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Competence and Complexity:
**Making and Unmaking Emerging Myths in
Recent Cultural Historical Studies of Sport
in Societies**

The history of sport as a body of knowledge is relatively young, reasonably firm-limbed, and increasingly full fleshed (even in some areas corpulent) but like the human body at any age, it is not without small tumors, emerging excrescences, and minor, but unmistakable, deformities. This paper reviews some recent and, at this moment relatively mild exiguous malignancies, which like all malignancies must be excised to ensure the healthy growth of the body before the skin that covers them becomes coriaceous and impenetrable.

To abandon the metaphor but not the meaning, the paper considers emergent myths that should be scotched to ensure that the simplistic is eschewed and the subtlety of continuity and change in the complex cultural contexts of sport in society is preserved. These recent myths are considered under the following headings: models of evolution I, thematic issues, models of evolution II, disciplinary issues, middle-class issues, models of Social Darwinist evolution, and militaristic masculinity issues.

The paper is a revisionist review of some statements in recent publications and, in its exclusive form, is an analysis of competence of consideration and complexity of perspective—an analysis undertaken in the hope that the historical body will be made whole while the historical myths will be unmade.