
The Myth of Femininity in the Sport of Bodysculpting

JAMILLA ROSDAHL

Women with muscular bodies have long been objects of public scrutiny and social contempt. Critical to the problematic of the muscular woman is the question of how femininity fits on a female body that is strong. The muscular woman is said to occupy spaces outside of accepted gender binaries because she challenges the assumption that men are naturally masculine and that women are naturally feminine. This article highlights the fraught and complex project of becoming a woman with muscle. It argues that femininity denaturalises the muscular female body by demanding feminine comportment and spatiality. To highlight the contradictory relationship between muscle and femininity, it examines the sport of bodysculpting. Bodysculpting generates problematic meanings for its participants. The idea of femininity as central to 'womanliness' dictates values that become continuous with women's experiences of their bodies and in the end with their own ideas about who they think they are.

The Problem of the Muscular Woman

There is something profoundly upsetting about a proud, confident, unrepentantly muscular woman. She risks being seen by her viewers as dangerous, alluring, odd, beautiful or, at worst, a sort of raree (*sic*) show. She is, in fact, a smorgasbord of mixed messages. This inability to come to grips with a strong, heavily muscled woman accounts for much of the confusion and downright hostility that often greets her (Chapman and Vertinsky 2010: 11).

The above quote highlights the bewilderment, shock, outrage and profound confusion that a muscular woman rouses with her much bigger, stronger and bolder body. The building of muscle by women generates a number of controversial discussions about the 'nature' of femininity and its complex relationship to muscularity and masculinity (Balsamo 1994; Bolin 1992; Daniels 1992; Guthrie and Castelnuovo 1998; Heywood 1998; Klein 1990; Schulze 1997). Because muscle is associated with people with male bodies and therefore with masculinity, women who participate in male-dominated sports such as bodybuilding, do not conform to standards of 'feminine' identity and displays of 'womanhood' or 'femaleness'. The muscular female body challenges Western understandings of the traditional female body as being 'naturally' feminine in appearance and physique. It problematises the notion of what it means to be a real woman or a real man. A muscular female body challenges the assumption that all men are big, strong and powerful and that all women are naturally smaller, weak, passive and dependent. Thus the combination of muscle and femininity produces wildly perplexing effects.

Women who build muscle: 'femininity or muscularity, what is it to be?'

A fascination with the corporeality of women who build muscle has left contemporary feminists debating the extent to which the muscular woman challenges or reinforces dominant ideas about femininity. Feminist writers such as Bartky (1988: 79) and Heywood (1998: 39-55) argue that muscular women resist normative femininity because they challenge the cultural association of muscularity and strength with masculinity, and the building of muscle by women should therefore be seen as an empowering practice. Bartky (1988: 83) sees women's 'pumping iron' as an oppositional and resistant practice because, she argues, some women bodybuilders seem to have 'little concern for the limits of body development imposed by current canons of femininity'. In a similar move, Heywood (1998) claims that women lifting weights is a specifically third wave feminist strategy that challenges patriarchal control. Women who 'lift' embrace physical power and independence and this makes women feel empowered.

Others have argued that women with muscle paradoxically represent both resistance and compliance to dominant femininity (Bunsell 2013; Bolin 1998; Miller and Penz 1991; Obel 1996). Authors such as St Martin and Gavey (1996), Guthrie and Castelnuovo (1998) and Choi (2003) contend that female bodybuilding is a contradictory social practice which should be considered both as a site of resistance and as a site of femininity's recuperation. The display of 'female hypermuscularity', they argue, challenges assumptions about what is considered to be a naturally female or male body (Choi 2003; St Martin and Gavey; 1996). The female bodybuilder who chooses

to take on this 'look' is deemed to be able to disregard society's ideals. As a result of this, it is assumed that the female bodybuilder is empowered (Wesely 2001).

Writers such as Bolin (1992) argue that women who have larger musculature challenge norms of acceptable femininity because they display female bodies that are much heavier and bigger than other female bodies. However, female bodybuilders are only accepted once they are 'tamed' by beauty (Bolin, 1992). Women are never presented only as resistant and powerful athletes but are instead ambivalently portrayed through sexualised images that trivialise their athletic abilities. Others such as Dworkin (2010: 314-315) maintain that women who build muscle actively define and negotiate the glass ceiling on muscular size and therefore the current condition of normative femininity 'might be tipping toward muscularity rather than away from it'. In other words, because we are seeing and hearing more about women who lift weights and build muscle, we should assume the glass ceiling on muscular women is being pushed upwards.

An overconcentration on the woman's muscular body as a problematic is often expressed through questions such as, 'Beauty or Beast' or 'femininity or muscularity, what is it to be?' (Hargreaves 1994: 146). From these different feminist positions it is straightforwardly assumed that a muscular female body either lacks femininity, challenges femininity or simultaneously does both. These tensions surface further in ponderings such as, 'how far can a female bodybuilder go and still remain a woman?' (Schulze 1990: 9). From this way of thinking, a muscular female body 'blurs' dominant understandings of the body, and 'destabilises' feminine bodily identity to ultimately 'confuse gender' (Sawicki 1991: 64).

What is of particular interest, however, is the way both frames of theorising figure femininity as rather incidental to how the muscular woman is spoken about as a problem. Curiously, it is assumed that femininity is simply a by-product or a consequence of speaking about the muscular woman. I want to ask, is it possible for a muscular woman to transcend a normative definition of 'woman' if, in fact, it is femininity that has made her visible as a deviant cultural identity in the first place? Far from being marginal to this process, I argue that the discourse of femininity has played a pivotal role in constructing and reinforcing the muscular woman as a distinct problem. In other words, femininity has worked to naturalise the idea that a real woman carries a female body which is non-muscular, round and soft in shape.

Much of the feminist literature incites discussions about a crisis surrounding the muscular female body that problematises the oppositional categories of man and woman. One of the effects of this is that theorising about the muscular woman has continued to secure rather than loosen the boundaries surrounding the meanings of the body and gender. This has consequences for how

we have been able to think about women with muscle. By employing the conceptual framework of feminist genealogy I want to fracture the 'normalising' knowledges that shape the historical and social logic surrounding the muscular woman. Here, I draw on Judith Butler (1999) who developed one of the most recent influential critiques of sex and gender. By utilising theoretical and conceptual frames of techniques of power/knowledge regulation and the production of subjectivity, and the theoretical concept of performativity we can understand how the muscular female body becomes regulated in the subject's own attempt to embody femininity.

Butler's theory on gender performativity helps to explain how a woman's sense of self comes to be constructed and regulated by the discourse of femininity made into a truth about woman. In this way, gender performativity reveals how gender only exists insofar as it is ritualistically and repetitively performed (Butler 1999). Femininity, as a historically specific and singular form of human experience, includes a complex system of rules which help create a distinct conception of what it means to be a woman. This system of control functions through various impersonal relations of power that dictate the values, beliefs and behaviours taken up and internalised as a type of normativity experienced by the body (Butler 1999). For women, this ethics of self or the moral codes that explain how they are supposed to constitute themselves as moral subjects of their own actions and desires, have been accepted as natural, normal and real. In other words, women's bodies are primary sites of sexual desire and cultural consumption used as a central cultural resource to live out ideas of self-identity through the deployment of femininity.

The study

Between 2008 and 2011, I undertook ethnographic fieldwork at a local gym. Although I had previous experience of weight training and various sports and exercise, I had never trained for competitive bodysculpting, nor had I ever had any contact with professional trainers, female bodybuilders and bodysculptors. This next section is based on my observations, conversations and reflections both inside and outside the gym on the practice of bodysculpting and the women who decide to train and participate in this competitive and highly contradictory sport. The conversational interviews included here draw our attention to how complex and fraught a project it is to be a muscular woman (names have been changed). They also highlight how femininity as a normative and ideal 'identity' category structures women's experiences inside and outside of training and the 'Ms Figure' bodysculpting competition. This is a competition held in a number of states in Australia and America. Femininity becomes inscribed and ensured through different techniques of power and forms of knowledge about woman, and these envelop the female body through disciplinary codes, norm-governing behaviours and processes of normalisation.

This system of control functions not through repressive practices but through various impersonal relations of power that dictate the values, beliefs and behaviours taken up and internalised as a type of normativity and a mode of relation to self in the experience of the body. For women who build muscle, this ethic of self, or the acts and moral codes that explain how they are supposed to constitute themselves as moral subjects of their own actions and desires, have been accepted as natural, normal and real. Therefore, women's bodies work as arenas for the complex production and reproduction of gendered subjectivities. In the sport of bodysculpting, the implications of these effects are troubling.

The sport of bodysculpting

Bodysculpting is a peculiar sport that emphasises the illogical and contradictory relationship between muscularity and femininity. It can be used to expose femininity as a myth that prevents women from becoming muscular and physically capable. For women involved in bodysculpting, the building and sculpting of muscle is a particular problematic and ambiguous practice (Boyle 2005; Chapman and Vertinsky 2010). It is also a sport where we can clearly see the performativity of femininity made into a truth about woman. Bodysculpting is a sport practiced particularly in Australia and America. It is a sport in which only women can compete. Bodysculpting or body 'figure' competition is an offshoot from bodybuilding where women are required to minimise muscularity on their bodies. In bodysculpting, women are expected to display smaller muscles.

In bodysculpting competitions, women are often penalised for displaying muscles that are too big. Instead they are advised to emphasise femininity, symmetry, proportion, tone, definition and grace rather than physique and muscle mass. The competitive guidelines within the sport are saturated with contradictions (Bolin 1998; Heywood 1998; Hargreaves 1994; Boyle 2005). Writers such as Bolin (1998: 198) have discussed the impact of Western beauty ideals on the sport's judging of female competitors. Various femininity markers, including the display of the female body as youthful, glamorous and sexy, are invoked and even expected in the judging of women (Bolin 1998: 198). Judges have also been found selecting women who are 'athletic, slim, graceful and pretty and ... whose muscles don't show unless flexed' (Bolin 1998: 198).

The emphasis on 'femininity', as specified in the judging criteria, is generated by and deployed towards a system of rules that demands, amongst other things, an hourglass female figure with graceful gestures and 'soft' movements beautified with decorations, high-heeled shoes, and bikinis. These requirements refer to femininity as a factor or as 'a mark' said to differentiate the female body to that of her male counterpart. The sport encourages and reinforces the performance of femininity through beauty adornments, suggestive bodily

forms, the display of submissive gestures and controlled postures as well as restricted movements. For example, whilst men use close fists to display their strength and muscularity, the women are required to use open palms. Fingers and palms are associated with femininity and grace. This bodily display is clearly softer and less aggressive in appearance.

The ideal Western female body is one of display, sexiness, youth and even bloneness, and the effects of these ideas and expectations are clearly visible on the women who compete in bodysculpting. As Bolin (1998: 205), herself a female bodybuilding competitor and cultural researcher notes, 'we are in the midst of somatic history where muscle density is debated by athletic beauty contests and where glamour and sex emerge as champion qualities'.

Female bodysculpting is therefore very different to that of male bodybuilding. In bodysculpting, the expectation of the female body is a combination of not being as big and bulky, having more symmetry and paying more attention to grooming such as hair, makeup and nails. Women have to perform femininity. Often women do this by wearing lipstick, by bleaching their hair, by appearing less muscular, by enhancing their busts and by altering how they walk, move and carry themselves. In male bodybuilding, the male body is simply judged on overall muscularity including structure, proportion, balance, symmetry and definition of each muscle group. Men are not judged on their masculinity or their 'maleness'. When a woman becomes muscular her body confronts the idea that strength, power and other ideas associated with masculinity only emerge 'naturally' out of male bodies. In other words, there are some clear tensions between the judging criteria specification for an ambiguous feminine quality said to exist within the female body, and between a female form that displays muscularity and strength.

'A real woman is decorative'

When I met Jaimee she was 33 and busy raising two children and working as an aerobics teacher five times a week. The following dialogue comes from a conversation that we had about her experience of bodysculpting and how this has impacted on her sense of self and her feelings about her body. For Jaimee, femininity is very closely connected to her sense of being a woman and 'looking better'. It is interesting to note that just before the conversation, Jaimee revealed to me that sculpting her body made her feel more attractive to her husband, and that sculpting and toning her body made her feel beautiful and that this was important to her. For Jaimee, femininity is intimately connected to the bodysculpting sport and also to her own sense of 'feeling' like a woman.

Jamilla: Ok. The next question that relates to these feelings surrounding your body is, what does the word femininity mean to you?

- Jaimee: Umm ... basically being ahh, a woman and being proud of it. Umm, yeah that's a pretty broad question (Laughs). Umm, basically looking like a woman, yeah.
- Jamilla: And does that ever come into play as you're sculpting your body?
- Jaimee: Yeah it did, definitely. Because the whole thing about the bodysculpting is, it's based on looking feminine. So umm, there's other levels that you can take if you want to look masculine and muscular, that's basically physique training. So I was in figure training. So, the figure training was, in the rules that they stipulated, that you had to have muscular definition, be toned, but still hold the feminine look. Ok? They actually even state in the rules that you are to wear high heel shoes on stage and jewellery is permitted. Whereas in body building you don't wear shoes and you don't wear any jewellery. And even with the bikinis that you wear, they like to fancy them up a bit, add a bit of bling.
- Jamilla: Ok. A bit of bling? Yeah so, so this feminine look is this something, an aspect that you enjoyed about the figure competition?
- Jaimee: Absolutely! Absolutely ... because I still looked quite feminine even though I looked quite muscular at the same time, so I didn't feel like I'd lost any of my femininity by building muscle, but just look ... like, I looked better actually!

Although Jaimee struggles to articulate exactly what this femininity is, she does specify that, on the day of the competition, it involves wearing high-heel shoes and jewellery. Here we are reminded that the judging criteria specifies femininity as something that necessarily involves decorating the bodies for the purpose of being judged in the competition. Jaimee understands that femininity is used as a marker for being classified as a 'woman' and she recognises that being identified as a woman is important for her sense of self. The ideas surrounding femininity, as specified by the guidelines, are part of that same grid of cultural intelligibility through which the female body becomes naturalised. For the female body to make sense as a woman, there must be a stable sex that is expressed through the decoration of the body that is oppositionally defined against a non-decorated male body, through the compulsory practice of femininity.

'A real woman doesn't have muscle'

The cultural sex/gender codes that signify womanhood can only cohere when they are situated against notions of a dimorphic sex that in turn specify the signs that denote manhood. These signs are held together by very specific

ways of conceptualising the body and determined by a particular system of knowledge and power. Within this system, muscularity is said to belong only to people with male bodies. Although my first question in the section below appears relatively straightforward, Jaimee struggles to articulate exactly what meaning the term 'muscularity' brings to her.

- Jamilla: Ok, alright, so having spoken a bit about femininity then, I've also got some questions on this term, muscularity. Does the term muscularity mean anything in particular to you?
- Jaimee: Umm ... not too much. Umm, well it did a little bit in the start 'cause (sic) I had to focus a lot on when I was building muscle. But I didn't look too much like ... because the rules state, you now, symmetry and all that sort of thing. Umm, I didn't want to get too bulky and look masculine.
- Jamilla: Ok and so, so how did you then go about avoiding being too masculine? And also what would you consider too masculine then?
- Jaimee: Umm ... basically size that would fit a man more than a woman.

There is a very strong sense here that whatever femininity means to Jaimee, she feels that muscles that are bulky are not desirable since muscle is seen as a natural attribute to a body that displays the cultural signs denoting maleness. To Jaimee, there is a fine line between building muscle and appearing too bulky. The latter threatens how Jaimee is perceived by those around her. Femininity is a discursive regime that operates by speaking about coherent stable biological bodies that do not exist. Therefore embodying muscularity requires a 'private struggle' where women have to comply with their own personal standards while embodying a much lower bodily standard to that expected of femininity. Here, femininity serves to protect and preserve an archaic vision that is said to represent a real woman. The body of this 'real' woman does not carry muscle.

'A real woman is sexy'

Below, Eve draws the discussion into the complex grounds of how femininity forms a certain mode of relation to the self in the experience of the body. In her reflections on her participation in the body sculpting competition, Eve highlights the contradictions and confusions surrounding the bodysculpting judging criteria that are currently in place. It is here that we see much clearer the effects of this normative system on the techniques of the self:

Eve: And I was really disappointed with that (the placing in the competition). Because, I mean, if I had just stepped on the stage and done it, without any conversations beforehand, I would have been probably happy with third.

Jamilla: Ok.

Eve: But I had been to some workshops and a couple of the head judges were there, and they were all like ... oh my gosh we have never seen anyone so striated and so lean and all that stuff, and one of the guys got me thinking about, even the possibility of me winning the natural universe ...

Jamilla: ah yes?

Eve: And it really got my expectations up here, and I said, when I got back, I don't want to be told that you can possibly win, you wanna (sic) be told that there could be anyone out there who is better than you and you gotta (sic) stick to the diet. So well, it filled my head with all this, you know: *how good you are*.

Jamilla: Yes.

Eve: and then on the day when I didn't win, I was really disappointed by that. I went in the novice category and got on the stage with twenty-two other girls and competed and didn't even get a placing, but then I had someone come and find me and say, 'uhm, I really wanted to see you before you left. Don't be disappointed, Out of all the girls you were the most striated lean and hard', and that stuff. But I was told that in body sculpting they are looking for a bit of muscle, but they still want them to look womanly and have a *peachy arse*, he said.

Jamilla: Really?

Eve: And so I suppose it's a really hard thing because you know, in a running race, with the first person across the line it's obvious who the winner is.

Jamilla: Yes.

Eve: whereas in sculpting, it's all a matter of the expectation of what they are looking for on that particular day, and since then my trainer and I have decided that I will enter into 'physique' bodybuilding instead ... But the thing is, I still like the sculpting with the bling and heels. I do like that girly stuff. But to be in sculpting I should come to the stage two kilos heavier and I don't want to train like that I wanna (sic) train in a way that makes me stronger.

Jamilla: To have more body fat and less muscle (in body sculpting)?

Eve: Yeah. They don't want kind of (pause) ... like I was told that my abs were too obvious and too muscly, and they want someone more slender through the abs. Even in the sport itself they are still looking for something else (pause) you know, very feminine, thin.

Eve constructs a sexual ethic of the self that is related to an aesthetics of existence through which she constitutes herself as a moral agent. Eve believes that if she takes on board the judges' comments, works on her body further and moves into another competition category, her 'feminine' self will be given to her and hence, she will win the competition.

Jamilla: What do you think they mean by feminine? What do you think they are looking for?

Eve: To be honest, I don't kow (laughing). 'Cause (sic) I thought on the day, I still looked feminine. But I obviously don't see in the mirror what they see!

Jamilla: Do you think that will change when you do physique?

Eve: I hope so.

What is apparent in this conversation is the tension between the judging criteria specification for an ambiguous 'feminine' quality said to exist within the female body, and between a female form that displays muscularity and strength. On the one hand, Eve was told that with such clear muscularity, structure and definition she had the potential to win the competition, but on the other hand, she was told that, within bodysculpting they are also looking for something else: a rounder, and more 'womanly form' with less muscularity. When Eve did not win, she was confused and upset since she had worked very hard to develop muscularity and strength. She also felt that she had displayed enough femininity.

The expectation of femininity has generated a deep-seated belief that women possess a distinct quality or some authentic womanliness thought to be unique to a body said to be female. The myth of femininity has real consequences for women competitors. Women must work on the 'idea' of what constitutes a 'natural and beautiful woman'. Competitors such as Eve do this by minimising extreme muscularity, aggression, power, strength and control since these elements are associated with maleness, masculinity, and the male bodily form. These requirements function as normative modes of feminine comportment, expression and spatiality that together, and

over time, appear as seemingly 'natural' expressions of the female body on the stage. These expectations are closely tied to ideas on sexuality and desire surrounding the female form forcing the attention and exaggeration of the woman's body as a fleshy erotic and sensual field.

In bodysculpting competitions women cover up their muscular physiques and calm the public outcry by emphasising a hypersexualised femininity posing in stiletto heels, lingerie and even fetish wear. Sex sells. Sexualised representations of the female body legitimise and work as a buffer against the otherwise overwhelmingly strong and powerful female body that stands strong and firm next to a strong and powerful male body. This has consequences for how the female competitors train, use and experience their bodies. In order to win, the women not only have to pass femininity's operating principles, but ultimately, they will have to pass as *natural* women.

The women who compete in bodysculpting are defined and valued based upon their capacity to embody and perform femininity. This is a female form with an hourglass figure, large breasts, a slim waist and, as one judge specified, a 'woman with a peachy arse'. Femininity also operates through more slippery markers such as, softness, grace, thinness, beauty and attractiveness. Femininity is a complex yet fictitious ideational construct upon which the sport's guidelines rest. As a discursive device, it both normalises the non-muscular female body as it renders the muscular female body unnatural (Rosdahl 2010). Femininity very effectively extends and disguises the power relations that are responsible for its own genesis.

In the sport of bodysculpting, the ideas of what constitutes a woman give the female competitor a limited number of choices or functions. She will need to perform as a beautifully decorated object of desire. This means that she must control, cover-up and even work to minimise, through the deployment of femininity, that which is said to make her into a beast: her very own muscularity. As Felkar (2012: 46) argues, the muscular woman becomes 'strategic' in ways to take on femininity. A woman cannot just show off a muscular body. Her muscularity must be paired with conventionally feminine styled hair, make-up and wardrobe to create an idea that she resembles a 'real' woman.

Conclusion: confronting the myth of womanhood

Cultural ideas about womanhood result in the highly problematic messages and the contradictory expectations of the sport mentioned here. Women are told that they are judged on their muscularity yet their own development of 'too much' muscularity will compromise their femininity. If femininity is not displayed, this will affect women's

placing in the competition. The judging of femininity is an ideational construct and a subjective positioning, and therefore completely in the eye of the beholder. This judging is part of a larger domain of knowledge that necessarily conditions and limits what women can do (Rosdahl 2010). The above arguments demonstrate the central problem, not only for the sport of bodysculpting, but for women generally – namely the idea of 'femininity' as a marker of woman.

Femininity forces the female body to operate within a closed space, in a state of inhibited intentionality and with restricted movements that do not allow the full physical capacity of the woman's muscles, power and strength. As Young (1980: 59) suggests, many 'women are trained to perform inefficiently'. A body that performs femininity well, underuses its real capacity both as the potentiality of its physical size and as the real skills and coordination available to it. Following feminists such as Burns-Ardolino (2003), I call for a critical eye towards femininity and those practices that limit bodily intentionalities and to reduce its capacities. There is nothing unnatural about a muscular and strong female body. What is unnatural is preventing and discouraging women from creating their full physical potential in the name of femininity.

References

- Balsamo, A. 1994 *'Feminist Bodybuilding', Women, Sport, and Culture*, Human Kinetics Publishers, Boston.
- Bartky, S. (ed.) 1988 *'Foucault, Femininity and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power'*, in *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on resistance*, Northeastern University Press, Boston.
- Bolin, A. 1992 'Flex Appeal, Food, and Fat: Competitive bodybuilding, gender, and diet', *Play and Culture* 5: 378-400.
- Bolin, A. 1998 *'Muscularity and Femininity: Women bodybuilders and women's bodies in culturo-historical context'*, *Fitness as Cultural Phenomenon*, Waxmann, New York.
- Boyle, L. 2005 'Flexing the Tensions of Female Muscularity: How female bodybuilders negotiate normative femininity in competitive bodybuilding', *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 134-149.
- Bunsell, T. 2013 *Strong and Hard Women: An ethnography of female body-building*, Taylor & Francis Group, London.
- Burns-Ardolino, W. 2003 'Reading Woman: Displacing the foundations of femininity', *Hypatia*, 42-59.
- Butler, J. 1999 *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*, Routledge, New York.
- Chapman, D. L. and Vertinsky, P. 2010 *Venus with Biceps*, Arsenal Pulp Press, Vancouver.
- Choi, P. Y. L. 2003 'Muscle Matters: Maintaining visible differences between women and men', *Sexualities, Evolution & Gender*, 5: 71-81.
- Daniels, D.B. 1992 'Gender (Body) Verification (Building)', *Play and Culture* 5: 378-400.
- Dworkin, S. 2010 ' "Holding Back": Negotiating a glass ceiling on women's muscular strength', *The Politics of*

Women's Bodies, Oxford University Press, New York.

Felkar, V. 2012 'Marginalized Muscle: Transgression and the female bodybuilder', *Ignite*, 4, 1: 40-49.

Guthrie, S and Castelnuovo, S. 1998 *Feminism and the Female Body: Liberating the amazon within*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, CO.

Hargreaves, J. 1994 *Sporting Females: Critical issues in the history and sociology of women's sports*, Routledge, London.

Heywood, L. 1998 *Bodymakers: A cultural anatomy of women's bodybuilding*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick.

Klein, A. 1990 *Little Big Men: Bodybuilding subculture and gender construction*, State University of New York Press, Albany.

Miller, L. and Penz, O. 1991 'Talking Bodies: Female bodybuilders colonise a male preserve', *Quest*, 43: 148-163.

Obel, C. 1996 'Collapsing Gender in Competitive Bodybuilding: Researching contradictions and ambiguity in sport', *International Review of Sport*, 31, 2: 185-201.

Rosdahl, J. 2010 'Sculpting my Feminist Identity and Body: An autoethnographic exploration of bodybuilding and poststructuralist feminist fieldwork' *The Australian Sociological Association (TASA) Annual Conference*, Sydney. TASA.

Sawicki, J. 1991 *Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, power and the body*, Routledge, London.

Schulze, L. 1990 *Fabrications, Costumes and the Female Body*, Routledge, New York.

Schulze, L. 1997 'On the Muscle', *Building Bodies*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick.

St Martin, L. and Gavey, N. 1996 'Women's Bodybuilding: Feminist resistance and/or femininity's recuperation', *Body and Society*, 2: 45-57.

Wesely, J. K. 2001 'Negotiating Gender: Bodybuilding and the natural/unnatural continuum', *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 18: 162-80.

Young, M. 1980 'Throwing Like a Girl: A phenomenology of feminine body compartment motility and spatiality', *Human Studies*, 3, 2: 137-156.

Author

Jamilla Rosdahl is a lecturer in Sex and Gender Studies at the University of the Sunshine Coast. Rosdahl completed her PhD in 2013. Her Doctoral dissertation employs a feminist genealogy that locates the muscular woman within a history of overlapping rules and practices of femininity. It exposes the ways in which the very thinking of what is possible for a female body is foreclosed by discourses that construct, regulate and denaturalise the muscular female body. Specialising in Butlerian performativity theory, Rosdahl's research reflects her interests in sex, gender, sexuality and the body. Drawing on thinkers such as Foucault, Rosdahl links techniques of the body and self with identity formation as interrelated cultural matrices of institutional and psychic practices.

god has left the building

I

god has left the building
we are all boat people now

II

god has left the building
we are all boat people now
we sons & daughters
of the expansive wave
by which empire slashed out &
slaved us into the mirror as shadows
as said by borges in *los seres de los espejos*

III

no god has left the building
but we modern are all boat people now

IV

nothing i can say about
gods & ancestors nothing
i have to learn it from those whose being
has being transformed into shadows
these are the limits mine
these are the limits of my language

V

everything else remains to be seen
i mean to actually be able to see
everything then is outside language
i mean our western languages
i mean our imperial languages

VI

god has left the building
please don't request autographs

VII

one good thing about it
let him go spiritual life is about to begin

SERGIO HOLAS
ADELAIDE, SA