

GENERATION IRON: "NO, YOU COULDN'T DO WHAT I DO"

by

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This thesis is dedicated to all the brave men who sacrificed their bodies blocking for George Rogers in his quest for the 1980 Heisman Trophy.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes the 2013 observational documentary film *Generation Iron*, directed by Vlad Yudin and produced by Edwin Mejia. Methodologically, it employs a textual analysis along with a contextual grounding. The theoretical basis for this analysis is a combination of postmodernism, as described by Jean Baudrillard and Fredric Jameson, as well as Stuart Hall's theories on encoding/decoding as well as representational media. The argument of this thesis is that the documentary *Generation Iron* represents the muscular male form of the subjects in the film as hyperreal, concealing their inexplicable nature by means of the logic of a simulation, in this case through the use of the opacity of human genetics. It is through this representation that the male body transitions beyond male-ness and into something *hyper-* or *trans-mensch*, borrowing and modifying Nietzsche's terminology. This opens up the possibility for further research into not only the questions of male and female embodiment, but also of sexuality.

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INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I am exploring the depictions of the male form in mediated images, specifically the 2013 documentary film *Generation Iron*. There has been a considerable amount of research conducted on the representation of masculinity and the male form in media, both inside and outside of the context of sports-specific media and of athletes and non-athletes alike. Hall (1997) notes that the concept of representation in mediated images is one of *constitutive* representation. If one were to be presented with a mediated representational image, the image itself asks – “What is the meaning of what is seen here?”

The discourse of the body and of representations of the body is, however, lacking in context. Outside of health and human performance disciplines, little is written about *how* the form of a muscular body is achieved in bodybuilding or related disciplines of powerlifting, strongman, and Olympic lifting. Furthermore, while research does exist concerning bodybuilders expressing themselves in their own terms, it is still centered on the audience or subculture as a social group, and not on the text and its production. For example, a sociologist or an anthropologist may make a sincere attempt at understanding the culture and social forces of bodybuilding culture (Boyle, 2010, Holmlund, 1989, Klein, 1985, Linder, 2001, Motschenbacher, 2009, Schippert, 2007), or a psychologist may attempt to understand the motivations of bodybuilders, but as for what bodybuilders say to each other in mediated forms; for example in bodybuilding magazines or online forums, is given comparatively little scholarly attention. In other words, the media of and by the bodybuilders themselves are not well analyzed, and instead what is captured and

understood in research are their thoughts expressed in focus groups, surveys, and laboratory settings (Boyle, 2010, Holmlund, 1989, Klein, 1985, Linder, 2001, Motschenbacher, 2009, Schippert, 2007, Nye, 2005). What media are analyzed is usually advertisements featuring bodybuilders, and more often than not, heavily reliant of feminist theory and casting it in the light of a crisis of masculinity.

This thesis discusses the depictions of a specific subset of athletes, in this case bodybuilders, in media of the bodybuilding subculture itself, specifically through the form of the 2013 documentary film *Generation Iron*, which chronicles the path of several competitive professional bodybuilders leading up to the 2012 Mr. Olympia contest. The goal is to examine how the decontextualized nature of the male forms in the film is presented, how the topic of the controversial and ethically challenging issue of the use of anabolic-androgenic steroids (AAS) is addressed and depicted in the film, and what the reasoning for how and why the bodybuilders came to take on this form will all be given special attention.

Generation Iron follows several real life bodybuilders in the lead up to the biggest professional contest of year, the Mr. Olympia, which has been held annually since 1965. The bodybuilders profiled in the film include reigning champion Phil Heath, his main competitor Kai Greene, other hopefuls Branch Warren and Dennis Wolf, the falling star Victor Martinez, and up-and-comers Ben Pakulski, Hidetada Yamagishi, and Roelly Winklaar, the last of whom is coached by an older woman, Sibil Peeters, affectionately known by the nickname Grandma in the industry. The film had a brief and limited theatrical release beginning September 20, 2013, and was available on commercial DVD

on April 4, 2014. Directed by Vlad Yudin, who has since stuck with the project after many years and still produces media related to it – currently a bodybuilding podcast of the same title, and produced Yudin and Edwin Mejia (who has produced many documentaries in his career), the observational documentary of *Generation Iron* follows the lives of these bodybuilders as they train, diet, and attempt to win their spot in the Mr. Olympia contest. The hyperreal bodies portrayed in *Generation Iron* are a consequence of the use of AAS rather than of anything else directly claimed – namely genetics or length, sophistication, or intensity of training.

The film is worthy of analysis for several reasons. The first is that it is a rare motion picture or televisual sample of contemporary bodybuilders in their most extreme form. No bodybuilding contest has been broadcast on any American television station since the 1979 Mr. Olympia. The 1980 Mr. Olympia was recorded by CBS but never broadcast following the controversial win of Arnold Schwarzenegger, five years removed from competition, over Mike Mentzer. Prior to the advent of streaming internet in the last decade, the only footage available of professional contests, even the Mr. Olympia, have been either amateur video, or proprietary recordings by the event promoters themselves for sale on VHS and later DVD. Even if one were to watch the upcoming 2016 Mr. Olympia for example, they would need to stream it over the internet. The point is that it is not a readily available method of broadcast or exhibition, and certainly not as mainstream as being viewed in a multiplex as *Generation Iron* was. The effect of this is that for the entirety of the 1980s through 2013, bodybuilding was as out of the mainstream eye while still existing in mediated form as could be. Secondly, aside from

still images in specialty magazines or supplement advertising, images of bodybuilders at their most extreme are absent from the media landscape. Professional bodybuilders may appear in bit roles in films on occasion for example, but they are not at their most extreme in terms of body fat or muscularity for those roles, as much extremes require months of planning, specialized drug use including diuretic abuse, and extreme dieting. Additionally, such a condition simply can't be held for longer than a few hours before dehydration sets in, and if a scene requires more than that in order to film, it becomes an impossibility. In short, *Generation Iron* is the closest to a broad market appeal, moving picture and sound media text of the extremes of the muscular male form that exists since 1979.

As barriers to entry for a bodybuilder have risen in terms of size and proportion, the ability to convincingly even conceptualize a real body has diminished, let alone the ability to explain it. The need to achieve a satisfactory concept of the muscular male form is lowered as well; the audience being sold the image of a bodybuilder is in effect convincing themselves of this reality as it happens. The need to lie is diminished, as little mainstream attention is paid to bodybuilding. If a current mainstream athlete achieved a similar aesthetic, it would have to be as a deliberate choice to recreate a grotesque caricature of a bodybuilder, and not the accident of circumstance of his chosen sport. The distinction here is one of honesty rather than execution.

Ultimately, this thesis argues, through the postmodernist perspectives of Jean Baudrillard and Fredric Jameson, that the documentary *Generation Iron* exists as a simulated system of representation, and that even simulated systems must exist by some

logic – invented or otherwise. The underlying system of logic given in the film centers around broad, unscientific and unverifiable claims about genetics and genetic expression, effectively creating a hyperreal ubermensch in the process. It is important to remember that the *über* prefix in German does not necessarily connote superiority, and I do not intend for it to do so in this context. A more accurate understanding, at least for its use here, would be something akin to *trans*-mensch – a man who has gone beyond the natural boundaries of masculinity, devoid of any and all connotations or valuations of superiority. It is both the male forms and this underlying system of logic that will be explored in this thesis, and how they represent a postmodern physical and logical zeitgeist in the film.

Baudrillard and Jameson are chosen because their theory enables us to best conceive of and explain the hyperreal and simulated idea of the muscular male form. It is a form that defies all physical logic, medical reality, evolutionary adaptation including sexual selection, and whose form exceeds all manner of function for the bodily form, in even the most utilitarian ways. For example, the oft-given excuse of genetics – found throughout the film *Generation Iron*, as well as in virtually all bodybuilding media, especially magazines, which are often owned by the very same companies that produce and market bodybuilding supplements, and most especially in the advertising copy of bodybuilding supplements themselves – itself bends the limits of logic, as there could not possibly be any self-selected evolutionary advantage to being the dimensions of a contemporary bodybuilder; generally regarded as ideally in excess of 270 pounds, at a body fat percentage of four to five, and between 5'8" to 5'9" tall. Since the first Mr. Olympia was held in 1965, twelve winners have been within those heights, and no winner

has fallen outside of those parameters since Dexter Jackson won in 2008 at a height of 5'6" (and he was preceded by two victories by Jay Cutler at 5'8"). Additionally, no winner has been beyond three inches of those heights in either direction since Franco Columbu (5'5") won in 1981, and the only man over 6' to have won was Schwarzenegger (6'2"). Such a form is on the edge of medical dehydration, unable to move efficiently, and nearly devoid of insulation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This thesis uses Jean Baudrillard's *The Precession of Simulacra* and Fredric Jameson's *Postmodernism* in order to understand both the postmodern muscular male form, and the underlying rationales for why it exists as given in the film, as well as Stuart Hall's theory of representation of stereotyped images. In *The Precession of Simulacra*, simulators seek to construct the real through coinciding the real with their models of simulation. In this simulation of reality, it no longer seeks or needs to be rational in that it no longer has to measure itself against a rational ideal, or a negative instance; that is a consequential absence of the simulated real – for example, food flavorings, especially in candy, do not taste anything like their real world counterparts. Simulations seek perfect simulations of the real in order to remove the real from existence. Perfect descriptions of the real through simulacra imply that the real and the simulacra are not even what they represent, but rather a denial of the existence. The Classical reason of the Enlightenment fought this (Baudrillard, 1994), but it has failed because reason itself is based on an objective truth. Once truth has become relative, reason becomes politicized, and statements such as your ideas are wrong gain prominence.

In the example of God and the simulacra of God, such a practice sees that inevitably, it is the simulacra that only ever existed, and that the God itself was only ever the simulacra. Baudrillard outlines the four stages as reflection of profound reality, masking and denaturing of profound reality, absence of profound reality, and that of no relation to any reality, that it is its own simulacra. As he says: “When the real is no longer what it was, nostalgia assumes its full meaning” (Baudrillard, 1994:457).

On the Rosy-colored resurrection, Baudrillard states that by saving the original, simulacra must be constructed in order to preserve the false legitimacy of its relation to our own history. If something is destroyed or displaced by the scientific process, it can be made better, and thus things can be seen as if they never happened. This is a symbolic extermination, akin to the face of a corpse in a casket looking “better” than in the last moments when it was alive (Baudrillard, 1994:457-460).

As for the hyperreal, it serves to make the surrounding unreal. Baudrillard gives the example of California and Disney amusement parks, but substitutions for behavior instead of simply acting on real behavior work just as well as do spatial examples; “no longer touch each other, but there is contactotherapy, no longer walk, but they go jogging” (Baudrillard, 1994:461-462). Real experience exterminated through this process must also be recreated through things like natural food to replace the simulacra of postmodern food. Politically, this works as concealing that there is any scandal, as opposed to previously where scandal was dissimulated. Political institutions themselves deny their own power in order to simulate their death to escape their real deaths. Heads of state can only become such if they themselves become simulacra of heads of state. Acting or behaving in or speaking in real terms does not convey power or the ability to govern. For example, politicians stick to a mercilessly rehearsed script when talking to the press or in public appearances during their campaigns for office. Any time not spent talking about a particular issue in the most focus-tested, sanitized, pre-approved way possible, complete with meaningless platitudes and empty catch phrases, is considered time wasted, though it is itself perceived after the fact by voters to be a waste of time.

Actually talking about issues in meaningful, and often polarizing ways is to mark oneself as un-presidential (or un-senatorial, and so on).

On the strategy of the real, Baudrillard (1994:466-467) talks of the possibility, or lack of, simulation of criminal acts. Simulation of such acts undermines the idea that law and order themselves are simulations, for they react to real crimes in the same way as simulations. A simulated crime would have to approximate a real one as closely as possible, and law has only the signs of the act of a crime to interpret that a crime is occurring. Even a crime that is determined to be a simulation will be prosecuted as either an offense against the law itself, or less severely because it has no consequences, but never as a simulation. Everything must be reduced to the real. According to Baudrillard media themselves only serve to promote events as being real, of having consequence, and of factual objectivity. Once the means become available for an event to occur, it becomes impossible because of the very existence of those means (1994:478).

In *Postmodernism*, Jameson describes that modernism's acceptance and academic institutionalization in the late 1950s change the cultural perception of modernist works. They were no longer seen as the subversive and ugly works they had been during the previous Victorian/post-Victorian period, and became totally normalized. His belief is that postmodernism began with the following generation, then its rebellion against the established modern order; that the culture of postmodernism is one of dissolution of high and low art, as commodity production seeks novelty and newness for their own sakes.

Jameson juxtaposes Van Gogh's *Peasant Shoes* with Warhol's *Diamond Dust Shoes* to illustrate this point. *Peasant Shoes* was painted in 1886 and *Diamond Dust*

Shoes is from 1980. Painted in the typical Expressionist style, *Peasant Shoes* shows a pair of boot-like dark leather shoes purchased used by an unknown reason by Van Gogh. They are heavily worn and appear in the painting against no particularly discernible background, but rather an open space of earth-tones. They are visible in their full dimensions, both of light and space. *Diamond Dust Shoes* is a silkscreen on linen of several pairs of women's high heeled shoes. The shoes are all in solid, bright colors, unlikely to be how they appear in reality. The work is both photo-realistic and heavily stylized. For example, the tiny details are clearly visible, such as the brand names on the insoles; however the coloring makes them all flat and compressed, unable to be seen in light or space fully. There is no highlighting on them as in the Van Gogh piece. There is also no background, just a formless black void the shoes appear against. In the Van Gogh, the viewer can read the painting in many of ways, but the point is that there is space for a viewer to do so. The shoes of the Warhol piece are not presented as artifacts of a greater context, whether that context be harmonious with the subject itself or not. As exemplified, modernist Utopian architecture in a sense ruins the natural city it is in by placing flawless monoliths into a decontextualized environment. The viewer literally can not react in any other way to the painting other than with that of encountering an inexplicable natural object. Art itself at this point ceases to even have a pretext of being anything other than commodity fetishism. It could be seen as a simulacrum of art; it has become so decorative and so frivolous that the individual nature of the art is replaced by its pure nature as commodity, a reflection of the means of production and reproduction of capital of the period. Linguistically, Jameson describes how modernist literature evolved

to include such narrow and personal styles that it allowed for a linguistic fragmentation to occur. Normal speech is that of only the media, and everything else has become social codes, descending from that modernist literature (Jameson, 1984). Class, race, ethnicity, profession, political orientation all serve as cleavage points to their own meta-languages.

According to Jameson, pastiche has replaced parody. Parody has a motivation behind it. It forces the reader to consider what is being presented and why it is being presented as such. Pastiche makes no such demands on the reader, being a formless hodgepodge of endless referents to other materials. Both operate within a dead linguistic framework, but pastiche now is divorced from any of the subversive elements of parody. One could even question if the minimal communication parody affords to an audience can even be understood in such an environment anymore. Perhaps parody can *only* be understood as pastiche anymore, regardless of motive.

Pastiche has taken on a whole new element. It has reached such a degree that certain cultural products now have an air of *vague anachronism*. The early Quentin Tarantino films (*Reservoir Dogs*, *Pulp Fiction*, *Jackie Brown*) are never given a date of occurrence. Visually and linguistically, the esthetic of the films could allow them to be placed anywhere from the late 70s to the mid 90s. There is a complete lack of modern cars, appliances, modes of speech and dress. Everything has been replaced with a vague pastiche equivalent. Not only can we only look back for our cultural production, but that production itself is now breaking down to melt down periods of time into one. The idea of the remake or the adaptation is predicated on an ever-increasingly fleeting awareness of the original, and hence becomes obsolete. If set in the time of the original, or of

another period of pastness, the setting becomes the meat of the story itself.

Baudrillard and Jameson provide a robust set of tools with which to explore the idea of the muscular male form as presented in *Generation Iron*. Their theoretical framework is critical for this thesis because it is in fact the lack of logic and the absence of any referents to a non-simulated reality that *Generation Iron* – and particularly the bodily forms within, and the rationales for why they exist – can be mapped out. The world of *Generation Iron* exists as a snow-globe, with all its meanings, realities, logics, and representations perfectly simulated but grotesque to any outside observer.

Hall (1997) argues that since there are multiple messages both encoded in the image, and potentially even more to be decoded by an audience, this act of representation can have no fixed meaning. He stipulates that this does not mean that an image that purports to be representative is meaningless. In fact, the opposite is true – the work of representation is constitutive; that is, it continuously and actively creates a world where such representations make sense. Furthermore, once the underlying concepts of representations are internalized, meaning can be made, or reinforced, by audiences independent of viewing any media text. Language as described by Hall here is very general, and can be constituted as the literal written or spoken word, down to anything that conveys meaning, such as semiotic signs, nonverbal expressions, images, music, and certain movements of the body itself. Objects do not give themselves meaning. Meaning is not fixed, things must be given meaning, and that must occur through language. Going deeper, an image of a physical object gives at least some of the physical characteristics of it, where the word for it gives almost none. For Hall, the question of power is linked to

that of representation, and what is not represented is often as important, and carries as much meaning, as what is. In this sense, stereotypes become an attempt to ascribe meaning to identity or cultural groups as an imposition and exercise of power over them by the hegemonic cultural power. As for what is left out, stereotyped groups can be marginalized through what is missing in their mediated depictions as much as what is included. Drawing upon the material in this thesis for an example, prominently muscled men are rarely, if ever, depicted as intelligent in mediated images.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The existing body of work on the profilmic bodily form – both male and female – is varied and expansive. The academic literature concerning the muscular male form, with the exception of the natural and biological sciences, can be broadly classified into a handful of categories. First, there are the works that deal with the muscular male form as a kind of cultural product or a fixed stock of form that appears in cultural products such as media. These texts tend to address the body as a constitutive-representational object, a thing to be emulated, and a projection of hegemonic power, be it as a stand in for capitalism, male dominance, white racial dominance, and the like. Second, there are the texts that approach the bodily form, be it male or female, through the lens of non-biological gender identity. The common theme of these texts is that there is no purely male nor purely female, but a vast gray in between the extremes. These two categories make up the majority of the literature. Secondarily, there are smaller bodies of literature concerned with the muscular male form as a means of sexual power expression, sociological approaches in understanding the dynamics of bodybuilding culture, and finally the literature that addresses what is conceived of as the pervasive homoeroticism of bodybuilding.

In *The White Man's Muscles*, Dyer (1997) lays out several themes of the academic concept of the muscular male form. Here, Dyer is looking at the roles, and specifically the masculinity and race depictions, in European films made during the 1950s and 1960s on the subject of the Classical Greek and Roman periods. The films, largely what would be considered action films today though the conventions of the genre did not yet exist,

were made for a popular audience on both sides of the Atlantic by European studios. The initial problem here is Dyer, in his explanation of the casting choices of European filmmakers' concepts of what would appeal to an American audience, that is to say, casting a heroic, American looking man as the lead hero, is the imagined ideal here is of a Northern European with American style. When the Ancient Romans encountered the peoples of Northern Europe, and even more southern peoples such as the Gauls, they wrote of them in explicitly racial terms in all of their history and literature, and depicted them as such in their art.

For example, the sculpture of *The Dying Gaul* depicts a stereotypical looking (to a Roman) male Gaul. Of particular note is this figure's hair, which more than any other feature, denotes him as a Gaul. Romans were always conspicuous in their depictions of Gaulish hair – straight and unkempt and with a distinct puffiness to it. This can be seen to a lesser extent in the *Ludovisi Gaul* sculpture, which depicts a Gaulish noble about to kill himself as he holds the corpse of his sister whom he has killed in order to save her from capture by the Romans. Though their hair is less Gaulish, it was undoubtedly because as nobles, they would have been more Romanized to begin with. Nevertheless, his appearance is still distinctly that of a Gaul, as he sports a similar mustache to that of the Gaul in *The Dying Gaul*. Romans, of course, were always depicted as clean shaven for most of their history as facial hair was associated by Romans as a Greek feature. Taken as a whole, it is clear Romans had a conceptual idea of themselves and their physical features, as well as how they were ethnically distinct from peoples they encountered, and how those peoples should be depicted in their cultural images. There

was no concept of a homogenous white people in the Roman period.

The Classical Roman and Greeks were of different physical characteristics than their barbarian neighbors. To cast what a European thinks an American looks like as an Ancient Roman or Greek for the specific purpose of creating a white masculinity superior to a black masculinity as is depicted in the films in question not only completely homogenizes whiteness, but effectively eradicates the true physical nature of an Ancient Greek or Roman. This in fact replaces him with someone he would have seen as a member of an inferior race. An American or an American-looking actor, even in Northern Italy where the Germanic features are more present, would still be a foreigner. The reverse does not hold though. For example, the famous early bodybuilder, Charles Atlas, was born Angelo Siciliano and changed his name to appear more American. Dyer (2007:297) even brings up the fact that the actors in these Italian productions were clearly not Italian, and this was known by the Italian audience. He leaves this otherwise unaddressed. This phenomenon is further compounded by the fact that the heroes in these films have modern haircuts and sometimes speak in British accents, the latter used to signify ancient to modern audiences.

Dyer goes on to address the re-use of characters in the films in question. This, however, is not unique to the genre of sword and sandal films of the time period discussed. The Italian film industry, especially in the genre of Spaghetti Westerns – Westerns shot by Italian directors (the most well know being Sergio Leone) and largely shot *not* on location in the American West, and which usually included bizarre European ideas about the American West, including overt Catholic religious iconography that never

existed in this place and time – re-used not only characters in completely unrelated films – for example, in the Django films of the golden age of Spaghetti Westerns (roughly 1964 to the mid 1970s) – but also deliberately tried to recreate real persons. The most obvious example of such a phenomenon was the use of the actor Franco Nero. Nero depicted the character of Django in the first film in the series – *Django* (1966). Directors began casting men who resembled Franco Nero (*Few Dollars for Django* [1966], *Ten Thousand Dollars for a Massacre* [1966], or *Django, Prepare a Coffin* [1968]), used false names for actors that approximated Nero's (Franco Franchi for example, in 1966's *Two Sons of Ringo*, played the character of Django. His real name is Francesco Benenato) or used deliberately misleading billing on movie posters in the subsequent Django films (the Giuseppe Colizzi trilogy consisting of *God Forgives... I Don't!* [1967], *Ace High* [1968], and *Boot Hill* [1969]). Interestingly enough, the only official Django sequel starring Franco Nero came out well after the heyday of Spaghetti Westerns, in *Django Strikes Again* (1987). This was not limited to the West, either. The Hong Kong film industry did exactly the same thing with both the re-use of characters as well as the attempts to recreate popular stars (Lui & Taylor 2003) such as Bruce Lee by using Jackie Chan as a substitute and billing him as “The Next Bruce Lee” in larger font sizes than his actual name appeared on film posters of early films he starred in. The Hong Kong film industry also had its own version of the feats of strength – explicitly racial strength in Dyer's view. Jump distances became ever longer over the years in Hong Kong martial arts films, to the point that it eventually became an analog for the power of flight. Harkening back to the logic of postmodernism, this feat of hyperreality transforms the jumper into a *trans-*

mensch, though instead of becoming a physical embodiment of that logic, it is the feat itself that serves as an example.

Many of the usual motivations for prominent male musculature are given by Dyer here. In addition to the idea that a bodybuilder is attempting to recreate the physical form of rural labor – a rural labor that has been eliminated, at least in Western white cultures, in modern times – he lists the following:

the promulgation of ego ideals, the desire to attract women, the appeal of (acknowledged or not) homoeroticism, the human pleasures in showing off and grooming (not so frowned upon in men in Italian culture), the reality of heterosexual women as media consumers (Dyer 1997:300).

With a few missing exceptions, here is seen the most complete and succinct summation of the academic ideas regarding the muscular male form. The list is rounded out slightly later (1997:300-301) when he goes on to say that muscles filled with blood are analogies for the penis and bodybuilders build muscles for the purpose of not being mistaken for women. Adding again to the list, Dyer says that wealth correlates with a built body, and that tanning – another feature of bodybuilders – is a sign of leisure. The actors in question, Steve Reeves, Gordon Scott, and Reg Park, all bodybuilders, were certainly well-muscled, but none were wealthy (Roach 2008) during the development of their muscles, and never reached anything approaching the wealth of mainstream actors of their time.

Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud (Laqueur 1992) attempts to make the case for a one-sex model of the human body. Drawing heavily from ancient and Medieval texts, particularly from Galen, Laqueur builds a case for the human sexual

dichotomy being a relatively recent development. The book ignores all biological differences in sex, substituting instead an idea of masculine and feminine qualities as markers of cultural status. On the one-sex model:

In a public work that was overwhelmingly male, the one-sex model displayed what was already massively evident in culture more generally: man is the measure of all things, and woman does not exist as an ontologically distinct category. Not all males are masculine, potent, honorable, or hold power, and some women exceed some men in each of these categories. But the standards of the human body and its representations is the male body (Laqueur 1992:62).

Laqueur claims that Renaissance male and female bodies were interpreted as such by cultural politics and “not on evidence about organs, ducts, or blood vessels” (1992:66).

Moving on to the frontispieces of anatomy books of the Medieval period, often depicting detailed drawings of dissected human bodies, Laqueur presents ideas about flaying to present evidence – saying witness in essence (1992:75-80). In much the same way, the drastic reduction in body fat for an advanced bodybuilder conveys the same message when displaying the musculature – again, saying witness.

What is of importance here is the idea of a perfect representation – is it possible? For example, is the Greek ideal of body proportion culturally rooted? “He [Galen] is, moreover, innocent of what Vesalius himself did on occasion: 'seeing' something that does not exist because an authority declares it to be present” (1992:83).

Idealist anatomy, like idealism generally, must postulate a transcendent norm. But there is obviously no canonical eye, muscle, or skeleton, and therefore any representation making this claim does so on the basis of certain culturally and historically specific notions of what is ideal, what best illustrates the true nature of the object in question (1992:166).

The anatomically normal was for him [Samuel Thomas von Soemmerring], as for much in anatomy in the idealist tradition, the most beautiful. An anatomist was

thus engaged in the same deeply serious tasks as a painter: to render the human form, and nature generally, in accord with the canons of art (1992:167).

Bederman, in *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (1995) again asserts a homogenous white American culture, as well as ideas of an American middle class. The book does not actually define middle class. One of the main foci for the book is the loss of male identity in the time period, and its implications politically and socially for America. American men now had to contend with women and male immigrants, as well as a loss of the traditional male work roles to the rapid industrialization of the West.

Beginning with the issue of immigration, Bederman, explicitly running on the premise that there exists a homogenous white culture, immediately runs into the problem of recognizing that the Americans at the time saw these immigrants as something altogether different than white. This is left unexplored for the duration of the book. Fears that immigrants would take over cities (1995:12) did indeed come to fruition over the course of the 20th century and have displaced the existing white middle class that had any semblance of urban identity. This sentiment is expressed plainly: “Working class and immigrant men, with their strikes and 'primitive' customs, seemed to possess a virility and vitality which decadent white middle-class men had lost” (Bederman 1995:14).

Bederman continues on this thread by pointing out that sports such as boxing, saloon culture, and other working class pastimes were seen as uncouth but attractive by middle-class males (1995:19). Bederman points out that the Jess Willard-Jack Johnson heavyweight championship match in Havana, Cuba in 1915 was seen as a contest of the

racism by a large segment of the American population. The fact that the champion at the time, Jack Johnson, was a black man was an uncomfortable and undercutting fact to the popular notion that the white race was the supreme race. Jess Willard's victory by knockout righted the order of the world for many. While true, it in no way addressed the notion of a homogenous white culture. Remaining in the realm of boxing for comparison, Jake Lamotta and Sugar Ray Robinson fought each other five times between 1942 and 1945, a full generation later than the Willard-Johnson fight. Either could have been world middleweight champion for most of the 1940s had they been given the opportunity. The idea of Robinson, a black man, or Lamotta, the son of Italian immigrants and seen as something other than white, as a champion was simply too distasteful.

Bederman states that in 1860, the ideal body type was lean and wiry. This serves as an interesting contrast to the idea that manual and rural labor resulted in a prominently muscled body. In fact, up until the mid-20th century, there were more underweight Americans, largely the rural poor, than there were overweight (Roach 2008). Expending large amounts of energy in physically demanding jobs while on a very low calorie diet, usually consisting of staples and not much else, could not possibly result in prominent musculature, but would indeed give a lean and wiry physique.

Covering a significant portion of the discourse on the concepts of masculinity is Sut Jhally's documentary film *Tough Guise: Violence, Media, and the Crisis in Masculinity* (1999), which was co-written by Jhally and fellow academics Jeremy Earp and Jackson Katz. It asserts that what is popularly conceived of as male behavior is the

result of exposure to media and socialization. Such male behavior, or expressions of behavior that go beyond it, such as the artificial nature of improving physical size and strength, are attributable to marketing, creating a violent streak among males that would otherwise not behave as such. Underlying this is what was and has only ossified since as one of the standard ingredients in the grab bag of explanations for hyper-masculine behavior among the academic mainstream; the loss of male space, especially economic and political space; the fear of displacement from women and The Other (someone identified as being physically different from one's own cultural group) – much of the discourse, implicitly or explicitly, revolves around specifically white male identity.

Whatever the motivation, in the popular consciousness, this myth has been taken as axiomatic. Deviance from the status quo in attempts to enlarge and strengthen the body through sporting activities unconnected with mainstream professional sports is at best seen as practically eccentric, and at worst a source of derision and mockery. When examining either the activity of bodybuilding and weightlifting or the associated subcultures the academic literature of the humanities has largely treated the athlete as not only an Other, but also sought to construct a rationale for his existence in terms the authors could understand. Boyle (2010) admits as much, not only identifying bodybuilding as a subculture, but also considering bodybuilders to be engaging in homoerotic activities in addition to operating on the fringes of mainstream culture, requiring an idealized hero, such as Arnold Schwarzenegger, to bring it into acceptance by adopting traditional American discourses on masculinity, namely self-reliance and his race. There are some problems with this assertion, as only three white American, or four

including Schwarzenegger, have embodied the American qualities identified by Boyle have ever won the Mr. Olympia contest multiple times, a precondition that led to Schwarzenegger's fame. The three were Larry Scott (1965, 1966), Frank Zane (1977, 1978, 1979), and Jay Cutler (2006, 2007, 2009, 2010). The two most famous winners aside from Schwarzenegger were Sergio Olivia, an Afro-Cuban, and Franco Columbu, a Sardinian who spoke almost no English. Furthermore, this idea of a deracinated, mongrel-white American is problematic in itself. The construction of a homogenous white culture is a very recent and purely American concept (Jones 2004).

Schippert (2007) deals with the theme of bodybuilding as tied into sexuality, but particularly in its subversion of sex through the reshaping of both the male and female physical forms. Identifying the activity of bodybuilding as being transgressive, Schippert's research seeks to build on the notion of the difference between gay muscles and straight muscles. He expands to questions left unaddressed for female bodybuilders through an analysis of *Pumping Iron 2*, a gender-swapped sequel to the 1977 documentary. What is unaddressed here is with regards to female bodybuilding, in its competitive form, the use of steroids, which are literally male hormones, in female bodybuilders, as well as their weightlifting. This issue has achieved a more culturally and arguably biologically complete female-to-male transexual than the traditional route.

Strong (2003) takes a route through the language and terms in the subculture of bodybuilding to argue for differences between the male gaze as it applies to the female and male forms. This analysis argues that the traditional male gaze sees the female form as passive, whereas the terminology of the male-on-male discourse in bodybuilding does

not lead to the same sexual objectification. Following this research, Motschenbacher (2009) analyzes the magazines *Cosmopolitan* and *Men's Health* for discourses on gender constructions through the language used to describe body parts. Though departing from either male or female bodybuilding, the texts analyzed still deal with largely idealized forms of the body. Textual analysis is not the only approach. Linder (2001) conducts research into the sex and sexual identity of a male-female couple of bodybuilders through ethnography.

Similarly, some popular literature follows suit. In addition to Ericsson, et al. (1999), Susan Faludi's book *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man* (2000) treats masculinity as an artificial and recent construction propagated by social forces onto men who otherwise would unwillingly seek such models. Expressions of male behavior then become nothing more than accoutrements onto the male body, be they physical or psychological. Faludi's view also incorporates a view of the world where such behaviors are no longer possible because of economic factors. The masculine behavior can no longer find an economic use, and a new idea of masculinity, such as a man who works indoors in an office can be explored.

Ideas like masculinity as a social construct, as well as a new masculinity being sold to men can be seen in Michael Augspurger's book *An economy of abundant beauty: Fortune magazine and Depression America* (2004). Augspurger details the construction and marketing of a new masculine ideal, wearing a suit and not doing manual labor, in the issues of *Fortune* magazine from the 1930s. Men at this time began to work in such settings in large numbers, leaving positions that were considered manly prior to this, such

as manual labor, especially when performed outdoors. *Fortune*, Augspurger argues, was not merely a financial publication, but rather one that also popularized an image and a lifestyle of a man not previously associated with masculinity. This idea of the body as a sold image, as well as a constructed image of the self, and sold to bodybuilding judges as well as the public, is also discussed by Holmlund (1989). Drawing the distinction between the original *Pumping Iron*, and the sequel which focused on female bodybuilding, Holmlund argues that the films address difference in the body along sex and racial lines, but not on class or historical ones. Unlike Schippert (2007), Holmlund also discusses the definition of body in relation to woman—that is to say how and when a female body transcends femininity and enters something else entirely. Whereas *Pumping Iron* does not need to ask what a man is, *Pumping Iron II* does have to ask what a woman is.

In treating bodybuilding as a sociological subculture, Klein (1985) discusses topics like the gym as a both a social and socially atomizing space, the hierarchy of gym culture members, steroid culture, and the very taboo subject of what is generally known as gay for pay in contemporary bodybuilding culture, but referred to as hustling in this thesis. Many contradictions and inconsistencies exist between the internal discourse of the culture, and how it presents itself to the outside observer.

Nye (2005) also ties notions of capitalist consumer culture into the discourses of sex and sexual identity. Calling attention to gay bodybuilders, among other examples, he argues that such behavior is an experiment into transgender redefinitions of sexual identity, along with creating a “plurality of masculinities and femininities.”

Moving onto the literature of documentary film, Bill Nichols' *Representing Reality* (1991) was the first academic work on the matter. A great deal of the material deals with hierarchies and relative power structures in the process of filming and editing a documentary. Effectively, if any message can be taken away, it is that at least in terms of a documentary as a film with some narrative structure, all approaches expressed in the taxonomy assume both of the following conditions; the director has an argument, and all filmed subjects are there to support it, in one way or another. Nichols even makes the point that filmed subjects are in some sense powerless or even completely unaware of this, and even if the director takes great care to minimize his effect in this manner, there is still the question of the final cut of the film being in his hands.

There are many examples given throughout Nichols (1991) of things that aren't documentaries that exhibit these conditions as well; journalistic interview, police interrogations, court testimony, pornography, and so on. The fundamental question here is can it be said that the presence of a camera changes the relationship of things, as all of those examples can and in some cases must be filmed, but there seems to be some degree of difference Nichols is making in that some kind of social desirability bias makes itself present given the qualitative difference a documentary has. In other words, does the fact that documentaries are recorded in order to be watch and evaluated by an audience, and an audience much different than those of the other examples, give the director even more of leveraged position?

In contrast to Nichols is Jay Ruby's *Picturing Culture: Explorations of Film & Anthropology* (2000). Ruby lays out some very strict parameters for what is and isn't an

ethnographic film – a subset of documentaries – and even who is and isn't allowed to make them. Ruby seems to be at a loss for why anthropologists are not using film to its full potential as he sees it in their work. Seemingly, this is because of the presence of professional filmmakers, and production value requirements set too high by the National Endowment for the Humanities, public television, independent documentary films, and the educational film market (presumably K-12) - which all seem to price the anthropologists out of the market.

Ruby himself admits that the subjects of anthropological research themselves have little competence or motivation to make their own ethnographic films. Is this something anthropologists are immune to? Perhaps the existing films that meet Ruby's qualifications are all that reasonably can be done under these parameters? What Ruby seems to be arguing here is for a piece of culture (a film) made by academics that exists totally and only for other academics.

Ruby is a self-professed moral relativist. In dealing with claims of moral neutrality (or arguably, moral relativity) (2000:145), the implication is that there is an end to authorship. If so, then why the moral evaluation of things such as *Triumph of the Will* and Robert Gardner.

Some people argue that ethics should have priority over aesthetics or, perhaps more correctly, that a morally acceptable ethical position produces the foundation for a good aesthetic. I make that argument in my critique of Robert Gardner's films in chapter 3 (Ruby 2000:144).

If this is indeed the end of authorship, what does it matter to Ruby if Spike Lee directed *Malcolm X* (2000:211)? He seems to impose objective moral obligations on the part of

both filmmakers and anthropologists (2000:153). Ruby cites John Grierson (2000:147), among others, who argued that art can and should be in service to political and social change. More importantly than the ethical question Ruby presents with this, it is of concern with the fact that to state such a thing implies some sort of concealed guilt on the part of the speaker, perhaps illustrated best when Ruby says that what anthropologists do and the philosophy of science are at odds (2000:179).

Providing a different though complimentary take on the history and nature of documentary film is Alison Griffiths in *Wondrous Difference: Cinema, Anthropology, & Turn-of-the-Century Visual Culture* (2002). Centering her argument on two early anthropologists whom employed film in their research, Alfred Cort Haddon and Walter Baldwin Spencer, Griffiths goes as far back as the technology of film realistically allows, roughly 1898-1901 for both subjects. Film then was still seen as a spectacle, and while drawings and still photography was employed by field anthropologists and ethnographers, the use of film as a tool was not yet seen as academic (2002:129). The first use of film for anthropological purposes was by Haddon in 1898 as part of his research in the Torres Strait in the Pacific. Haddon had filmed a ceremony called Malu-Bomai, a dance that was a reconstruction of a religious rite no longer in practice, as the islanders had converted to Christianity by that time. In addition to capturing the ritual on film, which increased the sense of being there over still photography, Haddon also made recordings of the sound on wax cylinders in an early attempt to capture synchronous sound. Griffiths points to the use of film as what elevated sight, and therefore devalued text, in anthropology: filmed ethnography defied scientific logic

because it is affiliated more with the senses than intellect. In contrast to still photography, it captured a more “haptic visuality” (2002:142), even if film at the time drew from still photography for what worked. Haddon, not without some artistic talent, selected this ceremony as something to film because of its ethnographic significance, its prior representation in still photography, and how well it would translate to film.

This elevation of the visual was not without problems, however. Ethnographic knowledge such as kinship relations between filmed subjects is not receptive to visual representation, nor, at least prior to synchronous sound technology, is language (2002:143). Griffiths cites Paul Stoller (2002:314) in describing text versus image (still or otherwise) – text mixes ingredients and brings deeper understanding than the visual. The still image gives detail but no context. Even after the invention of film, anthropology, for the most part, turned to text to fill context rather than film, and thus became a text-oriented discipline.

Spencer, influenced by Haddon, took much the same path and ran into many of the same problems. He was limited by the technology of the time, he filmed what he knew best, he was influenced by still photography, and given the remote and often hostile weather conditions experienced by both men in their travels, he was limited in what he could film. Spencer is notable for being one of, if not the first man to attempt editing in the camera – stopping filming and repositioning the camera in order to get a different angle or distance in the shot.

Spencer recognized limitations in his films as well, including; an inability to properly decipher context, even among other anthropologists; as well as fears of

contamination via other native peoples whom would simply replicate what was seen in his films, and thereby displacing their own subtly different variations of the same ceremonies. In other words, the filmed version would become *the official* version of the event. Prior to inter-titling, anthropological and ethnographic film required a constant policing by anthropologists, and required their physical presence at screenings to give audiences context and meaning.

Haddon did not use or promote his films, unlike Spencer, whom would often exhibit them to lay audiences for commercial purposes. Though seemingly trivial, this is an important consideration for ethnographic film – how can it be made legible to a scientific audience, and what kind of useful knowledge could they bring other than simply a visual record? (2002:167). Ethnographic films showed too much and revealed too little. If native peoples in photographs are objects, then in film they become individuals with a cultural identity. Griffiths cites Rosalind Morris who says that ethnographic film contains a *surplus* of meaning.

Griffiths points out that prior to the 1920s, most ethnographic film was shot by non-anthropologists and for commercial purposes. This elevated the risk of contamination in actual research, an altering of public perceptions, and films being easily confused for academic work as they were nearly indistinguishable.

In 1900, photographer George Wharton James pointed out the fact that the camera can't discern authenticity (2002:179), and as an example, used a recording of a Snake Dance performed by Indians of the American Southwest in where he points out that one of the dancers is actually performing the dance backwards in the presence of the cameras.

This leads to the idea of the “unprivileged camera” (2002:191) and the various ways filmed subjects can return the gaze. Griffiths outlines three return gazes; nervous reaction, treating the camera-as-celebrity, and sustained defiance or subversion (as was the case with the Snake Dancer performing backwards).

Finally, Keenan (2012) helps inform this thesis by describing how film functions in covering real events, in his case war footage. In filming real events, as in a documentary or in news footage, the tendency among those doing the filming is in treating those being filmed as if they were a spectacle on display. Additionally, there is an expectation of action on the part of the camera. Keenan uses an example from the Balkan Wars when the presence of a camera was arguably either the cause of action simply by its positioning and waiting for something to happen in front of it. Keenan also argues that the speed of the medium of filmed or televisual images makes rational thought impossible, instead relying on emotion and speed of a just response to what is being seen.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The overarching goal of this research seeks to answer how this film creates a postmodern body for the viewer. The main concern of this thesis is the depiction of the muscular male form in the film *Generation Iron*. The previous literature covered in the literature review focuses on issues of race and sex, and to a lesser degree, sexuality. In addition to exploring how these issues function in *Generation Iron*, the question of how are the bodies depicted in the film constitute a postmodern representation of them will be addressed. How is the representation of the male body in the documentary decontextualized? What logic, if any is presented in order to rationalize this phenomenon? And finally – What is the meaning of what is seen here?

METHOD

As a critical textual analysis in combination with and hybridized with a contextual setting, the main object of analysis is the film *Generation Iron*. Allen Repko defines textual analysis as a method consisting of a variety of techniques used to “speak most directly to the intentions of the author” (2012:249) allowing the researcher to pull valuable insight from the text. In order to analyze *Generation Iron*, I have performed a close viewing of the film, an official digital copy totaling 1:47:08. Much like a close reading of a printed text, extreme attention was paid to every detail, including repeated viewings of particularly relevant, important, or complex sections of the film in order to best understand it (Stokes, 2003, Repko, 2012). In order to lend more depth and context to the analysis, I have familiarized myself with the uses and protocols for the various drugs and other substances common in the bodybuilding world and their effects on the human body: AAS, human growth hormone, insulin, site-enhancement oil (literally sterile oil injected into the muscle bellies to stretch them out and appear bigger), exotic injectable peptides not yet approved for human use, aromatase inhibitors, selective estrogen receptor modulators (SERMs), dopamine receptor agonists, sympathomimetic amines, dinitrophenols, thyroid hormones, and follicle stimulating hormones and luetinizing hormones.

This is a textual analysis of the film, treating it as a postmodern artifact attempting to explain the postmodern physical form of a contemporary bodybuilder. As a film for a bodybuilding audience, it provides both a unique and diverse glimpse into the lives of professional bodybuilders, as well as filling an important role as a vehicle for

scholarly analysis of bodybuilding media and all its internal discourses. The analysis in this thesis is limited to this film, but other mediated, representational images of bodybuilding are brought in for context, historical placement, and comparison, particularly earlier documentaries about bodybuilding, including *Pumping Iron*, *Pumping Iron 2*, and, *Evolution of Bodybuilding*.

Instances were selected that best exemplify the theory and ask how they are making meaning for the audience, and what that meaning is. Careful consideration was given to interview footage as well as training and lifestyle shots. These real shots that have the best contents to analyze as they contain the more reflexive elements of the filming. How these characteristics stack up against the reality of the limits of the human form without the use of AAS is a cornerstone of this research. Musculature is of importance to this. The characteristics such as size, leanness, and proportion, and overall aesthetic were all considered, as well as their relations to the claims of genetics made by the bodybuilders.

Once all of this was considered, it was then possible to look and discern how these bodies were a more perfectly postmodern, hyperreal simulacrum of the reality of human performance, and how this was put to the audience member. If an object or place is subject to museumification, it has become something to be displayed. Arguably, what has been come to be known as the Golden Age of bodybuilding, from the mid 70s to the early 80s, was a museumification of the muscular male form. Competitors strove to achieve classical proportions, even if they were well in excess of the raw size of the classical statuary from where they drew their inspiration. Nevertheless, the proportion was still

there, and contemporary bodybuilding has lost all sight of it. All of the bodybuilders portrayed have been training for years, sometimes decades, and this time serves as a frequent reason for their physical form, as does the nearly ubiquitous but no less opaque excuse of genetics in place of more controversial issues such as AAS use.

FINDINGS

Though Hall's theory of encoding/decoding suggests a variety of meanings can be made, since representation has no fixed meaning, it is important to remember that this does not constitute meaninglessness, but rather a multitude of possible meanings. So the question becomes slightly altered - "What is the world in which the meaning of what is seen here makes sense?" Baudrillard states that postmodern simulations no longer need to be rational as they are not held to any rational ideal, but they still must operate in some form of logic. If taken at face value, that is to say to take the hegemonic reading of the film in Hall's terms, then the world in which what is being seen makes sense is a world of a simulation, as it is irrational, and contradictory to known realities of AAS use (Hartgens & Kuipers, 2004), among other things such as the reality of genetic expression (Cochran, 2014). Yet, as I will discuss later, there is still an underlying logic to this simulation.

The film sets up many contrasts, often between the personalities and lifestyle of the bodybuilders, and not directly through their form. The most obvious is that between Heath and Greene, the two favorites going into the contest. Greene had been a consistent top three finalist for several years, and in the film he is depicted as the rival of Heath, the reigning winner. The format is similar to that of the 1977 documentary *Pumping Iron*, where the narrative was one of the arrogant Arnold Schwarzenegger against the more naive Lou Ferrigno. *Pumping Iron*, much like *Generation Iron*, follows several real life bodybuilders in the lead up to a Mr. Olympia, in the case of *Pumping Iron*, the 1975 contest in Pretoria, South Africa. Though not perfectly performative or participatory (as the filmmakers in *Pumping Iron*, directors Robert Fiore and George Butler, are never seen

or heard), it nevertheless is a much less observational documentary than *Generation Iron*. Though retroactively labeled a docu-drama, there is little in the profilmic of *Pumping Iron* to support this. Despite popular perceptions, documentary films do often include recreations or reenactments, partially scripted or in any other sense performed scenes, and other things almost exclusively associated with fictional film. In *Pumping Iron*, Schwarzenegger and Ferrigno have much more interaction with one another, whereas nearly all of the communication between Heath and Greene in *Generation Iron* is conducted through the film itself. The time span is also much different. Significantly more of the footage that made the final cut for *Pumping Iron* relative to *Generation Iron* was shot in the few days before and during the contest, rather than the months and weeks leading it up to it. *Pumping Iron* still has much of such footage, such as Schwarzenegger and Franco Columbu training in the original Gold's Gym in Venice Beach, Lou Ferrigno and Mike Katz in their home lives, respectively in Brooklyn and Connecticut.

The film begins inside Greene's apartment, a section eight subsidized unit in Brooklyn, which has very little furniture or other trappings of success, and features him drawing stylized figures, presumably of himself, and surrounded by the finished and unfinished canvasses of his talents. In reality, what is being concealed here, and goes unaddressed in the film entirely, is that Greene is by all measures an affluent man. His professional success has produced vast financial rewards for him, yet he chooses to keep a small apartment in a housing project in Brooklyn as his primary residence. However, Greene's voice is not heard in the film until approximately 12:30 in. All we are given are enigmatic glimpses of him, and combined with his very eccentric appearance – beyond

his physical size – the contrasting effect with Heath is even more pronounced. Greene has a large facial scar running down the side of his face, and his hair consists of two long braids growing out of the side of his head. The braids are not entirely his own growing hair – they are a blend of his hair extended with trimmings of his own removed hair. They are long enough that they extend down to his mid back. His head is bald otherwise. The effect is one of giving him the appearance of antlers, or when worn in a top-knot fashion, oddly feminine – as a woman with long hair would wear her hair.

Heath's voice is the first voice heard in the film, and his own home, located in rural Colorado is filled with gaudy furniture and décor fitting of the nouveau riche lifestyle of a champion bodybuilder. This is made explicit when at one point later in the film, the camera pans up to the sky while on Greene's rooftop, and then cuts to a downward panning shot of Heath running on mountain roads in Colorado. The effect is one of contrasting the two characters as much as possible – in lifestyle, demeanor, appearance, physical location, family history, and upbringing.

Although both have black ancestry, Heath has a more pronounced white admixture, having lighter skin, light colored eyes, and more European facial features as compared to Greene, and the film does capture some, if not all racial elements of difference between the two, as well as class difference. Heath comments on Greene's past, going as far as to say that Greene may not even know what a resume is, given his life in and out of foster care and use of government assistance. This stands in stark contrast to Heath's own middle class upbringing. Heath's comments are indicative of his general portrayal in the film – an outspoken, arrogant, to some extent spoiled overdog,

and again serving in contrast to Greene, whom with the exception of one scene where he is mimicking being an angry youth, is borderline whispering every time he speaks, and is very measured and introspective in his statements.

Despite Heath's middle class background and college education (a scholarship athlete in basketball at the University of Denver), it is Greene who is the artist, the more well-read, the more philosophical, the more introspective and self-conscious, and the more intellectual. Most of Heath's scenes consist of his bragging, his gaudy taste in suits and exotic cars, his unthinking consumption, and his seeming arrogance. Greene, in contrast, falls into no trappings of success, and is often depicted working on his art, conducting performance art in and around Brooklyn, and quietly saying his innermost thoughts on camera – betraying a reserved quality about himself, but also highlighting his often troubled past as a youth. Compounding this is the fact that Greene, of noticeable size and eccentric appearance otherwise, always performs his performance art in a mask. His performances consist of stylized posing routines in highly public places in New York City such as street corners and in busy subway stops, such as Union Square. He is both allowing those to gaze upon him, but concealing some element of his person from that gaze.

The other major contrast is between Warren and Pakulski – Warren, an aging and fading contender, and Pakulski, a rising star. Some barbs are traded between the two indirectly throughout the film, generally about their training philosophies. Warren is portrayed as an unthinking trainer, simply lifting as hard and as heavy as possible in a gritty warehouse gym, with little regard to his health or any direction to his training.

Pakulski works out in a university laboratory under the guidance of sports physiology Ph.Ds and incorporates all manner of electronic tracking and visualization devices, taking a scientific approach to his training. It is implied that Pakulski believes Warren will simply injure himself into irrelevance if he continues training the way he does. Warren responds that he has not been injured in the gym since 2003, and his last two major injuries occurred as accidents while not working out. In that particular scene, Warren is being interviewed on horseback outside of his Texas McMansion, and in a perfectly timed sequence of events, is thrown from his horse and injures himself.

While mostly observational, going so far as to include the Voice of God provided by Mickey Rourke, the film does have some reflexive elements. In all other forms of non-observational documentary as outlined by Nichols (1991), voice-overs or titling that achieves the same result should be absent. The term Voice of God is given, somewhat pejoratively, to observational documentaries that include a voice-over, as it constitutes an element of the documentary fully outside of its own diegesis. While this is of no issue with fictional film, when applied to documentaries, it is meant to question who is the person speaking and how are they seemingly omnipotent if what is being captured in the profilmic is real? Two involving Warren stand out, and question the subject-object relationship of the documentary. In one training sequence, Warren is in the warehouse gym, metal music is blasting over the loudspeakers, and he is toiling away at his usual loud and aggressive lifting. He becomes visibly upset at the crew, and tells them directly to get away from him. If Griffiths' three types of return gaze are recalled, while certainly not treating the camera-as-celebrity, this ethnographic incursion into Warren's training

can be seen both as a nervous reaction, and as a sustained defiance. Though he is clearly angered, it is not clear, however, the motivation behind his reaction, at least not internally. Superficially, he is annoyed by their presence, that much is clear, however if his reaction is simply a defiance, it must at best be momentary as he seems to not exhibit this return gaze at any other moment in his filmed scenes. It is entirely possible it is a nervous reaction, as Warren is simply not used to the presence of cameras in his life, at least not under the circumstances of filming his training, and in an act of frustration and confusion, reacted nervously with anger.

The second instance of reflexivity comes later, at the Mr. Olympia contest, in an act of desperation and genuine concern, Warren asks the crew if they have seen a pair of dumbbells anywhere so he can pump up for the stage. Regardless of editing, this exchange must have happened chronologically later in the filming process, and Warren make have become used to the presence of the crew, perhaps even seeing them as friends as his request is clearly one of assistance. These two instances leave the viewer questioning whether or not Warren, if not all the others, saw the crew as voyeurs. While culture, class, and racial differences may not have come into play, the fact that the documentary was about a subculture, and an often poorly understood and generally unaccepted subculture that does engage in illegal activity such as the abuse of controlled substances, as well as some taboo elements such as hustling, raise issues of gaze.

The topic of steroids is addressed, although not thoroughly. In the opening credits, a plate of chicken and broccoli, the most stereotypical bodybuilder meal there is, is placed next to a newspaper with a headline about steroids. It is this concealment of the

issue of AAS, through opaque excuses such as genetics and the alleged science of supplements and nutrition that the film adheres to. Out of all of the bodybuilders in the documentary, Pakulski speaks the most about this issue, but simultaneously both muddies and clears the waters in his responses. While he does not deny their presence, he does claim that not everyone could do what he, or the others, do even while on AAS. While explaining this, he is visibly tense, and going through what seems like a rehearsed routine. Perhaps his most odd claim is that bodybuilders, at least the competitive ones portrayed in the film, have a unique ability to both shed fat while gaining muscle at the same time. This is physiologically possible for anyone, though the margin for error in either direction is exceptionally small. Furthermore, if employed as a technique to build one's body, the muscular gains would be very small. It takes a consistent and sustained intake of surplus calories to be able to add mass. What makes what Pakulski is speaking of possible, at least to the extent he is claiming it does, is the use of exogenous hormones, whether they be AAS, growth hormone, thyroid hormones, or the use and abuse of various stimulants and diuretics.

On the subject of injectable or indigestible substances of questionable legality for the purposes of bodybuilding, there is even a shot in *Generation Iron* of an insulin syringe in Winklaar's hotel room refrigerator. While insulin syringes are used by bodybuilders to inject insulin for growth purposes, as well as all manner of exotic peptides and research chemicals, both are legal. However, Human Growth Hormone (HGH) needs to be kept refrigerated once reconstituted from powder, and is typically injected with an insulin syringe. HGH is the only non-controlled substance in the United

States that is illegal to be prescribed for off-label purposes, and aesthetic enhancement is such an off-label use. Unless Winklaar is a diabetic, and there is no mention of him being one, the contents of the syringe must either be HGH or some manner of peptide injected for the purposes of muscle growth or recovery.

The history of the development of bodybuilding is the history of the use and discovery of image-enhancement drugs. The oft-given excuse of genetics makes no sense here, as genetic development can't account for the pace of change. Additionally, certain things attributed to genetics are nonsensical when examined critically. Rich Gaspari is generally credited with being the first bodybuilder to have muscle striations on his gluteus muscles (Ray & Rivera 2012). Every bodybuilder since has considered this a requirement to be competitive on stage. Did Gaspari luck out in the genetic lottery? If so, then how and why did everyone since also develop this trait? The much more plausible answer is he was the first bodybuilder to push the limits of known cutting drugs at the time, and everyone else followed suit. Arnold Schwarzenegger makes a brief appearance in the film and skirts about the issue of drug use in acceptable terms. While couching the discussion in terms of proportions, he states that in his era, the proportions of the bodybuilder were much more appealing to a larger audience (museumified versus demuseumified, to use the terms of this thesis). While not directly stating it, the implication is that because there were fewer drugs available, and generally taken in lower doses, it was impossible for a bodybuilder of the era, no matter how genetically lucky, to be able to build the out-of-proportion mass seen in the competitors of *Generation Iron*.

Because of such excuses as genetics and improved training and nutrition are

given, a totally new body must be created, as it is decontextualized from reality.

Baudrillard gives us an example:

In the same way, with the pretext of saving the original, one forbade visitors to enter the Lascaux caves, but an exact replica was constructed five hundred meters from it, so that everyone could see them (one glances through a peephole at the authentic cave, and then one visits the reconstituted whole) (Baudrillard, 1994).

In this case, our peepholes are the shots of training and eating, as they remind the viewer that the idea of a natural body is always there. This effectively functions as an element of pastiche, conveying the idea of a bodybuilder to the viewer in order to form the framework for the other elements of a postmodern body within the film.

The film focuses on several bodybuilders, but there is an element of *struggle* to all of them, save for Heath who is portrayed as a living embodiment of his nickname, The Gift. Greene has to overcome his hardships in life with his work ethic. Warren has to overcome his injuries and a career that is on the decline and never peaked. Wolf sees himself as the next Schwarzenegger, attempting to use bodybuilding as a transition to being an action star, yet exhibits none of Schwarzenegger's charisma. Martinez perhaps has the worst situation of all, having to deal with a prison sentence, the murder of his sister, no sponsorship, the inability to compete, and two autistic children. Pakulski must deal with his status as a relative newcomer and perhaps his delusions of victory. Early in his scenes, Pakulski displays an extreme confidence in his ability to win, often tied in with his scientific approach to training. He boasts that he is almost guaranteed victory, and is only worried about few other unnamed competitors, presumably Greene and Heath. Later in the film, backstage at the Olympia contest, the camera locks onto his

expression, and it is one of worry, and of being humbled. Yamagishi and Winklaar face both similar challenges to one another as well as divergent ones. Both are journeymen bodybuilders who must qualify in smaller competitions for the Mr. Olympia. Yamagishi's small stature, his race, and his culture are stated as obstacles by he himself. He wants to show that an East Asian can be competitive as a bodybuilder despite, as he says, their characteristically smaller stature compared to other races. Culturally, he feels alienated by his family, whom do not understand his decidedly non-traditional path in life. Yamagishi waxes about his former life in Japan, seemingly longing for home and family, while simultaneously attempting to make the United States his home, a country much more receptive to his lifestyle than Japan. In his scenes, he takes on the characteristics of a man caught between worlds, and never truly fitting into either. Winklaar and his trainer Peeters struggle with Winklaar's laziness and what Peeters sees as his less than full commitment to the sport. Often in his scenes, Winklaar takes his diet and training less than seriously, acting as a child would. As if forming an unusual pair bond, despite her disapproval of his antics and criticisms of his dedication, Peeters is very much an enabler for Winklaar, catering to his needs, allowing him to slack, and in general acting every bit the doting grandmother she appears to resemble. This may be in fact due to the cultural differences between Winklaar and Peeters. Peeters is a native Dutch, and as is typical of Northwestern European Protestants, comes from a guilt culture. Winklaar on the other hand is from Curaçao. Though a Dutch territory, the island is heavily Catholic, and culturally much more similar to the culture of South America. That is to say, it is a shame culture. Peeters is attempting to guilt Winklaar into improving his behavior, but

culturally, it is likely he does not respond to guilt and instead shame. Guilt is somewhat an internalized shame. Instead of fear of being ostracized as in a shame culture, a guilt culture is inward looking, using the mind against itself, depicting failure as a failure to live up to internal desire rather than external motivators (acceptance, love, being part of a community, for example).

Furthermore, these connotations are contingent upon awareness of how the body takes on such a form. Again, substituting various explanations for the form, they construct a pseudo-body and pseudo-science that take the place of reality. Jameson continues:

This historical novel can no longer set out to represent the historical past; it can only “represent” our ideas and stereotypes about that past (which thereby at once becomes “pop history”). (Jameson, 1984)

Here the film can't represent the reality of the body, it instead represents the “-ness” of a bodybuilder in their own mold. Baudrillard's *demuseumification* is also evident in the film. In the process of demuseumification here, an object, in this case the male form on display, is being transposed into a state for exhibition, but with absolutely no explanation for why it exists or how it even came into being – that is to say, to pretend it exists independent of the exogenous hormones and other ingested or injected substances commonly used to attain it. By attempting to transpose bodybuilder into reality without the explicit use of AAS, the film asks the audience to indulge in a hallucination; a body bigger, leaner, denser, and more effortlessly grown than any other. The footage of various old time bodybuilders and strongmen, including Eugen Sandow in

the form of a trophy for the Mr. Olympia, reinforces this idea, which “is even more artificial: it is a total simulacrum that links up with 'reality' through a complete circumvolution” (Baudrillard, 1994).

To paraphrase Baudrillard, this imaginary body is presented as such to make the audience believe it is real, and make all that surrounds it less real. A truly authentic recreation of the body would be both impractical and unbelievable for an audience. Here, the simulacrum of a bodybuilder must walk and talk as a simulacrum in order to be accepted as real. This is a bodybuilder in a vacuum. His dimensions render all other bodies as fiction. If this immense body comes into being by the process the film purports, then the hyperreal is the entire industry around it. They are now the simulations of the real bodybuilder.

Nothing in this painting organizes even a minimal place for the viewer, who confronts it at the turning of a museum corridor or gallery with all the contingency of some inexplicable natural object.” (Jameson, 1984 *Diamond Dust Shoes*)

If a viewer were to stumble upon this film, he would experience no concept of himself either. The film does not, nor does it need to represent the body in any fashion at all.

CONCLUSION

If *Generation Iron* does anything above all to convey the postmodern nature of the bodies shown, it is through omission more than it is through its contents. In this case, since the bodies are never sufficiently explained – or, rather, explained in a very narrow and specific way which I will delve into later – it both leaves no room for the viewer to make meaning, as in Jameson's description of *Diamond Dust Shoes*. No reaction is possible, given the content of the film and nothing more, than to see the body as an out of place object. It should be mentioned, however, that a different and further reaction is possible if one is familiar with what is unsaid – if the reality of AAS is known to the viewer. In any case, the body here has no meaning beyond fetishism, and in a quite literal sense. One limitation of this research is that it is limited to the text and surrounding paratext – it does not get at the subculture through its members. Further research should take a more ethnographic approach, especially when dealing with topics such as sexuality (gay for pay, hustling) and the body presented. Fetishized or not, or especially so when considered spaceless and meaningless as in *Diamond Dust Shoes*, the body becomes a simulation of itself. It exists purely to be seen, “flayed” in Galen's terms, and so much so that it becomes a commodity onto itself.

Elements of pastiche are also present, though they don't hail a past or any time at all, at least for the bodies. Overall, there is orthodox pastiche in the film; the numerous shots of old Golden Age bodybuilders; the implied lineages connecting the two periods in time; the shadow of Schwarzenegger that professional bodybuilding, even some thirty years after his last competition can never seem to shake from the popular consciousness;

and even in the trophy for the Mr. Olympia contest, which is a bronze statuette of Eugen Sandow, a Victorian-era figure. Beyond that, the pastiche hails elements of the body, consciously or not, that convey the message of strength, rather than time. In this case, it comes in the form of the musculature itself, a grotesque assemblage of muscular body parts with seemingly no reason to it. As Jameson notes, parody has motivation behind it, pastiche does not, it simply forms a reference. The body here does not seek to subvert, and in this sense, is very serious despite its grotesque nature and lack of rationale.

It is through omission that the film becomes a postmodern observational documentary. Though far from an exhaustive list, the film can be situated among other exemplars of postmodern documentaries of various types; *Chronicle of a Summer* (1961), *The Thin Blue Line* (1988), and *The Wedding Camels* (1980). Each represents one of Nichols' sub-types, participatory, performative, and reflective, respectively. *Chronicle of a Summer* is an example of cinéma vérité, or direct cinema, but it is notable for the enhanced presence of its directors, Edgar Morin and Jean Rouch. They are seen and heard through the film, and in the ending sequence, take an entirely self-referential (to the film) walk through the museum and discuss what had just been seen by the audience. *The Thin Blue Line* by Errol Morris contains many highly stylized and often repeated and subtly differently re-shot reenactments of the events covered by the film (a real life murder case), giving the rather serious subject matter of the film an almost surreal quality. Given that the film draws heavily from eyewitness accounts and after-the-fact police records, this is perhaps intentionally done in order to highlight the unreliability of human recall. *The Wedding Camels* is an almost purely ethnographic film, but is one of,

if not the earliest postmodern anthropological films, in addition to being highly reflexive. The Vietnamese-American anthropologist Trinh T. Minh-ha later became known for this style, though this film predates her work by a dozen years. Also notable for its extreme degree of reflexivity, the film is constantly aware of itself. Shot by husband and wife team David and Judith MacDougall, early in the film, while shooting East African pastoralists, the film sets up its own reflexivity by leaving in a sequence where two of the pastoralists are talking and making reference to the “white people” following them around with a camera.

As for representation, there are several issues at hand beyond the body itself; race, sexuality, and how the body has allowed these men to in a sex go beyond their gender (*trans*-*mensch*). While the three major anthropological racial categories are represented in the film, it is worth noting that aside from the at least partial racial conflict between Heath (mixed ancestry) and Greene (black), all of the bodybuilders must “become brown” for the contest. Even Heath, who is at least partially of black ancestry, is shown in the spray tanning both backstage at the contest, getting layers of tanning applied to him, including fine detail work. Winklaar, who also appears to be of mixed racial background and is also of dark complexion is never shown getting a tan applied, but it is clear from shots of him on stage that he is also wearing such an applied tan. When lined up on stage, all of the bodybuilders, with the exception of Greene, look to have the exact same color skin, regardless of racial makeup. Here, the film homogenizes race, but not in the way Dyer does. It is not a “homogenized white” but rather a “homogenized brown.” What it means that black bodybuilders are left out of this homogenization process is a

question for subsequent research, as are questions of sexuality, which were not covered in the film at all, beyond the most bare implications that all the men were heterosexual (being shown with wives or girlfriends).

As for the idea of the *trans*-mensch, the film gives a rationale, and in fact the only rationale for the existence of these bodies at all; genetics. Genetics in bodybuilding can refer to legitimate genetic limitations or boons. The following can be seen as such boons: low natural body fat, a non-boxy body type, a higher than average response to drugs (which is still suspect as it is the equivalent of saying a woman with natural A cups who can still then get D implants has really good breast genetics. You would never know you're a good responder until you actually do the drugs and in the quantities required), and long muscle bellies. That may in fact be it. And even if a bodybuilder were not in possession of those four things, there is nothing precluding him from becoming a professional, as IFBB pro cards are awarded regularly to winners of amateur contests who lack these characteristics. In fact, if the stages of the highest levels of professional bodybuilding are any indication, these genetics limitations would not stop someone from being a competitive professional. Every year, even at the Mr. Olympia contest, everyone but a small handful of competitors lacks all of these qualities. There is a visible and steep drop off among the competitors. Out of the men profiled in the documentary, Heath, and Greene finished first and second, respectively. Going down the list of competitors, Warren – distinctly different and lesser in the qualities judges are looking for finished fifth, with Wolf sixth. For all of his trouble, Pakulski placed 11th, earning \$4,000 in the process, as did Yamagishi (15th place), and Winklaar (12th). Martinez never qualified as

he was in prison for much of the time leading up to the contest. Needless to say, genetics don't turn off on certain days, inside or outside of prison, their expressions are constant. Returning to the modified Hall question – “What is the world in which the meaning of what is seen here makes sense?” – and the subsequent application of the irrational but still logical postmodern simulation onto it, the real world of consistent genetic expression (where one is in no danger of developing a snake tongue or bird wings, for example) becomes unmade, and unfolds into one of no referents to reality except the most tenuous and superficial, but does not need to for rationality is not the ideal, but rather a consistent, if whole-cloth logic. The reality remains that not a single competitive IFBB professional got to where he is without massive drug use. In some sense, what is being represented and constituted in the film is not necessarily the physical form, but rather this logic, which in turn exists to make the physical form believable in its hyperreality.

It is important to remember that other sports are broadcast, and much more readily accessible by a general audience than *Generation Iron*. In keeping that thought, again the question must be asked, “What is the world in which the meaning of what is seen here makes sense?” For any other mediated sport, the constitutive representation of the underlying logic of that question, nor the simulated world is ever presented, nor does it need to be, even in sporting events where AAS use is a known and discussed topic. So, my question becomes rather simply to answer; it is a world in which the parameters of the rules, and to some degree position on the field of play, have constituted a more or less ideal physical form – linemen are big and fat, kickers and small and thin. In *Generation Iron*, this is not the case, as both the physical form and the underlying logic (largely based

on genetics, hence the focus on the subject), are in a constant state of having to reinforce each other in order for each to make logical, if irrational, sense. The answer to the posed question becomes an endless loop; bodybuilders are represented in this film in this way because of their *trans-mensch* genetics and they have *trans-mensch* genetics because they are successful bodybuilders.

Bodybuilding is the fringe of the fringe of the fringe, and the math is rather different as a result. It is entirely possible to take any random man off the streets who has never touched a weight or set foot in a gym in his life, and so long as he's a good responder to the drugs and has the work ethic, he can become a bodybuilder. This is in contradiction to what Pakulski said in *Generation Iron* in his segment on AAS – that even given access to all the drugs in any quantity, the average person “No you couldn't do what I do.” There simply isn't enough variability in the spectrum of human genetics to explain away with the genetics argument.

The logic of using genetics as an excuse also forms an interesting underlying discourse. As seen in the film, few if any contemporary bodybuilders will outright deny the use of drugs, but the irreducible argument in this statement is as follows: "I have great genetics" has now taken on the form of a condescending yet hidden way of saying "I didn't need as many drugs as you." The unavoidable implication is that one competitor had some sort of inherent biological advantage over another, and just needed a little tiny taste of the drugs (or if he is particularly gutsy or thinks he is talking to someone who does not know any better, "just supplements") to get him over the top, and everyone else who didn't have those advantages had to take more drugs and therefore instead of cheat

they cheat more. The tacit admission of the role of drugs has, in an odd twist, now come to be yet another form of competition, with professional insinuating how *little* they take compared to others. Since the genetics argument is almost always brought up whenever it comes to size, it is even more of a subtle insult. There is no one who was almost at the size of a competitive bodybuilder who just needed proper nutrition and better training methods to get those last few pounds on on account of their superior genetics.

If a term like genetics is going to be used as a blanket explanation, at some point evidence is going to have to be provided for what is meant, otherwise it becomes no better than saying magic. If this is genetics as a lot of bodybuilders claim, it would have to be a pathology, and then we would be forced to ask where are the accompanying debilitating effects? Anyone walking around with 100+ pounds more muscle than the male human average represents someone so far off the mean, so inconceivably off the right side of the bell curve, that there would have to be some sort of other condition, as not only are individual alleles usually not responsible for one and only one function, but anyone so far from the mean would be suffering some sort of accompanying condition. For example, people in excess of 7 or 8 feet tall usually have a host of genetically-induced pathologies that accompany their height, or people with legitimate genetic obesity such as Prader-Willi, Bardet-Biedl, or Cohen syndromes which all, including many other things, are accompanied by intellectual disabilities as well as obesity (Driscoll, Miller, Schwartz, & Cassidy, 2016, Falk, Wang, & Traboulsi, 2011, Forsythe & Beales, 2015).

Further clouding this, to some benefit of the bodybuilders who use it, is just how

little is known about genetics. For example, it is known to science perhaps 1% of the alleles responsible for human height (Cochran 2014), but we know the biological process for why taller people are taller. So it's rather convenient for bodybuilders to claim a hormone (exogenous or natural) independent cause for increased muscle mass.

Finally, perhaps the most damning argument against genetics as presented in *Generation Iron* is the existence of female bodybuilding. There's more to biology than genetics. There's more to the biology of sex differences than just the anatomy of reproductive organs. While there must be some genetic control of things like, say, joint ossification and just the sheer amount of connective tissue men have over women (not even getting into the more obvious issue of natural testosterone production differences between the sexes), this is completely an issue of sexual dimorphism and not genetics. Being a woman, naturally and biologically, means you have these disadvantages though while genetic in the grand scheme of things, are inherent to being a woman physiologically – as much as being a woman also means you have female reproductive organs.

In short, although the presence of a uterus in a woman, and the lack of a uterus in a man, is determined by genetics, it is in no way reasonable to look at a little boy and say that since he lacks a uterus, he has poor uterine genetics more so than it is to look at a female bodybuilder and tell her that since her joints are weaker compared to a man, she has poor joint genetics.

Both the 1985 sequel to *Pumping Iron*, *Pumping Iron II: The Women*, and *Pumping Iron* itself form a counterpoint. Though at one point in *Pumping Iron* Ferrigno

takes some pills from an unmarked bottle, that is the closest the film every gets to talking about AAS, which were legal for possession at the time, and it never mentions genetics or any other *trans-mensch* subject matter. *Pumping Iron II: The Women* similarly never talks about the genetic-logic present throughout *Generation Iron*, but if it did, the argument would necessarily have to be that somehow, the women in the film have genetic expressions for male characteristics in excess of what a significant fraction of the male population express – in effect, becoming a third gender. As mentioned earlier, this may be the case, though not in any clinical, medical fashion. The introduction of hormones in the female body, which are either never present or present in only small quantities relative to men, has indeed physically changed the women in *Pumping Iron II: The Women*, but more importantly, their behavior, desires, and adoption of a male space independent of that all is what has made the transition more complete, much more so at least culturally than the current concept of transgenderism. Though they may not seek to perfectly emulate male appearance or sexuality, they have nonetheless come to adopt the most excessive male characteristics when it comes to the representation of the physical form within the film. If applied to *Generation Iron*, then the logic still holds up, but its shortcoming is that it hasn't gone *far enough*, and thus becomes again irrational and unable and unwilling to refer to reality. The physical space represented between all three films is nearly identical. If indeed the rapid genetic-logic of *Generation Iron* is taken as a hegemonic reading, and if it is considered that the women of *Pumping Iron II* have adopted a male space, then there must be a *trans-mensch* space represented within *Generation Iron*. The question of what world does this makes sense in becomes literal.

The sense is already made, but it is the spatiality of the film, not the representations of the male form, that becomes the focus of the question. Thus, it is with falling short of hyperreality that the simulation makes the world around it, and not the bodies of *Generation Iron* postmodern.

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