding when the buff woman became an ideal model for American females within popular culture of the 1980s. There is a dramatic shift in the 1990s in what is portrayed as the ideal female body. Growing up in these decades, I have witnessed the thin, fragile body represented in *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, and magazines like *Teen Vogue* or *Seventeen* shift to a much more athletic, muscular and strong body represented in these same magazines, particularly in the fitness sections of the magazines published in the twenty-first century. My research, then, attempts to answer the question of when it really began to become popular for women to weight lift, gain abs and focus on macro dieting to achieve the strong, masculinized body of the “new super woman” that we see today on social media and on the cover of fitness magazines.

⁴⁰ Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*, 270.

CHAPTER TWO

PUMPING IRON I AND II

With the emancipation of women in the 20th century, there has been a shift in the ideal of feminine beauty. This is also represented in imagery, ads and other types of new media...⁴¹

– Eric Chaline

The 1980s would be known as the “golden era of female bodybuilding,” according to Tanya Bunsell.⁴² Alan Klein noted that in 1985 women’s participation within the subculture of competitive bodybuilding “had become widely recognized, and had brought about changed views of women who participated.”⁴³ The question, then, is how it gained so much attention in so little time, and how this recognition would affect women’s body image in subsequent years. In my analysis, the depiction of female bodybuilders in *Pumping Iron II: The Women* was a breakthrough moment.

Today, bodybuilding not only liberates and empowers the individual, but also helps facilitate cultural change. Although this change is not fast paced, there was a recognizable shift in the 1980s once female bodybuilding began to be covered in mass media and slowly adapted by women seeking this liberation. Two subcultural films, *Pumping Iron* (fig. 1) and *Pumping Iron II: The Women* (fig. 2), were released in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The bodybuilding subculture did not gain much attention prior to the release of *Pumping Iron*. Scholar Alan Klein

⁴¹ Eric Chaline, *The Temple of Perfection: A History of the Gym* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2015), 187.

⁴² Tanya Bunsell, *Strong and Hard Women: An Ethnography of Female Bodybuilding* (London: Routledge, 2014), 29.

⁴³ Alan M Klein, *Little Big Men: Bodybuilding Subculture and Gender Construction* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 139.

notes that after the “award winning film released in the 1970s, the subculture began to gain wider visibility.”⁴⁴ As these bodybuilding films came to the forefront of the media, the very question of the definition of femininity began to surface not only in respect to the two films but more broadly across mass media as well. Prior to the 1980s, muscular definition was not accepted as the body ideal in the United States, particularly in women. Muscular women were seen as repulsive rather than attractive, and after this decade the acceptance of the muscular female body gradually became normalized. Through an analysis of these two films, this chapter gives a detailed background of the subculture of bodybuilding itself as well as its later impact within mass media and the larger society that eventually leads to the question of “What is femininity?” Moreover, this study also examines how the definition of femininity begins to gradually shift through visual representations in the 1980s.

SUBCULTURE OF BODYBUILDING

The implementation into mainstream culture through subtle shifts in mass media is one way that bodybuilding and other subcultures can be adapted slowly into the larger society. Through this incorporation of subculture, there will be small characteristics that will be placed in mass media, or mainstream culture, while other aspects are left out and will remain only within the subculture until later on when the small numbers of introduced characteristics have been accepted by the mainstream culture. Subcultures have their own set of values, ideas and opinions and theorist Pierre Bourdieu explains that subcultures attempt to deviate away from the binary structure of the popular culture or dominant society by altering normal ideas and creating

⁴⁴ Alan M Klein, *Little Big Men: Bodybuilding Subculture and Gender Construction* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 18.

their own structures to follow.⁴⁵ For bodybuilders, this means adapting workout routines, diets and particular body paradigms. To attract younger generations to the subculture, a differentiator remains between popular culture and the subculture, however, often these differentiators⁴⁶ are “incorporated into common culture” over time.⁴⁷ The films *Pumping Iron* and *Pumping Iron II: The Women*, were the first films to be promoted in mass media, thus creating a breakthrough for the popularity of the subculture.

PUMPING IRON FILMS

The bodybuilding documentary, *Pumping Iron* (fig. 1), was produced by George Butler and Robert Flore in 1977 in Venice Beach, California. It was created to advertise the subculture of male bodybuilding and featured Arnold Schwarzenegger as he prepared for the Mr. Olympia competition in 1975. The film also includes bodybuilders Lou Ferrigno, Franco Columbu and Ken Waller as key characters. The film was one of the first of its kind to celebrate male bodybuilding and visually define the most “masculine” men. According to Alan Klein in *Little Big Men* *Pumping Iron* is considered one of the popular staples of bodybuilding.⁴⁸

Within the interviews in the film, Schwarzenegger talks about bodybuilding in a way that appeals to the typical person attempting to get fit in a Western culture. In an essay “From Subcultures to Common Culture,” authors Thomas Johansson, Jesper Andreasson and Christer Mattsson state, “Schwarzenegger’s impact on the culture [introduced] a post-classic aesthetic era, in which competitive bodybuilders could be compared with Greek art, which symbolizes

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Johansson, Andreasson and Mattsson, “From Subcultures to Common Culture: Bodybuilders, Skinheads, and the Normalization of the Marginal,” 3.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁸ Klein, *Little Big Men*, 16-19.

proportion, symmetry and order.”⁴⁹ During the film *Pumping Iron*, Schwarzenegger discusses the idea of bodybuilding as sculpting the body to the camera crew. He explains that if a bodybuilder needs more definition in his triceps, or another area on the body, he must go back and work out that specific area repetitively, as someone would with a sculptural piece.

Pumping Iron’s main characters have their own interviews and personal background narration of how they came to lift weights in their daily lives. All of their footage leads to the final moments on stage where they compete for the title both within the lightweight and heavyweight classes. Within the film, there are no sub-characters to the body builders, besides a few coaches and fathers of the competitors that have very brief lines.

The film shows no romantic attachments of the men with women and the women that are briefly featured in this film are unnamed and are also not given any spoken lines.⁵⁰ These women portray the ideal body image of the time, which was typically shown as petite and thin. These anonymous and model-like women were filmed in mostly swimsuits and were lifted as weights or objects by the male bodybuilders for photo-shoots. Thus, the film scenes include a comparison of ideals of hyper masculinity and hyper femininity. At the end of the film, the audience members (who are assumed to be competitors’ spouses, as the film shows one audience member’s face and then the competitor’s face) are shown cheering for their loved ones. The film does not actually state the relationship between the competitors and their family, but suggests the heterosexual relationships in the way that the film is recorded and edited together.

Following the release of *Pumping Iron* was the documentary film *Pumping Iron II: The Women* (fig. 2), also produced by George Butler and Robert Flore in 1985. *Pumping Iron II: The*

⁴⁹ Johansson, Andreasson and Mattsson, “From Subcultures to Common Culture,” 3.

⁵⁰ Christine Holmlund, *Visual Difference and Flex Appeal: The Body, Sex, Sexuality, and Race in the “Pumping Iron” Films* *Cinema Journal* 28, no. 4 (1989): 38-51.

Women focuses on female bodybuilders, Rachel McLish and Bev Francis (fig. 2), as they prepare for competition in Ms. Olympia, 1984. George Butler and Robert Flore's main objective was to advertise this new subculture that had recently begun to accept women to participate in its competitions.

Pumping Iron II: The Women also focused on participants before a competition. The film documents lifestyles, eating habits, romance and specific routines that a female competitor must adapt to show on stage. Some of these routines include tanning, weightlifting, posing techniques, wearing faux nails, styling their hair and wearing a lot of make-up to present themselves on stage. Bodybuilding competitions for females still heavily depended on the stereotype of female. In other words, the competitions resembled masculinized beauty pageants. Although women in competitive bodybuilding were much more muscular than the average Western female, they still had to dress like a bikini model, and present themselves in the traditional role of female to not pose a threat to societal acceptance.⁵¹

During the time of this film, bodybuilding categories had not been placed between competitors, meaning there were not different levels of competitions for different body types, as there are now in the twenty-first century.⁵² Instead of separating classes ("bikini" category which includes the least muscular bodies, "figure" category includes toned bodies, "physique" category includes muscular bodies, and "bodybuilder" category includes the most muscle mass and muscular bodies), all of the women in the film were in the same league. This meant that Bev Francis,⁵³ who at the time was a world champion powerlifter, could compete against Rachel McLish, who arguably had a body type was described as "strong bone," or a very thin body with

⁵¹ Bunsell, *Strong and Hard Women*, 29.

⁵² IFBB.COM, "Our Disciplines." International Foundation of Bodybuilding, 2018, Accessed April 16, 2018. <https://www.ifbb.com/our-disciplines/>.

⁵³ Figure 2 demonstrates Bev Francis (left) in comparison to Rachel McLish (right).

a little bit of muscle. There was a significant difference between these two women (fig. 2), as Bev Francis (left) portrayed a much stronger body type than Rachel McLish (right). Bev Francis was a world champion powerlifter that had no prior bodybuilding experience. Powerlifting is an actual competition of lifting weight and not just posing. This means that Bev Francis did not just lift weights to produce an aesthetic but lifted weights to engage in competitions that were judged on who could lift the most weight. Therefore, the fact that Bev was allowed to compete next to someone with “stringy” muscles, like McLish, who was much smaller and less strong than she was, was unbalanced and unfair. The finalists in the film show an unjust result due to the fact that a strong woman with a masculine body was allowed to compete with and lose to a thinner body physique. This result displayed a preference for a more feminine woman body type even in bodybuilding competitions. This type of controversy in bodybuilding competitions is not an issue among the male leagues, as those who present the strongest male bodies win or place above those with less muscular definition.

The objective of *Pumping Iron II: The Women* was presumably to empower women, and as many weightlifters and bodybuilders suggest in the film, the act of bodybuilding empowers an individual and helps facilitate personal change due to confidence.⁵⁴ The goal of the producers was to advertise the subculture of bodybuilding and to place it in a more mainstream context; in other words, to get dominant culture involved in the lifestyle. Although the film attempts to promote the female bodybuilding subculture, it undercuts the idea of the masculine female body by displaying thinner and less strong female bodies in the top three finalists. Even the *New York Times* reviewed this film and its release in 1985; the article discussed the lack of sympathy exhibited by the film itself and discusses how George Butler amplified the display of

⁵⁴ Bunsell, *Strong and Hard Women*.

“formidably freakish,” female bodies.⁵⁵ Butler (producer) did nothing to take away from this particular opinion of the freak body, besides including specific life events of the contestants. For example, one contestant was proposed to in a hotel room and continuously throughout the film women were shown doing their make-up or hair before competition.

Pumping Iron II: The Women resulted in backlash because among bodybuilders Carla Dunlap was awarded first place, Rachel McLish (fig. 2) received third place and Bev Francis placed eighth or almost last. Australian competitor, Francis, was the world’s strongest female powerlifter at the time and entered the show knowing that her physique was stronger than the majority of the women entering the competition. Not only was she aware of this fact, but the judges and competitors were aware as well. Francis had a goal to push past the normalized “bone with muscle” look and “sculpted” her body, in the words of Arnold Schwarzenegger. However, in doing this, she received almost last place because of the lack of acceptance of her muscular body type for a woman in the competition. In reviewing this film, McTavish states that “the stronger women [became] the alternative, and competitions insisted on the conventional forms of feminine appearance and behavior. Yet even girls in the figure category might have been considered too muscular and thus potentially threatening to the gendered status quo.”⁵⁶

Therefore, Bev Francis challenged the status quo as well as many of the women participating in the competition, which resulted in an unfair judged competition.

Pumping Iron II: The Women is remarkably different from *Pumping Iron* in many ways; one major example is that *Pumping Iron II: The Women* includes sub characters in the film that did not exist in the film featuring only male bodybuilders. Each of the women featured in this

⁵⁵ Janet Maslin, “Film: Pumping Iron II: The Women.” (New York, *New York Times*, 1985).
<http://www.nytimes.com/1985/05/03/movies/film-pumping-iron-ii-the-women.html>

⁵⁶ Lianne McTavish, *Feminist Figure Girl: Look Hot While You Fight the Patriarchy* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2015), 6.

second film were portrayed as having boyfriends, were depicted as wanting to be engaged, or were constantly commenting in the film that they were not lesbians.⁵⁷ These heterosexual male sub characters kept the women in line with the conventional status quo that American women were comfortable with, and most importantly, that would not intimidate men. In other words, the heterosexual male sub characters legitimize the strong and muscular females, and they remind the viewers of the film that the women are still confined to the binary role of female. This idea is very much connected to the male dominated fitness industry at the time.

Although there were aspects that questioned the hyper muscular female body, the film still showcased stronger female bodies as sexy, and normalized, rather than grotesque and masculine. *Pumping Iron II: The Women* was a breakthrough for women wanting to pursue strength and the aesthetic of muscular bodies, because “being strong [was] acceptable, but being hyper-muscled [was] not.”⁵⁸ Since the mass media includes the promotion of weight training but creates limitations of that muscle growth, this brings about the question, “how [do] social norms inhibit women’s individual and social empowerment?”⁵⁹ Although in the beginning of the 1980s this body was not fully accepted, by the end of the decade it had become somewhat normalized for women to be toned rather than solely having a thin physique.

The time of the release of *Pumping Iron II: The Women* was during a period when the expectations for women’s bodies were beginning to change. The 1980s included the idea that “to be thin was not enough, the flesh must not ‘wobble,’”⁶⁰ as states Susan Bordo about the ideal body for women. In this instance, Bordo means that to be thin and have loose skin is not enough.

⁵⁷ Holmlund, *Visual Difference and Flex Appeal*.

⁵⁸ Maguire, “Exercising Control: Empowerment and the Fitness Discourse,” 124.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁶⁰ Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2013), 191.

As the body ideal changed for women, skin must be tight, or women must lift small weights to make sure that skin does not hang loose in any area. However, women could not be too muscular, because then the idea of femininity was not yet completely altered. Therefore, within the film of *Pumping Iron II: The Women*, there had to be ways to remind the typical American female, that these women are, in fact, women with thin bodies that are toned but not too strong, had male partners, and pursue competition in stereotypical female attributes like faux nails, hairstyles and make-up.

DEFINING WOMAN

The breaking of the binary definition of “woman,” was the importance of this film. Margaret Sallee discusses the very definition of masculinity and femininity, writing that the very difference was created based on the appearance and characteristics of the body.⁶¹ Sallee also states that masculinity is typically defined in opposition to femininity, she states, “masculinity is defined more by what one is, rather than who one is.”⁶² The very definition of masculinity relies on what a female is not; therefore if the definition of “female” challenges the definition of male and masculinity, masculinity will have to become hyper-masculinity to overcompensate. Klein states that there is no history to women’s bodybuilding, “reflecting the cultural stereotype of women as non-muscular,”⁶³ therefore, prior to this movement of women becoming involved with the bodybuilding culture, the definition of male was never threatened, because the definition was never challenged.

⁶¹ Margaret Sallee, “Performing Masculinity: Considering Gender in Doctoral Student Socialization,” *Journal of Higher Education*, Vol. 82, 2, (2011): 189.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 190.

⁶³ Klein, *Little Big Men*, 191.

The very definition of woman or construct of the feminine as the “other” of the male, creates linguistic and gender constraints according to Faye Linda Wachs. She writes, “Given the history of gendered power relations, definitions of what constitutes masculinity tend to be positive attributes, while definitions of “what is woman” are often negative attributes (crying, weakness, etc.).”⁶⁴ In other words, a woman is what a man is not. By this definition, if a man is strong, defined and powerful, a woman is undefined and powerless or weak. If a woman breaks this definition, then it is a threat to the definition of masculinity. Continuously over the course of the *Pumping Iron II: The Women*, “woman” is defined in conversations to remind the viewers what a “woman” is, and what it is not. Through this definition, it excludes several body types, such as those bodies that are built, or even larger than a size five. Peggy Bornstein defined the term “gender outlaw” as “a figure who is stigmatized not because she has broken formal laws, but because she has disregarded so flagrantly dominant understandings of what is aesthetically, kinesthetically and phenomenologically acceptable within the gendered order of social interaction.”⁶⁵ Even though female bodybuilding is to bring enlightenment to the binary role of woman, it is still being judged and defined by males within and outside of the industry.

When an individual does not match the expected alignment of body, desire and practice, that person is threatened with “gender terrorism.”⁶⁶ Bornstein defines this as “ideological, economical, and physical disciplinary mechanisms that go into action against those who trouble categories held by others to be central to identity.”⁶⁷ Therefore if the dominant culture is not

⁶⁴ Faye Linda Wachs, “Throw Like a Girl Doesn’t Mean What it Used to: Research on Gender Language and Power.” *Sport, Rhetoric and Gender*. Ed. Linda Fuller (New York, NY. Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 44.

⁶⁵ Quoting Bornstein, Chris Shilling and Tanya Bunsell, “The Female Bodybuilder as Gender Outlaw,” *Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise* 1, no. 3. (2015): 71-85.

⁶⁶ John Sloop, “Critical Rhetoric, Public Argument, and Gender Trouble,” *Disciplining Gender* (Boston, MA. University of Massachusetts Press, 2004). 121.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 121.

comfortable with this “Gender Outlaw,” than dominant society will rely on the performing aspects of gender to understand or judge the individual.⁶⁸

Throughout *Pumping Iron II: The Women* the word “woman” or “femininity” is explicitly defined. This occurs multiple times between judges, competitors and all involved in the competition within the film as explained below. The first instance occurs within a scene that takes place in a hot tub with the female competitors before Bev Francis arrives in the United States. Not only is this scene highly sexualized—as it shows female body parts up close (stomachs, legs, profile butt cheeks), covered in sweat and dripping with water—but throughout this scene the competitors are questioning how the judges will score the competition. The competitors were aware of Bev Francis’s arrival for the competition, and they understood that her body type was much more muscular than their own. The dialogue between the competitors centered around how women should look like women and how the judges needed to keep the difference of male and female in mind. One female competitor refutes this idea by saying that this competition is based on bodybuilding and not “model” building. After the discussion, the camera zooms in and out focusing on the women’s bodies, isolating specific parts of their body to solidify visually what defines a woman in biological sense.

The second instance of defining “woman” in the film is a meeting between the judges alone before the competition. The judges read passages from the International Federation of Bodybuilding and Fitness (IFBB) rule book, which quite literally defines “woman” and who is eligible to win or place within the competitive competitions. This definition and meeting is called because of Bev Francis’s participation in the competition. Again, there is a disagreement as one judge states that there should not be a cap on muscular bodies, specifically if they are

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 121.

judging based on bodybuilding and muscle presentation. This judge also states that he knows everyone is aware of Francis and her body type, and he believes that if she shows and she has worked the hardest at creating muscle mass, she should be rewarded. However, this idea is rejected, because the IFBB states that the winner needs to be “feminine” and has to be in between “athletic and feminine.”⁶⁹ Tanya Bunsell, co-editor of *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism*, comments on the film and its definition of the sexes, “women are women, men are men, and thank God for that difference,” that was stated to the cameraman by chairmen of IFBB, Ben Weider.⁷⁰

The third instance, but not the last instance in the film of this definition, is a recorded conversation between Rachel McLish and her personal trainer. McLish is asked what her goal is for her body and aesthetic. She references bodies like Wonder Woman (1975) and other icons of the time, and therefore references a thin body with some toned definition, but not very much. McLish and her trainer discuss Bev Francis and the boundaries that Francis is pushing with her defined muscular body. In a prescient remark, McLish’s trainer actually states that he believes society is not ready for this type of pioneer in the industry; therefore, he predicts Bev will not win the competition.

Pumping Iron II: The Women displayed the societal resistance to change the definition of “woman,” even in a setting (bodybuilding competition) that the change should be welcomed with ease. Tanya Bunsell links Bev Francis’s loss in the competition to the idea that the “greater society wasn’t ready to see this strong of woman just yet, which was shown in *Pumping Iron II*, which was supposed to promote female bodybuilding, but instead still adheres to traditional

⁶⁹ *Pumping Iron II: The Women*, directed by George Butler and Robert Flore (White Mountain Films, 1985), accessed December 23, 2017, 1985.

⁷⁰ Bunsell, *Strong and Hard Women*, 30.

definitions of ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity.’”⁷¹ This same type of negative reaction to the muscular female would also be seen in popular culture at the time, which is why the adaption of the paradigm of the strong woman as the norm takes decades after the introduction of this female body type in the 1980s.

At the end of *Pumping Iron II: The Women* a female judge says to the camera that if Francis were to win the competition, “it would be a disaster.”⁷² The judge’s logic behind this was that Francis did not represent the majority of women competing for Ms. Olympia, and that she also did not represent what the majority of women in America wanted to look like. Although Bev Francis pushed the boundaries while knowing that she was challenging the norm, the social construct of “woman” at the time still restricted her from placing within the top three finalists, even though everyone was aware that she was the strongest female body that competed.

The recurring definition of “woman” In *Pumping Iron II: The Women* puts Francis in her own category within the film. Although the judges and competitors do not label her a “man,” they do give her other terms. Women who demonstrate too much strength and ability have been labeled with terms such as “mannish,” which are used to discourage their sport participation and also leads to the stigma of lesbianism, as Faye Wachs points out.⁷³ The film focuses on Francis being too muscular or resembling men, which in turn would shame women viewers from becoming too muscular as well. Other writers have written on the similar idea of women becoming too muscular and being attributed to being lesbian. Wachs writes, “Leslie Heywood (1998) reported that when she demonstrated her lifting prowess she went from Leslie to Lester -

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁷² *Pumping Iron II: The Women*, directed by George Butler and Robert Flore (White Mountain Films, 1985), accessed December 23, 2017, 1985.

⁷³ Wachs, “Throw Like a Girl Doesn’t Mean What it Used to,” 45.

which she and her lifting partners viewed as a compliment.”⁷⁴ Similarly, Gloria Steinem (1992) wrote that “all patriarchal cultures idealize, sexualize and generally prefer weak women,”⁷⁵ which is a large reason why *Pumping Iron II: The Women* defines, redefines and glorifies the thin, toned, but not hyper muscular female body.

The film’s message has greater reach for women’s sports in general. Feminist rhetoric scholars Jeffrey O Segrae, Katherine L. McDowell and James G King III state that “by concentrating on looks and sex appeal rather than athletic performance, women are not only symbolically denied athleticism, but they are also forced to conform to standard, stereotypical and ultimately constraining ideals of femininity.”⁷⁶ Within this instance, language and definition becomes as important as the visual. The focus on men’s sports becomes the standard, and male athleticism dominates and defines performance; this in turn creates a definition of woman that is weakened and controlled by the definition of masculinity itself.⁷⁷

According to Butler, those that do not fall into the conventional definitions of female and male are punished, because they are failing to do their gender right.⁷⁸ This punishment is not a physical sense of punishment, but emotionally rejected, or in Francis’ case, loss of competition due to her “overly-masculine” framework. If gender cannot be seen in a conventional form, then the person must act or compensate in order to conform to gender norms. As Pompper explains, “Women perform, display and emphasize their gender through femininity, with some putting on

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 45

⁷⁵ Jeffrey O Segrae, Katherine L McDowell, James G King III, “Language, Gender & Sport: A Review of the Research Literature.” *Sport, Rhetoric and Gender*, ed. By Linda Fuller, (New York, NY. Palgrave MacMillan, 2006). 33.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁷⁸ Butler, *Undoing Gender*.

a spectacle or a masquerade.”⁷⁹ Butler states that gender is not what we are, but what we do.⁸⁰

Francis does not identify as a male, but the judges saw her as more muscular and “manly.” To be considered within the top three finalists of the competition, Francis understands she has to play up her role in the confines of femininity. Butler states “to be a woman is to have *become* a woman, to compel the body to conform to a historical idea of ‘woman,’ to induce the body to become a cultural sign.”⁸¹ Francis was muscular and did not conform to the ideal typical feminine (thin) body at the time. She had to present herself in a way that was “woman,” which included styling hair, wearing make-up and presenting herself onstage in a metallic bikini.

In *Gender Trouble*,⁸² Judith Butler discusses how women are the Phallus as they are the subject or the postures of the masculine subject. However, to be this the Phallus, women must be what men are not and “must establish the essential function of men.”⁸³ Therefore, if a woman is too masculine, and does not show herself as the feminine that holds this Phallus-like quality, she is not possessing this “being for” subject and threatens the entire construction of the binary roles of gender.⁸⁴ The feminine woman is closer to Phallus and fetish because the female body is unfamiliar to males as their own. Although the female body has had a history of being fetishized due to its difference from masculine male bodies, there are woman who view this body type as controlled and oppressive thus supporting a patriarchal system. The construction of this gender

⁷⁹ Segrae, McDowell, King, “Language, Gender & Sport,” 10.

⁸⁰ Quoting Butler, John Sloop. “Critical Rhetoric, Public Argument, and Gender Trouble,” *Disciplining Gender*, (Boston, MA. University of Massachusetts Press, 2004). 6.

⁸¹ Judith Butler, “The Performative Acts and Gender Construction: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminism Theory,” *Theatre Journal*, 40, no. 4. (1988): 522.

⁸² Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (New York, Routledge Classics, 1990).

⁸³ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 61.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 61-62.

role and its aesthetic is one that many women want to break free from. Francis, like many other bodybuilders, began to lift weights to challenge the binary roles of “woman.”

This subcultural female muscular body is at first rejected by society as seen in the second film. However, there are specific ways that a subcultural concept is assimilated into dominant culture —One way is broad promotion by spokespeople (celebrities), such as Schwarzenegger, that voice their agreement with the new ideal. The aesthetic that bodybuilding presents can be marketed by spokespeople to create a stir within popular culture but can also be rejected or accepted depending on a social class and norms. The idea of social classes’ access to particular sports points out the internal need people may or may not have to reach outside the norm, which in this instance would be to a particular ideal body.⁸⁵ This is the repulsion, within which dominant culture or those within specific conservative social classes are confined by the binary definition of masculine and feminine, would present to the aesthetic of a female bodybuilder. However, the bombarding of imagery through mass media may produce desensitization to the initial shock or disgust of seeing a stronger female body. Donnalyn Pompper, in her book *Rhetoric of Femininity*, attributes this constant bombarding of imagery as a way to introduce ideas and subcultural values into popular culture or to shift the more dominate ideas subtly over years at a time as the other case studies discussed below indicate.⁸⁶

The muscular woman was not yet widely accepted throughout the 1980s, but images began to be reproduced by mass media that portrayed more toned women, but nothing quite like the images of Bev Francis. Because of the uproar after the film the IFBB revisited its definition of femininity and allowed more muscular women to place in the following years of the

⁸⁵ Quoting Bourdieu, Robert E. Washington, and David Karen, “Sport and Society,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 27, no. 1 (2001): 191.

⁸⁶ Pompper, *Rhetoric of Femininity* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2017).

competition beginning in 1986 and on into the twenty-first century. However, because more muscular bodies began to become accepted within the competitive field of female bodybuilding, McLish stepped down from the competitive bodybuilding industry two years after the release of the film. Although body types similar to McLish began to compete in lower qualifying classes, such as “bikini” competitions, the inclusion of stronger women in higher classes, “physique” and “figure,” encouraged others to lift weights and produce mass muscle instead of worrying about breaking gender conventionality.

Although the film *Pumping Iron II: The Women* includes the redefining and defining of the word “woman,” it does show the confrontation of the new muscular body and the very beginning stages of acceptance within society. Female muscular bodies did exist in American society in the 1980s, and *Pumping Iron II: The Women* not only advertised muscular body types, but also showed the denial of that exact body type and demonstrated a rejection of its acceptance in the industry itself. Although the film in some respects rejected the muscular female, by virtue of showing the new super woman, the film made way for muscular body types to eventually be accepted within the following years. After this film was released, small, gradual implementations of the muscular female body would begin to become adopted into mass media after the 1984 Ms. Olympia competition and seen more widely throughout the 1990s. Even though *Pumping Iron II: The Women* portrayed this back and forth struggle of a socially constructed idea, it posed many questions for not only female and male bodybuilders, but mass media and popular culture as well regarding: “What is woman?”

CHAPTER THREE

COSMOPOLITAN MAGAZINE AS MASS MEDIA INFLUENCE

The introduction of the subcultural films *Pumping Iron I* and *Pumping Iron II* shows the acceptance of—yet also resistance to—a new female body ideal that is more muscular than previous decades. After the release of these films, mass media began to pick up some aspects of the aesthetics of the female bodies displayed within these films. In this chapter I analyze two front covers of *Cosmopolitan Magazine* from the years 1984 and 1988. Both of these issues feature the model Paulina Porizkova (Czech Republic, 1965) but situate and present her body in different ways. The comparative analysis of these two magazine covers show the gradual adaption of bodybuilding subcultural ideals into popular culture mediums.

BODYBUILDING IN MASS MEDIA

As the subculture of bodybuilding gained popularity within the 1980s, the subgroup itself gained more mass media attention. Mass media does not place all of the aesthetics from the subculture into the forefront of images within magazines or films but includes only a selection of approved aesthetics that do not initially threaten the definition of masculinity. The aesthetics that were adapted into mass media for American women started to include a slim figure that had muscle definition. This definition was not monumental, nor was it masculine, but it was much stronger than the previous ideal woman as represented throughout the 1970s.

The aesthetics promoted would require gym access and lifestyle changes. Access to gyms and fitness centers began to open up for women during the decade of the 1980s. Jesper

Andreasson and Thomas Johansson state it was during the 1980s that there was a massive development in gym and fitness culture.⁸⁷ The expanding of the culture created a growth in the gym industry, which allowed more access to gyms for people. Bourdieu identifies “access” as one of the largest contributors to the implementation of subcultural ideals within mainstream values.⁸⁸ Before this particular body type was accepted within mainstream culture, the access to the subculture was required. The attraction of the subculture also relies on who is involved with the subculture, as both Pompper⁸⁹ and Bourdieu.⁹⁰ This means that once the secrets of *Pumping Iron* stars, Schwarzenegger and McLish, were assimilated into public knowledge and were marketed heavily on the covers and in interviews of magazines, there was more information accessible that consumers could use to create a stronger and more muscular toned body.

The same tactic occurs in mass media when portraying female athletes as it does during female bodybuilding competitions, which heightens femininity to overcompensate masculine features. A recent analysis of the depiction of female athletes within magazines concluded that “media representations of women athletes reinforce the concept of emphasized femininity.”⁹¹ This occurs in magazines as well as mass media representations of women. This means that some women portrayed in athletic competitions are very strong and deemed too masculine to be presented as is. Therefore, if they are an Olympic medalist or a female bodybuilder that provide details within their physique that culture associates with more male-like characteristics, then the females have to overcompensate for this masculine associated body with a characteristic that is

⁸⁷ Jesper Andreasson and Thomas Johansson, “The Fitness Revolution. Historical Transformations in the Global Gym and Fitness Culture,” *Sport Science Review*, XXIII, no. 3-4. (2014), 104.

⁸⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, “Sport and Social Class,” *Social Science Information*, 17, no. 6. (1978), 830-42.

⁸⁹ Donnalyn Pompper, *Rhetoric of Femininity*. (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2017),

⁹⁰ Bourdieu, “Sport and Social Class.”

⁹¹ Timothy J. Curry, Paula A. Arriagada, and Benjamin Cornwell, “Images of Sport in Popular Nonsport Magazines: Power and Performance versus Pleasure and Participation,” *Sociological Perspectives* 45, no. 4 (2002): 397-413.

overtly female. With female bodybuilding this can be seen demonstrated by the excess of make-up, hairstyles, high heels, bikinis and faux nails. With the instance of very powerful athletes, images can be framed in a way that crops out important muscle mass like strong legs, or the imagery will focus on the emotional side of the woman, such as crying during the awarding or after competition, instead of the actual act of winning. Judith Butler describes the fear that society has with associations between gender and homosexuality if this overcompensation does not happen.⁹²

The more that weightlifting became popular for women, the more mass media continued to push weightlifting in imagery, consequently creating more demand for gyms. Images and visual representations of the ideal body influence readers to change or adapt these perceptions and thus attempt to apply these changes to their own bodies. Women's magazines are intended to create commerce and are "designed to stimulate a desire for perfection through consumption," states Pompper.⁹³ Therefore, if a particular body is repetitively shown on the front of popular culture magazines like *Cosmopolitan*, it will subtly be consumed and result in a new ideal body adapted as the norm.

The constant repetition of a new idealized body in the 1980s gradually shifted to a more muscular composition that was more commonly seen in the 1990s. Susan Bordo states that "muscularity has had a variety of cultural meanings that have prevented the well-developed body from playing a major role in middle-class conceptions of attractiveness [...]"⁹⁴ She also explains that at this time the idealized body began to shift as the well-muscled body became the cultural

⁹² Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009).

⁹³ Pompper, *Rhetoric of Femininity*, 89.

⁹⁴ Susan Bordo. *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and The Body* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2013), 193.

standard, and when “working out” became a “sexualized yuppie activity.”⁹⁵ This new “activity” is the way that a small niche idea from the bodybuilding subculture was adapted into mainstream values and became a lifestyle in dominant culture.

THE INFLUENCE OF MAGAZINES

People are altered and manipulated by text, just as they are manipulated when they “read” images, which will alter their definition of what they should look like, especially if they are “reading” it repeatedly across multiple mass media platforms or even reading the same message within different magazines. In Naomi Wolf’s book, *The Beauty Myth*,⁹⁶ Wolf discusses the power that mass redistribution has over its readers. However, Wolf discusses magazines in particular and the imagery that millions of American women consume. Wolf questions why women are so susceptible to a piece of paper with an image on it, something that could physically be thrown out. These women react to the ideal form, as if it is non-negotiable and they must abide by it.⁹⁷ She states “imagery has become obsessively important to women because it was meant to become so. Women are beauties in men’s culture, so that culture can be kept male [dominated].”⁹⁸ Images placed within these magazines are literally meant to target women to maintain their self-doubt, which in turn makes them constantly striving to purchase products, or better their own body to reach a portrayed ideal. However, this idea of self-doubt is one that is not promoted by solely advertisements or magazines, but both.⁹⁹ Each mass media tactic that

⁹⁵ Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*, 195.

⁹⁶ Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth* (New York, New York: William Morrow and Company, 1991).

⁹⁷ Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, 59.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 59

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

focuses on ladies needs to keep their “Feminine Quotient high.”¹⁰⁰ This means that the media has to ensure that the viewers of these images, whether in advertisements or magazines, would not liberate themselves out of the interest of the content provided.

As magazine industries began to see profits go down, specifically between the years 1965 and 1981,¹⁰¹ they had to change the way they promoted information.¹⁰² The magazine companies attributed the reduction of readership and interest to women who were being loosened by the “winds of social change.”¹⁰³ Due to this change, *Vogue* started to focus on the body instead of products or clothing. Rather than focusing on an advertising appeal, they changed their ideal to something even more artificial. Wolf explains: “The number of diet related articles rose 70 percent from 1968 to 1972. Articles on dieting in the popular press soared from 60 in the year of 1979 to 66 in the *month* of January 1980 alone. By the years 1983 to 1984, the *Reader’s Guide to Periodical Literature* listed 103 articles; by 1984, 300 diet books were on the shelves.”¹⁰⁴ As magazines begin to focus solely on the body, the attention shifted from women’s fashion and beauty products to a focus on their own bodies, thus creating a demand for diet products, new fitness routines and cosmetic surgery.

The aim of advertisements and magazines was to get women to purchase products and ideas about products. Wolf states, “Modern advertisers are selling diet products and ‘specialized’ cosmetics rather than household goods following the 1950s.”¹⁰⁵ During the year 1989, cosmetics and toiletries ad revenue “offered \$650 million to the magazines, while soaps, cleansers and

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁰¹ Sales of women’s magazines fell drastically from 555.3 million to 407.4 million copies a year. *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 65-66.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 63.

polishes, only yielded one tenth of that amount.”¹⁰⁶ The difference in the numbers that existed from the prior decade shows that modern women’s magazines changed their goals and objectives to promoting beauty rather than housework.¹⁰⁷ Wolf states that a women’s magazine is not just a magazine to a woman. A woman that continuously engages with a familiar magazine has a relationship with that magazine.¹⁰⁸ The relationship is far different from a male with his magazine. Wolf states “a woman reading *Glamour Magazine* is holding women-oriented mass culture between her two hands.”¹⁰⁹ Mass culture is so important because a magazine mirrors the dilemma of beauty by intensifying it.¹¹⁰

McCracken says that as advertising vehicles the most desirable publications are women’s magazines.¹¹¹ All magazines have one bottom line agreement, and it is consumption. McCracken states that “titles such as *Vogue*, *Mademoiselle* and *Cosmopolitan* try to impart a sense of sophistication to the woman portrayed on the cover. Some viewers might ordinarily interpret (the images) as unsophisticated,” however, the “sexually overdetermined poses of the *Cosmo* cover urge (their readers) to understand these visual signs as stylish, sophisticated and desirable.”¹¹² McCracken states that these techniques are used to produce guilt to buy an idea or product, which is always displayed in either an advertisement, or articles in a magazine.¹¹³ The front cover can be seen as an advertisement to buy the magazine, therefore positioning idealized imagery on the front will create a demand to be picked up and examined by the consumer for

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 73.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 73.

¹¹¹ Ellen McCracken, *From Mademoiselle to Ms* (Massachusetts, Amherst: St. Martin’s Press, 1993): 21.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 27.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 66.

purchase. This is a type of exploitation of the women represented works as a selling tactic for other women to consume.

COSMOPOLITAN MAGAZINE

Cosmopolitan Magazine has been one of the largest producers of women's popular culture literature and in the 1980s was heavily circulated as a primary cultural influence of the period. This was in part because of the visual change of its articles that occurred in response to the feminist movement. In the late 1960s, the new wave of feminism initiated a change by *Cosmopolitan* and the way they presented images with information. Their new formula was a mixed contradiction. It included an individualist, "can-do" tone along with aspirational content that "said that nothing should get in your way."¹¹⁴ However, it also included a focus on sexual and personal relationships that "affirms female ambition and erotic appetite, along with sexualized images of female models that were only slightly more subtle than those aimed at men, were meant to convey female sexual liberation," states Wolf.¹¹⁵ The last part of their new formula undermines and contradicts the idea of a pro-woman agenda. Since images can only be seen as an interpretation from the perspective of a viewer, the "truth" behind them is never revealed. Thus, if a viewer believes an image has not been post-processed or tampered with, the viewers will accept it as "reality" and may take it upon themselves to diet, apply skin care and potentially purchase cosmetic surgery to achieve this perceived perfection or ideal.

Cosmopolitan Magazine was one of the most influential American magazines of the 1980s. In 2017 it remains the top women's magazine in the United States, accumulating over

¹¹⁴ Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, 69.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 69.

50,000,000 readers annually.¹¹⁶ As Ellen McCracken states: “Hearst corporation [publisher of *Cosmopolitan Magazine*] was the country’s ninth largest media company and made an estimated \$1.3 billion in media revenues in 1982,”¹¹⁷ and 595 million dollars in revenues from its fourteen magazines, which 6 of them ranked in the top 7 money making women’s publications.¹¹⁸ The issues of *Cosmopolitan* alone made over 67.6 million dollars in 1982.¹¹⁹ When Helen Gurley Brown (1922–2012), took over the publication of *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, the images began to reflect a more “sexually liberated model” whose body was no longer hidden, as it had been in the previous decades. This was due to Brown’s own stance on women and their roles in society. The focus on the body within most popular culture magazines at the time helped raise sales in not only the magazine industry, but also the beauty industry. Because of this power of readership, I chose to analyze *Cosmopolitan Magazine*. The magazine would influence its readers with repetitive visual information and facilitate change within society.

COSMOPOLITIAN ISSUES (1984/1988)

The front cover images of *Cosmopolitan Magazine* (1984 and 1988) reflect the body ideal change from slim to more muscular yet in a very subtle way.¹²⁰ The front of the fall issue (fig. 3) of *Cosmopolitan Magazine* in 1984 features model Paulina Porizkova (b. 1965) photographed by Francesco Scavullo (1921–2004). McCracken explains that “most covers try to

¹¹⁶ “Fun Fearless Female,” *Cosmopolitan Media Kit*. Accessed November 09, 2017.
http://www.cosmomediakit.com/r5/showkiosk.asp?listing_id=4785154&category_code=demo&category_id=77109

¹¹⁷ McCracken, *Decoding Women’s Magazines*, 82.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹²⁰ I do not examine the articles themselves within *Cosmopolitan* magazine, however it should be noted that from research I collected, fitness articles from the time period 1980 to 1992 and texts about the use of small weights were gradually introduced after 1985 (they were nonexistent prior to that year). Most of the article’s imagery really focused on fashion while working out, instead of proper weightlifting techniques and form.

create an idealized reader-image of the group advertisers seek to reach [...] There is often an implied male presence, communicated through the woman's facial expression, make-up, body pose, and clothing, as well as through the camera angle, lighting and color."¹²¹ Porizkova is presented in a dress that heightens the viewer's attention to her thin collarbones. The body (fig. 3) is posed in an s-curve pose that includes her shoulders scrunched in, collar bone accentuated, small waist presented forefront to the viewer and her hands are attached to her hips, which showcases the thinnest presentation of her arms. Her facial expression is quite intense, as she stares at the viewers without a smile, but represented as if she were on a runway promoting high fashion. This pose and promotion of high fashion is something *Cosmopolitan*, and many other magazines like *Vogue* and *Mademoiselle* also attempted and successfully achieved.¹²² *Cosmopolitan* implemented a sense of sophistication in their imagery by portraying women on the cover as stylish, sophisticated and desirable.¹²³

Porizkova's make-up is clean and matted without an ounce of oil or shine on her face or body. Her frontal pose accentuates how thin she is. Most images of people that want to appear thinner are positioned within a 45-degree angle to the camera; however, because she is facing the camera with her stance directly, it accentuates how thin her body really is, providing the evidence that she does not need to be placed within a slimming camera position to portray a thinner body type.

The lighting on Porizkova is soft and seems to be a mixed combination between a side angle and a front angle. There are darker shadows on her face and body that provide a moody context. Her body is covered in clothing but her facial expression conveys confrontational

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 27.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 27.

strength. Her actual body is not necessarily lacking this strength in pose, but because her body is so thin, regardless of her semi-dominate, frontal pose, the viewer can assume she is not strong physically. Therefore, the strength portrayed by her facial expression is not reinforced or supported by her physical body.

Following this issue four years later, *Cosmopolitan Magazine* featured the same model in a position and outfit that seems to refer specifically to the subculture of bodybuilding (fig. 4). The first thing the viewer will notice is the lack of clothing that Porizkova is wearing. The second most attention-drawing feature is the style of clothing that is worn, which includes a bikini swimsuit which is shiny, blue, and linked together by strings, thus called a “string-bikini.” This suit had appeared before and began to be widely worn in the 1980s once again. However, what was particularly new about this style of swimsuit was the metallic and shiny fabric used. In the late 1980s shiny fabric and string bikinis began to circulate in mass media again. However, this time, instead of solely being shown in sexualized magazines for men like *Playboy* and *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition*, these types of suits were being shown in mainstream popular culture magazines for women. During this same time, the shiny string bikini was also worn on stage during bodybuilding competitions. The style of the bodybuilding competition suit, according to competition regulations, had to be shiny, all one color and include string features that would allow more display of the body compared to other swimsuits that were trending during this time, such as high-waisted bikinis, one-piece suits or any of the athletic swimsuits on the rise from the sports-oriented manufacturer, SPEEDO.

The 1988 summer issue represented Porizkova’s body and face as oily or sweaty as it shined in the light. Her face and body look as if they are completely drenched in oil. This could be a representation of sweat, or tanning oil, since it is hot in the summer time (July 1988), or it

could be a replica of oil that bodybuilders use for competitions to accentuate their muscle definition. Her body is also turned away from the camera in a 45-degree angle position, and her stance is placed as if she were posing on stage to be judged. Porizkova's body is not masculinized, nor does it seem to promote bulk muscle, but it is toned and thin, which could relate to both groups, the general public and the bodybuilding subculture, to peak interest in the magazine. Furthermore, with advancing technology, models that were not really toned or strong in real life could be presented to the public as if they were indeed strong. Such techniques used within mainstream media may be seen as evidence of the influence of the bodybuilding subculture making its way into mass media and thus insinuating itself into the wider, dominant culture.¹²⁴

In no way doesn't Porizkova's body seem muscular or buff, but the chosen pose and particular articles of clothing are further exaggerated by lighting, stance, editing and even skin complexion which can then be directly compared to magazines representing the subculture itself. Although the bodybuilding subculture for females was not accepted initially by society, through these subtle representations in popular culture vehicles (mass media), the subculture becomes accepted slowly and hence adapted into a more mainstream female culture.

Porizkova's body language (fig. 4) in general seems to be more confident and "on display" than the image presented in the 1984 magazine cover (fig. 3). Both images have different styles, as one seems more high fashion than the other, although both are depicting a different presentation of self. Porizkova's images are both sexualized, but the image in the 1988 cover is even more sexualized due to her hand placement on her bikini line, as well as her presented oiled and half-exposed body.

¹²⁴ This issue of *Cosmopolitan Magazine* did highlight an article that interviewed Arnold Schwarzenegger on the cover that promoted *Pumping Iron*.

Lastly, Porizkova's facial expression is much softer than in the 1984 image. In contrast, her body seems more toned and strong, yet her face and the lighting on it, appears less harsh. In this instance, it would seem as if there is a balance between the two issues, to make sure that one aspect of strength does not dominate the other. When the body is presented as toned and strong, the face compensates for this strength by being softened. However, when the body seems boney and weak, the face is presented as a bit more confrontational, strong and edgy.

SUBCULTURE AND POPULAR CULTURE MAGAZINES

The September issue of *Female Bodybuilding Magazine* in 1987 featuring Diane Pellegrino (fig. 5), looks very similar to the issue of *Cosmopolitan* in 1988 (fig. 4). Although Pellegrino's body varies slightly to Porizkova's body, Pellegrino's body position is turned away from the camera similarly to Porizkova and both swimsuits have the same style of string and material shine. Pellegrino's stance is positioned in a way that allows muscle flexing to happen naturally without the appearance of trying too hard. Her body is positioned in a 45-degree angle to the camera, producing the narrowest parts of her as slim, and the more defined parts of her body to be more prominent toward the camera. Her skin is matted and clean, and her make up is precise and feminine. Pellegrino looks as if she were going to compete on stage with her bikini styled bathing suit, but she is not oiled down for stage presence. Pellegrino's stance, however, is likely to be seen during competition "pose downs" to show off her strong arms and defined muscles in her butt and abdominals. What is particularly interesting is that the niche magazine (*Female Bodybuilding*) does not include oil, as if the magazine is trying to be more mainstream and pop culture friendly, while on the other hand, *Cosmopolitan*, adds oil onto the model which seems a bit more progressive and unique for the popular magazine.

The stance of Porizkova's body, in the *Cosmopolitan* image, is a fashion model version of an actual bodybuilding stance, meaning this is not the exact stance that would be seen during a competition. The angle and the leaning weight on one side to portray leg muscles is very similar to a bodybuilding pose, but most competitors would not raise an arm and place it in their hair, since that would show the leanness of the arm, rather than muscle. Pellegrino's stance, in *Female Bodybuilding Magazine*, is one that would be more likely seen in competitions, but her stance is too relaxed in comparison to actual competitions. In this way, both magazines have altered their models in a way that is softer than the reality of the actual sport and competition. It could be argued that both magazines are attempting to appeal to the general public or popular trends at the time in order to ease the introduction of this new ideal body into mainstream culture.

Although the texts linked to all three of these covers are not being analyzed, this cover of *Female Bodybuilding Magazine* (1987) does feature articles on Bev and Rachel, who are the competitors from the 1985 *Pumping Iron II* film, as well as an article about Arnold Schwarzenegger and the *Pumping Iron* films themselves. The 1988 issue in *Cosmopolitan Magazine* also includes a featured article about *Pumping Iron* and an interview with Arnold Schwarzenegger. At this time Schwarzenegger's career was on the rise and his presence was arguably everywhere within mass media.

The comparative analysis of the images from *Cosmopolitan* issues from 1984 and 1988 show a completely different representation of the same model, Paulina Porizkova and displayed a subtle gesture to bodybuilding culture in the July 1988 issue.¹²⁵ The comparison between

¹²⁵ Porizkova was seen within many different issues of magazines, which even include swimsuit issue(s) in *Sports Illustrated* (1984 and several other issues), *Playboy Magazine* (1987), *Bazaar* (1988), many international editions of *Cosmopolitan* Magazines and multiple other magazines. However, the idea of her body being presented in a string-bikini within mass media, and not within a male-oriented sexual magazine, is where the shift between body representation in the media can be seen.

Female Bodybuilding Magazine in the issue of 1987 and the *Cosmopolitan* issue in 1988 show a massive link between the subculture of bodybuilding and presentation of the changing ideal in society. Again, both issues reduce the aspect of masculinity by compensating either in pose or elements applied to the body, such as oil or make-up; however, the models have an underlying similarity of strength portrayed in body presentation and pose. The examples of these two magazines show the adaption of ideas within both the subcultural group and dominant society with the goal of attracting more attention and buzz from their audiences. *Female Bodybuilding Magazine* implements the idea of no oil and relaxed posing for the camera, whereas *Cosmopolitan* includes oil and reflects a different type of stance and lighting to show more muscle mass for women to contemplate.

At the end of it all, magazines are meant to sell. They sell products, ideas and trends for people to reflect and eventually buy into. The movement of a strong female body being placed into the ideal does not fully depend upon advertisements, magazines, or even subcultural films, but the movement is reliant on all mass media working cohesively to sell an idea to dominant culture. Dominant culture sees a glimmer of the strong woman through the July 1988 issue of *Cosmopolitan Magazine*. The magazine resisted dominant ideas of the female ideal when it assimilated the aesthetics of a muscular female ideal onto its front cover. In the next case study, Madonna, we will see a popular music icon assimilate, and disseminate the new muscular body type as a way to “Brand” herself as an autonomous and sexual woman.

CHAPTER FOUR

MADONNA: ICON AS INFLUENCE

Cultural icons (celebrities) are seen in mass media forms such as film, newspapers, magazines and advertisements. Celebrities provide significant impetus for societal changes to occur—a direct result of the many fans that will follow and imitate their every move. This means that icons and celebrities have the ability to influence new trends that become popular among their fans and hence spread such trends throughout society. However, more times than not, they are excellent examples of movements already in place. In this specific chapter I analyze the changes of Madonna to a more muscular body type and discuss how her presentation served as an early exemplar of a larger movement occurring in the 1980s.

MARIA LOUISE CICCONE AS INFLUENCE

During the 1980s Madonna was on the rise in the media and her popularity caused the growth of her success. I chose to Madonna to examine as a case study due to her impact and increase of fans in the 1980s. Madonna, Maria Louise Ciccone (1958 -), grew up in a very strict family that was focused on religious beliefs and control. In many interviews, but specifically in one that was aired by *The Tonight Show* in the year 1987, Madonna explained her father's old-fashion values and how they influenced her to become who she was, because they gave her a set of values to rebel against.¹²⁶ The name *Madonna*, which she chose as her stage name, was

¹²⁶ "Madonna on The Tonight Show 1987," YouTube, 2015, Accessed March 22, 2018.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_CBCyHZsSco.

derived from Old French and could be used to reference the Virgin Mary.¹²⁷ Her appearance throughout the 1980s and well into the 2000s was described as a form of resistance to social norms and constructs through sexual expression such as wearing lingerie on stage or dancing provocatively on stage, as she also rebelled against her catholic upbringing and the constructs placed on her.¹²⁸ In her music, videos and performances she included many subcultural ideas, including those from punk groups, as a form of resistance to political and social conditions.¹²⁹ During this time, the punk trend was wearing “boostie-yays” and other types of lingerie as clothing fashion. Moreover, Madonna’s resistance was mostly demonstrated through non-verbal actions or clothing attire.¹³⁰

The way Madonna represented herself radically changed from 1981 to 1990. Madonna sold over 300 million copies of her albums within the 1980s and early 1990s and is arguably one of the world’s most prominent and successful females within multiple multimedia companies.¹³¹ Due to her exposure and platform, Madonna would become her own visual definition of “woman.” Throughout the 1980s Madonna’s body was continuously becoming more toned in muscle mass compared to each prior year. Her fans would notice this, but also the majority of society could not ignore the evident changes in her presentation. Madonna would be seen on stage, but her images would also be represented in magazines, newspapers, music videos and other types of new mass media platforms, such as MTV.

¹²⁷ Marshall W Fishwick, “Madonna,” *Journal of American Culture*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004). 29. 1. 75-77.

¹²⁸ Jose Blanco, “How to Fashion an Archetype: Madonna as Anima Figure,” 1158.

¹²⁹ Blanco, “How to Fashion an Archetype: Madonna as Anima Figure,” 1158.

¹³⁰ Jose I. Preto – Arranz, “The Semiotics of Performance and Success in Madonna.” *The Journal of Popular Culture*. (Wiley Periodicals, Inc, 2012). 45. 1, 175.

¹³¹ Preto – Arranz, “The Semiotics of Performance and Success in Madonna,” 173-196

MTV was founded in 1981 and owned by Viacom Media Networks. It was and still is an American cable and satellite television channel that promoted new artists and played music videos daily. Madonna was one of the first stars to truly understand and exploit the potential that music videos and MTV had to offer. Michael Jackson was another artist to use this new medium to expand his career into success.¹³² The access to new artists and videos could only help artists during this decade to reach new listeners and watchers. Music videos provide both visual elements as well as audio which connects with more senses than simply just listening to a song on the radio. Madonna and Jackson were well aware of this new influence and utilized it as a platform for success. Due to the use of this new platform, Madonna would use MTV to disseminate images of a strong muscular female body.

With the introduction of MTV, Madonna's image would be promoted everywhere. As Madonna's career began to rise, many women either judged or aspired to create the new type of body that Madonna presented. Donnalyn Pompper's theory on the power of the visual explains the appeal of Madonna's body as it began to shift in muscle tone and presentation, and how this change would encourage her fans to also desire this new body ideal. In relation to impact of fans due to visuals, in *Unbearable Weight* (1993), Bordo stated that Madonna's "wannabes are following suit [...] studies suggest[ed] that as many as 80 percent of nine-year-old suburban girls [were] making rigorous dieting and exercise the organizing discipline of their lives."¹³³ What would cause fans to make drastic changes to their bodies? Specifically, within the years of 1986 to 1990, Madonna's body composition and her persona on stage changed from a thin performer

¹³² Camille Paglia, "Venus of the Radio Waves" in *The Pop, Rock and Soul Reader*, ed. by David Brackett. (Oxford University Press: New York, NY, 2009), 401-409.

¹³³ Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2013), 270.

to a performer who owns her sexuality and openly flexes her muscles on stage for fans to see. The confidence and body image promoted by the star would only encourage others to follow suit.

Images of Madonna depict a thin, petite dancer from the late 1970s (fig. 6) and the turn to a strong, and muscular composition in the late 1980s (fig. 10). In the 1970s, Madonna ascribed to a thrift-store style of fashion which ironically had many commonalities with Cyndi Lauper who was also a pop cultural icon within at the time.¹³⁴ However, Cyndi Lauper chose a different path for her career after the 1980s, which was songwriting as well as engaging in more political movements, after receiving the *Woman of the Year* award in 1985 by *Ms. Magazine*. Madonna on the other hand, began to flourish and grow beyond the years of the 1980s, while she still continually changed her image almost annually.¹³⁵ Madonna practiced yoga, weightlifting, dancing, interval training¹³⁶ and other specific types of workouts and was frequently asked about her fitness routine during interviews.¹³⁷

In terms of context and influence, it cannot be ignored that the 1980s also included subcultural weightlifting movies, such as *Pumping Iron II: The Women*, into the mainstreaming of mass media and also included the movement by Schwarzenegger promoting strength and fitness. The Schwarzenegger craze is impossible to ignore, and it is quite likely that the attention focused on him and bodybuilding influenced Madonna and other pop cultural icons during this timeframe. Schwarzenegger was featured on the covers of magazines, there were numerous interviews within mass media and he was certainly changing the body ideal for men—an ideal

¹³⁴ Paglia, “Venus of the Radio Waves,” 409.

¹³⁵ Camille Paglia, “Finally, A Real Feminist,” *Rock History Reader* ed. by Theo Cateforis (Routledge: New York, NY, 2013), 249-250.

¹³⁶ The Ellen Show, “Ellen’s First Interview with Madonna!” YouTube, 1987. Accessed March 29, 2018. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RugckjhGGo>.

¹³⁷ The Ellen Show, “Madonna and Her Workout,” YouTube, 2015. Accessed March 22, 2018. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=acz0gdDjJrw>.

which would further impact women involved with these men. Although it is difficult to say where Madonna got her ambition to lift weights or present herself as a more muscular woman, it is occurring at a time that is parallel with the growth of female bodybuilding culture. Madonna presented her muscular, toned female body in the late 1980s, and through her actions and physical changes would encourage her fans to weight-lift, gain strength and to be less afraid of a more muscular and strong female body.

As time progressed, the 1980s would present a different type of ideal body, one that moved away from this curve-less ideal but maintained a lack of body fat. In 1984 (fig. 7) Madonna still presented her body in a way that demonstrated these very feminine ideals. The first time she performed *Like a Virgin* on the 1984 MTV music awards¹³⁸ she was wearing an outfit of a bride, which was not overtly scandalous or sexy,¹³⁹ and the only article of clothing that she removed from her body was the veil. The words, “like a virgin, touched for the very first time,” however, seemed scandalous. The truth is the lyrics remained pretty vague and were surprisingly not overly sexual.¹⁴⁰ The only piece of clothing worn during the tour of the album release that seemed controversial to cultural norms was a belt that read “boy toy.”¹⁴¹ This specific article of clothing was a symbol of “Madonna’s willingness to become a sexual object while others regarded it as an ironic commentary.”¹⁴² Madonna argued that her belt signified that she could own a “boy toy,” and did not mean that she, herself, was a “boy toy.”¹⁴³ However,

¹³⁸ “Madonna - Like A Virgin - Live at MTV Awards 1984,” YouTube, 2009, Accessed March 16, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AFiwFKDyp8A>.

¹³⁹ Preto – Arranz, “The Semiotics of Performance and Success in Madonna,” 175.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 175.

¹⁴¹ Blanco, “How to Fashion an Archetype: Madonna as Anima Figure,” 1158.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 1158.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 1158.

since she in many ways controlled the power of the male gaze, Madonna might arguably accept either interpretation.

The 1984 MTV awards, and many of the live performances of *Like A Virgin*, remained relatively minor in sexual suggestion in the beginning of the performance. During the performance, it was not until Madonna stepped off of the giant wedding cake on which she initially began the performance that the narrative shifted. Once she stepped off the cake platform and unveiled her head, the performance took a twist as she rolled around on the ground suggesting intercourse and masturbation. The tour that included *Like a Virgin*, during the same year of the award show, would be the beginning of Madonna's physical sexual journey within stage performance.

In 1986 Madonna's body continued to reflect a popular cultural female norm that was petite yet sexualized. In a photograph in *Vanity Fair* (fig. 9) Madonna's gaze confronts the viewer with confidence and her hands are resting below on her chest, which then directs the viewer's eye to this part of her body. She abided by the gender binary role as female, small and thin but went against the norms of dominant society by owning her sexuality and not being ashamed of the idea that women could be sexual, too. Madonna used specific actions during concert performances to push the uncomfortable and embrace the gaze coming from her audience but knew the balance that she had to maintain to hold the audience captive instead of repulsing them. Even in the years 1985 (fig. 8) and 1986, as Madonna performed *Lucky Star*,¹⁴⁴ she maintained a sexual persona with her fashion and imitated motions mirroring sex acts within the performance, but never exaggerated these movements, thus avoiding resistance from the viewers. Specifically, in *Lucky Star* (Figure 8), Madonna was wearing mid-calf length leggings,

¹⁴⁴ Madonna, "Lucky Star," in *Like A Virgin* (compact disk). Sire Records: Columbia, 1983.

with a frilly mini-skirt over the leggings, along with a belly shirt and jacket, which was accessorized by frilly and feminine gloves. The only article of clothing she took off during the performance was the jacket, which only revealed more of her mid-drift. As she danced, she created eye contact and maintained that eye contact with the viewers in the audience. This was Madonna's way of accepting the gaze and not playing victim to it. In an interview with Ellen DeGeneres in 1995 Madonna stated that she looked for someone to connect with in the audience, male or female, and held their gaze to create [comfort] in her performance.¹⁴⁵

Madonna's goal during the rise of her fame was to own the gaze and push sexual boundaries that had been placed upon women in an area of taboo—disallowing female desire and sexuality. Within an interview on *The Tonight Show*, Madonna was asked about the title of “sexy,” and how she felt about it since it may be seen as a very chauvinistic term. Madonna stated simply that she liked being called sexy, because she is the same person she was before she was given that title.¹⁴⁶ Bordo equates Madonna's confrontational persona as her “refusal to allow herself to be constructed as a passive object of patriarchal desire.”¹⁴⁷ Madonna has always used her body as the “battleground,” and is what Bordo refers to as the postmodern heroine who is portrayed as a subversive cultural figure.¹⁴⁸

Although in the year 1986 Madonna was still following feminine ideal roles and guidelines with her display of body, she embraced this subversive cultural role by both inviting the gaze with her feminine look, but also controlling the reactions of the viewers. She presented herself in a defined Western ideal revolving around “female” presentation, but really challenged

¹⁴⁵ The Ellen Show, “Ellen's First Interview with Madonna!” YouTube, 1995, Accessed March 29, 2018. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RugekjhGGo>.

¹⁴⁶ “Madonna on The Tonight Show 1987,” YouTube, 2015, Accessed March 22, 2018. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_CBCyHZsSco.

¹⁴⁷ Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and The Body*. 268.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 269.

cultural norms and taboos with her more overtly sexualized performance on stage. Simply the act of rolling around on the ground in 1984 to demonstrate a careless, sexual and orgasmic female, (however still fully clothed), was revolutionary. She dressed herself in attire that played up female cultural expectations such as the desire for marriage but deconstructed these ideas through her overt ownership over her own sexuality and control of her body. In 1985 and 1986, she continued this push-pull reaction from the crowd by either wearing articles of clothing to reveal her mid-drift or legs or by creating thrusting motions with her hips on stage while sitting or lying on the ground. In 1986, her body was still in the process of changing to become what it would in 1988 or 1990. However, she was at the beginning of her training program and began to experiment with new ways of performing on stage. At the time, 1986, Madonna was using a push-pull tactic by pushing her audience away with sexually suggestive dance movements but pulling her audience's attention back in by not overdoing any of her chosen fashion, hairstyles, or dance moves that would make her audience feel uncomfortable.

At the end of 1986 Madonna began to work with professional trainer Carlos Leon in preparation of her world tour that would continue from 1987 to 1988. She began to weightlift, interval train, dance and do other various styles of exercising and became heavily involved with physical fitness. She began to build her body physically, which would become visually evident in 1987 and more specifically in 1988 (fig. 10) during her tour for *Who's that Girl*.

As the year of the worldwide tour approached her stage persona shifted from a thin sexual being on stage to a much stronger, toned body on stage. In 1988 (fig. 10), her outfit styles began to change even more. She began to wear fishnet tights, and lingerie on the outside of her clothing.¹⁴⁹ Her lingerie also included cups that were very pointy with tassels and suggestive of

¹⁴⁹ Blanco, "How to Fashion an Archetype: Madonna as Anima Figure," 1157.

the same outfits worn by the “somasochistic” figure of the “dominatrix.” The new fashion statement that she presented included lingerie and “boostie-yays (corset-like lingerie),” starting at the end of 1986 and was prominent in 1987. However, her body composition itself had completely changed between these years. Her body during the *Who’s that Girl* tour was evidently more muscular than the previous year, 1986. Her muscular legs and shoulders reflect this change the most. In all of her concerts for the tour she changed over 12 times and each outfit reflected a different idea. But the outfit she began and ended with, as well as remained on under all of the other outfits, showed off every muscle in her body. In an interview with Jane Pauley in 1987, Madonna stated that she liked to play different characters and enjoyed switching up her presentation on stage.¹⁵⁰

Madonna’s performances included aspects of performing that had not necessarily been acted upon by other female artists. She included sexual acts on stage that attracted the sexual gaze from males in the audience. Some feminists would not know how to react to this new sexualized woman who seemed to lack control, but who actually was in control of the audience as she anticipated their sexual interpretation of her. Camille Paglia said that most women did not know whether to call Madonna’s acts beautiful or grotesque. Her acts and constant change of image was an entirely new idea of presentation.¹⁵¹ Madonna proved herself to be adaptive and fluid performer by manipulating her image, yet maintaining media interest, as Paglia stated.¹⁵²

Madonna demonstrated her independency and attempted to gain control of the patriarchal system. Instead of rejecting the idea of patriarchal power, she wanted to grasp the

¹⁵⁰ “Madonna - Jane Pauley Interview 1987,” YouTube, 2012, Accessed March 23, 2018.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XzmVxd2LW7E>.

¹⁵¹ Paglia, “Venus of the Radio Waves,” 401-409.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

gaze and take ownership of the very thing which controlled women.¹⁵³ This is the tour in which she would begin to flex on stage to show people her trained muscles. However, since her outfits are so sexualized, she could both pander to, and challenge patriarchal ideas by being strong and flexing, and by presenting herself as ultra-feminine and “sexy.”

Madonna’s body composition continually changes in the 1980s, but her persona of pressing the acceptance of women’s ownership over their own sexuality remained constant throughout the decade. Her success continued to rise when most individuals thought that her career would be doomed by specific actions, such as her performance of *Like a Virgin* at the MTV awards, or her overt display of sexual body gyrations in her dance routines during concerts in the *Who’s that Girl* tour. Madonna’s performance was altered to fit into the dominant, accepted norms of society as she manipulated the limits of patriarchy. She may have repulsed some with her sexualized actions on stage, but also brought those same people’s attention back to her performance with norms that ascribed to the dominant definition of “woman.” Simple ideas, such as wearing a veil during her video and performance of *Like A Virgin* in 1984, showed her heterosexuality and availability as a female to become wed, or by wearing clearly ascribed female fashion, such as lingerie—all while flexing her muscles on stage in 1987 to showcase her “masculinity” or control. This repulsion and attraction (push-pull) can be best understood in relation to Judith Butler’s *Performing Acts and Gender Construction*, which discusses showing the binary gender norm roles, while having aspects of the Other visually available.¹⁵⁴ Although she did not refuse the gaze, she displayed more muscular features, which may turn the male gaze

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ Judith Butler, “The Performative Acts and Gender Construction: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminism Theory,” *Theatre Journal*, 40, no. 4. (1988): 510-522.

off, but she brought the male gaze back to her body by displaying overtly sexualized or hyper feminized outfits, hair and make-up.

Due to this “push-pull” tactic of repulsion and attraction, Madonna came to be seen as unique and new and relevant within mass media, thus growing her fan base. Bordo stated that Madonna’s fans would see her rise in her career and begin to equate success with beauty, meaning one does not come without the other.¹⁵⁵ As she became more successful, her fans would see success as linked to a particular body type. Linda Fuller quotes Bordo in saying that “it is well documented that mediated images of the ‘ideal’ female body—the tall, thin attractive body and the more toned, athletic body increasingly in vogue, are linked to body image disturbances and feelings of dissatisfaction with physical appearance for many (young) woman.”¹⁵⁶ If younger women saw a rising star with confidence, the adaptation of these characteristics may make them more confident in themselves, too.

Madonna as a solo participant did not control this shift of the ideal woman, as there are many factors that go into changing the norms of society, and more specifically, alter the visual definition of “woman.” Within contemporary society, it would be completely naïve to believe that specific trends or movements happen simply because there is a change in mindset among the general public. Something has to drive these changes into the general population. As Madonna changed her body, the ideal body in the United States society also radically changed. She was not necessarily the one creating these changes by herself, but she is an example of societal acceptance of these changes. The entire shift from the fragile female body to a stronger and toned body portrayed in mass media was not an individual shift, but a movement that gained

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Catherin Sabiston and Brian Wilson, “Britney, the Body and the Blurring of Popular Cultures,” *Sport Rhetoric, and Gender: Historical Perspectives and Media Representations*. Ed. By Linda Fuller (Springer, 2006), 199.

speed through imagery provided by mass media and then subsequently emulated by American females. Madonna's portrayal of herself not only highlighted the stereotypical Western female who would attract both male and females, but also represented a strong bodied woman who was not a victim of the gaze, sexual commentary or patriarchy.

The strong-bodied image Madonna portrayed was influenced by many subcultures. She adapted subcultural ideas from bodybuilding and burlesque clubs and introduced them into the mainstream by her use of clothing and the actions she presented on stage, such as flexing while in a corset or "boostie-yay." Madonna's use of lingerie as an outfit, and sometimes displayed over other outfits, is an idea taken partly from punk culture. The use of weightlifting and being stronger instead of simply thin, is an idea that arose from bodybuilding culture. The idea of owning sexuality and not being ashamed of being a woman, as well as the physical attributes that come with it, came from the new feminist ideas and movements occurring before time frame.¹⁵⁷

During the rise of Madonna's fame, a few things occurred in parallel. *Pumping Iron II: The Women* was released in 1985 and a year later (in 1986), Madonna started to train with Carlos Leon. Many female bodybuilding magazines came out in 1986, and a year later in 1987, Madonna really began to present herself in a much more strong and muscular way. Although Madonna never states that this subculture informed her new body idea, these two events are happening at the same time and therefore we can deduce that the strong muscular body that Madonna accepted was gradually part of a cultural assimilation of a subcultural norm into the mainstream.

¹⁵⁷ Preto-Arranz, "The Semiotics of Performance and Success in Madonna." 175 - 179.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The new strong, muscular woman was dependent on mass circulation and repetition for the new ideal to be implemented as a trend or norm in society. Without the repetitive viewing of imagery, the subculture of bodybuilding would have remained in the margins of dominant culture. The toned body presented itself in the 1980s and, at the same time, the subculture of bodybuilding began to be more visible within mainstream media. Although mass media did not grasp the full aesthetic of the bodybuilding physique in males and females, such as mass muscle and strong pecs on women, it did instigate the image of women with toned legs, arms and stomachs, whereas the previous ideal emphasized more curvy and thin women without muscle. The film *Pumping Iron II: The Women* was the first film to portray this strong aesthetic, which began to spill over into mass media vehicles such as *Cosmopolitan Magazine* and represented in icons like Madonna at the end of the 1980s. This was the moment that the ideal body for women began to shift and would allow the women in future decades to be fully engulfed in fitness and weightlifting as lifestyle, rather than bodybuilding competition.

If we look at the situation since the late 1980s, we can see that twenty-first century mass media promotes fitness everywhere. Fitness and dietary programs introduced to help Americans lose weight are promoted on social media platforms and are seen within magazine articles and even displayed constantly in commercials between family programs on the television. However, the fitness industry goes beyond losing weight. The idealism of gaining abs, shedding fat and being thin is now highly desired among members of both sexes within dominant culture. The subculture of bodybuilding, and those particularly involved in competitions, have an ideal body

as a goal that includes this muscle mass and lean physique; however, it is unsustainable to have muscles and to be thin for a long duration.

Fitness becomes lifestyle rather than a hobby in the twenty-first century. As new media platforms attest, the access to this new ideal body and the way to achieve it is heavily circulated among the general public as well as among celebrities. Instagram, Pinterest and Facebook are social media platforms that allow people to constantly place images of themselves online. The images are heavily curated and “tagged” with specific language. Hashtags like “Fitspo” or “Girls that lift” become common searches in social media to find meal plans, see workout routines or stare at a plethora of not only thin, but also buff female bodies. As Eric Chaline points out, “the emancipation of women in the twentieth century has given a new ideal [for] feminine beauty. Today we admire women whose appearance shows they are competent and palpable women with lean but strong bodies.”¹⁵⁸ The fitness involvement online is quite hard to avoid if someone is regularly on social media. Women and men everywhere post their “transformations” or their poses that are purposely chosen to display their lean physique and muscle mass.

The fit body trending in the twenty-first century is not only on social media but can be seen in films as well. The comparison of before and after 1980s is quite evident in mass media films and television shows. An example of this difference may be witnessed in the TV show *Wonder Woman* created by William Moulton Marston (1893-1947) and filmed by Stanley Ralph Ross (1935-2000), which ran from 1975–1979. *Wonder Woman* (fig. 13) was played by Lynda Carter (1951 -), and although the TV series had a female superhero, she had little clothing and a fairly slender body type. Lynda Carter was an American actress at the time but also a singer, songwriter and an earlier beauty pageant titleholder. In contrast to that television show, in 2017

¹⁵⁸ Eric Chaline, *The Temple of Perfection: A History of the Gym* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd. 2015), 187.

Warner Bros Company (directed by Patty Jenkins, b. 1971) released a new version of *Wonder Woman* (fig. 14) featuring Gal Gadot (b. 1985) as Diana who was portrayed in the movie as strong and powerful. Gal Gadot is an actress, model and also a martial artist; she served in the Israeli Defense Forces for two years. The choice of who played the role of Diana is significantly different and was intended to speak to the younger generations viewing the media. The actresses' pasts alone could reflect the changes of societal acceptance of strength, but also the portrayal of strength and beauty in the characters' actions display this gradual acceptance of the aesthetics of the new superwoman.

The 1980s set the groundwork for females to break away from the thin, helpless woman, and thus transform themselves into new, strong, independent women. Social media and commercials for products and films created before 1980 and after 2000—such as *Wonder Woman* produced in 1975 and its remake in 2017—show the switch from thin to strong¹⁵⁹ as the three case studies in the thesis have shown. The assimilation of the subculture of bodybuilding eventually changed the way mass media would define woman and the represented ideal female body as strong and more muscular for future generations.

¹⁵⁹ *Wonder Woman* was originally a TV show produced on CBS that featured Lynda Carter, as Diana Prince, who was a model and actress and represented the thin female body type. The TV show was created into a film in 2017 by Warner Brother Productions that featured Gal Gadot, who had served in the Israeli Defense and was physically built and represented a much stronger version of the character, Diana Prince.

FIGURES



Figure 1. *Pumping Iron*, video film still, 1977. Used with permission of Jeffrey Smith, representative of George Butler, White Mountain Films.

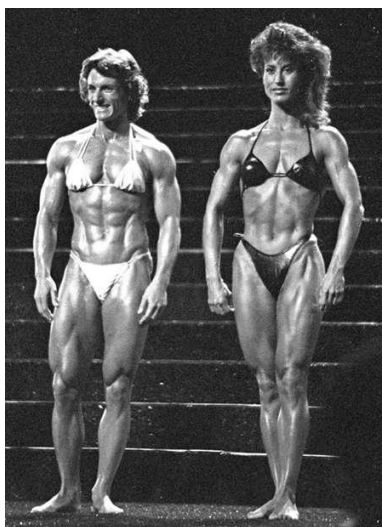


Figure 2. *Pumping Iron II*, video film still, 1985. Bev Francis (left) and Rachel McLish (right). Used with permission of Jeffrey Smith, representative of Gerald Butler, White Mountain Films.



Figure 3. *Cosmopolitan Magazine* – September Issue 1984. Paulina Porizkova, photographed by Francesco Scavullo, copy owned by the author, fair use.

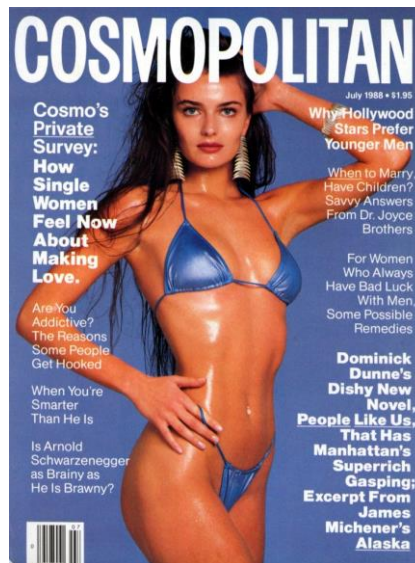


Figure 4. *Cosmopolitan Magazine* – July Issue 1988. Paulina Porizkova, photographed by Francesco Scavullo, copy owned by the author, fair use.

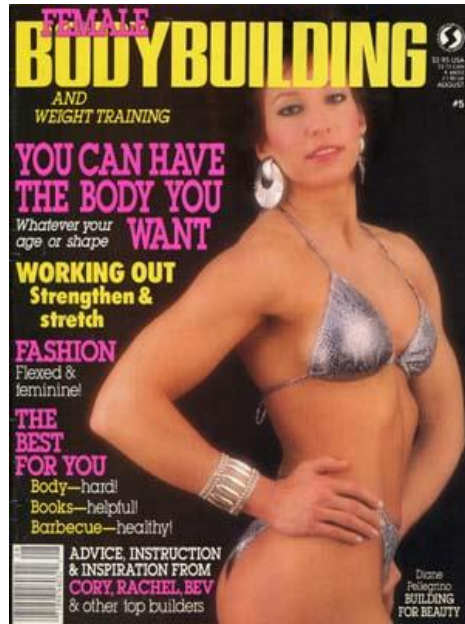


Figure 5. *Women's Physique World* – September 1987, Model: Diane Pellegrino, photographer unknown. <http://vintagemuscleblogs.com/mags>. Accessed March 22, 2018.



Figure 6. Madonna, 1976. Photographed by Peter Kentes in 1976, photographed at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan. <https://imgur.com/Z7pO3cV>. Accessed May 20, 2018.



Figure 7. Madonna, *Like A Virgin* Album Cover, 1984, photographed by Steven Meisel. <http://fistintheair.com/>. Accessed May 20, 2018.

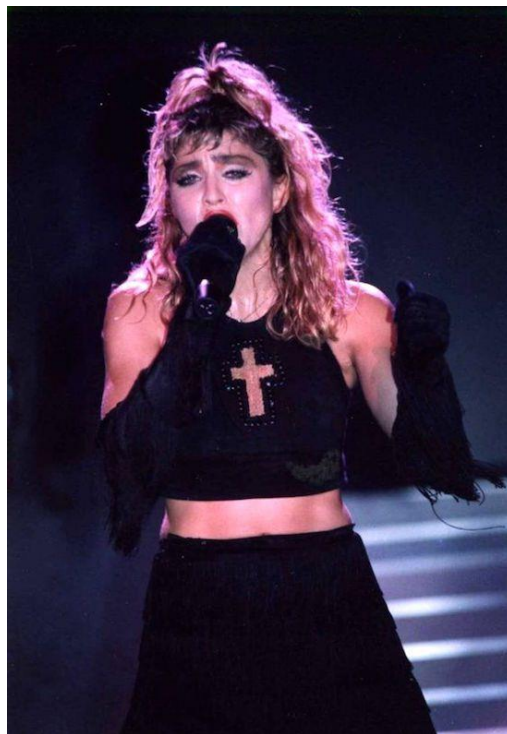


Figure 8. Madonna, *Like A Virgin* Tour, 1985, photographer unknown. Getty Images. www.gettyimages.com. Accessed March 23, 2018.



Figure 9. Madonna, *True Blue* Album Cover Photoshoot, 1986, photographed by Herb Ritts.
<http://www.herbritts.com/#/archive/photo/madonna-true-blue-profile-hollywood-1986/> Accessed May 20, 2018.



Figure 10. Madonna, *Who's that Girl* Tour, 1987. Montreal, Canada, photographer unknown.
Warner Brothers, Inc. 1997/1988. Getty Images. www.gettyimages.com. Accessed May 20, 2018.

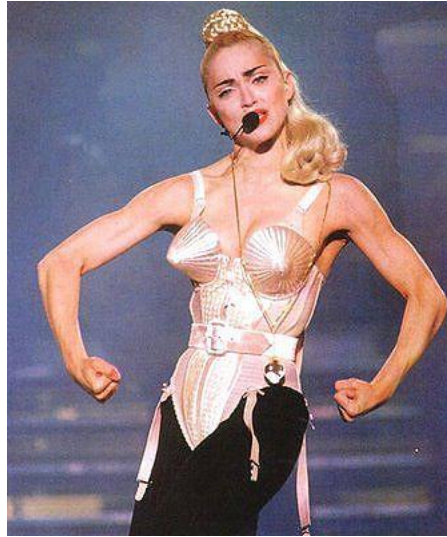


Figure 11. Madonna, *Blond Ambition* Tour, 1990. Corset by Jean Paul Gaultier, photographed by Neal Preston/Corbis. <http://www.bauergriffin.com>. Accessed May 20, 2018.

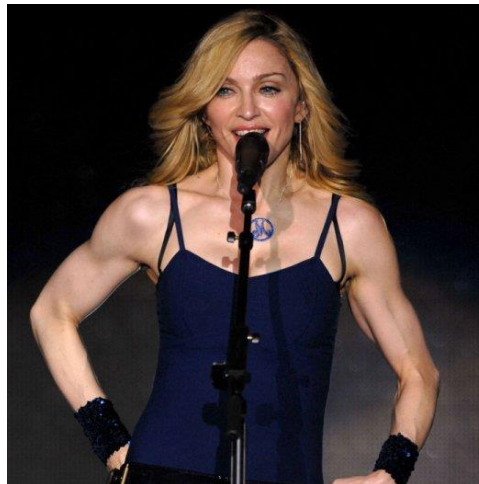


Figure 12. Madonna, Concert in Coachella, May 2006. Getty Images. <https://www.gettyimages.fr/événement/madonna-in-concert-at-2006-coachella-valley-music-and-arts-festival-75150987>. Accessed May 20, 2018.

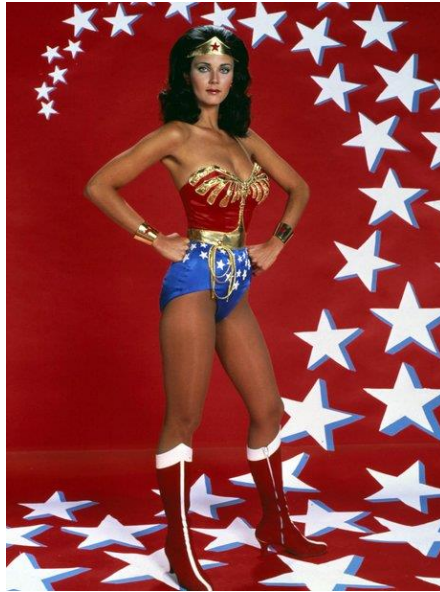


Figure 13. Lynda Carter in the television series, *Wonder Woman*, CBS, American Broadcasting Company, 1975-1979. www.gettyimages.com. Accessed May 20, 2018.



Figure 14. Gal Godot in the film, *Wonder Woman*, Warner Brother Productions, 2017. www.cosmopolitan.com. Accessed May 20, 2018.

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