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AMERICAN SPORTS SYMBOLISM.

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WAIT'LL NEXT YEAR: THE POLITICAL IMPACT
OF AMERICAN SPORTS SYMBOLISM

by

Richard Lipsky

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fulfillment of the requirements for the
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Abstract

WAIT'LL NEXT YEAR: THE POLITICAL IMPACT
OF AMERICAN SPORTS SYMBOLISM

Adviser: Professor Marshall Berman

This dissertation seeks to develop a political theory of American sports symbolism. Using theories of myth, drama, ritual and symbolism it seeks to explain the dramatic form of the Sportsworld itself. It then seeks to explain the way in which this dramatic form serves as a vehicle for the enactment of plots with political, social and personal significance.

A major theoretical focus of Wait'll Next Year is on the way in which the Sportsworld dramatizes a dialectic of socialization and escape. While the drama of sports facilitates a vicarious voyage for the fan, an escape from some of the harsher realities of American institutional life, it is at the same time socializing the fan for a "healthy" return to a world whose harshness encouraged his voyage of escape in the first place. The dissertation examines the political impact of both moments of this socialization and escape dialectic.

The dissertation treats the Sportsworld as a symbolic mass movement. It analyzes the newspapers, magazines and biographies, as well as the autobiographical accounts of involved partisans. This methodological perspective is designed to capture the essence of the lifeworld of sports through an examination of the "sacred texts." This approach is used so that an understanding of the way

in which sports grips popular consciousness can be illuminated. This approach also facilitates an understanding of how political values get inculcated "through the back door."

PREFATORY NOTE

This study seeks to develop a political theory of American sports symbolism. I wish to encourage the reader beforehand to be alive to the possibility that "politics" encompasses more than a narrowly conceived policy-making process. In this study I will be connecting personal themes with larger political and social institutions. I will be looking at aspects of everyday life and, importantly, the quality of that life. My purpose is to show how the world of sports, in a wide range of manifestations, is one of the major foundations of the stability of the American polity. In the process of doing this I wish to convey to the reader something he or she probably knows well already: the sports-world is a place of drama and joy. It is precisely those features that dramatically facilitate sports' contribution to the consensual basis of the American political system.

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PLAY BALL: TOWARD A POLITICAL THEORY
OF AMERICAN SPORTS SYMBOLISM

"As civilization advances, the sense of wonder declines. Such decline is an alarming symptom of our state of mind. Mankind will not perish for want of information; but only for want of appreciation.

The Wisdom of Heschel

"Why did football bring me so to life? I can't say precisely.... Whatever it was, I gave myself up to the Giants utterly. The recompense I gained was the feeling of being alive."

Fred Exley

"In a symbol...there is concealment and yet revelation."

Carlyle

When Marshall Berman suggested that I should tackle the larger political and personal meanings of American sports I was visibly shaken and vigorously reluctant. My hesitancy certainly did not arise from any ignorance or lack of interest in the sportsworld itself. I have been involved with sports all my life as a player, reporter and fan. I began as a devout disciple of the great Yankee teams of the 1950's. To me the two sweetest phrases in the world were, "How about that!," and "Going, Going, Gone!," uttered by the unforgettable voice of Mel Allen as he televised or broadcast the Yankee games. I still vividly recall the day I almost caught Gil McDougald's foul line drive at Yankee Stadium, nirvana just eluding my grasp.

When not actually watching or listening to the ballgame, I was reading about my team and its heroes in the seven newspapers that my father, a theatrical press agent, would bring home every night. In the afternoons, after school, my friends and I would play punchball or stickball and realistically enact the baseball metaphor as we imagined that we too were, or were going to be, major league stars. At school, especially in the afternoons, my thoughts would often turn to the upcoming Yankee game or to the anticipated pleasure of

punchball until dark. At night I would toss my "Spaldeen" ball against my closet door as I enacted fantasy encounters between my Yankees and the hated Brooklyn Dodgers.

As a young adolescent I was captured by basketball. The transfer process is still not clear to me, but gradually my baseball devotion gave way to an intense involvement with the "city game." I played for my junior high school and high school teams, in outside leagues, and in the parks, playgrounds and gyms throughout the city. During the winter, at least six nights of the week were covered. I would often practice with the high school team, come home and eat quickly, and be off to the gym that was open that night. Basketball was booming on all levels in New York during this time. I followed the high school exploits of the legendary Connie Hawkins and rooted madly for the N.Y.U. teams of Satch Sanders, Cal Ramsey, Barry Kramer and "Happy" Hairston. And then there was the New York Knickerbockers.

My father worked in the Herald Tribune Building on 41st Street and was friendly with basketball writer Irving Marsh. Because of this glorious connection, I was able to sit in seat "F-4," right behind the Knickerbockers' bench. There I would listen to the squeaky voice of Ray Felix exhort his team and denounce the opposition. I would watch

watch Keny Sears hit that beautiful jump shot from the corner, leap to my feet as Richie Guerin drove the lane for his patented underhanded "scoop" lay-up, and feel incredibly powerful as Harry "The Horse" Gallatin muscled in for a rebound. But, more often than not, my few moments of euphoria would give way to the premonition of disaster. Knick skillfulness would suddenly evaporate as the magnificent team of marauding Celtics from Boston, lead by the satanic presence of Bill Russell, would sneeringly sweep past the valiant Knick resistance. If it wasn't Russell and the Celtics, it was the methodical brilliance of an Oscar Robertson-led team, or the "show-time" virtuosity of Elgin Baylor and his Lakers. And, as if that weren't enough, the New York Knick fan could also look forward to Bill Chamberlain single-handedly devouring the entire Knick team as he did on the night he scored 100 points against them. By being first a Yankee fan and then a Knick fan, I understood early the potential range of the sports drama: from victimage and tragedy to redemption and triumph.

Despite, or rather because of, my involvement and expertise, the thought of seriously studying sports was unnerving. As the idea began to take hold and make sense I began to understand my resistance. Sports has always been

my refuge from what has often been a harsh and difficult reality. My real world was perplexing and painful yet theoretically within the grasp of intellectual understanding. Intellectualizing and abstract introspection became a convenient pattern for denying the depth of the childhood hurts. The escape into sports provided me with a place to let go; a place of clear understanding and undeniable feelings. The thought of putting this sacrosanct and personal area under an academic lens was not immediately welcomed.

My resistance arose from another source as well. My involvement in the sportsworld was never really encouraged, and more often actively disapproved of. My mother would harshly criticize the "grotling" voice of my beloved Mel Allen. She would consistently tell me to "stop bouncing that damn ball." Neither she nor my father ever came to a basketball game that I played in. Through indifference and disapproval I learned to feel guilty about my own intense devotion. Yes, I know, other kids were devoted, but somehow I was different--more monomaniacal perhaps. The more this feeling threatened the more involved I became. This legacy of guilt got in the way of my perceiving--right off the bat--the way in which my own "idiosyncrasy" was connected to a whole world of equally idiosyn-

cratic communicants.

As I began to let the idea of studying sports in, it became really clear how my own personal attachments were, in one sense, just the tip of an iceberg of intensity. Involvement with sports—playing and watching, reading and talking, dominates people's everyday lives from eight to eighty. The "Holy Trinity" of baseball, basketball and football is nurtured on the fields of rural America, the streets of urban ghettos, and the manicured play areas of suburbia. From its local and personal beginnings, the sportsworld emerges to become a major form of national and social communication. Interest in and knowledge of sports makes Americans of every region and class "available" to each other. Sports is the "magic elixir" that feeds personal identity while it nourishes the bonds of communal solidarity. Its myths transform children into adult prototypes while at the same time allowing adults to once again be children. This study will illustrate how all this rich excitement is part of a dramatic symbolic world with important political ramifications.

II

The Sportsworld^{1/} penetrates the core of individual identity. It is intensely personal yet also miraculously shared in the euphoria of community rituals and in the heated

communication of sports conversation. Despite this obvious depth and breadth of involvement, the attempt to study sports has met with much resistance. This resistance can be seen, in some ways, as analogous to my own initial hesitation to study sports, but other factors are important as well.

The attempt to develop a political theory of American sports faces many obstacles. Sports and politics in America have traditionally been seen as discrete institutional realms. The gatekeepers of the Sportsworld itself have encouraged the belief that sports are "fun and games" and have vigorously fought any attempt at "outside" regulations. As the historian John Betts has pointed out, "Except in the suppression of gambling or illegal amusements and in the maintenance of the Puritan sabbath, Americans traditionally looked upon sport as private in nature, to be regulated by private governing bodies."2/ The separation of sports from the larger institutional reality received judicial sanction in 1922 when the Supreme Court ruled that baseball was not a business and could not be regulated as interstate commerce..3/

The separation of sports and politics has had ethical overtones as well. Sports, in contradistinction to politics, has been seen as a moral realm where character is built and virtue is pursued. The traditional lionizing of the sports hero contrasts sharply with the negative public

perception of politicians. This popular contrast is the source of the fierce vigilance that the gatekeepers of the sportsworld exhibit over the slightest appearance of corruption. An inability to police their own realm would lead, it is feared, to a political interference that would destroy the moral and jurisdictional autonomy of sports. Robert Lipsyte's sharp prose captures the sports-politics separation:

"All their lives they have been told that politics was dirty; that baseball was beautiful; that politicians were connivers; that ballplayers had the hearts of children; that [the] smoke-filled caucus room was the hellish furnace of democracy and that a sunny ballpark was its shrine and reward."4/

The difficulty of analyzing sports is increased by the way in which it is "known" in almost a Biblical sense. There has been a pervasive "folk understanding" of American sports that has generated numerous self-made seers and journalistic experts. An interesting and non-obvious theoretical point will often bring a "Well, sure, that's obvious" response from the involved fan. It only becomes obvious, however, after it gets articulated. It is certainly a risk, though, to tackle a phenomenon where everyone feels like an expert and where a major insight may be treated like a two day old box score.5/

This popular folk belief---what I call the "I played

second base in high school syndrome"--is abetted by academic hostility towards sports. On many college campuses the football or basketball team occupies a much higher place on the prestige hierarchy than any academic subject or academician. Historically, there has been a continual struggle between coaches and physical educators, on the one hand, and professors and deans, on the other hand, over the alleged over-emphasis of intercollegiate sports.^{6/} The coaches' arsenal has been heavily laden with large doses of anti-intellectualism, which strikes a responsive chord in the American public. Not to be out-done, the intellectuals have exhibited an equally potent snobbery and disdain. As a result, the study of sports has been left to physical educators who have been more than willing to leave its larger political and social implications unexamined.

The creation of this sports (trivial) and politics (serious) dichotomy has been one of the most persistent obstacles to the development of a political theory of American sports. It is one thing to analyze societies that set up ministries of physical culture whose aims unblushingly reflect those of the ruling political party.^{7/} It is quite a different task to analyze sports in a society where the political and ideological purpose is often disguised and

where socialization often is accomplished "through the back door."

The appearance of sports as "above" politics was severely challenged during the upheavals of the 1960s. The assorted protest movements all appeared to have their own "sports sections." The New Left hit out at what they perceived to be the "facist," "anti-life" and dehumanizing aspects of sports,^{8/} the Black Protest Movement hit out at the "racism" in American sports,^{9/} while the burgeoning Women's Movement began to highlight sexual discrimination and exaggerated masculine stereotypes in sportsworld activity.^{10/} The attack on sports was a replication of the ideological attacks on other American institutions.

The radical polemics against what had previously been seen as moral realm provoked an equally emotional defense of sports as integral to the "American way of life."^{11/} This counterattack served to underscore that sacred space had been violated and helped to tentatively illuminate some of the ways in which sports had been put to ideological use in the past. The need for athletic elites and their political and journalistic allies to defend Sportsworld premises that had previously been accepted as "givens," helped to sharpen the extent to which these premises could be seen as inter-related to the larger institutions.

The athletic controversies of the 1960s legitimized the serious study of sports. Within a few years it became a significant social fact. Yet what is remarkable amidst all the political protest and counterprotest is the absence of any dispassionate attempt to clarify the political function of American sports. The anthologies put together by the sociologists of sports are informative but generally lack overall theoretical coherence.^{12/} This study is meant to begin to fill a glaring void. What I will be doing is building a perspective that utilizes sociological, psychological, philosophical and political analyses. It is theoretically essential to utilize these various approaches with a view towards synthesizing them into a systematic picture of the whole. The attempt at synthesis is risky, often yielding, in Marx's criticism of Proudhon, "composite error." Yet the development of a larger theoretical picture is absolutely necessary if meaningful empirical work is ever to get done.

At all times, the theory being forwarded here should be seen as unavoidably political. By "political," however, I am going beyond the government regulation of the sports business or the coordinated supervision of amateur athletics.^{13/} I am seeing politics here in an expansive sense,

including phenomena that have often been ignored as "a-political." This perspective borrows from the synoptic view of politics put forward by Plato and Aristotle. As we will see, the Greek concern with "citizenship" and political education (seen in its widest sense) still retains much merit.^{14/} As our political system becomes more modern and complex, it becomes increasingly difficult, as well as inappropriate, to deny the utility of seeing the way in which the political system is anchored within a whole cultural matrix.

III

Many of the critiques of sports that emerged out of the 1960s were characterized by the Marxist impulse to unveil what lies behind the hypocrisy and facade of "ruling class ideology." Their assumptions rested on the belief that ideas, belief systems, or symbols are serving to reinforce concrete and specific distributions of political power. The critiques importantly debunked the rose colored view of sports as untarnished by political perfidy. They were the systematic "let down" that follows the systematic "build-up."^{15/}

The critiques all purport to show what sports is "really" all about. If sports is seen by its promoters and

followers as manifesting the beauty and joy of play, the critics focus on the way in which sports "perverts" play as a dehumanizing spectacle.^{16/} If sports is depicted as an arena of mobility and equality, the critics focus on the elitism, racism and inequality of the Sportsworld.^{17/} If the athlete is seen as a creative worker, a craftsman, then the critics inveigh against the "dehumanization" of the jock, the strapping of the athlete into a rigidly stereotyped role.^{18/} If the Sportsworld is seen to be one area where discipline and authority still prevail, the critics point out the authoritarian or fascist nature of the relationship between coach and athlete.^{19/} If the image of the athlete is conveyed as one of innocence and the relationship between athletes as one of spiritual camaraderie, then the critics underscore the money-grubbing, sexual hypocrisy and general mean-spiritedness of athletes, while at the same time unveiling the shallowness of the locker-room scene."^{20/}

More importantly, the critical views focus on how sports may be serving to generate a quiescence that facilitates the stability of the larger political system. Where the promoters and gatekeepers have always encouraged the belief that sports is all "seashells and balloons," the critics crankily zero in on the way in which sports functions

as an "opiate" or "emotional Disneyland." 21/ Their anger is levelled at the way sports involvement prevents people from accurately assessing the harmful impact of the economics and political systems. Whereas sports defenders see the way in which sports acts "cathartically" for the release of pent-up aggression and hostility, critics point out how this emotional release prevents the causes of the aggression and hostility from every being creatively confronted.

The radical critiques of sports are "sociological" and "realistic." This attack on sports, coupled with the work of such critical sociologists as Harry Edwards, Brian Petrie and Alan Ingham, 22/ begins to demystify the Sport-world itself while laying bare the way in which the world "fits" within the larger political and social arenas of American society. A major problem with the critical perspective, however, lies in its excesses and its lack of sensitivity to sports itself. The debunking of the Sports-world, the focus on all of its "perversions," fails to adequately explain the seductive lure of that world as an aesthetic or symbolic form. 23/ The critical devaluation makes it difficult to understand how anyone could be so easily lured by the appeals of sports. The critics' disdain for "opiates" makes them emotionally and intellectually unable to understand people's involvement in any immanent sense. They have often merely substituted the epithet for the prayer. 24/

We must approach sports dialectically in order to reconstruct how its aesthetic symbolism "unrealistically" enacts the more realistic plots of political and social life. ^{25/} This approach is more a demystifying one than a debunking one. Although at times it partakes of similar impulses, I am approaching the Sportsworld as an arena of myth. In order to understand the myth, we proceed from an analysis of its symbolic form to an explanation of how this form enacts a particular content within a specific historical and political context. Roland Barthes clarifies this:

"But what must be firmly established at the start is that myth is a system of communication, that is, it is a message...it is a mode of signification, a form. Later, we shall have to assign to this form historical limits, conditions of use and reintroduce society into it: we must nevertheless first describe it as a form." ^{26/}

IV

Henry Morton's seminal work, Soviet Sport, provides a useful point of departure for developing a political theory of American sports that is alive to the dialectical interplay between symbolic form and political content. Morton suggests that the analysis of a nation at play "reveals the stuff of its social fabric and value system, and tells us much about other facets of political and economic life, particularly in modern industrial society." ^{27/}

Morton pays close attention to the intrinsic appeals of mass sports. He indicates that "sport as a medium has inherent qualities which engender mass enthusiasm while permitting emotional release."^{28/} He goes on to explain that, "[s]ports is a drama. Its great attraction lies in the vicarious experience that it imparts to the spectator. It is truly heroic--at once glorious and tragic. Sports telescopes the human struggle for power, offering a spectacle that plays upon the emotions."^{29/} Curiously, Morton sees the intrinsic drama of sports to be essentially apolitical.

In contrast, the main focus of this study is the illumination of the ways in which the separate moments of political content and symbolic form are brought together in the dramatic world of sports. Throughout the work I will be concentrating on each moment as if it were autonomous. It is only after clearly outlining the separate features of form and content that we will be able to see how each moment acts within a dialectical whole. We will be observing the way in which sports functions as a socializer of dominant values. This function, however, cannot be adequately understood without a full description of the rich symbolism of the Sportsworld itself. Moreover, as we shall see, the intrinsic appeal of the sports drama, its ability to transport people from the often harsh reality of everyday life, is by

itself an important vehicle for political and social integration.

We have already gotten a glimpse of the importance and limitations of the radical attack on sports. A further critical analysis of the wide range of literature on sports will clarify the operation of the dialectic between form and content. This literature runs the gamut from Paul Hoch's Rip Off The Big Game, a self-styled Marxist-Leninist interpretation of American sports, through Harry Edwards' The Sociology of Sport, an avowedly scientific treatise, to sixteen year-old Ann Leider's idealistic essay on the role of football in American life. Despite the apparent diversity of these approaches, there is a common unifying thread: sports, to use Robert Boyle's term, is a "mirror of American life." 30/

When sports is seen as a mirror of American life, however, problems of interpretation arise. None of the people who use the mirror metaphor adequately explain how sports functions as a mirror. Is sports a passive reflection of the values inherent in American society? At times, this would appear to be the case. Hence, if American society is fascist, 31/ sports reflects fascist values. If American society is seen as dominated by the "business creed" of competition so is sports. 32/ If American values are those of community,

cooperation and brotherhood, it is no accident that sports is "a mirror of ourselves."^{33/}

Clearly, when radicals like Hoch and Scott, conservatives like Agnew and Rafferty, and a young idealist like Leider all agree on the same mode of interpretation, we are faced with some interesting theoretical questions. Sports, as an aesthetic realm, seems to encompass a rich symbolism that functions as a Rorschach for radically different perspectives.

There is also, however, a mode of interpretation that sees sports functioning as a safety valve for the accumulated pressures of a growing urban society as well as an escape from the demands of industrialization. Historians John Betts, Fred Paxson and Foster Rhea Dulles, and psychoanalyst Arnold Beisser are representative of this perspective.^{34/} Robert Lipsyte colorfully illuminates this view:

"Sports is a sweaty Oz, you'll never find it in a geography book...an ultimate sanctioning, a university for the body, a community for the spirit, a place to hide that glows with that time of innocence when we believed that rules and boundaries were honored."^{35/}

Clearly, we must continue to explore how sports can function as a mirror (with numerous reflections) of American society while simultaneously providing an escape from that same society.

v

These seeming paradoxes can only be resolved by analyzing the way in which sports develops as an aesthetic symbolic world with a reality all its own. If at times our sports "mirror" acts more like its amusement park "fun house" cousin, this will be understood by an appreciation of the analogical uses and metaphorical functions of symbolic forms. A grasp of sports as a symbolic world, resting on Murray Edelman's analysis of political symbolism and Kenneth Burke's theory of "dramatism," will in turn enable us to understand how sports is able to become a socializer of dominant values, while acting as a receptacle for certain important emotional needs that are denied an outlet in other areas of the political and social systems. In this introductory essay, I will merely outline the nature of the sports drama. Each subsequent chapter will focus on a separate feature of the sports drama in more detail.

The aesthetic allure of the sportsworld rests on its ability to create a "finite province of meaning" 36/ for those who inhabit its arenas. As Neil Offer has observed:

"Sports is life to the nth degree. It is life in extremis: every season you are born and you die, every forty eight minutes or nine innings, you win and you lose. Every play encompasses an eternity."^{37/}

The view of the Sportsworld as a bracketed world dovetails with the philosophical analysis of sports and play. Both Johan Huizinga and Paul Weiss analyze the pure form of sports and play and underscore the way in which these phenomena are able to create a reality that is more structured and controlled than the world of everyday life.^{38/} The Sportsworld is an "imaginary world of living beings."^{39/} It has its own parameters of space and time, as well as its own internal drama.

In many ways the sportsworld can be seen as a "social life-world."^{40/} Jurgen Habermas, citing Aldous Huxley, clarifies this concept:

"The world in which literature deals is the world in which human beings are born and live and finally die, the world in which they love and hate, in which they experience triumph and humiliation, hope and despair; the world of sufferings and enjoyments, of madness and common sense...of shared language and unshareable feelings and sensations." ^{41/}

The Sportsworld is a lived world whose precepts and participants are highly charged with human meaning, as opposed to technical or functional meaning. As we shall explore,

human meaning is enacted through drama.

The analysis of social life-worlds has many points of congruence with Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's theory of symbolic universes of meaning.^{42/} These authors indicate how social order is given subjective plausibility by a "symbolic canopy," or belief system, which integrates everyday reality into a "higher normative justification."^{43/} This belief system ("nomos") creates a world that is meaningful for individuals to root their identities in. It is the basic plot that underlies the dramatic enactments. The effectiveness of this belief for social action rests on how well it is able to dramatize the cognitive content. Hugh Duncan's commentary on Burke illustrates the basic outline of the theory:

"Human relations are analyzed best in terms of drama. Men enact roles. They participate. They develop modes of social appeal. People are not animals nor machines nor do they 're-late' in configuration. They relate as actors playing roles to achieve satisfaction which only other human actors can give them. They do so through communication which, like struggle in drama, involves both competition and cooperation."^{44/}

The Sportsworld is characterized by a strong normative structure that lends plausibility to the actions of players, coaches and fans alike. This "sports creed" consists of a clearly understood telos: for those who

live in the world winning is the centrally accepted moral imperative that sharpens interest and devotion.

Coach George Allen drives this point home:

"One of the greatest things is to be in a locker room after a win.... The rewards are not necessarily tangible. It's the hard work and the agony and the blood and the sweat and tears.

"When you lose, it's a morgue. That's the way it should be, because you've failed. ... Some people can lose and then go out and be the life of the party. I can't. The only way you can get over a loss is to win the next week."^{45/}

As Henry Edwards has shown, and as Eldon Snyder's analysis of the inspirational slogans that coaches place on locker room walls underscores, the athlete is expected to be self-disciplined, both mentally and physically, so that he will have the competitive fortitude, "guts" and perseverance to overcome the pressure and adversity of the contest.^{46/} Those normative imperatives are internalized by young players and are reinforced for the fan in the newspaper and biographical accounts of the struggle to make the team and gain "election."^{47/}

This social-life-world of sports is also highlighted by a clearly defined and hierarchical authority structure. Unlike the larger world of impersonal regula-

tion, sports authority is highly visible and personal. On top of the structure sits the commissioner (or "Czar") who settles disputes involving matters of grave doctrinal importance, inevitably, "for the good of the game." On downward are the owners, not a faceless corporate bureaucracy, but concerned padroni visibly upset by defeat and exultant and chummy in victory. Towards the bottom of the authority pyramid sit the general managers and coaches whose day-to-day decisions decide the team's and player's fates. This process of personification is important because, through it concrete people can be blamed when the team is failing to win consistently. The "ritual viclimage" of the coach absolves the players and fans of their guilt and regenerates energy for renewed struggle.^{8/}

Importantly, the rules themselves come to life and are enacted in the visible interplay of infraction and punishment. The referee blows his whistle and dramatically intones before a hushed crowd, "I got number 24 for pushing--Two Shots!" The runner swiftly streaks towards the base and vigorously attempts to elude the tag only to see the sweeping thumb-in-the-air gesture of the umpire that indicates he has been caught stealing. (Compare this to

the frustration that grows daily about the inequities and delays of our criminal justice system.) The personification of rules also offers the fan-audience the chance to emotionally challenge authority in a ritual context that facilitates the acceptance of angry emotional discharge.

The Sportsworld is also mediated by a level of discourse that is warm, personal and easily understandable. "Sportpeak" is the symbolic glue that holds the entire life-world together.^{49/} On the playgrounds we hear the re-playing of last night's big game: "And then 'The Doctor' skied over top three people and jammed in their face." The bedroom dialogue will go: "Man, Reggie didn't even get good wood on that slider and there he was in his home-run trot." And, at the water cooler at work it might go: "They had on the safety blitz, but Namath picked up the red dog, called an automatic, and hit Snell with a screen pass for twenty yards." Try these phrases out on the uninitiated. Children are socialized through language--in their playing, reading, watching and talking--into a world of meaning. In addition, the use of sports language has created a "national sports consciousness."^{50/}

The Sportsworld is held together by a group infrastructure. Purpose is generated through the fan-team symbiosis.

This symbiosis exists on all levels of American social life. We see it in small towns, in high schools, large cities, entire states, and even countries. The team in many ways functions as a symbolic community. In small towns the team is the central feature of social and political life, while in larger areas it often acts as a symbolic "life-raft" that ameliorates the depersonalization of urban living.^{51/}

The teams provide a group foundation, but it is the athletic hero who provides the young fan with his or her first port of entry into the Sportsworld. The reminiscence of reporter Maury Allen underscores the point:

"I was fifteen when I first touched Joe DiMaggio. He doesn't remember it. I can never forget it ... There were only a dozen kids left waiting--the guards insisted all the players had gone. We hung around throwing and catching a ball in the rotunda, certain DiMaggio was still inside, confident he would sign our programs, our brown paper bags, even--pray God--our autograph albums if we got the pen and the page to him fast enough. Suddenly he was there....

"We closed in, and he signed a few scraps of paper as he walked through. I held my autograph book in my hand but was boxed out by a fat kid with yellow hair.... The other kids were yelling, 'Joe, Joe, Joe!' My tongue was glued to the roof of my mouth. With a desperate lunge I squeezed through and his arm brushed my side and touched his jacket as he bent down into the cab. He was gone."^{52/}

The athlete enables the fans to embark on the "vicarious voyage of identity" into the sportsworld.^{53/} The athlete becomes the leading actor in the sports drama and his or her heroic exploits vividly highlights the moral precepts of the sports creed. Identification with athletes also serves to connect child's play and adult fantasy through a process of imitation and imagination.

The Sportsworld is "made flesh" in the excitement of the game and its dramatic resolution of struggle. Here the teams and players come alive in passionate confrontation with arch enemies. Michael Novak gives a clue to the level of devotion and identification: "I was angry at the Dodgers, blowing it.... I sat there vacantly. How could I be forty and still care what happens to the Dodgers?"^{54/} The values and rhetorical appeals of sports are condensed in the dramatic ritual of the game. The game creates a deep involvement with the moral imperatives of the world. As Novak remarks: "It is considered inadequate, almost blasphemous, to be a mere spectator."^{55/}

The sheer collective massing of the athletic community signals the decline of emotional distance. As in political myth and ritual, emotion is galvanized in a

symbolic community drama that enacts the euphoria of togetherness. As the election ritual creates community cohesion through the enactment of "emotional consensus," so the game creates Sportsworld's unity; its beliefs, personalities and social structure are dramatically embodied.

The subjective sense of reality that the Sportsworld imparts to its fans rests on a process of socialization that is built on the power of play. The intense experience of partisanship develops out of a series of ritualizations that begin in the microsphere of play, are systematized in the structured world of games, and are formalized in organized athletics. All "world views," as Erik Erikson has pointed out, are generated through this kind of ontogenetic process. The success of sports as a "shared vision" rests on its ability to build its symbolic structure on the euphoric memory of play, on the illusion of play, and, finally, on the fantasy of play. The caustic criticisms of a philosophical idealist like Huizinga, who sees modern sport as "false play," and of Marxists like Aronowitz and Hoch, who see sports as "perverting play," will be shown to be way off base. Play

survives despite the commodification and rationalization

process. As one fan remarks,

"So many people say that the athletes are
in the game for the money, but when you
see a hard fought game, when you see 'Nug
McGraw jump up and down, I feel it can't
be all money."⁵⁶

The process of sports socialization is pro-

cognitive, intense and perpetuating. The power and joy

that the ego experiences in play is symbolically re-

enacted for the fan during the game. It is this tapping of

an emotional mother-lode that enables sports to resist the

ravages of rationalization while continuing to provide a

counterpoint to a less-rich technical reality. In the

process, a sense of identity, history and generational

continuity is forged.

VI

The dramatic symbolism of sports is the vehicle

for the internalization of the plots and characterizations

of the larger arenas of reality. Duncan's observation pro-

vides a valuable point of departure:

"The difference between symbolic and social
drama is the difference between imaginary
and real obstacles but, to produce effects
on audiences, symbolic drama must reflect
the real obstacles of social drama. Con-
flict must be resolved in the symbolic
realm by attitudes that make conformity

possible. All such expression, like prayer, is an exhortation to the self and to others. It is a preparation for social action, an investment of the self with confident strength."^{57/}

I think we can begin to imagine how values make an "end run" around conscious resistance through the analogical uses of symbolic drama. The research of Harry Edwards is an important historical documentation of the way in which sports has served as a socializer of dominant values. Edwards carefully combed old copies of the Athletic Journal and analyzed statements by coaches and athletes. He illustrated the extent to which the sports creed is analogous to the ethos of American capitalism. Edwards sees sports as a cultural blueprint: "Such ultimate blueprints typically involve some definitions of the 'good' citizen and thus set boundaries on acceptable goals and behavior."^{58/}

Edwards shows how the morality of the sports world--congruent with the needs of an industrializing society for hard-working and cooperative citizens--is transposed in the sports drama.^{59/} Thus it is no accident that the ideology or "occupational psychosis" of capitalism is metaphorically disseminated in the sports, art and popular culture of industrial society. Kenneth Burke

illustrates this:

"The psychotic force of the competitive ideology, so intense in the initial phase of American industrialization, is probably best revealed in the professionalization of sports...[and]...in the flourishing of success literature during the late lamented New Era."60/

Sports, as a symbolic drama, does not naively reflect the cultural assumptions of the larger society. It is an analogical world that dramatizes the dominant values in an arena that excludes much of what is problematic in real life. In general, audiences are subtly encouraged, through the vivid and dramatic portrayals, to accept the underlying ethos and transpose it to other institutional areas. The Sportsworld is an aesthetic nonverbal world. The sports aesthetic allows for the creative "suspension of disbelief" that facilitates the internalization of the "proper" attitudes towards mobility, success and competition. In this way, sports is the symbolic expression of the larger political and social reality.

As we shall see more clearly in subsequent chapters, the sportsworld's socializing force derives in large part from its role in American historical development. The historical process highlights sports' integrative functions. The growth of industrialization in America was

concomitant with the movement toward democratization and the incorporation of the immigrant.^{61/} Sports has played an important role in helping inculcate the belief that America is an egalitarian society, while at the same time giving immigrants symbolic assurance that they too have a place in this society. That egalitarianism and the "great melting pot" have mythical overtones does not detract from their ideological role in generating a diffuse attachment to the American polity.

As America steamed into the twentieth century sports, and its infant cousin play, began to be viewed as a great potential promoter of the democratic spirit. The playground movement and its educational and political allies promoted the idea that play was preparation for democratic society.^{62/} As John Betts points out, fair play and sportsmanship became identified with the American ideal. The symbolic transposition goes this way: In America we compete and struggle, but we do so within clearly defined boundaries provided by democratic rules and the spirit of the sporting code of fair play.

The heuristic value of sports for democratic life was most forcefully stated by Otto Mallery in his turn of the century essay, "The Social Significance of Play." His views

are representative of the changing mood of that era:

"It seems a far cry from the ideal of fair play in boys' games to the ideal of fair play in the political life of our democracy yet it can be demonstrated that the ideals of fair play and team play are important in forming the character of a community.... Team games of the playground require the submission of the individual will to the welfare of the team. Rigid rules inculcate fair play.... New standards are set up; standards of self-control, of helping the other fellow, of fighting shoulder to shoulder for the honor of the team...the standards, when translated into the language of political life, we call Self-government, Respect for the law, Social Service and Good Citizenship."63

The feeling that the sporting code represented the democratic concept of law and society was most vigorously promoted by Luther Gulick, a founder of the "Y" movement. Gulick saw play as a preparation for democracy. This feeling was not, however, restricted to the natural promoters of the athletic ideal. Respected academicians like G. Stanley Hall also recognized the socio-psychological value of sports. The most striking use of the sports metaphor, however, can be found in George Herbert Mead's discussion of socialization and the self. The following comment of Mead's gives a foretaste of my later analysis of play, games and sports:

"The organized community or social group which gives to the individual his unity of self may be called the 'generalized other.' The attitude of the generalized other is the attitude of the whole community. Thus, for example, in the case of such a social group as a ball team, the team is the generalized other in so far as it enters as an organized process or social activity--into the experience of any one of the individual members of it."64/

This aesthetic symbolization of the democratic ideal played a significant role in the Americanization of the immigrants. As John Betts indicates:

"The code of fair play and sportsmanship was widely praised as promoting good citizenship and deeper understanding of our democratic institutions. Although the repetition of such ideas was not frequently found on the sports page, an ever increasing realization of sports' significance worked its way into the inner fabric of the American mind."65/

This inner/outer awareness led people to see the ethics and philosophy of sports as congruent with the ideological infrastructure of "Americanism."

The identification of sports with American values had a further impact on the assimilation of the immigrant. Sports offered him a road to respectable status. Immigrant successes in the Sportsworld helped to facilitate a feeling of acceptability. Ethnic triumphs in sports symbolized the

possibility of mobility and integration within the larger society. As Walter Camp said, "Americanization is more possible for those who come to our shores through the medium of sports than in almost any other way."^{66/} Immigrant involvement in sports encouraged a diffuse attachment to the "American way" while at the same time dramatically devaluating nativist hostility.^{67/}

Sports can be seen to develop a diffuse "rain or shine" attachment to America while at the same time fostering the acceptance of the specific values of an evolving capitalist economic system. The appeal and strength of the Sportsworld lies in its ability to evolve along with the changes in the larger arenas while maintaining fan allegiances. Throughout this study I will be focusing on the nature of historical development and the role of sports in the process of socialization as old values lose their relevancy and new ones arise.

VII

Sports has acted historically as an important socializer of dominant values. The development of the Sportsworld itself, however, as a symbolic-aesthetic realm with an accent on reality that is truly its own, has important implications for understanding the complex and often para-

doxical function of sports in the American polity. As we have seen, many analysts have quite persuasively indicated how sports can be viewed as a practice arena for life in American society. Race, self-discipline, competition and "character" are seen as essential components of American ideology. The problem with this perspective is its inability to explain the appeal of sports once the values of competitive capitalism and Horatio Alger begin to wane.

The Sportsworld developed out of certain political, economic and social conditions and has achieved a certain degree of autonomy from those conditions, responding to them and yet, at the same time, exerting a reciprocal effect on them. The intrinsic appeal of sports as a symbolic life-world apart from the pressures of everyday reality can be seen to acquire increasing significance for social and political integration as America becomes increasingly industrialized and rationalized.

The thrust of my work in this area, leaning on Marx, Weber and Durkheim develops out of a concern with the process of rationalization and its effect on political integration and personal meaning. What unites these thinkers and their heirs is a concern with the collapse of old communal ties, warmth and purpose as a result of the

onslaught of industrial society. Throughout this study the scenic backdrop for the appeal of sports is what Max Weber saw as the "iron cage" of capitalism--the collapse of "meaning" in the face of instrumental and bureaucratic values. 68/

A central theoretical theme throughout this study will be the way in which the Sportsworld exists in counterpoint to the "dead public space" 69/ and felt emotional vacuum created by rationalization. An understanding of rationalization, as Cassirer shows in The Myth of the State, is essential towards an understanding of the role played by myth, rituals and symbols as vehicles that impart meaning to people's lives as they dramatically generate political and social cohesion. 70/ In this analysis, sports' appeal will be seen to recreate the charismatic warmth that Weber sought to dramatize through political leadership, and the "conscience collective" and "corps intermediaire" that Durkheim saw as essential to personal and political stability in industrial society.

In trying to grasp sports as a cultural component of the American political and social totality, we must be alive to the dialectic of socialization and "escape." In the contest of this dialectic, the early development of sports can be seen both as a reflection of and as a compensation for the growth of capitalism and its rationalizing tendencies. The early sports heroes like the Frank Merriwell prototype can be seen as character models for the young strivers for success in capitalist America. Merriwell, more Horatio Alger than even Alger himself, can be seen as a fictional "idol of production" whose abilities exemplified what one could achieve in life is one but perservered. 72/

Yet, it is also clear that the national pastime at the turn of the century provided an idyllic pastoral retreat from the pressures of expanding capitalism. At the same time that Merriwell and his real-life imitators were portraying the values of Franklin and Emerson, they were symbolizing the dramatic ruggedness of Paul Bunyan, John Henry and Davy Crockett--exemplars of a frontier age that was rapidly being eclipsed by urban expansion. As Wiley Umphlett remarks:

"At the same time that the restrictions of city life gave rise to the desire to release inner tensions in some sporting endeavor, there was the impulse to the primitive but ideologized world of nature and symbolized by the sanctified space of the playing area."^{73/}

Through the process of aesthetic distancing people can feel they are escaping the real world only to be transported to a world where the values of that real world are inculcated. The drama of sports, its ability to generate an emotional catharsis, is central to this dialectic.

As American society has shifted from an emphasis on hard work and production to an emphasis on leisure and consumption, observers have detected a shift--a changing emphasis--in a dialectical function of sports as well. With the decline of "ruthless competition" and the rise of organization, cooperation, and "impression management," ^{74/} the Sportsworld has begun to take on the appearance of a contradictory world--a world where values are still adhered to. Sports increasingly becomes not so much a microcosm as a cosmos with its own definitions of reality. Neil Offen makes the point vividly:

"There is a theory, quite prevalent among analysts...that sports is a microcosm of life. It isn't.... Sports is a world speeded up and a world of absolutes. There is good and bad, black and white, right and wrong. It's not gray and

tentative like the real world. It is hyper-life under glass." 75/

It is this dramatic contrast of the Sports-world that will be emphasized in this study. This moment of the dialectic is especially important in the context of the enervation of traditional social structures and communal values that have, in the past, been the foundation of American cohesion and political stability. A widespread alienation from work has been observed, 76/ and people's individual identities are widely felt to be problematic. 77/ People are seen to long for close individual and communal ties to overcome the felt impersonality and coldness of American institutions. 78/ In this situation, sports becomes a "magic elixir" that nourishes while the rest of the world drains.

The Sportsworld will be analyzed as a cult or mass movement with its own assumptions. James Reston captures the counterpoint:

"The world of sports has everything the world of politics lacks and longs for.... They have more pageantry and even more dignity than most occasions in American life; more teamwork, more unity, and more certainty at the end than most things." 79/

The Sportsworld has become the realm par excellence that provides that aesthetic form and putative ethical content

that contrasts so sharply, in the consciousness of many Americans, with a political and social world seen as deficient in either drama or meaning.

The Sportsworld not only creates an ethical realm, it also creates a communicative bond that is reminiscent of the powerful Greek festivals. The individual's need for transcendent bonds that unite him to others is supplied by rituals, rallies, communions, and rhetorical exhortations that overlay the rational structure of authority in a political system. Greg Stone underscores this point:

"The solidarity of the larger society rests in part on the maintenance of a community of experience, people must share both knowledge about and acquaintance with similar salient events." 80/

With the increased bureaucratization of American society, sports will be seen to function increasingly as a more "personal," more "concrete" and more "intense province of meaning. 81/ The Sportsworld, as Ann Leider's idealistic essay has eloquently captured, is an ideal place where "we think of ourselves as...." In this sense, it can be seen as a utopian world:

"Sports are deeper than politics-- deeper than any single political system and deeper in the human heart than political authority. Sports lie at the very root of liberty... in the free play of intelligence and imagination.... (In Heaven, it is rumored, the angels play in the presence of great love and light. Sports yield our metaphors for paradise.) Who imagines that the completely good life would entail working, pursuing means towards ends.... Sports constitutes the one place in life where the revolution is already here." 82/

VIII

In the study of the symbolic mass movement that follows, much emphasis is placed on the way in which sports functions as a male refuge. This is done sympathetically and yet critically. The maleness of the Sportsworld is an important historical fact that needs to be explained. Title IX and the rise of women's athletes will bring many changes, both salutary and unforeseen. What the influx of woman will bring, beyond some concluding speculation, is

outside of the study's scope. What I hope the reader will find here is the beginning of a theory that will explain the depth of people's involvement with sports in America and the larger political and social implications of that involvement; keeping in mind that politics includes the examination of political, social and personal life.

If sports acts as a "utopia of escape," the possibility exists that it is also acting to forestall real projects of reconstruction. On a personal level, it allows for the externalization of distress without providing its enthusiasts with the ability or opportunity to come to grips with the actual sources of this distress. The possibilities for personal growth and political change--two closely related themes--are effectively stalled in an aesthetic goal line stand.

This theory and critique of American sports proceeds immanently and sympathetically. It tries to transcend the naive reflective theories of sociologists and the crankiness of disgruntled ex-ballplayers. The theory goes beyond polemics to an understanding of drama and symbolic form. It further illustrates how dramatic form resonates with the emotional

life of the American people and with the political content of the larger American drama. Hopefully, it will illustrate, through sports, something of the structural malaise of American politics and society. If sports engenders the "sweet closure of anxiety," this critique seeks to locate the genuine sources of this anxiety as the first step toward overcoming it.

Footnotes

- 1 Robert Lipsyte, Sportsworld: An American Dreamland (N.Y.: Quadrangel, 1976).
- 2 John Betts, America's Sporting Heritage (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1974), p.376.
- 3 W. C. Robinson, "Professional Sports and the Anti-trust Laws" in Gerald Kenyon and John Loyled's Sports, Culture and Society (N.Y.: MacMillan, 1969). The separation of sports from the mundane world of politics and business is one historical source of its great appeal. The growth of sports as beyond the everyday must be understood in order to come to grips with the contemporary implosion of political and economic concerns within the world of sports.
- 4 Sportsworld, p.40.
- 5 This is Henry Edwards' phrase. The Sociology & Sport (Homewood, Illinois: The Dorsey Press, 1973), p.5. Much of this discussion rests on Edwards' analysis.
- 6 See Jack Scott's discussion of The Carnegie Foundation reports on intercollegiate athletics, The Athletic Revolution (New York: The Free Press, 1971), p.161.
- 7 Henry Morton, Soviet Sport (N.Y.: Colliers, 1963).
- 8 Paul Hoch, Rip Off The Big Game (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971); The Athletic Revolution, Chip Oliver, High for the Game (N.Y.: William Morrow, 1971); and Dave Maggysey, Out of Their League (Berkeley, Ramparts Press, 1970).
- 9 Edwards, The Revolt of the Black Athlete (N.Y.: Free Press, 1969); see also Jack Olsen, The Black Athlete: A Shameful Story (N.Y.: Time-Life Books, 1969).

- 10 Patricia Huckle, "Back to the Starting Line: Title IX and Women's Intercollegiate Athletics," in The American Behavioral Scientist (Vol. 21, No. 3, January/February 1978); Brenda Feigen Fasteau, "Giving Woman a Sporting Chance," Ms. (July 1973), pp. 32-37.
- 11 Max Rafferty, "Intercollegiate Athletics: The Gathering Storm" in The Athletic Revolution; reporters like Dick Young and Gene Ward are prototypes of the strictly conservative sports gatekeepers that exist on every paper throughout the country.
- 12 See John Talamini, and Charles Page (eds), Sport and Society (Boston: Little Brown, 1973); Sport, Culture and Society; Gerald Kenyon (ed), The Sociology of Sport (Chicago: The Athletic Institute, 1969); George Sage, Sport and Society (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1970); and Donald Ball and John Loy, Sport and Social Order (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1975).
- 13 Roger Noll (ed), Government and the Sports Business (Wash., D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 1974).
- 14 This is seen clearly by the literature on political socialization. Fred Greenstein's Children and Politics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965) is representative.
- 15 Kenneth Burke, The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1973), p.168.
- 16 The critics of sports differ in where they place their negative emphasis. Some focus more exclusively on the "perversions" in the world itself, others focus more on the "perverted" uses to which sport is put in the larger political and social system.
- 17 The Athletic Revolution; Out of Their League; Rip Off the Big Game; The Revolt of the Black Athlete.

- 18 See Lipsyte's discussion on the "jock" stereotype in Sportsworld; Alan Ingham discusses the progressive "dehumanization" of the athlete due to the process of rationalization. See "Occupational Subcultures in the Work World of Sport" in Sport and Bad Order. Both Meggysey and Oliver also talk about athletic "alienation."
- 19 Both Hoch and Scott deal with the problem of authoritarian coaches.
- 20 Phil Jackson in Maverick (Chicago: Playboy Press, 1975) discusses the shallowness of locker room friendships. Jim Bouton's Ball Four (N.Y.: World, 1970) chips away at athletic idols. Jim Brosnan's The Long Season (N.Y.: Harper & Rowe, 1960) first portrayed the athlete as a worker.
- 21 Rip Off the Big Game; Sportsworld.
- 22 The Sociology of Sport; "Occupational Subcultures in the World of Sports;" and Brian Petrie's "Sports and Politics" in Sport and Social Order.
- 23 Burke's theory of "dramatism" is developed in Permanence and Change (Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill, 1970); The Philosophy of Literary Forms: A Grammar and Motives (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1945); A Rhetoric of Motives (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1950); Language as Symbolic Action (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966); and Terms for Order by Kenneth Burke (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964).

Ernest Cassirer's work on symbolism is developed in his The Myth of the State (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947); Language and Myth (N.Y.: Dover Press, 1953); An Essay on Man (N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1944); as well as in his three volume study of symbolic forms published by Yale University Press beginning in 1955.

Suzanne Langer, building on Cassirer's work, develops a theory of art and symbolism that is useful to the attempt to develop the idea of sports as an aesthetic

form; see especially Philosophy in a New Key (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1942); and Feeling and Form (N.Y.: Scribner's Sons, 1953); Murray Edelman in The Symbolic Uses of Politics (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967) and Politics as Symbolic Action (Chicago: Markham, 1971) applies Langer's and Cassirer's ideas to political symbolism.

What I have attempted to do throughout this study is to develop a theory of dramatic symbolism that roots sports in the "scene" of a rationalized capitalist industrial society. The work of Perer Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1966) is especially helpful in developing this theoretical synthesis.

- 24 As Lester Rodney, former sports editor of The Daily Worker remarks: "Obviously we on the paper didn't regard pro sports as 'opiates of the people' and I never wrote such nonsense. I suppose I can get an argument on this from some of the socialist left, but I regard the very concept as coming from a million miles away, and an arrogant, elitist one, with overtones of 'we know best what is good for the workers.'" In These Times (October 12-18, 1977), p.13. The need here is to understand sports as sports--the way in which people themselves see their own involvement.
- 25 This perspective owes much to Burke's analysis of literacy form, but is also built on the ideas of Karl Korsch, Marxism and Philosophy (N.Y.: Monthly Review, 1970), and George Lukacs, History and Class Consciousness (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1971). Both authors stress the importance and autonomy of ideas (read "form") in the dialectic of ideas and material base.
- 26 Robert Barthes, Mythologies (N.Y.: Hillard Wang, 1975); Barthes' work can amplify any theory of symbolism and drama.
- 27 Soviet Sport, p.13.

- 28 Ibid, p.25.
- 29 Ibid, p.26.
- 30 Robert Bayle, Sport: Mirror of American Life (Boston: Little Brown, 1965).
- 31 Rip Off the Big Game
- 32 The Sociology of Sport
- 33 Ann Leider, "The National Football League and American Life," The New York Times (January 18, 1976), Section 5.
- 34 America's Sporting Heritage; Fred Paxson "The Rise of Sport" in George Sage (ed) Sport and Society, pp. 19-35; Foster Rhea Dulles, America Learns to Play (N.Y.: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1965); and Arnold Beisser, The Madness in Sports (N.Y.: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1967).
- 35 Sportsworld, p.xi.
- 36 This idea derives from the work of Alfred Schultz; see On The Phenomenology of Social Relations (Chicago: University Press, 1977). Here I am combining certain aspects of Schutz's phenomenological approach with Burke's dramatism in order to link symbolism, perception and socialization.
- 37 Neil Offen, God Save the Dodger (Chicago: Playboy Press, 1974), p.9.
- 38 Paul Weiss, Sport: A Philosophic Inquiry (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), pp. 135, 243; Johan Huizinga, Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955).
- 39 Homo Ludens, p.136.
- 40 Jurgen Habermas, Toward a Rational Society (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), p.50.

- 41 Ibid, p.51.
- 42 The Social Construction of Reality; see also Peter Berger's The Sacred Canopy (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967); and Berger, et al., The Homeless Mind (N.Y.: Random House, 1973).
- 43 The Social Construction of Reality, Chapter One.
- 44 Leo Lowenthal, Literature, Popular Culture and Society (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1961).
- 45 Cited in Studs Terkel's Working (N.Y.: Avon Books, 1972), p.508.
- 46 The Sociology of Sport, p.103; Eldon Snyder studies the inspirational slogans coaches placed on locker room walls. He distilled a coherent set of beliefs in the body of these slogans; "Athletic Dressing-Room Slogans as Folklore: A Means of Socialization," paper presented at a meeting of the American Sociological Association, August 30, 1970.
- 47 Michael Novak, The Joy of Sports (N.Y.: Basic Books, 1976), p.29.
- 48 Larry Merchant, "Ritual Victim I" (New York Post, September 17, 1969); "Ritual Victim II" (New York Post, September 18, 1969); Pete Vecsey's columns, "Willis Diggins His Own Grave" (New York Post, November 9, 1978), and "A Resurrection and Then Some" (New York Post, November 21, 1978), illustrate beautifully the process of victimage around the firing of Willis Reed and the re-hiring of Red Holzman. A summer soap opera, "Billy Martin's Perils" also is exquisitely to the point; see Henry Hecht's "Goodbye, and Good Riddance" (The New York Post, July 28, 1978) for one good example.
- 49 As Berger and Luckmann report, "Because of its capacity to transcend the 'here and now' language bridges different time zones within the reality of everyday life and integrates them into a meaningful whole. As a result, language is capable of 'making present' a variety of objects that are spatially temporally and socially absent from the 'here and now.'" The Social Construction of Reality, p.39.

- 50 America's Sporting Heritage, Chapter III.
- 51 See the chapter, "Membership is the Tribe," in The Madness in Sports.
- 52 Maury Allen, Where Have You Gone, Joe DiMaggio? (N.Y.: New American Library, 1975), p.1.
- 53 The term is Orrin Klapp's. The Collective Search for Identity (N.Y.: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, 1969).
- 54 The Joy of Sports, xi.
- 55 Ibid, p.24.
- 56 Quoted in Ray Kennedy and Nancy Williams' "Money: The Monster Threatening Sports" (Sports Illustrated, July 31, 1978), p.40; see Erik Erikson, Toys and Reasons (N.Y.: Norton, 1977) for an explanation of "shared visions." Huizinga's discussion is in Homo Ludens, Hoch's in Rip Off the Big Game, and Aronowitz's in False Promises (N.Y.: McGraw-Hill, 1973).
- 57 Communications and Social Order, p.112.
- 58 The Sociology of Sport, p.89.
- 59 "By infusing exceptional, but 'intrinsically' neutral physical activities with the socially significant values, societies reinforce prevalent value sentiments regarding acceptable perspectives and behavior. They thus establish avenues of communicating to the populace those values focusing on solutions to critical problems most notably those involving needs for social integration and goal attainment." The Sociology of Sport, p.89.
- 60 Permanence and Change, p.41.
- 61 America's Sporting Heritage; The Joy of Sports.
- 62 Greg Stone, "The Play of Little Children," in R. E. Herron and Brian Sutton-Smith (eds) Child's Play (N.Y.: John Wiley, 1971).

- 63 Cited in America's Sporting Heritage, p.187.
- 64 George Herbert Mead, Mind, Self and Society (Chicago: University Press, 1934). As Duncan points out in his commentary on Mead, sports enables the individual to develop a respect for democratic rules and an awareness of the necessity for a cooperative division of labor in an industrial society. Communications and Social Order.
- 65 America's Sporting Heritage, p.187.
- 66 Cited, ibid.
- 67 Sports was also seen by sympathetic elites to be an antidote to the "pathology" of the city--gangs, drugs and perversion. The attack on this pathology was often linked to attacks on the immorality of entire ethnic groups. In this respect, the immigrant's adoption of sports sanitized him, while reinforcing the image of sport's curative-cleansing value.
- 68 See Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (N.Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958).
- 69 Richard Sennett, The Fall of Public Man: On the Social Psychology of Capitalism (N.Y.: Random House, 1978).
- 70 The Myth of the State; see also Kenneth Burke's article, "The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle," in Terms for Order; we must always be sensitive to the dangerous political possibilities inhering to the collapse of meaning--the Jonestown massacre-suicide is just another indication of the "bad filling of a good need."
- 71 Emil Durkheim, The Division of Labor in Society (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1964); Suicide (N.Y.: Free Press, 1951); and Socialism (N.Y.: Collier Books, 1962).
- 72 Sport: Mirror of American Life.
- 73 Wiley Umphlett: The Sporting Myth and the American Experience (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1975), p.23.

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- 77 The Collective Search for Identity; Erik Erikson, Childhood and Society (New York: Norton, 1963).
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- 79 James Reston, "Sports and Politics in America." The New York Times (September 12, 1969).
- 80 Greg Stone, "Some Measures of American Sports" in G. Sage (ed) Sports and Society, p.405.
- 81 Fred Exley, A Fan's Notes (New York: Random House, 1968); Robert Coover, The Universal Baseball Association, J. Henry Waugh Prop. (New York: Random House, 1968); and Richard Hoggart, The Uses of Literacy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954).
- 82 The Joy of Sports, p.276. Novak's insights, while often useful, tend to get suffused with the incandescent glow of religious rhapsody.

"AND THEN I THOUGHT ABOUT THE GAME...." THE
POLITICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE SPORTS RITUAL

"Why does a man who does not like to go out in the warm
Spring ran to get a newspaper, sit for three hours in
a ten degree below blizzard watching a football game?

Neil Offen

"So if we are all poets, and if all poets are pious, we
may expect to find great areas of piety, even at a ball
game."

Kenneth Burke

The game is a dramatic confrontation of teams and an arena for the generation and clash of heroes and villains. It is also the crucible for the enactment of the values of the sports drama. The intensity of the game's ritual force communicates the plots and characterizations of the Sports-world and maintains its existence as a social life-world. 1/ The game, in turn, facilitates the integration of the Sports-world drama into the social structure and everyday life of its surrounding community. Ray Kennedy and Nancy Williamson illustrate this connection:

"The Seattle sports craze is so intense, says Bob Keller, an air traffic controller, that he can barely get his shopping done. 'You go into the supermarket and all the little old ladies want to talk about is the game. The guys out steel heading are fishing with ear-phones so they can follow the Sonics.... We're pulling together as a city.'" 2/

The game as a ritual drama can be seen to function politically in several ways. As a stage for the portrayal of the "sports creed" it acts as a socializer of dominant values. Secondly, throughout America, the high school, college, and even little league teams, are the focus of community life. The game functions in the diverse towns, villages and hamlets as the major ritual of political cohesion. Preparation for the game and discussions of the game dominate the town newspapers and the everyday communication of its people. In Vicksburg, Michigan, we can glimpse this important role of the game:

"If the Bulldogs win it is a matter of general elation in the town. A loss produces community depression, as well as lots of post-mortems about coaching strategy and the lack of moral fiber in today's teenagers." 3/

In addition, the local allegiances are connected to an entire team infrastructure throughout America. College teams clash intersectionally while local high school squads are more and more frequently defending the civic honor in far-off geographic regions. Importantly, the local youngsters are recruited for universities in all corners of the United States, and small towns also point with pride to their favorite sons who dot the rosters of the major league teams. A diffuse attachment to America is generated on a local level and reinforced through the national media's network of communication. We all are literally as well as figuratively "playing the same game."

Finally, the way in which the dramatic symbolism of the game functions psychologically must be examined. So much of political cohesion and legitimacy is built on pre-cognitive, emotional bases. The game generates intense emotional ties while its euphoria can be seen to compensate for an everyday life that is routinized, distressing and often devoid of real meaning. The cathartic channeling of distress into the sports arena is politically significant.

In seeing the game as a ritual drama I am building on the work of Kenneth Burke, Hugh Duncan and Peter Berger, in order demonstrate how social order, if it is to be kept "alive" in

the subjective experiences of a people, must be convincingly enacted.—^{4/} Peter Berger's point about ritual drives this home:

"Again and again it 'makes present' to those who participate in it the fundamental reality definitions and their appropriate legitimations. The performances of the ritual are closely binded to the reiteration of the sacred formulas that 'make present' once more the names and deeds of the gods." ^{5/}

As I hope to show, the game as a ritual-drama not only gives the Sportsworld an accent of reality but, through analogical extension, plays a strategic role in the political and social cohesion of the larger society.

The game is the focal point. The game links the team, the athletes, the fans and the community in its enactment of Sportsworld imperatives. In the popular literature we read about the arduous preparation and mind-bending pressure that precedes the crucial contest:

"The locker room before the last game. 13,909 wild fans inside. 10,000 people storming the gates. Players staring off into space. Russell throwing up. LeRoux winding and rewinding tape. Heinsohn sneaking a smoke...Sam Jones retying a shoelace for the twenty-first time. Auerbach, deep pouches in his eyes, a ragged dirty cigar poking out of his mouth, chewing the dead lip of it." ^{6/}

The sports writer describes the dramatic meaning of the impending confrontation and the fan, like his representatives on the field, goes through his own ritual of preparation so as to cut through the building tension. Fred Exley's semi-autobiographical saga, A Fan's Notes, captures the level of identification between the fan, the team and the players that is effected through the

dramatic intensity of the game:

"Finally I turned to the sports sections. Even then I did not begin reading about the Giants. I read about golf in Scotland, surf-boarding in Oahu, football as Harvard imagines it played, and deep sea fishing in Mexico. Only then did I turn to the Giants, having by then already torn from the Times and stuffed into my pocket Arthur Daley's column, which I always saved to read but a couple of minutes before the kick-off, the biggest caramel of them all. I read every word of these articles over and over again. Occasionally the opposing coach would jeer. He would say the Giants are lucky, or that they were a bunch of weary old men.... Certain that the statement would be pinned to the bulletin board of the Giants lockerroom in an attempt to infuriate the team to unbelievable feats. I would attach the insult to my heart and, with it, sneer and gloat as Robustelli, Grier, Huff and Katcavage pitilessly stomped their opponents into the hard, dry turf of Dallas." 7/

In examining the aesthetic form of the sports ritual, its inherent structure and drama--it is useful to see it as a "bracketed world," a "world apart." 8/ This kind of examination enables us to see clearly the formal outlines of the Sportsworld and facilitates a later understanding of how this form operates within the larger political and social context of American society. The perception of sports as a separate reality also better enables us to understand the ways in which fans become involved with the game. On a conscious level, the fan sees sports as separate. As he enters the arena or turns on his television he feels he is leaving "reality." This journey from reality is characteristic of all play (and sports). "It is rather a stepping out of 'real' life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all its own." 9/

Once the fan has begun his journey into sacred space he resents the intrusion of such real life concerns as politics and economics. The popular dichotomy of sports as somehow "above" politics originates in the emotional needs of the fan to distance himself from nagging everyday concerns. This dichotomization leads the average fan to resent any attempt by the athlete to use the game as a political forum. When Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised a clenched fist on the victory podium in the 1968 Olympics, the condemnation was swift and nearly universal. The resentment of the political intrusions, however, is not merely linked to radicals. As Art Buchwald dryly observed:

"The Republicans bought time on both NBC and CBS for a special political appeal by President Nixon to be aired between half-time of all pro football games in the country. It was a blunder of colossal proportions. The silent majority is willing to listen to anything the president has to say six days a week. But Sunday they set aside to watch football. They don't want to hear about the Vietnam War, the economy, law and order or violence in the streets.... It takes a lot to get the silent majority angry. But this was too much. When you mess around with their football games on Sunday, you're hitting them where it hurts...."10/

The sports setting, the arena or ballpark where the game takes place, plays an important part in the creation of the separate world of sports. In his discussion of political symbolism Murray Edelman emphasizes the importance of the setting or scene. He talks of how backgrounds make for the creation of a vivid aesthetic present.

"Such backgrounds make for heightened sensitivity, and easier conviction in onlookers, for the framed actions are taken on their own terms. They are not qualified by inconsistent facts in the environment. The creation of an artificial space thus sets the stage for a concentration of suggestions: of connotations, of emotions, and of authority." 11/

The ballpark or arena is sharply delineated from its environment, often rising as a shrine from its surrounding squalor. Leave the decay of the South Bronx and walk into Yankee Stadium. Fred Exley describes the special scene:

"Yankee Stadium can be a heart stopping, an awesomely imposing place, and never more so than on a temperate and brilliant afternoon in late November. The vivid reds and oranges, the plaids, the golds and green of autumn clothing flicker incessantly across the way where the stadium, rising as sheer as a cliff, is one quiversing mass of color out of which there comes continually, like music from a monster kaleidoscope, the unending roar of the crowd.... I am yet unable to imagine a young man coming for the first time out of those dugouts--I am incapable of imagining stepping out and craning my head upward at the roaring cliff of color, wondering whether it is all a dream...." 12/

This emphasis on scenes is important for an understanding of the aesthetic appeals of the game. As Edelman underscores:

"Many artists have recognized that the expressive power of their works is dependent upon their creating a world set apart from the one in which the audience lives and breathes, so that the spectators may find it easier to engage themselves with the artistic symbols." 13/

The "suspension of disbelief" that accompanies this artistic distancing not only allows the audience to "engage themselves

with the artistic symbols" but also allows for the inculcation of political and social values through an aesthetic "statue of liberty" play.

The arena, stadium or ballfield is a bounded area. We are transported, as when a curtain is lifted, into a finite province of meaning with its own distinctive space, sense of time, and rules of causality. 14/

Michael Novak calls the ballpark a "sacred space."

It is sacralized, as H. L. Nieburg says, by an ability to create in its followers an attitude of piety. 15/

Phil Berger captures this sacred quality:

"Fans, Knick fans especially, had inordinate passion for the contestants. The Garden crowd was both up and heated. No gallery in the NBA had a quicker reflex to the inevitable errors that referees committed...or greater vocal muscle. Enthusiasm for the Knicks obscured the last bars of the national anthem and lasted a full forty-eight minutes for the home club." 16/

The arena, as a playground, is not rooted in the everyday reality. This sacred separateness is instilled in childhood. Rich Telender's book, Heaven is a Playground, highlights the special feeling children have for their parks or "yard." Jay Neugeboren captures the essence of this in his fictional account of a tarnished ghetto hero:

"What schoolyard? Every basketball player, be he the world's best or the world's worst, lives for his schoolyard. It's where he grows, it's where he lives out his youth, where he finds his glory. For us it was an Eden!" 17/

The games of the arenas and stadium are analogical extensions of these early learning experiences and help to dramatically link childhood experiences with adult identifications.

We have seen that the game takes place in an atmosphere of pious seriousness. Michael Novak, in the Joy of Sports, attempts to develop these religious parallels even further. He sees the ballplayers as priests who represent us in liturgy (game) that is part of a sacred tradition. This approach has the merit of vividly underscoring the levels of intense devotion that sports promotes. Yet it may perhaps be more fruitful to look at the game as an enactment of social order, even as we recognize (with Burke) that religious order is the paradigm of all order. By making this distinction we can clearly differentiate the sacred canopy of the religious "cosmos" from the less inclusive social "nomos." ^{18/} Both provide the social order with symbolic canopies that integrate the disparate actions and beliefs of individuals. Religious cosmology, however, unlike its profane counterpart, is grounded in "ultimate" principles of life and death and is potentially more secure. The derivative belief, however, has similar manifestations in both realms.

The game functions as a symbolic drama. Its social and political impact can be seen by a process of analogical extension. ^{19/}

Before making explicit this interaction of symbolic form with political and social content it would be helpful if I first analyzed the drama being enacted on the field.

II

In examining the sports ritual with the aid of the principles of drama I am acknowledging the work of Kenneth Burke, Hugh Duncan and Murray Edelman. These men, in seeing human action in terms of dramatic principles, have focused on the way social order is created through performances in which sacrifice, victimage, and redemption are essential features. 20/ The athletic contest is a performance under pressure, the centrality of success, when coupled with the uncertainty of outcome, as two evenly-matched teams or opponents compete serves to magnify the tension, and creates a "crisis" situation. This tension is fed by various promotional techniques that underscore the stakes involved. Paul Gallico dramatizes this in his discussions of the promoter Tex Rickard and the staging of boxing's first million dollar gate:

"It came quite naturally when Rickard made prize fighting not only respectable, but universally interesting and dramatic...he was definitely the first prizefight promoter to recognize that the essential features of every dramatic conflict are a hero and a villain, black and white, good and evil...." 21/

In team competition the media build-up generally focuses on sources of hostility between the two contingents, past and

present slurs are magnified. The monetary and psychic rewards of victory are trumpeted by involved reporters and further stimulate the sweaty-palmed fan who anxiously carries his rolled-up afternoon newspaper into the arena.

Arnold Mandell, psychiatric consultant and fan, captures the pressure-packed atmosphere:

"My early-morning anxiety had turned to dread. The twittering of birds in the backyard led to listening to the jingle of spurs and swords.... I half-wanted for the concerts on the radio to be interrupted so they could bring me a special news bulletin that the bluecoats had crossed the Delaware." 22/

The pre-game pressure fuels and is relived by the vocal power of the crowd. The sheer collective massing creates an in-group effervescence that generates a communal solidarity. The forceful emotions of the crowd gives reality to the home-court advantage. Bill Russell captures the crowd-player emotional symbiosis:

"The people yelled and the sound came at us like waves.... Then it became frightening. More than a mere sports event. We were not just beating this team. We were destroying it. The people were screaming, they were yelling for blood. They were yelling for all their frustrations, all their pent up feelings about the world.... And we were responding.... Compelled, unable to stop. Meshing together all the years and running like a precise, perfect machine." 23/

The power of the audience, the Greek chorus, gives the contest its dramatic and social reality. The athlete is like an actor enmeshed in a performance, fueled by the collective approval of the crowd. Away from the crowd the athlete talks of "life on the run," the loneliness and nomadic existence of

the road. He fears the end of his career because it will mean the termination of his euphoric crowd-induced high. The talk of the loneliness of the road serves to accentuate the warmth and communalism of the arena. Phil Berger captures this dichotomy:

"The hoo-rah that the fans gave the games' player animated his nights and conferred on his work a blessed immediacy that solitary artists never had. But the blood that was pumped up by the clamor...turned still in the aftermath...." 24/

In the stadium, during the game, the social euphoria generates a festive communion between the players and fans. The ritual drama creates emotional bonds of communal solidarity. 25/ The tension-filled atmosphere is punctuated by chants of "defense, defense." "We want a hit." "Let's go Mets!" Simultaneous cheers, groans, sighs and boos break down the walls of isolation. The spectacular slam dunk generates a series of hand-slapping, fist-raising identifications. The atmosphere induces a "cultic piety" among fans. Orin Klapp explains: "Spectators also help make cults by assuming the role of devoted fans. Again there is a point at which the admiring audience becomes a worshipping congregation." 26/

The intensity and uncertainty of the athletic confrontation creates the crisis situation. This situation is magnified by the sheer physical risks involved and by the violent intensity of the play. As Bill Russell points out:

"But if it all sounds like fun, it's not. It is high speed applied psychiatry. It is a fight to the finish, a capsulized forty-eight minute version of a guerilla war or the struggles and hates and frustration and successes of a lifetime." 27/

The baseball can kill, the cleat can lacerate, the fore-arms can maim. The player lies still on the field, the boxer quivers on the ring's canvas, the runner collapses in exhaustion at the finish line. The protective gear underscores the danger that awaits, while the bandages and braces highlight the misfortune of past combat.

This physical intensity is dramatized by George Plimpton's Walter Mitty adventures as a participant observer. 28/ Here the fan is clearly informed of the awesome skills and sheer size of the athlete. Plimpton's own trepidations about actually participating with these men underscore their prodigiousness. Here he describes a football scrimmage:

"...the old whack of football gear when the lines came together sounded like someone shaking a sack of Venetian blinds. The spectators on the sidelines gave a gasp at the violence of the contact seen from as close as they were. Inside the helmet I felt my own jaw drop slightly and my eyes widen." 29/

The physical excitement and danger of the game has its own inherent excitement and appeal. It can even touch those who are not deeply immersed in the fortunes of the contestants. The game is, however, the dramatic enactment of a whole series of plots and sub-plots involving players, teams, and even owners. The game "makes flesh" an entire social life world that is mediated through sagas in the popular magazines, controversies in the daily papers, and inside stories in

"behind-the-scenes" biographies. Most serious fans maintain a persistent set of identifications not only with their own teams and heroes but with the entire normative structure of the Sportsworld. ^{30/} The game is an enactment and test of the "sports creed" at the same time that it reinforces the more parochial team loyalties.

As our representatives, the athletes are seen to sacrifice for "good" principles of social order. The athlete, like Plato's guardians, practices self-denial in the form of years of hard training. The training camp itself is an all-male refuge (away from the "soft" allure of women and the clamor of domestic strife). ^{31/} Self-denial and sacrifice is also communicated in the popular biographies of players. We learn (if we hadn't already known from our own early attempts at athletic success) how they have had to struggle and the obstacles they have had to overcome in order to reach the privileged pinnacle of their profession. ^{32/} The ideas of sacrifice and devotion are also upheld by the stories about failed athletes who are crestfallen after unsuccessful attempts to make the team (being cut from the team is described as having "died"). ^{33/} Their failure underscores the honor of those who play.

On the field our heroes are ready to do battle with the enemy. This war-like symbolism has often led critics to inveigh against sports' militarism. There is, however, as Kenneth Burke has pointed out, a huge difference between

symbolic murder and actual killing. (This, of course, takes us back to the Platonic-Aristotelian dichotomy of mimesis vs. cathasis.) More to the point, I believe, is the ability of the agon to instill a sense of purpose. Our players, in their pursuit of victory, will stake their reputation on the outcome of the contest and often will endure the pain of humiliation or injury. The moral injunction to "play with pain" highlights this principle of mortification. When an athlete does overcome an injury to lead his team to victory we are moved by his sacrifice.

A knee-braced Joe Namath, a broken-nosed Jerry West, a Bobby Orr with seven knee operations, exemplify the principles of sacrifice and mortification. The most intense enactment of these dramatistic principles occurred when a seriously injured Willis Reed led his team, in El Cid fashion, to a championship:

"The Knicks took the floor without Reed. He stayed inside trying to pinpoint his pain for Dr. Parkes. Once it was localized the Doctor would give him a shot of cortisone, an anti-inflammatory agent, and a shot of Carbocaine, a pain-killer.... The word was over the airwaves during the day that he would play. But as the crowd eyed the foyer...there was still no Reed. Then, minutes later, Reed was there. He looked straight ahead, his lips pursed. It had the melodrama of the cinema death walks...the crowd lit up. They cheered even his warm-up shots...in a series turned adrenal, New York had the trump in Reed." ^{34/}

Reed's example and the crowd's fever ignited the Knick team. If Willis could show up to play then anything was possible.

All the sacrifices, however, gain their meaning through the importance of the central goal of victory. Victory defines success with a clarity that the events in the real world seldom achieve. Teams collectively and the athletes individually, as our representatives, hold our destiny in their hands. The players are aided in this struggle by the coaches or managers who personify authority. The coach dramatically paces the sidelines (watch Jack Ramsey or Larry Brown) and intensely gestures at his players, visibly wincing at their glaring mistakes, patting fannies as a reward for excellence. The baseball manager (Leo Durocher or Billy Martin, for example) rushes out to upbraid an official who has been actively "persecuting" his team. Through the assumption of leaderships the coach also becomes the focal point when the team falls apart and the players don't perform. 35/

Winning or losing has been likened to life and death (or, as George Allen said, "Losing is worse than death, you have to live with it"). It is perhaps more helpful to see winning and losing as aspects of victimage and redemption. By pursuing victory (through a process of identification with our heroes) we are attempting to avoid being victimized--humiliated. By winning we are redeemed and at the same time are at one with the normative order of the Sportsworld--self-sacrifice, "character," mental toughness, teamwork and discipline. In losing, the other team highlights our own suc-

cessful enactment of the sacred values--just as order is defined by disorder, and righteousness by heresy. The jubilant, cheering, champagne-pouring victory celebration is punctuated by the head-in-hands, tear-stained losing lockerroom.

When the game begins to go poorly for our side, the search for scapegoats begins. The fans begin to get restless, they yell for the benching of their favorite whipping boy. They heap abuse on the million dollar slugger who strikes out. The coach tries new players (often the "wrong" ones as far as the experts in the stands are concerned). If the team continues to slide the coach himself can become the focal for a huge reservoir of frustration and anger. When the losses begin to pile up this can turn the stadium into a crucible of vindictiveness. Harland Svare of the San Diego Chargers was one coach who found this out.

Svare, personified in the press as lazy, soft, vicious and unstable (the reporter often becomes as angry and frustrated as any fan) became the focal point for a "crescendo of anger." Arnold Mandell gives this chilling account:

"The crowd was at full howl when we reappeared, like the big cat house at the zoo just before feeding time. The roar changed into one of approval when the Falcons streamed to the opposite bench!... The wildness and rage building in the sound of the crowd I had heard the likes of only in Oakland and in Baltimore. There it was always for the alien team. Here it was for the home team...." 36/

Mandell goes on to relate how Svare was forced to dodge bottles and other thrown objects. On his way out of the Stadium--after

another decisive loss--his car was set upon by a howling mob and he had to be rescued by city police.

The coach becomes the ritual victim whose "sacking" affirms the cohesiveness of the group and righteousness of its principles. The players, realizing their own role in the tragedy, yet glad to have someone else take the blame, band together with a new sense of purpose. The fans also, their anger cathartically released, are free to use their energies for the positive support of the team.

The process of victimage and redemption is most visible in the reaction of fans to the opposing team or an especially hated opposing player. A few years back, Knick fans derisively chanted "Good-bye-Louie" as their teams beat the Lew Alcindor-led Milwaukee Bucks. ^{37/} Wilt Chamberlain, as "Goliath," always served as the ready-made foil for ambitious basketball "Davids" and their fellow Willy Lomans. The ritual-drama of the game first heightens than reduces anxiety by externalizing anger and frustration, channeling it against a concrete and visible enemy. ^{38/} Bill Russell captures the psychodynamics of this process:

"We were running over them like a man might run over a floundering cripple.... It was my worst moment in sports. There was the horror of destruction, not the joy of winning. The horror of knowing you are the instrument of the worries of man calling out: 'Destroy...Kill...Ruin.' The long road had come to a peaceful end. We knew--and did not know--we sensed, and did not completely comprehend, that we had taken sports out of the realm of a game." ^{39/}

As Duncan observes: "Tragedy banishes its victims and then loads them with our evil." 40/

The game provides an arena for heroism, a stage designed for drama. The game provides the opportunity to visibly succeed or fail under situations of intense pressure. Free from the value--confusion and prosaic equalitarianism of a world of bureaucratic rationalization, the athlete is allowed to strive for greatness, encouraged to stand out among his peers. 41/ In the newspaper accounts we learn of the athlete's humble, often minority, origins. We also learn of his "ordinary" private life. The dichotomy of ordinary-extraordinary resonates well with the need of the average fan to vicariously toy with the possibility of a Clark Kent to Superman transformation. Paul Gallico equisitely plays with this theme:

"All the great legends of the ring are built upon the picture that the average man has of himself as he would like to be, a combination of D'Artagnan, Scaramouche, the Scarlet Pimpernel and Jack Dempsey. If we could, we would all be gentle, soft spoken creatures tender with women, cool and even tempered, but once aroused--'Whap!' A lightning-left to the jaw. Down goes the truck driver or hoodlum. We mentally dust our hands, re-adjust our cravat, smile pleasantly, step over the body of the prostrate victim and carry on." 42/

As the action takes place on the field we can imagine ourselves in his sneakers or cleats. The game's drama allows for an aesthetic distancing that enables a dialectic interplay between fan fantasy and player reality. This

process allows the fan to take a "vicarious voyage of identity." ^{43/} The athlete, with his clearly defined persona, provides his audience with a symbolically stable identity. We can sink our own roots into his stable role and singular achievements while the outside world increasingly erodes the foundations of a stable identity. "The crowd lives the actions of the players.... It is a release and something of a surge. It is the next best thing to participation." ^{44/}

Then, too, there are those villains who we love to hate. Wilt Chamberlain as Goliath; "Cassius Clay" as "uppity nigger"; Joe Namath as wise-guy braggart; or Reggie Jackson as the spoiled superstar. On the other hand, the Rorschach-like quality of the sports drama makes it possible for one person's hero to be another's villain. The possibilities here are truly protean. These villains, like the heretics of old, define, through counterpoint, the "good" principles that our more favored ballplayers have. The failure, vanquishing or banishment of the villain can serve as a necessary ingredient in the social order of the Sportsworld--and beyond. As Duncan sharply points out "...in a time when we cannot grapple directly with our villains, it is a great relief to do symbolically what we cannot do in reality." ^{45/}

The game, of course, is bounded by its own set of rules. The rules are dramatically and personally enforced by the umpires and referees. The grandiloquent "Out!" or "Strike!" is a staple of the sports cartoonist. The dramatic rule en-

forcement also affirms our faith in the order of the Sports-world. As former umpire Babe Parilli remarks:

"...if a baseball umpire is to give the impression that he is sure of his judgment, he must forego the moment of thought which might make him sure of his judgment; he must give an instantaneous decision so that the audience will be sure that he is sure of his judgment." 46/

The personification of the rules creates a legal drama. This we see clearly in the institutionalized rhubarb, the coaching tantrum, and the inevitable ejection designed to uphold the sanctity of the legal-moral order. As Duncan remarks, "the essence of the game is self-imposed rules, contests between equals and 'umpirage.'" 47/ When the game takes a turn for the worse for your side, however, the umpire easily is transformed into the scapegoat whose mistaken judgment "caused" the defeat. Vocal vilification is a mode of direct protest that trumps the best efforts of any advocate of participating democracy. The protest, however, is purely symbolic and cathartic. Then, too, controversy is only directed toward the applications of the rules, rarely at the rules themselves.

On the defined legal and moral parameters of the Sports-world, one more observation should be made. One of the perennial questions that hangs like a shroud over the integrity of sports is the possibility of a rigged contest. When the possibility of "fixing" arises the Sportsworld unites behind a strong executive to ritualistic purge victims in order to insure the plausibility of the social structure. 48/ In

recent years the questions of drugs and violence have invited similar executive responses. ^{49/} During the game it is clear to both players and fans that certain actions will lead to censuring--that a whole ethical-legal structure stands behind the man in the striped shirt or blue suit.

The game as the hub of the sports drama, links the fans to an ethical structure and an entire historical tradition. The game is part of a season which connects into larger life-patterns of involvement. Sidney Asofsky, archetypal Knick fan, had "been with" the Knicks through seasons of humiliation. The first long-awaited success of his team brought with it a feeling of rebirth. The achievement of a championship brought with it a vivid sense of redemption:

"When Mullaney made no changes at the start of the second half, a thirty-three year old Knickerbocker fan who history had taught circumspection, nevertheless thought it in the bag. But, however keen a basketball dialectician Asofsky was, the years had trained his biology to fear and no amount of rational powers could change that. In the final twenty-four minutes of the game, Asofsky said yes, yes, it's happening and tried to relax. But when it was over and the Knicks were at last champions, 113-99, Stanley Asofsky had his underwear slipping and knotting against his legs.... Yes, yes, yes, it had happened. The Knicks were the champs. At last." ^{50/}

Each game, and each season for that matter, has a sense of destiny and meaning. The thrill of consummation animates each segment of the Sportsworld lifetime. In real life the future is vaguely felt. We know that if we put the kettle on the flame the water will boil; but we usually do not have any idea of the future as a total experience which is coming

because of our present acts. This opacity, as Max Weber has pointed out, is exacerbated by an instrumental sense of "progress" that is infinitely ongoing and hence meaningless. The game (and the season) gives the Sportsworld a dramatic wholeness--a sense of purpose. Suzanne Langer underscores the dramatic principle at work here:

"Dramatic action is a semblance of action so constructed that a whole indivisible piece of virtual history is implicit in it, as a yet unrealized form, long before the presentation is completed." 51/

III

In developing a political theory of American sports I have argued elsewhere that the political implications of sports symbolism exists as moments in a dialectic of socialization and symbolic escape. 52/ In this section I will concentrate on the importance of the game in the process of socialization that goes on in the larger political and social arena. As Johann Huizinga points out about the social impact of playing games, "It is through this playing that society expresses its interpretation of life and the world." 53/

In the first place, the game is an enactment of the process of democratization. The game is played by equals in accordance with the principle of merit. In a society founded upon the idea of an open class structure, the contest symbolizes an ideal vision of this professed fluidity. From its beginning as a mass phenomenon sports has been a visible avenue for ethnic mobility. 54/ That the realities of successful mobility in real life were never as great as the sporting

myth proclaimed does not take away from the way in which the game could symbolically resolve the tensions created by the gap between expectations and reality.

The game has also, since the inclusion of blacks in baseball in 1947, presented a dramatic staging of racial harmony. The black and white sprinter running a victory lap arm in arm. The black half-back leaping for joy into the white tackle's arms. The white coach embracing his black superstar. The visual symbolism takes on mythic dimensions. Recently, to be sure, many critics have focused on incidents of racial tension, quota systems and systematic exclusions of black and Hispanic players. The critics excellently deflate the overblown prose of team press releases and the sentimentality of certain sports-writers. Their critiques, however, do not take away from the exemplary nature of black-white relations in sports.

The sports team is a visual example of black-white cooperation. In addition, almost all the popular biographies of players and teams emphasize the "beyond racism" nature of sports. Clearly, the level of cooperative intimacy never reaches the heights that the rhetoric of the Sportsworld gatekeepers achieves. That does not take away from the powerful symbolism being enacted. As John Wooden relates:

"One of the most gratifying moments in my coaching career came afterwards in the Astrodome as I walked in our dressing room door. I heard some writer ask Curtis Rowe, 'What kind of racial problems did you have on the UCLA team?' Curtis, without hesitation, looked at him in that firm strong way of his and said, 'Coach Wooden doesn't see color.'" 55/

The ferocity of the debunkers only underscores the power of the symbolism.

The game, as I have mentioned, enacts a legal drama. The personification of rules is an essential component of socialization in a legal rational political system (inculcating "faith" in rules). The rules are the scenic backdrop for the competitive struggle--inducing the idea of equality of competitors. Paul Hoch vigorously takes issue with what he sees here as a pretense.

"But under the rule of monopoly capitalism how much free competition really exists? And how fair is it? The race of capitalist society is like a mile run in which some of the competitors start with a three quarter mile lead. In this 'game' some players come into competition with a few million under their belts, while others get their training in ghetto slums." 56/

The reality of capitalist society is different. The game becomes a mythical enactment of the ruling ideas of society. Its symbolism is representative of what Kenneth Burke calls "hierarchical mystification." People are induced to "play the game" no matter how unrealistic their chances for success are.

The game is an affirmation of legal order. Yet, as Hugh Duncan observes:

"Once the rules are sacred, and beyond the powers of the players themselves, and the impartial third is taken over by a priesthood who are not responsible to the players, we are in the realm of ritual and not play." 57/

The legal operations of Sportsworld are indeed beyond the ken of both players and spectators alike. Decisions are handed down like obiter dicta for "the good of the game." Investigative bodies operate above/beyond any safeguards of due process. ^{58/} A faith in legal structure is a by-product of Sportsworld involvement, yet it is a regard for rules that are handed down. It is acquiescence (what Almond and Verba call "subject competence" as distinguished from "citizen competence"). ^{59/} Yet, acquiescence, or "rain or shine attachment," is an integral aspect of the stability of political systems. The game even offers the disgruntled a mode of protest in the accepted verbal assaults on officials that are seen as legitimate forms of fan "participation."

The game is also a metaphor of social cooperation. As American society becomes more complex the chances for individual mobility lessen dramatically. Competitive drive, meanwhile, must be leavened by a sense of "teamwork." People need to be induced to take part in the often oppressive intricacy of the division of labor. The team games, especially the more corporate ones of football and basketball, inculcate the ethics of cooperation. The late Milton Gross captures this symbolism in writing about the Knicks: "They seemed to be wired to the same circuit so that anyone of the five on the floor reacts to what the other four are trying to do." ^{60/} Even the discussions of baseball teams, the most individualistic of team sports, emphasize the importance of cooperation and team morale.

Cooperation and competition, equality and mobility, are antithetical themes in American life. The game dramatically synthesizes these ideals. It provides a visible symbolic resolution of the struggle between individual success and the cooperative ethics of the community. Everyone on the team strives to be a starter. Yet, although we compete within the team, we are still a team ("antagonistic cooperation"). Bill Russell captures this image:

"I was taking Risen's job and I would not have blamed him if he had hated me. Instead, Arnie Risen went out of his way to help. I've never forgotten him for it and I never will. Remember this was professional sports and the money was on the line. Risen transcended the norm for a professional sportsman. He was a team man all the way." 61/

The struggle between the two opposing teams affirms the larger rule-bounded structure and normative cohesiveness of the Sportsworld itself. When the game ends the cutting comments and sarcastic aspersions that had marked the pre-game atmosphere are no longer appropriate. The losers bravely congratulate their conquerors. The winners repeatedly are heard to say, "You guys played a hell of a game. We were lucky to win." When the battle's heat subsides, winners and losers, fans and players, are all joined in their common allegiance to the contest and to the world that it represents. In this way sports are an important

source of cohesion. As Max Lerner says, "They let the populace take part in a crucial ritual that bind them to one another and to the culture." 62/

The game is the crucible wherein the values of the larger society are transposed. It does this through the "stylistic subterfuge" of creating a mythical and unproblematic world. In this world obstacles that are symbolic refractions of the obstacles of the larger political and social system are dramatically and cathartically resolved. H. L. Nieburg summarizes the main contention of this section:

"Ritual drama expresses collective revelations.

"The ritual drama is never wrong because it contains within itself the legitimization of truth and reality.... Every element of art, as an item of ritual drama, is surrounded with dramatic and dialectical significance. Every item is related as response and responder to other items, and as such each item carrier meanings as a strategy of action that can be reduced to practice and real human relationships by individuals living in the culture." 63/

IV

I have posited in my introductory chapter that an important political function of the Sportsworld devolves from its existence as a symbolic social life world within the larger technical life world of capitalist society. 64/ I have argued that the "apartness" of the Sportsworld plus its characteristic sense of purpose and drama enable it to exist contrapuntally to a bureaucratic world of machines and techniques.

The game, as a ritual drama, is the hub of the Sportsworld and, for large numbers of Americans, the hub of their

everyday lives as well. Paul Gallico underlines the possibilities here in the typical hyperbole of Sportsworld's rhetoric:

"Dynasties fell, nations collapsed, politics changed, dictators appeared, countries were torn apart by revolution, there were distant wars, but all I saw were the eight-oared shells glistening in the late afternoon sun at Poughkeepsie...prizefighters lying twitching on the canvas.... In my world there were only ballgames played in the hot, sweating Indian summer days, when every move made by the figures in white and gray outlined against the brown and green diamond were greeted by never-shattering, hysterical roars from seventy thousand people...." ^{65/}

When the real world threatens instrumental emptiness and deadened routine, the games and players of the Sportsworld create a meaningful, almost pleasant-like seasonal cycle. Again Gallico captures this essence:

"They were queer fascinating folk who peopled this weird world and who became my temporary companions as the seasons brought them around, each in turn, almost as though they were papier-mache figures on a slowly revolving cyclorama. It seems, in turn, as though I never knew days, weeks, months...but only sports seasons...all coming round year after year regularly as if driven by clockwork, with their costumes and paraphernalia, their lingo, their camp followers, and their famous characters." ^{66/}

The centrality of the game in this cyclical procession is primarily achieved through its creation of a collective euphoria. As the process of rationalization reduces the opportunity for "emotional payoffs" a vacuum is created. As Ernst Cassirer points out in The Myth of the State, rationalization leads to the devaluation of "non-discursive symbolism"; myth and rite. The game, as a ritual existing

within a mythical life-world of human drama, provides an emotional nurturance and sense of collective strength of purpose that is rarely seen in the real world except during wars and disasters.

Our era is distinguished by a widespread "collective search for identity." 67/ People search for cults, heroes, popular movements or religious sects that can give anchoring to their frequently tenuous sense of self. These ad hoc movements provide a social structure, and a value-centering that links disparate individuals through collectively affirmed feelings. The passionate desperation of this search may devolve from the value confusion and massiveness of a scientific, bureaucratic and impersonal technical world. In response to this world, our perspectives often become more skeptical and impious. Yet, without some central orientation, we flounder; anxiety swells in us and seeks a channel for release. 68/

The changes inherent in this situation are magnified by the remoteness of political authority. 69/ Our society spawns numerous instrumental organizations that absorb our dues but not our devotion. Cults rise and then decline; we shop in the religious marketplace for a more relevant road to salvation. Disenchantment is inevitable.

The existence of this value instability and emotional vacuum is fraught with danger. The ability of political sorcerers to stage massive community dramas of perfected victimage attests to this. Kenneth Burke drives this home in his discussion of Nazi mass meetings and speeches:

"And is it possible that an equally important feature of appeal was not so much in the repetitiveness per se, but in the fact that, by means of it, Hitler provided a 'world view' for people who had previously seen it piecemeal? Did not much of this lure derive once more, from the 'bad' filling of a 'good' need?" 70/

Is it not useful to see the Sportsworld as a symbolic mass movement with myths and rituals of its own? Here is a world that can engage us actively and vicariously from childhood to old age. 71/ Here is a world where one game can feel like a lifetime with numerous little deaths and rebirths. Through all the various media it penetrates our everyday lives, forming a "national sports consciousness." It is a charismatic cosmos that warms the icy cold bars of Max Weber's iron cage.

In this discussion of the ritual drama of the game we have seen how the Sportsworld is able to create identifying rituals and "transcendent bonds" that are forged in the euphoria of social communion. We have begun to glimpse how the power of the emotional appeals are able, at least temporarily, to alleviate personal distress that is generated by the endemic strains of political, economic and social reality. We have further seen how the Sportsworld has been able to

inculcate important political and social values through the creation of aesthetic distance.

The Sportsworld is rich in symbolism and excitement. It also seems to resonate with the deficiencies of the larger environment within which it is absorbed. The question that should be pursued is whether or not more satisfying comprehensive solutions can be found that will get to the root of political and personal distress so that we are not continually mired in a false hope, ritually incantating, "It's never over 'til the last out."

Footnotes

- 1 Jorgen Habermas, Toward a Rational Society (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), pp. 50-61. This is a familiar theme of twentieth century political and social thought. It rests in part on Max Weber's famous description of capitalism as an "iron cage."
- 2 Ray Kennedy and Nancy Williamson, "Money and Sports," Sports Illustrated (July 31, 1978).
- 3 Bil Gilbert, "That Senior Season," Sports Illustrated (Nov. 14, 1977), p.113.
- 4 Kenneth Burke, "Ritual Drama as Hub," in Terms For Order (Bloomington, Ind.: University Press, 1964); Hugh Duncan, Communication and Social Order (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1978); and Peter Berger, The Sacred Canopy (N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1969).
- 5 Peter Berger, The Sacred Canopy, p.40.
- 6 Bill Russell, Go up for Glory (N.Y.: Howard-McCann, 1966), p.113.
- 7 Fred Exley, A Fan's Notes (N.Y.: Random House, 1968), pp. 15-16.
- 8 Those who have made this kind of examination have generally focused on the "ideal" aspects of sports and have seen the game as a "festal contest" (see especially Johann Huizinga's Homo Ludens (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955). This approach has been heavily criticized by many sociologists and radical critics of sports who would like to underscore the way in which sports is rooted in political, social and economic reality. For a review of this debate see my "Sports Drama" paper where I argue that both perspectives must be incorporated in a dialectical approach.
- 9 Gene Ward, "Words to the Wise," New York Daily News (Oct. 18, 1968).
- 10 Cited by Larry Merchant in And Every Day You Take Another Little Bite (N.Y.: Dell Pub., 1971), pp. 42-43.
- 11 Murray Edelman, The Symbolic Use of Politics (Chicago: University of Ill. Press, 1967), p.97.

- 12 A Fan's Note, p.310.
- 13 The Symbolic Uses of Politics, p.71. See also Simon Lesser's discussion of "aesthetic distance" in Fiction and the Unconscious (N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1962).
- 14 Paul Weiss, Sport: A Philosophical Inquiry (Carbondale, Ill.: SIU Press, 1969), p.152.
- 15 Michael Novak, The Joy of Sports (N.Y.: Basic Books, 1976), p.125; H. L. Nieburg, Culture Storm: Politics and the Ritual Order (N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1973). As Kenneth Burke remarked, "So if we are all poets and all poets are pious, we should expect to find great areas of piety, even at ballgames. Permanence and Change (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1970), p.76.
- 16 Phil Berger, Miracle on 33rd Street (N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1970), p.193.
- 17 Rich Telander, Heaven is a Playground (N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1976); Jay Neugeboren, Big Man (N.Y.: Belmont Books, 1970), p.83.
- 18 Sacred Canopy, pp. 19-21.
- 19 Communication and Social Order, p.112.
- 20 See Hugh Duncan's Symbols and Social Theory (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1969) as well as the other works by Duncan previously cited; Burke's Permanence and Change has been a seminal source of much of my own thinking, as has been his Language as Symbolic Action (Berkeley: University of Calif. Press, 1966). For a good "dramatistic" view of sports, see Paul Gallico's wonderfully descriptive and intuitive Farewell to Sports (N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1970).
- 21 Farewell to Sports, p.93.
- 22 Arnold Mandell, The Nightmare Season (N.Y.: Random House, 1976), p.11. Jerry Izenberg's How Many Miles to Camelot? (N.Y.: Holt, Rinehard & Winston, 1972), pp. 145-148, does a good job of describing fan anticipation.
- 23 Go up for Glory, p.118.
- 24 Miracle on 33rd Street, p.200.

- 25 Ernst Cassirer, The Myth of the State (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), pp. 28-38. See also Kenneth Burke's "The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle'" in Terms or Order.
- 26 Orrin Klapp, The Collective Search for Identity (N.Y.: Holt, Rinehard & Winston, 1969), p.191; Homo Ludens, p.15.
- 27 Go up for Glory, p.128.
- 28 George Plimpton, Paper Lion (N.Y.: NAL, 1974); Out of My League (N.Y.: Pocket Books, 1967); Shadow Box (N.Y.: Putnam & Sons, 1977); and "Bozo the Brain," Sports Illustrated (Jan. 28, 1978), pp. 56-64.
- 29 Paper Lion, p.75.
- 30 "Sports Drama."
- 31 See Dave Debusschere's The Open Man (N.Y.: Random House, 1970), and Jerry Kramer's Instant Replay (N.Y.: NAL, 1968) for good descriptions of training camp rigors.
- 32 Bill Bradley, Life on the Run (N.Y.: Quadrangle, 1976), p.210.
- 33 Jim Bouton, Ball Four (N.Y.: World Pub. 1970), p.112.
- 34 Miracle on 33rd Street, p.251.
- 35 Harry Edwards, The Sociology of Sport (Homewood, Ill.: The Dorsey Press, 1973), chapter 6.
- 36 Nightmare Season, p.146. Another example of this form of victimage is the way in which New York Giant football fans harassed former coach Allie Sherman with "Good-bye Allie" chants; see Larry Merchant's columns: "Ritual Sacrifice I" and "Ritual Sacrifice II" in the New York Post (September 17 and 18, 1969, respectively).
- 37 Leonard Lewin, "Knicks Look like Million Bucks," N.Y. Post (April 21, 1970), p.81.
- 38 Consult Murray Edelman's discussion of the interplay between anxiety and the perception of external enemies, The Symbolic Uses of Politics, p.175.
- 39 Go up for Glory, pp. 118-119.

- 40 Communication and Social Order, p.401.
- 41 For various comments on the role of sports heroism see Sidney Hook, The Hero in History (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), Chapter XI; Max Lerner, America as a Civilization, Vol I (N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1957), pp. 812-819; Jeffrey Schrank, Snap Crackle and Popular Taste (N.Y.: Dell Pub., 1977), Chapter 8; and Robert Nisbet, Twilight of Authority (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 102-112.
- 42 Farewell to Sport, p.17.
- 43 Collective Search for Identity.
- 44 Farewell to Sport, p.17.
- 45 Hugh Duncan, Symbols in Society (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 131.
- 46 Erving Goffman, The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1955), p.30.
- 47 Communication and Social Order, p.329.
- 48 See David Q. Voight's discussion of Judge Landis' role in the "Black Sox Scandal" in America Through Baseball (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1976). Voight points up the gap between Judge Landis' methods and normal concepts of due process.
- 49 Arnold Mandell, Nightmare Season, discusses Pete Rozelle's chamber methods in his investigation of drug abuses on the San Diego Chargers, Chapter 14. More recently, NBA Commissioner Larry O'Brien took strong measures against Kermit Washington for breaking an opponent's nose. Most players felt that Washington was being scapegoated to appease an aroused public opinion. See Steve Cady, "Washington is Reeling from the Punch He Threw," The Times (Dec. 30, 1977), p.17.
- 50 Miracle on 33rd Street, p.254.
- 51 Suzanne Langer, Feeling and Form (New York: Scribner's, 1953), p.310.
- 52 See chapter one.

- 53 Homo Ludens, p.12.
- 54 John Betts, America's Sporting Heritage (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1971), p.187.
- 55 John Wooden, They Call Me Coach (Waco, Texas: Word Book, 1972), p.177. For other examples of racial harmony see Curt Flood's The Way It Is (New York: Trident Press, 1970), Chapter 5; Roger Kohn's The Boys of Summer (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p.xv; Life on the Run, p.140; Paper Lion, p.168; Instant Replay, p.27; and How Many Miles to Camelot?, p.128.
- 56 Paul Hoch, Rip Off the Big Game (New York: Doubleday, 1971), p.104.
- 57 Communication and Social Order, p.329.
- 58 Ron Fimrite, "Bowie Stops Charlie's Checks," Sports Illustrated (June 28, 1976), p.22. See also footnotes 48 and 49 above. The courts have traditionally taken a hands-off policy towards both professional and amateur sports, whose ruling bodies are run in a manner similar to a Middle Eastern Emirate. Only recently have colleges and athletes been given some judicial protection.
- 59 Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, The Civic Culture (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963), Chapter VII.
- 60 Milton Gross, "The Knicks Together," New York Post (Dec. 8, 1969).
- 61 Go Up for Glory, p.56.
- 62 America as a Civilization, Vol. II, p.812. Teams like the Los Angeles Dodgers, who are "spoilsports," are excoriated by both partisan and neutral media.
- 63 Culture Storm, p.181.

- 64 This is a persistent theme, of course, throughout my work.
- 65 Farewell to Sport, p.5. The Gallico involvement, like Asofsky's or Fred Exley's, is extreme yet illuminating for the average attachment as well.
- 66 Ibid, p.7.
- 67 The Collective Search for Identity, p.34.
- 68 See Rollo May, The Meaning of Anxiety (New York: Norton, 1977). May discusses the relationship between anxiety and "meaningless" and how a sense of commitment can serve to reduce anxiety.
- 69 The Symbolic Uses of Politics; Jacques Ellul, The Political Illusion (New York: Vintage Books, 1967); Robert Nisbet, The Quest for Community (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965).
- 70 "The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle," p.112.
- 71 William Kilpatrick, Identity and Intimacy (New York: Dell Pub., 1975), p.159.

SPORTS LANGUAGE AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE

"It is precisely through metaphor that our perspectives, or analogical extensions are made--a world without metaphor would be a world without purpose."

Kenneth Burke

"It is a common place in American life to relate sports to experience. The minister colors his sermons with athletic metaphors...business and industrial leaders spice their talk with inspirational allusions to the world of sports; and most Americans poeticize their everyday speech with sports reference that have become part of the language."

Wiley Umphlett

"The game is one of the great pleasures of their lives, and while gossiping about it, they judge and analyze performances, determine standards, fix categories, and explain events."

Lewis Cole

Watch people talk about sports. See the way in which they seem to come alive in the process. Two examples will serve as illustrations. A few years ago I was talking with a professor of urban politics whose classroom style bordered on the soporific. The man spoke in a monotone and rigidly steered clear of personal revelation. We managed somehow to get into a discussion of the research I was doing, and all of a sudden the man was transformed as he electrically discussed his childhood love for the Brooklyn Dodgers. The change and contrast was impressive. In a similar vein, I recently went out to dinner with some old friends who are lawyers. A young woman lawyer, who happened to be a Chicana, was along with us. She seemed shy and reluctant to initiate conversation. Again, when I began to discuss my work on sports, the woman enthusiastically jumped in to explain, in heated, animated tones, her devotion to the DePaul University basketball team. After exhausting the mother-lode, she just as dramatically returned to her cloak of timidity.

A recent Sports Illustrated-sponsored survey has indicated that 72% of all Americans describe themselves as sports fans (with an increasingly large group of women joining in).^{1/} The level and intensity of political involvement does not approach the sports mania.^{2/} As a result of this dichotomy, politicians and political analysts have increasingly turned to the use of the sports metaphor in order to generate interest and communicate information about politics. In my introduction

to this work, I hypothesized that the Sportsworld develops in dialectical relationship with the larger arenas of economics and politics. The rise of sports language and its subsequent transposition to political communication gives us clues to this dialectic. The focus on sports language clarifies the growing autonomy of the world of sports as a separate province of meaning and its importance as an integral aspect of political legitimacy.

II

The political turmoil of the 1960s led to the growing politicization of athletics. At the same time, politics was being athleticized.

President Nixon was constantly photographed in some scene of sports significance. If he wasn't at the ballpark or in the lockerroom he was phoning the winning team and its coach to congratulate them. ^{2/} When political demonstrations against the Vietnam War engulfed the capitol, the president was pointedly sequestered watching a football game. Even more significantly, on the morning of the invasion of Cambodia the president met with a group of protesters at the Lincoln Memorial. "The president asked the young people what schools they went to. When they told him, he immediately started to discuss their respective football teams." ^{3/}

This emerging synthesis of sports and politics is perhaps best exemplified by the rise of sports language in political communication. Cabinet members are referred to as "team-players." The invasion of a country is described as "Opera-

tion Linebacker," and the military commander is called the "head coach." Making a job easier for a colleague is referred to as "doing downfield blocking," and an ally that needs a great deal of political and military bolstering is referred to as "an expansion team." Not only are politicians using these sports metaphors. Increasingly, political commentators are borrowing this "sportugese" and, by analogical extension, seeing politics in athletic images.^{4/}

The proliferation of the verbal symbolism of the Sports-world in descriptions of political actions and events indicates a significant relationship between the two worlds. In the first place the use of sports analogies and the borrowing of non-verbal symbolic settings of sports points to the pervasive influence of athletics in American life. Red Smith grasps this when he indicates that, "One measure of the stature of sports in the American scheme is the extent to which sporting terms are employed away from the playing fields." ^{5/} Smith's colleague on the editorial page concurs, "Sports in America play a part in our national life that is probably more important than even the social scientists believe." ^{6/}

It is through language and settings (or "scenes," in a dramatic sense) that we communicate "common symbolizations." ^{7/} The fact that there is a distinct sports lexicon indicates that the Sportsworld is a distinct province of meaning. Language, communication, symbolism and group life are inseparable.

arable pieces of a common plot. As Anselm Strauss points out:

"Any group or people that has any permanence develops a 'special language,' a lingo or jargon, which represents its way of identifying those objects which are important." 8/

Strauss goes on to indicate that, "Group life is organized around communication. Communication consists not only in the transmission of ideas from the head of one person to another, it signifies shared meanings." 9/

The existence of a sports jargon or "sublanguage" 10/ demonstrates that the sports fans are linked to a common perspective. As C. Wright Mills has shown, a vocabulary is connected to a set of motives which in turn are representative of a certain set of values. 11/ The "world view" of sports, then, is embodied in its scenes, slogans and jargon. If this is true, then the use of "sportspeak" by political leaders and political commentators, as well as the posturing of politicians in front of sports backdrops such as ballfields and lockerrooms, indicates the implosion of the values and motives of sports into the conceptualization and carrying out of political action. How this happens--the style of its happening--and the political consequences of its happening, needs to be explained.

III

The appeal of the sports metaphor cannot be grasped without first understanding the social context in which its appeal flourishes. We live in a time of increasing ratio-

nalization and bureaucratization. This process tends to create obstacles to effective communication. Unfulfilled needs for contact and communication rise accordingly.

"People become dependent on media external to their groups when informal channels beyond their immediate groups begin to be disrupted. As these informal channels become more difficult to maintain, as is the case in the shift from mechanical to organic solidarity...as the structure becomes more complex, people have less contact with the social system as a whole. In other words, they begin to be less aware of what is going on in their society beyond their own position in the structure." 12/

The increased complexity of industrial society, mirrored in the development of the specialized functions of the division of labor, introduces the problem of creating and maintaining an overarching symbolism. The fragmentation involved in this cultural development (accompanied as it is by its scientifically), gradually erodes the older, more stable system of values. It is not only the instrumental problem of "getting an idea across," but also the problem of effectively dramatizing a common purpose in a society that has, as Berger and Luchmann point out, developed "sub-universes of meaning" without any accompanying overall perspective that is shared. 13/

We live in an age of relativism where the question of motivation is unsettled. As Kenneth Burke says,

"...in highly stable eras, the recurrent patterns of life are highly stabilized, hence the combinations of complex stimuli become standardized, hence the matter of motives is settled.... But in an age of marked instability, of great and shifting contrasts, typical patterns of stimuli would be less likely to run through the group as a whole, or even a large part of it." ^{14/}

The problem is not merely one of intellectual confusion--the "credibility gap"--but cuts more deeply. As Ernst Cassirer's work in language and symbolic forms shows, the rise of language and its development rests on an emotional-communal chain." ^{15/} Language arises from mythical modes of thought that transfer the basic emotions into symbolic imagery. ^{16/} Myth and language have both a heuristic and a dramatic value. Initially both myth and language link people through common emotional ties. So when we talk about the difficulty that industrial society creates for communicating we are pointing to the decline of "common sentiments," ^{17/} the emotional glue that can cohere the overtowering rational structure.

The problem of conflicting values brought about by this rationalization process applies as well to the immanent development of language. As language develops, as it ascends logically, it becomes less rich. As Cassirer has argued,

"...if language is to grow into a vehicle of thought, an expression of concepts and judgments, this evolution can be achieved only at the price of foregoing the wealth and fullness of immediate experience. In the end what is left of the concrete sense and feeling content is little more than a bare skeleton." 18/

Language, with its roots in the expression of human emotions, loses its communal-cohering ability as it becomes more scientific and abstract. Style, beauty and form become downgraded in the face of the pedantic-instructional and "objective" uses of language. "Suasion was for cheap politicians, rhetoric became synonymous with falsity, and strict definition became the ideal." 19/ With the intensification of the division of labor each sub-area of society develops its own specialized jargon. These scientific and technical vocabularies are characterized by their low anthropomorphic content. Ideally, they are suited for signalling functional cogs moving lifelessly in our bureaucratic society. 20/ But, as Burke has shown, people are moved through inducement, through the suasive power of human motivation.

The proliferation of statistically laden vocabularies and denatured technical explanations reaches fruition in the stale prose of our most respectable newspapers.

"And one who loves the sound of words may get a perverse but genuine delight from the ringing tonalities of a scarehead editorial whereas he may feel a strange repugnance if he has to read a sober financial report." 21/

The key to understanding rhetoric and motives is interest:

"Despite the grave economic issues besetting him," Burke wrote in the 1930s, "the modern worker still seems to be more interested in society, drama and adventure fiction than proletarian literature" 22/ (or political information).

Clarity matters little--despite the pleas of general semanticists and other scientific linguists--if the reader or listener doesn't care about the subject being related.

The development of a legal, rational political system is accompanied by the rise of functional language forms. But as the structure becomes more pervasive and impregnable it seems to move by its own functionally-rational imperatives. In this sense, the structure, as Weber has pointed out, often loses meaning for the people who are subject to its imperatives. 23/ As the structure is drained of meaning, the problem of peaceful social cooperation can become serious..

As social structure is rationalized and language becomes instrumental, peoples' "natural" need for symbolic nurturance or "meaning" is not being satisfied. The functionally rational system has no purpose, and seems to reduce every form of relationship to cash exchange or cause and effect. It is into such a

vacuum that the sorcerers of 20th century politics have poured the most primitive symbolism of domination. Science, failing to answer the question of why we are here and where we are going, and creating a climate where symbolic community is problematic, paves the way for a mythic orientation. "What matters here are not the empirical relations between cause and effect, but the intensity and depth with which relations are felt." 24/

Abstraction in all forms proceeds along a precarious path. I believe Nietzsche understood this when he said, "Whoever pushes rationality forward also restores new strength to the opposite power, mysticism and folly of all kinds." 25/ An impersonal and abstract social and political system fails to provide the personal, concrete, tangible and emotional relations human beings seem to thrive on. 26/

III

Man is a symbolic animal. 27/ As Kenneth Burke, Ernst Cassirer and Suzanne Langer have shown, even the simplest mental operations and the most basic human relations are mediated by symbols. 28/ With the rise and development of complex bureaucratized social and political systems, however, we increasingly begin to live in a world that is beyond immediate experience. 29/ The concrete and local relationship gives way to the abstract and global. "Nowadays a fact is what has been translated into words and images; what has been worked over to give a general character very few people can experience

directly...." 30/

As political reality becomes more remote and symbolic, political action is increasingly split:

"Basic to the recognition of symbolic forms in the political process is a distinction between politics as a spectator sport and political activity as utilized by organized groups to get quite specific tangible benefits for themselves. For most men most of the time politics is a series of pictures in the minds. The pictures create a moving panorama taking place in a world the mass public never quite touches, yet its members come to fear or cheer, often with passion...." 31/

For the unorganized majority, politics is for the consumption of images. Yet, as an often threatening domain, it has the ability to function--in Rorschach-like fashion--as a receptacle for our emotions. As Murray Edelman, building on Harold Lasswell's seminal work points out:

"Politics is for most of us a passing parade of abstract symbols, yet a parade which our experience teaches us to be a benevolent or malevolent force that can be close to omnipotent.... [Therefore] its processes become easy objects upon which to displace private emotions, especially strong anxieties and hopes." 32/

The complexity, remoteness and abstractions of this political world leads to the creation of a "psychopolitical universe." 33/ that, because of its ubiquity and the devaluation of the concrete, becomes a substitute for the tangible and "vivid present." A dramatic symbolic life among abstractions thereby becomes a "substitute gratification for the pleasure of remolding the concrete environment." 34/

It is in this kind of political climate, as we began to see in the previous section, that the potential for manipulation is large.

Because the political universe is bewildering, politics become the creature of the language used to describe it.

"For the mass of political spectators developments occur in a remote area where there can be no direct observation or feedback." ^{35/} In this context,

"Metaphors and myths are devices for simplifying and giving meaning to complex and bewildering sets of observations that evoke concern. Political events and trends are typically complex and ambiguous and they become food of concern." ^{36/}

The kinds of vocabularies or myths we choose will inevitably effect the kind of "reality" that is perceived (precisely because of the ethereal or plastic nature of the socio-political world)^{37/}. The perception of political reality depends on the verbal in a way that the observation of the natural order does not.

"If I say 'table' there is at least the possibility of my using the physical object as the source of the communication between us.... But if I say 'democracy' or 'dictatorship,' there is no clear natural counterpart to these words...." ^{38/}

In order to make the political realm closer and comprehensible--especially when the interest of many is waning--it is essential for political discourse to employ metaphors that will convey a sense of the familiar, "for the unknown, the new, the unclear and the remote are apprehended by one's perceptions of identities with the familiar." ^{39/}

Given an environment of impersonality and abstraction, it is essential for the political rhetoric to metaphorically tap areas where audiences do experience warmth, clarity and personal satisfaction.

"The essence of metaphor is that a part evokes a new whole. Political metaphors can vividly, potently and pervasively evoke changed worlds in which the remedies for anxieties are clearly perceived...." 40/

This can be achieved through the symbolic linkage of speaker and audience, through the use of a communally accepted vocabulary of motives that facilitate empathy.

Since politics is complex, remote and often threatening, much political rhetoric is banal and ritualistic. "For amateur political spectators a small number of classic themes or myths serve repeatedly as explanations of what is shaping the political scene...." 41/ Such ritualistic incantation serves to cue the listener into the understanding that the world is moving along familiar routes. These expressions have the ability to close off fresh insight while at the same time keeping conflict within a comfortably circumscribed area 42/ (conflict that was perceived as open-ended would create anxiety and possibly galvanize people into active forms of political participation).

Murray Edelman's analysis of symbolic politics in the American context focuses on the relationship between ritualistic participation and the lack of intense ideological conflict within a social structure that he characterizes as "unimodal."

"The unimodal structure encourages a maximum of democratic procedures, forms and structuring.... There can be open and dramatic appeals for public rapport, for the support is already great and the likelihood of massive opposition to basic policies is light. The creation and dramatic employment of democratic forms may therefore not be so much an indication of responsiveness to changing popular signs as a sign that values are unimodal and that the mass public is uncritical." 43/

The problem with this decline of ideology, however, is that the "dramatic" appeals have a tendency to become stale. Ritualization easily devolves into somnambulant apathy or sullen anger. The "end of ideology," while moderating political tensions, threatens to create and/or reinforce a growing sense of indifference to political events. 44/

The prevalence of ideologically indistinguishable candidates in American politics presents a problem of finding alternate modes for generating political interest. The remoteness and threatening impersonality of political action is overcome through the symbolism of entertainment and the arena. As one perceptive observer has noted:

"Failing to organize our politics around politics, we organize it as entertainment; sometimes it is a horse race, sometimes an interminable TV sitcom. Hey--Jimmy Carter just picked up six delegates in Kansas..how about that sports fan? Even our political literature is getting less political these days, tending even more to dramatic, novelistic forms." 45/

Glamour, personality and the pure enthusiasm of the political agon, turn politics into the consumption of dramatic images that tend to be devoid of ideological

content. This leads to the creation of a measured spectator interest. This interest is similar in many ways to what Lazarsfeld and Merton call the "narcotizing dysfunction" of mass media. The politics of entertainment encourages people to keep abreast of political news and follow the confrontation of personalities.

"But this rather intellectualized, rather remote connection with organized social action is not activated. The interested and informed citizen can congratulate himself in his lofty state of interest and neglect to see that he has abstained from decision and action. In short, he takes his secondary contact with the world of political reality...as a vicarious performance." 47/

The simulated involvement stimulated by the political agon creates the concern of the "inside dopester." 48/ Politics, no longer a concern for moral approbation or indignation, is integrated into the enveloping popular culture.

"Politics is to be appraised in terms of consumer preferences. Politicians are people--and the more glamorous the better. The manner and mood of doing things is quite as important as what is done." 49/

Style, and the aesthetic sensibility of the discerning consumer are the important variables. The politics of fun and consumption teaches people to regard politics as consumer goods. "They are products, games, entertainments, recreations, and he is the purchaser, player, spectator or leisure observer." 50/

With the mass media becoming a barker for a political show, glamour is used to combat indifference. Glamour is retailed, as in the advertised world of commodities, to arouse spectator interest. This political game can still be

enjoyed, but its lasting appeals can certainly be questioned. It would appear that this form of politics is increasingly being driven from the center stage of public attention. Murray Edelman (building here on the work of Suzanne Langer) was certainly acute in describing how politics can involve audience attention by becoming an aesthetic form that creates a world "set apart from the one which the audience lives and breathes...." ^{51/} Yet the politics of entertainment and glamour is inevitably a weak imitation of those aesthetic realms where drama, conflict and personality exist in pure form. It begins to become clearer why the values of these purer realms starts to implode on the political scene.

IV

Spectator politics must compete for the entertainment dollar and overcome its own complex, technical and often banal reputation among the voters. The appeals of the Sports-world, on the contrary, are indigenous to its form. As the philosopher Paul Weiss has written:

"The athlete's world is set over against the everyday world. Economic demands and the satisfaction of appetites are for the moment set aside. This is what is done by ethical men in their endeavors to realize ethical goals. Artists...similarly bracket off their distinctive, dynamic, spatiotemporal worlds." ^{52/}

In less ethereal terms, James R. Ston has underscored a similar point, "The world of sports has everything the world of politics lacks and longs for.... They have more pageantry

and even dignity than most mass occasions in American life; more team work, more unity, and more certainty at the end than most things...." 53/

The Sportsworld is becoming the realm per excellence that provides the aesthetic form and putative ethical content that contrasts so sharply with a political and social world so grossly deficient in either grace or ideals. 54/ In interesting ways it can be seen as the American aesthetic. It not only creates a seemingly autonomous realm with its own ethical imperatives (slogans, morals and legal proscriptions), it also creates a communicative bond reminiscent of the powerful Greek dramas. As Cassirer's treatment of aesthetic experience reminds us,

"When absorbed in the intuition of a great work of art we do not feel a separation between the subjective and objective worlds. We do not live in our common place reality of physical things, nor do we live wholly in an individual sphere." 55/

The individual's needs for transcendent bonds is supplied by the aesthetic forms of social and political appeals--the rituals, rallies, communions and rhetorical exhortations that overlay the rational structure of authority. 56/ The Sportsworld, as Dr. Arnold Beisser points out, is an effective counterpoint to the decline of the emotional and familiar:

"Everyone needs to feel he has ties with others. With the dispersal of the traditional extended family, the clan, and the tribe, this need to be identified with a group of some kind has become more intense. The sports fan has a readily available group to satisfy this need, at least in part. He has a meeting place, where he is

needed to support the team. He can gather with others, don his Dodger cap or some other identification badge, and yell at the top of his lungs for his teams.... In effect, by doing all this, he becomes a member of a larger, stronger, family group, or collective entity comparable in some sense to the tribe or clan." 57/

The effective bonds dramatized through Sportsworld involvements are communicated by language.

"Speech is communicative in the sense that it provides a common basis for feeling--or it is communicative in the sense that it serves as a common implement of action." 58/

The groups' emotional bonds are mediated through the development of common symbolizations. Symbolic adherence to Sportworld activities is characterized by emotional participation mediated by a common jargon. This jargon, in turn, has a certain stylistic form as well as normative content.

The rise of sports language can be traced to the development of the sports page around the turn of the century. The struggle of tabloids for mass audience sees the development of yellow journalism, comics and a separate section in the newspaper devoted solely to sports. The newspaper sought to widen--to democratize its appeal--and sports was a vehicle for such an appeal. 59/

"In tapping all economic and social levels of American society it represents a distinctive democratic phenomenon. It reveals the existence of a psychological common denominator with little relation to either education or economic status." 60/

With this democratization process there has arisen a "national sports-consciousness" that is inevitably linked to

distinct dialect. As the sports historian John Betts has written:

"With the rise of a national press and the popularization of sporting journalism, with millions playing organized games on the playground or the athletic field, with the development of a national sports-consciousness, enrichment of the American language is inevitable." 61/

The sports dialect's democratic appeal is linked to its ability to reach people in a concrete, tangible and emotional sense. As sports writer Marshall Hunt points out about Captain Patterson and the New York Daily News: "It was Patterson from the beginning who saw we would increase circulation by developing a strong sports department. He always wanted us to write in a bouncy way. Very biff, bang, boom stuff." 62/ The late Paul Gallico concurs: "...the News reflected Patterson, his toughness and closeness to people, his understanding of his audience." 63/

Style was extremely important in the appeal of the sports page. The 1920s, the "Golden Age of Sports," saw the systemization of this style into a distinct jargon.

"Informality of style, originality of composition and a new jargon blossomed onto the sports page--but accompanied by a tendency toward verbosity, triteness and shopworn cliches, synonyms and analogies." 64/

It is exactly in this ritualistic aspect of sports jargon (overlaid with a stylistic originality), that the appeal of sports language can be found. As we have seen, ritualistic language creates a predictable and understandable world of

meaning, while at the same time, condensing emotional responses. Sports writing strives primarily to simplify and vivify. "It is clear that the selection of sports verbs and adjectives is not based solely on the objective content of the events...but also to convey part of the color and emotion of the contest...." 65/

The effect of dramatic simplification is bolstered by the involved attitude of the reporters themselves. Unlike the political or economic reporters who are supposed to remain neutral, the sports writer more often than not is an unabashed partisan. In Gallico's words,

"...I believed in it and was impressed by athletes and what I was seeing. And while the title of your book is No Cheering in the Press Box, I've seen and heard plenty of cheering in press boxes when we sports writers got excited by something." 66/

This involvement of sports writers in the contest is a sharp rhetorical mode of creating empathy and identification with an audience, as well as actively involving them in the action itself. 67/

The sports fan, cued by his idiomatic familiarity, is not only emotionally involved but knowledgeable:

"...spectatorship involves more than merely watching. It involved a great deal of cognitive ability on the part of spectators. It involves knowledge, an increasing knowledge. It involves expertise." 68/

This active cognitive involvement, in contrast to most people's lack of political knowledge and interest, is demonstrated by the role of the sports page in the building of circulation.

The cognoscenti need accurate information:

"According to newspapermen...no class of readers is more responsive and none demands a higher degree of accuracy than the sports fan. The baseball writer especially is writing for an informed readership, and, if he makes a mistake, both he and his paper will get a dozen letters in the next morning's mail calling attention to that fact." 70/

The involvement and knowledge of the sports fan is a product, then, of the tangible, concrete and dramatic nature of the sports scene as well as the symbolic medium through which it is transmitted. This process is noticed in an English working class setting by Richard Hoggart:

"The general point is further illustrated by two institutions--professional sports and Royalty--which, though they originate in the world outside, hold the interest of the working-class people because they can be easily translated into personal and concrete terms.

"At work, sports vies with sex as the staple of conversation.... Sports conversations start from personalities, often spoken of by their Christian as well as their surnames... technical details of play are discussed, often to the accompaniment of extraordinary facts of memory as to the history of matches many seasons back. The men talk about individuals who they know, at least as figures on the field...." 71/

The appeal of the language of sports to the English working class approximates Basil Bernstein's findings on the speech of working class children. He finds working class language to be strongly affective, parochial and tribal. This public language "contains its own aesthetic, a simplicity and directness of expression, emotionally virile, pithy and powerful and a metaphorical range of considerable force and appropriateness." 72/ Bernstein

roots this language form in the particularistic and traditional forms of social structure. Unlike the middle class code or formal language which is impersonal and abstract, the working class public language maximizes the emotional and concrete. What is extremely relevant for the point under examination here is the extent to which the public language users come into conflict with middle class teachers in the schools.

"The expressive behavior and immediacy of response which accompany the use of this language may again be wrongly interpreted by the teacher. This may well lead to a situation where pupil and teacher disvalue each other's world and communication becomes a means of asserting differences." 73/

I think that all that has been said about the sports jargon strongly points to its approximation of the public language form. Paul Goodman's analysis also seems to point in the same direction. He calls this language form a "badge language." 74/ Bernstein makes a further point that is worthy of notice.

"A fundamental characteristic of the language despite its apparent warmth and vitality is that it is impersonal in the literal sense of the term...the impersonality opens the way for rigid adherence to standards and ritualization which reinforces almost a tribal, mechanical solidarity." 75/

It would seem that this language form encourages a kind of "false personalization" and that facilitates "personal" and "concrete" relationships to mass media events and personalities. It is in this sense, perhaps, that Hoggart's

working class man "know" their sports heroes and are at "home" in the Sportsworld.

The sports language not only taps into an emotional world but taps into an ethical world as well. Idioms have a social context as receptacles for social values. A "tribes" attitude is built into its "entitlings." 76/ In this way the sports fan is transported to an ethically ideal realm. As Burke has pointed out, all universe building is ethical. Marshall McLuhan underscores this by pointing out how

"Games are dramatic models of our inner psychological selves providing release of particular tension.... As models they are collective rather than private dramatizations of inner life. Like our vernacular tongues, all games are media of interpersonal communication and they could have no meaning except as extensions of our immediate inner lives." 77/

In American society, Kenneth Burke sees the rise of professional sports as a result of (and extension of) the force of our peculiar "occupational psychoses" (success, competition, mobility, etc.). 78/ In this sense the game is an analogical extension of the ethical orientation of American capitalism. This observation is underscored by Harry Edwards' documentation of the similarity of the "American sports creed" and the "American business creed." 79/ The symbolic universe of the Sportsworld not only dramatizes this individualistic and psychically mobile ethos, it also taps into and syncretizes to it a tribal or communal aspect as well. Its appeals are truly protean. 80/

V

We have seen how the rationalization of the world creates a problem for the development of meaningful political symbolism. We have seen how the rational-functionalization of language contributes to this problematic. We have also seen how the development of sports symbolism and sports language arises out of this rationalization process, ^{81/} how it arises and develops its own aesthetic imperatives that contrast sharply with--and "lift us out of"--the everyday world. What remains to be understood are the reasons underlying the athleticization of politics: the implosion of sports symbolism into political discourse.

The only theoretical attempt that has been made to understand the political role of sports language is Isaac Balbus' article on the rise of the sports metaphor. ^{82/} He sees the almost complete absorption of political communication by sports jargon: He explains how the process of enveloping politics with sports symbolism in effect transfers the meanings from one realm to the other. Underscoring my previous analysis, he sees the rise of sports language as concomitant with the decline in political affect. ^{83/} He sees that politics has become an instrumental and rational realm, but also sees that sports has become technical as well.

"Thus, to begin with, a contemporary sports contest is the very model of purposive-rational or instrumental action governed by technical rules and strategies." ^{84/}

While it is hard to deny that rationalization is altering the Sportsworld, this thesis (whose tentative nature is admitted by Balbus himself) fails to illustrate the ways in which I believe that the rational-instrumental aspects of sports are inextricably interwoven with affective, purposive, ethical and ideal values. As Balbus indicates,

"A genuine demonstration of this thesis would require evidence that sports have assumed not only a technical form, but also, crucially, that they have been imbued with a technical meaning in the consciousness of those who follow them." 85/

The Balbus thesis (besides resting too heavily on the analysis of sports done by Paul Hoch) 86/ ignores the questions of rhetorical appeal and style (as pure form). As Burke cogently argues,

"In my Rhetoric of Motives, I have suggested the possibility that the appeal in the sheer forms of expression--be they called poetic or rhetorical--is universal. Hence, an audience can readily yield to this aspect of an exhortation. And in thus responding to the doctrinally neutral aspects of the address, the audience is more in the mood to accept by contagion the rest of the author's plea." 87/

As Hugh Duncan indicates in his commentary on Burke's work, rhetoric is a form of social identification between audience and speaker. 88/ It is a form of stylistic ingratiation. In order to be effective it must be able to utilize the vocabulary of motives which the audience is comfortable with. 89/ ("In its simplest manifestation, style is ingratiation. It is an attempt to gain favor

by the hypnotic or suggestive process of 'saying the right thing.'") 90/

In this context, Brian Petrie's conceptualization of sports fans as an "ethnic group" is certainly useful. 91/ Petrie points out the possibility that persuasion can also be effected through non-verbal modes of identification: visits to lockerrooms, phone calls and the hosting of sports banquets. Duncan, citing Burke, reinforces these observations, "You persuade man only insofar as you talk his language by speech, gesture...idea, identifying your ways with his." 92/

The development of a "national sports consciousness" and a distinct medium for its communication, paves the way for the transposition of sports symbolism into the political realm. The most sophisticated development of the possibilities inherent in this metaphorical extension was effected by former President Nixon. Nixon's use of the sports metaphor, I argue, derives from his complete self-identification with the world of sports. Nixon's relatively non-Machiavellian preoccupation with sports is observed by almost all those who comment on the former president's sports involvement. 93/ This more or less natural identification is a useful dramaturgical device for persuasion.

"The more 'unconscious' such equations are (in the minds of the audience), the greater the effectiveness is likely to be as 'stimuli' that provoke response." 94/

The intangibility of political "reality" (I have commented on its remoteness) unquestionably cooperates in the conveying of the saleable impression of Richard Nixon as a lover of sports. This helps in the transposition of sports values to politics. The symbolic nature of both worlds and their "distance" from the concrete and local also enables the political leader (as galvanizer of public emotions) to mediate in the transposition of values. 95/

As the focal point of the American political system, the president becomes the receptacle for much public expectation and fear. An effective device for identification in American politics has always been the image of being "one of the boys." For Richard Nixon, as Gary Willis has underscored, the impression of being an average guy has always been important. Willis reports that Nixon had a genuine dislike of snobbery. "Football was always his way to remain 'common' during his triumphs on the long debating tours of his time." 96/ This desire explains the proliferation (and political effectiveness) of visits to lockerrooms, phone calls to coaches, and receptions for sports figures. The use of sports terms and the "team" metaphor, as William Safire has observed, are useful because "they relate so closely to people." 97/ This fits in with the previously reported relationships between democratization and the rise of sports language. If the sports reporter is able to

become part of the action he is conveying, and is able to develop a sense of empathy with his audience, it is not hard to envision a similar process involved between a political leader and a mass public. As a "symbolic leader," ^{98/} the president is the personal link for many to the political system. Since sports does appear to many as a personal and concrete universe, the identification with its language and scenes is a way to develop a sense of the personal. The vicariousness of this relationship is part of the consumption pattern. It also probably encourages a sense of "false concreteness" about a complex and abstract political process.

Nixon's self-identification with the world of sports went beyond involvement with its ceremonial forms. He also seemed to believe that the values of the Sportsworld were those needed to "succeed" in real life. James David Barber and Gary Wills both indicate how Nixon's description of his "six crises" reflect the competitive "never-say-die" ethos of the athlete competitor. ^{99/} It is the ethic of Frank Merriwell-Horatio Alger:

"It became fashionable in the years of Nixon's crushing defeat in 1962 to ask him what kept him running. It was the same thing that kept him on the football field where he did not belong--the sacredness of running, the need to deserve luck eventually by showing the pluck that starts at the bottom and never quits." ^{100/}

This Alger ethic, and its Merriwell sports extension, are part of the "occupational psychosis"

of capitalism. As sports developed, no doubt, its ethos was a model of reinforcement for the ideological hegemony of American capitalism. But that simpler world of competitive "character" and success is a world that is anachronistic in the light of the development of the past century. Yet it is a world that is preserved in all its symbolic clarity in the realm of sports. The transposition of the ethically ideal values of sports into a technocratic political system is a stylistic subterfuge that falsely clarifies the new complexity with the images of an old simplicity. This is especially true since many of these values still continue to be accepted by many people. 101/

The use of the sports metaphor in political discourse may also be inherently mystifying. The concrete public nature of sports language, warm and vital in many respects, may prevent its users from being able to theorize and universalize.

"These constraints, however, cause little problem for personal communications since commonly shared interests and the individual's strong identification with the values and norms of his group reduce the restricted code speakers need to state explicitly his intent." 102/

Sports language, seen as a variant of a restricted code, tends to emphasize the concrete and the personal at the expense of the abstract and logical. In our highly differentiated political system,

"...a considerable amount of sociopolitical knowledge is required for an effective communication in political communication. Groups or individuals who have internalized and are thus bound by a restricted language cannot cope with the sophisticated messages...." 103/

The use of sports language encourages the conveying of complex messages through an oversimplified conceptual and syntactical framework. This inevitably leads to "noise"--but, importantly, "melodious noise."

Sports is a universe of controlled conflict. By transposing sports symbolism into political discourse the political participant or commentator tends to transpose sports' ideologically unproblematic nature into politics. As Balbus has pointed out cogently, this has the effect of underscoring the organizational (instrumental) imperatives at the expense of articulating substantive goals. It promotes an interest in who is "winning" or "losing" without the necessary concomitant interest in the reasons why one should win and the other should lose.

This tendency is evident in the use of such terms as "team player," "quarterback" (for leader) and "expansion team": The use of the team concept is an attempt to instill an "us-ness" whose victory (which is morally unambiguous) is essential. If the South Vietnamese are an expansion team, for instance, they are first of all typically American. Secondly, what do you have to do with an expansion team? Everybody knows that such a squad must inevitably go through the "rebuilding" process of "stockpiling" talent. With the help of the "expansion draft" we eagerly anticipate the rise of the South Vietnamese Rangers into a first division team.

Interest may be inculcated and loyalty instilled but not without paying a heavy price. Domestically, a similar de-ideologizing process occurs. If a political commentator reminds us that "Senator Muskie has been placed in the line-up as a possible Democratic running-mate," our attention is focused on whether "Ol' Ed" gets his licks rather than what's in "Ol' Ed's" head. (This, of course, overlooks the atrocious misapplication of this baseball term. If one is "placed in the line-up," then barring unforeseen circumstances, he should get his at-bats. Ironically, and almost certainly unintentionally, this "line-up" has more applicability to the process of picking out a criminal suspect for identification.)

The use of sports symbolism in political discourse is essentially a conservative device that prevents an adequate conceptualization of new policies and directions. Cassirer has noted that one of the ethical functions of art is to give up "the intuition of the forms of things," not as mere imitation but as a "true and genuine discovery." ^{104/} Sports as an aesthetic realm is an ideal world out of an idyllic past. It may perhaps be true that in order to move forward we must in some ways overcome and recover the past, but the Sportsworld is too often a place of refuge from the present. The attempt to transport its genuine apolitical and ahistorical appeals to our political and historical world will, further, reify the political present.

The rise of sports language and its subtle transposition to less dramatic arenas underscores the symbolic strength of the Sportsworld itself. Its use as a prop for a disinterested electorate offers neat insight into the evolving dialectical relationship of the two realms of sports and politics. The autonomous strength of sports language and drama clues us to the further analysis of the way in which the symbolic world of sports coheres an emotional network in American society that forms an important foundation for political stability. The power of sports language, as an agent of sports symbolism, forms a network of rational and social communication that provides large masses of Americans with communal warmth and personal identity. In such a role, sports language is the glue for a diffuse "rain or shine" attachment to the American polity. 106/

Footnotes

- 1 Robert Lipsyte, Sports Illustrated (July 31, 1978).
- 2 James Wechsler, "Politics: Newest Spectator Sport," New York Post (Dec. 20, 1978).
- 3 Neil Offen, God Save the Players (Chicago: Playboy Press, 1974). See his Chapter 9 for a good description of the president's sports involvement. Another helpful journalistic account is Chapter 9 of Jerry Izenberg's How Many Miles to Camelot? (N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1972).
- 4 The term "sportspeak" was coined by Lipsyte; other discussions of sports language include Ike Balbus' "Politics as Sports: The Ascendency of the Sports Metaphor," Monthly Review (Mar. 1975), Vol.26 # 10; Frederick Cozens and Florence Stumpf "The Sports Page" in John T. Talamni and Charlie Page, Sport and Society (Boston: Little Brown, 1973); Perry Tannanbaum and James Noah, "Sportugese: A Study of Sports Page Communication," in John Loy and Gerald Kenyon, Sport, Culture and Society (N.Y.: McMillan, 1969); Red Smith, "Spoken Like a True Son of Old Whittier," The New York Times (April 30, 1973); and William Safire, The New Language of Politics (N.Y.: Collier, 1969).
- 5 "Spoken Like a True Son of Old Whittier."
- 6 James Reston, "Sports and Politics in America," The New York Times (Sept. 12, 1969). The emphasis on language in this work is designed to show how symbolism is transmitted or conveyed through language.
- 7 Anselm Strauss, Mirrors and Masks: The Search for Identity (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1959), p.149.
- 8 Ibid, p.121.
- 9 Ibid, p.148. As Kenneth Burke indicates, all words have a social valuation and the "tribes" valuations are built into its idiom. Language as Symbolic Action (Berkeley: University of Calif. Press, 1968), p.361.
- 10 Paul Goodman, Speaking and Language: Defense of Poetry (N.Y.: Random House, 1971), p.58.
- 11 C. Wright Mills, Power, Politics and People (N.Y.: Ballantine Books, 1963), p.434.

- 12 Melvin DePleur and Sandra Bell-Rokeach, Theories of Mass Communication (N.Y.: David McKay, 1975), p.260.
- 13 Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967).
- 14 Kenneth Burke, Permanence and Change (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970), p.33. Mills also emphasizes this point: "In secondary, secular and urban structures, varying and competing vocabularies of motives operated coterminally and the situations to which they are appropriate are not clearly demarcated." p.449.
- 15 See especially his Language and Myth (N.Y.: Dover Pub., 1953) and the Philosophy of Symbolic Language, Vol. I (New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 1955).
- 16 Cassirer, The Myth of the State (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947), p.43.
- 17 Emile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1965). Durkheim tries to demonstrate how the increasing division of labor creates the need for the development of a conscience collective to prevent disorganization.
- 18 Language and Myth, p.98.
- 19 Permanence and Change, p.55.
- 20 See Max Weber's pessimistic account of industrialization in The Proletariat Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (N.Y.: Charles Scribner, 1963) and "Science as a Vocation" in Hana Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds.) From Max Weber (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1946).
- 21 Permanence and Change, p.58.
- 22 Ibid, p.30.
- 23 Max Weber, The Theory of Social and Economic Organization (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1947), pp. 95, 103, 115.
- 24 The Myth and the State, p.38.
- 25 Quoted in Arthur Mitzman's The Iron Cage (N.Y.: Alfred Knopf, 1969), p.176. This is also the underlying theme in Freud's Civilization and its Discontents (N.Y.: Norton, 1961): the growth of civilization taking place at the expense of human happiness.

- 26 "In such cases where the rational order of symbols would establish a congruity wholly alien to the emotional order of symbols, is it not possible that intense conflicts would arise with the result that anguish and unrest would follow any really thorough attempt to embrace the rational category?" Permanence and Change, p.22. This theme is explored by Orrin Klapp, The Collective Search for Identity (N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969).
- 27 Cassirer, An Essay on Man (N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1944); Burke, Language and Social Order; Suzanne Langer, Philosophy in a New Key (N.Y.: New American Library, 1956); Hugh Duncan, Communication and Social Order (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1968); Murray Edelman, The Symbolic Uses of Politics (Chicago: University of Ill. Press, 1967).
- 28 See Communication and Social Order for a discussion of sexual glamour and mystery, p.117.
- 29 The Political Illusion (N.Y.: Random House, 1972), p.viii.
- 30 Ibid, p.99. As Paul Goodman has pointed out, we must all exist in a verbal world but there can be a pathological tendency to exist solely in that kind of world. Speaking and Language, p.26.
- 31 Symbolic Uses of Politics, p.5.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 The Political Illusion, p.112.
- 34 Ibid, p.9. This dramatic "life among abstractions" is, of course, not limited to political phenomena.
- 35 Murray Edelman, Politics as Symbolic Action (Chicago: Markham, 1971), p.65.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 As Burke says, "...much of what we take as observations about 'reality' may be but the spinning out of the possibilities implicit in our particular choice of terms...." Language as Symbolic Action, p.46.
- 38 Ibid, p.375.
- 39 Politics as Symbolic Action, p.67.

- 40 Ibid, p.71.
- 41 Ibid, p.77.
- 42 As George Orwell says, "There is a huge clump of wornout metaphors which have lost all creative power and are merely used because they save people the trouble of thinking for themselves." "Politics and the English Language" in John Somner and James Roy, The Language Experience (N.Y.: Dell Pub., 1974).
- 43 Symbolic Uses of Politics, p.176. The idea of "uni-modality" is basically congruent with those of Louis Hartz, The Liberal Tradition in America (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1955), and Daniel Boorstein, The Genius of American Politics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953).
- 44 Robert Gilmour and Robert Lamb, Political Alienation in Contemporary America (N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1975).
- 45 Meg Greenfield, "Get on the Raft with Taft, Boys," Newsweek (June 7, 1976).
- 46 Herbert Marcuse, One Dimensional Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), p.104.
- 47 Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton, "Mass Communication, Popular Taste and Organized Social Action," in Bernard Rosenberg and David White (eds) Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1957), p.464 (emphasis added).
- 48 David Riesman, et al., The Lonely Crowd (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), p.181. This is congruent with the "narcotizing dysfunction."
- 49 Ibid, p.189. See also Christopher Lasch's The Culture of Narcissism (N.Y.: Norton, 1979), Chapter III.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 The Symbolic Uses of Politics, p.17.
- 52 Paul Weiss, Sport: A Philosophic Inquiry (Carbondale, Ill.: Northwestern Ill. Univ. Press, 1969), p.243.
- 53 Reston, "Sport and Politics in America," p.38 (emphasis added).

- 54 On the ethical idealism of the Sportsworld see Ann Leider's essay, "The National Football League and American Life," The New York Times (Jan. 18, 1976). For an analysis of this view, see my "Reflections in a Mirror: The Relationship of Sports and Politics in American Life."
- 55 An Essay on Man, p.186.
- 56 "The individual's deepest means of support in the civic context resides in such communication or co-operative bonds. By it he is "transcendentally" fortified. His personal solidarity depends upon his allegiance to it." Permanence and Change, p.236.
- 57 Arnold Beisser, The Madness in Sports (N.Y.: Appleton, Century, Crofts, 1967), p.129.
- 58 Permanence and Change, p.176.
- 59 "The Sports Page."
- 60 Ibid, p.428. This can be demonstrated by the number of "sophisticates" who read the New York Daily News or the New York Post precisely for its more elaborate, colorful coverage of sports (mea culpa).
- 61 John Betts, America's Sporting Heritage (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1974).
- 62 Jerome Holtzman, No Cheering in the Press Box (N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1974), p.23.
- 63 Ibid, p.70.
- 64 Tannenbaum and Noah, "Sportugese," p.237.
- 65 Ibid, p.336. See also Sports World, p.122. As Erwin Canham of the Christian Science Monitor once said, "...news must be made more interesting and compelling which means simplification and dramatization are imperative. The result is that the news is sometimes 'souped-up' to the language of the sports page which finds its way into events that are too grave to be considered in such terms." The Sports Page, p.420.
- 66 No Cheering in the Press Box, p.72. The preponderance of writers interviewed by Holtzman expressed a similar view. Stanley Woodward in The Sports Page (N.Y.: Greenwood Press, 1969) feels that sportswriting more and more resembles the rest of the paper. My observa-

tion is that this is not necessarily true unless we take the incongruous position that the rise of sports language in the rest of the paper is bringing it closer to the sports page rather than the other way around. See Sportugese, p.327, for a similar view.

- 67 "Rhetoric can do this," Burke argues, "because it is rooted in an essential function of language itself... the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols." Communication and Social Order, p.155.
- 68 C. H. Page , "Reaction to Stone Preservation," Aspects of Contermorary Sports Sociology, G. S. Kenyon (ed.) (Chicago: The Athletic Institute, 1969), quoted by Barry McPherson, "Sports Consumption and the Economics of Consumerism" in Ball and Loy, Sport and the Social Order (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1975).
- 69 Sports Page, p.35.
- 70 Ibid, p.424. "This is illustrated as well in "Sportugese" where Tannenbaum and Noah note a high communication coefficiency between sportswriters and sports fans. The kinds of verbs that the writer uses indicates to the fan the nature of the final point spread between teams. "However, for the person who does not read or follow sports, these verbs fail in communicating their message."
- 71 Richard Hoggart, The Uses of Literacy (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1954), p.91 (emphasis added).
- 72 Basil Bernstein, Class, Codes and Control: Theoretical Studies Toward a Sociology of Language (N.Y.: Shocken Books, 1975), p.51.
- 73 Ibid, p.43
- 74 Speaking and Language, p.58.
- 75 Class, Codes and Control, p.73.
- 76 Language as Symbolic Action, p.361; Permanence and Change, p.176.
- 77 Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man (N.Y.: McGraw-Hill, 1964), pp. 237-239. See also Communication and Social Order, p.112, where Duncan points out: "The difference between symbolic and social drama is the difference between imaginary and real obstacles but, to produce effects on audiences, symbolic drama must reflect the real obstacles on social drama."

- 78 Permanence and Chance, p.41.
- 79 Harry Edwards, The Sociology of Sport (Homewood, Ill.: The Dorsey Press, 1971), p.41.
- 80 For the tribal aspects of sport see Beisser's chapter in The Madness in Sport dealing with the fan. See also Greg Stone, "Some Meanings of American Sport," in Sage (ed.) Sport in Society (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1970), p.405. For a popular participant angle theme see Bill Bradley, Life on the Run (N.Y.: Quadrangle, 1976).
- 81 It can thus, let us say, compensate for personal inadequacy through vicarious identification with sports heroes, while at the same time helping devotees to overcome the impersonality and "rootlessness" of our society through a prototribal solidarity. For a theoretical discussion see The Collective Search for Identity, especially Chapter One.
- 82 "Sports and Politics: The Ascendancy of the Sports Metaphor."
- 83 Ibid, p.30.
- 84 Ibid.
- 85 Ibid, p.33. This involves us in the whole Weberian problematic of "meaning" that is discussed in Section II. It is my contention that it is precisely the subjective factor of meaning that differentiates people's relationships to sports from their feelings about politics.
- 86 Paul Hoch, Rip Off the Big Game (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971). For a critique of this approach see my "Reflections on a Mirror."
- 87 Language as Symbolic Action.
- 88 Communication and Social Order, p.154.
- 89 "The variable is the accepted vocabulary of motives, the ultimates of discourse, of each man's dominant group about whose opinion he cares." Power, Politics and People, p.448; see also Permanence and Change, p.162.
- 90 Permanence and Change, p.150.
- 91 Brian Petrie, "Sport and Politics," Sport and Social Order. "Spectators of sporting events can constitute a social group which merits political interest, and just as any ethnic, religious or special interest group they can expect individual politicians to make personal appearances in an effort to win identification and support." p.193.

- 92 Communication and Social Order, p.170.
- 93 "Anyone who would go to, unsolicitedly, privately to a Washington Senators' game--a doubleheader! in the 1950s, anyone who could care about Lou Berberet, is entitled to be called a fan. Richard Nixon is an honest to goodness fan." God Save the Players, p.119; "His admirers and his critics agreed that his passion for sports was no mere political expedient." Sportsworld, p.11.
- 94 Language as Symbolic Action, p.74. See also Carl Hovland, Irving Janis and Harold Kelley, Communication and Persuasion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), p.19.
- 95 Irving Goffman, The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959), p.252. The classic statement is Machievalli's The Prince. There it is pointed out that deception is abetted by the fact that the people can only "see but not feel" what is going on in politics. (N.Y.: Modern Library, 1964), p.66.
- 96 Gary Wills, Nixon Agonistes: The Crisis of The Self-Made Man (Boston: Houghton Nifflin, 1970), p.161.
- 97 The New Language of Politics, p.633. Mr. Safire was extremely helpful in the preparation of this chapter.
- 98 Orrin Klapp, Symbolic Leaders (Chicago: Aldine, 1965). This theme is pursued in The Collective Search for Identity.
- 99 Nixon Agonistes, p.122. James David Barber; Presidential Character (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1972), pp. 388-393. Robert Semple's article, "Football Fan Named Nixon Spends Day Like Millions of Others," The New York Times, Jan. 2, 1970), emphasizes how Nixon sees "higher virtues" in football.
- 100 Nixon Agonistes, p.162.
- 101 Robert Lane, Political Ideology (N.Y.: Free Press, 1962).
- 102 Klaus Mueller, The Politics of Communication (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1975), p.56.
- 103 Ibid, p.95.

- 104 An Essay on Man, p.184
- 105 Nixon Agonistes, p.167.
- 106 See Karl Deutsch, Nationalism and Social Communication (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1970); Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, The Civic Culture (Boston: Little Brown, 1965).

"LET'S GO METS!" THE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS
OF SPORTS TEAM SYMBOLISM

"We learn from the Boston Celtics even while we enjoy them."

Jeff Greenfield

"The season was one of the great experiences for the city,
for the team brought people from all walks of life together...."

Mayor Washington,
District of Columbia

"It's easy to be a fan of a winning football team: it takes
dedication and character to be an Iowa fan."

Letter to
Sports Illustrated

Sports has a vise-like grip on the emotions of the American people. At a time when political involvement is suspect, politicians are vilified, and the legitimacy of major social institutions is questioned, sports enthusiasm increases in both scope and intensity. The hub of this devotion and the center of this counterpoint between sports and political life is the sports team. James Reston's comments on the impact of the Washington Bullets is illustrative:

"It is silly, of course, to compare sports with what is called the great game of politics, but maybe not all that silly. It would be hard to overestimate the frustrations of ambiguity, uncertainty and complexity in American life today.... But sports, at least, have a way of bringing a community together, particularly when it has a winning national team."1/

The sportsworld, more universally than any other single phenomenon, dominates the consciousness and permeates the everyday lives of millions of Americans. In previous chapters I have developed the argument that the political implications of mass sports involvement can be best understood by seeing the way in which sports functions as a socializer of dominant values while at the same time understanding its ability to provide a symbolic refuge from the harsher realities of American institutions. The ability of the Sportsworld to have this kind of impact is derived from its existence as a dramatic life-world. As I have previously pointed out, before "realistically" tackling the political and social implications of

sports it is necessary to enter into and immanently explain the dramatic symbolism of the Sportsworld itself.

The sports team is the principal focus of this chapter. My discussion of the role of the team includes an analysis of the characteristics of the overall sports drama and the central position of the team within this drama. Radiating outward, I underscore the way in which sports' dramatic symbolism and team imagery functions within the larger scenic context of the American political system and capitalist society. In focusing on the aesthetic symbolic form of the team I am emphasizing the importance of understanding the power of dramatic symbols in creating meaning for social action.—^{2/} Once the symbolic form of the team has been made clear, and after the environment in which its appeals take hold has been sharply delineated, the political implications will be understood.

Many observers of the American sports scene as well as numerous social thinkers have been quick to point out the manner in which sports teams can act as effective dramatizers of political and social integration. The team has been seen as an integral aspect of the enactment and reinforcement of community cohesion on all levels of American society.—^{3/} The belief in the powers of team symbolism has been so strong that many sociologists and industrial psychologists have either recommended the creation of a "team spirit" in the work environment, or more explicitly advocated the use of sports

teams to generate social solidarity in the life of the commercial enterprise.—^{4/}

Allegiances to teams are both intense and persistent. We read of a man in Colorado who attempted suicide because his Denver Broncos fumbled the football too often. The Broncos were fumbling and this man wanted to shoot himself.—^{5/}

A man named Charlie Winkler follows the University of Nebraska football team all around the country. "Loudy" Loudensberger has raised a Baltimore Colt flag on the front lawn of his home. Larry Hallenback, keeping up with a family tradition, spends the night before every Kansas-Kansas State basketball game camped out in the cold outside Allen Fieldhouse so that he can be first inside. Roger Kahn lovingly describes his own involvement with the Brooklyn Dodgers from childhood to young adulthood, while a group of diehard devotees still hold regular meetings of the St. Louis Browns Fan Club, a team that has been moribund for over twenty years.—^{6/}

Our folk understanding of fan involvement with teams is a rich source for theoretical analysis. The fan, however, as Harry Edwards has observed, is the least understood actor in the sports drama. Edwards' own analysis is a useful point of departure in the development of an understanding of fan-team symbiosis. Edwards sees fan identification devolving from "role strain" within the larger social system. He sees the Sportsworld as having mainly socialization and value-maintenance functions.

In seeing sports primarily as a socializer of dominant values, Edwards explicitly rejects the socio-psychological perspective of psychiatrist Arnold Beisser. Beisser sees American sports as a response and counterpoint to certain alienating trends in "post-industrial" society. He emphasizes the manner in which the team and the ritual of the game creates a symbolic sense of communal belonging for the team partisans. Beisser's emphasis is on the way in which sports acts as a symbolic refuge--an "escape." 8/ What I will clarify, however, is the way in which these two themes of socialization and escape can be seen as moments of a single dialectic.

To understand the political importance of team symbolism it is necessary to demonstrate how the team acts as a socializer of important values in American society, while at the same time creating a dramatic "world" that gains an autonomy and reality all its own. Failure to grasp the symbolic power of the Sportsworld weakens any attempt to understand how values are internalized by masses of people. In turn, an analysis of sports as a symbolic world, analogous in some important ways to Murray Edelman's observations on the appeals of political symbolism, allows us to see how sports involvement can become a counterpoint to the decline

of political affect and the widespread nostalgia for community in America.^{9/}

II

The political uses of team imagery rest on the aesthetic structure of the Sportsworld itself and the ability of this world to exist, for those who inhabit its arenas, as a "finite province of meaning."^{10/} This view of sports as a "bracketed world" is congruent with the philosophical analysis of sports and play. Both Paul Weiss and John Huizinga have analyzed sports and play in their pure form. They see these areas as separate and more structured than the often chaotic world of everyday life.^{11/}

The philosophical approach that sees sports as separate from and purer than everyday life has served many of the recent critics of sports as a convenient tackling dummy. "Sociological realism" looks upon the philosophical approach as naive and idyllic. As Brian Petrie reports:

"If one defines the boundaries of the field of competition as the fringes of the real world, and the blast of the referees' whistle as a time out for a break during which reality intrudes then it is not difficult to maintain the belief that sports is separate. Sports may be regarded as such only if it can be demonstrated to exist predominantly for the resolution of satisfactions intrinsic to the spectators. Only then could it be claimed that sport is truly divorced from the considerations of the real world. However, it is clear that acceptance of such a view of sport is utopian in essence...."^{12/}

Petrie goes on to convincingly demonstrate how sports is "strongly rooted to the political-economic system." Clearly this point of view is a refreshing counterbalance to the popular view of sports as being "above" politics and other serious concerns. What is important to emphasize, however, is that the philosophical perspective is an essential aspect of any political theory of sports. It is precisely through an understanding of these pure forms that we will be able to analyze how the values of the political order are inculcated in an aesthetic "back door play." In analagous fashion, Murray Edelman demonstrates the way politics operates through the creation of an aesthetic symbolism that dramatizes what people want to see--thereby creating a "sense of involvement." 13/

In the Introduction to this work I began to develop an idea of the Sportsworld as a dramatic "social-life world." 14/ In this chapter this idea will be given a richer context through an illustration of how the team acts as a centering institution for the larger sports drama. What I want to re-emphasize briefly is the way in which the Sportsworld, as a playworld, is, in Huizinga's words, "an imaginery world of living beings" with an accent of reality all its own. Lewis Cole vividly captures the lively dramatic infrastructure, and the role of the fan within the drama, in his analysis of the appeals of basketball:

"Every contest is a drama of this conflict. Even before the play begins, while entering the arena we know the basic plot. The players will try to fashion themselves into a flawless unit, and several stories will be enacted during the quest--a rookie's progress, a duel between two well-matched antagonists, one player's battle with age, another's combat with his own selfishness, a third's attempt to curb his frenzied enthusiasm. Sitting above the court, we are so intimate with the particulars of the story that we feel a strange identification with its protagonists, the players. We associate ourselves with their efforts, cheering and booing their performances, often even imagining ourselves part of the team; at the same time, we can't help them practically; they alone decide the story's end. Experiencing the acts of their performance is a double role, we talk about them, using both 'we' and 'they' interchangeably."^{15/}

In my initial discussion of sports drama I emphasized how social order is given meaning through the creation or enactment of a symbolic canopy--or system of belief--that integrates everyday reality into a higher normative justification. The strong normative structure of the Sportsworld is underscored, as we shall see more clearly later, in the struggle to make the team. This struggle is mediated by the newspaper, magazines and popular biographies and is integrated into everyday life through social communication. The social emphasis that schools, communities and media give to what Michael Novak calls the process of "election" dramatizes the prestige of the team and importance of the adherence, like young monks, to the efficacious ways of devotion.^{16/}

The young athlete learns that it is important to be self disciplined, to have "guts" and mental toughness. He acquires a Code that helps him form a strong personality that can be utilized in the competitive process. The Code^{17/} is strongly individualistic, emphasizes the control of emotions and the centrality of competition and winning. Importantly, the strongly individualistic Code is synthesized with the moral necessity of collective sacrifice. The slogan, "There is no 'I' in a Team," underscores this basic moral imperative. Children are socialized into these principles as they participate in the increasingly institutionalized junior leagues and as they feel the pressure to represent their communities in high school competitions. As George Kirk, assistant football coach at Baylor, remarks: "The Community EXPECTS a boy who's able to play to play. Football becomes important to him because it's important to the community."^{18/}

The agonistic self-sacrifice to make the team and the altruistic collective sacrifice for the team's welfare accentuate the larger dramatic meanings. The ethos is most clearly seen in sports fiction for children. In The Kid from Thompkinsville, young Roy Tucker worries about making the team:

"He was not only unhappy, he was afraid, and his loneliness accentuated his fright. There was the fear of not making good, of having to return home without a job as everyone in Thompkinsville had predicted. Worst of all

there was the worry as to whether he'd ever be able to return. Suppose he couldn't make the grade?"19/

Once the struggles for election are resolved, the key subject, as Lewis Cole pointed out earlier, is whether or not the team will mesh as a unit. When cohesion is achieved, the powerful symbolism of collective struggle and the common good is dramatized. In John Tunis' The Keystone Kids the point is clear:

"A team is made up of equal parts of Bob's pep and fire and vinegar mixed with Roy's quiet determination when things went wrong.... It was Karl Case's drive and push in the clutch when he forgot his batting average and was trying hard to win for the club.... It was all these men and all these qualities that made a team."20/

The struggle to make the team and the struggle to make the team cohere underpin the larger competitive drama between teams: the struggle to win. These struggles, the interweaving of plots, are brought to life by the actors whose characterizations give the plots human significance. Importantly the plots, characterizations and beliefs take place within a clearly delineated hierarchy of authority. In keeping with the significantly human nature of the Sportsworld, the structure of authority is not heavily bureaucratized or impersonal. The commissioners who sit atop the structure are always personally involved in the doctrinal disputes--settling "compensation" rulings, over-ruling protests and sometimes vetoing trades

because they are not "in the best interests of sport."21/

The sports' owners are not a faceless corporate elite but concerned leaders who anguish over defeat and visibly exult in victory. This comment on Chicago Bears' owner, "Papa" George Halas, is representative:

"The old warrior fights his battles from a desk now but he is there all day every week day and half a day Saturday, the way everybody worked when the warrior was in his prime. And not put-tering around you understand--working."22/

Halas personally symbolizes the Bears' history, and his involvement with the team is dramatically portrayed during games. The eighty-two year old Papa Bear will not let anyone accompany him to a game, "lest he appear too coarse and obstreperous."23/

Sports ownership is also deeply immersed in the underlying plots of the sports drama. The newspapers and magazines focus on the decisions of concerned owners. The owner is portrayed as part businessman, part fan. In 1977, a protracted struggle between Met pitcher Tom Seaver and Met corporate leader M. Donald Grant was played out in the newspapers with Daily News columnist Dick Young warring (on Giant's behalf) with New York Post columnist Maury Allen (fighting for Seaver).24/ The part that Yankee owner George Steinbrenner played in the "Days of Reggie and Billy" soap opera is well known.25/ As part of the drama the owner also

becomes a person to identify with, as well as a receptacle for anger and frustrations. Pete Vecsey castigates the Knickerbocker ownership for incompetence, while Jerry Izenberg movingly portrays fan disgust and disillusionment with Giant owner Wellington Mara.^{26/}

At the bottom of the corporate hierarchy are the "GMs" and coaches whose day-to-day decisions decide the fate of the team. It is on this level that scapegoating most often takes place. The coach especially becomes a ritual victim whose periodic "sacking" strengthens normative structure and social cohesiveness of the team. This is important because, as Kenneth Burke has shown, order is enacted in a struggle between good and bad principles and people in which the guilty are purged through a dramatic ritual of victimage. I shall dwell on this process more concretely later on.

The entire social life world of sports rests on a group infrastructure of professional, collegiate, scholastic and junior league teams. The team, as the hub of the Sportsworld, acts as the symbolic community of sports. It is this feeling of community that unites belief systems and structures of authority with people's everyday lives. The group infrastructure gives the social bond its intensity and immediacy. The fans follow the team religiously throughout the season and read, hopefully, about its rebuilding efforts during the off-season. This intensity of meaning is dramatized by Neal

Offen:

"I know of a doctor...who was told he was suffering from leukemia. He wasn't going to die immediately, but he was going to have to live with the knowledge of a disease that made death something more than abstract. The fear and the anxiety were so great that he was going to commit suicide. Then he became involved with the fortunes of a professional basketball team. The team started to have great success and the doctor decided against suicide. He decided--because of the way men unknown to him shoot and pass a round ball--that he was going to live."^{27/}

The team is the backdrop for the imbibing of stories about the players themselves. We learn of their individual personalities and the ways in which they relate to their teammates and to authority. Importantly, their styles and personalities represent the team for the fan audience. Denver Bronco tight end Lyle Alzado, with his frenzied enthusiasm, is an excellent example:

"During a game Alzado emits waves of energy that radiate clear into the stands. On the field he never stops running.... Off the field he stalks the sidelines--talking, remonstrating, gesticulating.... He pats heads with his huge bandaged forearms and roars with laughter when things are going well. When they are not, there is no one in the stadium more anguished."^{28/}

This resonates with fan-needs:

"And Denver loves it. A young fan once wrote, 'Dear Lyle, you are the meanest defensive end I have ever seen. The way you rip all those quarterbacks is terrific. I sure am glad you play for the Broncos.'"^{29/}

What the Alzado reference makes clear is the central importance of the game as the crucible of emotional identif-

ication. The team's symbolic meaning is "made flesh" in the ritual-drama of the game as are the values and rhetorical appeals of the Sportsworld in general. The relationship between the fan and his or her team is solidified in dramatic confrontation. At the University of Kansas, fans line up for tickets for the big game with Kansas State at 1:30 A.M.--in 9° weather! Kansas fans are no longer permitted to sit behind the opponent's bench because of their penchant for harassment. 30/

The game generates an intense emotional atmosphere. As in the rituals of mass movements, a common enmity arouses a collective force in a symbolic community drama. As the election ritual enacts and thereby creates community cohesion through the redefinition of an emotional consensus, so the Game recreates communal solidarity. John Tunis' fictional account of the way in which the game unifies players, teams and fans is illustrative:

"He could even distinguish voices in the roar.
 'Go get 'em Roy...!'
 'You can do it, Tuch...!'
 They knew him. And he knew them, through those terrible periods of July and August they had stayed behind the team; winning or losing, in rain or shine, wind, heat, they were always there. Here they were for the last game of all, his friends sticking with him to the end." 31/

The identification with the team in struggle creates a euphoric togetherness, a congruence of sensibility. It is

through this euphoria that the rational legal structure of the Sportsworld is dramatized. The arbiters themselves assume a character of their own. As veteran referee Richie Powers says, "I try to instill personality into the game and hope that people enjoy watching me."^{32/} Hugh Duncan's observations capture the rule enactment drama:

"The mystery of the rules are personified in the figures of umpires, referees, judges and courts... the solemn umpire who gestures so decisively, the referee who stalked the field as the 'keeper of the rules' style themselves carefully as guardians of the game. We watch them in awe, and the players accept their decisions, because they embody the rules whose observance upholds the honor of the game."^{33/}

The rules come to life in ritual figures with whom we wrangle with or blame when the team is being abused. Ultimately--and cathartically--we accept the decisions that uphold the legal parameters of the Sportsworld. We learn that it is only through adherence to the rules that victory may be savored and the team honored.

The team is the center of Sportsworld's drama, but it is only through the language of sports that the dramatic world enters into the social communication of everyday life. As the chapter on sports language points out, sports talk is concrete, personal and has a high degree of intersubjectivity. (Its cognitive and emotional cues are readily understood.) The language is the symbolic glue that links people in taverns, offices, car-pools and drivers across the country. Talking

about the team becomes the core of communication of everyday life. There are traditional "watering holes" throughout the country where loyal fans gather before and after each game to discuss the strategies, lay blame for defeat, and prognosticate the future.^{34/} Illustrative, on a sectional level, is the way in which the University of Kentucky basketball team dominates informal chatting throughout the entire state, "discussed avidly along with the price of tobacco and cattle."^{35/} Talk about the team extends the warmth of solidarity from its intense enactment in the glow of audience participation in the arenas to the more mundane rituals of everyday existence.

III

Throughout this work I have been theorizing that the aesthetic symbolism of the Sportsworld is a form of stylistic ingratiation that is instrumental in the inculcation of social values and the creation of political cohesion. I have argued against those sociologists who have too quickly glossed over the symbolic form in order to be "realistic." We must now begin to explore the manner in which the symbolic form and the socio-political content are in dialectical tension. Our task is aided if we remember that symbolic dramas, although often imaginary and fantastic, must reflect the real obstacles of social drama if they are to produce an effect on audiences.

The impact of symbolic drama derives from its refraction of the real problems of everyday life and its ability to ritualistically resolve these tensions so that social life can continue smoothly.

What I will continue to be analyzing is the way in which important political and social values make an "end run" around conscious resistance through the enactment of symbolic-social drama. We will be seeing the way in which politics and culture are intertwined, as Plato so clearly indicated many years ago. Through the continued observation of the function of the team in the overall sports drama, I will be demonstrating how fantasy constitutes the basic underpinning for political legitimacy, stability and change.

The sports drama mobilizes the fantasy resources of Americans while at the same time enacting the values of the political and social hierarchy. The glamour of sports invests politically significant values with the proper awe in an arena that is relatively free of political controversy. As Duncan and Burke have shown, any structure of authority generates a good deal of tension when its sacred symbols and expectations fail to conform to political and social practice. Socio-dramas, performing ritual functions, provide for symbolic resolution of such tension.

The symbolic resolution of tension in the sports drama preserves the group's energy for positive social action. A

ritual test of nerve and skill can be enacted in psychogenetic paradigms that lead to real social adjustment and the "sweet closure of anxiety" ^{36/} that will ameliorate the danger that the social order will collapse in the wrangle of insurrection and pent-up frustration. The Sportsworld, as the dominant American aesthetic, provides for the symbolic resolution of potentially dangerous political problems while inculcating norms that bolster the legitimacy of the American polity. Sports accomplishes this through its existence as a symbolic refuge, a refuge whose preserve will also be seen to have political significance.

IV

Before we can begin to decipher the political significance of team symbolism we must closely examine the aesthetic world of team sports since the team is the hub of the ritual drama of sports. After I have analyzed its form, I will examine how the team imagery functions in the process of political socialization. From there we will be able to observe how the team can function as a communal refuge from (and in dialectical tension with) a capitalist society and a political system that will be seen as remote and lifeless.

In attempting to bring to life the symbolism of the team I have concentrated on the way in which the team is portrayed in the various print media.^{37/} I wanted to see if there were recurrent themes and images that I could distill from this

mass of documents. I used these media because it is my contention that it is through the reporter--in all his guises--that the game on the field takes on human significance. Roger Kahn's confrontation with veteran sports writer Dick Young emphasizes my point:

"But most of the time you do write the games [Young]. That's right, and when you do you forget the Times. They tell the score but the real fan knows the score already. When you do write the game, the way you do it is: 'In yesterday's 3-2 Dodger victory the most interesting thing that happened was....' Get that? Someone stole two bases. Someone made a horseshit pitch. Dressen made a mistake. Not just the score. Tell 'em fucking why or make them laugh...."38/

The sports reporter mediates the world, he assigns responsibilities, puts the game into dramatic form and searches for the controversies and hidden meanings. The reporter concretizes and personalizes the world of sports. He brings it to life in idyllic form because he himself is involved. Phil Berger's 1969 account of the idealization of the New York Knickerbockers clarifies what is operating here:

"Writers felt an affection for the team [Borgi named his son David William after Stallworth and Bradley] that limited barbed comments on players' ability. Sly[Berger's own persona] could understand it: after the close associations he'd had on road trips, he welcomed getting away from the players so that he could ponder them more objectively."39/

Berger describes how New York Post reporter Leonard Lewin would privately and sometimes publicly censor any

copy that he felt might damage the team. The excitement on the field and the demands of the fans for an engaged perspective demand that the reporter become involved. The intense drama of the 1969-70 Knickerbocker season, culminating in a series of heart-stopping playoffs, quickly stripped the veneer of objectivity from Berger himself. He tells of reading all the afternoon papers to psych himself up for a long game with the Bullets.

He then described what happened to him during the game:

"And in the press box, Sly, who had sat objectively through a season's games, began to raise his fists at Knick baskets, and profane referees he had earlier interviewed." 40/

The popular team sages are even more intimate. George Plimpton's Out of My League and Paper Lion are paradigmatic of these inside diaries. Plimpton's stated purpose was to provide his readers with a sense of what it was like to be inside a sports team. The rationale of the books was to play out the fantasies and daydreams that so many people have about being a team member. This inside-dopester genre captures the human drama behind and within the game.

Many journalistic critics of sports decry the reporters' emotional involvement with the events they cover. 41/ This critical thrust is, I believe, misplaced. The very structure of the Sportsworld and the nature of the fan involvement creates a demand for dramatic reporting. It is clear that any newspaper that attempted to give fans "objective" reporting would rapidly

lose its devoted sports section readers. It is for these reasons that controversial columnists like Dick Young, Larry Merchant and Jerry Izenberg, and enthusiastically rabid announcers like Marv Albert and Johnny Most, attract the greatest following. The dynamics at work here also explain Howard Cosell's huge popularity in the role of media villain. Villainy as well as heroism accentuate the boundaries of the drama.

The media takes us inside the intimate world of the team. Initially it would be helpful to think of the team as a model work community. The team symbolizes, on many levels, the hierarchy, specialization and division of labor associated with the organized world of work. In the team imagery this is represented in the way certain people are ethicized for being "unsung heroes." A player like former Knickerbocker Mike Riordan is willing to come off the bench to "give a foul" (a menial task). For this he is lionized by his coach:

"It is just as important for Mike Riordan to give a foul at the right time as it is for Willis Reed to score thirty-five points.... I never had to explain to Riordan why he was being used mainly to give fouls. He did it because he felt it was important. It was his involvement with the team." ^{42/}

The symbolism of the division of labor can also be seen in the acclaim given the specialty teams in football and the praise heaped on those players who can perform in substitute roles in key situations.^{43/} As Jeff Greenfield illuminates in his paen to the Boston Celtics:

"If there is one fundamental to be learned from the astonishing reign of the Boston Celtics, it is that a team wins when players are permitted to concentrate on their skills and forget about their weaknesses. Let the defensive specialists harass the opponent's best ballhandlers and shooters and reward them for what they do well.... Tell your shooters to shoot. In other words look at the game of basketball as a series of necessary skills that can be scattered among your team--as long as one player possesses an essential skill in extremely high quality." 44/

Another essential characteristic of organization is skilled leadership--an ability to be expert in technical strategy as well as efficient in handling personnel. In almost every single article on a team in Sports Illustrated over a two year period (1975-1977) there is the prominent mention of owners, general managers and coaches whose expertise and leadership qualities are seen as essential to team success.45/ All these articles, and the books that focus specifically on coaches, emphasize the psychological skills of emotional management as being the prerequisite of success.

The coach must have the ability to personally mold the team in his image and forge the social skills necessary for success, while owners are praised for their visibility and personal concern.46/ What we can see developing here is the engrafting of the personal and communal into the functional and organizational. This is congruent with the shift in organizational ideology in this century from an emphasis on impersonal, autocratic control to the stressing of humane, personal and social-psychological leadership skills.47/

The concern is with morale and the fear is of disorganization. Even when sports authority remains autocratic, as it

does in some areas of football, it is mediated by a personal warmth and concern. The two primary models of this are Woody Hayes of Ohio State and the late Vince Lombardi. One of Lombardi's former players illustrates the way he used to get the team "up" through the force of his personality:

"Lombardi turned and faced us. 'OK boys,' he began, then stopped and rubbed his hands together for several seconds.... 'This may be the last time we'll be together so, uh....' His lips actually began to tremble, his whole body quivered. He looked like he was about to start bawling. He never finished the sentence.... I don't think any of us concentrated on the film; we were all wondering what playing for Green Bay would be like without Lombardi. It's been hell to play while he's been here, but I don't want to play if he's not around."^{48/}

Authority in sports is concrete and personal. The humaneness exudes through the poignant tears of a street tough Al McGuire when he wins a college basketball championship prior to his retirement. It likewise flows from such hardboiled coaches as George Allen (in a tearful press conference), Red Auerbach (emotionally embracing a tear-streaked Bob Cousy), and John Wooden (his reserve discarded in an embrace with star UCLA player Sidney Wicks). These scenes resonate with Robert Nisbet's view of the nature of authority in the idyllic community. Nisbet criticizes modern political authority for being too remote and impersonal to galvanize the emotions necessary for the creation of a social bond. Only in the discipline of the small group can authority be effectively communicated and identification occur.^{49/}

Personal authority and intimacy, when successfully synthesized, lead to the creation of a cohesive team order. The morale of the team is facilitated by effective leadership but is expressed in the close working relations of the players. The potentially estranging aspects of the division of labor are overcome by the intimacy of the lockerroom and the collective pursuit of common objectives. There is also, as Erving Goffman has suggested, the added solidarity that comes with the need for the players to put up a united front in order to enhance the effectiveness of the team. This leads players to be consciously aware of each other as co-conspirators and to protect their own individual and collective image vis-a-vis the press and the public.

Phil Berger catches this in his anecdote about the Knicks:

"The stories that Barnett recounted were not to this thinking society's possessions. 'I call what I got inside humour!' He said, 'Some of it is for the ballplayers and nobody else to hear.'... He maintained in locker-rooms the inscrutable front of a sphinx save for those moments when the doors were barred to outsiders."⁵⁰/

Goffman's insight must, however, be expanded in order to understand sports team symbolism and performance. The symbiosis between the media and the team combines to create a consumable image for the team. What is more, Goffman's analysis resonates too easily with the sounds of contrivance. The team does spontaneously enact a certain kind of warmth and intimacy that is palpable to players and fans alike.

Bill Bradley eloquently captures this:

"The lockerroom had become a kind of home to me.... I often enter tense and uneasy, disturbed by some event of the day. Slowly my worries fade as I see their unimportance to my male peers. I relax, my concerns lost among relationships that are warm and real but never intimate, lost among the constants of an athlete's life. Athletes may be crude and immature but they are genuine when it comes to loyalty. The lines of communication are clear and simple...we are at ease in the setting of satin uniforms and shower nozzles."⁵¹/

George Plimpton and Jim Bouton also capture this special form of male intimacy that is "warm and real but never intimate." The life in such a work community is never stable in a feudal sense--players are "cut" and traded. While the players are together, however, they reach a level of fellowship that is perhaps only approached during civil disasters and wartime. It is not the anonymous closeness of the crowd. In Paper Lion, Plimpton describes the storytelling and pranks of training camp in a tone that brings to mind the vivid camaraderie of male urban street life--the playing of dominoes or poker out in the streets of working-class neighborhoods.

In reading the literature on teams I also began to see some important parallels between the life of the players, their sense of togetherness, and the models of fraternity developed by Carey McWilliams. His model consists of 1) limited numbers, 2) shared goals and values, 3) a relationship

to ego identity, 4) intensity, 5) emotional nurturance, and 6) tension to society at large.

McWilliams emphasizes the importance of male bonds and indicates their democratizing power. An analysis of the sports team and American sports symbolism in general needs to understand the way in which sports has historically been a refuge for male warmth and meaning. ^{52/} The literature on teams clearly delineates the male/female separation at the onset of training camp. The teams are generally closeted in aesthetic school dormitories away from their families, and leave on long road trips that take them away for weeks at a time. The anonymity of the road often thrusts players into the warmth of male friendship. Bradley illustrates this in his description of his relationship with Dave Debuschere:

"There is much in our relationship that is left unspoken, but it is hard to imagine it ending. Living together makes for a strong bond...shared toiletries, mutual kidding.... Sometimes we keep our luggage in the same room in a town and never see each other. But this is precisely what is good about our friendship. There is no need to feel guilty for not socializing together every night on the road.... Within the boundaries of that friendship there is much room for good times, affection and deep respect." ^{53/}

The male intimacy of the team, in contrast with most male socialization patterns outside sports, is also warmly physical. It appears that the team--as a symbol of masculine cooperation--is far enough beyond suspicion to allow "un-

masculine" emotions to be cultivated. The warmly physical intimacy also transcends racial barriers. Rugged (and white) Dave Debusschere runs into the Knickerbocker locker-room after their 1970 championship victory, embraces the 6'10", 260 lb. Willis Reed, and plants a kiss on his cheek. This interracial male intimacy is vividly symbolized during the games. Players hug each other after homeruns or touchdowns, pat each other on the behind, and affectionately slap palms after key baskets or goals.

Interestingly, the male intimacy that McWilliams idealizes is seen to exclude the idea of traditional community. He chastizes the pursuit of Gemeinschaft because of that concept's rigid hierarchy and its subjugation of the individual to the iron yoke of custom. Fraternity for McWilliams is a more fluid concept that allows for a synthesis of individual personalities in a rich social context. My own analysis of the team sees its rich symbolism encompassing both the concept of community and the idea of fraternity. In addition, it accomplishes this in a milieu that captures many of the features of work and organization.

The team synthesizes powerful egos into an organized whole. In many ways it captures the "echo of Gemeinschaft" but does so in the context of the modern reality of individual personality. It captures symbolically what Emile Durkheim saw as a necessary integration of individual personality and

collective ideals. There is the warmth of intimate cooperation and the structure of statuses and authority. There is joy and work. The linchpin of this synthesis is the ability of the team to symbolize a sense of purpose.

This sense of purpose, which Mead and Dewey link to the aesthetic idea of consummation, is symbolized for players and fans alike in the euphoria of the victorious lockerroom. This consummatory goal infuses, with meaning, all the prior painful self-discipline and momentary setbacks. It is this sense of consummation that Mead feels is essential to amalgamating all the "isolated and dreary" activities of industrial democracy into a "blessed community." The team effort, the symbolization of Mead's "I-Me" dialectic, captures and portrays the aesthetic ideals of craftsmanship and communion and infuses the division of labor in a "festival of common delight."^{54/}

The athlete, in participating in the deep communal celebration, receives immense ego gratification for his performance. This participating moment intensifies the social bond between teammates and coaches. Jerry Kramer captures this moment:

"Greg and I, the two men closest to the coach, just lifted him up and started running out on the field. He was grinning at us and slapping us and he hollered. 'Head for the dressing room boys....' We finished the Lord's Prayer and we all began slapping each other on the back and hugging each other once again.... I wanted to keep my uniform on as long as I possibly could."^{55/}

In this sense, teams like the Green Bay Packers, Boston Celtics, and old New York Yankees are the Sportsworld's paradigms, the models that concretize the values and goals of the arena. Their appeal, through analogical extension, bursts the boundary of the Sportsworld itself. The team becomes a "metaphor for ultimate cooperation."^{56/}

These team paradigms are an exhortation to Sportsworld's citizens. In the sense that order rests on disorder, their appeal exists in counterpoint with that of the strife-torn negative team models. To know the joys of cooperation we must learn the evils of dissension and discord. The appeal of the hero is dramatized through the villainy of his opponent. During the Knickerbocker championship year, the New York Post would frequently focus on the problems of the visiting teams in articles like "Are the Rockets Ready to Fire their Coach?" and "The Glory that was Boston." These stories highlighted the fragility of team morale, its dependence on effective leadership and the necessity for ample amounts of self-sacrifice. These dramas of dissension would reinforce the Knick fans and player's appreciation of their special achievement and reinforce the continued enactment of those values that would lead to on-going success.

The model failures focus on the grouching of malcontented players, the inefficiency of too weak or too harsh and remote coaches, and the jarring interventions of irascible team

owners. In focusing on a successful team, Sports Illustrated habitually underscores how the new team leadership is effectively overcoming the patterns of the past failure.^{57/} In each of the sagas written on the Knick championship, much attention is given to the failure of the previous coach to maintain a purposeful discipline and the manner in which Coach Holzman turned that around. There is discussion also of how former players Walt Bellamy and "Butch" Komives, through their inability to sacrifice themselves for the team, disrupted team cohesiveness. Their departure is seen as the first step--a necessary ritual victimage--toward the creation of team solidarity.

Aside from the central importance of the coach, the two most important factors that contribute to dissension are "enlarged egos" and "high prices superstars." The effect here of rationalization and the rise of Big Money is a definite threat to the normative structure of sports. This can be evidenced by the way in which the reporters, acting in this way as gatekeepers of sports' value system, look for and often find discord in teams whose successes were engineered through crass cash purchases. The recent controversies surrounding the Philadelphia 76'ers in basketball and the New York Yankees in baseball dramatizes the media's function as watchdog.^{58/} The press' role is to maintain a normative vigilance by highlighting the forces of disharmony.

VI

Team harmony, like order in the Sportsworld in general, is created through drama. The drama is both internal and external: focusing on the dynamics of the team and the competition between teams. For each team the season is a lifetime, replete with successes, defeats, joys, humiliations and symbolic rebirths. The fan is drawn into the seasonal rebirth--the charley horses, sore arms, bruised heels, and separated shoulders. A broken leg or fractured elbow often leads to the premature "death" of a player as he is cut from the team to make room for the more able-bodied.

The life-drama is lent poignancy in the publicized struggle to make the team. Invariably we read of some rookie who has sacrificed a good job possibility merely for the chance to make the team. The desire to gain election leads to some intense mortification. The following is representative: "The Jets' Greg Murphy, a free agent making a third try to escape the pathos of East New York for the glory of professional football, collapsed Wednesday from heat exhaustion...."^{59/} We appreciate the honor of being chosen and the self-abnegation of those who seek glory. As fans we are also imbued with the team's purpose which is symbolically transformed into a life or death struggle. As Jim Bouton and others have pointed out, when a player is cut it is said, "He died."^{60/}

Preseason is a time of symbolic mortification--sacrifice that it is hoped will lead to the eventual redemption of a World Series or a Super Bowl. We are moved, Burke tells us, through the dramatic enactment of sacrifice (the player's struggle and pain), victimage (those who "die" so the team can live), and redemption (the cathartic transcending of guilt in ultimate triumph). The season itself takes on a dramatic quality of its own--it may be characterized by the bickering failings of a loser or the festive communion of a winner. It may partake of both moments. Each game enacts parallel dramas. Defeat or a losing season may be imminent and yet "it's never over till the last out."

George Allen is quoted as saying that defeat is worse than death because you have to live with defeat. In some sense this is true. If winning is a life-tonic, then losing is surely a death-like witch's brew. When losing becomes endemic for a franchise, the pain that the fans feel can come to resemble a tyrannical oppression. If the humiliation extends over years the hope of redemption becomes as elusive as the spiritual's promise of "milk and honey on the other side." In this context the diehard fan will often, like the downtrodden slave, carve a negative identity out of his own identification with his team's defeat.⁶¹/

This is why each game presents itself in military terms and the local papers are full of agitation about the mean or awesome characteristics of the opposition. The Game here is

the crucible that determines how well the team has followed Sportsworld's imperatives. Before each game, players and fans go through rituals of "psyching up," emphasizing the crucial nature of the agon.

Defeat leads to doubt and the search for an explanation. Media scrutiny magnifies the first rumblings of discontent, which then takes on a life of its own. The players are usually criticized, but the coach is held responsible. The coach serves as an exquisite ritual victim for the team's frustrated fans. Through the building drama of outrage--"Martin Teeters on the Brink"--the "causes" of disorder are rooted out.^{62/} The media's crucial role is underscored by the relative equanimity of the normally tumultuous New York Yankees during the newspaper strike of the Summer of 1978.

Ritual victimage is rarely related to actual culpability. Player selfishness, mismanagement by the ownership, "bad breaks," are all part of the makeup of defeat. The "canning" of the coach is designed for fan appeasement. In this act of victimage the players' own guilt is expiated. They are let off the hook and are shamed for their part in the ritual slaughter. They bind together and vow to uphold the authority of the new coach. The fans also realize, post hoc, that the coach couldn't have been the only one to blame, but with their anguish expunged, their hope is renewed.^{63/}

The dramatic nature of fan-team involvement is epitomized

by the saga of the 1969-1970 New York Knickerbockers. Knick fans, as all accounts attest, suffered through over two decades of humiliation. As that championship season approached, the fans wondered if their suffering would finally end. The anticipation of redemption built over a magnificent 18 game winning streak. As the old hated rivals, the Boston Celtics, were soundly trounced, Celtic Coach Heinsohn accurately observed, "It must be sweet for the Knicks, after we sat on their fannies for so many years...." ^{64/} It wasn't, however, the current players who had suffered. It was the fans. The players partake of an ongoing drama that is defined for them before they join the team. They learn about the team's history and become its representatives. The fans' own involvement can easily span an entire lifetime. Childhood identifications can be extended into adulthood and old age; an impressive example of continuity in an age of dislocation. ^{65/}

VII

I have stated that symbolic drama expresses and reflects the real obstacles of the ongoing social order. It is also true that symbolic and social dramas resonate with the distribution of power and property in a society. I will now examine the manner in which the sports drama interacts with the major plots of the political and social system.

I have posited that an adequate political theory of American sports symbolism must grasp the dialectical interaction

between sports as a socializer and sports as a symbolic refuge. Team symbolism underscores this subtle interaction quite clearly. Initially, America's dominant team sport was baseball. The rise of baseball is concomitant with the post-Civil War period of modernization that was characterized by rapid industrialization, urbanization and democratization. The potential for widespread social upheaval was furthered by the influx of masses of foreign-born, uprooted from alien cultures and traditional social orders. Participation in sports was encouraged by concerned elites as part of the overall process of "Americanization."^{66/}

The immigrants were crowded into urban ghettos where "pathology" of all kinds flourished. The immigrants were linked in the native American mind with crime, perversion and radicalism. Baseball became an excellent way for the newcomer to escape moral opprobrium. The folk understanding saw the game as a "builder of character." It was felt sports developed the desirable social character traits that would benefit American society. Sports was seen as American and moral: "Sports have supplied a new and effective motive for resisting all sins which can corrupt the body and the nation." ^{67/}

The team was seen to foster ideals of honorable struggle and fair play which, it was felt, translated into the language of self-government and good citizenship. This transportation was most vividly formulated by George Herbert Mead. Mead saw the team as an efficacious vehicle of primary socialization in a democracy. He also saw it as a model for the secondary

socialization of adults into a community of equals because of the way it enacts a drama of equality. We can see this clearly in Hugh Duncan's discussion of Mead's analysis of games.

"As he plays his own position, the player guides himself by his ability to arouse within himself responses and attitudes that arise in those who play other positions. Players on a team are related in an organized and unitary fashion. The responses of the players are predictable in terms of rules which all know and agree to. When conflict arises, the umpire is given power to make decisions. He is the actor whose role personalifies the 'generalized other.' In him, universal and highly abstract rules come to life in action." 68/

In this one ritual drama a community of equals is enacted, the division of labor and the idea of cooperative work comes alive, competition is encouraged and the legal-rational structure of authority of personified. This all occurs within symbolically expansive yet finite provinces of the Game. As Reuel Denney observes, "The artificial time and space limits of the game permit fluid interpersonal experience that would never occur so rapidly or with such permutations in real life." 69/ So, whereas in real life competition is enervating and the rules of the game often quite rigid, in the game a genuine sense of fairness is allowed to flourish. The vituperativeness of Paul Hoch's attack on the tendency of political elites to rhetorically transpose norms of "sportsmanship," "rules of the game," and "fair play" to real life situations, merely serves to underscore the political and social impact of the game. 70/

There are two factors that enhance the force of these

socialization patterns. In the first place, the process takes place at an early age and is effected in the atmosphere of happy playing. Secondly, sports' appeal rests on the sense that it is "above politics." The larger polity uses this apolitical "mystery" of sports to decorate its own hierarchal structure. This interface and valuational transposition can be glimpsed in this way:

"Baseball is a Lockean game, a kind of contract theory in ritual form, a set of atomic individuals who assent to patterns of limited cooperation in their mutual interest." 71/

It is important to point out that this socialization drama is not static but historically contingent. The "Lockean game" dominated the early era of American capitalism--a period of hard work, competition and individualism. The development of American capitalism confronted the mythos of Horatio Alger with new institutional realities. Large scale political social and economic bureaucracies began to challenge the credibility of individualism and the cohesion of small town life.

With the rise of factory and city, with the specialization and rationalization of work and society, widespread concern arose over the threat of disorganization and political disruption. A whole range of social scientists began to worry over the growing specter of anomie caused by capitalist development. Mead and others vividly saw the need to infuse capitalist society with an aesthetic sense of purpose that

would provide the "shared experiences" necessary to overcome the isolating currents of the division of labor. Mead's choice of team-game symbolism for his communal model is as illuminating as it is contrapuntal. The team and its purposes shine with a clarity that the opacity of the rest of the society lacks. This enables the values of social cooperation to be transposed by analogical extension.

The emerging bureaucratic capitalist reality led to the evolution of a new "social ethic." The decline of rugged individualism and the rise of a "new mythology" of group predominance, "togetherness," and "belongingness" is seen by William Whyte as a major shift in American ideology. ^{72/} The new emphasis is seen more clearly in the rise of industrial psychology and human relations experts. This movement, led by Elton Mayo and his colleagues at the Harvard Business School, attacked the disciples of Frederick Taylor who had emphasized the technical rationalization of the firm. They pointed out that this form of rationalization failed to understand the worker as a person enmeshed in a web of social relations. The new approach emphasized the factory as a social system. Mayo and his colleagues saw the need to create a sense of morale through a more effective integration of the individual into the social processes of the factory. ^{73/}

The human relations approach centered around the idea of teamwork. The dual emphasis was on creating a sense of teamwork in the process of work itself, and on the creation

of sports teams. The purpose was to break down potential class conflict and imbue workers with a sense of belonging to the entire "community." As Whyte has observed, the linchpin of this approach is the use of the techniques of human emotion-management. The key to success is the training of administrators with "social skills" who can create more effective "communication" and "cooperation."

The creation of an administrative elite to facilitate political and social integration completely (and often deliberately) by-passes the political process. In a democratic polity we wrangle about what constitutes the aims of integration and cooperation. The ideology of administrative integration, however, operates differently. The group theories of human relations ignore the need for debate and political conflict. For them, the goal of group cohesion is an administrative desideratum to be achieved through the techniques of integration. 74/

The entire thrust of industrial psychology dramatizes a popular form of apolitical politics. If the organization is a social system there is no reason why democratic debate and political struggle should not be present. The image of "social system," however, implies a stable structure of statutes similar to the hierarchy that existed in the middle ages, a time when individuals were rooted in a stable social order. In fact, this is Mayo's ideal imagery, mediated by LePlay and Durkheim. It is to paraphrase Alvin Gouldner's

criticism of Talcott Parsons, the marriage of an old dowager to a young stud. The hierarchical roles of Plato's Republic are bolstered by the techniques of scientific human management.

This aversion to politics as too remote, uncertain and divisive became quite prevalent. It can also be seen, as Sheldon Wolin points out, as part of a tradition of discourse that spans over two centuries. The twentieth century manifestation of this "sublimation of politics" emphasizes the need to induce a sense of community within the very bowels of organizational reality. ^{75/} "Society," (the factory), must fulfill the person's emotional needs through the provision of a cohesive moral order. If "society," (the factory), fails to do this, disorder and chaos will result.

The apolitical politics of integration, Wolin notes, amounts to an arbitrary redefinition of democracy. If left to themselves, the mass of people will allow their "anti-social" or "neurotic" natures to explode into "morbid" forms of radical politics. The people are desperately in need of guidance. This idea is vividly formulated in Mayo's discussion of radicalism. Mayo tells the story of a radical student leader who was persuaded to go to a psychiatrist, and who soon afterwards discarded his "neurosis-induced" political activity. Writers in this tradition are quick to associate radicalism with psycho-pathology. ^{76/}

Mayo also felt that the existence of absenteeism, strikes and sabotage was a result of the failure of administrators to instill the ideal of teamwork! The point must be emphasized again that the ideology of teamwork and cooperation ("getting along"), rising to the level of a moral imperative, is a form of pyramidal mysticism that obscures the vital question of what the goals of teamwork should be.

I think it is quite clear that the sports team, as an analogic extension, is profoundly congruent with the goals of administrative capitalism. It is no accident that as American society became more complex and bureaucratic, the more corporate games of football and basketball rose to popularity. It is a mistake, however, made by Jeff Greenfield and Michael Novak, to view this development as a form of socialism. Greenfield comments:

"Basketball is a game in which the most talented youngsters practice one-on-one ball, the playgrounds of the inner-city ghettos produce the most flamboyant players. But on the most successful competitive team in professional sports history the single mortal sin is individualism. It is as if a major manufacturing corporation preached socialism." 77/

The goals of social cooperation, integration and collective purpose, far from being necessarily socialistic, were precisely those goals articulated by Emile Durkheim, a man who spent his entire career devising moral alternatives to socialism and social conflict. The team and its coach

symbolize these conflict-free features. In fact, the team can be seen as analogous to Durkheim's proposed corps intermediaire.

VIII

The team, besides acting as an agent of socialization, can also be seen as a symbolic refuge from many ills that are endemic to capitalist society. Foster Rhea Dulles observes this in the rise of baseball. He saw the appeal of baseball linked to the closing of the frontier and the process of urbanization. "America had discovered a new world," Dulles observed, and that world existed as a pastoral retreat from the crowding and evils of city life. ^{78/} The world of baseball began to be seen as a moral world above the corruption of the urban political landscape. This moral sports-immoral-politics dichotomy was dramatized in the 1919 Black Sox scandal where the tampering with the World Series produced a sense of moral outrage that far transcended the tempest in a Teapot Dome. ^{79/}

The use of the sports team as a symbolic refuge gains greater impact with the entrenchment of the industrialization-bureaucratization process. There is a tendency, observed by Marx, Weber, Lukacs, Marcuse and others, for political, economic and social processes to become "reified" over the heads of individuals. The life world of capitalism becomes a "natural world" that people feel is beyond their control. This is developed in Marx's view of alienation and Max

Weber's view of industrial society as an "iron cage."

In this context authority becomes remote, abstract and formal. The individual, linked to his everyday world of small milieux, finds it difficult to relate affectively to the state. Intermediate associations are equally ill-equipped to provide emotional nurturance because they are too instrumental and bureaucratic. It is within this climate that the "quest for community" becomes a political issue. The growth of this iron cage drains the institutional structure of meaning. Political institutions no longer seem to possess a human content and people begin to search for human significance in the private order. 80/

With institutions offering little emotional support for the ratification of the individual's identity, he is forced to seek sustenance on his own. Warmth and communal meaning seem to be an important aspect of this search for identity. A common feature of much of this searching, however, is an unavoidable instability. The growth of plural social worlds and the proliferation of avenues open to individuals make the identity process fragilly dependent on purely subjective choice. Freedom coexists with uncertainty, and "homelessness" is a permanent feature of this society. 81/

The Sportsworld as a social life world and the team symbolism of community, fraternity and intimacy, grow in vivid counterpoint to developments in the "real" world. In contrast to the barrenness of what Habermas calls the "technical

life world," the symbolic-aesthetic appeals of sports are warmly personal and concrete. It is understandable how sports becomes "the primary lived world of the vast majority of Americans." ^{82/} The rationalization of the real world is ameliorated by an injection of charisma, magical performances, gifted leaders and intense rituals--certainly an ironic dramatization of Weber's hypothesized prescription for the ills for industrialization.

As a "more real" province of meaning, the sports teams form the foundation of a group infrastructure that spans the country on all different political levels. As we have seen, these groups, imbued with aesthetic purpose and linked to a meaningful normative structure, provide the country with an integrating set of common symbols. These symbols of conscience collective are inculcated through the enactment of dramatic rituals--certainly an ironic enactment of Durkheim's hypothesized cure for industrial society.

Involvement in the Sportsworld contrasts sharply with the withdrawal and wary cynicism characteristic of the American citizen. This dichotomy is most effectively dramatized in the sagas of Henry Waugh and Fred Exley. Waugh, the protagonist of Robert Coover's Universal Baseball Associations, is a browbeaten accountant, uninvolved in either his work or meaningful social relations. He creates a fictional baseball world through the rolling of dice and the compilation of statistical ledgers. He

lives out the games and the personal lives of the players. As his involvement with his fabricated world increases, his attachment to his "real" world lessens. Eventually, Waugh appears to have a "psychotic break" and permanently takes up residence in his "Universal Baseball Association." 83/

In A Fan's Notes, Fred Exley can't seem to function normally, and is slowly losing his grip on "reality." He sees little sense in any of the traditional institutions--his marriage ends rapidly--and even less in the various asylums he spends time in. The only thing that allows him to keep a grasp on "reality" is his attachment to the Football Giants and Frank Gifford. They give him a "feeling of being alive." Frank Gifford becomes his "life raft." Toward the end of the book Exley quits fighting his fate, abandons his dreams of personal fame, and accepts his destiny as a fan. 84/ The distance from Henry Waugh and Fred Exley to Sydney Asofsky, Charlie Winkler, George Plimpton, and the rest of us, is a matter of degree. Madness here provides evidence of normal involvement.

The Sportsworld provides a symbolic canopy, group infrastructure and series of sacred rituals that feed a hunger for human drama and meaning. By doing this, the Sportsworld creates an integrating set of meanings whose apparently apolitical nature thinly disguise a profoundly political function. There is, however, still another political ramification in the intense involvement with the Sportsworld's

imperatives. Jurgen Habermas' investigation into legitimation in advanced capitalist society is important here. He sees the growing power of the "technical life-world" penetrating the social life-world of human meaning. With this technical penetration, it becomes increasingly difficult for mass publics to actively control the directions of technological "progress," for reasons of substantive and linguistic complexity. 85/

The direction of techniques remains in the hands of certain dominant interests. Democratic control can only occur if a democratic public is able to discuss knowledgeably and envision the conditions it wants to realize. The possibility is frustrated by the depoliticization of mass publics. This depoliticization and the process of legitimate rests on the seemingly autonomous nature of science and technology and the delivery of consumer goods.

Substantive political questions are eliminated through the process of depoliticization: "the public realm loses its political function." 86/ A system of rewards for privatized needs nurtures the rise of a stimulus-response government. This practical trend, as Carey McWilliams' notes, is ratified in theory by the way in which American political philosophy has concerned itself almost exclusively with institutions and organizations:

"In so doing it has neglected the facts that democratic theory must always be primarily a theory about a demos, about the character and relations of citizens. What we have been taught to call political life and opinion reveal only part of the picture. Indeed,

what most never notice, or what they never conceive to be political, may be more important than the issues and events which engage them most." 87/

When the mainstream in American political science has looked at the demos it has either fled in horror or else ratified the private world of homo civicus. The escape into elitism or "methodism" ignores the need to develop publics capable of informed democratic debate and active participation. It also ignores the profound dangers that the absence of any meaningful normative structure in society creates. 88/

America's political legitimacy rests on a foundation of technical domination and privatized consumption. While sports involvement resonates with the rise of consumption it has a life-force and autonomy all its own. It feeds depoliticization by creating a world of meaning, a utopian refuge, within the larger technical life-world. The possibilities of political change are silenced by the din of the sports fans' time honored cry of hope: "Wait'll next year!"

Footnotes

- 1 James Reston, "Sports and Politics," The New York Times (May 13, 1978).

- 2 Here I am placing myself in the tradition represented by Suzanne Langer and Ernst Cassirer in philosophy and Hugh Duncan in sociology. I am, of course, learning heavily on the unique synthesis that Kenneth Burke calls "dramatism." I am also indebted to Murray Edelman's own application of many of these principles to the study of mass politics. Much of this analysis develops from the Frankfort School's investigation of mass culture. This direction probably has certain points of congruence.

- 3 The evidence of this is voluminous, it ranges from the Lynd's observation of the galvanizing effect of Muncie's high school basketball team as community whereas, Middletown (New York: Harvest Books, 1955), to Frank Deford's lively expose of boosterism, state identification and Oklahoma football in his article "Fans to Press: Drop Dead" (Sports Illustrated, Dec. 13, 1976). See also Martin Ralbovsky's two books, Lord of the Lockerroom (N.Y.: Peter Widen, 1974) and Destiny's Darlings (N.Y.: Hawthorn Books, 1974), for excellent material on team-town symbiosis.

- 4 Bill Gilbert, "Sis-Boom-Bah! For Amalgamated Sponge" in G. Sage (ed.) Sport and American Society (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wexley, 1970); Elton Mayo, The Social Problems of an Industrial Civilization (Boston: Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration, 1975); George Friedmann, Industrial Society (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1955); and F. J. Roethlisberger, et al., Management and the Worker (N.Y.: John Wiley, 1964).

- 5 Michael Roberts, Fans: How We Go Crazy Over Sports (Wash., D.C.: New Republic Books, 1976), p.xi.

- 6 William Mead, Even the Browns (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1978); Roger Kahn, The Boys of Summer (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1972). Most of the other examples are taken from such anecdotal accounts as Michael Roberts' Fans; Neil Offen's God Save the Player (Chicago: Play-boy Press, 1974); and from Sports Illustrated. Many of the insights on team identification that will follow are generated in good hermeneutic fashion, by my own intense preoccupation with New York Knickerbockers basketball.

- 7 Harry Edwards, The Sociology of Sport (Homewood, Ill.: The Dorsey Press, 1974), pp. 234-243.
- 8 Arnold Beisser, The Madness in Sports (N.Y.: Appleton-Century Croft, 1967).
- 9 Murray Edelman, The Symbolic Uses of Politics (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1968).
- 10 This idea derives from the work of Alfred Schutz. This section combines certain aspects of Schutz's phenomenological approach with the dramatistic methodology of Burke. The attempt is to link symbolism, perception and social action.
- 11 Paul Weiss, Sport: A Philosophical Inquiry (Carbondale, Ill.: So. Illinois University Press, 1969), pp. 135-243; Johann Huizinga, Homo Ludens: The Study of the Play-Element in Culture (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955). Huizinga distinguishes play from "false play." He fits sports into this latter category. It would be my contention that the appeal of sports lies precisely in its recherche of child's play.
- 12 Brian Petrie, "Sport and Politics" in Ball and Loy (eds.) Sport and the Social Order (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1975), p.190. Petrie's critique is representative of most of the sociological approaches.
- 13 The Symbolic Uses of Politics, pp. 3, 11.
- 14 Jurgen Habermas, Toward a Rational Society (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), pp. 50-57. Habermas contrasts the "social life world" with the "technical life-world." I shall elaborate on his discussion later on.
- 15 Lewis Cole, A Loose Game: The Sports as Business of Basketball (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Berrill, 1978), p.174.
- 16 I will develop this idea more thoroughly in a later section. Most of the popular books on teams focus on this struggle. Novak posits the making of the team as a form of "election." See The Joy of Sports (N.Y.: Basic Books, 1976), p.29.
- 17 B. I. Gilbert, "That Senior Season" in Sports Illustrated (November 14, 1977).
- 18 Lords of the Lockerroom, p.125.

- 19 John Tunis, The Keystone Kids (N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1943), p.23.
- 20 Ibid, p.195.
- 21 See Arnold Mandel's The Nightmare Season (N.Y.: Random House, 1976) for the discussion of the personal power of football commissioner Pete Rozelle. In "A Walk on the Sordid Side, Sports Illustrated (Aug. 1, 1977), William Johnson vividly describes Rozelle's role in trying to control the level of violence in football. In Eliot Asinoff's Eight Men Out: The Black Sox and the 1919 World Series (N.Y.: Holt, Rinehard and Winston, 1963), the historical importance of Judge Landis, the "czar" of baseball is stressed. Periodically, the styles of the commissioners are assessed and compared: Red Smith, "Ford Frick: He Wasn't a House Dick," The New York Times (Apr. 11, 1978).
- 22 Frank DeFord, "I Don't Date Any Women Under 48," Sports Illustrated (Dec. 5, 1977), p.36.
- 23 Ibid, p.52. For other illustrations of this see Don Kowet, The Rich Who Own Sports (N.Y.: Random House, 1977); Dave Anderson, "Roy Boe and the Public Trust," The New York Times (May 4, 1978); Sam Goldaper, "Maverick Sonic Owner Gets all the Applause," The New York Times (May 24, 1978); Mike Lupica, "Knicks Await Godfather's Move," New York Daily News (Oct. 17, 1978); and Gerald Eskanazai, "Werblin Weighs Changes at the Top," The New York Times (May 29, 1978). George Steinbrenner is, of course, the epitome of personally concerned ownership; See Ron Fimrite's article, "Yankee Clipper," Sports Illustrated (Oct. 10, 1977).
- 24 Dick Schaap in "The Year the Mets Lost the Franchise," Sport (Nov. 1977) summarizes the bizarre battle this way: "Don said Tom was an ingrate, and Tom said Dick was a bleeping maniac. Dick said Tom was a spoiled brat, and Maury said Dick was an apologist for Don," p.71.
- 25 See Jerry Izenberg, "Billy Became a Victim of George's Whim," New York Post (July 25, 1978); Mike Lupica, "Steinbrenner's Style Has Reg Bewildered," The New York Daily News (Aug. 1, 1978); Pete Hamill, "Steinbrenner Moved to the Head of the Class," The New York Daily News (Aug. 1, 1978).

- 26 Pete Vecsey, "Knicks Brass Cast in Mediocre Mold," The New York Post (Apr. 25, 1978); and Jerry Izenberg, "Giant Cries of Anguish," The New York Post (Dec. 11, 1978). Paul Zimmerman's article, "Fans Take to Air Against Giants," in The New York Post (Dec. 11, 1978), indicates how owners can occasionally become the focal point for fan anger.
- 27 God Save the Players, p.10.
- 28 Sarah Pileggi, "No End With This End," Sports Illustrated (Dec. 12, 1977), p.33.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Larry Keith, "The Tradition," Sports Illustrated (Feb. 13, 1978).
- 31 John Tunis, World Series (N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace, World, 1941), p.163. Burke again adds insight: "The individual's deepest means of support in the civic context resides in such communicative or cooperative bonds. By it he is 'transcendentally' fortified...." Permanence and Change, p.236. The game also becomes a receptacle for the discharge of intense wrath on the opposing team. Visiting Manley Fieldhouse at Syracuse University means playing before the "Zoo," a group of rabid and obnoxious fans who sit in a special section. See Curry Kirkpatrick, "The Color for the Orange is Gray," Sports Illustrated (Feb. 21, 1977).
- 32 Bill Verigan, "The Lonely Life of the Referee," Madison Square Garden (Dec. 17, 1978), p.37.
- 33 Symbols and Social Theory (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1969), p.266.
- 34 Ray Blount, "Where Football Comes to a Head," Sports Illustrated (Sept. 5, 1977), p.37. See also Lewis Cole's discussion of "serious gossip" on the playgrounds as an essential continuation of the sports drama into everyday life, A Loose Game, p.11.
- 35 Curry Kirkpatrick, "The Kain-tuck-ee Jubilee," Sports Illustrated (Dec. 26-27, 1977), p.29. See also Dave Kindred, Basketball: The Dream Game in Kentucky (Louisville, Ky: Data Courier, Inc., 1975).
- 36 H. L. Nieburg, Culture Storms: Politics and the Ritual Order (N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1973), p.53.

- 37 I have read through over 50 popular treatments of teams. In addition, I analyzed over two straight years of material on teams in Sports Illustrated, one year in Sport, the Basketball Weekly and the Football News. Also I read through the coverage of the entire 1969-1970 championship year of the New York Knickerbockers in the New York Post in order to grasp the sense of purpose and drama portrayed in newspaper sports coverage. My analysis is intended to distill forms, and does not rely on empirical verifications, as practiced in the content analysis of Bernard Berelson. For methodological purists I would suggest a reading of Hugh Duncan's critique of Berelson in Symbols and Social Theory. Here I follow his path.
- 38 Roger Kahn, The Boys of Summer (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1972), p.108.
- 39 The Miracle on 33rd Street (N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1970), p.191. Dave Kindred's remark is apt: "A sports writer is a basketball player who can type better than he can shoot." Basketball: The Dream Game in Kentucky, p.1.
- 40 Ibid, p.219. For further illustrations of this point see Bill Bradley's Life on the Run, p.210, where he describes how the Milwaukee papers treated the Knick arrival like an invasion of an enemy army. The Post tells of Milwaukee's explosive reaction to beating the Knicks (Jan. 3, 1970).
- 41 Robert Lipstye in Sports World: An American Dreamland (N.Y.: Quadrangle, 1976) devotes a chapter to "skills and hacks." Paul Hoch in Rip Off the Big Game (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971) also criticizes the media heavily.
- 42 Red Holzman, The Knicks (N.Y.: Dodd and Mead, 1970), p.24.
- 43 Leonard Lewin, "Sub Cazzie Gives Knicks a Start," The New York Post (Oct. 17, 1969).
- 44 Jeff Greenfield, The World's Greatest Team (N.Y.: Random House, 1976), p.14.
- 45 See John Underwood's "New Colts are Mighty Frisky," Sports Illustrated (Nov. 17, 1975) for a look at a talented general manager named Joe Thomas; Curry Kirkpatrick, "A Cavalier Attitude is Paying Off," Sports Illustrated (Jan. 12, 1976) for a look at

Cleveland coach Bill Fitch and "Everybody Gets Into the Act," Sports Illustrated (Nov. 14, 1975) for a look at the way Golden State owner Franklin Mieuli is portrayed as essential for the team's success.

- 46 "Everybody Gets Into the Act" analyzes the importance of the coach's personality in creating team solidarity. The emphasis is that different coaches will have different emotional levels but that success is a result of a congruence between coach and players. This is aphoristically stated by Al McGuire when he said "the team should be an extension of a coach's personality. My team is arrogant and obnoxious...." Dave Anderson's column in the New York Times (March 2, 1977). Especially for an explanation of the rise of "personal" ownership, see Ray Kennedy, "Who Are These Guys?" Sports Illustrated (Jan. 31, 1977).
- 47 Management and the Worker, p.vii; George Friedmann in Industrial Society explains this trend. He sees the growing emphasis on the ability of the enterprise to make the worker feel "at home." Elton Mayo is, of course, one of the pioneers here in the advocacy of "administrators" to be trained in "social skills."
- 48 Jerry Kramer, Instant Replay (N.Y.: NAL, 1978), p.275; Robert Vare, Buckeye (N.Y.: Popular Library, 1974); and Jerry Brondfield, Woody Hayes and the 100 Yard War (N.Y.: Random House, 1974), point to parallels between Lombardi and Hayes. The term "up" in sports parallels the use of the term "morale" in industrial management.
- 49 The Quest for Community. See also Sebastian de Grazia, The Political Community: A Study of Anomie (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958) for an emphasis of the importance of emotional identification with leaders in the creation of political community.
- 50 Miracle on 33rd Street, p.112. The Presentation of the Self, Chapter 2.
- 51 Life on the Run, p.70, emphasis added.
- 52 Carey McWilliams, The Idea of Fraternity in America (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1975), pp. 1-8. Lionel Tiger, Man in Groups (N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1970), discusses "male bonding" in sports as does Michael Novak. A private talk with Professor McWilliams encouraged me to pursue this idea.

- 53 Life on the Run, p.80.
- 54 G. H. Mead, "The Nature of Aesthetic Experience" in Selected Writings (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), p.296.
- 55 Instant Replay, p.281. See Life on the Run, pp. 210, 211; these moments are most visibly captured by non-verbal symbolism. The hundreds of photographs of joyous, hugging athletes and the television scenes of jubilation after a big victory. That they resonated deeply with the fans is evidenced by the huge protest-phone calls deluging the CBS switchboard--when the network cut away before the fans could partake in the Portland Trailblazer lockerroom celebration.
- 56 Life on the Run, p.60. Thus it is no accident that Kenneth Burke feels that if we are to regain our sense of purpose we must experience the rebirth of the agon.
- 57 See the story on the Houston Oilers, Sports Illustrated (Nov. 3, 1975) on how coach Phillips overcame the "morale of death row" to turn that team into a bunch of happy winners.
- 58 See Curry Kirkpatrick, "Good But Why Not the Best?" Sports Illustrated (March 21, 1977); Mark Engel, "Julius and George: Can Two Superstars Bring Philadelphia Title that it Wants to Buy?" The Basketball Weekly, Vol. 10, No. 8 (Jan. 27, 1977); and The New York Post and The New York Daily News have focused daily this year on the perils of Yankee dissension. In Symbolic Leaders (Chicago: Aldine, 1964), Orrin Klapp points out how the "troublemaker" is an essential villain figure in a society that emphasizes team work and organizational reliability; p.191.
- 59 Plimpton is very good at capturing the agony of being cut in Paper Lion, p.89.
- 60 Ball Four, p.112.
- 61 In "Giant Cries of Anguish," Jerry Izenberg analyzes the insurrection of Giant Football fans after fifteen years of frustration. In The Boys of Summer, Roger Kahn tells how identifying with the Brooklyn Dodgers cultivated his tragic sense of life.

- 62 Concerning the tenuous fate of Yankee Manager Billy Martin, The New York Post (July 25, 1977). Larry Merchant, "Ritual Victim I," The New York Post (Sept. 17, 1969); "Ritual Victim II," (Sept. 18, 1969) analyzes the dismissal of former Giants football coach Allie Sherman.
- 63 Burke works this out in "Human Behavior Considered Dramatistically" in a section called the "perfecting of victimage", Permanence and Change, p.286.
- 64 The New York Post (Jan. 29, 1970).
- 65 See Beisser's chapter in The Madness in Sports (N.Y.: Appelton-Century Croft, 1967) on "Membership in the Tribe."
- 66 I am indebted to John Betts' historical research here; America's Sporting Heritage (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1975).
- 67 R. Eliot, cited in Sociology of Sport, p.129. Edwards' research into America's sports creed is a valued source of information.
- 68 Communication and Social Order, p.78; see also G. H. Mead, Mind, Self and Society, Vol. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), pp.152-156.
- 69 Reuel Denney, "The Spectatorial Forms," in J. Talamini and C. Page (eds.) Sport and Society (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), p.380.
- 70 Rip Off the Big Game, p.102.
- 71 The Joy of Sports, p.59.
- 72 Organization Man, pp.5-8.
- 73 See The Social Problems of an Industrial Civilization: Management and the Worker: in Alienation and Freedom, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), Robert Blauner emphasizes this trend. W. L. Warner's work on the factory is influential here; American Life: Dream and Reality (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953).
- 74 Whyte's analysis of the group process is germane here: "For any group of people to operate effectively some form of agreement is necessary and a meeting cannot be productive unless certain premises are so shared that they don't have to be discussed and the argument can be confined to areas of agreement." Organization Man, p.58.

- 75 Sheldon Wolin, Politics and Vision (Boston: Little, Brown, 1960), p.366. Wolin's insights were extremely important in working out some of the themes in this section.
- 76 Social Problems of Industrial Civilization, p.27. This theme is also present--spanning ideological barriers as Wolin has pointed out--in the work of Wilhelm Reich, The Mass Psychology of Fascism (N.Y.: Noontday, 1970). Reich saw politics as an "emotional plague" and searched for solutions to political conflict in sex therapy. This theme is also present in Harold Lasswell's Pathology and Politics. Conflict is to be replaced by the emotional management of a cadre of psychoanalytically trained "administrators."
- 77 The World's Greatest Team, p.8; Novak in the Joy of Sports makes similar statements about football. This is not to deny that socialist symbolism is not present. One needs to be careful about being overly euphoric in one's application, however.
- 78 America Learns to Play, p.191.
- 79 Eight Men Out.
- 80 What Hannah Arendt first called the "privatization of meaning." See The Homeless Mind, p.35.
- 81 I am relying on Klapp's The Collective Search for Identity here. William Kilpatrick's, Identity and Intimacy (N.Y.: Delta Books, 1975) also underscores this basic theme.
- 82 The Joy of Sports, p.34.
- 83 Robert Coover, The Universal Baseball Association, J. Henry Wanh, Prop. (N.Y.: Random House, 1968).
- 84 Fred Exley, A Fan's Note (N.Y.: Random House, 1968).
- 85 Toward a Rational Society, p.59. Habermas' argument is a creative synthesis of the ideas of the Frankfurt school. The argument developed here is similar to Jacques Ellul's in The Technological Society (N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1967).
- 86 Toward a Rational Society, p.104.
- 87 The Idea of Fraternity, p.96.

- 88 See Carole Pateman, Participation and Democratic Theory (N.Y.: Cambridge University, 1970) for an extensive critique of mainstream political science treatment of democratic theory.

"WHERE HAVE YOU GONE, JOE DiMAGGIO?" THE
POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF ATHLETIC HEROISM

"For three years he had daydreamed of how he would be a scintillating high school baseball star and how he would hit a homerun with the bases full. And look at the way he had folded up in a pinch. Yes, after kidding himself about his destiny, and having the nerve to think that he would be a star like Ty Cobb or Eddie Collins, he was a miserable failure.... He didn't have what it takes. He was eighteen years old and he was no good. He lacked something--nerve, confidence.... Yes, even though he was considered one of the best athletes in school, he was never really going to be any good."

James Farrell, Father and Son

"Each person builds up his personal idealized image from the material of his own special experiences, his earlier fantasies.... The individual wants to--or, rather is driven to--express himself. And this now means that he want to express his idealized self, to prove it in action.... For this reason, self-idealization inevitably grows into a more comprehensive drive...the search for glory."

Karen Horney

"In a good theatrical performance (as in ardent worship) actor and audience feel, 'We do it together.'"

Otto Fenichel

"On the final Sunday of the 1966 season, Sandy Koufax won the second game of a double-header in Philadelphia and with it a hot pennant race for the Dodgers. This was the last game he ever pitched in Philly, and it ended after dark. As the fans hurried across the floodlit field, two professors from the University of Pennsylvania stopped near the mound where moments before Koufax was struggling to triumph. One of them toed the slab and looking up at the obscure stands remarked, 'If I had that guy's left arm, damn if I'd be teaching economics.'" 1/

An understanding of the role of the athletic hero as model and symbolic representative is essential for a complete understanding of the political importance of the sports drama.

Sports in America is a form of communication that connects all classes and ethnic groups. As Michael Novak has observed, "Sports are our most universal art form." 2/ As a depoliticized symbolic world, sports is a safe sanctuary for the creation of common allegiances. What Robert Lipsyte has observed about football can be extended to the sports phenomenon in general:

"Addiction to the sport, as much as the contest itself, became a currency of communication on every level of American life, ritual manchat at water coolers and in car pools, interclass howdy-do, a way for fathers and sons to discuss loyalty, love, sacrifice, dedication, discipline, success, failure, pain, in detached and nonthreatening symbols." 3/

The drama of sports, then, penetrates the social fabric of American culture through its impact on the everyday lives of so many Americans. It becomes a vehicle of national and

social communication because of the way its symbolism digs so deeply into the consciousness of Americans. Symbolic dramas are effective to the extent that they resonate with the ideas and symbols of the social system. In turn, the ideas and symbols of the social system are only effective to the degree that they are internalized by the citizens of the system, to the degree that the citizens adopt these symbols as motives of their own. ^{4/} Sports, as a symbolic form facilitates the internalization of values through its aesthetic appeal. Its drama, its playfulness, its joyfulness, all create strong emotional attachments at an early age and continue to exert strong pulls throughout adult-life.

The symbolic drama not only acts as a social tutor. Its dramatic form is cathartic as well as exemplary. The symbolic drama does exhort people to act. Its leading characters are exemplary--acting out in analogical form what is prescribed in the libretto of the drama of social life. Yet the dictates of social drama create what Kenneth Burke calls a "hierarchial psychosis." The reality of most people's lives usually falls far short of the tantalizing possibilities embodied in the myths of social drama. The gap between myth and reality creates tension and guilt. If allowed to build up, this tension and guilt would be personally immobilizing and socially and politically crippling. Symbolic drama provides an aesthetic distance that

allows the spectator to engage in the symbolic resolution of problems that would, if left unresolved, lead to a dangerous buildup of anxiety. Simon Lesser drives this point home:

"For as blessed moment tendencies which are usually a source of tension, anxiety and conflict are either not in evidence or are so soft-spoken that they appear readily manageable.... The experience we call catharsis enables the ego to re-establish the control which is threatened by dammed up instinctual demands." 5/

I will take up this point in more detail later but now it should be pointed out that imitation--basically the theory of artistic imitation first expounded by Plato--and catharsis--Artistotle's rebuttal--are not mutually exclusive. In fact they can be seen as aesthetic explanations of the dialectics of socialization and escape that I have forwarded toward the understanding of sports symbolism. The symbolic dramas exhort us to act in certain ways and promise us certain rewards for acting correctly. In the competitive and individualistic drama of American society everyone learns that he and she is each responsible for their own successes and failures. The anxiety and guilt that accrues threatens to immobilize individuals. The same symbolic dramas that exhort people to act in certain ways also provide the arena for the tensions that are engendered by those symbolic dramas. Energy is now released which can be channeled into socially accepted modes of action.

As I have outlined in the introduction, sports is perceived as a "lived world" that stands in sharp relief with the "dead space" of the rationalized world of factories and bureaucratic institutions. As Suzanne Langer has indicated, drama creates the illusion of virtual history. "Its substance is an image of human life--ends, means, gains and losses, fulfillment and decline and death." 6/ The dramatic mode is one of destiny and rests on the fateful consequence of action. In real life the future is vaguely felt while in drama we experience the crisis of decision with full force. In drama, unlike in real life, destiny is personified through heroic action. An understanding, then, of the political impact of sports symbolism rests on the analyses of the dramatic role of the athlete and an explication of the actor-athlete, audience-fan symbiosis.

The athlete is the cynosure of the sports drama, a vehicle of entry into the world of sports. 7/ The part that the athlete plays in this drama, however, rests on the scenic structure of the Sportsworld itself. The Sportsworld sets up its own parameters in order to condense the human drama into the structure of one game, a pennant race, a play off, a world series, or a season. Neil Offen correctly points out how this condensation is enacted as "hyper-life under glass." 8/ The essence of drama is a dramatic crisis. A dramatic crisis rests on the existence of the possibility of a vivid and meaningful human intervention.

In a world of complex extra-human "forces" the scope of heroic action is limited. As Sidney Hook points out, "...heroic action can count decisively only where the historical situation permits of major alternative paths of development." 9/

The background assumptions of sports drama is the existence of alternative. Destiny is in human hands from the commissioners' offices to the owners', general managers' and coaches' decisions. Dow Jones Averages, anonymous memoranda, and bureaucratic inertia are absent. Koufax faces Mantle with two on, two out; O. J. Simpson confronts Mean Joe Greene in the open field; "Dr. J." swoops in on Kareem Abdul-Jabbar in the fourth quarter. Crisis and individual intervention is given. As Mel Allen points out:

"But to a considerable number of us the sports world serves as the most accessible contemporary stage on which men of courage, boldness and determination can be watched! The issues are defined, the performances properly identified and the whole story immediately made available to the public." 10/

The sports drama originates in the formulaic descriptions of the sports writers whose purpose is to search for and underscore the dramatic crisis. Tristram Potter Coffin highlights the importance of the sports chroniclers. He points out that the popularity of the melodramatic Frank Merriwell fiction in the early years of the century become the model for actual sports reporting. In that fiction, there is a

world "in which the big game is a near cosmic crisis, where the pressures, the urge for glory, and the failures are gargantuan." 11/ The real life reporters quickly found that such "Merriwellisms" were popular with their readers. As Coffin indicates:

"The fact of the matter is that people don't care to bring the same old world they have to live in. They prefer to pay their 'dime' for things as they ought to be. So there is no way that the newsman or the ghost can escape some sort of 'Merriwellism....' If he cares to make a living he had better offer the package that is marketable." 12/

The dramatic spectacle of sports really became a vivid mass phenomenon in the "Golden Age" of the 1920s. Earlier limited trends became sharply delineated and expanded for a national audience. What needs to be pointed out here is the essential linkage between promotion, publicity and drama. Sports entrepreneur Tex Rickard did much of the pathbreaking. He looked for dramatic angles and then shamelessly promoted them. His boxing spectacles always had a popular hero pitted against someone of questionable character or courage. 13/ Reporters found that focusing in on the athlete's personality resonated with the needs of an emerging mass audience to be on the inside of the drama.

"The result was that the prizefighters of the million dollar era were better known to the readers of newspapers than members of their own family.... These men became part of the daily life literally of millions of people." 14/

The hyperbole and publicity intensified the nature of the dramatic encounter. The symbolism of the game, however, is the crucible of the crisis atmosphere. The games' drama rests on its enactment of the normative values of the Sportsworld. In particular, the central aim of sports (victory) serves as the generator of the crisis atmosphere. The intense necessity of winning generates a tremendous pressure. The pressure is even more intense when the athlete is representing his team and community. Losing is seen as sinful, akin to death. Losers are failures, the objects of our frustrations, pity and scorn.

The crisis of winning is the emotional backdrop for hero-worship. Tremendous individual and social insecurity is created when moral-communal values are threatened. ^{15/} The athlete is the fan's life-raft in this situation. His courageous manner obviates the threat of humiliation and chaos. Murray Edelman's point on leadership is analogous here.

"Because it is apparently intolerable for men to admit the key role of accident, of ignorance, and of unplanned process in their affairs, the leader serves the vital function of personifying and reifying the processes. As an individual he can be praised and blamed and given 'responsibility' in a way that the processes cannot." ^{16/}

The ability to assign "responsibility," to play along with human actors in a symbolically shared struggle enacted right before our eyes, is the foundation of Sportsworld drama.

The pressure that devolves from the clear-cut alternatives of winning and losing is enhanced by the nature of a game as a mass ritual. Thousands of spectators are noisily chanting, fervently loving and hating the individuals and/or teams involved. The tension and pressure on audience and actor alike enhance the emotional impact of the performance. Hockey player Eric Nesterenko captures this atmosphere exquisitely:

"The pro game is a kind of stage. People can see who we are. Our personalities come through our bodies. It's exciting. I can remember games with twenty thousand people and the place going crazy with sound and action and color. The enormous energy the crowd produces all coming in on the ice, all focusing in on you. It's pretty hard to resist that (laughs).... These people were turned on by us (sighs). We came off, three feet off the ice...." 17/

The dramatic pressure creates an actor-audience fusion. As Robert Smith points out, people would experience a physical thrill when Babe Ruth hit a key homerun, "What deep roar would go up then! It was as if the person in the park shared with Babe the consummate release...." 18/ This dramatic fusion is generated by all the gifted soloists of sport. A description of Julius Erving highlights this general process:

"Then, all of a sudden, the Sixers sprang to life.... On offense, the Sixers fed Julius again and again and each time he made some impossible crazed, spinning, driving leaps toward the basket. It was pure magic and Philadelphia fans went nuts. This was no longer basketball but a kind of religious exercise with Erving as shaman." 19/

The great athletes are charismatic performers who exude an emotional force that energizes those who bear witness. Writer-fan Woody Allen captures the fan's feelings in his description of Earl Monroe:

"What makes Monroe different is the indescribable heat of genius that burns deep inside him. Some kind of diabolical intensity comes across his face when he has the ball. One is suddenly transported to a more primitive place. The audience gets high with anticipation of some great thrill about to occur." 20/

Allen goes on to describe the connection between fan and athlete:

"It's amazing, because the audience's 'high' originates inside Monroe and seems to emerge over his exterior. He creates a sense of danger in the arena and yet has enough wit and style to bring off funny ideas when he wants to." 21/

The star athlete imprints his personality on the game, the team, the fans, and as often as not, the whole nation. The hot-house method of nurturing a sports star in a continual crisis atmosphere results in a process of ruthless selection. Those who survive to become the focus of an entire nation tend to have "stronger personalities." 22/ They don't crack under pressure, they "want the ball in the last two minutes." 23/

The importance of the personality as a factor emerged during the 1920s, an era of personal publicity and glorification of the individual skills of athletes. This focus had, and continues to have, two important aspects. On the one

hand the fan observes and the reporters glorify the color and style of the performers during the contest. On the other hand, the media puts out an endless stream of speculation and analysis about the inner workings of the star's personality. The twin-edged approach facilitates the entire process of identification. The fate of our athletes is our own. It feels "like a personal friend is out there fighting for us." ^{24/} Fred Exley's remark underscores this process: "Frank Gifford, more than any single person, sustained for me the illusion that fame was possible." ^{25/}

Each athlete develops an on-the-field manner and appearance that makes him immediately identifiable. Thurman Munson's neck gyrations, Joe Namath's slouch and white shoes, Kareem Jabbar's skyhook all are commented upon and copied (where possible) inside the arena and out. This stylistic differentiation fuses with the marginal differentiation of personalities in a process of social typing. As Orrin Klapp has shown, Americans identify with performers who make shining impressions in front of the audience. ^{26/} The colorful performances and personalities ingratiate audiences and stylistically urge emulation and vicarious identification with all aspects of the athletes' lives.

The dramatic focus of the Sportsworld pushes the sports star into the role of symbolic leader. The symbolic leader is a model of social type whose image reflects the values of the world in which he acts. Orrin Klapp highlights this in

his discussion of heroes, villains and fools:

"...the hero, villain and fool represent three basic dimensions of social control in any society. Heroes are praised, followed, set up as models, and given a central part in dramas. Heroes, villains and fools represent three directions of deviation: (1) better than, (2) dangerous to, and (3) falling short of, norms applied to group members.... These basic models are used by all societies to maintain the social system...." 27/

The athlete's typing resonates with basic values of the "social system" of sports. The moral injunctions "hustle," "a winner never quits, a quitter never wins," "don't be a sore loser," "be humble," be a "team player," all generate the social types. Players whose on-or-off-the-court behavior flouts the moral beliefs become a receptacle for fan anger. The tantrums of Rick Barry invite audience hostility. 28/ The "cool" of a Walt Frazier is ridiculed as indifferent loafing. 29/ A non-hustling Dick Allen is an easy target for abuse. 30/ On the other hand, those who grandiosely exemplify the normative structure are lionized. Pete Rose becomes "Charlie Hustle," Jerry West becomes "Mr. Clutch," and Bill Walton is lauded for his willingness to subjugate his ego into the larger good of the team. 31/

The athlete is expected to perform with a grace and a flamboyant understatedness. The hero is always threatening to "become too big for his britches." There is always that danger that he will think he is "bigger than the game." This is why such pressure is placed on the athlete to be humble and acknowledge his debt to his team or his

sport. Even the immortal Babe Ruth is censured for acting in direct disregard of the rules of his sport. As then-Commissioner Landis remarked, "Who does that big monkey think he is?" ^{32/} We live vicariously in the ability of the culture hero to transcend all the pointless routines of everyday life. Yet we secretly rejoice when he is forced to atone for his transcendence. In both instances the social order is reinforced.

It is no accident, then, that those athletes who are most despised are the tricksters, the spoil sports, and the braggarts. ^{33/} Yet these villains are allowed to continue to play only as long as their umpudence does not threaten the world's order. In basketball, for instance, a rough enforcer is both feared and admired as he "subtly" keeps order on the court. If, however, his tactics lead to brawling and brutality--or, as with Kermit Washington, near death--the rules themselves are threatened and the athlete is ritually sacrificed. ^{34/} This same process is even more seriously seen with regard to the fixing of games. The "dumpers" are sacrificed so that the game's integrity is preserved. ^{35/}

The dramatic appeal of the sports star is also linked to the ability of the Sportsworld to symbolically recreate the joy, playfulness and spontaneity of childhood. Thorstein Veblen captured this in his early observation that there was

a heavy dose of "make-believe" in sports involvement.^{36/} This sentiment became institutionalized in the injunction that sports were "fun and games" and that athletes were innocent children. ^{37/} This is one of the primary reasons why the enthusiastic athlete is idolized. "Say Hey" Willie Mays, Mark "The Bird" Fidrych, and Bill Walton transmit a joyful energy while playing and thereby help to reinforce the morally important belief. As players become more business-like in their rhetoric we should look out for the even greater media emphasis on the joyful, playful, "anachronisms."

It is important to point out in this respect that the enthusiasm of playing (performance) is linked to the seriousness of craftsmanship (ability achieved through years of hard practice). While it is clear that the athlete is "playing," the fan realizes through his own involvement that a lot of hard work lies behind the execution of a perfect shot. The athlete, thus, symbolically enacts certain basic principles of workmanship. ^{38/} Everyone who has shaken his or her head in awe over a passing volley, a stutter step in the open field, or a "dipsy-do" lay-up, understands this. Billie Jean King's discussion of the "perfect shot" illustrates this point:

"The perfect shot. It's just an 'aahhh'--all those years of preparation, the moments of losing and mis-hitting the ball, all those nights as a kid when I stayed out when the sun was going down.... My heart pounds, my eyes get damp, and my ears feel like they're wiggling, but it's also just totally peaceful. It's almost like having an orgasm--it's exactly like that." ^{39/}

The synthesis of play, intense emotion, craftsmanship, and hubris is what permits the athlete to symbolize the consummatory moment of all great art. Billie Jean King once again captures this idea exquisitely:

"When everything is right and I know I'm playing my absolute best tennis, I really don't believe there are very many players who can come close to me.... On my very best days I have this fantastic utterly unselfconscious feeling of invincibility...." 40/

She continues,

"When I'm in that kind of a state...I feel that tennis is an art form that is capable of moving the players and the audience--at least a knowledgeable audience--in almost sensual ways.... When I'm performing at my absolute best, I think that some of the euphoria I feel must be transmitted to the audience...." 41/

The sports star combines mystical charismatic performances with years of ascetic preparation, a synthesis of emotional uplift within a rational goal-oriented Weltanschauung. When this is seen against the backdrop of dramatic intensity it is understandable how the conditions for heroism and identification are created. In the next section I will begin to focus on the ways in which this heroic drama of individual triumph functions in socially, economically and politically significant ways.

III

Symbolic dramas, as Hugh Duncan has so cogently illustrated in Communication and Social Order, are significant to the extent that they resonate with real issues emanating

from the dramas of social life. Symbolic dramas in general, and sports in particular, are a form of stylistic ingratiation that inculcates important political and social values, "through the back door." They are analogical extensions of tensions embedded in the larger political and social structure. At the same time that they serve to socialize their audience to the major assumptions of these structures, they move to ritualistically and cathartically resolve the tension emanating from the problematic nature of these assumptions.

The athlete, as the hub of the sports drama, is used as a stylistic subterfuge for the inculcation of important values. Wiley Umphlett's observation is illustrative in this context:

"Heroes represent a people, and by discovering the meaning of their character, by returning to the roots of their behavior, we discern the moral figure in the tapestry of the nation." 42/

Values are easily transposed because of the agonistic nature of the Sportsworld setting. As Duncan observes:

"Symbols reach their highest state of power in struggle between good and bad principles of social order as personified in heroes and villains.... As we say in vulgar America, the 'good guys' and the 'bad guys' must shoot it out." 43/

The sports star, as a vernacular hero" moves with the ebb and flow of everyday life. In who rises as an athletic hero, we can learn a great deal about the values that are taking hold within ordinary lives and mass consciousness.

As Max Lerner indicated, the living little hero is more important in understanding America than the storybook military and political figures that dominate the didactic civics texts. ^{44/} The vernacular hero resonates with people's everyday needs, needs that are generated by endemic problems with larger political and social institutions.

In order to understand the impact of the sports hero as an inculcator of important values, I will focus on the historical development of the Sportsworld and the role of the athletic hero in this process. I build here on David Voight's insight: "In the changing face of American nationalism popular choices in sports heroes reflect changes in society's values and norm." ^{45/} Later on, I will explore how the drama of the athletic hero interacts with certain psycho-social needs to facilitate the "escape" into vicarious voyages of identity. I will then illustrate how both socialization and escape function as moments of a dialectic that is instrumental in inducing cohesion and effecting a form of legitimacy that is vital to the stability of the American political system.

Sports has a long popular tradition in America. The sense that sports has a history plays an important role in its work as a socializer of important values. The power of the ideas of a social institution rests on its "there-ness," its possession of an ongoing reality that transcends

the particular biography of any one individual. It enables individuals to feel that they are part of a project that has continuity and human meaning. The historical continuity bridges generational gulfs and can also serve as an important connective tissue within the different stages of an individual's biography. It connects us with our parents (usually fathers and sons) and it gives us a continual hold on our childhood through identification and fantasy. As Tristram Potter Coffin observes:

"The picture of the father shoving a glove and a hat into the crib of his first son is an American cliché...simply because it symbolizes something about American hopes and fears...."

Sports, particularly baseball, begins to rise as a national phenomenon as American society begins to modernize and industrialize. Initially, problems of modernization revolved around breaking down and infrastructure of small towns and local cultures and creating a national network that would form the basis for a unified political and economic system. The impetus behind this, as John Betts and Fred Paxson have shown, was the push of capitalist expansion. Technological advances and increased communication sophistication laid the groundwork for the establishment of national markets and a politically and culturally unified polity. ^{48/} The growth of railroads and the telegraph enabled local "townball" teams to begin to venture out and compete against each other. The Civil War enabled

the "New York" game to be taken back to all areas of the country. ^{49/} Baseball (and to a slightly lesser extent boxing) information and talk began to develop as a communicative bond among various sections of the country. The stars were the vehicles of identification in this process:

"Baseball had its national heroes worshipped by small boys from Maine to California. There was not an American who did not recognize the name of 'Pop Anson,' 'Iron Man' Joe McGinnity and Honus Wagner...." ^{50/}

The sports hero helped to create a "feeling of national community identity." ^{51/} A star would rise in a particular locality and would then move onto the national stage as his skill and reputation swelled. When John L. Sullivan won a big fight, Boston would turn out en masse to welcome him home. When he was defeated, by James Corbett, "The world seemed to totter. An incredulous public refused to believe the dire news which appeared in bold-faced headlines from coast to coast." ^{52/} Coffin condenses the relationship of baseball and national communication in this way:

"Throughout its history it has been identified with our 'manifest history.' After the Civil War, when baseball was formulating, America needed a national game, as well as national heroes, legends and literature to shore up its pride, soothe its self consciousness, and explain its attitudes...." ^{53/}

Baseball was quickly identified with a diffuse sense of Americanism. Importantly, it also exhibited early a dual-edged appearance that was later to characterize the Sports-

world as a whole. As Umphlett and Dulles have shown, baseball was clearly emotionally perceived as an "escape" from the evils of urban-capitalist life. The scenic backdrops of the ballparks--their dirt and grassy fields--encouraged the feeling that the game was an idyllic pastoral refuge. Yet the park's cramped surroundings in a narrow urban lot and their hawkish billboards contained the sense of escape within urban-capitalist parameters. Here the dialectic of socialization and escape is graphically portrayed. Whatever the scene, however, the values of the sport resonated sharply with those of the developing capitalist system. Mark Twain recognized this when he wrote that:

"Baseball is the very symbol...the outward and usable expression of the drive and push and rush and struggle of the raging, teeming 19th century." 54/

The professionalization of baseball was turned into the needs of a growing competitive system. The inculcation of an ethos of production (or "proletarianization") was the necessary ideological concomitant of capitalist growth. 55/ Umphlett's analysis of the Frank Merriwell sports fiction for boys illustrates the extent to which the values of Franklin and Emerson were transposed and communicated through the sporting code. 56/ Self-reliance, rugged individualism and competitiveness were inculcated and then linked to the expanding economic order.

The competitive values of sports were tied into the whole Horatio Alger myth of mobility. The symbolic value of seeing people rise from lower origins through sheer skill and determination cannot be underestimated. Robert Smith points this out in his baseball history:

"As the New England town meeting, by habituating the colonists to democracy, doomed the manor system, baseball, by setting no other standards than craft and skill and brutal determination, helped get the common people into the habit of honoring a winner without regard for his antecedents...." 57/

It is evident how the entire democratization process is linked here with political and economic factors. The game itself, originally an aristocratic stronghold that restricted the participation of common people, began to recruit players from all class backgrounds as gambling interests pushed out "etiquette" in favor of ability to win with any methods available. The polite, no-sliding, "don't take advantage" game was replaced by the more ruthless ("ungentlemanly") tactics of people like John McGraw and "Pop" Anson. 58/ This change reflected the increased competitiveness of the economic order.

As baseball was nationalizing the democracy, it was proving to be an excellent crucible for the difficult task of Americanization of the immigrants. The immigrants needed to be assimilated into all the newly emerging cultural values--values that were by no means secure even among the native born. As John Higham has pointed out,

threats to conform always fluctuated with more palatable forms of inducement. ^{59/} As sports became more acceptable it became a symbol of the immigrants' embrace of the American system as it illustrated in turn the openness and receptiveness of the system itself. Smith captures the class-ethnic synthesis here:

"But among the manual laborers--the young railroad firemen, the newsboys, the teamsters, the shovelers and the farmhands--the first great professional heroes of the game were being bred. That so many of them in the eighties and nineties wore Irish names was just an indication that the Irish rode the bottom rung of the ladder in America." ^{60/}

As the sport grew, other ethnic groups symbolically strutted over the American scene. As David Voight has observed, the 90s was the era of immigrants. "A low profit era, the nineties saw hyphenated Americans, the children of immigrants, rise to stardom to the delight and admiration of their compatriots." ^{61/} The historian Oscar Handlin vividly underscores the important aspect of sports in this context of Americanization:

"Increasingly the thoughts of the children were preoccupied with the events of the world of sport within which were played out the vivid dramas of American success and failure." ^{62/}

The immigrants mobility drama was certainly not limited to baseball. Boxing heroes evolved with each new influx of ethnic groups. The growth of football at the turn of the century exhibits the same trend. As Riesman and Denney

indicate, you can trace the Americanization process by seeing how the names of Walter Camp's All-American teams changed:

"The ethnic significance of football is immediately suggested by the shift in the typical origin of the play--names on the All-American football teams since 1889. In 1889, all but one of the names (Hefflinger) suggested Anglo-Saxon origins.... By 1927, names like Casey, Kipke, Oesterbann, Koppisch, Garbisch, and Friedman were appearing on the All-American lists...." 63/

Notre Dame, with its Irish and Polish gridiron stars, became the symbolic embodiment of ethnic American success--especially when they overtook the Anglo-Saxon Ivy League in football supremacy.

We can see how the ethos of democratic competition permeated the Sportsworld belief system. An important concomitant of this creed was the notion that participation in sports had curative value for potential delinquents caught in the squalor of urban ghettos. Educators like Richard Ely and G. Stanley Hall promoted the relationship of sports with good "character." The "Y" movement, the Boys' Club and the Knights of Columbus all picked up on this theme and institutionalized the idea. As John Betts pointed out, "Every institution centered in the life of youth either by compulsion or by choice, assumed some degree of leadership in athletics." 64/

People in the settlement house movement like Jane

Addams marvelled at the way in which sports gripped the mass consciousness and sought to dovetail this enthusiasm with their own efforts. This thrust at the grassroots level paralleled the growing media portrayal of the athlete as an innocent. An athlete like Christy Mathewson was a clean-cut "YMCA type" and not really typical of the average ballplayer.

"Yet there was a tendency in those days to accentuate, to exaggerate or even invent a pure and gentle side to every human endeavor. Mathewson was treated not as an unusual figure, but as a typical figure.... The periodical writers undertook to dress the game...in clean rompers at every opportunity." 65/

And, as Robert Smith points up, the glorifiers portrayed baseball as a crusade lead by "clear-eyed scout masters."

The depiction of the athlete as a youthful innocent, a regular staple of even some of the best American sports fiction, served to inculcate the "fun and games" ideology which effectively "sold the product." It also was a useful ancillary to the inculcations of the more materially germane values of competition and mobility. The power of Ring Lardner's writing lay in his forceful description of much of the hypocrisy in this glorified youthfulness and innocence. His "You Know Me Al" stories serve as an ironic debunking of those themes while they demonstrate the grip the ideas did have on the popular imagination. 66/

As American modernized, the need to induce an acceptance of the entire process of rationalization arose. As Max Weber

has pointed out, the success of a capitalist society rests upon a legal-rational system of authority. At the turn of the century there were heated controversies over the structure of football rules and arguments about the improper enforcement of those rules that were accepted. Gradually a stable body of rules evolved along with methods to smoothly deal with necessary changes. Similar currents were visible in baseball as administrators like Ben Johnson sought to bolster fan faith in the rules by enhancing the dignity and professionalism of umpires.^{67/} Periodic attempts to deal with the suspicion of bribery were also important ways in which further rules were inspired.

Faith in the uncorruptibility of baseball, however, could never completely eliminate suspicion. In the Post-World War I period, when baseball business was booming, a major scandal was uncovered by Chicago baseball writer Hugh Fellerton. Public furor mounted, far transcending the later dismay over President Harding and his cabinet. ^{68/} Swift and effective action was demanded. The hiring of the real life "Judge Roy Bean"--Kenesaw Mountain Landis--proved to be the remedy. Acting quickly, overruling a jury that had acquitted the players who were accused of fixing games, Landis banned the "Chicago Black Sox" for life. The Black Sox sins were ritualistically purged through banishment and Landis became a true ethical hero of American life. ^{69/}

More importantly, however, Landis personified the integrity of the rules (as did the Black Sox through their victimization) and restored public confidence in the sanctity of the national pastime. As a result, sports entered its "golden age," the rising of sports as a national mass movement. All of this had tremendous significance for the role of sports as an agent of socialization. John Betts sets the stage for this discussion:

"By 1920 sport had been associated, in the minds of millions of Americans, with local and national prestige and with democratic society. Sport had, through development from a local to a regional to a national basis, done much to unify the social interests of men and women from Bangor, Maine to Spokane, Washington." 70/

IV

Sports' role in socialization and the generation of political cohesion takes a dramatic turn in the post-World War I period. The decade of the twenties sees America go "sports crazy." What is important to point out in this context is the way in which the burgeoning sports phenomenon is exquisitely congruent with some significantly new political and social trends. The 1920s, as Stuart Ewen's pathbreaking work Captains of Consciousness points out, marks a watershed in the development of American capitalism. As Ewen remarks:

"In response to the exigencies of the productive system of the 20th century, excessiveness replaced thrift as a social value. It became imperative to invest the laborer with a financial power and a psychological desire to consume." 71/

Ewen's work points toward a conceptualization of how Americanization, consumption, rationalization and political integration can be pieced together. 1919 was a year of intense capitalist political activity. This militancy provoked the repressive responses known as the "Red Scare." Ewen sees this type of response as typical of American political history but also observes the development of new policies of inducement. During the turn of the century period of industrialization the thrust of socialization, aimed at "proletarianization," the creation of an army of hardworking citizens. As American industry increased its industrial capacity, and as integration of the work force remained problematic, new policies of inducement were needed:

"It was within this context that American history began to produce a cultural apparatus aimed at defusing and neutralizing potential unrest." 72/

Methods of rigid subordination of worker to the factory, characteristic of Frederick Taylor's "scientific management" movement, gave way to attempts to effect a more subtle yet more thorough integration of the worker not only in the factory but beyond. Enlightened businessmen and the growing corps of human relations experts began to see the possibility of the creation of "citizens of industrial civilization." 73/

It is no accident that the post war period also saw the simultaneous eruption of a national sports movement.

The nationalization of sports can be seen as integral to the entire movement towards consumption and political and social integration. The role of athletic "heroism" can be seen as a key factor in both the rise of sports and larger processes of socialization. The "Golden Age" was an age of personality and it was the charismatic injection of flamboyance that fueled all the post-war trends. As Robert Smith points out, it was Babe Ruth who propelled the game of baseball out of a period (1919-1921) where the threat of radicalism and inflation was causing great anxiety. His remarks are indicative of the way in which the growth of sports can be seen as congruent with Ewen's analysis:

"Yet despite all these alarms, there seemed always men and boys enough to crowd a baseball park. And when Babe Ruth appeared there were usually so many fans ready to put strikes, international disputes and the high cost of living out of their minds that the bleachers could not hold them." 74/

The "Golden Age" fueled by the dramatic action of its heroes quickly extinguished unpleasant political memories. The business of sports itself, as I touched upon above, took on a heroic quality. Tex Rickard lifted the sport of boxing out of a quagmire of moral suspicion through the force of his flamboyant personality and his keen insight into the need to promote the essentially dramatic nature of the sport. Rickard carefully groomed his hero and his villain and spent lavishly to give boxing an aura of respectability. 75/

Sports writers of the period indicate that the phenomenal rise of sports can be explained by the dominant personalities: "Never before, nor since, have so many transcendent performers arisen contemporaneously in almost every endeavor of competitive athletes as graced the 1920's." ^{76/} A more sophisticated explanation would underscore the way in which post-war economic expansion, combined with the psychic liberation from a wartime scarcity mentality, dovetailed with the growth of a national communications network to lay the groundwork for sports drama to have the impact that it did. The movement was certainly fueled by the hyperbolic efforts of an equally colorful group of chroniclers whose dramatic intensification resonated with the needs of a mass public.

The heroic deeds became the lingua franca of national communication. Paul Gallico's remarks on Dempsey are prototypical: "But nearly everyone in every walk of life seemed to love and admire Jack Dempsey. There was hardly any class to whose imagination he did not appeal...." ^{77/} Dempsey's national appeal was probably transcended by Babe Ruth's:

"Ruth incognito was a contradiction in terms. Even in that era before television and mass circulation picture magazines...everyone knew and recognized Ruth's huge round, flat-nosed face...wherever he went Babe was on public display and few, if any, of peccadillos went unnoticed." ^{78/}

The creation of national heroes dovetailed with the movement toward the nationalization of a consumer culture. The athletic heroes symbolized the new era of consumption. As the ad-men were promulgating the idea that "freedom" and "democracy" were coterminous with the consumption of goods, the athletes were personifying the idea in their own symbolic dramas of success. The "Babe" is accurately seen as a symbol of the age; his salary disputes were good copy and it was always clear what he needed the money for:

"Aside from the esthetic appreciation of his own worth, Ruth needed more money because he was spending more and more of it--on clothes, on automobiles, on girls, on partying...." 79/

The athletic heroes not only were idols of consumption. Unavoidably this feature was linked to the overall drama of mobility. Paul Gallico's chapter on Gene Tunney is entitled "Horatio Alger, Jr." and eloquently captures the symbolism involved in the rise of a bank clerk (his BA from Yale downplayed) into the upper echelons of the society:

"No fictional story ever based on the beloved rags to riches theme was ever more unbelievably fantastic or more characteristic of the cock-eyed post-war sports period that made it possible. Twenty-five years ago it could not have happened. It took war, post-war inflation, an unprecedented sports mania...and Gene Tunney himself, probably the most remarkable of all the people who were featured in the success story to end all success stories." 80/

In boxing it often didn't matter if one did not fight well. The excitement of seeing poor, struggling, often immigrant young men, earn hundreds of thousands of dollars in a few moments was enough of a stimulus. The "up from penury theme" was dramatized by the intense focus of the media on the lives and personalities of the athletes. When Ruth seemed to break all the normal human limits of eating, drinking, spending and fornicating, outrage was always muted by the popular knowledge of his "orphan" beginnings. That "half-brutes" like Dempsey and Ruth from "across the tracks" (as were most Americans) could become rich beyond maddest fantasy fueled the popular imagination, "mobilized the instincts" (to consume) and reinforced a faith in the larger political and social system. As Gallico says, "It is one of the favorite fables of our democracy, and when it comes to life as it sometimes does in startling places, we are inclined to regard the lucky character as more royal than royalty." 81/

The personification of consumption by athletic heroes fit well with the nascent political ideology of consumption-- "The attempt to create a national unified culture around the social bond of the consumer market...." 82/ This ideology sought to equate the consumption of goods with political freedom. "Democracy" resonated with the proliferation of consumer choices and by buying people legitimized a growing cultural apparatus of control in the name of individual

liberation. The ability of the athlete to symbolize an "escape" from the routines of everyday life--Dempsey's ability to "lick any man in the house"; Ruth's ability to act like a spoiled child--was an effective device for mobilizing people for consumption. 83/

The thrust of the consumption ideology was aimed at creating individual insecurity. Products were pushed as compensation for personal inadequacy. Ads made people "emotionally uneasy." Importantly, the growing consumption ideology sought to offer people an escape from the very ills that capitalism itself had created. If the process of rationalization turned people into isolated, anxious cogs in an industrial machine, consumption offered the possibility of escape by offering "mass produced visions of individualism by which people could extricate themselves from the masses." 84/ The "triumph of mass idols" that Leo Lowenthal documents offered the "spectacle of an outstanding life" 85/ that was securely rooted in the evolving capitalist system.

The 1920s was the initial phase of the development of an ideology of consumption. It was not, however, until the post World War II period that the values of consumption could be effectively internalized and practiced by a larger majority of Americans. The depression, as Ewen indicates was an era of retrenchment as the advertisers waited for a better day:

"Beyond the realm of goods, media were mobilized to sell what could be bought: a spirit of fraternity and commitment, a sense of justice within a vigorously conserved sense of order. The popular arts and cinema enjoyed a heyday. The radio became an integral tool of politics and culture. These combined to generate an ideology of raw frontier idealism and moral commitment, an idealism of acceptable scarcity, resilient cultural fiber, social realism, hard work and fortitude." 86/

In this climate, the "Gas House Gang" in baseball flourished--a collective enactment of the fibrous, never say die, ruggedness. Importantly, this "frontier ruggedness" was embodied in a cast of urban toughs whose brawling and collective spirit symbolized the labor struggles of the militant CIO as it did the city slickness of those for whom mobility was a serious and not necessarily moral game. Baseball salaries were cut and sports start re-enacted the old pre-Ruthian verities. The symbol of the age was boxing's James Braddock:

"He was a unique produce of a specific era.... Braddock ascended to the title in the waning years of the depression, having fallen from an earlier prosperity and then pulled himself out of the poverty and despair with which so many of his countrymen were only too familiar. 'The Cinderella Man,' they called him, and perhaps no other champion had been so real a national symbol." 87/

In this shift in the content of heroic models we can see just how the Sportsworld resonates with shifts in the socioeconomic and political climate. It acts as a separate symbol system yet moves within the parameters set by the larger systematic realities. The shift in sports symbolism

is in response to the change in people's needs caused by a changing reality. Sports symbolism then moves to alleviate hierarchical tensions:

"Braddock inspired an unprecedented wave of public sympathy and good will. The millions whose spirits and imaginations had been stifled by the depression clutched at Braddock as a symbol." 88/

V

Further research needs to be done into the way in which the Sportsworld dialectically responds to and with an ongoing historical political reality. My purpose here is to give some sense of historical perspective as a lead-in to a discussion of the present age of intense sports involvement. In this section, focusing on sports' role in political and social integration, I will develop the way in which today's sports "heroism" is linked to the trends established during the decade of the 1920s.

Today's sports heroes, with adjustment for more modern packaging techniques, are perfected and expanded versions of the consumption idols of the 1920s. Interestingly enough, many of the earliest themes of Americanization, "Sanitization" and mobility are still present, acting as important bolsters to the larger ethos of consumption.

It is important to begin this analysis of modern athletic heroism with a discussion of objections that many people have to labeling today's athletes as heroes. Many fans and commentators take issue with the popularized "immortality" of athletes and the media examination of all the personality flaws of the stars. The objections go like this: "No matter how sophisticated our youth have become, they are still young and need someone to emulate. They need the Gary Cooper portrayal of Lou Gerhig.... In this age of complicated personalities, an idol without known faults and deficiencies is necessary." 89/

The point that needs to be emphasized is that heroism need not devolve from rigidly set down ethical guidelines. The hero-model moves with whatever is cultural significant at a given time. The commercialization of the sports star is a natural spin-off to the development of a consumer ideology. As Jurgen Habermas' and Klaus Mueller's work underscores, the world of commodities itself increasingly replaces any normative basis of legitimacy for the polity as a whole. 90/ What is heroic, then, is what contributes to the common good of buying and selling. This is refracted in the Sportsworld through the process of utilizing many divergent athletic exemplars for the encouragement of consumption.

The linchpin of this process is athletic performance. From there many kinds of personality-images are utilized

for popular consumption, Joe, "The Stud" Namath is pitted against Fran "The Boy Scout" Tarkenton. Yet, when we turn on our television, Namath and Tarkenton are earnestly peddling the products that the advertising people feel are representative of the groups that each athlete symbolizes. Each symbolic model provides a way into tapping Sportsworld energies for the corporate system: "The hero endorsements say simply that the product endorsed belongs in the super-human world of the gods...." 92/

The turmoil of the 1960s saw the disintegration of the previous consensual bases of American society. The pluralization of the social world lay behind the proliferation of heroic sports models. Whom one rooted for began to be determined by the content of the athlete's political view and lifestyle. The politicization of athletics added to the possibilities for hero-worship and villainy. The controversy ultimately, however, was rooted within the commodity structure. The fulminations of Dick Young against Joe Namath brought this response from Joe's business manager, Jimmy Walsh: "Thank God for Dick Young...." 93/ Walsh quickly realized that the controversy merely enhanced Namath's market value.

The politicized athletic controversy was indeed a profitable drama. Lipsyte's mordant pen captures this in his discussion of the congruent roles of Namath and Vince Lombardi:

"The two men complemented each other, Lombardi was football's frontman, while it was promoting itself as a sado-masochistic weekly adventure show written by Robert Ardrey, Konrad Lorenz and Lionel Tiger. By mid-decade, when territoriality and male bonding were slipping, Joe Namath arrived with that outrageous price tag on his arm. By the end of the sixties, Lombardi was firmly established as the Father and Namath the Son while football was being packaged and sold as psychodrama...." 94/

Generally, however, Namath and his heirs were the vanguard of a radical hedonism that began to take root in American culture. What we have here is the democratization of Ruthian excessiveness. Increasingly, what Americans could only do vicariously through heroes like the Babe, became possibilities for their own lives. Namath's impact devolves from his ability to affect the stylization of rebellion. He was able to symbolize the anti-establishment values of youth while inducing an acceptance of the larger commodity structure. Through him the counter culture is transformed into the "over the counter culture." Larry Merchant captures this subtle synthesis:

"Namath drove a Lincoln, lived in a penthouse, was a devout hedonist...and would rather go one on one with Dick Butkis than sit in the mud for three days at Woodstock and listen to rock music. But America saw him as a hippie and there was no doubt in anyone's mind that if he were a girl he wouldn't bear a brassiere...." 95/

The "Namath Effect" ushered in the era of Rolls Royce's, penthouses, llama rugs, fancy wardrobes, and

stunning "female accessories." The Reggie Jacksons, Ken Stablers, Walt Fraziers and Frank Tananas are style leaders for an era of free living that is intricately connected with consumer ostentation. The media preoccupation with salaries, more and more a staple of Sports-world communication, is linked in article after article with a consumption refracted ideology of "freedom," "fun" and "individualism." This reference to tennis star Vitas Gerulaitis is paradigmatic:

"Gerulaitis, who has flowing blond locks and a vast array of high fashion clothes and high class ladies, loves his gaudy bachelor life style. You only live once, he says, and you better smell the roses while you can." 96/

The athlete is also a leading symbolic advance-men for the sexual revolution. As a persuasive representative for the hip promiscuity of our times, the athlete is a trend-setter for a relationship fluidity that increasingly characterizes our high mobility corporate transfer society. The loosening of stable committed relationships, allows for the interchangeability of positions that resonates so well with a complex and fluid division of labor. 97/ We must be prepared to easily pick up roots and move on. Gregariousness and quick and easy intimacy is congruent with this trend.

Sexual promiscuity can be seen as a behavior pattern that is utilized for political and social integration. Herbert Marcuse's view of the sexual revolution as "repressive

desublimation" fits within the escape-integration perspective. ^{98/} Sexuality and its integrative functions are increasingly portrayed by athletic models in the media game of kiss-and-tell. Joe Namath tells us, "I can't imagine anyone who doesn't enjoy sex, who doesn't want sex all the time. It's the best thing ever invented." ^{99/} Marv Fleming lets us know that, "Women made my career." ^{100/} The opposite sex ratifies the notion in stories about female "groupies" like Linda Huey's "I Gravitate toward Jocks." ^{101/}

It is important to emphasize that the heroic symbolism is not so completely one-sided. As always, the appeals remain protean. The Sybarites and swinging singles are counterbalanced by solid family men, clean living kids, and working class heroes. As we hear about Tommy John:

"John does not resemble your everyday athlete. He is articulate, literate and quick-witted. He wore a vested suit of Oxford gray, tailored in Brooks Brothers style; a solid blue shirt burgandy, tie and new shoes. His hair was neatly styled."

Later, after learning of his All-American upbringing, we read about how his devoted wife helped him to recuperate from a new career-ending injury:

"For months his arm was useless. He had to be fed and clothed by his wife.... Doctors thought he would never pitch again. He exercised his hands with rubber bands and Silly Putty. Within months he and Sally, who had just recovered from the birth of their first child, were working out in the yard of their home in Yorba Linda, Calif. He lobbed pitches that she caught with a softball mitt." ^{102/}

We also learn about the simple life of Larry

Bird:

"He doesn't care about material things....
He prefers denim to double-knits and
traditional high topped canvas shoes to the
sleek, striped leather models which know no
bounds between stars and reserves nowadays." 103/

Bird turns down a multi-million dollar pro contract because of his commitment to Indiana State University. Morality and the anti-material spirit survive within the larger apparent breakdown of values and themselves, eventually contribute to the ethics of excess in a slightly ironic end-around.

Money erodes traditional norms--generating lavishness, ostentation, and envy--and creates the need to cut people down to size so that the normative structure is not completely disregarded. For some years now, Dick Young of the New York Daily News (typifying an important group of sportswriters), has done this job well. He has questioned the political radicalism of Bill Walton, attacked the "racism" of Kareem Abdul Jabbar's black nationalism, and has turned almost visibly nauseous at the glorified permissiveness of Joe Namath and Reggie Jackson. His single most important theme has been on how money has eroded Sportsworld's values, bringing showboating, egotism and arrogance in its wake. Ah, but money even penetrates the consistency of Dick Young's moral outrage. In a column on Pete Rose, he cannot hide his admiration for "clean living and dirty uniforms" being rewarded:

"He's unique, Pete Rose is. Not only on the field.... He is a hard-hat millionaire, a deese, dem and dose guy who majors in double negatives.... He may be ungrammatical, but when Pete Rose tells you something you can take it to the bank." 104/

Dick Young finally has a hero of his own; a throw-back to another era who nonetheless is receiving the big bucks that all the "jerks" are getting. The money factor is sanitized because someone with the "right character" has hit the jackpot.

We can see how the pluralization of athletic models can promote consumption for diverse audiences. This consumption promotion does not, however, eliminate the traditional Sportsworld mythology of hard work, mobility and innocence. The "Rocky-like" stories or a "too small" Charlie Criss, a "too small" Lou Piccone, a "too small" and "too old" Vince Papali still harp on the theme of guts and determination and effort. 105/ We still hear how athletes like Lyle Alzado, Bobby Hammond, Ron LeFlore, and Mike Koren escape the hellish squalor of the big city ghettos for the sanitized heaven of the Sportsworld. 106/ The "moral" infrastructure is, however, linked with the "amoral" but socially important push to consume. A work ethic is maintained as a concomitant of the commodified world of fun and leisure. 107/

A final point on the socialization theme needs to be made. Orrin Klapp's seminal work on social typing and

American character, Heroes, Villains and Fools lists the major hero types in the American cultural experience. The "winner," the "splendid performer," the "good Joe," the "independent spirit" and the "group-servant" have all been admired throughout American history. 108/ The model of the sports hero is interwoven throughout this American typology and is indicative of the underlying importance of sports as a socializer of dominant assumptions.

VI

In the beginning of this work I offered the possibility that the sports aesthetic is both emulative and cathartic--its symbolism inducing an acceptance of dominant values while offering as "escape" from the tensions that these values generate. Ewen's remarks, congruent with Marcuse's analysis of the uses of sexuality, point the way for an analysis of this section.

"Advertising and much of what is generally termed 'mass culture' represent a deformed and internally contradicted corporate acceptance of that which power structures have historically forbidden. In a century in which political, social and sensual realms have been exploded by a revolutionary resistance, the 'mass culture' is a symbolic acquiescence by capitalism to what Freud called the 'return of the repressed.' Western civilization in general and capitalist society in particular have maintained their guards on the political and social frontiers of freedom, yet the significance of the 'mass culture' has often been an offering of 'escape' from these controls...and from the... restricted sensual life that they have entailed." 109/

Sports subjectively simulates an alternative level of reality. It is in a sense a utopian realm, yet as I have made clear in the introduction, it is a "utopia" that is thoroughly integrated within corporate cosmos of rationalization and bureaucratization. 110/ The symbolism of the athletic hero underscores this basic theoretical point. The hero has always symbolized the possibility of escaping from the restrictions of everyday life. Previously, the hero overcame the imposing restrictions of "nature." Nowadays the heroic escape is from the "iron cage" of bureaucracy, a world of "dead public space," devoid of human meaning. 111/

Basically, the theme of escape moves with the split between the process of rationalization and the decline of dramatically significant behavior. The growth of a thoroughly rational world undercuts the scope of human action. More and more things are defined by bureaucratic procedures where "untoward" incidents are both feared and fought. It is no accident that a world so delimits the scope of human action should develop political and social theories that see people as "forces," "patterns," "variables" or products of conditioned responses. It is a world that Max Weber feared would end in a "polar night of icy darkness."

The "coldness of an instrumentality rationalized world is dichotomous to the ardor and spontaneity of the sports

drama. As my earlier analysis indicates, the Sportsworld, as a world of plots, values, and heroic actors, exists in counterpoint to the larger scene of capitalist-industrial society. It is an analagous extension of Weber's proposal to "routinize charisma" so that bureaucratic standards would not totally drain the world of human meaning. Sports' ability to generate magical warmth rests primarily on its ability to tap the enthusiasm and spontaneity of child's play, while linking it through fantasy to the drama on the field. 112/ The decision of George Plimpton to see what it would be like being in a big league baseball game illustrates the play-fantasy-identification synthesis: "I kept toying with the notion of doing something about it until I began to be plagued by those half-forgotten boyhood dreams of heroics on the major league diamonds...." 113/ In childhood, playing the game is intimately connected with fantasizing about the big league stars. When you watch kids play you will often hear them calling themselves by the name of their favorite athlete. Mike Candel captures this scene in reference to basketball stars.

"They are the winter heroes of America's young, these gifted professional basketball players who dart, dash, spin and leap across over television screens. Their faces are collected on trading cards. Their numbers are sewn onto the backs of T-shirts, and their playing styles are carefully studied and copied on playgrounds and gymnasiums from coast to coast. Millions of youngsters spend tireless hours trying to perfect the moves of the 'Pearl' and 'Pistol,' the 'Doctor' and others." 114/

The richness of a summer afternoon on the makeshift diamond or the scalding cement of the basketball court, where last inning base hits and running hookshots are warmly cherished, becomes a vivid life memory. It is this poignant remembering that Plimpton sought to mobilize in the acting out of his own fantasies.

"James Thurber...once wrote that the majority of the American males put themselves to sleep by striking out the batting order of the New York Yankees. That's my fellow you see, staring at the bedroom ceiling.... The bases loaded and he is imagining himself coming in from the bullpen...." 115/

The vividness of boyhood heroics is with the fans as they watch their favorite stars. Any fictional event, as Simon Lesser illustrates, may succeed in involving us actively in its drama and stimulate us to spin fantasies around the drama. Michael Novak centers in on this process of "analogizing";

"It is difficult to express the sheer beauty I experienced facing leftward, feeling the blazing sun on my head, feeling the weedy field beneath my feet, listening mentally for the assigned count, fronting, then suddenly facing rightward, looking back and spotting it, falling out of the silvery blue sky--the burning pointed oval that my fingers so desired, touched, held, pulled in, and then the fantasy of the white yard stripes gliding into one another without breaking stride I crossed the goal line. The beauty, the discipline of the thing, is one of the loveliest memories of boyhood." 116/

And now Novak the fan:

"Yet I would be astonished if Barry and John, and all the millions of others like us, didn't still watch Blanda, Namath, Ullrich and all the other Sunday heroes with exquisite pleasure,

admiration and beauty-scorched memory. What we wished to do, strove for--what do I mean? Still strive for, still emulate--they do as gracefully as gods. We were for a season gods, or at least boys with dreams; we still are... we regard them not with envy but in brotherly participation." 117/

The recapturing of childhood is facilitated through identification. This aspect of fan escape resonates with the observation of Kenneth Keniston that our age lacks ardor. The romanticization of childhood by writers and social theorists underscores the power and appeal of a drama that can "make present: the integral, concrete, immediate and spontaneous reality of child's play. The intensity of sports involvement can be understood in this context. Kenneth Burke makes this point well in his criticism of the psychiatric view that regression is linked to profound mental suffering:

"We may begin by noting that any intense experience is regressive in one respect, it is more characteristic of childhood simplicity than of adult complexity. In maturity our experiences are usually mixed, lacking the intensity they may have in childhood when the range of response is more limited." 118/

The successful integration of political systems, as a theorist as early as Plato pointed out, rests on the public enactment through fable and fantasy of private dreams. Or, more accurately, the process of actively inducing private fantasies to have a public content. Sports' "regressive" features enables it to function this way in American society.

In this section we are focusing on the way in which these public fantasies themselves serve politically important purposes as relief from the tensions and contradictions of everyday life in American capitalist society.

The growth of a complex bureaucratic society, as many theorists have observed, threatens the integrity of individual identity. In the world of public institutions, people are quantified cogs, anonymous functionaries, insignificant statistics, and marketable commodities. 119/ This kind of rationalization of the individual creates a tremendous gap between the individual's public role and his private self. Richard Sennett's description of the world of public institutions as "dead space" clarifies the way in which people withdraw into a private space to find meaning. This privatization of identity, as Klapp and Berger point out in different contexts, lacks stability because it must be maintained without solid public or institutional support. Great efforts must be made to convince oneself and others who one "really" is. 120/

The world of unstable identity is a world that is exquisitely charted by Erving Goffman. It is a world of "images" and "impression" management, mystification and suspicion. In this sense I would agree with Sennett's criticism that Goffman's work is less of a theory than a

symptom of a modern malaise; a description of a situation where it is difficult to imagine social relations which have much passion and credibility. It is the world of Fred Demara, "The Great Imposter." In a condition of homelessness those who appear to belong and appear to have solid identities become, through the process of identification, psychologically nurturant.

As I pointed out earlier, the athlete's performance is not only vivid but is also linked to a world of values (scenes and plots). The athlete as actor and public persona comes to symbolize someone who has "got it all together." This is, of course, often linked to all his women, cars, and clothes. The credibility and vividness of the athlete's persona is illustrated by the deadness that the ball player feels when his playing days are over. Ex-basketball player Jim Barnett captures this:

"This is a tough period of my life. I know it doesn't look so tough...I have a nice house, and we just had a new baby...but you've got to measure that stuff against not playing...the adoration of the fans; the great pleasure of leading a fast break and scoring over a tall opponent; the big money...all of it over...." 121/

The "high" if the athletic performance is tough to give up. As Bill Bradley points out, "I've been preparing for the end since my first year, but even so I can only hope that I will manage easily the withdrawal from what Phil Jackson called my addiction." 122/ The popular accounts of the deathlike retirement of athletes underscores

the youthful joy that the athlete symbolizes in "his life." At thirty-five the prolonged joy of adolescence is over. Listen to Mickey Mantle:

"'I loved it,' he says, his voice throbbing with intensity. 'Nobody could have loved playing ball as much as me...I must have fifty scrapbooks. People sent 'em to me. Sometimes after breakfast when the boys go off to school, I sit by myself and take the scrapbook out and just turn the pages. The hair comes up on the back of my neck. I get goose bumps and I remember how it was and how I used to think it would always be that way.'" 123/

The athlete's vivid public self is a "shared high" that compensated for the depersonalization of the larger society. Through what Klapp calls the "vicarious voyage of identity" fans can show the intensity of public recognition. Fred Exley grabs this moment in his discussion of his feeling for Frank Gifford:

"...I cheered for him with such inordinate enthusiasm, my earning became so involved with his desire to escape life's anonymity, that after a time he became my alterego.... Each time I heard the roar of the crowd, it roared in my ears as much for me as for him; that roar was not only a promise of my fame, it was its unequivocal assurance." 124/

The star athlete is like a cult--a shared experience in himself. Fans fetishistically crowd around their favorites hoping to get an autograph (talisman) or merely to just touch greatness. This phenomena penetrates into everyday life in the consumption of news about one's favorite hero, the organization of fan clubs and the intermitable debate over, "Who

is better, Mantle or Mays?" that enlivens watercooler, lockerroom and barroom discussions. It reaches its apotheosis in the crucible of the game.

Sports heroism "solves" identity problems in another related way. It overlaps the impersonal bureaucratic structure with a drama of individual accomplishment. The ideology of individual accomplishment and mobility still inheres to the structure of American capitalism. As many have pointed out, however, this ideology is not now nor was it ever really congruent with the reality of a class society. Previously though, during the earlier phase of industrialization, the Alger ethos fit more comfortably with American reality. With increased complexity and bureaucratization the gap between ideology and reality widens. This situation, as Peter Berger's work highlights, encourages psychic mobility.

The inability of Fred Exley to impose his ego on the city and the frustrations of Robert Coover's fictional accountant Henry Waugh 125/ to find meaning in his work and personal life lead to frustration and fantasy. The sports hero is able to channel tensions that might end up in a solipstistic withdrawal into a public allaying of private frustration. Clark Kent and Walter Mitty join Fred Demara as archetypical heroes of our society:

"Much of this is not visible, it is going on within a man who does not do anything visibly. This is the 'Mitty Function' the compensation of unfulfilled dreams and identity. So the smorgasbord of role choices does not necessarily mean opportunity for the greater fulfillment of self. Rather it may go along with the considerable frustrations of unrealized identity...." 126/

Psychic mobility allows people to escape from the restrictions of everyday life, restrictions that contradict the exhortations of political and social mythology. This discussion brings us back to the role of symbolic drama. Margaret Mead's comment is to the point: "The assumption that men were created equal, with the equal ability to make the effort and win an earthly reward, although denied every day by experience, is maintained every day by our folklore and our dreams." 127/ Once the myths fail to approximate reality, "social and personal tensions result."

The point that needs to be emphasized is that American ideology holds the individual responsible for his own success or failure. Intense guilt, fear and anxiety devolve this situation. 128/ The works of Karen Horney, Rollo May and Erich Fromm focus on the danger of anxiety for the maintenance of personal self-esteem. Horney particularly highlights the effects of the cultural psychosis of competitiveness. She links the high incidence of neurosis-anxiety to the larger forces at work within capitalist society.

As Horney points out, "neurotic" competitiveness underlies the entire pursuit of power, prestige and pleasure. Such "neurotic" competitiveness is used as a way to alleviate the anxious helplessness and insignificance engendered by the processes of the capitalist system. As she points up, this competitiveness generates a heightened sensitivity to frustration of ambition. 129/ The existence of an ideology of competitive individualism creates a zero-sum game among people. "Who's on first" becomes a literal concern. Hostility and isolation are twin themes that emerge from this situation.

Competition isolates people from each other. As Bob Cousy indicates, you need the "killer instinct" in order to succeed. "On the court I had that instinct... I would climb over anything or anyone to succeed, whatever the cost to me or anyone else." 130/ But, as Horney indicates, the success of a Bob Cousy is not frequently available to many people. Most of us don't have the lime-light to compensate for our competitive isolation from others--our ambitions and our reality fail to coincide. This lack of congruence can become so unbearable that it demands a remedy, "As such a remedy fantasy offers itself." 131/

Identification with athletic heroes offers the "illusions of intimacy." The guilt and risk that revolves around personal relations is eliminated in what Harold

Mendelsohn calls a "para-social relationship." We can love them, share their experiences, learn their "innermost secrets" in "intimate relationships" without the risk of their disapproval. 132/ Their role demands that they put up with all the irksomeness of our adulation. The existence of a cult around the athlete enhances the illusion of intimacy as does the anonymous yet non-threatening warmth of a stadium around.

Simon Lesser's discussion of identification in fiction is explanatory for the athletic situation as well. "Our immersion in a work of fiction is so profound, the ties that bind us to the protagonist are so strong, that they are not broken until they are released, as from a spell, as the very finish of the drama...." 133/ We not only form para-social relationships with our athletic heroes but we also participate with them on the field as they hug, kiss, and slap the palms of their teammates in the euphoria of the moment. Our isolation is alleviated through the identification with the symbolic drama of warm affection.

Competition leads to frustrated ambition which is usually displaced onto concrete individuals or groups within a social system. Identification with the sports hero works in two ways to allow the hostility that is often generated by frustrations. The sports star is often engaged in a good deal of controlled violence. Through his vicarious voyaging the fan gets the chance to cathartically relieve

his pent-up anger. Paul Gallico captures the sports version of Clark Kent's transformation into Superman in his description of the "common man" appeals of prize fighters:

"The most popular thing a sportswriter can say about a prize fighter, the good old standby, is that outside the ring you would never take him for a pug. No, sir, more like a bank clerk or a businessman. Just as quiet and gentle--loves birds and flowers, you ought to see him with his kiddies on his knee.... But what Killers when aroused! Could that soft-spoken fellow with the well-cut clothes, the rather queer laugh, pitched voice and the perfect manners be the Jack Dempsey who clouted Jess Willard until he resembled nothing at all human?... How wonderful to be so quiet, so gentlemanly, and yet so terrible." 134/

The sportswriters play on the averageness of the hero outside the arena. Ethical objections notwithstanding, this averageness aids in the fantasy dramatizations of ourselves that are enacted through identification. The desire to tell the boss to "take this job and shove it!" the impulse to throttle the mugger instead of skulking away, the imagined thrill of depositing the loan shark in the incinerator are all cathartically played out in the violent dramas of sports:

"If we could we would all be gentle, soft-spoken creatures, tender with women, cool and even tempered, but once aroused--'Whap!' A lightning like left or right to the jaw. Down goes truck-driver or hoodlums. We mentally dust our hands, readjust our cravat, smile pleasantly, step over the body of the prostrate victim, and carry on." 135/

Averageness resonates with the democratic requirement that the hero must not rise too highly over the mass. He

must be "one of us." His uniqueness is confined to the arena--outside he is just a more colorful version of the "Good Joe."

The drama of sports heroism functions so well as a receptacle for repressed emotions because of its ability to objectify anxiety in the form of stress. As Freud, May and Horney have pointed out, anxiety is amorphous, free-floating and immobilizing. Stress, on the other hand, arising out of a concrete, fear-producing situation, can be more easily come to grips with. ^{136/} The aesthetic process of distancing is also helpful in enabling us to experience the stressful problems through the actions of the hero. As Lesser points out, "Finally, by a number of devices...the tendencies are 'distanced' and isolated from the world of our everyday experience so that we can adapt a spectator attitude towards them." ^{137/}

The identification with the sports hero is a vehicle for the resolutions of personal anxiety that arises out of a definite political and social environment: ^{138/} Vicarious voyaging allows us to symbolically confront and ritualistically resolve problems that we all share at participant spectators in a competitive capitalist society.

VI

The analysis of the role of the hero in the sports drama helps facilitate an understanding of the political importance of sports in American society. In this section I will clarify earlier themes while exploring the nuances of the political uses of the sports hero.

I would like to begin this discussion with a short quote from Paul Gallico that should be seen as a corrective to the critique that follows:

"What a world! What heroes and heroines!
How the black ribbon streamers of the
celebrating headlines poured from the high
speed purses!... Dynasties feel nations
collapsed, politics charged dictators ap-
peared were the right-oared shells of
glistening in the late afternoon sun at
Poughkeepsie...." 139/

The joy of sports is the source of its appeal.
Critiques that belabor the "duping" of the masses suffer
from an inability to accurately describe what's going on
and why.

First of all, as Karl Deutsch's seminal work on
political integration and social communication points out,

"Membership in a people essentially consists
in wide complementary of social communication.
It consists in the ability to communicate more
effectively and over a wider range of subjects,
with members of one large group rather than
with outsiders." 140/

Sports is a major form of social classes and ethnic groups;
it also connects the generations. The sports hero has played

a role in the socialization of dominant political values since before the turn of the century. We learn about what is expected in the larger arenas through the symbolic enactments of our heroes.

The role of the sports hero also is instrumental in the life-history of the individual. The imaginary uses of the sports star are within the fantasy--reach of millions of children. As Plato imagined, the public control of the imagination is a powerful form of political control. Here the dialectical interaction between socialization and escape is seen most clearly. Children learn the important cultural assumptions through identification and fantasy. Later on, as the gap between the mythical nature of these assumptions and political and social reality becomes clear, the earlier intense identification serves as a bridge toward the resolution of personal distress emanating from an inconsistent mythology. At the same time, fantasy resolution re-establishes the psychic equilibrium that allows the continued pursuit of the important values.

The "sweet closure of anxiety" is functional to the competitive hierarchy of consumption-capitalism. The competition for power, prestige and pleasure generates the "neurotic personality of our time." The nature of this competition, as I have indicated, is specifically built on

individual guilt and mobilized frustration. People are instructed to be dissatisfied and then are blamed for their "failures." The system rests on this restless dynamic of socially sponsored distress. The overload caused by the distress is then channeled into various modes of fantasy and symbolic escape. The system that creates competition, anxiety, anonymity and anger then offers a "utopia" that compensates for all these destructive trends while allowing us to continually accept them.

This compensation is effected by the use of the hero as an "idealized self." Individualized dissatisfaction that emerges from the "no-win" pursuit of competitive supremacy is alleviated through the vicarious identification with the hero. The symbolism of the hero, then, links social and political tensions with psychic disequilibrium--as both cause and effect. Anxiety is stimulated and then put to political use. The individual, however, is continually caught in a vicious circle that prevents him from seeing how his personal distress is intimately connected with the political processes. Instead of being encouraged to confront this dilemma by powerfully working for political and social change, he is induced to flee his real self for a partial life among abstractions.

Sports involvement can be seen in this sense to approach the character of a neurotic symptom, almost like an obsessional neurosis. As psychiatrist Henry Kellerman points out:

"People who are fans keep rooting for the same things day in and day out.... Each game they want the same thing to happen. That's because on a symbolic level they can't work anything out at all.... If the conflict on a reality level remains in your life, then you can root for something symbolic over and over again. If the conflict is resolved in reality, you don't need to be a fan anymore. The symbolic isn't necessary for you to act out your needs. To put it another way, sports can be cathartic, but never therapeutic."141/

There is a giving up process involved here and in Fred Exley's confessional that powerfully supports the ongoing political and social system. Listen to Exley's admission:

"In a moment I would fall asleep. But before I did, all the dread and dismay and foreboding I had been experiencing disappeared, were abruptly gone.... I understood, and could not bear to understand, that it was my destiny--unlike that of my father, whose fate it was to hear the roar of the crowd--to sit in the stands with most men and acclaim others. It was my fate, my destiny, my end, to be a fan."142/

The ability to live in a symbolic life among abstractions, as Murray Edelman points out in another context, is an abdication to those people who are able to concretely mold public policy for their own interests. The individual is incapacitated for the project of reconstructing his personal life, a reconstruction that is linked to the larger political and social institutions. People are rendered powerless insofar as they are unable to see the ways in which their personal concerns are related to the larger structure of society.

What's more, the isolation, hostility and deception that characterizes our age of rationalization and "impression management" is allowed to continue to poison our community life.

Franz Neumann had shown how an understanding of anxiety is critical to an understanding of politics. The focus of politics, he tells us, is "the dialectical relation between freedom and domination." ^{143/} It should be clear that freedom entails an understanding of how the forces of domination act both outside and within the individuals of a society. Sports has always been portrayed as "above politics." This rhetorical subterfuge has allowed it to inculcate political values through a stylistic "end run." Importantly, the "life-world" of sports offers a refuge from the entire structure of commodity capitalism at the same time that it acts as an important member of the consumption team.

In the role of fans we can thrillingly participate in the "spectacle of change" while the powers that actively shape our society remain out of our control. The exhilaration we feel in the symbolic "breaking of tackles" in our imaginary display of dazzling open field running from the forces that restrict us, seriously increases our risk of being "blind-sided."

Footnotes

- 1 Tristram Potter Coffin, The Illustrated Book of Baseball Folklore (N.Y.: Seaburg Press, 1975), p.151.
- 2 Michael Novak, The Joy of Sports (N.Y.: Basic Books, 1976), p.27.
- 3 Robert Lipsyte, Sportsworld: An American Dreamland (N.Y.: Quadrangle, 1976), p.57.
- 4 Consult Hugh Duncan's Communications and Social Order (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1968); Symbols and Society (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1968); Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills, Character and Social Structure (N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1953); and Erich Fromm's large extensive writing in the area of character and social structure.
- 5 Simon Lesser, Fiction and the Unconscious (N.Y.: Random House, 1962), p.251.
- 6 Susan Langer, Feeling and Form (N.Y.: Scribners, 1953), p.306.
- 7 For corroboration, it is only necessary to watch the children imitate their favorite stars.
- 8 Neil Offen, God Save the Players (Chicago: Playboy Press, 1969), p.11.
- 9 Sidney Hook, The Hero in History (Boston: Beacon Press, 1943), p.109.
- 10 Mel Allen, It Takes Heart (N.Y.: MacFadden-Bertell, 1962), p.15.
- 11 The Illustrated Book of Baseball Folklore (N.Y.: The Seaburg Press, 1975), p.135.
- 12 Ibid; Paul Gallico, in Farewell to Sport (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1970) underscores this point, p.282. The reader should take note of the early relationship between dramatic form and economic foundation.
- 13 Farewell to Sport, p.92; Allison Danzig, Sports' Golden Age (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), p.ix. For a wonderful description of the connection between promotion, drama and the rise of sports, see Bert Randolph Sugar's Hit the Sign and Win a Free Suit of Clothes from Harry Finkelstein (Chicago: Contemporary Books, Inc. 1979).

- 14 Farewell to Sport, p.100. Gallico's assertion is certainly traditional sports "hype," but it does strike a responsive chord.
- 15 Dave Anderson, "Kentucky's Tortured Champions," The New York Times (March 29, 1978), reports this: "But the Kentucky fans had fun long into the night. And somewhere one of them was chuckling, presumably the one who threatened the life of Eugene Banks, the Duke freshman forward...." For a discussion of the American obsession with winning see Thomas Tutko and William Burns' Winning is Everything and Other American Myths (N.Y.: MacMillan Pub., 1976).
- 16 Murray Edelman, The Symbolic Uses of Politics (Urbana, Ill.: University of Ill. Press, 1964), p.78; The Heroin History, p.12.
- 17 Studs Terkel, Working (N.Y.: Avon Books, 1970), p.500.
- 18 Robert Smith, Baseball (N.Y.: Simon & Schuster, 1947), p.234.
- 19 Robert Ward, "The Mutilation of a Work of Art," Sport (May 1977), p.108.
- 20 Woody Allen, "A Fan's Notes on Earl Monroe," Sport (Nov. 1977), p.24. As Orrin Klapp remarks: "The function of an actor is to transport an audience vicariously out of every day roles into a new kind of reality...." Symbolic Leaders (Chicago: Aldine Press, 1964), p.24.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Winning is Everything and Other American Myths, p.8.
- 23 "Lionel Hollins Fuels Blazers," New York Post (Apr. 1, 1978), p.86. This is a primary Sportsworld cliché used to describe the sports hero.
- 24 Farewell to Sport, p.103.
- 25 Fred Exley, A Fan's Notes (N.Y.: Random House, 1968), p.131.
- 26 Orrin Klapp, Heroes, Villains, and Fools (Englewood Cliffs, N.Y.: Prentice-Hall Pub., 1962), pp. 5,37.
- 27 Ibid.

- 28 Ron Fimrite, "A Splendid Warrior Knows His Onions," Sports Illustrated (May 9, 1977).
- 29 Joe Flaherty, "Above All Image Did Clyde In," New York Daily News (Oct. 30, 1977).
- 30 Leila Gemme, The New Breed of Athlete (N.Y.: Washington Square Press, 1975).
- 31 Curry Kirkpatrick, "LA Couldn't Move the Mountain," Sports Illustrated (May 23, 1977). Winning and losing accentuates the symbolic process.
- 32 Robert Creamer, Babe: The Legend Comes to Life (N.Y.: Pocket Books, 1976), p.245.
- 33 See Coffin's discussion of Ty Cobb in The Illustrated History of Baseball Folklore, p.34. See also, Mary Bell, "The Self-Destruction of Jimmy Connors," Sport (Jan. 1978); Frank Deford, "The Mouth that Soars" on high-jumper Dwight Stones, Sports Illustrated (May 30, 1977).
- 34 Steve Cady, "Washington Reeling from Punch He Threw," The Times (Dec. 30, 1977), p.17.
- 35 Stanley Cohen, The Game They Played (N.Y.: Farrar Strauss & Groux, 1977); Eliot Asinoff, Eight Men Out (N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1976); Charles Rosen, Scandals of '51 (N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1978).
- 36 Thorsten Veblen, The Theory of the Leisure Class
- 37 See Lipsyte's introduction to Sportsworld. The joyfulness of sports is a form of stylistic ingratiation that facilitates its role as an inculcator of important political and social values. Wiley Umphlett's The Sporting Myth and the American Experience (Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell Press, 1969), points out how the athlete as innocent is a powerful motif in sports fiction.
- 38 Roger Kahn, The Boys of Summer (N.Y.: New American Library, 1973), Chapter Four, for an excellent discussion of the elaborate preparation and expertise needed to practice the athlete's craft.
- 39 Kim Chaplin, Billie Jean (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1974), p.197. The importance of this idea for fans' consciousness is dramatized by the "Pro-Kids" sneaker add-- "For those moments you feel like a Pro." Here the notion of craftsmanship, joy and emulation is linked directly to the commodity structure.

- 40 Ibid, p.191.
- 41 Ibid, p.160
- 42 The Sporting Myth and the American Experience, p.169.
- 43 Symbols and Society, p.23
- 44 Max Lerner, America as a Civilization (N.Y.: Simon & Schuster, 1957), pp. 800-804.
- 45 David Voight, America Through Baseball (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1976), p.147. Jeffrey Schrank, in Snap, Crackle, and Popular Taste (N.Y.: Dell Pub., 1977), p.163, mirrors this basic view.
- 46 See Character and Social Structure; Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman, The Social Construction of Reality (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967); George Herbert Mead, Mind, Self and Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934).
- 47 The Illustrated History of Baseball Folklore, p.3.
- 48 Frederick Paxson, "The Rise of Sport," George Sage (ed.), Sports and American Society (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1970).
- 49 Baseball Folklore, p.9. The role of war as a nationalizer and sports tonic is very important here.
- 50 Foster Rhea Dulles, American Learns to Play (N.Y.: Appleton Century Crofts, 1963), p.228.
- 51 America Through Baseball, p.147.
- 52 America Learns to Play, p.228 (emphasis added).
- 53 Baseball Folklore.
- 54 Quoted in Dulles, p.141. The energetic involvement of the fans, their overall boisterousness also contributes to the rising sense of tumult in urban industrial development.
- 55 Verben saw sports as a preparation for cut-throat competition.
- 56 Sporting Myth, pp. 32-37; John Betts, America's Sporting Heritage (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1974), p.237.

- 57 Baseball, p.7.
- 58 Baseball Folklore, p.9. Both Coffin and Smith show how the game became "proletarianized" and how winning replaced aristocratic manners.
- 59 John Highman, Strangers in the Land (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1955).
- 60 Baseball, p.30. Actually, Smith is remiss here; it is more an indication that the Irish apprenticeship on the bottom rung had about ended.
- 61 America Through Baseball, p.153. See also Baseball Folklore, p.25.
- 62 Quoted in America's Sporting Heritage, p.184.
- 63 David Reisman and Ruel Denney, "Football in America: A Study in Cultural Diffusion," In David Reisman (ed.) Individualism Reconsidered (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1954), p.243. See also Jerry Brondfeld, Rockne (N.Y.: Random House, 1976).
- 64 America's Sporting Heritage, p.184.
- 65 Baseball, p.99. Yet even at this time the world is not morally monolithic. The brutally competitive Ty Cobb had many an admirer in the press box and in the stands; John McCallum, Ty Cobb (N.Y.: Praeger, 1975).
- 66 See Coffin's discussion of Ring Lardner in Baseball Folklore, as well as Umphlett's remarks in The Sporting Myth.
- 67 Baseball, pp. 57-62.
- 68 America Learns to Play, p.356.
- 69 Coffin discusses Landis' role as an ethical hero, called The Judge, a "latter day Judge Roy Bean," Baseball Folklore, p.81. For further discussion of Landis' "purgatory" functions, see America Through Baseball, pp. 70-75, 156-157; also Baseball, pp. 202-204.
- 70 America's Sporting Heritage, p.191.
- 71 Stuart Ewen, Captains of Consciousness (N.Y.: McGraw-Hill, 1976), p.25.
- 72 Ibid, p.12

- 73 Ibid, p.15. See also Elton Mayo's The Social Problems of an Industrial Civilization (Andover, Mass.: Andover Press, 1945).
- 74 Baseball, p.222.
- 75 "The patrons arriving were immediately directed to their proper aisles and promptly and courteously led to empty seats waiting for them. They then witnessed a boxing show that went off like clockwork...." This quote points to the importance of rationalizing sports and making it respectable. Farewell to Sports, p.95.
- 76 Sport's Golden Age, p.ix. For a more sophisticated analysis see Farewell to Sport, pp. 100-103.
- 77 Farewell to Sport, p.15.
- 78 Babe: The Legend Comes to Life, p.12.
- 79 Ibid, p.179; Baseball, p.226.
- 80 Farewell to Sport, p.81.
- 81 Ibid, p.41.
- 82 Captains of Consciousness, p.55.
- 83 Ewen also convincingly links the pressure to consume with the entire homogenization-Americanization process. The athlete as an ethnic hero can be seen as a consistent component of this process. Captains of Consciousness, p.43.
- 84 Ibid, p.45.
- 85 Leon Lowenthal, Literature, Popular Culture, and Society (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1961), p.133.
- 86 Captains of Consciousness, p.205.
- 87 It Takes Heart, p.58.
- 88 Ibid, p.67. I would be remiss to leave out the symbolic impact that Joe Louis exerted on millions of peer blacks and poor whites. The sharecropper's son generated hope and renewed faith in the American system. See Joe Louis with Edna and Art Rust, Joe Louis: My Life (N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace, Jan., 1978).
- 89 Tom Dewey, "A Plea for Some Untarnished Athletic Heroes," New York Times (Dec. 25, 1977), Sec.5, p.2. See also, Frances Mugavaro, "One Vote for Gil Hodges: A Man of Integrity," New York Times (Dec. 25, 1977), Sec.5, p.2.

- 90 Jorgen Habermas, Toward a Rational Society (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970); Klaus Mueller, The Politics of Communication (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1973). Ewen's work should be read along side these pieces.
- 91 Larry Merchant, "The Sensuous Quarterback," in And Every Day You Take Another Little Bite (N.Y.: Dell Pub., 1971).
- 92 Snap, Crackle and Popular Taste, p.160; see Lowenthal's discussion of pseudo-individuation, Literature, Popular Culture and Society, p.69.
- 93 Ricktelander, Joe Namath and the Other Guys (N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976), p.228.
- 94 Sportsworld, p.53; the point should be made that Namath had the real appeal of a rebel. He did do things his own way. His genuineness was the foundation for his xeroxed heirs. See particularly Barry McDermott's "Back to Bruce in a Moment, First, This Commercial," Sports Illustrated (Sept. 26, 1977) for an understanding of the growth of contrivance through a look at the packaging of Bruce Jenner.
- 95 And Every Day You Take Another Little Bite, p.166.
- 96 Nick Seitz, "The Playboy Plays Tough Tennis," Sport (Sept. 1977). Gerulaitis, we are told, also owns a \$45,000 Rolls Royce. For further illustrations of this trend see Bob Wischinia, "Faultless Frank," Sport (Dec. 1977); Wilt Chamberlain, Wilt (N.Y.: MacMillan, 1973); Ron Firmite, "Reggie, Reggie, Reggie," Sports Illustrated (Oct. 1977).
- 97 Vance Packard, A Nation of Strangers (N.Y.: Pocket Books, 1972); William Whyte, The Organization Man (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1957); David Reisman, The Lonely Crowd (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953); and William Kirkpatrick, Identity and Intimacy (N.Y.: Delta Books, 1976).
- 98 Herbert Marcuse, One Dimensional Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), pp. 24, 75.
- 99 Joe Namath with Dick Schaap, I Can't Wait Until Tomorrow (N.Y.: Random House, 1969), p.69. Later on Namath tells us: "I drink for the same reason I keep company with girls. It makes me feel good. It takes away the tension." P.75.

- 100 Mary Fleming, "Women Made My Career," Sport (May 1977).
- 101 Linda Huey, "I Gravitare Towards Jocks," Sport (May 1977); Neil Offen's discussion of "Detroit Shirley," God Save the Players. See also, Grace Lichtenstein's "There's Something About a Man in Uniform," Esquire (Oct. 1974), and Dan Wakefield's "My Love Affair with Billie Jean King," Esquire (Oct. 1974). For a revealing description of an orgy, see Arnold Mandell's The Nightmare Season (N.Y.: Random House, 1976), Chap.9.
- 102 John Radosta, "Courageous Comeback Pitcher," The New York Times (Nov. 23, 1978), p.D12. Similar themes are recounted in stories about Ron Guidry. See Phil Pepe, "He Dropped Out of a Tree House," The New York Daily News (June 20, 1978), p.73; and Murray Chase, "Ron Guidry: Breezing Along at the Top," The New York Times (March 4, 1979).
- 103 Mark Engel, "Now, A Word About Mr. Bird," The Basketball Weekly (Jan. 12, 1978).
- 104 Dick Young, "Clean Living and Dirty Uniforms Pay Off," New York Daily News (Dec. 6, 1978), p.79. See also Dave Anderson, "The Little Boy in the Rose Deal," New York Times (Dec. 7, 1978), p.D21; and Henry Hecht, "Charlie Hustles Off to Philly," New York Post (Dec. 6, 1978), p.74. Two typical examples of Dick Young's vitriole are: "Even on Sinking Ships, Showboats Perform," New York Daily News (Dec. 28, 1977), and "Nets Give King Something to Sit On: The Beach," The Boston Globe (Jan. 1, 1978).
- 105 Curry Kirkpatrick, "Very Short and Sweet in Atlanta," Sports Illustrated (Nov. 14, 1977); Paul Bellow, "For Lou Piccone the Suicide Squad is a Living," Sport (April 1977), and Robert Jones, "Recovering from a Rocky Start," Sports Illustrated (Oct. 3, 1977).
- 106 Woody Paige, "Alzado," Sport (Jan. 1978), Sarah Pillegi, "No End with This End," Sports Illustrated (Dec. 12, 1977), and Steve Serby, "Alzado High," New York Post (Jan. 5, 1978), all discuss Lyle Alzado's miraculous transformation from East Harlem hoodlum to Denver good samaritan. See also Tony Kornheiser's "Giant Hammond Keeps His Roots as He Blossoms," New York Times (Oct. 30, 1977), Sec. 5; Jim Hawkins, "Stealing Was My Specialty," Sports Illustrated (Feb. 6, 1978); and Richard O'Connor, "The Son of Rosie O'Koren," Sport (Jan. 1978).

- 107 Studs Terkel, Working; Stanley Aronowitz, False Promises (N.Y.: McGraw-Hill, 1974); and C. Wright Mills, White Collar (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1956) all link work with the desire to consume.
- 108 Heroes, Villains, Fools, pp. 35-36.
- 109 Captains of Consciousness, p.200.
- 110 See Kenneth Kenniston's discussion of fantasy, escape and integration in The Uncommitted (N.Y.: Dell Pub., 1974), Chapter 11.
- 111 Richard Sennett, The Fall of Public Man (N.Y.: Random House, 1978).
- 112 The Joy of Sports hits this point solidly.
- 113 George Plimpton, Out of My League (N.Y.: Pocket Books, 1967), p.7.
- 114 Mike Candell, "The Washington Effect," Eastern Basketball (Jan. 26, 1978), Vol.III, No.4, p.9.
- 115 Out of My League, p.9.
- 116 The Joy of Sports, p.161.
- 117 Ibid.
- 118 Permanence and Change, p.48. A fuller discussion of these points may be saved for a later chapter.
- 119 Eric Kahler, The Tower and the Abyss (N.Y.: Viking Press, 1967).
- 120 The Collective Search for Identity; Sacred Canopy.
- 121 Bob Ward, "Suddenly It's Over, The NBA Odyssey of Jim Barnett," Sport (March 1977), p.59.
- 123 Life on the Run, p.189.
- 124 A Fan's Notes, p.134.
- 125 Robert Coover, The Universal Baseball Association (N.Y.: Random House, 1968).
- 126 The Collective Search for Identity, p.212.
- 127 Quoted in David Potter, People of Plenty, p.54

- 128 Potter talks of the potential "demoralization" that this frustration can generate in a society, People of Plenty, p.105.
- 129 Karen Horney, The Neurotic Personality of Our Time (N.Y.: Norton, 1964); Neurosis and Human Growth (N.Y.: Norton, 1950). My reliance here on Horney's analysis should not be taken as an acceptance of her "revision" of Freud nor as an acceptance of her distinction between the "neurotic" and the "normal." For further insights on these themes, see Rollo May, The Meaning of Anxiety (N.Y.: Ronald Press, 1950); and Maurice Stein, Arthur Vidich and David White (eds.), Identity and Anxiety (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1960).
- 130 Bob Cousy, The Killer Instinct (N.Y.: Random House, 1975), p.4. As Horney remarks, "Modern Culture is economically based on the principle of individual competition. The isolated individual has to fight with other individuals of the same group to surpass them and frequently to thrust them aside...." Neurotic Personality, p.284.
- 131 Neurotic Personality, p.223
- 132 Harold Mendelsohn, Mass Entertainment, pp. 128-133; as Hugh Duncan remarks, "When we cannot reach others necessary for our social beings we create fantastic others to give us in make believe what we cannot have in reality." Symbols and Society, p.92.
- 133 Fiction and the Unconscious, p.248.
- 134 Farewell to Sport, pp. 17-18.
- 135 Ibid, p.17. This can be exemplified by an exchange between Oakland "assasin" George Atkinson and a young fan: "'You gonna play the Steelers again soon?' 'I hope so,' George said.... 'Me, too,' the kid said. 'Then you can get that cry baby Lynn Swann again. Oh, I loved the way you took him out. That was some hit.... Oooh...was that great.'" Robert Ward, "The Oakland Raiders' Charming Assasin," Sport (April 7, 1977), p.53. Much hatred is channeled into the scapegoating of ritual victims--coaches and players alike. See The Nightmare Season, and Ray Fitzgerald's article on Sidney Wicks, "Sidney, You've Arrived," The Boston Globe (Jan. 1, 1978), p.26.
- 136 See especially The Meaning of Anxiety, p.111.

- 137 Fiction and the Unconscious, p.251. Harold Mendelsohn remarks, "...anxieties and guilt are alleviated through the dynamics of participant spectatorship." Mass Entertainment, p.106.
- 138 Farewell to Sport, p.4
- 139 Karl Deutsch, Nationalism and Social Communication (Boston: MIT Press, 1953), p.97.
- 140 Cited in God Save the Players, pp. 206-207.
- 141 A Fan's Notes, p.327; Daniel Boorstien remarks, "We risk being the first people in history to make their illusions so vivid, so persuasive, so 'realistic,' that we can live in them." The Image (N.Y.: Atheneum, 1962), p.240.
- 142 Franz Neumann, "Anxiety and Politics," Identity and Anxiety. As Marshall Berman remarks, "Thus the freedom or repression, equality or inequality in a state is a function, not of its merely political organization but of the structure of its personal and social life as a whole." The Politics of Authenticity, p.7.

TOYS AND SEASONS, GAME AND REASONS: THE IMPORTANCE
OF SPORTS IN POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

"The Yankee resurrection is as much a celebration of the past as the present. It has given the fans the purest of opportunities: the opportunity to turn back the clock and relive their childhoods. Or at least to feel they are reliving them."

Larry Schwartz

"A theologian once called me a spoiled sport because I have presumed, too, to detect conflict and purpose even in child's play."

Erikson

"Civics classes and other forms of deliberate indoctrination (national ceremonies and holidays, political mythology and propaganda and such) all no doubt play a role in the socialization process, but it is doubtful whether they contribute as much--let alone more than incidental learning does toward's a person's political socialization."

Roberta Sigel

The political importance of sports symbolism emerges out of the drama and euphoria of child's play. John Mose-
dale's discussion of Wilifred Sheed's analysis foreshadows
the theoretical perspective developed in this chapter:

"'If you had to limit yourself to one aspect of American life, the showdown between the pitcher and the hitter, quarterback and defense...would tell you more about politics, manners and style in this country than any other one thing....' Sheed also warns that playing games can be 'incurably childish.' Well, inside of every adult male is a little boy struggling to stay there."^{1/}

In what follows, I am focusing on the way in which children's play, games, and fantasy form the phenomenological, psychological and ethical foundation for adult mass involvement with sports. And, since I am concerned with the political and social implications of American sports symbolism, I will be underscoring the way in which politically important values are internalized in the developmental process from play to organized sports.

In the portrayal of this dramatic socialization process, it will become clear how personal and prepolitical experiences with play and sports are the avenues through which social and political meanings are enacted. These "ritualizations of everyday life" form an ongoing bridge from the microsphere of the play world to the larger arenas of political and social life.^{2/} They are gradually woven into a fabric of diffuse attachment to an abstract entity called "America." Importantly, this process links individual biography with the

historical formation of a national political culture. Baseball historian Robert Smith foreshadows this analysis:

"Thus our love for the game grew deep, even when we were no more than mediocre performers. And we stumbled along from worse to better, learning the game as the nation itself learned it, first as an individual contest with each man playing the part awarded to him.... Then as a coordinated team contest with every member trying to work in unison with all the rest...." 3/

II

Before we can turn to childhood play, games and sports, I believe it is necessary to highlight features of the political socialization process. This is a necessary prelude because of the traditional segregation of sports from the "important" areas of life. There is much insight in the political socialization literature that is sensitive to the political importance of non-political phenomenon. I cite extensively from the literature in the hopes of silencing the nagging and (sometimes) thoughtless question, "Yes, but how is all this political?"

Numerous investigations in the field have pointed out the way in which political values are inculcated "incidentally." 4/ Fred Greenstein, for one, shows the way in which a great deal of political socialization in America occurs "latently" and is "analogous."

"More often, at least in the United States, early political learning has a preconscious quality--the child absorbs political information and attitudes without being particularly aware that he is doing so...." 5/

It might be concluded that it is precisely the "apolitical" (and preconscious) nature of American political socialization that renders it so effective. As will be clear later, the American political system has adopted "incidentally" Plato's insightful program of political education through play, games, myth and fables. 6/ Greenstein concurs with both Plato and Aristotle in the need to see political education in as wide a scope as possible.

Analogous socialization is instrumental because, on the one hand, it occurs in areas where the child is concretely aware of the context (such as "strike three and you're out"), and, on the other hand, it is often enacted in a pleasurable environment that gives the child a sense of his own power. As Bettelheim points out, "because it promises that the Kingdom will be his, the child is willing to believe the rest of what the fairytale teaches." 7/ This takes on an added importance when we realize that it is often years before the child has a concrete idea of what a political system is.

Political socialization, then, extends horizontally into non-political arenas. It is here that culture is internalized and personality is molded. Overt political behavior and implicitly significant personality characteristics can be seen to result from "learned predispositions--the goals, preferences, conceptions of reality, and loyalties which

citizens and their leaders acquire through prior experience. To the degree that learning has taken place, it becomes less necessary, and often less possible to influence behavior by external rewards and punishments." 8/

Political and social institutions can only operate efficiently if there is a congruence between individual identity ("personality") and institutional roles and structures. Erich Fromm underscores this point:

"In order that any society may function well, members must acquire the kind of character which makes them want to act as members of the society...." 9/

The development of some uniformity of social character is especially important in the American context of immigration and rapid economic developments. As Greenstein remarks:

"The oft-proclaimed stability of the American political system in spite of a remarkably heterogeneous population, suggests that powerful psychological mechanisms encouraging political obedience are present...." 10/

Most Americans are exposed to nondemocratic authority patterns in their homes and schools. 11/ Authority relations internalized in those non-political arenas have a profound effect on the level of participation and stability of the political system. 12/

The American political and economic system, besides needing a high level of control and obedience, also requires high levels of aggressiveness, competitiveness, initiative,

and confidence. A high premium is also placed on the control of emotions. As I pointed out in my discussion of the athlete as hero, a competitive "neurosis" is culturally commonplace. The need to succeed encourages the adoption of a form of "killer instinct" that predisposes a person to the competitive struggle. It is also true, however, that a highly organized society needs to develop a level of smooth cooperation.^{14/}

The success of the American polity can be seen to devolve, in part, from an ability to inculcate requisite character variables in analogous learning situations.^{15/} Greenstein highlights this well in his analysis of the distinction between the political attitudes of boys and girls. He sees the higher political efficacy of males resulting from the fact that boys are encouraged in their aggressive play while girls are not. The differentials are reinforced by the kinds of literature read by each sex. Boys are encouraged to read sports and adventure books while girls are pushed toward "milder stories of home and school." Greenstein goes on to observe that "[i]n a field as controversial as politics, it would also seem possible that differential aggressiveness would affect the degree of participation."^{16/}

What is clear here is the way in which a combination of character traits and social values gets hooked into a cultural definition of masculinity. It is also clear how a masculine-

oriented culture created the kind of character differentials it needed for the operations of its institutions. The ability to operate effectively in the outside world (away from the home)--in the arena of cool rationality--is built upon a framework of already existing pre-political orientations. 17/

Political stability also rests upon the development and hostorical continuity of a general symbol system. As Hess and Torney indicate, citing Lloyd Warner:

"'Complex societies...need a general symbol system that everyone not only knows but feels.' Symbols of this type are necessary not only to the society as a whole but particularly to young people who must be initiated into allegiance to America." 18/

The existence of this general symbol system is what generates a sense of "we-ness." Importantly, Hess and Torney point out that this early differentiation is "non-rational and non-political." 19/

A general symbol system, or symbolic canopy, forms the language for a network of national and social communication. As Karl Deutsch has underscored, it is such a symbolic infrastructure that forms the basis for national political integration. It enables citizens to be "available" to each other across geographic areas, while it provides individuals with a secure foundation for the development of a personal identity. As the child begins to develop a sense of autonomy from his

parents, the political belief system acts as a cushion for a secure and stable growth process. 20/ The fact that the belief system is rooted in a historically viable political order allows citizens to securely plan for the future. 21/

The general symbol system forms the foundation for a diffuse "rain or shine" attachment to the ongoing political order. As Almond and Verba have shown, this kind of attachment allows political elites a flexibility to maneuver without continual stress from the environment in which the political system is located. This attachment provides for an orderly and gradual process of change. 22/ The diffuse sense of national identity ("baseball, hot dogs, apple pie and Chevrolet?") is a psychological one, and "[i]t is this sense of identity that legitimizes the activity of national elites...." 23/

Dean Jaros has indicated that although the United States has been able to instill positive emotions for the entity, "America," "the precise way in which this predisposition comes about is not altogether clear." 24/ Jaros does, however, provide a useful point of departure for an understanding of diffuse attachment when he observes that children often generalize from concrete and familiar surroundings to the more abstract notion of the political community. What this observation leads up to, I believe, is the necessity of understanding the ontogenetic ritualization of everyday life

if we are to come to grips with American political stability.

The ritualizations of everyday life are important because political stability persists despite an obvious decline in the saliency of political ideology and meager support for democratic values. ^{25/} Robert Lane sees this persistence resulting from a "halo effect." He observes that:

"a person may have a set of experiences that, while not really relevant to the political order, nevertheless create for him a general sense of satisfaction that leads him to accept and endorse the political system of his society." ^{26/}

Jaros talks about children, Lane about workers in New Haven. There is an obvious need to understand the psychosocial development of diffuse political attachment from its pre-political beginnings.

The halo effect works in such a way that children can take their love for the toys, games and play of their everyday life, and generalize it into a diffuse love of country. The objects and activities of everyday life also serve another, equally significant, political function. As Erikson points out, the microspheres of the toyworld and playworld enable children "to feel reassured of the chance

of subduing destructive forces within and fighting off inimical ones without, and thus to continue to feel like a new being capable of utilizing new competencies in a wider present." 27/

The activities of everyday life provide an arena for the discharge of crippling emotions and anxieties. This discharge frees children and adults alike for action in the larger world.

The control of enervating emotions is an important facet of political stability. As H. L. Nieburg has shown, the ritual release of tension acts as a catharsis for individuals at the same time that it gives structure, form and meaning to political life. 28/ The "sweet closure of anxiety" is an important part of the search for or need to maintain political stability. Rituals of the larger polity reinforce belief while they alleviate anxiety in a dialectic of integration and "escape." A major thrust of the later sections of this chapter will be an elaboration of Erikson's investigations into the process whereby the playing child becomes the play-acting adult; the connections between make-believe and belief. 29/

The child is nurtured and becomes attached to the political system through an ongoing progression of ritu-

alizations within everyday life. Each stage of individual development has a ritualization that is appropriate to it and each stage incorporates and yet transcends the one preceding it. Erikson's important emphasis here is how the child's playworld microsphere exists within the larger context of a "shared vision." The coherence of the ritualization of any stage of development is connected to the ideological consistency of the larger political and social system. The process reaches its crucial denueoment in adolescence when the young person makes the leap to ideological commitment and a way of life.

Erikson's analysis is congruent with the thrust of much of the political socialization literature. Prepolitical and non-rational learning forms an infrastructure for later political affect. This process is, however, hindered by the attitudes about politics that are inculcated in the process of socialization. Americans tend to defuse the aggressive aspects of politics for the young and implant the idea that politics is morally suspect. In addition, the political system is awfully opaque to the young child. When "dirtiness" is added to opacity, we can see that political interest is not being greatly encouraged. 30/

It should be emphasized, however, that lack of interest needs to be added to the other psycho-social mechanisms of political stability. As Greenstein points out, disinterest itself is one of the foundations of American stability. The view that apathy is functional for political stability then can be seen to develop within childhood socialization.^{31/} What we can see developing here is how the affairs of everyday life--the self concerns of individuals--tend to transcend any concern for political activities. Americans, from childhood on, are subtly and not-so-subtly encouraged to develop themselves in their everyday routines. But, as C. Wright Mills pointed out quite a few years ago, when people get "sunk" in their routines, and by them, they forfeit political control over the institutions and processes that effect their everyday lives. ^{32/}

If, however, prepolitical learning is not being effectively converted into political affect, how come American stability continues to remain so impressive? Erikson points out that individual identity is maintained by the ideological commitment to a shared vision. The American political system, on the other hand, is characterized by low ideological commitment. Attachment to explicitly patriotic symbols of national unity has also been seen to decline. It must be true that somehow coherent mass belief systems are being generated in those

microspheres of prepolitical and non-rational learning, and are being extended, through the ritualization of everyday life, to adult concern with some kinds of shared visions.

An understanding of the conversion of prepolitical and "a-political" belief to a support for the ongoing political system would go a long way towards enriching Jurgen Habermas' concept of "para-ideology". Habermas, as well as Klaus Mueller, see American political stability resting increasingly on the "para-ideology" of consumption. ^{33/} The thrust of this work has been to see involvement with sports as a variant of a para-ideology with a richness and life of its own. What follows is designed to show that symbol systems are still being generated and values are still being fostered, but they are being enacted in non-political arenas. An understanding of such apolitical politics needs to be built on an analysis of the way in which the make-believe of the play-world is transformed in the ontogenetic process into adult belief. It will then be clear how a phenomena such as sports can exist in dialectical tension with political "reality."

III

I have posited that the political importance of American sports involvement rests on a dialectic of integration and and escape. The belief that sports fans have that the game

is a separate reality generates a feeling that one is escaping from the burdens of politics and everyday life. It is, however, just this feeling of freedom (encouraged by the drama and symbolism of the sports world) that allows important political and social values to be inculcated "through the back door." This dialectic of integration and escape can only be understood clearly if it is seen to rest on a developmental process from childhood involvement with play and games to adult fascination with organized sports.

To understand playing, it is first necessary to see play as a separate reality with its own symbolic form. The best analysis of this kind is contained in Johan Huizinga's Homo Ludens. Huizinga begins by seeing play as a self-contained symbolic system that imparts meaning to its players. He feels that play can be explained only by an analysis of what is intrinsically "at play" in the playworld. He rejects all theories that see play as serving any ulterior personal, biological or psychological purposes. In analyzing the "profoundly aesthetic quality of play" he asks, "Why is a huge crowd aroused to a frenzy by a football match? The intensity and absorption in play finds no explanation in biological analysis." 34/

In analyzing play as an aesthetic form Huizinga illustrates how it creates a "sacred space" apart from reality.

Playgrounds are consecrated: "All are temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart." ^{35/} The sense of separateness from ordinary reality is enhanced by the sense of timelessness in play. Eugen Frank, building on Huizinga's analysis, points this out:

"In the autonomy of play action there appears the possibility of human timelessness in time. Time is then experienced, not as a precipitate rush of successive moments, but rather as one full moment that is, so to speak, a glimpse of eternity." ^{36/}

The world of play creates its own internal order. This order is maintained by a rule-bound structure. If the rules are violated the playworld order collapses. Importantly, the playworld is also a social world. Equality under the rules-covenant creates a play-community. This play-community, "the feeling of being apart together,"^{37/} generates the euphoria that usually accompanies ritual forms of social communion.

What Huizinga develops for play is a phenomenology of separateness. The aesthetic form of play is seen as contrapuntal to the reality of ordinary life, divorced from the notions of obligation and duty. Thus it is "a stepping out of real life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own." ^{38/} As such a sphere, play is

always "voluntary," never a task, and consequently a "realm of freedom."

Before developing a critique of Huizinga's one-sidedness, it is important to point out how this romantic dichotomy of play-reality cuts across an ideological spectrum. In his analysis of work and play in capitalist society, Stanley Aronowitz depicts two worlds of childhood. On the one side are the institutions of family and school "and other institutions that constitute the ideological apparatus of the prevailing social and economic system." On the other side is play: "Play, as here defined, is the one activity within capitalist society that is non-instrumental--that is, produced for its own sake." 39/

Both Huizinga and Aronowitz fail to capture the dialectical nature of play. The aesthetic form of play exists as a moment within the process of socialization into the larger reality; and also partakes, in different ways, of the contradictions of that reality. Jacques Ehrmann points this out in his criticism of Huizinga and Roger Caillois:

"But they fail to see that the interior occupied by play can only be defined by and with the exterior of the world, and inversely, play viewed as an exterior is only comprehensible by and with the interior of the world, that together they participate in the same economy." 40/

Play emerges from and affects the larger reality.

"Play cannot therefore be isolated as an activity without consequences. Its integrity, its intuitiveness are only apparent, since the very freedom of the expenditure made in it is part of a circuit which reaches beyond the spatial and temporal limits of play." 41/

We need to explore the interface of play and reality. The interplay between the two realms is even evident in Huizinga's own examples. He visualizes the "potlatch" tribal ceremony as "ennobling play." But, as Ehrmann points out, potlatch is also a ritualization of an economy as well as a political exchange.

While we criticize Huizinga and his heirs we must be careful to avoid failing to incorporate their sensitivity to aesthetic form into our dialectical analysis. The playworld has its own symbolic form which re-presents the real world in a more manageable microsphere. The child's play is recreation precisely because it continually recreates the society in which it takes place. Dramatic symbolic form (as Plato anticipated) facilitates the acceptance of social and political content. As Gregory Stone points out, "We know that much of the drama of childhood replicates the interaction of the larger society...." 42/

It is precisely, as Stone says, the dramatic nature of communication in play that facilitates the internalization of social meaning. The child enacts the roles of the larger

society, "takes the role of the other" (most notably parents), and enters into meaningful communication with other children. ^{43/} The microsphere of the playworld partakes of the values and "shared vision" of the larger society. As Erikson demonstrates in his discussion of the enactment of the ego ideal,

"Childhood play, in experimenting with self-images and images of otherness, is most representative of what psychoanalysis calls the ego ideal--that part of ourselves which we can look up to, at least insofar as we can imagine ourselves as ideal actors in an ideal plot, with the appropriate punishment and exclusion of those who don't make the grade." ^{44/}

The circumscribed nature of the playworld, its malleability, allows for the generation of a feeling of freedom. Because the world is manageable the child is able to feel his own power and autonomy. In more spontaneous forms of play he can even change some of the rules to suit his ego or desires. Always, however, he is in charge: "In his playworld, the young child is the decisionmaker and the playmaster." ^{45/}

It is a mistake, however, to over-romanticize the supposed freedom and spontaneity of childhood and child's play. The life of the small child is filled with conflict, fear and a sense of powerlessness. He is at once threatened by a reality that can cut off his sense of pleasure, by

parents whose distressed behavior can often generate fears of abandonment and loss of affection, and by his own inner impulses that are frightening and bewildering. The play-world becomes an arena for the mastery of all these complex forces.

The playworld microsphere is the emergent form of the "human propensity to create model situations."^{46/} As such, it enacts the dialectic of socialization and escape. The child in essence creates a symbolic model of what the world really is like. He then struts and frets across this stage, internalizing the values and meanings of society as he "re-invents" them. Importantly, the dramatic nature of the symbolic world allows for (as Aristotle anticipated) the discharge of painful emotion:

"Here, above all, human conflict is projected into a circumscribed space-time in such representative form and supreme condensation that players and audience can experience the catharsis of affects...unbearably personal and yet miraculously shared."^{47/}

The audience aspect is most important. Allen Guttman, in an excellent book on sports and play, holds back from considering play as art precisely because, he says, play needs no audience. On the contrary, I would say that play cannot proceed without an audience. The citations from Erikson on ego ideals, Stone on drama, plus the entire thrust of George Herbert Mead's work on socialization, indicate the way in which play takes place in the presence

of real and/or imagined audiences. As drama is confrontation, the child's playworld confronts the harsh and/or loving parents with its own powerful admonitions. Surely the child spanking his doll and saying, "Don't you ever do that again!" is enacting a dramatic and socially important plot that is all too familiar. The catharsis emerges from the appropriate resolutions that the ego manages. 48/

The creation of the microsphere model facilitates a dialectical connection between the child's inner world and his society's changing world-view. The externalization of inner fears, their enactment on a social stage shared by others, enables the young child to gain a sense of mastery that can be transposed to the real world. Once, as Bettelheim has observed, he is able to get his inner universe in order, he can then proceed to create order in his life. The ritualized release of dammed up distress in play refreshes the child for participation in the ongoing activities of the real world. As Erikson observes, "play saturation" allows the child to emerge as a sleeper from a dream that "worked." 49/

The dialectical interplay between playworld and reality is at the same time the arena for the beginning of the creation of identity. Initially, the purely physical mastery of body control, poise and coordination enhances the child's self-

esteem. The physical is, however, tied in with the social. Learning to walk is intrinsically pleasurable as the child is able to transcend previous limits. Yet the child also achieves the status of "one who walks." ^{50/} The growth of physical mastery and self-image interacts with the valuations that the culture places on the forms of physical mastery.

Even more importantly, the playworld is a place where the child begins to differentiate himself from parental images. The child is assigned a social Me by his parents, siblings, and later his peers. In playworld mastery he has the leeway to begin to develop a creative I. The child's own identity emerges in this I-Me dialectic that is enacted at the interface of play and reality. ^{51/} This emergent sense of identity is then cautiously tested in the rough waters of the real world. When the undertow is too severe, the child returns to his own manageable wading pool of play. Gradually the rough waters are more manageable, the world, and the child's place within it, begins to "make sense." ^{52/}

IV

The ages of seven to twelve witness the growth of organized games. The child becomes more capable of dealing with the demands of the external world and needs to resort less to play compensation. This development is seen by Piaget to devolve from the interplay of assimilation and accommodation (basically the modalities of play and imita-

tion). ^{53/} The normal child becomes more adapted to reality and assimilation is less useful. And, while Piaget posits an equilibrium between assimilation and accommodation, the creative function of play and fantasy as typical modes of assimilative activity is devalued. ^{54/}

What Piaget's dichotomy misses is the sensitive dialectic between I and Me that is incorporated into Erikson's view of play and games. Erikson sees play developing into games within the context of an interplay between leeway (I) and limits (Me). Play in this sense is the precursor and generator of creative imagination. ("[T]he human ability to create model situations.") As he says,

"To truly leap, you must learn how to use the ground as a springboard and how to land resiliently and safely. It means to test the leeway allowed by given limits; to outdo and yet not escape gravity." ^{55/}

Piaget does say that the child uses his creative (sober) intelligence on the real world but misses the connection between play, games and adult work. Intelligent mastery is kept alive by what Erikson calls a "maturing playfulness." Piaget's epistemological concern for abstract intelligence would unwittingly drain the creative sources of this intelligence. The fostering of a one-sided abstract and conceptual view of rationality (the ontogenetic equivalent of Max Weber's discussion of the historical process of

rationalization) abets the creation of a world where a mature playfulness is ruthlessly curtailed.

The development of organized games does not signal the decline of play and symbolism (leeway) as Piaget would suppose. As Sutton Smith remarks in his critique of Piaget:

"Even when children's games are mainly matters of physical or intellectual skill, as from ten years onward, however, it is difficult to accept Piaget's view that this is simply a matter of play being converted from a symbolic procedure. There is, after all, little that is precisely rational about a game of football or a game of basketball."^{56/}

The game, much like the play microsphere, acts as an expressive system. And also like play, the game is a ritualization--as a higher level of development--of the interplay of leeway and limits. Such a ritualization, by definition, integrates the play elements. Stages of development do not disappear but are incorporated in a higher synthesis. This process was implicitly recognized by Huizinga when he described how ritual is built on the foundation of sacred play: "Ritual grafts itself upon it; but the primary thing is and remains play."^{57/}

The organized game is one further step in the development of the ritualizations of everyday life, and it remains playful and symbolic. As a symbolic form, the game perpetuates the ongoing dialectic between socialization and escape

that was first observed in play. The work of Brian Sutton-Smith and his collaborators clearly underscores the theoretical development. They point out that some analysts, primarily those who emerge from the Freudian tradition, see games in psychogenetic terms: as places where players go to alleviate anxieties and other psychic wounds. The game serves as a tension reducer, an escape from reality, and an arena for wish fulfillment. Another school, primarily sociologists, views games in sociogenic terms: as places where people can get practical training, rehearse social roles and values and enact socially desirable character traits. Avedon and Sutton-Smith point out that their approach has the advantage of incorporating psychological and sociological variables in one dialectical process:

"This theory states that the individual motivation for game playing is the presence in the player of anxieties and conflicts induced by antecedent child-training processes. The game is enjoyable to the player because it consists in a symbolic statement of those conflicts, and in the course of the buffered learning situation that the game provides, the player develops competencies and confidence to handle the real life situations toward which the original anxieties point."⁵⁸

Anxiety is generated in the larger social system. As Roberts and Sutton-Smith underscore, in the American context the anxiety devolves from obedience training--the need to

rationalize) abets the creation of a world where a mature playfulness is ruthlessly curtailed; a world where imitation would be the only mode of adaption.

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"Even when children's games are mainly matters of physical or intellectual skill, as from ten years onward, however, it is difficult to accept Piaget's view that this is simply a matter of play being converted from a symbolic to a realistic application. The total game performance remains basically a symbolic procedure. There is, after all, little that is precisely rational about a game of football or a game of basketball." 56/

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Anxiety is generated in the larger social system. As Roberts and Sutton-Smith underscore, in the American concept the anxiety devolves from obedience training--the need to

learn to give and take orders in a complex society--and the need to develop aggressive and competitive character traits.

The development of these traits creates much frustration:

"When it is remembered that the pattern of child-training associated with games of strategy involves much severity and therefore much implicit frustration and provocation to aggression but that it is at the same time a pattern in which obedience is strongly rewarded and in which the parents do not practice aggression, the need for a displaced and considerably attenuated form of aggression becomes evident." 59/

The child training in a competitive, political culture needs to inculcate the virtues of initiative, pluck, and "get-up-and-go." The young player has a limited ability to use this socially necessary aggressivity in the real world. The ritualization of play and games expand the competitive competency of the growing child by alleviating accumulated anxiety. Obedience to the polity is fostered at the same time that energy is released for socially important purposes. 60/

At the same time that the dialectic is operating within the arena of the game, the player feels "possessed." The phenomenological feeling of freedom, joy and mastery enlarges the player's ego and facilitates, as it does in the more limited playworld, the inculcation of social values. Again, to paraphrase Bettelheim, because the Kingdom is his, the player is more willing to internalize the representative

values of this microcosmic social structure. 61/

The game's symbolic structure, like its counterpart in the playworld, transports the player to a separate reality. What we see here, however, in contrast to play, is the further ritualization of social themes into more coherent plots. The organized game is the bridge that connects the toyworld with the arena of politics. Play becomes ritual play "in which human beings unite in communal interplay and establish rules for joining and contesting with each other." 62/ If we are alive to the interplay here we can recognize the political element in games as later we can be clear about the game element in politics.

The game, as a buffered learning situation, acquaints the players with the "power strategies relevant to some of the major parameters of influence within our own culture." 63/ At the same time, the more formalized structure gives the players an opportunity to ground themselves within an embryonic division of labor. It is here that a child begins to envision the way in which his individual mastery of experience can fit within and become a successful variant of the group identity. The need for "methodical performance" gives structure to the development of the child's identity. "Without this, the elements mentioned so far would lack a binding discipline holding them to a mutual sequence of

competent acts and an overall quality of craftsmanship and perfection." ^{65/} Play is not "subverted" and spontaneity eliminated. It is given a comprehensible form within a larger shared vision. Without this evolving ritualization the formation of identity would be impossible. When Paul Hoch complains that the "perfectly natural animal impulse towards play is subverted to transmit ideologies and world views," ^{66/} he misses the fundamental need for the process of individual identity formation to be grounded within an ideological world view. When Camus, the archetypical "stranger" remarked that all he knew about ethics he learned from soccer football, he was recognizing the necessity of interplay between identity (even that of a rebel) and social structure.

The formation of identity, then, is linked to the integration of imagination and craftsmanship within an expanding shared vision. This process is aided by the team structure of many games. As Greg Stone points out, following Mead, individual identity must be validated within a framework of social interaction. On the team, the player's identity is carved out in the interplay of mutual expectations. The term itself symbolizes the division of labor of the larger society and prepares the player for accepting the generalized expectations of the political culture. The

child, originally totally egocentric, cannot even begin to form an abstract idea of a political system until he develops some degree of "sociocentricity." Thus, the team becomes a step in the process of differentiation and eventual social integration. 67/

Identity formation and social integration are bounded and given purpose by the agonistic structure of the game itself. It is important that identity is formed and social order is enacted within a dramatic struggle between two competing teams. As with tribal moieties confronting each other in sacred ritual combat, the contesting teams act out the conflicting principles of affiliation and antagonism. Each team separately creates a play-community whose solidarity is forged during the struggle. The end of the contest sees a symbolic resolution of the anxieties and contradictions attached to the conflicting principles. The game's performance binds the two halves, in the euphoria of communion, within a renewed shared vision.

V

Play and games are intimately tied into individual fantasy. The process of identity formation and the gradual integration of children into a shared vision utilizes all three modes in various combinations. Fantasy

begins in a fragmented form, is systemized in make-believe play and is then given collective discipline and codes of honor in games with rules. As the child becomes more competent and the world becomes more manageable, fantasy is internalized. As a form of leeway it is transposed into imagination, and the "human propensity to make model situations" becomes the creative ability to remodel the world of social institutions. The internal imaginative escape nurtures the ego's power for the creative and potentially powerful return to reality.

As is the case, however, the individual often finds his psychosocial world to be unmanageable. The "normal" child, as Piaget has shown, has less need to resort to make-believe and fantasy as he finds opportunities to act powerfully in the real world. Even the normal child, however, is often confronted with a reality that resists his efforts. When this happens, fantasy can become a way in which the child escapes the frustrations of his environment. This escape into "disassociated fantasy" facilitates a routinized adaptation to a world that is reified above the child's head.^{68/}

Fantasy, then, partakes of the same dialectic of integration and escape. As the exemplary realm of wish fulfillment it generates its own joy as it amplifies the symbolic satisfaction of play and games. Just as the frightening feelings of a child's inner universe are formalized in play and the game, the child's fantasies are structured in the myths and fables of the society. Like the other forms of leeway, the fables act as projective screens for the externalization of crippling anxiety. By projecting in this way, the child gains an understanding of his inner psychological make-up as he gains a mastery over it. This is accomplished within the shared vision of the fable. As Bettelheim indicates:

"By doing this, the child fits unconscious contents into conscious fantasies which then enables him to deal with that content. It is here that the fairytales have unequalled value, because they offer new dimensions to the child's imagination. Even more important, the form and structure of fairytales suggest images to the child by which he can structure his day dreams and will then give better direction to his life." 69/

The public control of imagination is a powerful first step towards integration into the larger political culture. The fable is able to take over the private fantasies because of its dramatic content and existence as a form of social communication.

"While the fairytale may contain many dream-like features, its great advantage over a dream is that a fairytale has a consistent structure with a definite beginning and a plot that moves towards a satisfying solution...." 70/

The child's feelings are safely objectified. He can

"embody his distinctive wishes in one figure, gain desired satisfactions from another, identify with a third, have ideal attachments with a fourth..." 71/

The hero's triumph, in turn, ritualistically resolves the anxieties while giving the child hope for his own redemption (if he follows the hero's morally prescribed path).

Fables and fantasy also are important parts of the formation of identity.

"Fairytale...direct the child to discover his identity and calling and they also suggest what experiences are needed to develop his character further. Fairytale intimate that a rewarding, good life is in one's reach despite adversity, but only if one does not stay away from the hazardous struggles, without which one cannot achieve true identity." 72/

The fairytale helps the child to overcome his own guilt and develops a sense of initiative through an identification with the heroes of the fables.

Gradually, the dreams of early childhood are attached to the goals of an adult world view. The heroes of the fables are replaced by adult models.

"Formal institutions...offer children of this age [around six, seven and eight years old] an economic ethos in the form of ideal adults, recognizable by their uniforms and their functions and fascinating enough to replace the heroes of picture books and fairytales." 73/

This is the stage of exemplars where children internalize through identification the approved plots and character traits of the society.

The fable's hero is increasingly supplanted by the "ideal adults" depicted in the stories of the mass media. These story tellers, "picture the world for the child and thus give both form and limit to his memory and imagination." 74/ The process is reinforced by the peer group. The events and personalities in the prepackaged fantasies are the lingua franca of peer communication and individual acceptance. The peer group becomes the individual's source of direction and the mass media fandoms and lingo generate the emotional energy that holds the group together and ratifies individual identity.

VI

The sportsworld lies at the end of a developmental cycle that begins in play, is formalized in organized games and is nurtured by fantasy. Each stage is incorporated and kept alive in the process of ritualization. This view is divergent from Huizinga's idealism as well as the undialectical Marxism of Aronowitz and Hoch. Both

these perceptives are unable to come to grips with the reason millions of people are caught up within the sportsworld nexus.

Huizinga sees sports as "unholy," having lost its play element. The integration of sports into the fabric of political culture bursts the bonds of his unworkable dichotomy between play and "seriousness." This Huizinga finds unpalatable:

"Firstly, certain play forms may be used consciously or unconsciously to cover up some social and political design. In this case we are not dealing with the eternal play element...but with false play." ^{75/}

In analyzing play as an ideal form he misses the way in which the sportsworld incorporates a play spirit. What is odd, however, is the fact that Huizinga's ritual example of the "profoundly aesthetic quality" of play is the crowd's frenzy at a football match. ^{76/} One has the feeling that Huizinga's analysis is richer than his categories. His discovery of the play spirit in sacred ritual and drama offers a foundation for a deeper understanding of modern sports.

Once again avowed Marxists like Aronowitz and Hoch join hands with the idealist Huizinga in their denunciation of sports as dehumanizing and joyless. Aronowitz in particular sees the corruption of the play spirit. "Professional sports represent the final perversion of

child's play in which the game is reduced to commodity relations." ^{77/} This view presented a picture of "wage slaves" enacting a sterile drama for comatose spectators. In seeing sports as an "opiate of the people" this analysis misses the dialectical subtlety of Marx's own probe of religion which saw that phenomena as, not only an opiate, but also "the heart of a heartless world."

The sportsworld consists of athletes, fans, coaches, managers and executives; all are players. Howard Senzel's observations of baseball are true for the sportsworld in general:

"In this world of baseball the only legitimate activity is play. And so the only legitimate lifestyle is to be a player. And so, by emulation, proximity and desire, everyone who embraces baseball becomes, in some way, a baseball player." ^{78/}

Senzel recognizes that baseball is "commodity relations," but that it is simultaneously nurtured by illusion. Illusion, delusion and play, as Erikson has pointed out, all come from the root word "ludere"--an indication of another connection between child's play and adult belief. Piaget has called play a "deliberate illusion." Senzel recognizes these connections in the following linkage of baseball with play: "To partake of shared illusion is the definition of play." ^{79/}

My concern is with the way in which the sportsworld emerges from the playing, dreaming and imitation of

children. The adult intensity of involvement is built upon this developmental process. The adult fan is symbolically linked to the athlete and his world precisely because of the biographical links to his own childhood play and fantasies. While it may be possible to distinguish players from fans by definition, it is more fruitful to see the way in which both groups are connected by a symbolic canopy in the present as well as by common biographical antecedents immersed within a shared historical tradition.

The fan is a spiritual athlete. As Arnold Beisser comments:

"They continue to follow intensely the progress of athletes and teams. Emotionally, if not physically, they remain ever-ready if the call to play should come." 80/

The emotional link is nurtured by the American view of the athlete as Peter Pan. The sportsworld in its historical growth has encouraged the view of its athletes as innocent boys. The vigorous manner in which sportsworld authorities prosecute those who might generate disillusionment (be "spoilsports"), attests to the powerful pull of the symbolism of children at play. 81/

The play imagery is captured in the biographical statements of contemporary athletes. And, despite the rise of a debunking trend, its import remains dominant. Bill Bradley

captures this moment most eloquently:

"In those moments on a basketball court I feel as a child and know as an adult. Experience rushes through my pores as if sucked by a strong vacuum. I feel the power of imagination and the sense of mystery and wonder I accepted in my childhood before my life hardened." ^{82/}

The fan is himself immersed in the play symbolism.

He reads the biographical statements, watches the dramatic and often joyous intensity of the game and, at the same time, recollects and fantasizes about his own childhood triumphs, failures and dreams in a process that Simon Lesser calls "analogizing." ^{83/} Watching involves the fan in the action while conjuring up an entire sequence of biographical recollections. Irwin Shaw captures this in his Voices of a Summer Day. Middle-aged Benjamin Federov watches his son playing ball and reminisces about his own life, which is interwoven with the American game:

"The sounds were the same through the years--the American sounds of summer, the tap of bat against ball, the cries of the infielders, the wooden plump of the balls into catchers' mitts, the umpires calling 'Strike three and you're out.' The generations circled the bases, the dust rose for forty years as runners slid in from third, dead boys hit doubles, famous men made errors at short-stop, forgotten friends tapped the clay from their spikes...coaches' voices warned across the decades, 'Tag up, tag up!' on fly balls. The distant, mortal innings of boyhood and youth." ^{84/}

The memory of childhood play exerts a tremendous pull.

"For many adults, the immediacy and aesthetic depth of

childhood experiences are never equalled later in life." 85/
 As Kenniston points out, underscoring the Peter Pan imagery,
 "The Holden Caulfields of this country love children because
 they love themselves best as children: it is the 'phony'
 grownups who are the objects of anger and pity." 86/ Robert
 Smith's comments about baseball are generally valid for all
 sports:

"This I am sure is the lot of numberless American
 males, that they cling as long as life and common
 sense will let them to the days when a game of
 baseball could fill a whole hot afternoon so full
 that it would run over at the edges." 87/

In their recollections, fans and players alike also
 recall their dreams. As a young player Max Zaslofsky fan-
 tasized about the future:

"All I had was this one desire to be the greatest
 basketball player of all times. It was a fantasy
 a Walter Mitty thing. That's the dream I had." 88/

The dream is integrated in the young athlete's play and is
 transformed in the process into a passionate devotion.

Zaslofsky again:

"I can remember as a youngster the grueling hours,
 whether it was summer or winter, working on a
 certain thing; maybe five or six hours on a
 particular move." 89/

Alas, few will be able to actualize this childhood
 dream. Howard Senzel realizes this early on. He made a
 pact with his friends that they would all never cease to

rest until they became major leaguers; he worked religiously on his baseball fundamentals, but it was never to be. A fan was born: "What really interested me, even from my earliest memories, was the world of baseball." 90/ At this age, however, being a fan and remaining a player (despite the collapse of the dream) is quite common. Here the symbolism of the larger world penetrates everyday life:

"Even out of the little games I played, bouncing a tennis ball against the backwall of our garage, I would spend the entire afternoon playing two major league teams, in a five game series. I would try to mimic each batter's actual style in the way I threw the tennis ball against the garage wall. It wasn't really baseball. And it wasn't really day-dreaming, it was metaphor." 91/

Fairy tales and picture books are replaced by a larger mythology. The heroes of the sportworld permeate play and fantasy. As Julius Erving recalls:

"Sometimes I'd go out on the court and shoot a ball and say somebody's name as though imitating their shot and their game, putting myself in their place, maybe hoping that one day I'd be out there." 92/

Dave Debusschere corroborates this:

"As a kid you had a dream. Playing ball in Detroit Stadium where the Tigers play--I guess it was a fantasy. No, I think it was more a solid dream...". 93/

The larger symbolism penetrates communication in everyday life as well. My cousin Jacob Lipsky had the whole family in stitches doing his Louis Tiant imitation. While we

were watching the World Series together, my seven year old son Jonathan grabbed a long tinker toy, bent into a low crouch and yelled, "Look Dad, this is Brian Doyle."

Heroic emulation is also a coin of peer group communication. Rick Telander, in his marvelous book Heaven is a Playground, captured this following sidewalk scenario; a group of children are walking to school:

"One group comes by and a boy runs out in front. He holds a candy wrapper in his hand and spinning around as though dribbling shouts, 'Who am I?'

"Earl the Pearl! the boys cry. Then he holds the wrapper over his head and rotates his arms like a cowboy twirling a rope, before throwing the paper to the ground. 'Who?' 'The Doctor, Dr. J!'

Next he holds the wrapper gently in his palm and lofts a slow hook shot towards an imaginary basket no higher than his head.

"Jabbar! Jabbar! the boys shout, jumping in the air." ^{94/}

Immersion in sportsworld's aura does not stop there. Baseball cards often dominate the peer group activity. ("In the Spring, flipping baseball cards was the most esteemed play activity in the school yards of Rochester."^{95/}) The cards become the basis for the discussion of the merits of the players. One's ability to memorize the statistics on the back becomes a source of prestige and acceptance. The holding of a personal icon facilitates as well the identification with the symbolic world. It is increasingly dif-

difficult to be sure where the sportsworld begins and the world of everyday life ends. A child will frequently leave home with the ballgame on his lips, his baseball cards in his pocket, his team jacket on his body, his "Pro-Keds" or "Converse" on his feet, and a baseball cap in his head.

Sportsworld symbolism is also internalized through the newspapers. Howard Senzel reports:

"As a child I sat on the porch steps on summer afternoons and waited for the paper boy to bring the news about baseball." ^{96/}

The two worlds of sports often merge, as in Arnold Beisser's description of a young basketball player:

"He had fantastic detailed information about sports and athletes, and the events of his own sports career were remembered in the tiniest detail. Each morning he 'memorized' the sports page. The performances of great athletes were extremely vivid to him, and their records were the vital statistics of his life." ^{97/}

Importantly, sports has been one of the only areas where fathers and sons have been able to have warm relations. Removed from the world of his father's work, the young boy may play catch with his father, watch the game with him on television and occasionally make the longer excursion to the ballpark. This matrix of relations can have a tremendous impact on a youngster. Former Little League star Bill Masucci recalls:

"But first I go back to when I was seven years old, maybe; my father used to take me on this train that ran from Schenectady to just outside Fenway Park in Boston. It cost him about five dollars a head.... I loved it. My father and I...". 98/

Robert Smith captures the penetration of sportsworld symbolism through the mediation of the father-son relationship in this reminiscence:

"The major league park--it might be forty miles away--was the goal to head for on an overnight excursion, on which fathers could bring their sons to give them an early taste of the grownup world. One or two holidays of this sort every season would give a boy enough baseball to keep the flame of his devotion burning. For there were scores in the newspapers every day, usually on the front page, and stories of the game, pictures of the games heroes to collect, a magazine devoted to baseball...". 99/

This father-son symbolism permeates the ethos of the sportsworld and the larger culture. The father who sticks a bat and glove in his son's crib is a staple of American folklore. We also read of famous athletes whose success would never have been accomplished without Dad. Pete Maravich boasts:

"Everything I know about basketball I learned from my father. I like to think that he made sort of a robot out of me, sort of a bionic person, because of what he wanted. I am not ashamed of that. He was instrumental in making me what I am today. Actually, you might say I was born with a basketball, because in early baby pictures I had one of the first basketballs made with the string tied to it, and my Daddy put it in the crib with me." 100/

The sportsworld comes to life for the child, and his

own play is majestically enlarged, through the drama of the game. Stanley Aronowitz observes that young children are rarely spectators. The evidence is overwhelmingly to the contrary. Youngsters witness the excitement of the drama at a very early age. Pat Smith, a former basketball player at Marquette, was transfixed in a tree overlooking a famed Harlem playground:

"The old Rucker Tournament was held in this park.... When I was a kid I'd climb up into that tree. I'd stake out one of those branches early in the morning and I'd just sit up there all day.... I was in a world of my own sitting up above the crowd and watching the great ones come and do their thing...." 101/

The drama fuels the youngster's emerging commitment. Smith describes with awe a confrontation between the late-arriving Connie Hawkins and Wilt Chamberlain:

"The crowd was still hushed as they called time out.... They surrounded the man. They undressed the man. And finally he finished lacing up his sneakers and walked out into the backcourt. He got the ball, picked up speed, and started his first move. Chamberlain came right out to stop him. The Hawk went up--he was still way out behind the foul line--and started floating towards the basket. Wilt, taller and stronger, stayed right with him, but then the Hawk hook-dunked the ball right over Chamberlain. He hook-dunked! Nobody had ever done anything like that to Wilt. The crowd was so crazy that they had to stop the game for five minutes. And I almost fell out of the tree." 102/

That kind of moment gets replayed, rehashed and re-lived--in court action, enthusiastic re-telling and in the dreams of the young.

The drama permeates the young player's own play but is further reinforced by the growth of team allegiances. This process, symbolically re-enacting its larger world model, begins on the sandlots. As Robert Smith recalls:

"That may have been what made baseball so exhilarating to all of us, for it took us outside of our slums and often immersed us so deep with the common cause that skin scrapes, strawberries, bloody noses...were of so little account that we sometimes never felt them until the out had been made or the run scored." 103/

The team breaks down stubborn egocentricity and installs a shared vision in the young player. It is small wonder that George Herbert Mead builds his model of socialization on the concept of the team. In recent years, sandlot team play has given way to, been progressively replaced by, organized, miniature professional little leagues on all major sports. These teams assume a great importance in a youngster's life. An ex-Little Leaguer recalls:

"I was really lucky, I thought, making the team when I was eight; heck, most of the kids got cut, and they were really shaken, crying and all of that. I can even remember how they used to do things when they cut a kid; there were so many kids trying out, it was unbelievable. But they never told the kids, 'Hey, you made the team,' or 'Hey, you didn't make the team.' They would tell everyone to look in the newspapers; they said that the kids who made it would have their names in the paper.... Finally, the day came when the team rosters were announced in the paper; hey, I saw my name, and I went crazy--it was like Christmas." 104/

The little league team often gets its meaning enhanced by the local minor league professional club. Prior to the advent of television a vast infrastructure of these teams intersected the country. Another ex-little leaguer explains:

"Look, when I was a kid in Schenectady, my heroes were the Schenectady Blue Jays.... I thought God played on the Blue Jays...one night I caught a foul ball--hey, I was hooked on the Blue Jays for life." 105/

These kind of team allegiances triggered the emotions of the sportsworld drama. Howard Senzel amplifies the point:

"I was going to watch my heroes display their dexterity. I was going to watch my team undergo a massive public confrontation with a bunch of well-known strangers. My life, inside of Red Wing Stadium, was the highest reality I experienced. I felt that I had to be there." 106/

The little leagues and minor leagues are just a part of the team infrastructure. In many small towns the local high school is the foundation of the town's community identity. 107/ The importance of the team gets interwoven into the whole fabric of community life. Here, players and fans alike partake in the team-game drama. As James Coleman has remarked about the sports team:

"It generates strong positive identification with the school; without athletes, the school world is lifeless for the students; deficient in collective goals." 108/

In their book, Small Town in Mass Society, Vidich and

Bensman remark on how the maintenance of an ideology of community wards off the reality of the collapse of the real thing. In the small towns of Texas, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Illinois, etc., sports team partisanship is the bulwark of this ideology. In Massilon, Ohio the high school team even has its own historian. The following description of high school football games in Texas underscores the general point:

"They are props for something bigger, something which is discussed in churches, bars,..cafes, schools, Kiwanis club meetings, oil fields and out on the north forty. Football, particularly high school football, is the staff of life." 109/

The major league team partakes of the same symbolism and can have an equal impact on the youngster growing up. Roger Kahn recalls his feeling about the old Brooklyn Dodgers:

"They might even have been gods, for these seemed like true Olympians to a boy who wanted to become a man and sensed it was an exalted and manly thing to catch a ball with one hand...". 110/

Later on, Kahn became a reporter covering these same Dodgers and in one small remark captures the fantasy of involvement that is generated in the process of socialization: "I strode out onto the plane, monarch of my dream...". 111/

Playing on the team, watching the team and dreaming about playing on the team are all intertwined. This synthesis is most clearly captured by Arnold Beisser's psychiatric profile of a young adolescent named Benny. Benny's family moved from St. Louis to Los Angeles and the move precipitated a schizophrenic reaction--estrangement, loneliness and depersonalization. Benny was lost in the urban sprawl of Los Angeles. Gradually, however, he developed a rooting interest in the Dodgers. His therapy started to go better, the city began to take on a certain order--with Los Angeles' Coliseum as the center. "One day when the crowd rose to cheer a game-winning run Benny realized that he too had risen and was cheering. . This was an event of great significance." 112/

The last key feature of sportsworld symbolism that penetrates into the world of the growing fan-child is the image of authority. The penetration of authority often begins with the father who initiates the younger's interest in the world. The father quickly gives way to (or merges with) the coach. In the recollections of the Schenectady Little League champions of 1954, the figure of manager, Mike Maietta, looms large. Bill Masucci describes it this way:

"I'm a success in life and I owe it all to three people: my father, Mike Maietta and Bucky Freeman, my coach at Ithaca. They taught me how to win, not only in baseball but in life." 113/

The coach has a tremendous impact. Chuck Neidel, conjuring up images of Plato's philosopher king, illustrates this impact:

"Now Mike took each and every one of us and sculpted us into players. It was like, here he was with fourteen little pieces of clay, he chiseled away here and he chiseled away there, and when he was done he had created fourteen players." 114/

Besides influencing the youngsters on the team the little league coach becomes a respected man in the community and is a visible symbol of authority.

Now Martin Ralbovsky doesn't like little league coaches. He finds them dictatorial, immature and frustrated. He laments for the poor youngsters:

"They are subjected to the influence of coaches, not men trained to be coaches but, by and large, the frustrated guy down the street who recaptures lost successes and achieves vicarious pleasures by exploiting those young men." 115/

By and large, however, the data from his own Destiny's Darlings questions Ralbovsky's conclusions. Those young men grown old, with a few exceptions and not without a bit of hedging, recall the profound, positive influences that the perhaps frustrated, certainly dictatorial, Mike

Maietta had on them.

The frustrated ex-athlete will be the one to most vividly impart the ethos of the sportsworld. The often dictatorial nature of the team set up is generally perceived by many black and working class kids, especially, as a place to win respect, learn discipline and a code of honor, and gain acceptance. Dave Meggysey, certainly no knee-jerk admirer of sportsworld cliches, recalls that he would "do anything" for Coach Vogt:

"I was a real hustling fanatic once I stepped onto the football field. This was the first time I had ever received praise directly for anything I had done and I thrived on it." 116/

Maggsey, escaping from a brutal father, turned to a harsh but disciplined Coach Vogt,

"and in a pattern I was to see repeated time and time again, the coach became a sort of substitute father. Vogt at times seemed to show a genuine concern, perhaps because he too had been poor and made it through college with the help of a football scholarship." 117/

The young athlete received praise and is introduced into a world of concerned purpose, receiving a direction that is too often missing elsewhere.

The high school coach as a personal authority figure has a profound personal and symbolic influence. In a study done by psychologist Daniel Offer the coach was found to be the most respected authority figure in the

school.

"As far as the students are concerned the athletic coaches are almost the only teachers in the high school environment who treat them as individuals. The coaches often serve as confidants, helping the students to overcome emotional hurdles." 118/

When school sports dominate the community the coach is also the most important man in town.

It is not that Ralbovsky is wrong and all coaches are the ideal fathers we all longed for. It's just that he misses the way in which the authoritarian attitude is integrated within a world of meaning for the youngster who is often searching for direction. Nowhere is this more true than in the ghetto where fathers are often unknown or absent. A white Rick Telander was coaching a team of black youngsters against black coach George Murden. His comments are revealing:

"I watched George Murden's style--berating his players, pushing them on, demanding silence, obedience--his eyes always carrying the threat of violence.... And it bothers me that as his players work and sweat and succeed they fill up with pride, the the angry furrows disappear and they become a unit, molded from common suffering." 119/

In the ghetto the coach is often the first adult male who approximates a father figure. Coach Gene Smith gives the young Connie Hawkins his first sense

of self-respect, and Coach Fisher of Boy's High gives young Connie his first view of a white man who cares. 120/ Bill Russell eloquently captures the essence of the personal impact of a coach:

"I was terrible, but Powles had faith in me as a person and didn't want to break my spirit. He had only fifteen uniforms for the team but carried sixteen players. I was the sixteenth and I split the uniform with a boy named Roland Cambell. By that one gesture, I believe that that saved me from becoming a juvenile delinquent. If I hadn't had basketball, all of my energies and frustrations would surely have been turned in some other direction." 121/

All the aspects of the symbolic sports drama--the heroism, the team, the dramatic confrontation of the game, and the personal authority of coaches--penetrate into and emerge from child's play. They are nurtured on fantasy and dreams and given reality in a developing network of social communication.

VII

After observing how the joy of play merges with the larger dramatic ritual of sports we can easily understand how values get inculcated "through the back door" of growing children. In the next few sections I will show how this inculcation of values interacts within the dialectic of socialization and escape.

As Harry Edwards has observed, the "sports creed" or belief-system is derivative of the "business creed" of

the larger society. ^{122/} Importantly, this ethos is conveyed within a framework of aggressive masculinity. Boys learn to be aggressive and to develop initiative and industry. At the same time, they learn to control their feelings so as not to betray a vulnerability in the competitive struggle. Breaking down emotionally is quitting and the sportsworld maxim admonishes "Winners never quit and quitters never win." Other maxims reflecting this moral nomos are: "When the going gets tough, the tough get going;" "It's not the size of the dog in the fight its the size of the fight in the dog;" and "Kill the weak and punish the strong." ^{123/}

The Code is learned from the biographers, the newspaper accounts, and through the actual playing. It is also learned from involved fathers and is passed on in the inspirational literature. Mickey Mantle tells of a time, early in his career, when he felt like just giving up. His father's intervention was crucial:

"I guess I was like a little boy, and I wanted him to comfort me.

"He said, 'How are things going?'

"I said, 'Awful. The Yankees sent me down to learn not to strike out, but now I can't even hit.'

"He said, 'That's so?'

"I said, 'I'm not good enough to play in the major leagues.... I'll never make it. I think I'll quit and go home with you.'

"I guess I wanted him to say, 'Oh, don't be silly, you're just in a little slump, you'll be all right, you're great.' But he just looked at me for a second and then in a quiet voice that cut me in

two he said, 'Well, Mick, if that's all the guts you have I think you better quit....'" 124/

Mickey, of course, as in all the other "true stories of heroism and bravery" is shamed into a return to the fray and eventually triumphs, as do all the others who "have heart." The message is Horatio Alger's with a healthy amalgam of Ben Franklin and Ralph Waldo Emerson. The lesson is clear: if you develop the appropriate character, you will rise in this world. Bill Bradley's comments on Willis Reed underscore the message:

"People underestimated his skill and determination.... Willis lived by the aphorisms of his high school and college coaches who said 'There is no harm in failing. Just pick yourself up and get back in the race.' ... 'A man's reach should exceed his grasp.'" 125/

In order to succeed in a competitive culture you must develop the appropriate character. One of Destiny's Darlings emphasizes this: "I learned one thing about life from that experience: nothing is impossible if you work hard to get it, that's been my theory for the rest of my life." 126/ Another ex-little leaguer: "I like winning in life, instead of winning in baseball--but you can't make it on luck alone; you have to work hard, that's America." 127/ The role of the coach is often instrumental:

"If you broke down and cried in practice, he [Coach Maietta] figured that you'd break down and cry in a game. I don't think it hurt me a bit because that's what life is all about anyway, pressure and competition." 128/

The mobility there is accentuated by the immigrant status or color of the exemplars in the biographies and inspirational literature. Yogi Berra's rise is seen as a "fantastic rags-to-riches saga," "an American success story." As Mac Davis explains:

"Miracles happen in big league baseball. Take Yogi Berra for example. The son of poor immigrant parents, Yogi grew up on The Hill, a tough Italian section of St. Louis. His boyhood dream was to be a professional baseball player. His father, a bricklayer, was scornful of such youthful ambition. He wanted Yogi to become a laborer, so he could make good money." 130/

We smile at the naivete of the immigrant parent and a typical pattern unfolds. The immigrant parent is too locked into the old folkways; it is the second generation that socializes its parents as it is socialized itself. Stan Musial's Polish father is violently opposed to Stan playing children's games. Joe DiMaggio's father wants him to follow in his footsteps and become a fisherman. This dual level socialization is captured in a touching dedicatory epistle in Roger Kahn's latest book:

"For Olga Kahn
student, litterateur, teacher,
who at length is learning, in
her eighth decade, which base
is second." 131/

Character, mobility and Americanism all merge in the exposure to sportsworld's imagery. Philip Roth attests to the power of the symbolism for the young fan:

"To sing the National Anthem in school, even during the worst of the war years, generally left me cold.... Nothing stirred within, strident as we might be---in the end just another school exercise. But on Sundays out at Ruppert Stadium...waiting for the Newark Bears to take on the enemy from across the marshes, the hated Jersey City Grunts (within our church the schisms are profound), it would have seemed to me an emotional thrill forsaken if we had not risen to our feet (my father, my brother and me--together with our inimical countrymen, Newark's Irishmen, Germans, Italians, Poles, and out in the Africa of the bleachers, Newark's Negroes) to celebrate the America that had given to this disparate collection of men and boys a game so grand and beautiful." 132/

The microsphere of the sportsworld becomes an arena for personality adjustments as well. As Connie Hawkins explains:

"Until I got good at basketball...there was nothing about me that I liked. There wasn't a thing that I could be proud of.... It didn't seem like I had anything going for me...". 133/

Connie would sleep long hours, appear listless when awake and be constantly beaten and ridiculed by the neighborhood boys. His brother Fred would call him a "faggot." Gradually, however, his basketball skills increased and "the level of his 'game' became his measure as a man." 134/

Being good at sports or merely being interested and knowledgeable facilitates social acceptance. The playground stars are known throughout the neighborhoods of the city. The athletes are the most visible and popular boys in the school. This process is underscored by a sign in Greenfield, Indiana a few years ago that said: "Welcome to Greenfield, Indiana, home of Mike Edwards." Edwards was at the time still in high school. 135/

The discussion of the socialization function of sports would be incomplete without illustrating the way in which the athlete has become a barker at a commodity carnival. "Reggie Bars" and "Pro-Keds" posters proliferate. Adidas and Puma t-shirts are a staple for the young players and fans. It is also hard for the young fan not to notice the way in which Bjorn Borg resembles a walking billboard with his Bancroft racquet, his Fila shirts, his SAS patch, his Tuborg headband, and his Treetorn sneakers. 136/ And if the youngsters happen to get temporary blindness, the popular magazines offer stories, complete with the pictures of opulent living, on the new idols of consumption.

What is interesting to note is the way in which the new fetishistic egotism is integrated--deliberately at times--with the old moral infrastructure. Just when the

money-changers threaten to take over the temple some greedy soul falls flat on his face or some store-bought team collapses in dissension. Then watch the writers drag out the old moral parables of team play and humility.

Joe Morgan's comments are representative here:

"Once when asked about his value for the team, Morgan just shook his head 'No single player--not even a league MVP--should ever forget that he has to blend his own individual skills with the other 25 guys on the club as well as with the coaches and managers. Show me a so-called superstar who is selfish and doesn't fit in, and I'll show you a team that won't win the pennant.'" 137/

VIII

In earlier sections we have observed how play, games and fantasy are interwoven. This takes on an added significance when we examine the role of sports fiction in the dialectics of socialization and escape. Much of Bettelheim's analysis of fairytales and myths as well as Simon Lesser's analysis of fiction can be utilized when we examine the unique role of sports fiction--falling somewhere between fairytale and myth, but having a relationship to "reality" that is truly unique.

The fairytale is quite unrealistic. It functions as a projective screen for the child's unconscious feelings and anxieties. The fairytale, as a

struggle between good and evil, plumbs the darker side of human nature. The child identifies with the hero who is usually an ordinary figure from everyday life. The identification with the hero, along with the distancing that goes along with aesthetic form, helps the child to externalize his crippling fears. The happy ending of the tales gives the child hope that he too, initially powerless and afraid, will be able to overcome adversity in the real world if he follows the hero's examples.

In myth, however, the culture hero is presented as a figure that the child should directly emulate in his own life:

"A myth, like a fairy tale, may express an inner conflict in symbolic form and suggest how it may be solved--but this is not necessarily the myth's central concern. The myth presented its theme in a majestic way; it causes spiritual force and the divine is present and experienced in the form of super-human heroes...". 138/

The fairytale is presented in a modest form and this prevents even the meekest child from feeling inferior and compelled. The mythic hero, on the other hand, will always point up to us our shortcomings.

Sports fiction is a combination of the elements that Bettelheim sees in the fairytale and the myth. At the same time, however, it has a different relationship to the child's world and to the larger adult world.

This can best be explained historically. The use of sports fiction had a tremendous impact on the growth of the sportsworld itself. Tristram Coffin explains:

"Ralph Garber once wrote an article in the English Journal on the subject of baseball literature. In it he made the following remark about Ralph Henry Barbour, an early hack writer of baseball stories.... 'His clear and vivid accounts of the games in his novels were so superior to newspaper accounts of actual games that the sports reporting became more interesting as his books swept the country, and the accounts formed the model for the reporting of real ones.'" 139/

The symbolism of the sports drama was built on fictional sagas written for children. The Frank Merriwell stories had an even greater impact; and the "Golden Age" of sports reporting in the 1920s was replete with "Merriwellisms." Importantly, the mythic infrastructure of sportsworld discourse was taken from the fictional plots. Coffin's account of the fiction is again suggestive:

"In this never-never literature, plots seldom vary, relying on set situations of lowly beginnings, cruel reversals, overwhelming odds, industry and success;.. of evil which reigns supreme until goodness suddenly prevails; of untested Davids who meet veteran Goliaths." 140/

Sports drama and symbolism is mediated through juvenile sports fiction. Significantly, the same

dramatic situations, plots and resolutions are repeated in the sports reporting and journalism of today. The level of mythical discourse is certainly complex, and the historical linkage creates a universe of discourse with an unparalleled tradition in American life.

Frank Merriwell was a hero who had one of the greatest impacts on the imaginations of American boys. He was read by Babe Ruth, Woodrow Wilson, Jack Dempsey, and Wendell Wilkie. The impact of Merriwell can best be gauged by the recollections of my father. While I was reading one of the Merriwell reprints, he came over to where I was sitting and proceeded to rattle off every leading character in the book and, in an amazing demonstration, summarized the plot that I was in the middle of; this was sixty years after he had read it! When I asked my uncle about Merriwell, he replied, "You know, I have never smoked because Frank Merriwell said it wasn't good for you." 141/

Merriwell represented moral virtue. In the words of his creator, Gilbert Patten:

"Frank Merriwell...stood for truth, faith, justice, triumph of right.... [p]atriotism, sacrifice, retribution and the strength of soul as well as body." 142/

Merriwell helped to transpose the ethical ideals of Franklin and Emerson into the athletic code. His brand

of hard-boiled practicality combined "rugged experience," "self-reliance," "perseverance," "self-assertiveness" and competitiveness with an ideology of fair play.

However unreal Merriwell was, he became the ideal in action of what every American boy wanted to become, "simply because the American way of life led him to believe the mythical accomplishments of a Frank Merriwell possible." ^{143/} Merriwell propagated at the same time a brand of masculinity that was congruent with the athletic Code and the business ethos. Boys who take a beating "well" are admired, and only the most outrageous insult could ever get Frank to show emotion: "Frank was terribly angry at his betrayal. It was a singular thing for Frank Merriwell to betray such feelings...". ^{144/}

Frank's control of emotions, his asceticism and his triumph through struggle was a model for the capitalist "idols of production." Emerson's ideals of inner resourcefulness expressed through action, mediated by the Merriwell fictional sagas, permeated the ideology of the economic world as it influenced the coaching philosophy of organized sports. Significantly, it did so within a framework of Americanization and democratization. The plots are peopled by country boys, Swedes, Poles and Italians. The leading villain in the beginning of the

series, Bartley Hodge, is described as "well-to'do" and "foppish." Through exposure to Frank's example, however, young Hodge loses his class snobbery and spoiled demeanor to become "one of the boys," a defender of fair play.

At the same time that it was promoting rugged Americanism, the Merriwell series, like all fiction, offered young boys an escape as well. This is especially highlighted by Merriwell's own creator, Gilbert Patten--a repressed youngster and frustrated athlete. Frank was Patten's own escape hatch but, then

"Of course, the accounts reflect the basic frustrations of most lives, and obviously the reader as well as the author sees himself in the 'Merriwell role.' Men like Merriwell are everyone's dream of himself--secure, resourceful, capable...cool under fire...respected." 145/

At the same time that the Merriwell stories were offering young boys a recompense from the world they were encouraging the development of the belief that the sportsworld was a clean and moral place. This emergent belief encouraged the idea the sports was a refuge from the evils that beset the real world. When Bart, who wants to smoke and gamble, asked Frank, "Can't a guy have a little fun?" Frank replied, "Sure, but there are two kinds. One is wholesome, invigorating and good

for building character, like baseball and football for instance. The other is spell-binding, injurious, degrading, like gambling." ^{146/} The fictional escape paved the way for the growth of the sportsworld as a world apart.

John Tunis takes over from Patten as the next great writer of juvenile sports fiction. Tunis' books, more than Pattens, develop fully the entire symbolism of a maturing sportsworld. The plots link city and country. The Kid From Thompkinsville comes out of a small New England town to make good in the threatening city; The Keystone Kids are out of Nashville; Highpockets comes from North Carolina; and the Iron Duke comes all the way from Iowa to Harvard.

Tunis builds on the same moral infrastructure as Patten. These books were "object lessons." The preface states: "The author wishes to state that all the characters in this book were drawn from real life." As Howard Senzel remarks, they were one step away from John Calvin; "that authentic moral quality makes them more than just baseball books for boys." ^{147/} Senzel illustrates their influence on the sportsworld in this way:

"I read my John Tunis books during the same afternoons that I went to all the Red Wing games. And it was as difficult to separate them from each other as it is to trace any aspect of identity to a single influence. But the Tunis novels were the easiest and most convenient physical objects to attach symbolism to." 148/

In all the Tunis books the hero faces numerous setbacks, is counselled never to quit, and eventually triumphs through sheer perseverance. Predictably the parallels between sports, life and America are vividly drawn. Here Dave the old pro counsels the Kid: "'You know, I've seen a lot of ballplayers, lots that had everything except courage.... They just didn't have it and they couldn't work.'" And a little later Dave remarks: "And baseball is all life, that's why it gets under your skin." 149/

Tunis details the drama, the ascetic sacrifice and the centrality of victory but adds another ingredient. Merriwell was written before the Age of Organization. Tunis, mirroring the changes in American political and economic life, emphasizes teamwork and personal authority. What is striking about the Merriwell stories is the singular absence of significant adults. Merriwell and his chums are the "band of brothers," the adolescents who built America without an older generation to rely on.

The leading Tunis characters are youngsters who venture into the city and are integrated within the team concept by concerned authority figures.

It is interesting to watch the way Tunis weaves the old moral infrastructure within a framework of team co-operation. Belonging is emphasized: "He was one of them, one of the gang, not an outsider anymore, but part of the machine...he had become part of the secret fraternity known as a baseball club." 150/ Racism is not tolerated:

"Perhaps we can't win the pennant. But there's one thing we can be, a team that's pulling together.... [And there's] something else, too. That every man's as good as everyone...no matter who he is and where he comes from...". 151/

The fight against egotism (and capitalism) is seen within the framework of a larger citizenship:

"You know, you're out there risking that throwing arm of yours 'cause you're one of them. You don't hesitate. You go out and take chances for the team.... That's the trouble with this country nowadays, everyone's out for himself, aiming to hit the long ball over the fence." 152/

Once the team becomes a unit the lesson is even clearer:

"For now they were a team...thin and not so thin, tall and short, strong and not so strong, solemn and excitable, Calvinist and Covenanter, Catholic and Lutheran, Puritan and Jew, these were the elements that, fighting and jarring at first, then slowly mixing and blending, refining, made up a team, made up America." 153/

The solidarity is reinforced by warm and forceful authority figures. Invariably a Billy Martin or Leo Durocher type manager is replaced by a Bob Lemon, warmly paternal manager. Tunis emphasizes how important the role of the manager is. The team's morale is collapsing until the strong conciliator steps in. In The Kid From Thompkinsville, a quiet Dave Leonard replaces a combative Gabby Street. And, while it is clear that Tunis sees a place for both managerial types, he prefers the one who is capable of treating everyone as an individual:

"Different managers; different ways of running a ballclub. Gabby stressed fight. Fight and discipline. You had to do what Gabby said and like it. Every member of the club had to be in his room at eleven.... Dave abolished this.... Each man was to live sensibly, to do his own thinking on the field." 154/

Interestingly, while Tunis is developing all these moral overtones he is slowly introducing the idea of the athlete as a financial symbol. (No, it doesn't begin with Joe Namath.) In World Series, the Kid is getting jittery because "two or three thousand dollars are at stake." "All that dough, more than he had made for his two seasons in the majors, on one game alone." 155/ And also the athlete as idol of consumption:

"Who knows: maybe he would make good after all? Might be able to buy a blue sports coat with blue striped pants and white shoes. And a big car with the top rolled back...." 156/

The Tunis novels offer a wonderful chance to escape as well. Besides the basic rags-to-riches drama and David/Goliath confrontations, Tunis offers the warmth and camaraderie of the team as a refuge. The Kid watches the veterans in the hotel:

"While he sat silently in a big chair, men kept coming downstairs, greeting old friends, calling in delight as they found a pal, laughing and talking, perfectly at ease with no worries and fears." 157/

The Kid, of course, is eventually accepted into this warm refuge. The same is true for the egotistical "Highpockets" McDade, who learns the importance of the team and is greeted at home after his game-winning hit:

"He felt their bodies jostling his, the friendly contact of hips and thighs when he came across the plate, their hot paws extended to him.... Now he was one of them, now he was part of the team." 158/

The traditional themes of the sportworld's moral nemes are passed along to more contemporary writers like Clair Bee in his Chip Hilton series, Wilfred McCormick in his Bronc Burnett series, and in the stories of Matt Christopher. 159/ As is the case with Tunis' work, the Merriwell themes are united within a framework of co-

operation and acceptance. The centrality of personal authority and warmth is especially clear in Chip Hilton's sagas.

Chip Sr., a famous athlete in his own right, has died and left Chip's mother alone to raise the boy. Coach Rockwell, vividly symbolic as the tough but fair coach, becomes Chip's father-surrogate. This becomes especially clear in Championship Ball. In the beginning we find that Chip had violated the coach's orders. He is, however, able to "unburden his feelings" and tell Rock how sorry he is. ^{160/} Chip is relieved by the coach's friendly manner and we learn how "all his uncertainty vanished." "I know how you feel Chip," the coach said, "exactly how you feel.... What say we forget about it...?" ^{161/} Chip's confidence soars from this warm encouragement, "Suddenly he felt sure of himself."

The coach is portrayed as a moral leader and sports is seen as analogous to life. The coach as a paternal substitute is melodramatically illustrated later on in the book. Coach Rockwell writes a letter to Chip's mom to assuage her fears about her son's mental condition. He tells her he is aware of it and is dealing with it. Then,

"He glanced thoughtfully around the office and then walked over the picture of 'Big Chip'

Hilton which hung on the wall. Looking up at the picture, he muttered, 'He's a good kid, Old Timer.'" 162/

All's well Mom and Dad. The coach is in charge.

The Hilton books offer a world of warm paternalism, an escape from the cold anonymous authority that increasingly characterizes a rationalized world. In a society "without the father" it offers paternal guidance and a male role model. Typically, there are no women aside from Chip's Mom featured prominently in the books. At the same time, Bee encourages the view of the Sportsworld itself as a warm male refuge from the harsher instrumentality of "reality."

IX

We come to the moment of escape. Much of it should be already crystalizing from the previous discussion of sports fiction. The workings of the dialectic, however, need to be clarified.

The courts, playgrounds, fields and arenas--set apart as they are--facilitate the psychic mobility of escape. In an incredibly vivid pictorial essay entitled "The Dawn of the Possible Dream," Sports Illustrated captures the symbolism of the court-escape. The first picture silhouettes two boys on a court, lunging for a rebound in the approaching darkness in Venice, California.

The next picture shows a black youngster watching, mesmerized, as his shot swishes clearly through the nets of a basket in a New York City playground.

Another picture captures a boy dribbling down a dirt road in Newport, Rhode Island. A caption illustrates both moments of the dialectic:

"He is Walt Frazier or Jerry West, the future pro. But more than that, just lunging for a loose ball can be a marvelous act of desire, done over fallen leaves or on a court cleared of snow or in the summer when the city sizzles. A fast break is a boy's passion, and it is his training for the years ahead." 163/

As Erikson, Bettelheim and Sutton-Smith have shown growing up and being socialized into a complex society creates severe tensions. These tensions are magnified by the child's own terrifying inner fears. The playground, arena and stadium provide a place to escape these tensions.

As Dolf Schayes reports:

"I had a lot of frustration, like everybody in everyday life. I don't think I solved them very well, but the court seemed to be an outlet for all the pent up aggression that I couldn't release in the everyday world." 164/

Julius Erving corroborates:

"It became a truly enjoyable thing for me. If certain things troubled me or there was a conflict at home, I would take my ball, go out to the park and play by myself for a few hours and it would make the whole situation pass by. I wouldn't be uptight anymore. It would really cool me out.... It was utopia." 165/

The feelings that build up and are denied any acceptable outlet can be discharged as a spectator as well. Howard Senzel shows how:

"As I grow closer and closer to the core of my childhood alienation a shiver begins to run up my neck. Everybody needs to feel and I was no different. But when the feelings got too strong, too crazy, too morally ambiguous, or just too much to take, I had an alternative." 166/

And, further on:

"The emotional content of baseball was wrapped up in my denial of feelings. Baseball was the escape from feelings. Baseball was my relief from how I felt and how my environment demanded that I act. There is no place more important in life than your hideout, and baseball was my hideout." 167/

Senzel sensitively conveys the way in which his sports involvement--with a world of emotion, drama and heroism--contrasted with his everyday life. It is also clear how his sports involvement increasingly dominated his everyday life. The metaphorical transposition works this way:

"The repeated watching of baseball games gradually reverses the metaphor and in the end makes baseball itself the only reality. And that while that reality exists, no others compete. Because all your hopes, dreams and fears are taken up by the game itself, no external necessity can impinge." 168/

The creation of a more vivid reality is an irresistible enticement for young and old alike. The escape is into the playworld itself:

"Here, for two hours or more, a man can forget the drab march of the months and be as young again as when he first stepped trembling into the batter's box or first made a frightening stab at an angry spring ball and held it." 169/

The adult fan's escape is horizontal and vertical--into the game and into his own past. As Roger Angell notes while watching a game being played: "Sixty years have gone by, yet Napoleon Lajoie is in plain view and the ball still floats over to Terry Turner." 170/

Importantly, the nature of sports as a male refuge must be further clarified. Until very recently, the world of political and social institutions was exclusively male. In order to be successful in these worlds men were trained, in good Merriwell fashion, to control their emotions, to strategically channel them within accepted boundaries, and consequently they created a world of cool instrumentality. As Kenniston has shown, "Emotion must be 'kept in its place'-- and this place is ideally somewhere away from public life...."171/

The Sportsworld of fact and fiction gives men and boys the one area where they can exhibit emotion and affection for their male peers. This is exhibited on and off the field, in the stands where men slap palms and embrace, and in the lockerrooms where towels are snapped and buttocks pinched. Connected with this is the way in which fathers and sons interact. Players and fans alike attest to the importance

of Dad in their sports careers.

The male bonds and father-son connection exists in counterpart with the harsher reality of these interactions in the larger world. Keniston illustrates how the father is widely perceived as emotionally absent in the middle class home, where the mother rules supreme. ^{172/} The physically absent father is a staple of literature dealing with the ghetto. And even in working class home, where the father is present, his presence is often threateningly unpredictable. In all cases, the Sportsworld offers a place for warm male communication that is absent elsewhere. This is why, I believe, the fatherless Chip Hilton--paternal Coach Rockwell symbolism--has had such a powerful appeal for young people.

As the world becomes more bureaucraticized and rationalized it also creates fragmentation and confusion. Young people growing up can't quite get a handle on the roles that the adult society has to offer. Erikson's concepts of "identity diffusion" and "moratorium" in adolescence get extended for years beyond that period. A major problem is the collapse of any world view or "shared vision" without which identity is difficult to formulate.

The Sportsworld is, however, "an island of directness in the world of circumspection." Step by step from

the playgworld to the sportsworld the child is concretely enacting and internalizing the shares vision of the player. The athletic beliefs, roles and institutions have a clarity that is not matched anywhere else. It is a clarity forged in the euphoria of play and drama. The ritualizations of everyday life can be seen to be linked by generational continuity--from father to son--to a clearly ordered future.

Unlike the rest of the society, where ritual bonds are absent, the sportsworld, as a "seasonal masculinity rite" gives young boys at least one clear connection to adulthood. It is the single area where an adolescent can test his identity and masculinity. The counterpoint can be seen in this way:

"The spectacle of young men testing their physical powers in ritual combat taps a deep well of emotion. Perhaps it is regret for an identity that would be won once and for all in a decisive and clear cut way." 173/

This is the point that Wiley Umphlett misses in his discussion of "neo-romantic" authors like John Updike, Irwin Shaw and Fred Exley. He sees the Rabbit Angstrom characters as immature, Shaw's Christian Darling as unable to cope, and Fred Exley as unable to adjust. 174/ The emphasis should not be placed on the personal maladjustments of these men. The authors are using the sports/reality dichotomy to symbolize the way in which

boys are socialized into "an artificial, commencement kind of life," 175/ only to find out that the world of political and social institutions is less clear cut and make more subtle demands on individuals.

Christian Darling is a prototype. His inability to cope with a career and marriage is symbolic of the growing chasm between the warmth and certainty of childhood play and sports and the cool uncertainty of adulthood. His career as a lawyer is failing and his marriage is crumbling. He returns to the scene of his past glory, a university football field.

"That was the high point, Darling thought, fifteen years ago, on an autumn afternoon, twenty years old and far from death, with the air coming easily into his lungs and a deep feeling inside him that he could do anything...outrun whatever had to be outrun." 176/

Darling takes the field again! "He shook his hips to throw off the halfbacks," gained speed and "raced lightly and exuberantly for the goal line"--his return is alive and real. After re-scoring his "touchdown" he turns to two bewildered undergraduates and says, "I once played here." 177/ A response that acts as epitaph as well as explanation. In a world turned sour, we continue to return to the places where we used to play.

The sports escape hatch is not only lateral into the game and vertical into one's own biographical past. It links the biographical with the historical past of the nation. A coherent sense of identity, besides requiring a connection with significant others, needs historical continuity as well. A major American problem, brought about by mobility and change, has been historical dislocation. This dislocation is another contributor to identity problems. As Keniston points out, "Young men and women must feel that they stand on the shoulders of their parents; or, if not their parents of other preferable exemplars of the older generation." 178/

The historical continuity of sports is a bedrock for American identities. This is best illustrated through the example of the socialization of first-generation Americans. Silvia Tennenbaum's recollections illustrate the identity foundation:

"Baseball is a reflection of the American dream. Baseball is a mirror held up to something profound in our lives--it gives us back our youth, our hopes, all our summers before the fall.

"In my own case it also represents my initiation into American life; it was my rite of passage from being a German refugee, a kid with pigtails and funny clothes who couldn't speak the language, to being an American who rooted for the Dodgers and knew the difference between the bullpen and the catbird seat...and knew the crack-voiced cry: 'Wait'll next year!'" ^{179/}

Sports memories intersect lives and institutions.

They evoke the past while they are symbolically re-enacted in the present. They are, at the same time, as collective as they are intimate. They are the intellectual's passport to acceptance and the hard hat's vehicle for instant recognition of expertise. They are the heart of the American reality.

X

The sportsworld, emerging as it does out of play, dreams, games and fantasy, has a deep-seated hold on Americans. We have seen how play, games and sports emerge ontogenetically in the progressive ritualizations of everyday life; a process that provides an arena for identity formation within the shared vision of the larger society. As Erikson has taught us, play forms evolve and are enveloped in "a total vision of life in which a sufficient number of individuals find their private worlds

confirmed." ^{180/} Howard Senzel captures the way in which sports can create a deep emotional connection between private feelings and public order:

"And as fans sink deeper and deeper into the profundity of the game, they take with them the knowledge that they are floating through an internal and private depth that is, nevertheless, well-travelled...a large populous universe consisting of private internal dreams, hopes and aspirations." ^{181/}

This chapter has concentrated on the phenomenological connections between play and sports and the impact that these play forms have on everyday life. The way in which the playworld and the sportsworld inculcate political and social values while at the same time providing an escape from the nagging frustrations of everyday life should be clear. It is also evident that some of the most important issues stressed in the political socialization literature are dramatically highlighted through the impact of play forms.

The practitioners of political socialization research seem to be more sensitive than some of their colleagues to the "prepolitical" ingredients of political legitimacy and stability. This results from the fact that the child remains ignorant about the world of politics for quite some time. Fred Greenstein has shown how the nine year old is still immersed in the world of play. And yet, the American

political culture is among the most stable in the world. The investigator of political socialization is forced to examine child-training variables, character traits, "powerful psychological mechanisms" and the like. In all of this sensitive research, however, small attention has been paid to play, games and the ritualizations of everyday life.

The foundation for understanding the political importance of sports symbolism has been set. The emerging sportsworld ritualizes childish make-believe into adult belief. At a time when identity is seen as problematic, community as having collapsed, and ardor as having been extinguished, sports creates a social life-world of meaning that reaches in and taps the depths of emotional response. At a time when national bonds are enervated and civic rituals relatively extinct, sports symbolism is the richest form of internal and social communication that this country has. Writing in New York, even I tend to lose sight of the intensity of feeling involved. Picking up a copy of the ACC Basketball Handbook, however, restores one's perspective. The folks are absolutely crazy; painted faces, weird costumes, season tickets left in people's wills, and even death threats on opposing players and coaches. 182/

If there truly is an "end of ideology," then obviously some people didn't get the message. The Sportsworld provides a source of ideology. No, it is not part of the "liberal-conservative" axis. Sports involvement is a mass belief system, a shared vision that is more profoundly conservative than any conservative appropriation of its appeals could possibly be. In effect, as Erikson's work shows, a shared vision, or "way of life," integrates a group's imagery. It is Durkheim's "conscious collective," Peter Berger's symbolic canopy, and Robert Bellah's civil religion (borrowed from Rousseau). Erikson's description is important:

"In speaking of a 'way of life,' however, we are interested to learn the ways in which a world view professedly and tacitly reaches into the minds and motivations of the participants. It may be explicit and effusive on ceremonial occasions and yet almost hidden in the ritualizations of everyday life...." ^{185/}

Basketball is a "way of life" in Kentucky, Indiana, and in the ghettos of the large central cities. Football is a "way of life" in Texas, Ohio, Nebraska and Pennsylvania. And there is still nothing as gripping on the national imagination as the fever of a tight pennant race and drama of a World Series. For millions and millions of people, sports is the diffuse sense of attachment to America. What we learn here is the way in which the "prepolitical" sources of stability emerge into the "apolitical" sources of stability.

With the decline of political legitimacy in the traditional sense, Sportsworld symbolism, reaching as it does into the minds of millions, enveloping as it does private hopes with public drama, forms the most important institutional and emotional infrastructure in American life.

The existence of the Sportsworld as a social life world is also politically important as an escape. As our society becomes more rationalized and bureaucraticized the danger grows, as Weber pointed out years ago, of a collapse in meaning in an "iron cage" of coldly instrumental bureaucracies. In counterpoint, sports is the "elixir" that nourishes while the rest of the world drains. ^{183/} Its links to the expressive warmth of childhood play and mastery, when combined with its inherent drama and collective euphoria, provide people with a "utopia of escape"--a warm refuge within the iron cage. The escape, however, is illusory or at best symbolic: the cage remains. The Sportsworld's refuge, existing as it does simultaneously within the way of political reconstruction. As Howard Senzel has indicated, the repeated watching of games and involve-

ment with sports transposes the metaphor into a reality. The existence of this metaphor seeps into one's soul and resists change. The example of Teddy Gold drives this point home. Teddy blew himself up in a bomb factory in Greenwich Village. No one was more desperate for change than Teddy Gold:

"And at the same time, Ted Gold was a fanatic follower of the New York and, later, San Francisco Giants. He read the box scores every morning. And he was quoted as saying that he would have to wait until Willie Mays retired before he could become a true communist." 184/

As Senzel observes, radicalization is an intellectual process; alienation is emotional.

The symbolism of the Sportsworld is both rich and warm. Sports is not "fascist," "totalitarian," or "dehumanizing." People need to be given more credit. If it is part of the system of "commodity relations," its "deliberate illusion" has survived a lot better than the frying of chicken or the broiling of hamburgers. It is, however, its rich emotional appeal that makes it such a bulwark of political stability.

I keep getting drawn back to my own involvement: punchball on the street, and the Yankees; softball at camp, and the Yankees; basketball at the playgrounds and gyms, college basketball at the old Madison Square Garden, and the New York Knickerbockers. Thousands of absorbed,

alive hours; talking, reacting, watching and playing. Howard Senzel, Teddy Gold, Michael Novak, Fred Exley, Sidney Asofsky, George Plimpton, and all the rest. In Arnold Beisser's psychiatric studies, a young basketball player lived a vivid life in the context of his playing and in his absorption in the drama of the larger Sportsworld. At the same time, "he didn't know his own feelings." The symptoms are cultural.

To create the kind of political community where warmth and rationality can flourish is the project of political reconstruction that lies before us. Play forms are able to generate "feelings of freedom" precisely because they maintain a wonderful balance between leeway and limit. When the limits of the larger political and social reality harden, "play disruption" occurs and pretence and disillusionment sets in. To create a reality which would allow for the ritualization of a "maturing playfulness" would be a real cause to slap palms. Let's "Play ball!"

Footnotes

- 1 John Mosdale, The Greatest of All: The 1927 Yankees (N.Y.: Warner, 1975), p.20.
- 2 Erik Erikson, Toys and Reasons (N.Y.: Norton, 1977). This book is perhaps Erikson's finest. It is a concise, clear statement of the connections between childhood, identity and the adult world.
- 3 Robert Smith, Baseball (N.Y.: Simon & Schuster, 1947), p.4 (emphasis added).
- 4 Roberta Sigel (ed.), Learning about Politics: A Reader in Political Socialization (N.Y.: Random House, 1970). As Sigel says, "civics classes and other forms of deliberate indoctrination (national ceremonies and holidays, political mythology and propaganda and such) all no doubt play a part in the socialization process, but it is doubtful that any contribute as much--let alone more than--incidental learning does towards a person's political socialization." p.xiii.
- 5 Fred Greenstein, Children and Politics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), p.14.
- 6 Cornford (ed.), Plato's Republic (N.Y.: Oxford Press, 1972), pp. 69-85. Plato underscores the need to point the "soul" in the right moral and political direction at a time when the child is most susceptible. The aesthetic form of play, games, myths and fables is particularly conducive to the moulding of youth.
- 7 Bruno Bettelheim, The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales (N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1977), p.137.
- 8 Children and Politics, p.2.
- 9 Cited in David Reisman's The Lonely Crowd (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p.5. For some other discussions of "social character" see David Potter, People & Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954); Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills, Character and Social Structure: The Psychology of Social Institutions (N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1953).
- 10 Children and Politics, p.53.

- 11 Seymour Martin Lipset, "Working Class Authoritarianism" in Political Man (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1960); and Edgar Litt, "Civic Education, Community Norms and Political Indoctrination" in Learning About Politics. We must be sensitive to the different impact these variables will have on different classes.
- 12 Harry Eckstein, Division and Cohesion in Democracy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966). For a good analysis of Eckstein's views see Carole Paleman, Participation and Democratic Theory (N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1970). Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba deal with related themes in their discussions of "subject competence" in The Civic Culture (Boston: Little Brown, 1965).
- 13 Bob Cousy, The Killer Instinct (N.Y.: Random House, 1975).
- 14 Erik Erikson, in Childhood and Society (N.Y.: Norton, 1963) sees competition and cooperation as one of the major polarities of American Identity. p.286.
- 15 As Robert Hess and Judith Torney indicate in The Development of Political Attitudes in Children (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1968), "A role may mediate between one situation or system in which learning takes place and another in which the learning is directly or indirectly applied. Particularly because the child does not have direct experience in the political arena his experiences in non-political roles is an important influence...." p.108. The same procedure operates for the economic sphere as well.
- 16 Children and Politics, p.121. This is not meant to imply that girls are not interested in sports. At a certain age, however, they have, in the past, been subjected to much social pressure to give up their involvement.
- 17 Ibid, p.125.
- 18 The Development of Political Attitudes in Children, p.34. The theme is W. L. Warner's.
- 19 Ibid, p.32.

- 20 Sebastian DeGrazia, The Political Community: A Study & Anomie (Chicago: Chicago University & Chicago Press, 1948); see also Karl Deutch's The Nerves of Government: Models of Political Communications and Control (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1966).
- 21 Kenneth Keniston, The Uncommitted: Alienated Youth in American Society (N.Y.: Dell, 1960), p.196.
- 22 The Civic Culture.
- 23 Dean Jaros, Socialization to Politics (N.Y.: Praeger, 1973), p.19.
- 24 Ibid, p.34.
- 25 This point is made by Jurgen Habermas, Toward a Rational Society (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971); and Klaus Mueller, The Politics of Communication (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1970). It is stated even more persuasively by Robert Lane, Political Ideology (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1962).
- 26 Political Ideology, p.91.
- 27 Toys and Reasons, p.45.
- 28 H. L. Nieburg, Culture Storm: Politics and the Ritual Order (N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1973), Chapter 5. As Kenniston indicates, "When a society works relatively well its members successfully ward off shared anxieties through shared defenses--common beliefs, rituals or character traits, and their collective anxieties are seldom experienced as such." The Uncommitted, p.193.
- 29 Toys and Reasons, pp. 17-27.
- 30 Children and Politics, p.45.
- 31 Ibid, p.53. See The Civic Culture for a view of functional apathy; Robert Dahl, Who Governs? (New Haven: Yale University, 1961) develops the concept of homo civicus which examines the impact of disinterest on political stability. The critics of this view do not dispute the reality of apathy, nor its contribution to political stability; their attack is on the way in which the benefits of stability are class-related.

- 32 C. Wright Mills, "The Big City: Private Troubles and Public Issues," in Irving Louis Horowitz (ed) Power, Politics and People: The Collected Essays of C. Wright Mills (N.Y.: Ballantine, 1962) pp. 395-402.
- 33 Toward a Rational Society: The Politics of Communications.
- 34 Johan Huizinga, Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955) p.2; Allen Guttman in From Ritual to Record: The Rise of Modern Sports (N.Y.: Columbia, 1978) sees play as "autotelic;" Greg Stone, "The Play of Little Children" in R. E. Herron and Brian Sutton-Smith (eds.) Child's Play (N.Y.: John Wiley, 1971) underscores the dramatic and symbolic nature of play; Huizinga beautifully captures this one aspect of the dialectic.
- 35 Ibid, p.10.
- 36 Eugen Frank, "The Oasis of Happiness: Toward an Ontology of Play" in Jacques Ehrmann (ed) Game, Play, Literature (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968) p.21.
- 37 Homo Ludens, p.16.
- 38 Ibid, p.18.
- 39 Stanley Aroowitz, False Promises: The Shaping of American Working Class Consciousness (N.Y.: McGraw-Hill, 1973) pp. 60-61. The lack of dialectical subtlety is surprising for a Marxist.
- 40 Jacques Ehrmann, "Homo Ludens Revisited" in Game, Play, Literature, p.42.
- 41 Ibid, p.43.
- 42 "The Play of Little Children," p.12.
- 43 As Stone points out, "It is the task of society to make lives of its members meaningful. This is accomplished by bringing little children into meaningful communication with adults and with one another.... Play has a major part in the accomplishment of those tasks." Ibid, p.9.
- 44 Toys and Reasons, p.101.
- 45 Frank and Theresa Caplan, The Power of Play (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1973) p.xiii.
- 46 Toys and Reasons, p.44.

- 47 Ibid, p.102; see also Jean Piaget, Play Dreams and Imitation on Childhood (N.Y.: Norton, 1962) p.49.
- 48 Ibid, p.98; "As Piaget remarks, it might even be said that every symbolic game, even if it is an individual game, sooner or later becomes a performance given by the child to an imaginary companion, and every collective symbolic game, even the most highly organized, retains something of the ineffable which characterizes the individual symbol." Toys and Reasons, p.109.
- 49 The Uses of Enchantment, p.5; also Childhood and Society, p.229. This is underscored by our awareness that a child who is too severely distressed cannot play at all; a further indication of dialectic interplay.
- 50 Erik Erikson, Identity, Youth and Crisis (N.Y.: Norton, 1968) p.49.
- 51 This builds, of course, on the work of George Herbert Mead.
- 52 Ideally, the process should proceed this way: "This self-esteem grows to a conviction that one is learning effective steps towards a tangible future and is developing into a defined self within a social reality." Childhood and Society, p.235
- 53 "The child finds as he grows older more and more opportunities for satisfying these needs in his own life, if it is normal, and a recourse to symbolic make-believe assimilation becomes less necessary.... In many cases where hitherto play was indispensable, life itself offers him the means of compensating...." Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood, p.145.
- 54 As Sutton-Smith points out: "From Piaget's view point as undirected thinking, fantasy, play, etc... are specifically child-like and mainly compensating...". "Piaget on Play: A Critique" in Child's Play, p.332.
- 55 Toys and Reasons, p.17.
- 56 "Piaget on Play" p.332.
- 57 Homo Ludens, p.18.
- 58 Elliot Avedon and Brian Sutton-Smith (eds) The Study of Games (N.Y.; John Wiley, 19-1), p.436.
- 59 John Roberts and Brian Sutton-Smith, "Child Training and Game Involvement" in The Study of Games, p.480.
- 60 Ibid: "The players are presumably those who remain obedient to the social system but who relieve their ambivalence about it in the miniature social world of the game."

- 61 "In general, it is suggested that each game is a microcosmic social structure in which the polarities of winning and losing are variously represented. The individual in conflict is attracted to a model because he can find in it a codification of the emotional and cognitive aspects of his conflict, which is unavailable to him, at his level of maturity, in full-scale cultural participation." Ibid, p.485.
- 62 Toys and Reasons, p.72.
- 63 Ibid, p.71; Erikson is quoting Sutton-Smith here.
- 64 Ibid, p.103.
- 65 Ibid, p.104.
- 66 Paul Hoch, Rip Off The Big Game (Garden City: Doubleday, 1976), p.6.
- 67 "The Play of Little Children," p.12; George Herbert Mead discusses the role of the team in socialization, Mind, Self and Society, p.134; see also, Jean Piaget and Anne-Marie Weil, "The Development in Children of the Idea of the Homeland and of Relations with other Countries," in Learning about Politics.
- 68 Susan Millar, The Psychology of Play (London: Penguin, 1968) p.155.
- 69 The Uses of Enchantment, p.7.
- 70 Ibid, p.57.
- 71 Ibid, p.66.
- 72 Ibid, p.24.
- 73 Childhood and Society, p.258; Identity, Youth and Crisis, pp. 120-121.
- 74 The Lonely Crowd, p.91.
- 75 Homo Ludens, p.205.
- 76 See Footnote 34, above.
- 77 False Promises, p.66.
- 78 Howard Senzel, Baseball and the Cold War (N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace & Javonovich, 1977) p.140.
- 79 Ibid, p.145; In a statement that can be seen to be a refutation of Aronowitz, Senzel comments: "The illusion of baseball cannot be dispelled. And so, despite the cynicism we remain unable to refuse the playful notion of pure grandeur that is baseball. And we are glad for it, cynicism is no fun...and baseball is,..." p.141.

- 80 Arnold Beisser, The Madness in Sports (N.Y.: Appleton-Century, 1964), p.12.
- 81 Leverett Smith, The American Dream and the National Game (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1975)) captures this symbolism in his discussion of the fan, media reaction to the "Black Sox" scandal of 1919, Chapter IV; Wiley Umphlett, in The Sporting Myth and The American Experience (Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 1975), illustrates the way in which the athlete has been portrayed as an "innocent" in American sports fiction.
- 82 Bill Bradley, Life on the Run (N.Y.: Quadrangle, 1976), p.221.
- 83 Simon Lesser, Fiction and the Unconscious (N.Y.: Random House, 1962).
- 84 Cited in From Ritual to Record, p.102.
- 85 Kenneth Keniston, "Alienation and the Decline of Utopia," in Hans Ruitenbeck (ed), Varieties of Modern Social Theory (N.Y.: Dutton, 1963), p.88.
- 86 Ibid, p.87.
- 87 Baseball, p.7.
- 88 Ann Byrne Hoffman (ed), Echoes from the Schoolyard (N.Y.: Hawthorn, 1977) p.9.
- 89 Ibid, p.14.
- 90 Baseball and the Cold War, p.14; emphasis added.
- 91 Ibid, p.165.
- 92 Echoes from the Schoolyard, p.193.
- 93 Ibid, p.103.
- 94 Rick Telander, Heaven is a Playground (N.Y.: St. Martins Press, 1977) p.261.
- 95 Baseball and the Cold War, p.109.
- 96 Ibid.
- 97 The Madness in Sports, p.22.
- 98 Martin Ralbovsky, Destiny's Darling (N.Y.: Hawthorn Books, 1974), p.86; My own involvement with the New York Knickerbockers stems from my father's taking me to the old Madison Square Garden when I was nine year old and sitting right behind the Knick bench.

- 99 Baseball, p.256.
- 100 Echoes from the Schoolyard, p.177.
- 101 Pete Axthelm, The City Game (N.Y.: Pocket Book, 1971), p.3.
- 102 Ibid, p.5.
- 103 Baseball, p.3.
- 104 Destiny's Darlings, p.175.
- 105 Ibid, p.154.
- 106 Baseball and the Cold War, p.18.
- 107 See my "The Political Implications of Team Sports Symbolism," Politics and Society (January 1979).
- 108 James Coleman, "Athletics in the High School," in George Sage (ed.) Sports and American Society (Reading, Pa.: Addison-Wesley, 1970), p.84.
- 109 Martin Ralbovsky, Lords of the Locker Room (N.Y.: Peter Wyden, 1974), p.124. As Ralbovsky remarks, "Indeed, in the hot beds of high school sports, the school teams actually dictate the emotional climate in the community...." p.91.
- 110 Roger Kahn, The Boys of Summer (N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1972), p.35.
- 111 Ibid, p.34.
- 112 The Madness in Sports, p.137. As I will continually emphasize, this is not meant to imply that sports is therapeutic. Benny's symptoms are "managed" but not rooted out. The problem with the critics is that they often will deny that sports even has any cathartic value. It sure does.
- 113 Destiny's Darlings, p.107.
- 114 Ibid, p.191.
- 115 Lords of the Locker Room, p.70, emphasis added.
- 116 Davd Maggysey, Out of Their League (Berkeley, Calif.: Ramparts Press, 1970), p.11.

- 117 Ibid.
- 118 Daniel Offer, The Psychological World of the Teenager, p.42.
- 119 Heaven is a Playground, p.277.
- 120 David Wolf, Foul (N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1972), pp. 14-26. "There are Gene Smiths in every ghetto... anonymous men who spend their free time in the schoolyards or community centers working with kids. To them it is a second job but a first love...." p.14.
- 121 Bill Russell, Go Up for Glory (N.Y.: Coward-McCann, 1966), p.21.
- 122 Harry Edwards, The Sociology of Sport (Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey Press, 1974), discusses the relationships between the "sports creed" and the "business creed." A comment by former President Ford illustrates the connection: "It has been said that we are losing our competitive spirit in this country, the thing that made us great, the guts of the free enterprise system. I don't agree with that, the competitive urge is deeply coated in the American character." Cited in Thomas Tutko and William Burns' Winning is Everything and other American Myths (N.Y.: McMillan, 1976), p.5.
- 123 See Eldon Snyder's "Athletic Dressing Room Slogans as Folklore: A Means of Socialization," Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association (Aug. 30, 1971). The last slogan was picked up when I visited Springfield College as a member of the Clark University basketball team--it had its proper effect.
- 124 Mickey Mantle, The Quality of Courage: True Stories of Heroism and Bravery (N.Y.: Bantam, 1964), p.7.
- 125 Life on the Run, p.75.
- 126 Destiny's Darlings, p.156.
- 127 Ibid, p.210.
- 128 Ibid, p.209.
- 129 Baseball and the Cold War, p.181.

- 130 Mac Davis, The Greatest in Baseball (N.Y.: Scholastic Book Service, 1977), p.77.
- 131 Roger Kahn, A Season in the Sun (N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1977). Kahn has mellowed in his attitude towards his mother's antipathy towards baseball. When he was growing up he used the sport to escape his mother's world, to feel American, and to identify himself more closely with his father. See The Boys of Summer (N.Y.: NAL, 1971).
- 132 Cited by Marc Fasteau, The Male Machine (N.Y.: Dell, 1975), p.111.
- 133 Foul, p.4.
- 134 Ibid, p.21.
- 135 Basketball Special (Sports Quarterly, 1972-1973), p.78.
- 136 Ray Kennedy and Nancy Williamson, "For the Athlete How Much is Too Much?" Sports Illustrated (July 24, 1978).
- 137 The Greatest in Baseball, p.31.
- 138 The Uses of Enchantment, p.26.
- 139 Tristram Potter Coffin, The Illustrated Book of Baseball Folklore (N.Y.: Herder and Herder, 1976), p.113, emphasis added.
- 140 Ibid.
- 141 As the old sports editor of the Daily Mirror, Dan Parker, said, "Every kid that would look at a TV show now read Merriwell.... A lot of us through he was real. He certainly couldn't have helped to give people the idea that it was good to have clean sports...." Cited in Robert Boyle, Sport: Mirror of American Life (Boston: Little Brown, 1963).
- 142 Ibid, p.242.
- 143 Sporting Myth, p.31.
- 144 Burt L. Standish (pseud.), Frank Merriwell's Schooldays (N.Y.: Smith Street Pub., 1971), p.245. As Saul Bellow has commented about the athletic code: "'Do you have an inner life? It is nobody's business but your own. Do you have emotions? Strangle them. To a degree everyone obeys this Code.'" Cited in Sporting Myth, p.26.

- 145 Illustrated History, p.126.
- 146 Burt L. Standish (pseud.), Frank Merriwell's Chums (N.Y.: Smith Street Pub., 1971), p.57.
- 147 Baseball and the Cold War, p.145.
- 148 Ibid, p.153.
- 149 John Tunis, The Kid From Thompkinsville (N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1940), p.56.
- 150 Ibid, p.72.
- 151 John Tunis, The Keystone Kids (N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1943), p.158.
- 152 John Tunis, High Pockets (N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1944), p.170.
- 153 The Keystone Kids, p.198.
- 154 The Kid, p.183.
- 155 John Tunis, World Series (N.Y.: Bantam, 1969), p.173.
- 156 The Kid, p.19.
- 157 Ibid, p.16.
- 158 High Pockets, p.159. Notice the explicit sexual symbolism. This kind of imagery could not be allowed in any other fiction for young people.
- 159 Clair Bee, Championship Ball (N.Y.: Grosset & Dunlap, 1948); Clair Bee, Touchdown Pass (N.Y.: Grosset & Dunlap, 1947); Wilifred McCormick, The Right End Option (N.Y.: Grosset & Dunlap, 1965); Wilifred McCormick, The Three-Two Pitch (N.Y.: Grosset & Dunlap, 1966); Matt Christopher, Lucky Seven Sports Series (Boston: Little Brown, 1970); Matt Christopher, That Basket Counts (Boston: Little Brown, 1971).
- 160 Championship Ball, p.20.
- 161 Ibid, p.22.
- 162 Ibid.
- 163 Walter Jooss, Jr., "The Dawn of the Possible Dream," Sports Illustrated (Feb. 21, 1972), p.40.

- 164 Echoes from the Schoolyard, p.27.
- 165 Ibid, p.193.
- 166 Baseball and the Cold War, p.58.
- 167 Ibid, p.65.
- 168 Ibid, p.235.
- 169 Baseball, p.429.
- 170 Roger Angell, The Summer Game (N.Y.: Popular Library, 1962), p.310.
- 171 The Uncommitted, p.221. Coolness does not always dominate. The tendency to suppress emotions often erupts into a politics of passion.
- 172 Ibid. See also Alexander Mitscherlich's Society Without the Father (N.Y.: Schocken Books, 1970), and Herbert Marcuse's Eros and Civilization (N.Y.: Random House, 1962). In The Lonely Crowd, David Reisman touches on similar themes.
- 173 William Kilpatrick, Identity and Intimacy (N.Y.: Dell, 1975), p.159.
- 174 Sporting Myth, pp. 123-129; John Updike, Rabbit Run (N.Y.: Knopf, 1960); Fred Exley, A Fan's Notes (N.Y.: Random House, 1968); and Irwin Shaw, "The Eight-Yard Run," in Short Stories: Five Decades (N.Y.: Delacourt, 1978).
- 175 Ibid, p.121.
- 176 "The Eight-Yard Run," p.11.
- 177 Ibid, p.12.
- 178 The Uncommitted, p.178.
- 179 Silvia Tennenbaum, "Trying to Love the Yankees," Newsday (Oct. 5, 1978), p.91. For further unstanding of the historical dimension, see Joe Gergen "And America Pauses to Honor its Past," Newsday (July 21, 1978), p.78; and Tony Kornheiser, "To Old Fans, Spring Recalls Many Seasons," The New York Times (March 24, 1978).
- 180 Toys and Reasons, p.68.

- 181 Baseball and the Cold War, p.289.
- 182 Ivan Mothershead (ed.), ACC Basketball Handbook, 1978-1979 (Charlotte, No.Ca.: UMI Publication). This is an example of one of the many sectional publications that are put out on basketball and football around the country. Hundreds of thousands of dedicated fans learn the "inside dope" about their favorite teams and players.
- 183 Neil Offer, God Save the Players (Chicago: Playboy Press, 1974), p.xi.
- 184 Baseball and the Cold War, p.273.
- 185 The Madness in Sports, pp. 23-24.

POST-GAME WRAP-UP: THE POLITICAL IMPLICATION
OF AMERICAN SPORTS SYMBOLISM

"It might be reasonably maintained that the true object of all human life is play. Earth is a task garden; heaven is a playground."

Lord Chesterton

"There's a love of the game in this city that is very difficult to put into words. You start off when you're very young and you never get it out of your system. You might be married to a woman, but basketball is still your first love."

Willie Hall

"Unless those individuals who are physically and legally members of a political system...are also psychologically members of that system (that is feel themselves to be members) orderly patterns of change are unlikely. It is this sense of identity with the nation that legitimizes the activities of national elites...."

Sidney Verba

A post-game wrap-up is customary in the Sportsworld. It is a place for the weaving together of the subplots within the larger drama. It is ritualistically soothing as well as emotionally necessary because the excitement of the sports drama often leaves people drained and bewildered. The events need to be put into a perspective, and the wrap-up accomplishes this through a dissection of the past and an anticipation of the future. My own conclusion here is designed to fulfill a similar purpose since the preceding inquiry has traversed a number of untravelled roads and has attempted to develop a political theory, synthesizing a variety of unconventional approaches, for a phenomenon that has resisted political analysis.

The central focus of this study has been the way in which the Sportsworld exists as a dramatic life world that penetrates the everyday lives of millions of people. I have, relying on theories of symbolism, myth, ritual, identity and drama, entered into the world itself to capture immanently the way in which a symbolic universe can generate an emotional impact and create meaning for millions of people. I have probed the way in which the symbolism of sports can plumb the depths of personal devotion while remaining, at the same time, at the level of public celebration.

My analysis of the intersection of the personal and the political elements in the drama emerges, as I began to

outline in the introduction, out of my own personal involvement with sports.

The texture of the Sportsworld is woven deeply into the fabric of my life. It is difficult to describe my immersion without a sense of embarrassment creeping in. I feel vulnerable, exposed. Something deeply personal is opened up for scrutiny. Did so much of my life get taken up with this world of sports? Yes, and it opens up old wounds. The needs that couldn't be met elsewhere that found a level of fulfillment in sports. Success, joy, fellowship, an identity as player and expert. But, above all, a sense that things were not just random. That goals could be achieved if one devoted oneself to the often painful effort. When things were confusing I had a refuge of clarity.

So my analysis of the sports drama emerges from within the drama itself. And as I did the research and discovered Fred Exley, Sidney Arofsky, George Plimpton, Roger Kahn, "Loudy" Loudensberger and Charlie Winkler. (And also James Farrell, Philip Roth, Irwin Shaw, Chaim Potok and Morris Raphael Cohen.) I began to lose my sense of embarrassment and understand (in C. Wright Mills' terms) that my personal troubles were in reality public issues. That the power of the sports drama penetrated deeply among a host of man-children and female fellow travelers, and answered needs

and alleviated frustrations that were miraculously shared.

My internal understanding was an aid for the effort to get outside the sports drama and develop a theoretical grasp of its power. It was obvious that an analysis of the newspapers, magazines and biographies was essential. These media are the holy texts of the Sportsworld. They chronicle the larger plots of the sports drama, underscore its villains and heroes, and bring the world into the hearts and minds of the sports fans. Studying these media is like studying the official documents of any mass movement--the position papers, personal memoirs of leaders, and recollections of the followers are the essential ingredients for comprehending the way a movement or symbolic world moves in and takes hold of people's consciousness. Analyzing these texts enabled me to see myself from the outside. What I had previously read uncritically as a fan became a rich source for analysis and I immediately understood what emotional buttons that fan-reporters were pushing. In addition, the separate components of the Sportsworld began to come together.

II

An understanding of the sports drama is the connection for understanding the political impact of sports

because it is through an engagement with the drama that people begin to unconsciously internalize politically important values. It is also through this drama that people are able to escape and eventually accept the harsh realities of political and economic life. The political impact of sports symbolism, then, devolves from this dialectic of socialization and escape. The dialectic itself functions through the mediation of the drama.

An adequate understanding of the appeals of the Sportsworld rests on an understanding of the stage on which it unfolds and the backdrop against which its dramatic appeals take hold. As I have pointed out throughout this study, the rise of sports is concomitant with the growth of capitalism and the acceleration of the process of rationalization. The magnetic force of the drama and rituals of sports exist in counterpoint to the "iron cage" of capitalism, the "dead public space" of bureaucratic institutions, as well as to the perceived banal confusion of political life. The symbolism of the Sportsworld fills an emotional vacuum that is created by a world of instruments and techniques. This point/counterpoint is captured in Fred Exley's autobiographical account:

"Why did football bring me so to life? I can't say precisely. Part of it was my feeling that football was an island of directness in a world of circumspection. In football a man was asked to do a difficult and brutal job, and he either did it or got out. There was nothing rhetorical

or vague about it; I chose to believe that it was not unlike the jobs which all men, in some summer past, had been called upon to do... something unclouded by legerdemain and subterfuge. It had that kind of power over me, drawing me back with the force of something known, scarcely remembered, elusive as integrity--perhaps it was no more than the force of a forgotten childhood. Whatever it was, I gave myself up to the Giants utterly. The recompense I gained was the feeling of being alive." 1/

The Sportsworld is able to bring people to life because of its existence as a symbolic life world. Its dramatic underpinnings have a richly human content that enables it to become the "primary lived world" for so many people. As we have seen, it has a coherent world view: a set of ritualistically enacted moral precepts is internalized and tenaciously held onto by the adherents of the Sportsworld's symbols. In this way players, fans, coaches, managers, team presidents and reporters are all linked to a set of common beliefs that Harry Edwards calls the "sports creed." 2/

A world view or ideology is able to take a firm hold on people through ritual enactment. The game is the ritual drama that brings the values, characters and interweaving plots to life. The game draws people in and transfixes them. To be only a spectator, as Michael Novak points out, is blasphemous. 3/ Here I re-quote Exley to dramatize the point:

"The Giants were my delight, my folly, my anodyne, my intellectual stimulation. With Huff I 'stunted' up and down the room among the bar stools, preparing to 'shoot the gap,' with Shafner I faked two

defenders 'out of their cleats,' took high swimming passes over my right shoulder and trotted dipsy-doodle like into the end zone; with Robustelli I swept into the backfields and with cruel disdain flung flat-footed, helpless quarterbacks to the turf." 4/

The game is the dramatic hub that gives coherence to the institutional infrastructure of the Sportsworld. Winning or losing, the game becomes a crisis that generates an intense sense of belonging to the team and, analogously, to the community that the team represents. Through a process of identification ("...with Robustelli I swept into backfields...") the fan is symbolically incorporated within the boundaries of the team. In addition, the team itself comes to represent a symbolic community that synthesizes certain aspects of work along with the warm camaraderie of a fraternity.

The team as a warm work community attracts us with stories about hard-working aggressive owners, authoriarian or warmly concerned coaches and shrewed wheeler-dealer general managers. The world of business and commerce is overlaid with an infrastructure of personalities and is rendered more attractive as the fan is seduced by a gossipy concern for the financial structure and quality of ownership of his team.

The team's enactment of a dramatic struggle becomes an integral feature of community life in thousands of small towns and middle-sized cities in America. The team, a

symbolic community itself, embodies the life of the community itself. Here John Rooney's comments about high school football in Texas are paradigmatic:

"Stores are closed, the downtown area is nearly deserted on a clear warm Friday night. Half the town is cheering the McKinley gridgers to another victory.... Community prestige, a possible trip to the state playoffs, and scholarship offers for the best individual performers are all on the line. On Saturday morning the town will dissect the game. Players will be praised or chastised and the turning point established." 57

If the game is the hub of the sports drama, then the team is the institutional center of sports' life-world.

A dramatic crisis demands heroism and almost unavoidably creates the conditions for villainy and ridicule as well. The heroes, villains and fools of the sports drama are the special vehicles for fan identification. The importance of the individual athletes lie in their personification of numerous subplots within the larger dramatic enactment. The struggling rookie, the 12-year veteran trying to get in one last year, the newly vegetarian center with left-wing ideas, the brilliant running back with a chip on his shoulder, all enact varying modes of identification. The individual athlete as the cynosure of the drama facilitates the vicarious voyage of identity.

The crisis atmosphere is alluring. There is nothing as gripping as watching our hero, or pet villain, bursting with egomaniacal self-confidence, take charge in the crucial

moments of a game. These "confidence men" as New York Post columnist Pete Vecsey calls them, gives us the hope that individual will and power can triumph against the forces of villainy and fate. The failures, the proverbial (scape) "goats" act as sacrificial victims. They exonerate us from our sense of guilt, act as the projected victims for our own shortcomings and define, in exquisite counterpoint, the boundaries of dramatic heroism.

As we have seen, the dramatic world of sports generates its own special language. The passport to the pleasures of sports drama is the verbal cues and jargon that set the world off from the mundane routines of everyday life. "Sportspeak" is a special badge language that creates instant understanding and rapport between conversants. It is the vehicle that the reporters use to mediate the world to their knowledgeable readers. It is the mode of identification whose usage immediately and unequivocally bespeaks a state of belonging. Nowhere is this dramatic narrative so clearly seen as during a game broadcast by a set of announcers chosen by the home team. As Lewis Cole observes:

"Those who work regularly with teams develop relationships with the players and the squad; in their broadcasts they reveal these feelings in their voices and comments, becoming representatives of the fans absent from the games and letting these viewers experience the athletic contest through their spoken narrative, including moments of boredom, disappointment, and frustration." 6/

Sports language creates an identification with the dramatic world. Concomitantly, it is the major vehicle for integrating the Sportsworld within the everyday lives of people. Its warmth and concreteness creates a network for social communication, 7/ and its usage by individuals facilitates social acceptance. Furthermore, sports talk in everyday life has the ability to meld the discussants together while at the same time conjuring up the symbolic world of sports. Serious gossip is essential to involvement, linking fans together with the activities of the larger world. 8/

The language of sports helps to generate the feeling that sports is a world apart (while at the same time integrating it into everyday life). The language of sports is but one aspect of its distinct dramatic form. A major emphasis of my study of sports as drama has focused on this dramatic form. The fact that sports has its own "virtual history," its own space, time and geographical parameters contributes to the dramatic illusion that it is a world apart. We suspend our disbelief as we are transported into a world of great clarity.

An understanding of the intense grip that sports has on its millions of devoted followers is dramatized by the study of the way in which children are socialized into its assumptions. My chapter on play, games and fantasy is central to under-

standing the Sportsworld because I indicate there how involvement emerges in the euphoria of play and games and is solidified in the ontogenetic ritualizations of everyday life. My own personal account at the beginning of this wrap-up is a clue to the manner in which sports can envelop one's own life before any conscious decisions are capable of being made. Plato understood this years ago when he posited the need to build a world view out of the building blocks of child's play and fantasy. Plato's insights gain modern confirmation in the work of Erik Erikson who links the world of political belief with ritualizations of play and games. 9/

An understanding of the emergence of sports from the microspheres of play and game is essential. The drama of sports develops in the autonomy of the playground just as all drama is a derivative of play. The unique appeal of the sports drama--setting it apart from all other mass culture facsimiles--lies in its ability to recapitulate the euphoria of child's play in the progressive ritualizations of people's lives. We are transported into the dramatic setting but, significantly, we are also swept back into the sweetness of our childhood past. The gradual ritual growth of the Sportsworld from child's play to organized sports slowly solidifies the shared vision of the world. Its historical continuity and biographical unity creates a symbolic canopy of dramatic impressiveness.

III

Throughout this work I have emphasized the way in which the symbolic drama of sports resonates with the larger political and social dramas of American institutional life. The point that needs re-emphasis is that any symbolic drama, if it is to move audiences, must analogously represent the problems of the real world. The drama is gripping because its representation and symbolic resolution of problems makes sense to great numbers of people.

The apartness of the Sportsworld, its dramatic form, encourages the vicarious voyaging of its adherents. The values and problems that are being enacted are what gives the voyage its meaning. Each moment-form and content-work together to give the symbolic world of sports its vivid appeal. The devices of dramatic form, in turn, enable the Sportsworld to function as a socializer of dominant values. The unproblematic nature of the dramatic setting facilitates the inculcation of important values "through the back door" (what Burke calls "stylistic subterfuge").

The clearly defined ethos of the Sportsworld (the "sports creed") has been shown to be congruent with the larger ethos of American capitalism (the "business creed").^{10/} The belief system of sports, with its emphasis on hard work, sacrifice and competitive struggle, has been an important agency for socializing a diverse work force into the world

of capitalist production. Creating a productive work force, as the work of Max Weber clearly indicates, is certainly not unproblematic. It is definitely not any inborn aptitudes that generate the acceptance of harsh routines, rigid time calculations and long working hours in cramped conditions. Workers must be imbued with the "spirit of capitalism." 11/ The Sportsworld, through analagous extension, has been a powerful historical aid in developing this spirit.

An interesting point that developed out of this study is the way in which the Sportsworld's symbolism evolves with the historical changes in American society. The rising emphasis on teamwork and organization is a case in point. At the turn of the century, the laissez-faire game of baseball, with its loosely individualistic cooperation, dominated the Sportsworld. As American society became more complex, however, the more corporate games of basketball and football began to slowly supplant baseball's unchallenged supremacy. Sports stories began to intricately focus on the team's ability to mesh--its division of labor, the quality of its authority structure and its level of cooperation.

The ability of the Sportsworld to adapt its normative structure was also evinced in the changing emphasis on superstars. As consumption replaced production as the

dominant American ethos, the stars of the Sportsworld emerged as "idols of consumption." The athlete's salary, clothing and lifestyle became important subplots in the larger dramas of heroism and villainy. The rise of big money, in fact, merely spices the plot. Lewis Cole vividly dramatizes the synthesis:

"American sports today, both professional and amateur, are a vastly profitable and wildly speculative business, and the amounts of money won and lost in basketball by players, investors and teams challenge the imagination as powerfully as any moves you see performed on the court. A world of princes, thieves, law-suits, unions, vendettas and gambles, it calls upon myths and dreams to describe it...and three years ago a tall and talented eighteen-year-old names Moses Malone graduated from high school into the pros with a three-million-dollar contract. Such split-second transformations--like that of the fairy-tale frog who turns into a prince--don't yield easily to the logic of most people's everyday lives, and it isn't surprising that the protagonists of these dramas are talked about as heroes, and the stories of their professional careers are molded into modern folktales, complete with obscure beginnings early prophecies, and dramatic announcements of their unusual talents." 12/

Importantly, the Sportsworld is able to synthesize the rising emphasis on money with its old moral infrastructure. It is, in fact, this infrastructure that stylistically permits the discussion of money and commodities. The mythical overlay of anachronistic values softens the unholy crassness of commodification. 13/

At the same time that the Sportsworld is inculcating the values of an evolving capitalist society it is also

generating support for democratic norms and the rules of fair play. Throughout its historical development we have seen how sports emphasizes equality before the law, the sanctity of the rules themselves, and the often illusive hope of economic and social mobility. Faith in the rules of the game develops, through analogical extension, a generalized faith in the legal-rational structure of authority. This faith is coaxed dramatically by the device of personification. The rules and structures of authority are embodied in umpires, owners, coaches and general managers.

The myths of equality, mobility and legal equity have been seen to merge into a package of diffuse "Americanism." Allegiance to the world and its values was, and continues to be, seen as a giant step toward the acceptance of the "American way." We watch as the various ethnic groups dart, dribble and slide into acceptability through their adoption of the American games. The movie Hester Street symbolizes the process. The conflict between the Americanized father and the "greenhorn" mother is dramatized in a moving scene at the park. The mother sits under a tree with a Talmudic scholar as we watch the father in the background passionately engaged in teaching the boy baseball.

The Sportsworld prepares its partisans for activity in the real world not only through the inculcation of values

but also through the teaching of the proper control of emotion. The growth of capitalism and the increasing rationalization of society has created a world of cool instrumentality and controlled passion in much the way that Max Weber foresaw. In order to successfully compete you need to have what Bob Cousy calls a "killer instinct." This involves a studious disregard for the feelings of others and an ability to mask one's own true emotions and intent. Never let the other guy spot a weakness, keep a noncommittal "game face," and don't let anyone past your emotional defenses.

The inculcation of this self-aggrandizing isolationism has had the greatest impact on boys. The Sports-world has functioned historically as a male refuge and the arena has been a place for boys and men to learn The Code, ^{14/} a pure expression of American male macho. Young girls, who were not expected to compete in the larger economic and political arenas, were often allowed a freer range of emotional expression. In fact, it is no accident that as women begin to push for greater acceptance in the larger arenas they also push for the concomitant growth of women's athletics.

It would be an interesting study in itself to probe all the ways in which sports has functioned as a training ground for men, and to assay the impact of the influx of the women into a previously all male preserve. ^{15/} My

preliminary hypothesis would be that, although the women's movement initially aims at transvaluation of masculine values, the radical cutting edge soon gives way to the more mild demand for greater access. In this way, as Bob Lipsyte also suggested, the values and procedures of the Sportsworld will incorporate the women with certain relatively minor moral adjustments. ^{16/} The sports creed and its political and economic analogies will remain flexible within a fairly strong permanent orbit.

IV

What this study has found is that the existence of the Sportsworld as a symbolic refuge facilitates the inculcation of important values. The growth of capitalism brings enormous instability and uncertainty in its wake. Without the enactment of a strong normative structure the industrial cosmos might well turn chaotic. We have seen that the Sportsworld plays an important role in the creation of an amenable work force whose expectations meld comfortably within an ethos of democratic mobility. And, as Max Weber has shown, the legitimacy of a capitalist society rests on its ability to incorporate an acceptance of a legal rational system of authority. The Sportsworld has been seen to be a major actor in this process.

The political impact of the Sportsworld, however, has two moments: one of socialization and another of escape.

We have seen throughout this study how sports exists as a dramatic life world--a symbolic utopia of drama, warmth and collective euphoria. It has continually been pointed out that this utopian refuge exists in counterpoint to the iron cage of capitalism and bureaucracy. The existence of the Sportsworld as an integrated utopia has a profound political impact.

Max Weber saw the process of rationalization leading to the disenchantment of the world, the decline of affect and meaning in a "polar night of icy darkness." He sought to devise ways to inject a charismatic warmth into this cold cosmos. Warmth only comes in the form of human connections and drama. The Sportsworld fulfills Weber's prescriptions in numerous ways. Its symbolic canopy or shared vision, enlivened by dramatic enactment of magical performances, culminates in the ritual effervescence of the game. The game and the dramatic warmth of the world in turn penetrates, as we have seen, into everyday life. People use the world to dream, to fantasize and to reach out to make human contact with others. 17/

Emile Durkheim saw the growth of the division of labor (rationalization) as leading to the gradual disintegration of society (decline of meaning) through the growth of anomie. He sought to recreate within the bowels of industrial society the "collective effervescence" of

the French Revolution (dramatic meaning), and the group infrastructure of the middle ages (the integration of community). The Sportsworld fulfills Durkheim's prescriptions as well. The games, as we have mentioned, do generate a collective euphoria and sense of purpose. It is also clear that the institutional team infrastructure of sports in many ways parallels the integrative mechanisms of medieval groups. ^{18/} The Sportsworld is a conservative realm in many positive senses of the word.

The metaphor of an "iron cage" and the fear of anomie are congruent with the neo-Marxist analysis of the dangers of reification. And while all three perspectives diverge significantly at key points, there is a common thread: all these approaches see the growth of the institutional apparatus of capitalism as threatening the stability of political institutions and the integrity of the individual. The neo-Marxist emphasis is on the latter: the danger of individual powerlessness and insignificance. Their focus is on the way in which the forces of domination make an end-run around conscious resistance and are internalized at the psychic level. ^{19/}

The existence of the Sportsworld as a sub-universe of meaning within a world of reified institutions has the effect of dulling the anxiety-producing force of an out-of-controlworld of remote and bureaucratic institutions. The reification of an institutional structure creates what

Jurgen Habermas calls a "technical life-world," a world of cool instrumentality devoid of human meaning. 20/

The Sportsworld as a social life world, a world with a sense of comprehensibility, historical destiny and dramatic rituals, creates an arena of human meaning within the cool confines of the technical life-world. The drama of sports transports people into a world of lush human warmth, a world of clarity and purpose. In addition, through fantasies and social communication this warmth can overlay the routines of everyday life as well.

The Sportsworld can be seen then to ameliorate the deadening effects of disenchantment. Importantly, in congruence with much neo-Marxist analysis, this amelioration is facilitated pre-cognitively. As we have seen in this study, the Sportsworld's intense grip on mass consciousness is developed in play and games prior to the development of any strong conscious apparatus of resistance. The regressive force of sports (in the sense that any intense experience is regressive) rests on its tapping of childhood euphoria. It exerts a strong emotional hold that often resists the pull of intellectual alienation. 21/

The collapse of meaning, the reification of institutions and the threat of anomie structure the modern theoretical concern with identity. 22/ The writers on identity

emphasize the inability of people to develop a coherent sense of themselves within a world of instability and instrumentality. A concern with the consequences of identity-collapse was given impetus by the success of fascism in the 1930s and 40s. The way in which the fascists were able to provide a world view and shared vision was seen as instructive--another example of the bad filling of a good need. As most of the theorists point out, identity can only develop successfully within the symbolic canopy of a shared vision. The capitalist assault on purpose ("all that is holy is profaned") makes identity precarious.

The Sportsworld is a rich source for the development of identity. As I made clear in the chapter devoted to children, the development of organized sport out of the ritualizations of everyday life rests on a conservative process that symbolically recreates the peasant life-cycle. The biographical unity of this process, in turn, is hooked into an historical continuity that provides an excellent foundation for identity formation. Fred Exley identifies himself as a football fan--it is "his destiny"; Howard Senzel sees his identity as inextricably interwoven with the world of baseball; and Arnold Beisser's psychiatric profile of "Benny" demonstrates the way in which fan identity can ameliorate the extreme depersonalization of schizophrenia. ^{23/} In my own case, I would be unafraid to

say that during my adolescence my sports identity functioned as a life-raft that transported me away from overwhelming difficulties that were beyond my ability to handle at that time--difficulties, I might add, that threaten adolescents everywhere.

The question of identity has profound political importance. The rise of mystical cults, encounter groups, sensitivity training, communes, and even computer dating, speaks of a profound dislocation in American life. The loneliness and depersonalization is fertile soil for the rise of irrational mass movements that would threaten the foundation of American life. ^{24/} In addition, this condition is exacerbated by the way in which the process of rationalization (as Freud and Nietzsche saw) generates guilt and anxiety. The existence of a large reservoir of free-floating anxiety provides the fuel for the irrational dramas of victimage and redemption.

The Sportsworld, as this study has continually sought to emphasize, exists as a quasi-cultic mass movement. Its symbolism answers many of the needs and alleviates many of the frustrations that have been seen to provide the impetus for those political movements that have threatened the status quo. The Sportsworld, however, is institutionalized within the boundaries of the same status quo whose inherent defects spawn the need for so many people to seek refuge elsewhere. Escape and integration operate together as the Sportsworld provides for the ritualized voyage of identity.

The political efficacy of such a ritualized escape operates through the medium of the sports drama. In combining the insights of Burke and Duncan on drama, Lesser on catharsis, and Edelman and Nieburg on the political implications of symbols and rituals, ^{25/} I have demonstrated how some of the tensions that are imbedded within the structure of American political and economic institutions and their ideological supports are ritualistically resolved through the drama of sports. The relief of tension--much in the manner of "play satiation"--allows for the refreshed return of the fan to the routines of everyday life. The ability of a society to provide for the collective alleviation of shared anxieties is a strong support for its political stability. ^{26/}

The political importance of the Sportsworld as a utopian refuge grows as the standard sources of political legitimacy wane. I have pointed out how many observers see the collapse of any traditional normative basis for political cohesion. The so-called "end of ideology" does not only affect the incidence of disruptive mass movements. Political affect in general is dangerously close to extinction. ^{27/} Klaus Mueller and Jurgen Habermas see the growth of a "para-ideology" of consumption and technical domination providing the major source of political stability. Throughout this work I have been pointing out how sports symbolism functions in parallel ways to the para-ideology of consumption.

This point needs continual emphasis because of the occupational psychosis of political scientists. The United States, in the face of heavy apathy, is a remarkably stable political entity. When 37.9% of those who are old enough to vote go to the polls, and when the scoreboard reads 96 million not voting to 56 million who are, then some attention needs to be paid to the apolitical sources of political legitimacy.^{28/} In the face of this paradox, however, the discipline of political science continues to be dominated by a discussion of institutional processes, structures and the soporific exposition of how a bill becomes a law.

In addition to meekly hiding behind a narrow definition of what is political, the discipline of political science encourages the development of even more sophisticated methodological techniques. Such "methodism" (Sheldon Wolin's term) however is divorced from the context of people's lives and itself contributes to political opacity. In this manner the people doing political analysis develop a trained incapacity to understand the widespread problems of political importance.

Political inquiry, as C. Wright Mills emphasized a few years back, needs to address itself to the relationship between people's private milieu and the structure of political and social institutions.^{29/} This study emerges out of Mills' perspective. The Sportsworld is the one American institution that is able to reach down and tap the allegiances of millions of people from all social strata. The existence of sports as

a life-world penetrates the everyday lives of people and becomes for so many the "primary lived world." As such a subuniverse of meaning, the Sportsworld is able to generate a strong diffuse attachment to the larger political system. Warner's work on symbol systems, Deutsch's work on political and social communication, and Almond and Verba's analysis of "rain or shine attachment" all support the general political perspective that I have developed through this study. Sports enthusiasm creates a "halo-effect" that girds the larger political system. 30/

From the standpoint of a practical concern with the sources of political stability, an examination of a seemingly apolitical phenomena like sports is essential. It is also essential if one is concerned with the ethical aspects of political change and with the importance of utopian thinking. The Sportsworld gets in the way of political reconstruction. By repeatedly and compulsively alleviating the tensions that are generated by the defects of the political and economic distribution of power, the sports drama prevents any attempt to locate root causes--both personal and political.

Political change grows out of conscious discontent. In a democratic context, this discontent would lead to the possible creation of an organized movement or "public" that was aware of the way structural defects penetrated the personal lives of people. The Sportsworld's genuine appeals, however, feed the process of depoliticization. Is there really any

comparison between watching "OJ" in the open field and listening to Jimmy Carter with the open mouth? As I indicated in the chapter on sports language, the drama of politics simply cannot compete with its athletic counterpart. The contrast becomes so stark that James Reston wonders whether "politics in this country doesn't have something to learn from sports." 31/

The Sportsworld as a "utopia of escape" 32/ further dulls political consciousness by its ability to galvanize people's imagination and fantasy. Political change, as both Erikson and Keniston show, rests on the ability to fantasize about undreamed possibilities. Erikson defines play as "the human propensity to create model situations." This is extremely close to Keniston's discussion of the political importance of utopian thinking. Fantasy and imagination that has its roots in the Sportsworld is too often disassociated from a connection with the context of people's lives. In such a way is sports an emotional roadblock to reconstruction.

And yet, the analysis needs to have a greater balance. To give sports a radical hazing as an "opiate" glosses over the nuances that are operating here. The Sportsworld can also be studied as a radical critique of politics and society. If sports is the "magic elixir" that nourishes while the rest of the world drains, we could profit greatly from

studying all the sources of its nourishment while at the same time noticing its counterpoint with the barren environment around. Drama, community, identity, fellowship, and purpose all are generated within the boundaries of the arena. So when Burke says that our age needs the "rebirth of the agon" we must be aware that the 72% of all Americans who characterize themselves as sports fans have, to varying degrees, already recognized this necessity.

V Further Considerations

Because of the richness of the Sportsworld, any single study is going to emphasize certain points at the expense of others. I have by design concentrated on the nature of sports as a mass drama with particular emphasis on what Michael Novak calls the "Holy Trinity"--baseball, football and basketball. I am completely aware that this kind of emphasis underplays the importance of such sports as tennis, boxing, ice hockey and auto racing. My interest, however, was to begin to develop a theory of sports as drama that could be the starting point for the political analysis of all kinds of sports involvement. All studies must draw artificial boundaries.

It is also true that I have paid less attention to the different symbolic appeals that inhere in each sport. It is possible that the different symbol systems of each sport have separate appeals to certain personality groups

or various classes. The work of Arnold Beisser is a good start on the former and Gunther Lueschen has done work on the latter. No comprehensive linkage has been done between class, personality and sports symbolism. Survey data and in-depth interviewing would be necessary to accomplish this task. The journalistic work of Roger Kahn, Roger Angell and Robert Smith in baseball; Jeff Greenfield, Lewis Cole and Pete Axthelm in basketball; and Dan Jenkins, Bob Lipsyte and Don DeLillo in football is a good beginning for the understanding of separate symbolic systems. The scholarly work of Allen Guttman and Murray Ross is also important.

This study has been specifically a focus on the political impact of American sports symbolism. My early reliance on the work of Henry Morton and my theoretical debt to Marx and Weber should make it clear that I believe that the theoretical perspective that I develop here can be applied, with special cultural considerations, to any industrializing country where mass sports plays an important role in the culture. I am certainly not saying that it is only "capitalism" that is the clue to unraveling the political implications of mass sports involvement. Here I am more persuaded by the Weberian concern with "rationalization" and the more sensitive neo-Marxist uses of Weberian concepts. What is obviously needed is a cross cultural study using the same kinds of methodological tools that I employ here in this work.

The process of rationalization is certainly crucial. There are many analysts who see this trend infecting sports as well-leading to a gradual erosion of faith through disenchantment. While more study is needed, I would seriously take issue with this analysis. The mythical symbolism of the Sportsworld has always been tremendously adaptive. For over fifty years it has been gradually synthesizing the emerging world of money and commodities with its traditional ethical belief system. This synthesis is evident when we read how the world of business and corporate wheeler-dealing merges with the standard themes of the sports drama. Articles like "Giants Clean House" and "Celtics' Owner Longs for Glory" ^{33/} are acknowledging this trend.

Money magic enlivens rather than erodes interest. The trials and tribulations of players, owners and their teams and personalities get woven into the serious gossiping of the committed fans. Already sportswriters are pointing the way for fan acceptance of the money mania. In writing about Pete Rose, Pete Axthelm defends the selling of the superstar:

"For all the high stakes involved, it came down to a simple decision made by a simple man. Rose got what he wanted in an open marketplace. If there were garish aspects to this quest, they were often introduced by the owners. If there are signs of decay in the old game, they seemed most evident in Cincinnati, where management shows a curious way of serving some of the country's most enthusiastic fans." ^{34/}

Pay the man his money, you cheapskates!--and reward his enthusiasm and the fan's devotion.

While money sweetens the plot we still read about the crazy spontaneity and joy of a Lyle Alzado and the genuine gratitude of a Charlie Criss who made the pros after almost a decade of struggle. The drama is still there and it dovetails with the exquisite ability of fans to block out any commercial interruptions. This special involvement is no mere interlude for most fans but is, according to one psychologist, "the basic substratum of our intellectual and emotional lives." 35/

One final anecdote serves to dramatize the emotional depth that this study has just begun to explore:

"And last season a man was fatally shot in a Denver bar for playing the jukebox while the Bronco game was on TV. Amid speculation that an impartial jury could not be impaneled anywhere in the Rockies, one Bronco fan asked, 'Why have a trial? That fellow committed suicide.'" 36/

Sports is the magic elixir that nurtures personal identity and political stability throughout American society. Sports has managed to integrate itself into the fabric of American life in some obvious and not-so-obvious ways. That no serious attempt to analyze its political importance has been attempted merely attests to its special place in American culture--above politics and beyond scrutiny. I would hope that this study has provided a starting point for continued serious analysis of the Sportsworld and for a better understanding of the connection between political, economic and social institutions, sports, and the everyday lives of people.

Footnotes

- 1 Fred Exley, A Fan's Notes (N.Y.: Random House, 1968). James Reston, "Sports and Politics," The New York Times (May 13, 1978) also captures the point-counterpoint. The major theoretical debt here is to the works of Max Weber, Karl Marx and Emile Durkheim. A modern handling of some of these important themes is done by Kenneth Keniston in The Uncommitted (N.Y.: Dell Pub., 1964).
- 2 Harry Edwards, The Sociology of Sport (Homewood, Ill.: The Dorsey Press, 1973).
- 3 Michael Novak, The Joy of Sports (N.Y.: Basic Books, 1976).
- 4 A Fan's Notes, p.12.
- 5 John Rooney, A Geography of American Sport (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1974), p.3; see also pp. 126,130.
- 6 Lewis Cole, A Loose Game (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1978), p.69.
- 7 Rooney relates the following: "A casual observer can hear basketball talk everywhere--post office, grocery, taverns...." He is referring to the states of Illinois, Indiana and Kentucky. A Geography of American Sport, p.2.
- 8 A Loose Game, p.11. The term "serious gossip" is Cole's.
- 9 Erik Erikson, Toys and Reasons (N.Y.: Norton, 1977).
- 10 The Sociology of Sport.
- 11 Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (N.Y.: Charles Scribner, 1958).
- 12 A Loose Game, p.11.
- 13 Pete Axthelm, "Gilding the Rose?" Newsweek (Dec. 18, 1978), p.105.
- 14 See Bil Gilbert's discussion of the Code in "That Senior Season," Sports Illustrated (Nov. 14, 1977).

- 15 Marc Feigen Fasteau, "Sports as the Training Ground," The Male Machine (N.Y.: Dell, 1975). Fasteau was one of the first to explore the male-sports relationship. His critique suffers from an inability to highlight the positive aspects of male involvement.
- 16 Robert Lipsyte, Sports World: An American Dreamland (N.Y.: Quadrangle, 1976).
- 17 Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills, From Max Weber (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1946); and Max Weber, The Theory of Social and Economic Organization (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1947).
- 18 Emile Durkheim, The Division of Labor in Society (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1964); Suicide (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1966); The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1965); Moral Education (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1961).
- 19 Martin Jay in The Dialectical Imagination (Boston: Little Brown, 1973) emphasizes this; see George Lukacs History and Class Consciousness (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1971); Herbert Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968); Eros and Civilization (N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1962); Karl Korsch, Marxism and Philosophy (N.Y.: Modern Reader, 1970); Erich Fromm, Escape from Freedom (N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1941); and Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, The Dialectic of Enlightenment (N.Y.: Herder & Herder, 1972).
- 20 Jurgen Habermas, Toward a Rational Society (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970).
- 21 See my discussion of Teddy Gold in the chapter on children.
- 22 Erik Erikson's work is seminal here: Childhood and Society (N.Y.: Norton, 1963); Identity, Youth and Crisis (N.Y.: Norton, 1968). See also Kenneth Kenniston, The Uncommitted; Maurice Stein, Arthur Vidich and David Manning White (eds.), Identity and Anxiety (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1960); Orrin Klapp, The Collective Search for Identity (N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969); and William Kilpatrick, Identity and Intimacy (N.Y.: Delta Books, 1975).
- 23 See Arnold Beisser's The Madness in Sport (N.Y.: Appleton Century Crofts, 1965) for a discussion of "Benny the Fan" in Chapter IV.

- 24 Suzanne Gordon, Lonely in America (N.Y.: Simon & Schuster, 1976); Jane Howard, Please Touch (N.Y.: Dell Pub., 1970); The Collective Search for Identity; Identity and Intimacy; E. U. Essien-Udam, Black Nationalism (N.Y.: Dell Pub., 1964); and see Kenneth Burke's "The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle'" in Stanley, Edgar Hyman (ed.) Terms for Order by Kenneth Burke (Bloomington, Ind.: University of Indiana Press, 1964).
- 25 Kenneth Burke, Permanence and Change (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970); Hugh Duncan, Communication and Social Order (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1970); Simon Lesser, Fiction and the Unconscious (N.Y.: Random House, 1962); H. L. Nieburg, Culture Storm: Politics and the Ritual Order (N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1971); and Murray Edelman, The Symbolic Uses of Politics (Urbana, Ill.: The University of Ill. Press, 1967).
- 26 The Uncommitted, p.193.
- 27 Robert Gilmour and Robert Lamb, Political Alienation in Contemporary America (N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1975).
- 28 James Wechsler, "Politics: Newest Spectator Sport," New York Post (Dec. 6, 1978).
- 29 C. Wright Mills, "The Big City: Private Troubles and Public Issues," in Irving Louis Horowitz (ed.) Power, Politics and People: The Collected Essays of C. Wright Mills (N.Y.: Ballantine, 1962).
- 30 Fred Greenstein, Children and Politics (New Haven: Yale University, 1965); W. L. Warner, American Life: Dream and Reality (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953); Karl Deutsch, The Nerves of Government (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1966); and Robert Lane, Political Ideology (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1962). For greater emphasis, see the chapter on children herein.
- 31 James Reston, "Sports and Politics," The New York Times (May 13, 1978).
- 32 Lewis Mumford, The Story of Utopias (N.Y.: Viking Press, 1962).
- 33 Norm Miller, "Giants Clean House," New York Daily News (Dec. 19, 1978); and "Celtics Owner Longs for Glory," Associated Press, no by-line, in New York Post Dec. 26, 1978).

- 34 Pete Axthelm, "Gilding the Rose?" Newsweek (Dec.18, 1978), p.105.
- 35 Ray Kennedy and Nancy Williamson, "The Fans: Are they up in Arms?" Sports Illustrated (July 31, 1978), p.42.
- 36 Ibid, p.47.

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