

Seagrave, Jeffrey O.,) and Chu, Donald, eds. *The Olympic Games in Transition*. Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics Books, 1988. Pp. ix, 443. \$30.00.

From the Greek, the word “*anthology” means “flower gathering.” In the contemporary academic world, however, the word has a more mundane interpretation: a collection of writings on a given topic. Occasionally such “collections” do gather flowers, but more frequently they assemble a few roots, bits of stems, even a petal or two. In part at least, this may be because editors draw on their own perceptions of what they think will enlighten, suffice as course readings, or sell. Invariably, too, editors are at the mercy of what other people can or will contribute. Consequently, contemporary anthologies are problematic. Given the proliferation of scholarship, though, they may also be necessary evils.

The Olympic Games in Transition is an anthology in the contemporary sense of the word and with all of the genre’s characteristics. Edited by Jeffrey Seagrave and Donald Chu, professors in the Department of Physical Education and Dance at Skidmore College, this book is the team’s second such effort in this decade (*Olympism*, 1981). Several articles appear in both volumes. The purpose of *Games in Transition* is also consistent with that of *Olympism*; it aims “to critically examine (sic) the entire panoply of the Olympic Movement” (p. viii). The “in Transition” in the title, however, presents a sense that the editors will focus on a theme that has been played out in the most recent Games: “the current era of boycott diplomacy suggests that we are today in the throes of yet another transition-one from which the Games may not emerge intact” (p. viii).

Offered as a text for undergraduate and graduate students, *The Olympic Games in Transition* arranges twenty-eight articles in seven sections. Chronology and/or topicality define the sections: the Ancient Games, the Modern

Revival, the Modern Olympic Movement, the Games Themselves, Individuals and Events, Issues and Problems, and the Future of the Games. The editors incorporate primary sources by Pindar and Coubertin, accounts of events by ex-athletes, commentaries, and an array of platform pieces, descriptions, and analyses by long-time scholarly observers of the Olympic movement. Some of these pieces are new; many others are not. Each section begins with an introduction by the editors, and most offer short lists of suggested readings. The articles themselves provide references, rather than footnotes, and vary in quality and insightfulness. On this score *The Olympic Games in Transition* does provide a panoply: the contributions range from trivial to mediocre to marvelous. A few are true flowers gathered. These include "Olympic Games and American Culture" by John MacAloon, who focuses on the Olympics as "international cultural performances" (p. 279) in which are games that "lie at the center of a nexus of competing interests" (p. 284). Richard Gruneau and Hart Cantelon have also produced a fine piece in "Capitalism, Commercialism, and the Olympics," which actually attends to the book's title. Instead of supporting the notion of creeping commercialism and, hence, "transition," however, they argue that a transformation (effected as sport was drawn into a "universal market") "compromised" the Olympic movement "right from its inception" (pp. 351, 347).

One cannot, of course, fault the editors for the range in quality of the articles. Seagrave and Chu might, however, have avoided some of the book's other shortcomings. Most obvious perhaps is the paucity of analyses of the most recent Games, which presumably needed to be covered in this new volume, as well as the abundance of impressionistic and anecdote-gathering accounts. Far more critical, especially given the Olympics' international scope, is the volume's Western ethnocentricity. The Games may have originally been a Western contest, but they have not persisted as such. Moreover, had the editors seen to the treatment of eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa, they might have reconceived the "era of boycott diplomacy." A third disconcerting aspect surrounds the definition of "Issues." One must wonder why a piece about women's involvement remains-or ever was-an issue, while articles focusing on other social science categories (which gender is) such as race and class reside elsewhere. Finally, there is the editors' claim that the text "represents no particular ideology and is not aligned to any one school of thought" (p. viii). The book as a unit offers no theoretical grounding and explication (a few individual chapters do), but it does manifest a dominant school of thought and it is the product of a dominant ideology (as viewed in its structure, sense of evolution, and "reading" what present meanings can or should be from earlier forms). All scholarly endeavors are ideologically informed, and recognizing that does not diminish or demean the information. If there were to be a third anthology on the Olympics, however, the Skidmore team might be alert to competing ideologies and to diverse schools of thought.