**Book Chapters: Women Athletes in Contemporary Art. Representations of the Gendered Paradox in Neoliberal Literature and Film**

**Deadline for submissions:**

October 31, 2025

**Full name / name of organization:**

Dr Hannah Anderson (University of Calgary) and Dr Tommaso Villa (independent scholar)

**Contact email:**

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"That Ain't a Girl, That's a Fighter" – (Million Dollar Baby)

Forming an interdisciplinary study across twenty-first century texts, this edited collection seeks to analyse the role of women athletes in contemporary culture. Because sports – and sports literature – are founded on the false premise of male superiority and patriarchal values, the presence and representation of women-identified athletes are frequently informed by the thematic and aesthetic patterns of the so-called ‘female athlete paradox’, namely the expectation for sportswomen to navigate societal ideals of femininity and beauty with the bodily requirements of athleticism. Starting from this perspective, this book will analyse, critique, question, and challenge the depiction of women-identified and non-binary athletes in contemporary literature and film, with specific interest for works produced after the year 2000.

The chapters in the collection will focus on works of art produced in the late neoliberal era, a historical epoch in which self-monitoring increased and the line between personal and private lives blurred or disappeared entirely. This is particularly salient for the fictive athletes studied here, since their lives embody a constant overlap between social performance, habitual practice, and sports performance. In an effort to analyse and deconstruct these representations, the book explores narratives of self-surveillance, body dysmorphic disorder, portrayals of heteronormativity and gender stereotypes, as well as the disconnect in how male authors and women-identified authors address these issues.

Movies like *I, Tonya* and novels like *Headshot* illustrate, via different media and from different ideological perspectives, the centrality these points have come to retain in the arts.

Though sports literature is a niche topic, this research is interdisciplinary. By constructing a new space for women-identified athletes in contemporary art, this book will appeal not only to sports literature specialists, but to researchers interested in sports participation, film studies, sociology, psychology, philosophy, and gender studies.

We welcome abstracts for 7,000-word chapters from scholars at any stage of their research, in any discipline.

Topics may include but are not limited to:

* The Female Athlete Paradox
* Feminism, particularly third-wave feminism
* Postfeminism
* Ecocriticism
* Female masculinity, tomboyism and butch culture
* Queer theory
* Gender identity
* Racial identity
* Sex and gender in sports
* Aesthetic vs non-aesthetic sports
* LGBTQIA+ rights
* The Neoliberal Success Narrative
* Interdisciplinary Studies
* Politics, Ideologies, and Revolution
* Flow, Gamification, and playbour
* Bodily self-management and healthism.

Please send abstract proposals of no more than 400 words, with a brief biographical note (about 150 words) and an academic CV to [womenathletesinthearts@gmail.com](mailto:womenathletesinthearts@gmail.com) by 30th October 2025.

Please reach out if you have any questions.

Many thanks,

Tommaso and Hannah

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