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# Milk, Modernity and Muscles: Raw Dairy and Bodybuilding in 1960s America

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## ABSTRACT

In the mid-1960s, bodybuilding coach Vince Gironda began promoting raw milk. Done alongside nutritional supplement entrepreneur Rheo H. Blair, the pair claimed raw (unpasteurised) milk was the most anabolic and 'pure' substance available to men. Accordingly, raw milk and cream were presented as effective as anabolic steroids used by bodybuilders. Studies of milk have often focused on the manufacturing, trading and politics surrounding the foodstuff. Few studies have associated milk with masculinity in the same way that scholars have done for meat. This article examines Gironda and Blair's nutritional plans with reference to modernity and masculinity and highlights the hyper-realised masculine bodies and personalities linked to raw milk.

I helped pioneer certified raw milk in my gymnasiums and feel it is the most important factor in gaining weight which I have to offer my members ...

Vince Gironda, 1966.<sup>1</sup>

In the mid-1960s, American bodybuilding coaches Vince Gironda and Rheo H. Blair began promoting raw milk to clients. The two men claimed that raw (meaning unpasteurised) dairy – whether milk or cream – was the most anabolic and 'pure' substance for men seeking to build muscle and strength in equal measure. Raw milk and cream were presented as just, if not more, effective than the newly emergent anabolic steroids used by professional bodybuilders.<sup>2</sup> Studies of raw dairy have mainly focused on the manufacturing, trading and politics involved in the production of these products, with some attention to gender.<sup>3</sup> Few works, however, have examined the gendered dimensions of dairy in a sporting or athletic context.<sup>4</sup> Bodybuilding, which is typically understood to be a hyper-masculine activity, offers a wonderful opportunity to explore this phenomenon. This article will argue that raw dairy, as part of a restricted diet, was linked by bodybuilding coaches like Gironda and Blair to a specific kind of American masculinity, a highly embodied form of gender identity in which the muscular body came to signify and represent traits like determination, ambition, discipline and virility.

Gironda and Blair's specific form of American masculinity privileged lean and muscular bodies as the most prized form of manhood. For Gironda, Blair and their

allies, this masculine body was representative of a certain kind of sovereignty, a refusal to adhere to cultural, or nutritional, norms. The article's first task is to situate Gironda and Blair's advice within the context of American food politics. From here, the article addresses the link between raw dairy and masculinity as found in Blair and Gironda's writings. Surveying training programmes, magazine articles, correspondence and advertising materials, the article discusses the masculine bodies and personalities linked to raw dairy. In their multiple outlets, Gironda, Blair and several of their customers, spoke of the strength and muscularity they derived from raw milk and cream. The consumption of raw milk was linked to an ideological and material form of masculinity compatible within the field of American bodybuilding, although they likely influenced popular society to a certain degree.<sup>5</sup> Anxious to avoid overarching discussions of masculinity in the United States during the 1960s, this article focuses exclusively on American fitness and the masculine archetypes found therein.

### Raw dairy, food politics and physical culture in the United States

Raw dairy, and raw milk, have long been contentious foodstuffs in the United States. At the outset, it is important to note that it was not until the nineteenth century and the creation of the pasteurisation process that distinctions began to be drawn between 'raw' and pasteurised milk.<sup>6</sup> The process of heating raw milk to a certain temperature (normally between 145 and 162°F) in order to kill harmful bacteria was created in the mid-nineteenth century and, by the end of the century, was being increasingly promoted in Europe and the United States.<sup>7</sup> Thus, for several centuries, raw dairy was simply dairy. Distinctions did not exist. In the United States, efforts were made in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to make pasteurisation the norm in American dairy production.<sup>8</sup> This, as Julie Miller has explained, was not an easy process.<sup>9</sup> Indeed it is telling that debates in the early 1900s as to whether or not milk should be pasteurised in American cities oftentimes devolved into debates about 'pure' foods, improper entrepreneurs and the role of 'modern' science in life.<sup>10</sup> This idea of pure versus impure or good versus bad was replicated in bodybuilding discourses.

The first decade of the twentieth century saw the publication of numerous tracts about pasteurised dairy, some of which were later used by fitness writers as justification for their promotion of raw milk. In 1909, Archibald Ward and Myer Jaffa published *Pure Milk and the Public Health*, which painstakingly recorded the health benefits of pasteurisation.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, *The Milk Question*, published in 1912 by Milton Rosenau, the medical director of the Public Health Service's Hygiene Division, warned of the dangers of raw milk. It also thoroughly explained how pasteurisation removed harmful substances from milk.<sup>12</sup> From the mid-1890s, several American cities saw the formation of milk commissions dedicated to pasteurising milk.<sup>13</sup> It was those cities which suffered 'swill milk' epidemics in the late nineteenth-century – as happened in 1850s New York, when sale of a tainted batch of unpasteurised milk resulted in thousands of infant mortalities – which proved to be the most ardent supporters of pasteurisation.<sup>14</sup> Debates were not confined to the health field nor were they uncontested. Many farmers, politicians and producers argued that pasteurising milk removed its vital nutrients. This also included American 'physical culturists' – the term given to a late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century health phenomenon generally seen as an immediate predecessor to modern gym cultures.<sup>15</sup> On both sides of the 'milk

question' in the early twentieth century, and really running until the 1940s, were concerns about purity.<sup>16</sup> For advocates of raw milk or cream, the heating process destroyed nutrients. For those who favoured pasteurisation, raw dairy represented potential illness and disease.

Even at this early stage, a link was made by fitness writers about the purity of one's foodstuffs and the purity of their body/mind. Adrienne Rose Johnson has previously traced the lineage of modern fitness diets to prior health movements, and similar processes can be seen around discourses on dairy.<sup>17</sup> Turn-of-the-century health and fitness enthusiasts drew on ideas about pasteurisation to discuss bodily health. Charles Sanford Porter's *Milk Diet*, a book on health, suggested that pure (meaning unpasteurised) milk could be used to treat a variety of ailments.<sup>18</sup> Porter's book was popular enough to undergo several editions in the space of a decade and was picked up by fitness experts.<sup>19</sup> Bernarr Macfadden, publisher of *Physical Culture* health magazine, which enjoyed a circulation of over 100,000 in the early 1900s, regularly quoted Porter's *Milk Diet* in the magazine and argued that pure food could help individuals avoid disease and also undesirable vices like excessive eating, masturbation, slothfulness and so on. He also placed emphasis on the benefits of 'natural' foods. Macfadden went on to write a book in the 1920s called *The Milk Cure*, which revised and republished Porter's ideas.<sup>20</sup>

Macfadden was not the only turn-of-the-century physical culturist who was a champion for dairy. Charles Atlas, the fitness entrepreneur famed for his 'insult that made a man out of Mac' advertisements, regularly included milk in his mail order workout courses. Atlas claimed that milk was the best food he had encountered for building strength and muscularity.<sup>21</sup> Previous work on Atlas has positioned him as a sort of muscular spokesman for American teenagers and young adults seeking to transform their lives, and their bodies, through physical activity.<sup>22</sup> For Atlas, milk needed to be treated like a whole food, thoroughly chewed, before being consumed. Atlas was one of many fitness figures in America who claimed that they had discovered a new method of 'unlocking' milk's full potential. That Macfadden and Atlas held reverence for milk was perhaps not surprising given that it was Macfadden who helped introduce Atlas to the public through a series of physique competitions in the 1920s.<sup>23</sup> That withstanding, other interwar physical culturists certainly promoted the idea that milk held special 'growing' qualities and that it was part of the combination needed to create the ideal (meaning white) male physique. In the early 1930s, American physical culturists began to promote the 'GOMAD' or gallon of milk a day diet. Combined with a strenuous exercise regimen, this diet promised to build large amounts of muscle and size in a relatively short period of time.

Research on GOMAD has made clear the masculine tropes used to promote the diet.<sup>24</sup> Advocates of this approach, like American weightlifting coach and fitness writer Mark Berry, or Peary Rader, the owner of popular fitness magazine *Ironman*, claimed that strength and size defined the modern man. It was not sufficient to simply be athletic; men needed to be large. Here, the 'growing' factor of milk was deemed critical. Berry, Rader and others linked the large physiques created by the 'GOMAD' programme with one's very masculinity. Those who 'failed' to adhere to the programme were admonished for being weak willed.<sup>25</sup> At times, such discussions descended into racialised debates with claims that those with a 'Gandi-ite' [sic] frame were lesser than hardworking men.<sup>26</sup> This also served to distinguish white American

bodies from 'effeminate' Asian ones. The ideal male body was presented as muscular, white and large. Berry and others linked the muscular frame to ambition, discipline, work ethic, sexual attractiveness and overall value.<sup>27</sup>

These debates about pasteurisation, physical culture, the role that milk played in a healthy diet, and even programs like 'GOMAD' all fit within recent work that historians have done on the gendered, racialised and classed undertones of modern milk as a product. Melanie Dupuis problematises the very nature of milk drinking by demonstrating that the practice of consuming milk across populations is a relatively recent phenomenon.<sup>28</sup> Peter Atkins' work on the materiality of milk focuses on its perceived purity, especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>29</sup> Kendra Smith-Howard has shown that efforts in the early 1900s to introduce milk into American schools, ostensibly as a means of improving children's education and welfare, were also intended to help 'Americanise' immigrant children.<sup>30</sup> Daniel Block has similarly looked at promotions in early twentieth-century America to encourage immigrant mothers to use 'pure milk' rather than breast milk for their infants which, as Block explains, was born from a desire to reform, and Americanise, immigrant women's behaviours.<sup>31</sup> Related to this point, Deborah Valenze's global history of milk explores the intersectionality of milk consumption and production wherein concerns at a consumer level about health and wellbeing compounded pressures on industrial dairy farmers.<sup>32</sup> When turn-of-the-century physical culturists promoted pure milk consumption, they were also promoting white, middle class, 'American' values.

They were also promoting a certain kind of masculinity. Block's work on public health officers in America showed how male public health officers partially 'appropriated a task (the process of milking) formerly ... performed by women' while also attempting to 'masculinise' milk through technology and regulatory processes.<sup>33</sup> And as Maria Veri has argued, by the interwar period milk came to be associated with masculine science ('purity') but also with men's growth, strength and development.<sup>34</sup> Efforts made by large firms in the milk industry to use high profile athletes like baseball's Bob Feller or Hank Greenberg promoted milk drinking alongside specific forms of manhood.<sup>35</sup> Aside from helping to increase milk consumption, such campaigns strengthened the association between milk, masculinity and strength. As we turn to thinking about bodybuilding in America from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s, it is important to note that many of the bodybuilders who promoted raw dairy as a strengthening aid, and those who ascribed to this idea, grew up within the context of the historical phenomena described by Dupuis, Atkins, Smith-Howard, Valenze, Block and Veri, or, at the very least, with the idea that 'pure' milk – and this definition varied – was linked to strength, sporting achievement and masculinity.

### **Gironda and raw milk bodybuilding**

An active bodybuilding competitor in the mid-century, Gironda began coaching bodybuilders in the late 1950s.<sup>36</sup> Within a decade, he was regarded in the fitness industry as an iconoclast. Gironda spoke out against the influx of anabolic steroids in bodybuilding, criticised common training methods and vilified those who dietary prescriptions ran contrary to his.<sup>37</sup> In the late 1950s, the doctor to the American Olympic weightlifting team, Dr John Ziegler, created the first anabolic steroid in the form of Dianabol.<sup>38</sup> Defined crudely, anabolic was understood in these communities as growth promoting.

Specifically, it related to the growth of muscle and strength cells far beyond what was previously thought possible. Although the efficacy of anabolic steroids was not fully understood at that time, the word anabolic came to be used within fitness communities with increasing regularity at this time.<sup>39</sup> Anabolic became a buzzword within the fitness communities of 1960s America as shrewd entrepreneurs began advertising the latest food supplement, or indeed, diet, as ‘anabolic’.<sup>40</sup>

Gironda publicly decried the use of anabolic steroids which, he argued, distorted men’s bodies.<sup>41</sup> It was not the muscularity Gironda objected to but rather that men’s bodies had become too muscular, and hence had lost any form of symmetry. For Gironda, raw milk and raw cream became the non-synthetic ‘anabolic’ choice for ‘real’ men. Such foods would produce better bodies and do so without harming the symmetry of their physiques. In 1939, the first recognisable bodybuilding competition was held in the United States. Although physique shows had existed in the past, this show – the Mr. America competition – was the first to become a yearly event. Modelled on the Miss America pageant, first held in 1921, the Mr. America contest sought to find the best representative of American masculinity.<sup>42</sup> Early Mr. America contests were scored based on one’s physique, personality and athleticism. Judging criteria was often used to reinforce a very strict sense of white American masculinity in which the man with the muscular build, who was patriotic and intelligent, was favoured.<sup>43</sup> Somewhat illustrative of this was the fact that several African-American and Black bodybuilders won the physique portion of the competition but lost the competition based on their ‘personalities’. This led to multiple accusations of racism within the Mr. America show but also in American bodybuilding more generally.<sup>44</sup> This situation changed somewhat in the 1960s as Black and African American bodybuilders won contests, but media attention within bodybuilding still tended to favour muscular, white physiques.<sup>45</sup> By this time, the excessive muscularity decried by Gironda had come to dominate the sport.

Gironda’s dietary ideas have been discussed elsewhere.<sup>46</sup> Here, it is sufficient to highlight two of his main arguments regarding food to explain why he came to privilege raw dairy as a sort of ‘super food’. Gironda argued that American agriculture devitalised foods and that excessive levels of key nutrients should be consumed to achieve optimal health.<sup>47</sup> The idea of devitalised foods was, in essence, a repackaging of those very same concerns found in the early 1900s that pasteurisation was somehow stripping dairy of its inherent nutritional value. The very idea that American agricultural practices in general were devitalising foods gained a wider traction in the early 1940s. A key text was Albert Howard’s 1943 work *An Agricultural Testament* which argued that the use of machines, pesticides and chemicals in American farming leached nutrients from the soil, which then impacted the nutritional quality of foods.<sup>48</sup> For Gironda, the rise of organic foods and fears that traditionally farmed foods were no longer nutritious was used to support his contention that ‘raw’ or ‘fertile’ foods, like dairy, must be consumed by bodybuilders.

Gironda’s nutritional dictates were coupled with the message that consuming large amounts of vitamins and nutrients improved one’s health. Here, Gironda was influenced by, and cited, the ‘mega dosing’ principles of Linus Pauling whose scientific work in the 1960s and 1970s suggested that large doses of vitamin supplements could treat ailments and improve health.<sup>49</sup> Pauling’s work was published in the late 1960s but as early as 1966 the American Food and Drug Administration warned consumers that



‘there is no scientific basis for recommending routine use of dietary supplements’.<sup>50</sup> Unperturbed, Gironda’s diets often included large doses of vitamin and mineral supplementation to the extent that some bodybuilders remember Gironda informing them that the tablets and powders required represented their ‘real diet’.<sup>51</sup>

In dietary prescriptions to the general bodybuilding public, Gironda focused on raw dairy’s ability to detoxify the body, provide extra nutrition and, of course, build muscle. Gironda’s *Master Series* – a monthly mail order workout course – was his method of reaching customers. Gironda also wrote for high profile fitness magazines, like *Ironman* or *Muscle and Fitness*, but it was within his mail order courses that his rhetoric was uninhibited.<sup>52</sup> Raw dairy became the conduit to building the ‘desired state’. Gironda’s first lesson was that to build muscle, clients needed a ‘positive nitrogen balance diet’ which would provide ‘detoxification’ from harmful elements found in typical American foods. His nitrogen diet, which revolved around high protein foods, promised to ‘burn fat and increase muscle development’ through raw, therefore natural, foodstuffs.<sup>53</sup> Clients were told that, in order to build the muscular physiques they desired, they needed to eat raw eggs mixed with certified raw cream every three hours. This, Gironda wrote, ensured the body was in a continuous anabolic state, by which he meant muscle growth would soon be forthcoming.

Gironda’s later diet recommendations – they changed every several weeks in his mail courses – continued to stress the idea that raw foods, especially dairy, were the best foods clients could eat. But consuming raw foods in the quantity and routine Gironda commanded represented commitment to his plans and one’s desire to build the ideal male physique.<sup>54</sup> By adhering to his diet plans, Gironda claimed clients exhibited the discipline needed by all men. The next diet Gironda recommended was his ‘stone age nutrition’ plan which, in effect, was premised on the same suspicion of modern farming practices exhibited in later Paleo diets.<sup>55</sup> This diet revolved around the consumption of raw cream, butter and milk. Despite his favouring of raw dairy over other foodstuffs, it was not until his later courses that Gironda explained why raw dairy was beneficial. Beginning his course by stressing the importance of ‘creating an illusion’ in bodybuilding, by which he meant appearing more muscular or leaner than the reality, Gironda returned to a well-worn idea from raw milk circles that ‘certified raw milk is superior because none of the enzymes are destroyed as is the case with pasteurized milk’.<sup>56</sup> For those doubting his credentials, Gironda reminded clients that he was one of the first physical culturists to ‘practice organic dietary discipline and supplementation in sports medicine’.<sup>57</sup> Writing at a time when anabolic steroids were first introduced to bodybuilding, Gironda’s raw milk claims promised steroid like results. Bodybuilders who used raw milk and raw cream ‘develop muscle faster’.<sup>58</sup> Other methods, like mixing raw cream with ginger ale and drinking it in between meals – ‘a European weight gaining trick that is time proven’ – supposedly added forty pounds to clients’ frames in short order.<sup>59</sup> Any potential harm from drinking unpasteurised milk was ignored. Certified raw milk was legal in the United States at that time, but its sale was restricted to farms which passed safety tests. Thanks to the growing popularity of the organic and counter cultural farming movement of the 1960s, it was relatively simple for Gironda to acquire raw milk in California.<sup>60</sup> This was not the case for clients in other states who faced obstacles in obtaining it. Proximity and access to raw milk obviously varied across the United States and it is telling that in some letters to fitness

magazines, individual men discussed the difficulty of tracking down farmers willing to supply them with raw dairy.<sup>61</sup>

In other dietary dictates, especially those related to liver supplements, Gironda cited scientists and sources by name rather than relying on a decades old idea that American agriculture was devitalising. Thus, clients were told that 'in ... certified raw milk, the bacterial count may not exceed 5,000 cc while the Pasteurized milk is allowed 15,000 bacterial county per cc'.<sup>62</sup> Alongside concerns about purity was his assertion that because strongmen from previous generations used raw milk, so too should modern bodybuilders. This was made clear in Gironda's declaration that '[t]he *strongest men in history* [emphasis added] have always been big milk drinkers. But, remember – USE ONLY CERTIFIED RAW MILK'.<sup>63</sup> This claim was later repeated in Gironda's bodybuilding monograph *Blueprint for a Bodybuilder*, published in 1966. Within it Gironda reiterated the link between strength and raw milk, the need to use raw milk for weight gaining and raw milk's nutritional purity.<sup>64</sup> The extremity of Gironda's dietary approach was justified by his assertion that bodybuilders' dietary requirements surpassed those found among the general populace.

In the past, physical culturists like Macfadden or Atlas stressed the importance of raw milk for every individual, especially those who were ill. Some contemporaries, like Berry or Rader, advanced the idea that weight trainers were different from the general populace. It was not until the mid-1960s, however, that this idea truly took hold. Gironda ascribed to the idea that bodybuilding men – and it was exclusively men – were different from their sedentary counterparts. Raw dairy was desirable for trainees because it was nutritionally pure, had special muscle building properties and was fast acting.<sup>65</sup> Consuming raw dairy, especially when it was done by bodybuilders, represented a set of behaviours which differentiated these men from average, untrained, individuals. Research on bodybuilding from the 1980s to the present day has noted the gender communities which form within this field.<sup>66</sup> For men, such communities generally enforce and support the idea that male bodybuilders are more masculine than those who do not train.<sup>67</sup> They exhibit discipline in their eating habits, show stoicism in the face of pain (whether found in training or dieting) and boast the muscles often synonymous with the archetype male body.<sup>68</sup>

To build muscle, Gironda's clients were expected to drink raw milk every three hours, supposedly to maintain protein in their bloodstream. Alternatively, they could use raw milk in one of their main meals.<sup>69</sup> Raw milk became a material example, a required tool, of the expression of individual discipline. Gironda used such messages to promote his coaching services and writings. Blair did so to promote his protein powders.

### Blair and mother's milk

Irvin Johnson (or Blair as he was later known) was one of the most influential fitness entrepreneurs of the twentieth century. Unlike Gironda, who promoted raw dairy as a 'superfood' in and of itself, Blair's messages centred on the combination of raw dairy with his patented nutritional supplements. Born in New Jersey in 1921, Johnson moved to Chicago in the 1940s where he initially pursued a singing career. His other passion was physical culture and bodybuilding. At the time when Johnson began lifting weights, American bodybuilding was undergoing something of a renaissance.



The new sport appealed to the young Johnson who, in 1948, opened his own health studio in Chicago.<sup>70</sup> Johnson's fortune as a gym owner proved far more lucrative than as a singer. Within a matter of years, he obtained a national reputation as an innovative bodybuilding coach whose intricate nutritional programs could increase men's body-weight and muscularity in a short period of time.<sup>71</sup> The secret to his successes was said to be the nutritional supplements he sold which, combined with superfoods like raw dairy or eggs, could provide near miraculous results in terms of body composition. To understand why this was the case, it is necessary to discuss Blair's long history of hyperbole when it came to marketing supplements.

In 1950, the man then known as Johnson appeared in *Ironman* magazine, a national fitness magazine popular in the United States. Entitled 'Build Bigger Biceps Faster with Food Supplements', the article made a deep impression with the magazine's owner, Peary Rader, who became one of Johnson's strongest advocates.<sup>72</sup> The article laid out a roadmap for Johnson's later supplement career. Ideal male physiques boasted 'vitality', 'glow' and large muscles.<sup>73</sup> Anything other than this physique – which was the kind coveted in the Mr. America contest – was cast aside. Johnson, like Girona, continually returned to the idea that the muscular body was the ideal male body and, importantly, that such bodies were indicative of one's broader value as a man. Food became an integral part of this process.

Initially selling vitamin and mineral supplements, Johnson branched out to protein supplements in the early 1950s. His 'Hi-Protein Food', a soy-based protein powder, began to be advertised in *Ironman* and, soon after, *Strength and Health* magazine. In 1951, Johnson published *Irvin Johnson's Scientific Body Building and Nutrition Course* whose sole purpose was to advertise his nutrition protocols. Claiming that he first became interested in bodybuilding because of his own ill-health, Johnson explained that his purpose was to bring health and vitality to masses of young men struggling to achieve the ideal body.<sup>74</sup> Johnson explained that every man should strive for the lean muscular body exhibited by bodybuilders. This body was associated by Johnson with supposedly admirable masculine traits like hard work and sexual vigour.<sup>75</sup> Using his dedicated system, Johnson claimed to have gained forty-five pounds in just three months. To convince the public that this was not an isolated occurrence, Johnson provided numerous testimonials from clients who achieved similar results.<sup>76</sup>

Johnson moved from Chicago to the West Coast in the late 1950s to reinvent himself as Blair.<sup>77</sup> Johnson had marketed and sold soy protein supplements, but Blair sold milk-based protein powders which, he claimed, were more advantageous than anabolic steroids when combined with raw dairy. Blair also utilised the grandiose approach he had adopted as Johnson, but as Blair he now offered something none of his competitors did: a milk-based protein powder. This differentiated Blair from his competitors, many of whom exclusively sold soy-based protein powders.<sup>78</sup> Like Girona, Blair also made liberal use of the word, and power, of 'anabolic'. Blair claimed that his milk protein powders were made using a low heating process. This, he assured clients, meant that little nutritional value was lost in the process of making his products.<sup>79</sup> Blair co-opted scientific methods to present his product as nutritionally pure. Next, Blair's advertisements promoted the idea that, used correctly (i.e. combined with raw dairy), the protein supplements were the closest manufactured food to a human mother's breast milk.<sup>80</sup> 'Mother's milk', for Blair, was one of the most anabolic substances known, as it was breast milk which helped babies develop. Blair claimed that one scoop of his

nutritionally pure protein powder, combined with raw dairy, produced a similar effect to breast milk when it came to muscle and weight gain. Breast milk might help babies rapidly gain weight, but Blair's powder and diet could offer these advantages to adult men.

Blair theorised that the fat in raw cream 'wrapped' protein in the bloodstream, thereby slowing digestion and ensuring that a steady dose of protein was provided throughout the day.<sup>81</sup> Raw milk, raw cream, raw butter and 'fertile eggs' were some of the key components of Blair's nutritional programs. To clients, Blair cited older works, like Stanford Porter's milk diet, as justification for using unpasteurised dairy.<sup>82</sup> He also referenced Feodor Inozemtseff, a mid-nineteenth-century Russian physician who supposedly treated thousands of ill patients using his milk cure.<sup>83</sup> Blair borrowed from older works on the healing powers of unpasteurised milk and claimed to have advanced these benefits through his protein powders. Such borrowing showed the long lineage that raw dairy promoters in the United States could rely on. For all involved, purity was a key concern. Accordingly, Blair is quoted by a former client as saying that through 'special nutritional supplementation, I am able to make milk a more perfect food'.<sup>84</sup> His 'perfect food' was used to build the muscular bodies demanded by American bodybuilders. That Blair did not see the irony in claiming that his modern, and processed, protein powder was perfectly acceptable while simultaneously eschewing pasteurised milk as lacking vital nutrients is remarkable. Either way, it did little to impact his claims.

Later interviewed about his bodybuilding diet in the 1960s and 1970s, former Mr. Olympia winner Frank Zane recalled that Blair's protein was in huge demand among American bodybuilders because it was linked to the levels of muscle growth associated with anabolic steroids.<sup>85</sup> Blair's supplements tasted good, were recommended because of their anabolic properties and were used by many physique stars. Blair's protein was desirable to American bodybuilders based on his claims it would produce muscle growth. Blair's clients re-iterated this idea in their articles. In 1965, champion bodybuilder Larry Scott told *Ironman* magazine that he had used Blair's protein powders for the past six years and that it was Blair's formula (raw dairy and protein powder), more than anything else, which helped him grow the muscle needed to be a bodybuilding champion.<sup>86</sup>

That the general public was so interested in creating strong, muscular bodies highlights a central and fascinating contradiction within discourses about masculinity and femininity in the period. Both Gironda and Blair were caught up in this contradiction, and it's worth pausing briefly to consider how these two men both contributed to and manipulated ideas about idealised men and women. Cordelia Fine has argued that words like 'testosterone' gained exclusively masculine connotations in the twentieth century, and arguably, the same could be said for the term 'anabolic'.<sup>87</sup> Anabolic foods, like Blair's protein powders, were linked to the heavily muscular physiques sported by bodybuilders. Where Gironda was outright in his discussions of masculinity, Blair was implicit, only referring to 'ideal' bodies and occasionally to supposedly masculinised concepts like 'discipline' and 'ambition'. The muscular body was a keener focus for Blair. Given the obvious infantilising effect such a comment seemed to suggest, it seems an odd contradiction that Blair linked breast milk to hyper-masculine bodies. Promoting a breast milk-like substance did nothing to lessen Blair's popularity in the hyper-masculine world of bodybuilding. In fact, clients seemed to

be captivated by the idea that his anabolic, breast-milk mimicking supplements were available to purchase.<sup>88</sup>

Blair's claims and advertisements continually played with the idea that his protein powder, when used with raw dairy, mimicked the anabolic properties of 'mother's milk'. The key mixture in this 'secret' approach was raw cream (and at times raw egg yolks) combined with one scooped serving of Blair's protein.<sup>89</sup> Block's previous work on public health officers proves useful here; Block detailed the process whereby public health officers attempted to transform baby's milk from a feminine behaviour into a masculine scientific endeavour. Similarly, Blair drew on science and technology to mediate the gender of milk from feminine, maternal, infantile or juvenile, to wholly masculine through the focus on pure production processes and the excessive muscularity it produced. Celebrating 'mother's milk' for its growth properties, Blair's advertisements transitioned to its applicability for bodybuilders seeking muscle.<sup>90</sup> The drive for muscularity, and muscularity at all costs, made 'mother's milk' a desirable label despite its seemingly feminised connotations.

In order to further his promotions and business, Blair, formerly Johnson, decided to return to *Ironman* magazine. He was welcomed back under his new name and persona, and in 1964, *Ironman* told readers that Blair's protein was 'made from milk and eggs, the highest-grade proteins known to man. The milk and eggs are from selected Wisconsin farms where the soil is rich. It is made at a low temperature and maintains not only the protein and the good flavour of the milk and eggs'.<sup>91</sup> The article next discussed the need to mix the protein according to Blair's formula – with raw dairy – to achieve full benefit. Like Gironda, Blair pushed the idea that raw dairy had some mystical power. Two years later, Blair's promotions were more powerful than ever, with words like 'purity' and 'anabolic' repeatedly used to highlight the efficacy of Blair's powders. A 1966 *Ironman* featured the assertion that Blair had been working with a chemist for several years to ensure his supplements were effective.<sup>92</sup>

In addition to input from scientists, Blair's promotions used strategic case studies to make them seem more convincing, putting faces and names to his programme. At various points, Blair claimed that individuals like Scott existed solely on Blair's protein powder.<sup>93</sup> While this was not a new tactic – fitness celebrities made similar claims in the early 1900s – they took a renewed emphasis.<sup>94</sup> In 1967, Blair worked with Steve Davis, an American powerlifter with aspirations to become a bodybuilder. Putting Davis on a strict diet, Blair had Davis consume vast amounts of his protein powder, mixed with raw milk. In magazines, Blair claimed that Davis lost weight and gained a great deal of muscle.<sup>95</sup> The truth was rather different, as Davis' own testimony revealed that while he did use Blair's supplements, he eventually undertook a diet comprised solely of meat and water.<sup>96</sup> Nonetheless, the claims stuck: Davis supposedly had become a more masculine man under the Blair regimen.

Davis' success was added to a long list of Blair's publicised students. In 1965, Stan Brice from California claimed to have lost weight and built muscle using Blair's protein protocol.<sup>97</sup> Brice's story led to follow up interviews in *Ironman* magazine in which Brice claimed that despite the high calories in raw dairy, his waistline decreased while his strength had soared.<sup>98</sup> When Blair was questioned about the value of raw cream in his formula, he retorted that 'the reason they (his clients) don't put on fat is because the special protein is formulated in such a way that the cream will be more efficiently metabolised in the body'.<sup>99</sup> Raw dairy, alongside Blair's own supplement, was linked

to the kind of muscular bodies coveted in many American gyms. In client testimonials, attention was continually brought to the dissatisfaction men had with their bodies. The ideal male body was lean and muscular. When men failed to adhere to these standards, they expressed anxiety and shame.<sup>100</sup> In the case of Scott, Brice and others, articles included 'success' stories wherein the men transformed their physiques from unmanly to masculine.<sup>101</sup> They built muscular bodies and, in turn, effected a change in their personas. With a muscular body, Brice's life had supposedly become more enjoyable. He had 'vitality' (a code word often associated with sexual drive), was more confident and happier than before.<sup>102</sup> Blair's advertising offered the message that vitality, ambition and determination were linked to the masculine and muscular bodies he produced. For many, a cornerstone of this approach was the 'mother's milk' advanced by Blair.<sup>103</sup> Here, raw dairy became a cornerstone of the masculinisation process – an ingredient which helped transform bodies and, stemming from this, masculinities.

What is remarkable is how infallible Blair seemed to the bodybuilding community. In American society, Blair worked with television and movie stars; in bodybuilding circles, his reputation stemmed from obscure comments about his scientific method and his bodybuilders' successes.<sup>104</sup> When in 1964, *Ironman* claimed that 'Johnson's Protein supplement and cream [are] equivalent to muscle building drugs', no readers disputed it.<sup>105</sup> Like Gironda's claims, Blair's advertisements claimed that through raw dairy, individuals could build the muscular bodies they desired. While Gironda was explicit in linking this body to the mental, physical and spiritual strength 'expected' of men, Blair proved subtler. In focusing exclusively at times on the body, Blair nevertheless reiterated Gironda's comments on American masculinity. Blair spoke of the inherent health and vitality associated with the muscular body.<sup>106</sup> He commented on the sexual virility of such bodies and the discipline needed to achieve it. In using case studies like these, Blair shrewdly put forward the illusion that in buying his products, actual American men could, and would, achieve the body they wanted. More than that, they could transform their very masculinity.

## Conclusion

Gironda and Blair were among the most outspoken proponents of raw dairy in the bodybuilding and fitness world during the 1960s and 1970s. For Blair and Gironda, raw milk was a product all should try if they were serious about building a muscular body. What can be learned from their passionate promotion of a controversial food substance? The first point is that food products can, and will likely continue, to be linked with normative and/or restrictive forms of masculinity or femininity. Here, raw dairy was associated with lean and muscular physiques and the presumed masculine qualities they embodied. While previous fitness entrepreneurs discussed milk in the context of overall health or building strong, but rotund, frames, Blair and Gironda associated raw milk and cream with a new body ideal for men. Owing to changes within their sport – bodybuilding – muscular and lean physiques became the new standards from which men were measured. The problem with this development was that it was fuelled using anabolic steroids by a select number of elite athletes. While those within bodybuilding were aware of steroids, and their effects, the public was still largely ignorant. Instead, they were told that anabolic foods, which included raw

dairy, caused these changes. Body types and the importance or relevancy of certain foods thus changed.

During this process raw milk's symbolism changed. Whereas for those in the fitness community unpasteurised milk had been associated with nutritional purity, it now became linked to muscle growth and increases in strength. This change reflected much broader social changes within the community, not least the introduction of regular bodybuilding shows and steroids. Combined, these factors increased expectations and ambitions regarding the muscular male body. Raw dairy, for some, seemed to facilitate this process. While only two men in a field of hundreds, Gironda and Blair were among the most respected bodybuilding experts of their era. Their courses and supplements were widely bought and both men's opinion carried a great deal of weight among coaches and clients within the industry. Although differing slightly in their thoughts on raw milk, both men's philosophies coalesced around the idea that raw dairy was integral to the building of a muscular male body which they held to be ideal. More than that, they linked raw dairy to the masculine ideal itself. For Gironda or Blair, it was linked to discipline, ambition and a counter-cultural disregard for authority.

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