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Herculean Muscle!: The Classicizing Rhetoric of Bodybuilding

MARIA WYKE

I. The Classical Body in Popular Culture

ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER begins his mammoth *Encyclopedia of Modern Bodybuilding,* published in 1985, with a chapter on the evolution of modern bodybuilding, and describes its history as follows:

> at the end of the nineteenth century a new interest in muscle building arose, not muscle as a means of survival or of defending oneself, but a return to the Greek ideal—muscular development as a celebration of the human body.[1]

Classicists may query any definition of a Greek ideal of physical culture that regards ancient athletics as a "celebration of the human body" pure and simple. They see Greek athletics rather as a social institution of the ancient city-state, which fully integrated the aesthetic ideal of the beautifully formed male physique (the *kalos*), with the moral and political ideal of the good male citizen (the *agathos*).[2] Yet, in another respect, Schwarzenegger is right. As a product of the nineteenth century, bodybuilding—the practice of putting highly defined musculature on public display—drew its initial context and much of its validation from the ancient world.

Scarcely any scholarly attention has been paid, however, to this aspect of our classical heritage, because popular culture has traditionally been viewed as just a degenerate version of "high" culture and so hardly worthy of attention in its own right. Furthermore, the classical world in particular has been linked so frequently with the high culture and the ruling classes of subsequent centuries that academics investigating the classical tradition have failed unawares to explore the process whereby the classical body has entered the mass culture of the twentieth century and taken on popular and commercial shape.[3]

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Ever since the work of Roland Barthes on the "mythologies" of modern mass culture and their systematic structuring of experience, any hierarchical distinction between "high" and "low" culture as the subject of academic inquiry has been challenged. Such diverse disciplines as sociology, history, politics, anthropology, film studies, and literary criticism have long been brought together in order to explore popular culture as an important area of exchange between social classes and as a system that displays complex formal structures and a wealth of ideological significance, as well as a concern for economic profit.[4]

Drawing on such studies, we can see more clearly the importance for classicists of confronting the modern constructions and reconstructions of the classical body in mass culture. For the relationship between ancient and modern conceptions of the body may be viewed, paradoxically, as one of interdependence. In the late nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century, large numbers of people have received their first or even their principal contact with the ancient world through its manifestations in popular culture, and classical bodies have pervaded mass culture in circus spectacles, novels, films, cartoons, television programs, and even in consumer goods and advertising. In this way, perceptions of the classical body have been reshaped by its modern mediations. Correspondingly, the modern body, and in particular the muscled male body, has been shaped by notions of the classical. In popular discourses of the muscled body, the designation "classical" operates as a multivalent (and sometimes contradictory) signifier of what is natural, traditional, patriotic, spectacular, artistic, and above all valuable.[5]

In this paper, therefore, I propose to examine particular moments in and aspects of the rhetoric of bodybuilding—its rituals of display, cinematic narratives, iconography, marketing, magazine editorials, and historiography—where the classical and the modern have together worked to construct a muscular male body that carries a high ideological charge and asks for our spectatorship and admiration.

II. An Aetiology for Male Musculature

Towards the end of the last century, the ancient attention to male physical excellence and bodily strength was notably appropriated

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for the supposed revival of the Olympic games. Hellenism operated as a "symbolic glue" to hold together an international competition that, in its proclamations of sport for sport's sake, bore scarcely any relation to its Greek model.[6] In that respect, the modern games were singularly distinct from the ancient Greek institutions of the body which saw its oiling and exercise in the gymnasium as a political display of citizenship, or as an appropriate training for warfare, and saw the competitions of the Olympic games as an aspect of interstate rivalry.[7]

Competitive bodybuilding is inherently an even more problematic institution than the modern Olympic games for which to seek sources in the ancient world. Concerned with the display of static moments of extreme physical tension,[8] male bodybuilding involves the pleasures of looking at a muscular body that performs no other function than the display of itself. Yet, as bodybuilding developed during the nineteenth century out of the feats of strength exhibited in the circuses and funfairs of Europe and the United States, its rituals of display were constantly bound up in a similarly classicizing rhetoric.

The popularity of "antiquity" in the theatrical, literary, and educational worlds of the nineteenth century[9] extended even to exhibitions of strength and horsemanship. The strongmen who performed in the nineteenth century were referred to as "Kings of Force" and were often provided with stage names such as Hercules, Apollo, Romulus, Remus, or Cyclops. They carried the classicizing attributes of animal skins and a club, or were set in some form of classical scenario such as a "Roman" spectacle, replete with lions, elephants, and gladiators.[10] Equestrian programs incorporated circus artists with well-developed physiques who rode around the ring in skintight fleshings and posed on horseback in attitudes drawn from classical or pseudo-classical statuary. Criers gave each pose a title such as "Ajax Defying the Lightning" or "The Fighting and Dying Gladiator."[11] As the century progressed, so circus programs began to include acts that had no pretensions to the display of skills such as weightlifting or equestrianism, but were instead wholly focused on the representation of classical figures familiar from statues and paintings. In a bill of August 1828, for example, Andrew Ducrow was advertised as due to perform in a Dublin circus an entertainment known as "The Living Statue or Model of Antiques." Ducrow's act comprised nineteen poses

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including seven of "Hercules Wrestling with the Nemean Lion" or "Hercules Throwing Lysimachus into the Sea."[12]

The broad exploitation of classical models in the popular culture of the nineteenth century helped provide a supposedly natural and traditional (and, therefore, seemingly unproblematic) context for circus exhibitions of the muscled male body. The spectacular presentation of that body was also justified by an appeal to the terminology and the architecture of "arenas" and "amphitheaters." The circus buildings themselves were sometimes decorated in a classical vein with, for example, Corinthian columns and a winged Pegasus, or they were ornamented, on their boxes and in their lobbies, with painted classical scenes.[13] The various appeals to classical architecture and statuary in the display of the male body gave the veneer of "high" art and instructional purpose to this new form of popular entertainment. Thus, in response to such strategies, a contemporary reviewer of Ducrow's classical poses identified the statues from which he apparently drew his inspiration, and argued that the exhibition of his poses provided appropriate models both for the artist and the student of the classics.[14]

The popular history of bodybuilding, however, centers around the figure of Eugene Sandow, who is treated as both a starting-point for and a validation of the practice of displaying male muscles. Eugene Sandow began his career as a professional strongman and weight lifter in Europe, went to America in the 1890s, and was promoted there by Florenz Ziegfeld. But his appearances in America rarely focused on lifting weights, bending iron bars, or wrestling lions. Instead, wearing only a fig leaf and some bronze body paint, he would step into a glass case and perform, on an animal skin, a series of classical poses set to music.[15] Thus the majority of photographs of Sandow's routine show him posing in imitation of a classical statue rather than performing a feat of strength. In a shot of Sandow posing as the Farnese Hercules, for example, an effort has been made to reconstruct the alignments of the purportedly classical body, from the stance and the animal skin down even to the definition of Sandow's abdominal muscles. Only the fig leaf seems to operate as a concession to the dominant social conventions of the late nineteenth century. (See figs. 1 and 2.)

Furthermore, when Ziegfeld introduced the theatrical classicism of Sandow's posing routine (his Farnese Hercules, his Discobolos, his Dying Gladiator) at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, he dubbed Sandow not the world's "strongest man" but

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the world's "most perfect man," and in publicity releases he claimed that Sandow had been a weakling until a classical statue of Hercules had inspired him to embark on a program of self-improvement. Both in Sandow's rituals of display and in Ziegfeld's associated publicity, an appeal to the clichés of classical art, and an assumed familiarity with them, directed Sandow's audiences to admire his muscular physique for its aesthetic qualities rather than for its physical capabilities. At the same time, audiences could acknowledge their own sophistication in the act of recognition and admiration of high art. The appeal to "self-improvement" then gave an additional, moral legitimacy to the practice of building and displaying highly defined musculature.

Although the contests which sprang up in the wake of Sandow's success occasionally required contestants to perform some physical feat, the winners were largely admired for the visual development of their bodies. The alignments of the classical body were appropriated by the institutions of bodybuilding as a timeless ideal, not of strength and functionality, but of beauty, proportion, and symmetry. In competitions, it was against this ideal that judges would match the contestants. Thus at Dresden, in 1907, a contest was held for the title of "Modern Apollo" in which the prize was awarded to the competitor whose physical development was thought to match most closely the assumed Greek model.[16] This classicizing ideal was then commercialized and sold to the public at large through magazines, such as Bernard Macfadden's *Physical Culture*. The products advertised in such magazines laid claim to turning any man into a modern Hercules.[17]

From the claims to inspiration, through the actual poses, to the competition goals, the rhetoric of classicism imbued the practices of bodybuilding in the 1890s and presented the cultivation of male musculature as a high and improving art at which all men should aim. That rhetoric provided the foundation on which later histories of bodybuilding, such as Schwarzenegger's *Encyclopedia,* could rest their justifications for putting male musculature on display.

III. A Narrative for National Heroes

The final years of the last century saw the introduction of a new medium in which the display of male musculature would take on a

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more sustained and complex relation to the contours of the classical body. For it is cinema, more than any other medium, that turned the bodybuilder into a classical hero. The still-photographer's camera literally focused on the bodybuilder's visual image, but the narrative of feature films also attributed to muscles dressed in a cloak and sandals the power to save nations and innocent princesses.

From its inception, silent cinema explored the muscular male body and set its movement in supposedly appropriate narrative contexts such as the circus, the public stage, or the ancient arena.[18] Already in 1879, athletes had been photographed by Eadweard Muybridge in stances copied from ancient sculpture,[19] and Thomas Edison in the 1890s had filmed the muscular poses of Eugene Sandow using his Kinetograph machine.[20] The short films of the 1890s, such as that of Sandow, consisted largely of compositions of men and were made principally for the profit to be gained from amusing a working-class market. Documenting vaudeville acts and released in vaudeville houses, they continued to elaborate popular conventions for displaying the muscled, semi-naked male form.[21]

From the 1910s, however, silent cinema attempted to surmount the class and sexual barriers which separated it from the category of "respectable" entertainment.[22] The popular conventions which it had borrowed from the circus for the display of the muscled male were now positioned in narratives operating on a larger scale and at a higher cultural level. These more elaborate narratives were frequently borrowed from nineteenth-century historical novels, provided with sumptuous and spectacular sets, and then shown in specialized theaters. Thus, while the popular circus acts of the late nineteenth century appropriated the classical world in order to lend authority and dignity to its exhibitions of strength, the silent cinema drew extensively on narratives set in a Greco-Roman context in order to win over the theater-going classes to the new industry.[23] "Authentic" and "instructive" became key terms in the marketing of these feature-length films to a new audience of the educated elite. Enrico Guazzoni, for example, exalted the didactic function of his film *Marcantonio e Cleopatra,* in the *Giornale d'Italia* of autumn 1913, emphasizing the research which had gone into his reconstruction of the ancient city of Rome,[24] and claimed for his film *Quo Vadis?* (1913) that even the smallest detail would be in conformity with the strictest historical truth.[25]

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The genre of silent films set in the classical world which attempted to give the new cinematic medium a form of literary nobility and a grandiose register developed out of the nineteenth-century tradition of historical novels, paintings, and opera. The classical films were accordingly heavily influenced by theatrical codes of representation, borrowing from them the illusion of a stage-proscenium, employing stage actors and elaborate musical scores, and adapting intertitles from the scripts of stage plays.[26] Yet, by continuing their engagement with the conventions of a popular cultural tradition through the reproduction of the spectacles of the circus with its horse pageants and exhibitions of force, they effectively addressed conflicts and tensions between the "high" and "low" cultural experiences of early twentieth-century society.[27]

Based on a novel by the Nobel Prize-winning author Henryk Sienkiewicz, Guazzoni's film *Quo Vadis?* featured the attempts of a Roman patrician Vinicius to rescue his beloved from condemnation to the arena. The feature-length film culminates in the exposure of Vinicius' honorable war wounds to the sympathy of the spectators, now massed at the arena in order to watch the torment of the Christians whom Nero has condemned. Yet the film also highlighted the muscular feats of the humble servant Ursus, who battles a bull in the arena in order to save the young Christian girl from death. Ursus fighting the bull established a long-lasting cinematic code of the good and pious strongman who grapples with the brutality of a tyrant and simultaneously saves the life of an innocent young girl. In the narrative context of *Quo Vadis?*, it is Ursus' physical victory over the bull as much as Vinicius' symbolic display of his past patriotism that leads to a public outcry by the Roman spectators against the persecutions instigated by Nero.[28]

By virtue of its broad appeal, *Quo Vadis?* played extremely successfully during the pre-war period in both Europe and the United States, and the figure of the ancient strongman Ursus was ever after identified with the Italian actor Bruto Castellani who played him.[29] Thus the more complex, novelistic classicism which now overlaid cinematic displays of strength engaged the strong male body in issues of political organization, religion, and class. A sense of honorable purpose was restored to the strongman whose body shape and associated virtuous acts were pitted against the decadence and languor of a grotesquely shapeless oppressor.[30] The expansive frame of the cinematic screen and the historical sweep of

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its dramatic action gave to the movement of a muscular body an epic and heroic register,[31] while the inclusion of a vast cheering audience internal to the classical narrative helped the external audience in the cinema to identify with the grand spectacle they were witnessing.

Similarly, Giovanni Pastrone's epic film *Cabiria* of 1914 reached a wide audience in the United States as well as Europe.[32] It played to an educated elite in its association with the name of the great Italian poet Gabriele d'Annunzio, whose name was linked with a large number of poetic intertitles.[33] Audiences were informed through the associated publicity material that Pastrone regretted he had not been able to study the classics but had spent a great deal of time at the Louvre researching sets and costumes. *Cabiria* also played to a popular audience, however, in the construction of a strongman Maciste who, alongside his master, the Roman patrician Fulvius Axilla, rescues a virtuous Sicilian girl from the evil empire of Carthage, where she has been taken prisoner during the Punic Wars of the third century BC. (See fig. 3.) In this connection, it was said that the Genoese dockworker Bartolomeo Pagano (who had been chosen to play the role of the muscular hero after a nationwide search) could barely read or write, yet understood instinctively his role as the avenger of wrongs.[34]

The use of an untrained dockworker to play the part of Maciste imparted a populist tone to the "classical" strongman and gave the mass audience of *Cabiria* a stake in both the ancient and modern history of Italy.[35] When this classicizing formulation of a muscular male physique was unveiled in the cinema of the prewar period, the character of Maciste was elevated in Italy into a symbol of patriotic recovery. His services to the Roman state were witnessed by an audience which, in 1914, was gripped by a wave of imperialistic fervor after the Italian government had attempted to reclaim Tripolitania from the invading Turks. So Turkey was to be compared to ancient Carthage, and Italy with virtuous Rome, while Maciste embodied the triumph of *Romanità* through the application of justified force.[36]

So popular was this cinematic image of the strongman as classical savior, and so clear was the modern analogy, that Pastrone's next film now bore the strongman Maciste as its protagonist and began in the modern world. A distressed girl takes refuge from her would-be assailants in a cinema, where she sees the film *Cabiria* and observes the audience clapping when the earlier film's hero

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breaks open his prison bars. The girl decides to visit the actor Pagano at his production house in Turin to ask for his help, but—as the intertitles make clear—she addresses her plea not to the actor but to his cinematic character Maciste. Classical hero and modern strongman are thus completely assimilated as champions of the innocent, and the historical boundaries between the classical and the modern muscular body are completely effaced.

The cinema of the 1900s and 1910s incorporated into a single figure the classical athlete, the modern strongman, and the triumph of physical force. The ideological implications of this network of associations were brought out by Italian intellectuals of the period. Giovanni Bertinetti, for example, wrote a novel for adolescents with the title *The Strongest Boy in the World* and collaborated on the screenplays for several of the strongman films. He also campaigned to promote the genre in an article entitled "Cinema, the School of the Will and Energy" published in *La Vita cinematografica* of 1918. He argued that cinema was the best school to teach Italy's youth the patriotic lessons of strength and action.[37]

It comes as no surprise then that Mussolini later appropriated for himself the visual continuation of cinema's muscular superhero Maciste, and in his public persona conjured up the pedigree of the cinematic strongmen and their classicizing validations of force.[38] For the exaltation of nationalistic feelings remained a key term in the rhetoric of the cinematic narratives of ancient history. The musculature of the classical body displayed on the screen became a site on which could be constructed the emerging patriotic consciousness of 1920s Italy, while its very classicism helped legitimate the forms which that national identity took.[39]

IV. An Alibi for Homoerotic Art

While the muscularly defined and classicized body of feature-length cinematic narratives became an expression of national identity in 1920s Italy, the classicized body of the physique magazines and film shorts which were circulated privately in 1950s America and Europe became largely an expression of sexual identity. After the second world war, a new form of physique magazine began to be produced for wide circulation among the gay community of the United States. During a period of growing demand for cultural legitimacy, it was nonetheless necessary to employ clever circumventions for any representations of homoeroticism if they were to

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remain above ground and be distributed through the legitimate market. For, during the fifties and early sixties, the so-called "beefcake" photographers were frequently prosecuted and convicted in the American courts if they were felt to have exceeded the strict requirements of state censorship. The rhetoric of classicism was then one of several such circumventions employed to safeguard mass-produced but privately consumed visualizations of gay desire.[40]

Those bodybuilding magazines of the 1950s that appear to have been aimed at a gay market, such as *Physique Pictorial,* were replete with classicizing visual depictions and verbal descriptions of the muscled male body. Drawing on the conventions of nineteenth-century gay pornography, the physique photographers of the 1950s merged their pictorial aesthetics and pseudo-classical idealism with the already classicized, but populist, conventions of bodybuilding iconography, to produce a commercialized, mail-order nude.[41] The models were often surrounded with or propped against paraphernalia designed to signal the ancient world, such as columns or drapes, dressed in sandals and a skimpy gladiatorial skirt, and equipped with a bow, a spear, a sword, or a discus. Many of these photographs offered only the slightest, playful hint at a classical inheritance, only the faintest allusion to, for example, the pose and the contours of the Farnese Hercules. They concentrated instead on highlighting the erotic suggestiveness of their classical props. (See fig. 4.)

It was often the captions to these photographs that expressed more directly the desired association with the classical body and, particularly, its sculpted forms. Thus the readers of *Physique Pictorial* of autumn 1956 were informed that Vic Carlisle, the male model they could admire in the accompanying picture, was twenty years old, five-feet eight-inches tall, weighed 151 pounds, worked in the shipping department of a Los Angeles sports store, read and collected the classics, and spent many hours in art galleries studying sculpture and the Old Masters. Similarly, captions in a *Young Physique* of 1960 described one photograph as offering "a study in classical physique contrasts," the body "Apollinaire" versus the "Herculean" mold, described the muscles of a model's back as tapering "gracefully from deltoids to waist in a very long Praxitelean line," and claimed that "the sculptured ruggedness of Herculean muscles is more dramatically highlighted in attitudes of

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torsion and strife."[42] As early as 1940, Al Urban, who subsequently supplied many of the pictures for such physique magazines as these, was recorded as stating that he had long been fascinated with the Greek ideal of the perfect male body and that "the most genuine standard of male perfection is to be found in the Doryphoros by Polycletus [sic]."[43] The physique magazine editorials of the 1950s continued this appeal to perfection, idealism, art, and the classics. On one occasion, for example, the editors of *Physique Pictorial* claimed that they approached physical culture specifically from an aesthetic point of view, within a front and inside cover displaying for sale contemporary paintings of "Spartan Soldiers Bathing" and "The Baths at Rome."[44]

The rhetoric of classicism, most evidently in this context, provided a rationalization for the pleasurable contemplation of the semi-naked male body. Formulated and vaguely shaped as an imitation of classical sculpture, appealing to the legitimacy of "high" art, a man's body could now be looked at, admired, and even desired safely, without appearing to exceed the constraints imposed by state censorship.[45]

Short films were also circulated privately throughout the gay community in this period. These films continued, for some years, to exploit the justification that the ancient world seemed to provide for the pleasures of looking at male musculature.[46] It would be more appropriate here to describe their classicizing procedures as a form of alibi for, rather than denial of, homoeroticism, since the films often played up the superficiality of their classical veneer or even subtly alluded to the very homoeroticism with which ancient Greece was itself associated. Distributed in 1954, *Days of Greek Gods* is set in the present and stars three bodybuilders who discuss ways of spending their afternoon. One says that he has just read a book about the Greek gods and suggests that the three attempt to imitate the poses of the statues which his book contains. In succession, stills of the sculptured contours of Hercules, Narcissus, and Apollo dissolve into static imitations of them by their living "counterparts," whose fixity in a moving medium underlines the narrative pretence for male display.[47] Furthermore, the accompanying anecdotes about the gods or their sculpted representations subtly hint at the erotic possibilities of this short filmic narrative. The spectator is informed that the statue of Apollo depicts him as a vigorous and triumphal youth, naked but for his cloak, that Hercules once dressed in women's clothing, and

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(perhaps most pointedly) that Narcissus pined away in desire for himself. When the spectator finally sees the bodybuilders depart offscreen for a shower, he has been sufficiently encouraged to imagine the outcome.[48]

Other film shorts parodied the extravagant Hollywood epics set in the classical world which were being widely distributed in the cinemas of this period, at the same time as they appropriated the epic films' narrative conventions to address—at some remove, and often with evident humor—issues of violence, oppression, and self-assertion in the realm of sexual identity. *The Captive* is set in an ancient world where two men are taken prisoner while on their way to Rome to pay tribute to an unspecified Caesar. Their captor chains one prisoner to a pillar, removes some of the prisoner's clothing, and examines the hardness of his pectoral muscles. Impressed, however, by the bravery of his captives, the official declares—in the grandiose style of Hollywood epic—"you have won your people's freedom, go in peace." The spectator then witnesses the happy couple's departure, one still clad only in his posing strap. The classical setting and its by now familiar association with muscular bodies both justifies the display and close inspection of the male form, and authorizes a triumphant narrative closure.[49]

One film, intriguingly entitled *Ben-Hurry* and therefore distributed some time after 1959, actually places its characters on the studio set of an epic film. Here three bodybuilders play bodybuilders taking a break from playing gladiators in a feature film which is imagined as being underway offscreen. Thus the short film's backdrop of a Roman villa and the classical costumes that the "extras" wear are marked out precisely as nothing but costumes and a film set. After much horsing about, including the removal of their gladiatorial skirts to reveal their posing straps beneath, the extras hear the call "all girls and gladiators on set please!" Reluctantly, they restore their costumes and head offscreen to play at being Romans, as one admonishes "Ben, hurry!" Such self-referential techniques, the manifest theatricality, and the playful pretence now attached to the scenario, effectively decode the classicizing stratagems for compliance with society's norms which the gay subculture had long been using.[50] Moreover, given that the bodybuilders cease their fun and games at the very moment that they are summoned onto a classical set, the short film's narrative suggests that male bonding—with all its erotic potential—takes place in fact in the

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here and now, and is only obstructed (beyond its enabling fiction) by any association with the classical past.

In the 1960s, after the "beefcake" photographers had achieved a variety of successes in the American courts, and with the subsequent collapse of legal barriers against more sexually explicit representations of the male form, the magazines directed at a gay market could now display full-frontal male nudes, and the visualization of gay desire on film could be played explicitly and publicly to a collective audience in urban cinemas.[51] Classicizing circumventions for the homoerotic display of the male body accordingly disappeared as did, shortly thereafter, the bodybuilding alibi itself.

V. An Iconography for Hercules

Curiously, at the same time as classicizing circumventions disappeared from evidently homoerotic representations of the muscled male form in the late 1950s and early 1960s, so the cinematic genre of the historical epic which identified the modern strongman as classical hero reached the height of its popularity. The strongman of the silent era had been incorporated into a classical, novelistic narrative in order to achieve for cinema a high status equal to that of theater. This time it was the professional bodybuilder, cloaked in classical costume, who was called upon to prove cinema superior to the new medium of television as the best form of popular entertainment.

When the United States withdrew from the production in Italy of relatively cheap epic films, such as *Helen of Troy* (1956), the Italian film industry, unable to compete with the now imported Hollywood extravaganzas, was forced to look for new gimmicks to feed its large domestic market. It consequently looked to its earlier successful—and exportable—combination of muscle and classicism. Assisted by the defensive tactics of the technology of color and the wide screen, the industry dressed new, even more muscularly defined, heroes in a diluted form of classical trapping which now signified "spectacle" rather more than "sophistication."[52]

Thus, in 1957, Pietro Francisci brought to the Italian screen in Eastmancolor and Dyaliscope a Hercules played by the American bodybuilder Steve Reeves, and heralded a whole series of muscleman epics now known collectively as "pepla."[53] Between 1957 and 1964 (by which time the popularity of the classical film had

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been superseded by the Western), approximately ten percent of Italian film production fell into this generic category. More than 170 such films were made and successfully released throughout Europe and even in the United States. By 1965 there were twenty films in distribution featuring a muscle-bound "Hercules," twenty-four featuring "Maciste," and eight featuring "Ursus."[54]

Aimed primarily at audiences in the *seconda* and *terza visione* circuit where seat prices were kept fairly low, the Italian muscleman films of the 1950s and 1960s presented to a huge, largely working-class market the professional bodybuilder as classical hero.[55] Standardized and formulaic, the films endowed the classical heroes such as Hercules with the comic strip qualities of a Superman. The cinematic Hercules is the faithful servant of the status quo, the incarnation of legitimated power and force, and his cinematic labors often resonate with problems of the Cold War era.

To take just one example, Pietro Francisci's *Le fatiche di Ercole* incorporated a whole array of feats of strength within a narrative that had the mythological hero helping to restore Jason to his rightful place on the throne of Jolco [sic]. As an incarnation of the classical hero, Steve Reeves was seen uprooting a tree to stop the runaway chariot of the princess Iole, bending an iron spear when asked to prove that he is indeed Hercules, demonstrating how to use a bow and hurling a discus beyond the horizon, wrestling a Nemean lion and a Cretan bull, holding up a teetering statue which might otherwise crush his shipmates and destroy the Argo, repressing the mutiny of the crew by lifting and tossing aside its recalcitrant members, overpowering some aboriginal apemen of Colchis, and, at the film's climax, breaking out of his prison cell to wrap his chains around the palace columns and pull the entire edifice down over the heads of the usurper's soldiers.[56]

Francisci delineated his mythological hero in a manner with which his mass public could identify. At one point in the film's narrative, Hercules renounces his right to immortality because he aspires to the condition of humanity and a family life with Iole. In at least this respect he becomes an Everyman, even if one of epic proportions. Playing Hercules, Steve Reeves incarnated a muscular hero of noble ancestry who is nonetheless disposed to fight on behalf of the people. He enacted the triumph of a popular justice, defined conservatively as a return to the status quo and achieved through the application of pure physical force.[57]

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Dialogue, space, and color all proclaimed clearly to the film's audience that physical strength resided on the side of the good. While the tyrant Peleus appears within the shadows of the palace walls, and his murderous henchman Eurystheus emerges from its murky depths, the liberator Hercules is introduced outdoors, bathed in full, bright sunlight.[58] "Thank you, and I thank the gods for providing me with such a strong man when I needed him" are the first words spoken in the film, when the princess Iole addresses her gratitude to Hercules for rescuing her from the headlong flight of her chariot. The camera, in the meantime, rests on a shot of Steve Reeves straining his pectoral muscles. Similarly, later in the film, when Hercules is displaying his prowess in athletic contests, the camera looks up at a bare-chested Steve Reeves posed high up on a rock. A voice-off meantime cries out "Look at him!"—effectively encouraging *both* the Greek spectators within the narrative *and* the modern spectators in the cinema to gaze upon a muscular hero who is "as pure as sunlight" and whose strength is "a challenge to all evil." This simple moral theme is reaffirmed at the film's conclusion, when a voice-over proclaims majestically that Hercules and his beloved Iole are leaving the liberated city to "find a new happiness among the race of men, where justice and peace will be with them again."[59]

Moreover, the rhetoric of good versus evil which gained a mythic dimension in *Le fatiche di Ercole* was that which had occupied the West from the start of the Cold War era. When the contours of an American bodybuilder were dressed in the costume of a classical hero, the resulting modern Hercules symbolized the victory of Beauty, Virility, *and* the American Way over a villainy depicted as monstrous, weak, and decidedly "Asiatic."[60] Through the film's classical veneer, through the traditional association of Hercules with strength and moral goodness, a seemingly natural link was forged between muscularity, masculinity, justice, and the supremacy of the West.

In this and subsequent films of the peplum cycle, however, muscular display was given priority over motivations and meanings. The cinematic Hercules is a man of externals, of action. Remaining true to its origins in the circus, *Le fatiche* reiterated and amplified the nineteenth-century codifications of the strong body. Hercules, in his fight for freedom from tyranny and for the rights of the family man, lifts and throws heavy objects, breaks chains, bends iron bars, and wrestles lions, magnified spectacularly by the

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wide screen process of Dyaliscope.[61] The muscleman film also imitated the practices of bodybuilding in offering momentarily static poses of huge and proportioned musculature. In the final dramatic stages of *Le fatiche di Ercole,* for example, when Hercules pulls down the palace of the tyrant, he is spectacularly and statically framed within its columns flexing the lateral spread which had earlier won for Steve Reeves the titles of Mr. America, Mr. World, Mr. USA, and Mr. Universe. Magazine articles and press releases concerning the film frequently fetishized the muscular contours of the modern bodybuilder in the act of listing his vital statistics (height 6 feet 1 inch, weight 203 pounds, chest 47 1/2 inches, waist 29 inches, biceps 17 1/2 inches, calves 18 inches). Cinematic editing fetishized the contours of the classical hero that Reeves played by presenting close-ups of his body being subjected to the admiring gaze of both male and female spectators internal to the mythological narrative.[62]

The sexual ambiguity of this image, which mapped a classical hero onto the contours of a professional bodybuilder, had a vital role to play in the success of *Le fatiche di Ercole,*[63] at the same time as it highlighted contemporary anxieties about masculinity, narcissism, and homosexuality. The narratives of the peplum cycle asserted a conventional sexuality, according to which the muscled male body dressed in classical costume was not marked explicitly as the erotic object of another male's attention. In *Le fatiche di Ercole,* for example, it is only the princess Iole who is overtly structured as desiring the body of Hercules, while the gaze of Peleus and the other Greeks is presented as motivated solely by admiration for and envy of that body's physical capabilities.[64] The potential eroticism of the male gaze on the body of the muscled hero could not, however, be entirely repressed. For, in addition to the already mentioned structures of fetishism on which the muscleman genre drew (including stopping the narrative flow in order to recognize the pleasure of displaying the male form), the peplum cycle was steeped in the same conventions, practices, and personalities as the more explicitly homoerotic representations of the classical body that had belonged to the gay subculture of earlier years.

Many of the models who had first appeared in gay physique magazines subsequently became stars of the Italian muscleman epics, while bodybuilders who played classical roles in the films were then featured in those magazines. The center pages of an *American Apollo* for 1959, for example, contained a synopsis of

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the plot of *Le fatiche di Ercole* and stills of Steve Reeves posing as Hercules.[65] Furthermore, the muscleman genre proved itself open to appropriation and rereading by the very subculture from which it had borrowed some of its actors and techniques. The preferred or dominant heteroeroticism of its narratives had been clearly outmaneuvered when, in the late sixties, an Italian peplum with the English title *My Son, the Hero* was shown at the Apollo theater in Los Angeles as part of one of the earliest programs of gay films to be played in a public cinema. The event was advertised in the *Los Angeles Times* as an opportunity for a great "camp out."[66]

Most significant in the popularization of the bodybuilder as a classical hero, and of the ancient Hercules as shaped according to the contours of a Mr. Universe, was the huge commercial success achieved by the first film in this cycle of muscleman epics, Francisci's *Le fatiche di Ercole* and his follow-up film *Ercole e la regina di Lidia*. Both films were heavily promoted and highly successful in the United States as well as in Italy and unexpectedly raised bodybuilding to big business.[67] The American film promoter Joseph E. Levine spent a million dollars on the publicity campaign for the first film alone, which he geared primarily towards the young, and within a short space of time had recouped his investment many times over. Almost twenty years later the film was still appearing in *Variety*'s listings of the biggest money-makers of all time.[68]

Each film opened at hundreds of cinemas on the same day and was promoted through television plugs, radio commercials, newspaper and national magazine advertisements, and huge billboard displays.[69] The key artwork comprised an impression of Steve Reeves standing posed beneath the American titles for the films—respectively *Hercules* and *Hercules Unchained*. Displaying the bodybuilder's pectoral muscles as he pulls on chains or holds iron doors ajar, the posters were accompanied by slogans: "fabulous feats of human power the screen has never shown before!"; "spectacles of massive might beyond any ever known before!"; or "mighty saga of the world's mightiest man!"[70] (See fig. 5.)

Describing Reeves as the perfect specimen of manhood, as built exactly like the powerful Greek heroes of old, the rhetoric of the films' publicity even asked that the modern bodybuilder's muscles be compared to those of classical Greek statuary.[71] Many cinemas promoted the films by holding competitions to find their local "Hercules," and on one particular occasion Mae West was called

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upon to select the "Mr. Hercules" most closely approximating the supposed physical perfection and Greek ideal embodied in the former Mr. America, Steve Reeves.[72] Newspapers carried anecdotes about the films which claimed, for example, that Italian teenagers were beginning to sport beards similar to that worn by Reeves on screen and were flocking to his farm outside Rome to set eyes on the man they always called "Ercole."[73]

The market in the United States was also flooded with merchandising—Hercules comic books, Herculean hamburgers, Test Your Strength machines, statuettes, sport shirts, and even a record of the film's sound track.[74] Yet all bore the imprint of the body of Steve Reeves rather than any classical representation of Hercules. Thus the mass audience of these films was encouraged in every conceivable way to identify the ancient Hercules with, and even subordinate him to, the figure of the modern bodybuilder.

The modern bodybuilder has thus borrowed much of his body image from the classical world, but he has also added to popular conceptions of ancient bodily identity itself. For, in the development of the cinematic genre of the strongman, once the classical body was converted into a mass cultural commodity and produced and distributed by a profit-making industry, the professional bodybuilder *became* the classical athlete or mythic strongman, and popular notions of Hercules were shaped along the contours of the bodybuilder who played him on the screen.

VI. A Justification for an Olympic Sport

In the light of this cinematic tradition and the interdependence it has generated in popular culture between ancient and modern conceptions of the muscled male body, it is hardly surprising that the rhetoric of ancient precedent continues to be used to validate the practice of bodybuilding today. For it was the cinematic Hercules who underscored the visual benefits of the muscled body, giving to the modern bodybuilder an association with the values of the classical past and with the advocacy of the "American way of life," and it was the cinematic Hercules who launched bodybuilding into the realms of vast commercial profit. Moreover, when arguments began to be advanced for the recognition of bodybuilding as an Olympic sport, justification could also be found in the traditions of the cinematic industry. Released and distributed in an Olympic year, the muscleman epic *The Battle of Marathon* (1960) had

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already witnessed a former Mr. America and Mr. Universe, the ubiquitous Steve Reeves, playing the role of Pheidippides, an athlete who competes in the games to gain a place among the select guardians of the city of Athens. In cinematic terms, therefore, a bodybuilder had already played at the Olympic games and the Olympic athlete was already shaped like a bodybuilder.

Through the titles of its competitions (such as Mr. Olympia), through its classicizing poses, through its descriptions of "Herculean" strength and the beauty of an Adonis, through its prizes of pseudo-classical statuettes, bodybuilding has continued throughout this century the process of appropriating the classical tradition of physical culture for its own accreditation. In the last twenty years, however, the rhetoric of classicism with which the practice of bodybuilding was once extensively imbued has become confined to a few magazine articles and the topoi of bodybuilding histories. In such texts, classicism often operates explicitly as a discourse of validation.

Readers of such popular works as Gaines and Butler's *Pumping Iron: the Art and Sport of Bodybuilding* (1977), Webster's *Barbells and Beefcake* (1979), Doan and Dietz's *Photoflexion: A History of Bodybuilding Photography* (1984), and Schwarzenegger's *Encyclopedia of Modern Bodybuilding* (1985) mentioned at the beginning of this paper, are informed that bodybuilding needs a history if it is to receive greater recognition and that the past is more than a matter of convenient comparison—it is the principal justification of the struggling sport.[75] But, supported by the nature of bodybuilding's earliest rituals of display (such as Sandow's static imitations of the Farnese Hercules), the past on which these histories draw is largely that of classical statuary, rather than classical athletic practice.

A key to the modern sport is said to be that the muscled male body is itself a work of art, malleable and capable of being aesthetically shaped, like the clay molded by a potter.[76] A bodybuilder is therefore a kind of sculptor of himself, and his product a form of living, classical statue.[77] During the bodybuilding competitions (which can now be defined conveniently as aesthetic rather than athletic in nature), his handiwork is then made available for serious contemplation and admiration.[78]

Similarly, in the editorial to *Muscle and Fitness Magazine* for March 1991, Joe Weider declares his hope for the recognition of bodybuilding by the International Olympic Committee on the

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same page that he speaks out against any debasement of his "dignified, conservative and very artistic sport" as follows:

> We must remember that in the roots of our sport as art, as far back as ancient Greece, never would you find any statue that disfigured the body or distracted from the revered human form.... If the bodybuilder is anything other than an athlete, he or she is an artist.

It is precisely the purely visual element in bodybuilding competitions that has constituted its greatest problem in gaining accreditation as a sport suitable for entry in the modern Olympic games and has set it at such a distance from the athletic practices of antiquity. Yet the constant reference back to classical *art* rather than classical athletic practice in Weider's comments and those of the popular historians neatly elides the entire problem. Within the logic of these rhetorical terms, building a muscled male body becomes a modern form of classical art, and its display in competition summons up the high-brow pleasures of a tour around a cast gallery. Furthermore, "classical art" here works to mark body-building as a practice whose origins are both high-brow and, more pointedly, ancient Greek. For "ancient Greek," "Olympic" can then seem an easy substitution.

One further question deserves to be raised, however briefly, in this study of the classicizing rhetoric of bodybuilding. Given that this institution raises problems concerning the politics of gender and sexuality,[79] as well as class, race, and nationhood, we should ask: what classicizing strategies have been available for the muscled woman? The female bodybuilder especially disturbs dominant notions of gender and sexuality and is therefore very difficult to position within any existing cultural map of the feminine.[80] If muscles have been constituted as "essentially" and "traditionally" masculine, as the direct inheritance of a classical tradition, what form can a classicizing rhetoric of validation take for the muscled female?

NOTES

I am most grateful to Paul Cartledge, John Henderson, and Christopher Wagstaff for their comments on an earlier version of this paper.

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1. A. Schwarzenegger with B. Dobbins, *Encyclopedia of Modern Bodybuilding* (London 1985), 30.

2. See, for example, M. B. Poliakoff, *Combat Sports in the Ancient World* (New Haven 1987); H. W. Pleket, "Games, prizes, athletes and ideology: some aspects of the history of sport in the Greco-Roman world," *Stadion* 1 (1975), 74–89; D. G. Kyle, *Athletics in Ancient Athens* (Leiden 1987); M. Walters, *The Nude Male: A New Perspective* (New York 1978), 43–4.

3. See, for example, R. Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Oxford 1980); F. M. Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven 1981); M. Reinhold, *Classica Americana: The Greek and Roman heritage in the United States* (Detroit 1984); and W. L. Vance, *America's Rome. Volume 1: Classical Rome* (New Haven 1989).

4. R. Barthes, *Mythologies,* trans. A. Lavers (London 1973) on which see G. Day, "Pose for thought: bodybuilding and other matters," in G. Day, ed., *Readings in Popular Culture: Trivial Pursuits?* (London 1990), 2–4. For popular culture in general see, for example, C. MacCabe, ed., *High Theory/Low Culture: Analysing Popular Television and Film* (Manchester 1986); L. Gamman and M. Marshment, eds., *The Female Gaze: Women As Viewers of Popular Culture* (London 1988); and J. Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (Boston 1989).

5. For discourses of the body as an element in the relations of power see M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1: An Introduction,* R. Hurley, trans. (Middlesex 1981), and B. S. Turner, *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory* (Oxford 1984).

6. J. J. Macaloon, *This Great Symbol: Pierre de Coubertin and the Origins of the Modern Olympic Games* (Chicago 1981), 174.

7. See note 2.

8. W. Doan and C. Dietz, eds., *Photoflexion: A History of Bodybuilding Photography* (New York 1984), 7.

9. J. Solomon, *The Ancient World in the Cinema* (New York 1978), 16.

10. A. Farassino, "Anatomia del cinema muscolare," in Farassino and Sanguineti, eds., *Gli uomini forti* (Milan 1983), 30–1, and 49 n. 8.

11. A. H. Saxon, *The Life and Art of Andrew Ducrow and the Romantic Age of the English Circus* (Connecticut 1978), 73–4; G. Speaight, *A History of the Circus* (London 1980), 58 and 67.

12. Saxon (note 11), 149–53.

13. See, respectively, Speaight (note 11), 35, on the Royal circus, and Saxon (note 11), 153 on the London Amphitheater.

14. Saxon (note 11), 149–53 and 226–32.

15. For Sandow's presence in the historiography of bodybuilding see Schwarzenegger (note 1), 31; D. Webster, *Barbells and Beefcake* (Irvine 1979), 29–35; Doan and Dietz (note 8), 12–4. Compare, for further comment, Walters (note 2), 293, and A. Foster, "Men in print: popular images of the male body in the twentieth century. Part 3: getting physical," *Gay Scotland* 33 (1987), 8.

16. Webster (note 15), 45.

17. See, for example, Webster (note 15), 24–8 and Walters (note 2), 293. On the exploitation of the "Greek ideal," compare R. Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (London 1986), 121, on its later usage.

18. Farassino (note 10), 40.

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19. R. B. Haas, *Muybridge: Man in Motion* (Berkeley 1976), 112; E. Mancini "Ricerche americane: Maciste manca ma pornografia c'è," in Farassino and Sanguineti (note 10), 72; Doan and Dietz (note 8), 11–2.

20. Mancini (note 19), 75; C. Musser, *Before the Nickleodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company* (Berkeley 1991), 39.

21. L. May, *Screening out the Past: The Birth of Mass Culture and the Motion Picture Industry* (Chicago 1980), 35–7; Musser (note 20), 40.

22. May (note 21), 28.

23. F. Hirsch, *The Hollywood Epic* (New Jersey 1978), 13–4; G. De Vincenti, "Il kolossal storico-romano nell'immaginario del primo Novecento," *Bianco e Nero* 1 (1988), 10 n. 15. For the genre of films set in a Greco-Roman context, more generally, see also M. Wyke, "Make like Nero! The Appeal of a Cinematic Emperor," in J. Elsner and J. Masters, eds., *Reflections of Nero* (London 1994), and "Cinema and the city of the dead: reel histories of Pompeii," in C. MacCabe and D. Petrie, eds., *New Scholarship from BFI Research* (London 1996), 140–56.

24. De Vincenti (note 23), 18.

25. P. Leprohon, *The Italian Cinema,* R. Greaves and O. Stallybrass, trans., (London 1972), 7.

26. Farassino (note 10), 29; J. Hay, *Popular Film Culture in Fascist Italy: The Passing of the Rex* (Indiana 1987), 11 and 168.

27. J. Hay (note 26), 11–2.

28. For the strongmen of Italian silent cinema see especially the essays collected in Farassino and Sanguineti (note 10), and V. Martinelli and M. Quargnolo, *Maciste & Co.: i giganti buoni del muto italiano* (Gemona del Friuli 1981).

29. Solomon (note 9), 17 and 136; L. Liehm, *Passion and Defiance: Film in Italy from 1942 to the Present* (Berkeley 1984), 9; Martinelli in Farassino and Sanquinetti (note 10), 9–10.

30. Compare Hay (note 26), 226.

31. Hay (note 26), 22.

32. G. Nowell-Smith, "Italy: tradition, backwardness and modernity," in Z. G. Baranski and R. Lumley, eds., *Culture and Conflict in Postwar Italy: Essays on Mass and Popular Culture* (London 1990), 56.

33. Liehm (note 29), 10.

34. A. R. Seaman, *CinemaTexas Programme Notes* 11.4 (1976), 97; Martinelli (note 28), 10–1.

35. Compare Hay (note 26), 165 on Blasetti's *1860.*

36. M. D. Cammarota, *Il Cinema Peplum* (Rome 1987), 18; Liehm (note 29), 10; Solomon (note 9), 33.

37. Cammarota (note 36), 21; Farassino (note 10), 44–8. The article is quoted in Farassino and Sanguineti (note 10), 159–64.

38. Farassino (note 10), 48; Cammarota (note 36), 25; Hay (note 26), 226.

39. Liehm (note 29), 10; Hay (note 26), 150 and 152.

40. See J. D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States 1940–1970* (Chicago 1983), 46–7; and, especially, T. Waugh, "Hard to imagine: gay erotic cinema in the postwar era," in *Homosexuality, Which Homosexuality?* Conference papers. Literature and Art, volume 1 (Amsterdam 1987), 32–3 and 78–9.

41. T. Waugh, "Photography, Passion and Power," *The Body Politic* 101 (1984), 30.

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42. *Young Physique* 2.3 (1960), 38–9, 18, and 17 respectively.
43. Doan and Dietz (note 8), 16.
44. *Physique Pictorial* 6.3 (1956).
45. Waugh (note 41), 30; Foster (note 15), 8.
46. Waugh (note 40), 80. I am very grateful to Richard Dyer for making this material available to me.
47. Waugh (note 40), 83.
48. Compare Waugh (note 40), 32–3.
49. Ibid, 87–91.
50. Ibid, 87 and 91.
51. D'Emilio (note 40), 133 and 136; T. Waugh, "A Heritage of Pornography," *The Body Politic* 90 (1983), 32–3; Waugh (note 40), 92–3; Foster (note 15), 9.
52. Liehm (note 29), 90 and 143; V. Spinazzola, *Cinema e pubblico: lo spettacolo filmico in Italia 1945-1965* (Rome 1985), 165–66.
53. For the peplum genre in general, see Cammarota (note 36).
54. L. Micciche, *Il cinema italiano degli anni '60* (Venice 1975), 108–11; Liehm (note 29), 182; Solomon (note 9), 191; Spinazzola (note 52), 324–25.
55. P. Bondanella, *Italian Cinema: From Neorealism to the Present* (New York 1988), 158–60.
56. See, for example, the account of Solomon (note 9), 72–5.
57. Spinazzola (note 52), 328–31; Liehm (note 29), 183; D. Elley, *The Epic Film: Myth and History* (London 1984), 55.
58. H. Chacona, *CinemaTexas Programme Notes* 12.3 (1977), 31–5.
59. Chacona (note 58), 34–5; Elley (note 57), 55.
60. Micciche (note 54), 108–11. For such narrative devices in general see U. Eco, "The narrative structure in Fleming," in B. Waites, T. Bennett, and G. Martin, eds., *Popular Culture: Past and Present* (London 1982), 242–62, on the James Bond novels.
61. Chacona (note 58), 33–4; Farassino (note 10), 42–3.
62. See, for example, *Sunday Picture Magazine* for May 31, 1959, and *Time* for July 27, 1959.
63. Chacona (note 58), 34.
64. For film genres where the male body becomes the object of the erotic gaze see, for example, S. Neale, "Masculinity As Spectacle," *Screen* 24.6 (1983), 2–16; S. Moore, "Here's Looking at You, Kid," in Gamman and Marshment (note 4), 44–59; Gamman and Marshment (note 4), 5–7.
65. *American Apollo* 1.2 (1959), 20–6.
66. P. A. Siebenand, *The Beginnings of Gay Cinema in Los Angeles: The Industry and the Audience* (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1975), 12–3.
67. T. Sanguineti, "Mitologico, muscle man epic, peplum," in Farassino and Sanguineti, (note 10), 89.
68. Elley (note 57), 21; Solomon (note 9), 191.
69. See, for example, the comments of the *New York Times* for May 29, 1960.
70. I am very grateful to the staff of the film archives at the University of Southern California for providing me with access to this material.
71. *Hercules Unchained* pressbook for 1960.
72. Warner Brothers Press Release, July 24, 1959, and see *Variety* for August 3, 1960.
73. *Seattle Post* for August 7, 1960.

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74. See the *New York Times* for July 22, 1959 and *Time* for July 27, 1959.

75. Respectively Webster (note 15), 5–7 and Doan and Dietz (note 8), 11.

76. C. Gaines and G. Butler, *Pumping Iron: The Art and Sport of Bodybuilding* (London 1977), 44, and compare Webster (note 15), 6–7.

77. Doan and Dietz (note 8), 7.

78. Gaines and Butler (note 76), 105–6, and for this type of classicizing rhetoric see the comments of Walters (note 2), 106–8.

79. L. Schulze, "On the Muscle," in J. Gaines and C. Herzog, eds., *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body* (New York 1990), 78.

80. Schulze (note 79), 59–65, and compare A. Kuhn, "The Body and Cinema: some problems for feminism," in S. Sheridan, *Grafts: Feminist Cultural Criticism* (London 1988), 11–23.

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Fig. 1 Farnese Hercules. Photo: Alinari/Art Resource, New York.

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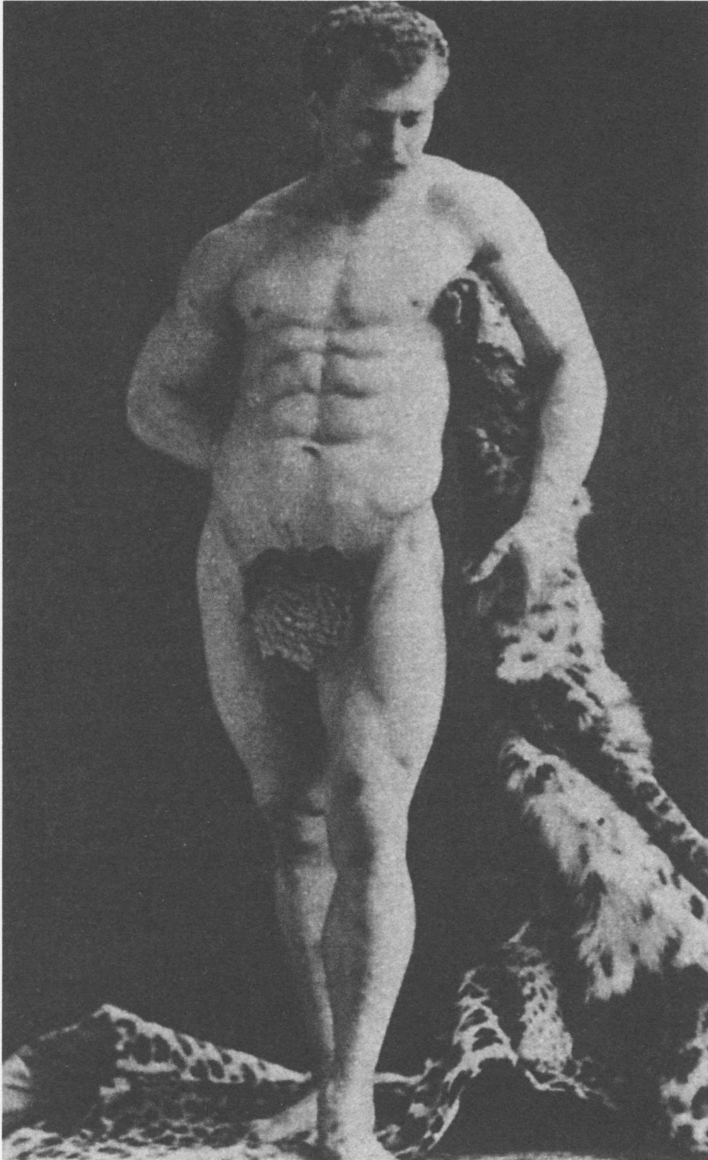

Fig. 2 Eugene Sandow. Courtesy of the Mansell Collection, London.

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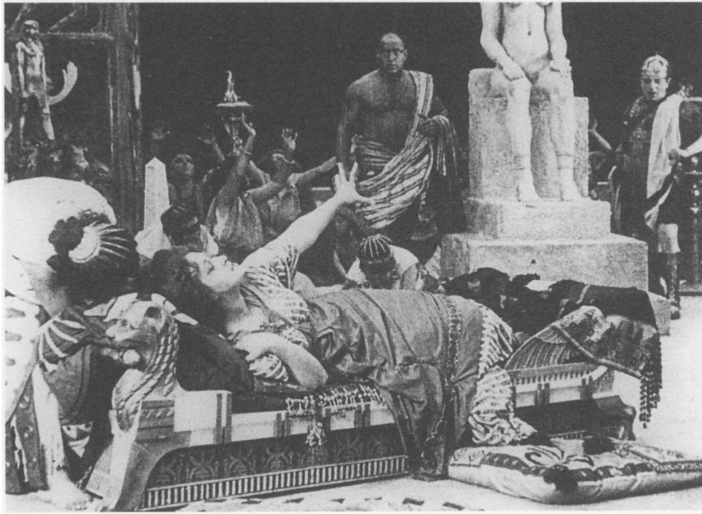

Fig. 3 Poster advertising *Cabiria* (1914). Courtesy of the British Film Institute, London.

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Fig. 4 "Kid Jonathan," from *Male Physique* 14 (1962).

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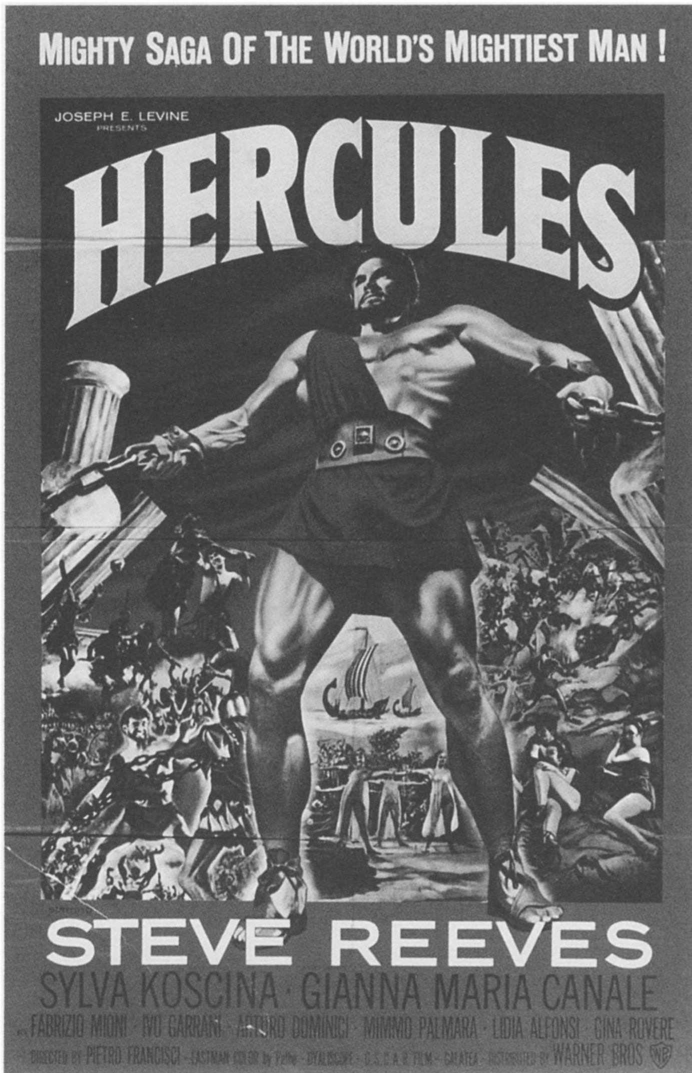

Fig. 5 Poster advertising Steve Reeves in *Hercules* (1957). Courtesy of the British Film Institute, London.

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