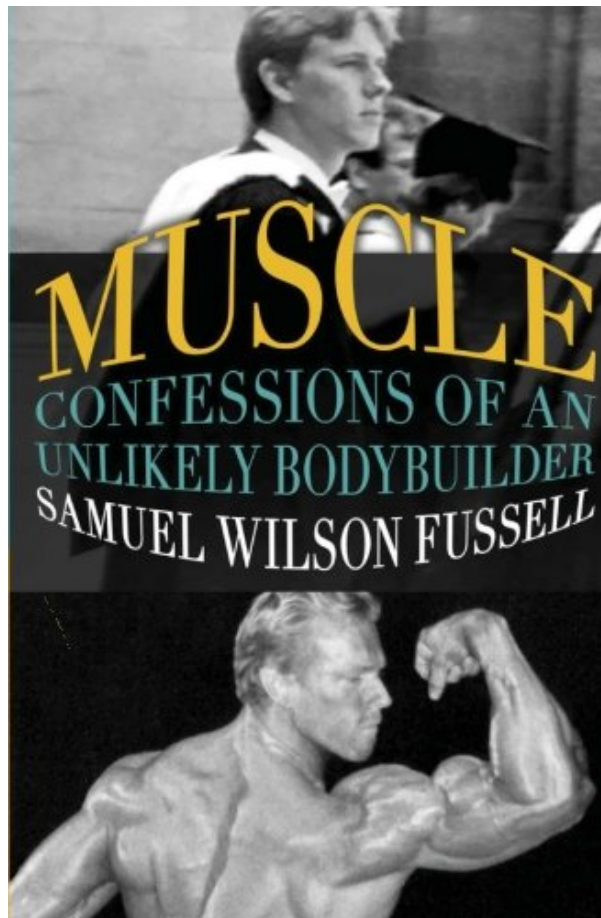
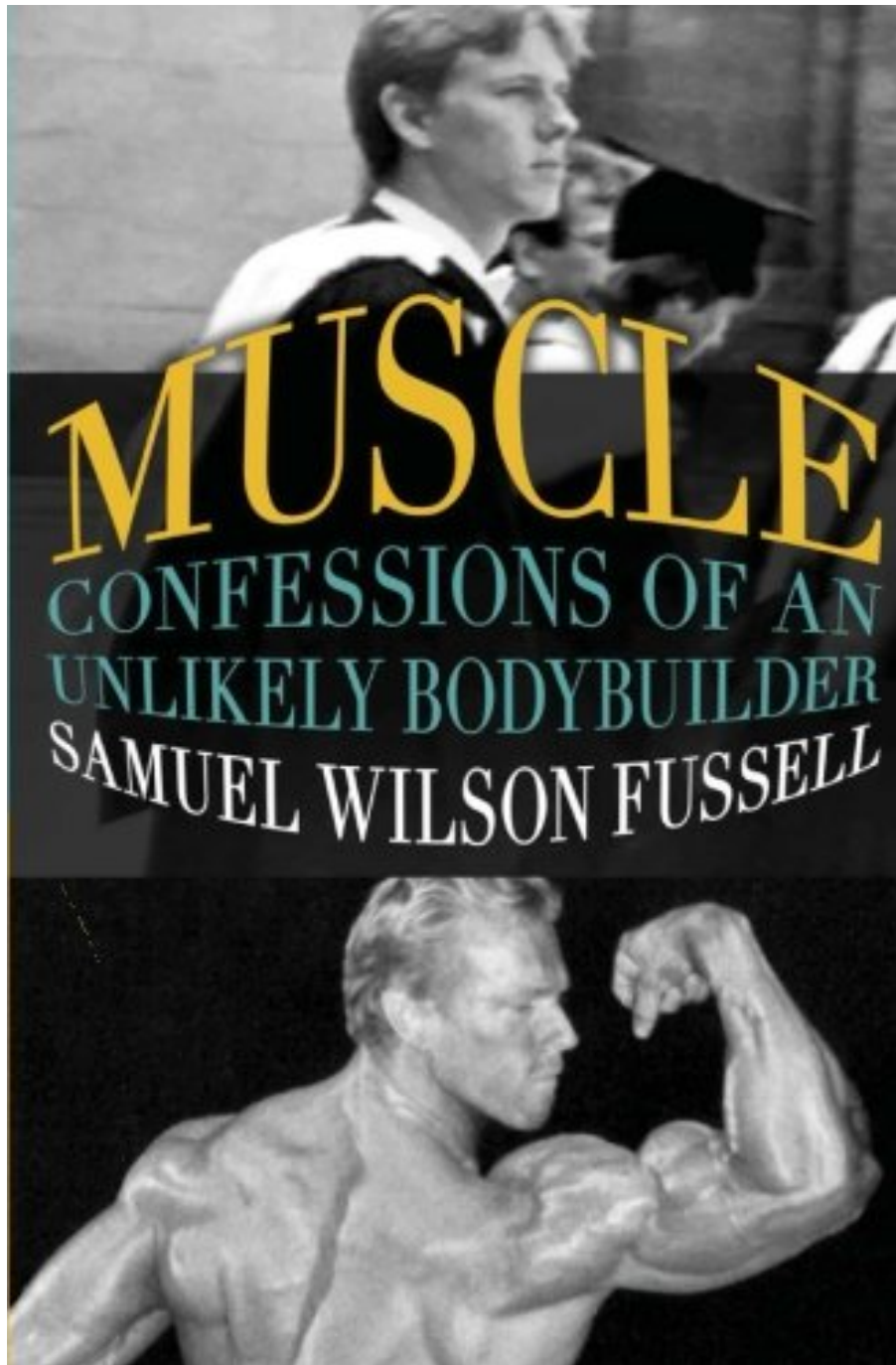


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BODYBUILDER BY SAMUEL WILSON
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From Publishers Weekly

Fussell, who took up bodybuilding after attending Oxford, tells his story and examines the diets, drugs and dedication that drive the bodybuilding world. Enjoyable reading.

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Review

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MUSCLE: CONFESSIONS OF AN UNLIKELY BODYBUILDER BY SAMUEL WILSON FUSSELL PDF

A hilarious and harrowing firsthand account of the eccentric world of hardcore bodybuilding. When blue-blooded, storklike Samuel Wilson Fussell arrived in New York City fresh from the University of Oxford, the ethereal young graduate seemed like the last person on Earth who would be interested in bodybuilding. But he was intimidated by the dangers of the city—and decided to do something about it. At twenty-six, Fussell walked into the YMCA gym. Four solid years of intensive training, protein powders, and steroid injections later, he had gained eighty pounds of pure muscle and was competing for bodybuilding titles. And yet, with forearms like bowling pins and calves like watermelons, Fussell felt weaker than ever before. His punishing regimen of workouts, drugs, and diet had reduced him to near-infant-like helplessness and immobility, leaving him hungry, nauseated, and prone to outbursts of "roid rage." But he had come to succeed, and there was no backing down now. Alternately funny and fascinating, *Muscle* is the true story of one man's obsession with the pursuit of perfection. With insight, wit, and refreshing candor, Fussell ushers readers into the wild world of juicers and gym rats who sacrifice their lives, minds, bodies, and souls to their dreams of glory in Southern California's so-called iron mecca.

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Good, but Apparently Fictionalized Memoir of BodyBuilding Days

By A Midwesterner in Jersey

I read about "Muscle" many, many years ago in an article on Fitness, but had never found it for sale, and was pleased when it was released on Kindle. I read it over the course of a few hours, and it was a very involving story, but throughout I found myself wondering at how much of it was true, and how much had been exaggerated or simplified for storytelling effect. The characters he encounters in the book are caricatures, not portraits, and he readily admits that he changed names and details throughout.

I've never been a bodybuilder, and my own fitness levels have waxed and waned over the years, but I did go through a period where I got hooked on going to the gym and strove to lift heavier and heavier weights. My motivation, like most others, was the knowledge that I should be fitter than I was, but I did see the powerlifters and bodybuilders who strove for something beyond mere fitness, for reasons known only to them.

Fussell says that he turned to bodybuilding out of feelings of fear and vulnerability while walking the streets of New York. For reasons he explores in the book, but not quite getting to the real reason - SPOILER ALERT - he gave it up after he competed in his first bodybuilding events.

I don't want to get all Chicken Soup for the Soul or anything, but after an initial read, it seems to me that he did what he did not because of what he felt he lacked on the outside, but for a sense of manliness, for lack of a better of word, that he didn't feel on the inside. He embraced the "bodybuilder identity" and all of its outward hypermasculinity, but eventually realized its hollowness, and when the reality of competition didn't live up to his expectations, he dropped it completely. That's growth, I suppose, but the author's bio page now makes a point of him being a subsistence hunter in Montana, which seems to be another way of seeking to actualize and announce one's manhood. Why the need to call out "the author is now a subsistence hunter", rather than simply saying "the author lives in Montana", unless one is trying to make an impression?

At any rate, it is a good read, and an interesting read, but not the classic I was hoping for. Its reputation is a bit overstated.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Quick read - good story about being careful what you ask for

By Charlie G

This was an interesting read. If you're not familiar somewhat with the bodybuilding culture you probably won't like it. But you probably wouldn't be checking out the book if you're not. Sam is a good mix of bookish/athletic to write the story as well as he experienced it. There's no way to judge the truthfulness of some of the antics, but it doesn't take away from the quality of the book.

The friends he makes in his adventure are shown as two-dimensional, but some seem to have cared about him, adding to the story. You feel sorry for them, but at the same time they seem happier than a lot of people - at least they're doing something they enjoy part of the time.

It's a fast read, after a few chapters, the pace and feel are set. By that point you'll know if you're going to like it.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Great story of an improbable bodybuilder

By Beaumont Vance

Well told story of a man losing himself in bodybuilding. Perhaps a little light on insights into his motivations along the way. But for anyone who has ever fallen in love with weightlifting and bodybuilding, this book does justice to much of the allure. After all, it is the purity and simplicity of being lost in the pain and blinding effort of the reps that is the drug. The size is the outward proof that you belong in the tribe.

I would not say this is the best written book, nor is it overly pensive; but I could not put it down. And it gives some good insight into the single mindedness of the sport. Best of all was the perspective on the show and show prep.

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