

AMERICAN MUSCLES AND MINDS: PUBLIC DISCOURSE AND THE SHAPING OF NATIONAL IDENTITY DURING EARLY OLYMPIADS, 1896-1920

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When the American athletes returned home from the 1912 Stockholm Games, New Yorkers lined the streets from Fifth Avenue and Forty-First Street to the City Hall to honor “the greatest American team that ever left these shores.” By recognizing the “victorious athletes who added greater glory to American prowess,” the parade dramatized many of the key symbolic and ritualistic aspects of American nationalism.

While interpreting the celebratory atmosphere as one which reflected a nearly universal appeal of Olympism to Americans, a New York Times journalist stressed the heterogenous “melting-pot” nature of the crowd. The cheering was led by “the youngest of young Americans,” public school pupils who were strategically situated along the line of march. Amidst the national bunting, “shown in profusion,” the school children demonstrated their “real American pride” by competitively chanting “U.S.A. A-m-e-r-i-c-a.” Behind the mounted police and the Grand Marshall, Brigadier General George Dyer, an automobile carrying Supreme Court Justice Victor Dowling; founder and president of the American Athletic Union, James Sullivan; and president of the American Olympic Committee, Colonel Robert M. Thompson appeared. Following that distinguished cadre marched a battalion of the artillery corps, trailed by Spanish-American War veterans and Boy Scouts. A third division of the parade comprised of the Citizens’ Committee and two Guards of Honor, was followed by the American Olympic team and the United Swedish Societies.¹

The parade’s fourth division was comprised of an impressive array of athletic clubs, in which ethnic-oriented units were conspicuously present, such as the Bohemian Gymnastic Union, the National Turnverein, and marchers from the Bohemian and Slovak Gymnastic Clubs. Bringing up the rear of the parade were members of the Y.M.C.A. and their religious counterparts from Catholic athletic organizations and the “colored athletic clubs.” At the procession’s conclusion, the victorious athletes were treated to a patriotic homily by City Mayor Gaynor, who proclaimed that “The prowess you have displayed has been the medium of comment for the people of the world, and particularly Europe. You have shown that you possessed American stomachs, hearts, muscles, and heads.”²

President William Howard Taft, ex-President Theodore Roosevelt, and Governor

¹“Olympic Champions Cheered and Dined,” New York Times, August 25, 1912, 4.

²Ibid., cf. New York Herald Tribune; New York World; and the New York Evening Call, August 24-26.

Woodrow Wilson of New Jersey were in attendance at a grand banquet that evening in honor of the athletes. The master of ceremonies, Justice Victor Dowling, paid homage to the sacred cause of amateurism in American sport in his opening remarks. After an elaborate dinner and an obligatory exercise in flag adoration (aided by the breeze of electric fans), Colonel Thompson spoke to the gathering. "He felt that America had gained more through the Games than could be obtained through a dozen other mediums which might argue for the continuance of good-will between the nations of the world," reported the New York Times.³

Until recently, historians interpreted this kind of public ceremony as a straightforward reflection of notions shared by nearly all those present. Lately, however, scholars have provided a more critical analysis of the relationships between public ceremonies and the social context they have interpreted parades and ceremonies are political acts. Susan Davis, for example, persuasively argues that people use street theatre, like other rituals, as tools for building, maintaining, and confronting power relations, a process through which images, subjects and ideas for consideration and communication are selected.⁴ John MacAloon insists that political celebrations contain both ritual and play frames. Ritual frames depend upon transhistorical, immemorial authority, while "play" frames depend on the formula "let's pretend"--allowing participants to "escape from the 'should' and 'ought' character of ritual. . .and [they] see themselves as free to fabricate a range of alternative possibilities of behaving, thinking, and feeling." The Olympics represent a synthesis of these two frames of ritualistic behavior. Through the Olympics, according to MacAloon, we seize upon occasions of "relatively purer sociability, consensually framed as play, and attempt to solve. . .our terrible confusion" about the relationship between the "objective" world of political and social constraints and a more "subjective" one of personal enjoyment and autonomy. Since they are voluntary play performances, the Olympics prompt fans and athletes to engage in fantasized versions of nationalism.⁵

The 1896 revival of the Olympic Games provided a powerful vehicle for Americans to engage in what Eric Hobsbawm has called the "invention of tradition," a process through which modern nation states solidify their legitimacy by constructing modes of communication and edification to help citizens understand the relationships between government and the people as well as the people and history. Traditions are often invented in cultural contexts not commonly perceived to be "political." A significant case in point which illustrates these

³New York Times, August 25. For a more sober, albeit highly partisan account of American victories, see James E. Sullivan, "What Happened at Stockholm," Outing, 61(October 1912), 20-31.

⁴Susan Davis, Parades and Power: Street Theatre in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia (Philadelphia: Temple University 1986), 5 and passim.

⁵John MacAloon, "Sociation and Sociability in Political Celebrations," in Victor Turner, ed., Celebrations: Studies in Festivity and Ritual (Washington: Smithsonian 1982), 28, 268.

judgements is the rarely recognized ideological nature of American sport.⁶

Recognition of the power of organized sport in shaping national consciousness, however, was certainly recognized by those Americans commenting on the early Olympic Games in contemporary newspapers and magazines. Mark Dyreson maintains that “Americans used the Olympics as a forum to prove to the rest of the world that the ‘stuff which their youth was made of was the ‘stuff of an exceptional people’--the success of which stemmed from America’s democratic institutions, the predominance of the work ethic, and the essential fairness of American society. Dyreson specifies that middle-class spokesmen recognized that sport promoted values consistent with bourgeois society, such as respect for rule by law and social equity.⁷ By the late nineteenth-century, indeed, sport discourse became one of the key sources in the shaping of national identity.

The emergence of sport discourse during the late nineteenth-century was inextricably linked to the proliferation of national magazines and sports pages. Despite the considerable success of American athletes in Athens, newspaper coverage in the U.S. was modest, due to poor advanced planning and publicity and the fact that the first U.S. team was selectively comprised of a handful of athletes from the Boston Athletic Association, Harvard, and Princeton. The 1900 Paris Games, as well, received relatively minor newspaper coverage outside of the New York daily press, and were rarely referred to as “Olympic Games.” Although the 1904 Games were held in conjunction with the St. Louis Exposition; coverage was commonly submerged within the more general reporting events of the Exposition, a presidential campaign, and the Russo-Japanese War, which claimed substantial attention. When the “off-year” Olympics were held at Athens in 1906, some attention was given in newspapers about the American contingent sent aboard the S.S. Barbarossa, but again, other front-page events, like the San Francisco earthquake and fire, overshadowed the athletic contests.⁸

⁶Eric Hobsbawn defines ‘invented tradition’ as “a set of practices. . .of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. . .they are responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition.” See his introduction in Hobsbawn and Terrence Ranger, eds., The Invention of Tradition (London: Cambridge University 1983).

⁷Mark Dyreson, “Melting-Pot Victories: Racial Ideas and the Olympic Games in American Culture During the Progressive Era,” The International Journal of the History of Sport 6 (May 1989), 49.

⁸For background to the beginnings of the modern Olympic Games, see John J. MacAloon, This Great Symbol: Pierre de Coubertin and the Origin of the Modern Olympic Games (Chicago: University of Chicago 1981); Richard Mandell, The First Modern Olympics (Berkeley: University of California 1976); John Lucas, The Modern Olympic Games (New York: AS. Barnes 1980); William O. Johnson, All That Glitters Is Not Gold: The Olympic Games (New York: Putnam’s 1972); Peter J. Graham and Horst Ueberhorst, eds., The Modern Olympics (Cornwall, N.Y.: Leisure 1976); and Micheal Morris Killanin and John

Olympic scholars have incorrectly equated the marginal newspaper coverage with a low level of discussion and public recognition of the Games in general.⁹ Although the Games initially registered a modest level of awareness by the larger American public, one should not dismiss the respectable attention given in the burgeoning national magazines of opinion. On the 1896 Games in Athens, most distinguished magazines featured lengthy articles written by widely recognized writers and several of those articles were illustrated by renowned artists.¹⁰

Such magazines were read primarily by the American middle-class and social elites,¹¹ which suggests that this privileged cross-section were the first to be converted to the emergent national sporting tradition. The content and tone of these early articles courted the educated, cosmopolitan members of the middle class as allies by those who saw the potential utility of American involvement in the Olympics. Albert Shaw, the conservative editor of the world's most popular magazine, the *Review of Reviews*, maintained that the revival of the Olympics was "one of the most hopeful signs of the day."¹²

The themes, issues, and style of discourse about American athletic prowess in international sporting events were created in the early Olympiads and, by the 1912 Stockholm

Rodda, eds., *The Olympic Games: 80 Years of People, Events and Records* (London: Barrie & Jenkins 1976).

⁹Robert K. Barney has recently made this assessment in a paper, "Brief Euphoria: Chicago and the 1904 Olympic Games," delivered at the North American Society for Sport History conference May 1991.

¹⁰See, Albert Shaw, "The Re-Establishment of Olympic Games: How International Sports May Promote Peace Among Nations," *Review of Reviews* 10(1894), 643-6; Paul Shorey, "Can We Revive the Olympic Games?" *The Forum* 19(1895), 313-23; George Horton, "Revival of Olympian Games," *North American Review* 162(1896), 266-73; Rufus B. Richardson, "The New Olympian Games," *Scribner's Magazine* 20(1896), 267-86; and Baron de Coubertin, "The Olympic Games of 1896," *Century* 31(1896), 39-51.

"A useful discussion of the emergence of middle-class national magazines at the turn of the century can be found in Richard Ohman, *The Politics of Letters* (Middletown: Wesleyan 1987), 139-50.

¹²Shaw, 646. A useful historical survey of magazines in the U.S. is Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines. 1885-1905* (Cambridge: Harvard University 1957). Recent monographs on particular editors provide important biographical details for better understanding the editorial mentality. See, for instance, Jan Cohn, *Creating America: George Horace Lorimer and the Saturday Evening Post* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh 1989); and Arthur John, *The Best Years of Century: Richard Watson Gilder. Scribner's Monthly and Century Magazine, 1870-1909* (Urbana: University of Illinois 1981).

Games, became powerful channels in the shaping of American national identity, which was strictly defined in masculine terms. Prior to the 1920s, international amateur sports, reinforced what John Hargreaves has labeled a “rigid gender division and chauvinist masculine identity.”¹³ During a time when many middle-class and elites feared the effeminization of America (symbolized by the newly mobile and aspiring woman), sports provided a place where masculinity could be earned and legitimated. As Micheal Kimmel observes, the gender hierarchy was maintained by assuming that those “traits that made for athletic excellence were also those traits that made for exemplary citizenship.”¹⁴ The national sporting identity was also based on a strict separation between whites and nonwhites. As such, the dominant masculine sporting identity extolled in early twentieth century sport discourse reinforced the unequal distribution of power based on class, race and gender, and thereby provided some of the main cultural supports of bourgeois hegemony.

The dominant notions regarding American athletic prowess were defined in national terms. The most significant aspect which emerged from the early commentary about U.S. involvement in the Olympics, thus, is the notion of a national team. Despite the fact that only in 1908 did the American Olympic Committee make preparations on a national scale, with regional tryouts rather than selection by past performances, the early teams were described as representatives of “America.” In truth, American involvement before 1908 was principally an eastern college and club affair. Nevertheless, observers quickly came to equate the athletes as representatives of their nations and races. British participant and sport enthusiast G.S. Robertson admired the effort which the “American” team made to participate in the Athens Games, which he attributed to “the natural enterprise of the American people and to the peculiarly perfect method in which athletics are organized in the United States.”¹⁵

Lauding the American Olympic victors for their “mastery of modern athletics,” influential sporting commentators like Caspar Whitney asserted that “even with men of lesser prowess” than the elite sportsmen who comprised the Olympic contingent, “America must still have

¹³John Hargreaves, Sport, Power and Culture: A Social and Historical Analysis of Popular Sports in Britain (New York: St. Martins 1986), 43.

¹⁴Micheal S. Kimmel, “Baseball and the Reconstitution of American Masculinity, 1880-1920,” in Micheal A Messner and Donald Sabo, eds., Sport, Men, and the Gender Order: Critical Feminist Perspectives (Champaign: Human Kinetics 1990), 64-5. Among the better studies of sport and masculinity, see Elliott Gorn, The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize Fighting in America (Ithaca: Cornell University 1986), and Melvin Adelman, A Sporting Time: New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820-70 (Urbana: University of Illinois 1986). More generally, see Peter N. Stearns, Be a Man!: Males in Modern Society (New York: Holmes & Meier 1979), and Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen, eds., Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America (Chicago: University of Chicago 1990).

¹⁵Robertson, “The Olympic Games By a Competitor and Prize Winner,” Fortnightly Review 65(June 1896).

proved an overwhelming victor, for the superiority of the style and form of our representatives was entirely convincing of American pre-eminence.” America’s “national[my emphasis] craving to break the record” in all things was given as another reason for her athletic domination.¹⁶ In the minds of American sporting editorialists, such mastery demonstrated that the United States was the most energetic and modern nation on earth. Whitney and like-minded athleticists linked modern sporting practices to the cultivation and control of human energies, and to the production of progressive modern civilization.¹⁷

The “American” team performed sufficiently well in the 1896 Games that those who followed sporting events in the U.S. became accustomed to hearing about American athletic superiority in the sports pages. Responding to the greatly expanded field of athletes and countries competing at the next Games, the U.S. athletes made good on the nationalistic rhetoric of their advocates by performing even better at Paris, thanks in part to a clever point scoring system devised by several journalists which favored track and field events. As a harbinger for things to come, the New York Times described the 1900 Games as the “World Amateur Championships,” and declared that the U.S. had, in fact, won them.¹⁸

Similarly, amateur sport czar James Sullivan was convinced that at the 1906 Games in Athens “the athletic supremacy of the world was settled; every country being represented by its strongest men.” Another writer commenting on the 1906 results concluded that “like Alexander of old, the sturdy American gladiator may be sighing for new worlds to conquer.” American explanations of their victories at Paris testified to the widening recognition of the

¹⁶Caspar Whitney, Outing 36(September 1900), 677; and “American Triumphs in the Olympic Games,” American Review of Reviews 33(June 1906), 664.

¹⁷See Mark Dyreson, “Between the Virgin and the Dynamo: Athletics, Energy and Social Discourse in Modernizing America,” paper presented at the N.A.S.S.H. Conference, Chicago 1991, 3. American commentators unflinchingly scored the Paris Games as a victory for American national spirit and athletic science; see “Our Athletes in Paris,” New York Times, July 12, 1900, 5; “Clean Sweep for Americans,” Chicago Tribune, July 15, 1900, 17; “American Athletes Win,” New York Times, July 15, 1900,4; “Americans Win at Paris,” Chicago Tribune July 16, 1900, 8; and George Orton, “The Paris Athletic Games,” Outing 36(September 1900), 690-5.

¹⁸New York Times, July 23, 1900. This development of a nationally-biased point-scoring system is briefly discussed in Robert H. Goodhue, “The Development of Olympism, 1900-1932: Technical Success Within a Threatening Political Reality,” in Graham and Ueberhorst, The Modern Olympics, 41-2.

power of sport in modern discourse and the identification of athletic teams in nationalistic terms.¹⁹

A second critical characteristic of early Olympic discourse was the legitimization of certain sport forms. American commentators regularly placed track and field events at the pinnacle of athletic hierarchy. James Sullivan, the most instrumental figure in America's interest in track and field, promoted the notion that track and field events were the essence of Olympism in numerous articles published between the 1890s and 1914. By 1903, he was maintaining that track and field had become America's athletic showpiece, and its international domination reflected national vitality. Sullivan explained away American losses as being in those non-track and field events not practiced in the U.S. During the early days of the 1908 Games, Sullivan expressed this bias in the New York Daily Tribune when he declared that "We have come to win the championships in field sports and we are going to do it, despite the handicaps[partisan officiating] from which we are suffering." Addressing the seasoned American sports fans after the 1912 Games, he made provision for their "reason to be complacent," over the fact that "America's track and field victory was even more sweeping than it was at London," given that the U.S. team scored more firsts than all the other nations combined.²⁰

In a similar fashion to Sullivan, British sportsman G.E. Robertson offered comments as to the "legitimate" events in the 1896 Games which reflected a bourgeois Anglo-Saxon bias. Robertson criticized the Athens Games promoters for their "naive" assumption that all sport forms and nations were of equal importance. Convinced that except for England and America, all other nations were "still in an absolutely prehistoric condition with regard to athletic sports," he made jingoistic assessments of the inferiority of Continental sports relative to the "superior" track and field athletes produced by the British and Americans. French

¹⁹Sullivan "American Athletes--Champions of the World," Outing 48(August 1906), 625-8; "American Victors at Athens," Public Opinion 40(May 12, 1906), 584. Other articles which exhibit a nationalistic tone in their commentary of the 1906 Games include: "America's Athletic triumph at the Olympic Games," Harper's Weekly 50(May 26, 1906), 738; William Bates, "The Olympic Games of 1906," Independent 60(May 24, 1906), 1204-11; Caspar Whitney, "America at the Olympic Games," Outing 47(September 1906), 785-66; and "Victories of the American Athletes at the Olympic Games," Harper's Weekly 50(June 2, 1906), 774-5.

²⁰Biographical information about Sullivan is well documented in John Lucas, "James E. Sullivan--America's Pioneer Olympic Games Leader," unpublished paper; Lucas, "Early Olympic Antagonists: Pierre de Coubertin Versus James E. Sullivan," Stadion 3(1977), 261. Sullivan's advocacy for track and field events can be found in: "Present Status of Athletic Gymnastics and Gymnasiums," American Physical Education Review 8(December 1903), 268-70; "American Athletes in Ancient Athens," Review of Reviews 34(July 1906), 43-8; "American Athletes Champions of the World" ; New York Daily Tribune, July 19, 1908, 8; and "What Happened at Stockhom." Whitney's comments were published in his monthly column, "The View-Point," Outing 52(1908), 761-4.

“successes” were confined to fencing and bicycling; German performance was confined to gymnastics and their recognition on the vaulting horse was questioned on the grounds that the event was not sufficiently consequential. After all, he said “An Olympic wreath is far too precious a thing to be squandered on good form in hopping over a horse or swarming up a rope.” Even the host nation, the Greeks, except for “the throwing of a primitive discus, [and] a primitive hop, step, and jump,” were characterized as a people who did not possess the requisite “physical gifts” for athletics. Their “disposition” was supposedly “opposed to active exercise.”²¹

A third dominant theme in early Olympic discourse was the “melting-pot” character which appeared to create the American “race.”²² Many historians have described the enormous appeal which the idea of an American “race” has exerted in the United States since the nineteenth-century. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as the United States developed an empire and with it a major role in world affairs, many Americans discovered a symbolic relationship between athletic success and national vitality.

Nationalistic advocates of American athletic prowess appropriated the Olympics to extoll the melting pot character of the United States. This notion became popularized in the first Olympiad to such an extent that some foreign writers began to make reference to the idea. One Greek newspaper accounted for American athletic prowess in the 1896 Games by reference to their composite blood “join[ing] to the inherited athletic training of the Anglo-Saxon the wild impetuosity of the red-skin.” James Connolly, winner of the first gold medal in the Athens Games, wrote a popular fictional account which, as Dyreson has characterized it, “epitomized the American vision of sport as an institution through which the uniqueness and providence of American civilization was both expressed and enhanced.” Connolly had an Athenian newspaper pay homage to the melting pot: “Ah, well might the Americans say that their mixed blood was welding a nation that is to be invincible in time.”²³

Such journalistic musings were substantiated with scientific legitimacy by Dr. Charles E. Woodruff, who, employing neo-Darwinist reasoning, explained how the “melting-pot” nature of American society aided the development of super athletes.²⁴

²¹Robertson.

²²Dyreson deals with this theme in cogent detail in “Melting-Pot Victories.”

²³Richardson, 275-6; James B. Connolly, “An Olympic Victor,” Scribner’s New Monthly Magazine 44(August 1908), 210; Dyreson, 52.

²⁴Charles E. Woodruff, “The Failure of Americans as Athletes,” North American Review 186(1907), 201-2, 203. See also his article, “Why the Native American Does So Badly at the Olympic Games,” Current Literature 53(August 1912), 182-4. For more on the issue of ‘nervousness’ during the Progressive Era, see T.J. Jackson Lears, No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920

In truth, the exclusion of African-Americans and women belied the dominant “melting-pot” rationales for American athletic prowess. The romantic belief that American Olympic teams brought minority groups together was, accurate only as far as certain European immigrant groups were concerned. Although it was common to interpret black and female athletes’ historical involvement in sport as an inexorable procession toward freedom and equality,²⁵ in reality, Jim Crowism and sexism in amateur sport ensured that African-Americans and women were excluded from Olympic participation.

African American track and field athletes were conspicuously excluded from bourgeois public discourse on the Olympic Games. Until William De Hart Hubbard won the broad jump in the 1924 Paris Games, only Howard P. Drew, a star Springfield, Massachusetts sprinter invited to the 1912 Games by James Sullivan, was recognized in the national sport commentary. After winning a trial heat in the 100 meters, Drew pulled a tendon, and was unable to compete in the finals which his teammates predicted would have given him the gold medal. Later, as a collegiate athlete at the University of Southern California, Drew won many intercollegiate titles and set world records. His 9.6 second time for the 100-yard dash run in 1914 stood unsurpassed until future African-American Olympic star, Thomas Edward Tolan broke the record in 1929 with a 9.5 seconds time. More widely recognized than Drew, Tolan received an athletic scholarship to the University of Michigan, where he set both Michigan and Western(Big Ten) Conference records in both the 100-yard and 200-yard sprints. Tolan won gold medals in the 100- meter and 200-meter sprints at the 1932 Los Angeles Games. His 10.3 second 100-meter time would be equalled by Jesse Owens in the 1936 Berlin Games, but would remain unbroken until 1960.²⁶ Jesse Owens became the first nationally-renown African-American Olympic athlete as a result of his stellar performances in 1936. Not until the 1936 Berlin Games were exponents of the American melting-pot ideology forced to address the blatant contradiction in opposing Nazi racial philosophy while doing nothing about racism at home except to use Jesse Owens as anti-Nazi propaganda.²⁷

(N.Y.: Pantheon 1981), and Tom Lutz, American Nervousness, 1903: An Anecdotal History (Ithaca: Cornell University 1991).

²⁵The most famous scholarly study of this romanticism is John R. Betts, “Organized Sport in Industrial America,” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1951). See also Frederick M. Cozens and Florence S. Strumpf, Sports in American Life (N.Y.: Arno Press 1956).

²⁶James E. Sullivan, “What Happened at Stockholm,” Outing 61(October 1912), 22-3. For biographical information about Howard Drew and Eddie Tolan, see Lockett V. Davis and William J. Baker’s entries in David L. Porter, ed., Biographical Dictionary of American Sport: Outdoor Sports (Westport: Greenwood Press 1988), 455, 551-2.

²⁷See William J. Baker’s treatment of American Olympic racism in his excellent Jesse Owens: An American Life (N.Y.: The Free Press 1986). See also David K. Wiggins, “The 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin: The Response of America’s Black Press,” Research Quarterly

America's melting-pot Olympic sporting tradition was defined exclusively by notions of masculine athleticism. Women athletes were barred from Olympic competition by the official dictates of the first International Olympic Committee on grounds that rigorous sport compromised women's femininity and social decency.

The I.O.C. policy was consistent with Coubertin's personal way of thinking, who in 1902 claimed that women's participation would be contrary to the "Laws of Nature." To him, the role of women was to applaud the male victor as a means of reward. Sullivan was an adamant opponent as well. Sports were "morally a questionable experience for women," except for the purpose of segregated recreation and diversion. Male Olympics officials and advocates' opposition to female participation was most succinctly articulated in a 1912 statement, in which the I.O.C. officials attempted to define the thrust of the Olympics in terms of "the solemn and periodic exaltation of male athleticism with internationalism as a base, loyalty as a means, art for its setting, and female applause as reward."²⁸

It may well have been that women's inclusion in the modern Olympics had to do with the fact the I.O.C. had very little authority at the Paris Games of 1900, which was organized by the World's Exhibition committee. Charlotte Cooper of Great Britain became the first of twelve women participating in 1900 to gain an Olympic gold medal in tennis; Chicago Golf Club member, Margaret Abbott, won the ladies golf competition. Lydia Scott Howell, among only eight women who participated in the 1904 Games (all of them American archers), won gold medals in both individual events, and a third as a member of winners in the team competition, and became the first American female to win three gold medals in an Olympiad. After the 1908 Games, archery would be replaced by swimming, and would not be included

for Exercise and Sport 54(1983), 279-82. For a general overview of scholarship on black athletes, see Wiggins's "From Plantation to Playing Field: Historical Writings on the Black Athlete in American Sport," Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport 57(1986), 101-16.

²⁸Uriel Simri, "The Development of Female Participation in the Olympic Games," Stadion 6(1980), 188; Paula Welch and Harold Lerch, History of American Physical Education and Sport (Springfield, Ill: Charles C. Thomas 1981), 294; "No Women Athletes for American Team," New York Times, March 31, 1914, 9; and Ellen W. Gerber, et al, The American Woman in Sport--Reading, MA Addison-Wesley 1974), 137-8. Jennifer Hargreaves cogently details how the "legitimate" use of the female body was redefined to symbolize a more active yet still subordinate role, when compared to men in her unpublished master's thesis, "'Playing Like Gentlemen While Behaving Like Ladies': The Social Significance of Physical Activity for Females in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Britain," (University of London Institute of Education, 1979); and her article, "Victorian Familism and the Formative Years of Female Sport," in J.A. Mangan and Roberta J. Park, eds., From Fair Sex to Feminism: Sport and the Socialization of Women in the Industrial and Post-Industrial Eras (London: Frank Cass 1987), 130-44.

on the Olympic program again until 1972.²⁹

Sullivan managed to block American women swimmers from participating in the 1912 Games, by influencing the A.A.U. not to sponsor national championships for women. The First World War prevented the Olympic Games from being held in Berlin in 1916; when the Games resumed at Antwerp in 1920, women athletes were limited to tennis and aquatic events. American women dominated swimming and diving, winning all but one of those events. A couple years after Coubertin resigned as president of the International Olympic Committee, the body decided, in an unrecorded vote, to permit women's track and field and team gymnastics, which comprised 9.6 percent of all the Olympians at the 1928 Amsterdam Games.³⁰

The turning point in the development of a female Olympic sporting identity was the performance of Gertrude Ederle, who won a gold as a member of the 400-meter relay team, and two bronze medals in the 100- and 400-meter freestyle races at the 1924 Paris Games. Despite the fact that the seventeen year old Ederle held eighteen world records, The Literary Digest editorialized that physical prowess was detrimental to femininity. Describing Ederle as "a strapping, wholesome, fun-loving young creature, with muscles of steel and a great chuckle in her throat," the journalist judged that Gertrude's "wide-set brown eyes" would ultimately fail to "lire a good sailor on the rocks when there were a wife and children waiting for him on shore." Two years later when Ederle began the first woman to swim the English Channel, shattering the record time of five previous male swimmers by two hours, the Literary Digest modified its previous sexist assessment, hailing her as "the bob-haired, nineteen-year-old daughter of the Jazz Age." Distinguished sportswriter Paul Gallico, was more forthright in his assessments of America's first internationally-renown athlete, when he called her "the greatest girl or woman athlete that ever lived, certainly the greatest of our time."³¹

The Olympics provided occasions not only to define but also to display American prowess. The 1908 London Games proved a model context. At a time when the U.S. challenged Britain for the political, economic, and athletic domination of the world, the Games increasingly simplified the larger struggle in terms easily understood by the American public. The headlines of the New York Times prior to the Games reflected the intense desire of the U.S. to claim victory over the British: "American Athletes Sure of Success;" "Britishers Fear Yankee Athletes;" "We Will Knock the Spots Off the Britishers." Without detracting from the particular events which fueled the controversies during the Games, such anecdotes

²⁹Smiri, 189-91.

³⁰Allen Guttmann incorporates a fine overview of these developments in his excellent new synthesis, Women's Sports: A History (New York: Columbia University 1991), 163-71, 139-40.

³¹Ib id., 147-8. See Sheila Mitchell, "Women's Participation

represented manifestations of a more general endeavor to define and display national greatness between the most powerful industrial and imperial power of the world and the emergent one.³²

The primacy of this rivalry was extremely important to the hosts of the 1908 Games. Members of the British middle- and upper-classes were concerned that the Empire's prestige was perceived to steadily declining. A consequent search for new devices to ensure social cohesion and national identity materialized into a veritable heyday of "invented tradition," characterized by David Cannadine as "a time when old ceremonials were staged with an expertise and appeal which had been lacking before, and when new rituals were self-consciously invented to accentuate this development."³³

The opening ceremony of the 1908 London Games represented such an example of a more general proliferation of political ceremonials designed to promulgate respect for the British aristocracy. According to Cannadine, the social and political changes which altered Edwardian British society enabled the ceremonial presentation of an "impotent but venerated monarch as a unifying symbol of permanence and national community." The London Times assertion that "there is no one living more fitted to open and in one sense preside over the fourth Olympiad than King Edward the Peacemaker," reflected the extent to which such an invented tradition became commonsensical in British public discourse.³⁴

The exaggerated ideological rifts between American and British nationalism were dramatized in the opening ceremony when the American flag was conspicuously absent from display in the stadium. Despite British disclaimers that the incident was caused by an incompetent worker assigned to the task, the episode sparked great indignation among American athletes and sport enthusiasts, most notably shotputter and standard-bearer Ralph Rose, who refused to dip the flag in customary courtesy while passing the royal box during

³²New York Times, July 12, 1908, 10. Useful documentation of the 1908 Games can be found in: Weyand, 79-104; Kanin, 34-5; George R. Matthews, "The Controversial Olympic Games of 1908 As Viewed by the New York Times and the Times (London)," Journal of Sport History 7(Summer 1980), 40-53; Lucas, 55-63; Rodda and Killanin, chapter four; Johnson, 127-9. See also, John Lowerson, "Sport and National Decay: The British and the Olympic Games Before 1914," abstract in N. Muller and J.K. Ruhl, eds., Olympic Scientific Congress 1984 Official Report (Niederhausen 1985), 384. See also, Richard Holt, Sport and the British: A Modern History (New York: Oxford University 1989), 274.

³³Hobsbawn "Mass Producing Traditions," 265,263; and David Cannadine, "The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the 'Invention of Tradition,' c. 1820-1977," in Hobsbawn and Ranger, eds., The Invention of Tradition, 108.

³⁴Cannadine, 121-2; Times (London), July 14, 1908, 10. See also, Nadjeda Lekarska, "Olympic Ceremonial," in Killanin and Rodda, 157-8.

the opening ceremony. One of the American athletes reputedly quipped: ‘This flag dips to no earthly king.’ This ideological tone, in marked contrast with the Americans’ affectionate embrace of the Greek monarchy just two years earlier,³⁵ was established for an entire wave of American protestations throughout the London Games.³⁶

From the American perspective the most controversial event was the 400 meter race. American runner J.C. Carpenter was disqualified by British officials for obstructing England’s athletic idol, Lt. Wyndham Halswelle, whose performance promised to bring the greatest glory to the motherland. The acrimonious situation was fueled by different track and field rules between the countries, a difficulty which was resolved years later by the formation of the International Amateur Athletic Federation. Despite an unsuccessful appeal to the Olympic jury, chauvinistic American journalists and spokesmen portrayed Carpenter as the winner. ‘Carpenter of Cornell Easily Beats English Crack, but is Disqualified for Foul,’ announced a headline in the *New York Times*, ‘Officials Claim Bump-Race to be Re-Run, English Crowds Boo American Performers for No Reason Whatsoever.’ Nationalistic recriminations flew back and forth across the Atlantic during the ensuing days.³⁷

Caspar Whitney, genteel American sport enthusiast and editor of *Outing*, offered a conciliatory note by assuring British sports fans that ‘the hearts of our athletes are of prime quality even though their manners may not be an invariably correct index.’ Whitney

³⁵During the opening ceremony for the 1906 Athens Games, U.S. coach Matt Halpin expressed only the highest adulation for being in the presence of the Greek monarch. Leading the American contingent before the royal box, Halpin dipped the flag, upon which ‘the Ring staked me to a smile that made me feel that I belonged. . .’ At the concluding awards ceremony, Halpin rallied the American team together and led three deafening cheers in honor of the King. Three weeks later, the *New York Times* reported that even Roosevelt had sent the highest commendations to the king for his ‘impartiality and hospitality. Halpin quoted in Johnson, *All That Glitters*, 126; *New York Times*, May 3, 1906, 4; *Ibid.*, May 26, 1906,9.

³⁶A review of the first five days of competition reveals that in addition to the American protest of the missing flag, the U.S. contingent had lodged three official protests regarding the pole vault competition, the English method of scoring, and the permissible types of gear used by the British in the tug-of-war.

³⁷*New York Times*, July 24, 1908, 7; cf. *Times* (London), July 24, 1908, 6; cf. Caspar Whitney, ‘The Viewpoint,’ *Outing* 53(1908), 244-5.

Not until after the 1912 Stockholm Games would efforts be initiated to standardize rules, given the fact that each national federation had slightly different scoring standards. See British Olympic Association member Sir Theodore A Cook, *The Olympic Games* (London: Archibald Constable & Co. 1908), 97-8 for a post-London Games British perspective. William M. Sloane recognized the potential pitfalls of cheating and poor judging, and was influential in pushing for reform; see his article, ‘The Olympic Idea,’ *Century* 84(June 1912).

attributed the American involvement in the controversy to a “mistaking of violent glorification for patriotism by the younger element,” and to an “absence of tradition.” He went on to explain the American sporting personality in terms of a “general disposition to ‘kick’ at decisions” and their “training to beat the rules.” Americans reputedly understood that “kicking” and endeavoring to out-smart the officials did not reflect dishonesty, but rather “an expression of [their] frenzy to win so characteristic of us. . .that has made us what we are.” Thus, in a couple of strokes of the pen, Whitney aptly equated the Olympic athletes’ behavior with a distinct national character. Such explanations, articulated by nationally-renown spokesmen, quickly became part of the popular discourse of the day.³⁸

Despite the fact that Britain handily surpassed the U.S. in total medals,³⁹ the American media claimed victory based solely on the track and field competition. Arthur Ruhl, distinguished associate editor of Collier’s, described the track and field results as “American achievements.” Ruhl ventured the established explanation of American “dominance” in running to the “particular make-up,” namely, “a large amount of immediately available nervous energy and the alert power of concentration” which he suggested was “characteristically American.” The New York Times personified the mighty, strenuous American nation in a caricature of a robust Roosevelt facing a skinny Englishman in a top hat wearing a monocle.⁴⁰

By 1908, nationalist Olympic discourse had become standard fare--ideologically consistent and predictable. In just fourteen years, the Games had gained unchallenged legitimacy in the mainstream organs of opinion throughout the United States. Only the socialist press offered alternative assessments of American involvement in the Olympics. Although many socialists were indifferent or downright hostile to sport, socialist opinion was not uniform, and for every socialist opposed to sport there was sure to be one firmly in favor.⁴¹ Recognition of sport

³⁸Whitney, “The View-Point,” Outing 52(1908), 761, 766.

³⁹The American squad dominated the track and field competition, winning 15 gold, 12 silver, and 11 bronze. In the total medal count, however, the U.S. won 23 gold, 12 silver, and 12 bronze to the British 56 gold, 50 silver and 39 bronze. David Wallechinsky, The Complete Book of the Olympics (N.Y.: Penguin Books 1984), xii.

⁴⁰Ruhl, “The Men Who Set the Marks,” Outing 52(1908), 389; Connolly, “The Sheperd’s Bush Greeks,” Collier’s 41(September 5,1908), 12-13; and “When Greek Meets Greek,” New York Times, July 19, 1908.

⁴¹Little is known about socialist involvement in sport in the United States. A couple studies of the European labor and socialist movement provide a starting-point for future studies of the U.S. See, for instance, Stephen G. Jones, Sport, Politics, and the Working Class: Organised Labour and Sport in Inter-War Britian (Manchester: Manchester University

commentary outside of bourgeois circles points to the contested nature of sport and leisure, and its connection to national consciousness.

Despite the yet unexplored contested nature of sport discourse, a consensus prevailed on the legitimacy of certain sport forms and institutions. The New York Evening Call, a socialist daily, devoted a full page to sports of all kinds, including baseball, college football, horseracing, boxing, and track and field. The Call's coverage of the flag incident in the opening ceremony closely resembled that of other mainstream daily newspapers. Throughout the first week of the Games, readers of the Call were treated to front-page stories whose themes paralleled their competitors' stories. The only ideologically-distinguishable comment made about the London Games was an indictment of the snobbishness of the English organizers who provided "solely for the comfort of the classes rather than the masses of the people" making "a dead failure of the Olympic Games." The writer went on to criticize the exorbitant cost of tickets as evidence that the Games were deliberately made inaccessible to the working class.⁴²

Although The Call was more forthcoming than most papers and magazines about the manner in which the U.S. trailed the British in total medals, it, too, was quick to boast "America Ahead in Purely Olympic Games---England Leads by Counting Events Not Athletic."⁴³ The Call's socialist perspective was critical, however, of the way in which local and national politicians in the United States used the Games to strengthen their own status. Prior to the grand celebration in New York City, the Call exposed the politics of raising funds for the New York parade. When it was reported that \$10,000 for the parade and banquet had been promised by the "team exploiters" to be raised through "voluntary" public subscription, The Call predicted that the public would be coerced into contributing. Tammany's pressure on local employers would simply "result in a sudden interest in the underpaid and hard working employees denying their families the pleasure of a Sunday at the shore in order to give 'voluntarily'" the money necessary to entertain the Olympic athletes and their bourgeois patrons. In other words, the writer suggested that the "spontaneous"

1988); and David A Steinberg, "The Workers' Sports Internationals, 1920-28," Journal of Contemporary History 13(1978). Mark Naison initiated the study of the Communist Party's involvement with sport in the U.S. over a decade ago in his "Righties and Lefties: The Communist Party and Sports During the Great Depression," Radical America 13(July-Aug 1979). See also William J. Baker, "Muscular Marxism and the Chicago Counter-Olympic Games of 1932," forthcoming.

⁴²New York Evening Call, July 18, 1908, 2.

⁴³New York Evening Call, July 19, 2.

enthusiasm of America's athletic exploits abroad were not equally visible in all social classes.
4 4

Several days later, when it had become apparent that popular contributions were virtually nonexistent, the New York aldermen created a welcoming committee to act as a vehicle for procuring funds from a city slush-fund. The Call condemned the effort as a ploy by "a bunch of ward heelers, political grafters, and artistic plunderers" to steal "the city's scant supply of real money to eat up and drink up in a political exploitation of a pseudo-reception to the Irish-American Olympic team." According to the writer, the aldermen's action was prompted by "the fear that they themselves, heaven forbid, might be compelled to explore the well-filled region of their own pockets" in order to raise the requisite funds.⁴⁵

Despite the occasional dissenting viewpoint, the dominant version of American athleticism heralded by an alliance of journalists, politicians, Olympic leaders, and fans was ritualized in the streets of New York on the Saturday afternoon of August 29, 1908. Amidst the profusion of bunting and the sound of patriotic hymns, a quarter of a million people took part in "the greatest ovation in the history of athletics," celebrating those "brawny representatives of young America [who] faced the multitudes in the London Stadium perfectly unconcerned and won the most glorious victory in the annals of athletics."⁴⁶

An uninformed urban-dweller might have mistaken the Olympic parade for a military celebration. The Grand Marshall, Gen. George Wingate, accompanied by sixteen high-ranking officers, proudly flaunted the coercive powers of the nation, leading four groups representing the U.S. Army, National Guard, Marines, and Navy, numbering some 15,000 troops in all. Behind the militia marched the athletes and the city's elite, followed by athletic clubs of all stripes and throngs of proud school children.⁴⁷

The orgy of nationalistic fervor culminated in a rousing speech delivered by Mayor McGowan who, on behalf of "the people of the United States," congratulated "those of our countrymen who have won victories in athletic sports against the world." McGowan proclaimed the "uplifting role of amateur athletics" in producing a "strong and manly race" of strong, courageous, and patriotic men. Beyond the regeneration of the body sport served to

⁴⁴New York Evening Call, August 8, 1908, 2.

⁴⁵New York Evening Call, August 12, 1908.

⁴⁶"Thousands Cheer Victors of the Olympic Games," New York Times, August 30, 1908, 1.

⁴⁷Ibid.

elevate the national reputation, the mayor insisted. These sentiments were echoed two days later by President Roosevelt, the nation's leading advocate of manliness and the strenuous life. Entertaining the Olympic athletes at his summer home on Oyster Bay, Roosevelt ardently declared "that everyone in America" was proud of the team's feat, and that he himself thought it "the the biggest feat that has ever been performed by any team of any nation."⁴⁸

Olympic discourse during the 1912 Stockholm Games also accommodated the dominant metaphors and themes of the newly-created American sporting tradition. Leading sport journalist Edward Bayard Moss referred to U.S. Olympians as "America's Athletic Missionaries," and through his commentary, honed the already-effective "melting pot" explanation of American athletic prowess. Not only did America successfully assimilate the various ethnic groups into a national team, class lines were also supposedly blurred in the process. The American team, according to Moss, represented a "heterogeneous gathering [of] lawyers, physicians, policemen, Indians, negroes, [sic] Hawaiians, college men, school boys, clerks, mechanics, and, in fact, entrants from every walk of life." American Olympic Committee President Col. Robert Thompson maintained that the athletic contingent sent to Stockholm constituted a "fair criterion in speculation as to what sort of a race we now are building in America." Victories of Americanized immigrant athletes over men of their own original nationalities inspired Thompson to conclude that the active ingredient was "that something which is added to their original blood by their Americanism." The notion that the U.S. Olympic team's success derived from America's great assimilative capacities was echoed throughout newspapers and magazines.⁴⁹

Jim Thorpe's brilliant performance at the Stockholm Games appeared to many Americans to legitimize such nationalistic claims. Thorpe, a Sac and Fox tribe Indian, originally from Oklahoma, had previously been selected by Walter Camp as an All-American halfback, as well as having played minor-league baseball. When King Gustavus of Sweden awarded Thorpe trophies for winning the pentathlon and decathlon, he was merely one of thousands who recognized Thorpe's athletic abilities by declaring "You, sir, are the greatest athlete in the world." Within six months of the Olympics, however, an American sportswriter publicized Thorpe's earlier brief stint in professional baseball, and Thorpe was subsequently coerced into returning his medals by the powerful athletic officials of the A.A.U. and the American Olympic Committee. Historian William Baker concluded that "Perversely, the muses turned the brightest gold of Stockholm into dross." Hobsbawm interprets such actions as explicit examples of how leading members of the middle class combined both social and political elements of the invention of tradition, representing a "spontaneous attempt to draw class lines

⁴⁸President Greets Olympic Athletes," New York Times, September 1, 1908, 1. See also the editorial, "Mr. Roosevelt and the Athletes," N.Y. Times, September 2, 1908, 6.

⁴⁹Moss, "America's Athletic Missionaries," Harper's Weekly 56(July 27, 1912), 8; Thompson, "Race Questions at the Olympics," Independent 73(July 25, 1912), 15. See also Moss's earlier article, "America's Olympic Argonauts," Harper's Weekly 56(July 6, 1912), 11-12.

against the masses, mainly by the systematic emphasis on amateurism as the criterion of upper- and middle-class sport.”⁵⁰

The Jim Thorpe incident, however, was not entirely a “class” issue, since it brought attention to the emergent national sporting tradition. As David Kanin has observed, “Many in the U.S. saw Thorpe’s problem as an opportunity for foreigners who were jealous of American sport to point a finger at its moral deficiencies.” Athletic organizations and their publicists scrambled to explain Thorpe’s “mistake” in terms of his race, which they had characterized as “American” just months prior. Yet the New York Times editorialized that Thorpe’s disgrace was “a trivial matter in comparison with the humiliation which he has brought upon his country--with the derision and denunciation which all Americans will long have to hear from the foreign critics. . . that we lack the instinct of fair play.”⁵¹

According to British commentator Philip Baker, “Apart from the journalistic talk [my emphasis],” there was no ill feeling at Stockholm or afterwards. Nevertheless, “the papers had to represent the whole English team as seething with discontent against the Swedes and Americans. But it was almost pure invention.” Baker, a star middle-distance runner from Cambridge and son of a prominent Parliamentarian, sought to efface the impression created by certain English sportswriters that American sportsmanship was found lacking. Baker characterized the nationalistic volleys as a “silly newspaper quarrel,” whereby the press had created a “conspiracy to bicker and squabble expressly for the purpose of discrediting the Olympic contest.”⁵²

Despite Baker’s conviction, various American journalists continued to fan the embers of nationalism by deriding the British performance. One writer reminded his readers that the “modern Olympic meet is chiefly regarded as a contest between nations,” and with regard to this, “the disappointment of the English is especially humiliating, because they were the first to insist that success in sports is a measure of national greatness.” Implying that the lackluster British performance reflected ‘racial’ degeneration, the writer emphasized that had not the ‘colonials’ done so well, the results would have been even more disappointing for the declining empire, which was forced to “‘think imperially’ more than any other event since the Boer War. . .”⁵³ The ideological twist here is worth noticing. The “American” team was

⁵⁰Weyand, 112; Kanin, 36; Baker, Sport in the Western World (Urbana: University of Illinois 1988), 207; and Hobsbawn, 300.

⁵¹Kanin, 36; New York Times, January 28 and 29, 1913.

⁵²Philip J. Baker, “Olympiads and Liars,” Outlook 102(October 19, 1912) 359, 355.

⁵³Independent 73(July 25, 1912), 214.

proudly hailed as a great “melting-pot” of races, which largely determined its success. The British empire’s team, however, showcased the declining athletic prowess among the English relative to their colonial subjects. In other words, the melting-pot theory was used selectively by American commentators to legitimize the American “race” at the expense of the British “race.”

In less than twenty years, U.S. involvement in the Olympic Games had gone from a modest university and club contingent, with relatively marginal public recognition, to a truly national endeavor. Whereas James Connolly had been denied a leave of absence from Harvard in 1896 in order to compete, a dozen years later, collegiate athletes were actively courted and praised for their participation. The national character of American Olympism was further solidified by the active participation in the Games of the military. American Olympic Committee President, Col. Thompson, saw to it that the U.S. team at Stockholm had a large military contingent, including a young athlete named George S. Patton, who competed in the Pentathlon.⁵⁴ Eight years later, the cooperation between the American Olympic team and the military won Congressional approval, as a resolution was passed that authorized the War Department to use ships to transport athletes to Antwerp in 1920. A prominent American Olympic official, Gustavus T. Kirby, commented that the Congressional fiat would ensure that the envoy to Antwerp. would be “a truly American invasion in every way. Our men will be sent across the ocean under the Stars and Stripes. . .and will enjoy the official support of the Government in their effort.”⁵⁵

Official federal support of the U.S. Olympic team was simultaneously complemented by energetic citizens in the ‘private’ sector. The first campaign to secure national support for the Olympic team was initiated with the distribution of 20,000 posters in Greater New York. Beginning on May 17, 1920, the posters, “Help America Win the Olympic Games,” appeared in every public and private school, police station, firehouse, municipal building, dock, social center, recreation pier, settlement house, and athletic club. In addition to their explicit nationalistic appeal, the posters bore the Olympic shield and a facsimile of the gold button which was awarded to contributors. From New York the poster campaign spread nationwide, coordinated by local Olympic committees. A spokesman made it abundantly clear that “It is the desire of the American Olympic Committee that the support and financing of the American teams this year shall be national in character.”⁵⁶

The capacity to structure sport in preferred ways, to establish sporting traditions, and to

⁵⁴See Davis Edwards, “Col. Thompson Praises America’s Athletes: Work Done at Stockholm Shows that Our Race is Not Losing Stamina, but out of Our Mixed Blood has Arisen a Compound that is Invincible or May Be Made So,” New York Times, August 25, 1912, 10.

⁵⁵“U. S. Vessels Likely to Carry Athletes,” New York Times, May 23, 1920, sec. 8, 4.

⁵⁶“To Finance Trip of Olympic Team,” New York Times, May 17, 1920, 11.

define the range of “legitimate” practices and meanings associated with sport practices enabled Olympic advocates to extend their hegemony over an ever-growing sporting public.⁵⁷ Such efforts at promoting American athleticism, which contemporary advocates boasted as being “national in character,” were predicated on a wider public recognition that the Olympics dignified the dominant national identity. When analyzed within the context of the invention of nationalism, it becomes clear that the Olympics served as a device for creating a factitious national communal identity at a time when the obedience and loyalty of a heterogenous citizenry was anything but certain. If bourgeois hegemony was to be successfully nationalized, many elites and middle-class spokesmen realized that America had to be continually made and remade in the realm of popular culture.⁵⁸

American involvement in the early Olympiads, then, must be seen as an integral part of the cultural terrain upon which the hearts and minds of individuals from various classes were won.

Sport’s historical association with “popular culture” has constituted regular public occasions for discourse on the basic themes of American cultural and political life, precisely because this realm was not normally defined as ‘political.’ In this sense, sport has and continues to afford nationalistic commentators the opportunity to praise the superiority of American muscles and minds.

⁵⁷For a more elaborate discussion of these themes, see Richard S. Gruneau, Class, Sports and Social Development (Amherst: University of Massachusetts 1983), and John Hargreaves, Sport, Power and Culture (N.Y.: St. Martin’s 1986).

⁵⁸An excellent study of the manner by which British bourgeois ideology ‘found’ itself into popular culture is John M. MacKenzie’s, Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960 (Manchester: Manchester University 1984).