
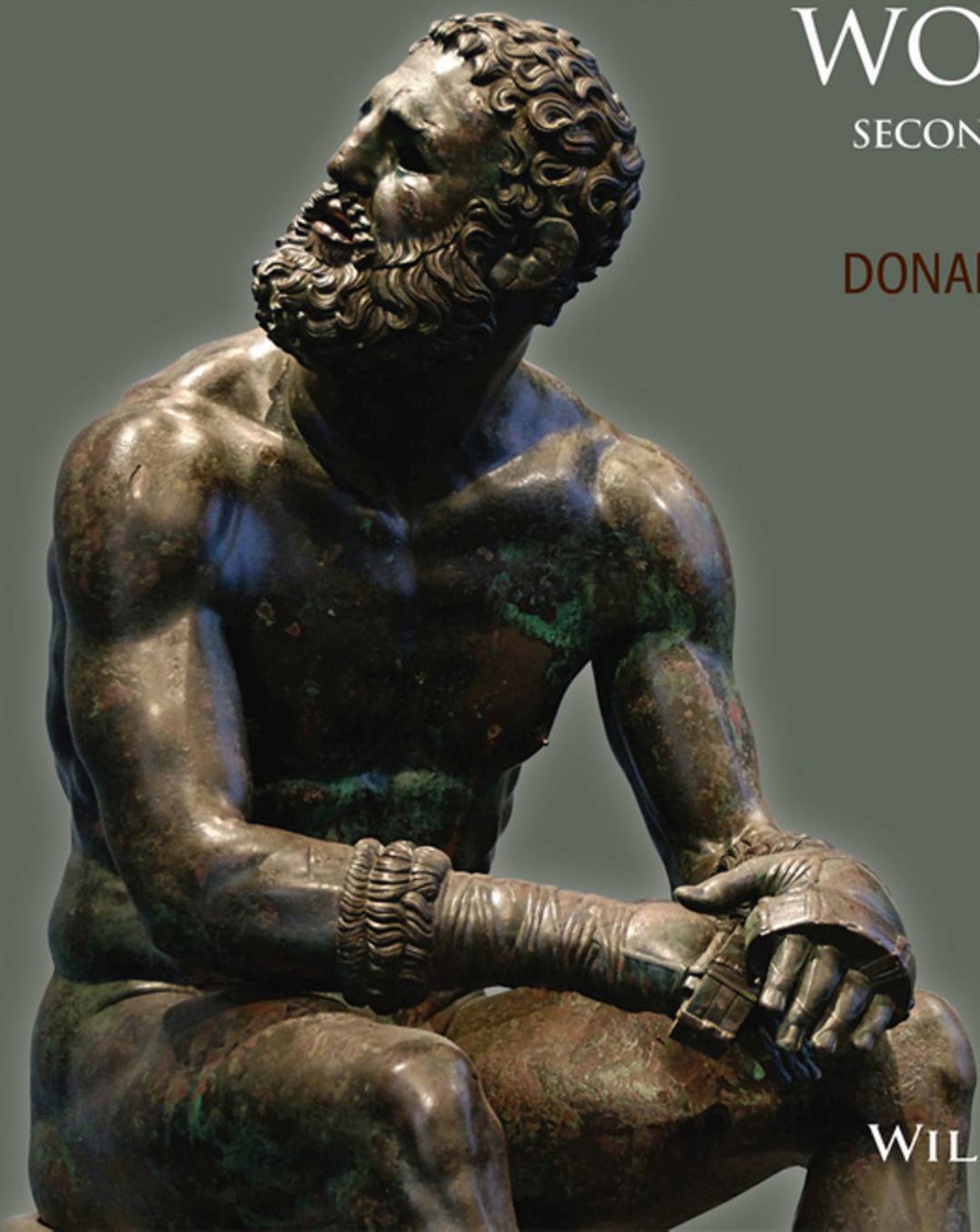


SPORT & 
SPECTACLE
IN THE ANCIENT
WORLD

SECOND EDITION

DONALD G. KYLE



WILEY Blackwell

Sport and Spectacle
in the Ancient World

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Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World

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Donald G. Kyle

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Preface and Acknowledgments

People often assume that historians of sport must be frustrated former athletes. Perhaps my youthful passions for sport and for antiquity moved me to study ancient sport. Perhaps it was useful that I played sports, enthusiastically if not that successfully. My games certainly taught me things about myself, about life, and about human nature. I remain convinced of the value of sport, especially team sports, for the health of individuals and society. Even as a youth, however, I realized that my recreation, my fun, might be on the playground but that my future lay elsewhere. I never imagined a career applying the life of the mind to the life of the body.

My generation witnessed Vietnam and the rise of modern terrorism, assassinations of inspiring leaders, the Munich Olympic massacre, Olympic boycotts and crises, and scandals of corruption and drugs in professional and college sport. We had to ask ourselves why humans remain aggressive and violent, why sport cannot be free of politics and economics, and why being the victorious competitor or fan seems so important. My generation saw sports news grow from the back page to a whole section of the newspaper. Sports became a larger part of the trinity of the evening newscast, and sports went from Monday Night Football and Hockey Night in Canada to whole channels of sport and more sport.

Why not study things that students find interesting and relevant? We have long followed our interests (e.g., democracy, art, and theater) back to antiquity. Spectacular sports now are more prominent than ever in our media and society. Untold millions associate the Modern Olympics, with their invented traditions and Hellenic trappings, with Ancient Greece. Images of Rome's Colosseum and Circus Maximus, of gladiators, beasts, and chariot races, remain pervasive and provocative, but are such topics beneath academics? Do people want to understand Rome's games or just to be shocked by them? History is often ugly or sad, but our actions and performances, for good or ill, reveal our human nature.

Ironically, the study of ancient sport has moved from the fringes to the mainstream of ancient studies. Sport and spectacle are ideal subjects for cultural,

anthropological, and sociological studies of performance, festivals, ethnicity, identity, body imagery, and eros. Cultural discourse and the construction of social order unquestionably apply to sport and spectacle. Academics tend to privilege the mind over the body, but the physicality and passionate competitiveness of the Greeks and Romans cannot be denied.

When Blackwell invited me to contribute a book to their “Ancient Cultures” series, I suggested that my *Sport and Spectacle* (not *Sports and Spectacles*) should go beyond Greece and include the Near East and Rome to allow me to investigate changes and continuities, contrasts, and comparisons. Deriving from my years of teaching and researching ancient sport, this book contains both new research and echoes of some of my previous works in reduced or revised forms. I hope that whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

This is definitely not a definitive work but rather an overview with a central theme and related sub-arguments. The scope is very broad, and this active field is still unfolding. Though not intended solely as a textbook, the work may have some value in the now proliferating courses on ancient sport. The notes and bibliography are selective, concentrating on reasonably accessible publications in English. Good bibliographical aids exist, and scholars now can pursue leads electronically. I want to make a case for the value of studying ancient sport, and I want to help non-specialist readers and undergraduates think more—or in new ways—about sport, spectacle, and antiquity.

Abbreviations herein follow the systems of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* and *L'Année Philologique* unless otherwise indicated (e.g., *IJHS* for the *International Journal of the History of Sport*; *JSH* for the *Journal of Sport History*; *Nikephoros* for *Nikephoros. Zeitschrift für Sport und Kultur im Altertum*; *Stadion* for *Stadion. Internationale Zeitschrift für Geschichte des Sports*). Translations of ancient works are mostly from the Loeb Classical Library and S.G. Miller’s sourcebook (2012). Ancient Greek names and places generally are transliterated unless there is a well-known Latin form. For more illustrations, readers can consult books such as Bergmann and Kondoleon (1999), Köhne and Ewigleben (2000), Gabucci (2000), Miller (2004), and Valavanis (2004).

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This work is dedicated to the late Dr. Daniel J. Geagan for his dedication to teaching and scholarship.

Addendum to Preface

Why a second edition of this work after relatively few years? Some parts of the first edition could have been better, certainly, but the work was well received. The reviewers were kind, disagreeing at times but understanding that ancient sport and spectacle cannot be exhausted even in 400 pages. The book already is in use in courses on ancient sport history, and my arguments about the similarities between Greek sport and Roman spectacles (i.e., as ritualized cultural performances with emotional intensity) have found some level of acceptance.

The study (and teaching) of ancient sport, however, continues to grow and change dramatically. New approaches (e.g., comparative and sociological), continuing debates (e.g., about male and female competitors), new scholarship (e.g., by M. Carter, P. Christesen, K. Coleman, G. Fagan, D. Potter, D. Pritchard, and K. Welch), and exciting recent discoveries (e.g., inscriptions about games and burials of gladiators) all are enriching our understanding of the subject.

In addition, while coediting *A Companion to Sport and Spectacle in Greek and Roman Antiquity* (2014) with P. Christesen, I realized that a new edition could be more up to date, broader, and more “student friendly” (e.g., with clearer writing, chapter references, more images, more transliteration, and less citation of dated or non-English works).

I remain grateful to my wife Adeline and my sons Cameron and Colin for their patience and good humor. I earnestly thank P. Christesen for reading and improving all of my chapters in this second edition. I also thank Haze Humbert, Ashley McPhee, and Allison Kostka of Wiley-Blackwell, for their courteous assistance.

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Introduction: Ancient Sport History

I learned early on that sports is a part of life, that it is human life in microcosm, and that the virtues and flaws of the society exist in sports even as they exist everywhere else. I have viewed it as part of my function to reveal this in the course of my pursuit of every avenue of the sports beat.

Howard Cosell, *Cosell* (1974) 415

However propagandistic, Leni Riefenstahl's film *Olympia* (1938) about the 1936 Olympics was a triumph of cinematography and an inspiration for later sport documentaries and photography. With striking camera angles, iconic forms, and ageless symbols, the film turned athletic intensity into aesthetic delight. With scenes of misty mythological times, an athletic statue coming to life and hurling a discus, robust maidens dancing outdoors, and ancient ruins of Athens and Olympia, the film evokes ancient glory. A torch relay of handsome youths brings the talismanic fire of Classical Greece across miles and millennia to sanction the "Nazi" Olympics (see Figure I.1). Almost seamlessly, the film transports the viewer from the supposedly serene pure sport of Ancient Greece to the spectacle of the Berlin Olympics with its colossal stadium, masses of excited spectators, Roman symbols (e.g., eagles and military standards) of the Third Reich, and, of course, the emperor Hitler as the attentive patron, beaming as athletic envoys of nation after nation parade through and salute him.

Riefenstahl's commissioned effort took manipulative myth making to new lengths; but, instead of recording a triumph of the fascist will, in spite of itself the spectacle immortalized Jesse Owens as an athletic hero. With its characteristic element of suspense, of unpredictability despite appearances and agendas, sport triumphed over despotism and racism. Through the beauty and brutality of various contests, and the human virtue of athletes of diverse lands, sportsmanship survived on the field of play. The crowd, and in time the world, cheered

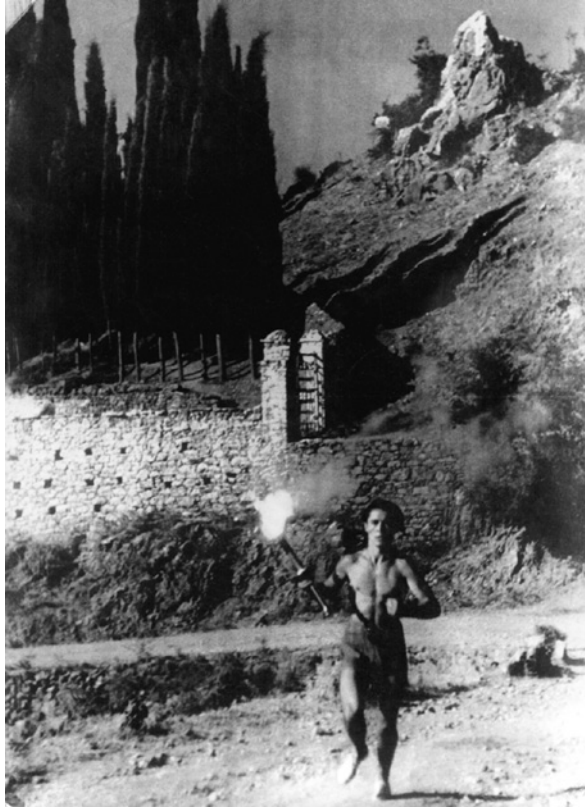


Figure I.1 Torch relay runner in Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympiad* (1938). © akg-images/Interfoto/Friedrich.

even as the tyrant and his cultural and propaganda ministers watched. All were amazed. Everyone knew that something extraordinary, something spectacular, was taking place.

The 1936 Olympics and Riefenstahl's film were not the first or last combinations of sport and spectacle. When talented, determined, and charismatic athletes strive against each other, athletic competition becomes a spectacle. People want to watch, and performers want to be watched, to have others appreciate their efforts and hail their victories. Ancient spectacles similarly incorporated physical performances, many of them on a competitive basis with rules, officials, and prizes. It was the modern world that decided that the activities it differentiated as "sport" and "spectacle"—and the athletes and performers regarded as "sportsmen" and "professionals"—were incompatible, even as the competitions and competitors coalesced in ever-grander and more popular modern games at colleges and in the Modern Olympics.

With its heroes and hustlers, its victors and victims, sport—the playing, organizing, and watching of sports—was, is, and will remain undeniably popular and significant. Ancient and modern civilizations share an obsession with physical contests and public performances, but just what are "sport" and "spectacle," and how can they be studied and understood historically? How and why did sports and spectacles become so

central, so moving, in the life of ancient Mediterranean civilizations? This work examines the prominence, forms, and functions of sports and spectacles in ancient societies, but first let me explain how the game should be played.

This is a study of ancient *sport*, not ancient *sports*, a sport history or a history of sport rather than a sports history or a history of sports. Traditional sports history tends to be event oriented, concentrating on individual sports and providing chronological narratives by leagues, teams, or players. Treating data (e.g., records and statistics) as facts, it favors anecdote above analysis. Instead, sport history pursues the phenomenon of sport over time, identifying and trying to explain its changes and continuity both causally and in context. It approaches ancient sport and spectacle not as isolated pastimes but as essential elements in social, civic, and religious life. Serious interdisciplinary sport history uses sport as a lens to examine human nature, societies, and cultures, not as an end in itself. Ancient sport historians have moved the field from antiquarianism to contextualization, from collection to collation, from enumeration to interpretation.¹ In recent decades, we have improved our understanding of ancient sport by questioning traditional assumptions, integrating new archaeological evidence, reexamining existing texts and artifacts, and applying anthropological, comparative, and social historical approaches.

Most historians of sport agree that sport, in some form, is a universal human phenomenon, that agonism (competitiveness, rivalry, and aggressiveness) is fundamental to human nature, and that agonistic motifs abound in widely dispersed myths and literature.² Most also agree that sport exhibits significant adaptations and variations over time and space. The impulse to sport emerged early and remains rooted in human instincts and psychology, but different human groups, classes, cultures, societies, and civilizations practice and view sport in revealing and characteristic ways. Sport cannot be studied in isolation from its historical, social, and cultural context, and sport historians now speak of cultural constructions, tensions, negotiations, and discourse in sport and spectacle.

Ancient sport is a growing and exciting field in which scholarly advances and controversies abound. Disillusioned by excessive athleticism and the impact of ideologies on modern sport, demythologizing scholarship has shown that modern movements have abused the ancient games for their own ends, turning them into what they wished the games had been. Traditional studies now seem methodologically antiquarian or ideologically burdened with assumptions about amateurism, athleticism, classicism, idealism, Hellenism, Eurocentrism, and Olympism. As modern sport and the Modern Olympics evolve, scholars have reexamined traditional and supposedly ancient notions of sport for its own sake alone. A traditional rise and fall paradigm of pristine origins, golden age, and later decadence has been challenged. Now more ideologically self-conscious, we realize that the study of cultural adaptation over time involves continuity as well as change in the phenomenon and in modern interpretations.

Using interdisciplinary approaches from comparative, political, and symbolic anthropology, ethnology, sociology, New Historicism, and cultural and social history (e.g., on rituals, performance, initiation, hunting, processions, identity,

and more),³ scholars have gone beyond the traditional concentrations—the Greek Olympics and the Roman Colosseum—to look at the sporting activities and spectacles of earlier Near Eastern peoples, the archaeology of the Bronze Age Mediterranean, the crucial transitional Hellenistic era, local games with their intriguing contests, rites of passage, and issues of class and gender, the emergence of Etruscan and Roman spectacles, the facilities and stagecraft of spectacles, and the persistence of Greek sport in the Roman Empire. Research on ancient sport and spectacle in the last generation has been so fertile, innovative, and international that there is a need for a synthetic and suggestive survey to attract and assist students and scholars who have not studied antiquity from this perspective.⁴

This survey of demythologizing therapeutic trends in ancient sport studies challenges old moralistic conventions including the claim that there was no sport before the Greeks and the simplistic contrasting of Greek sport and Roman spectacles as polar opposites. After downplaying or ignoring cultures before the Greeks, traditional studies applaud Greek sport as admirable, pure, participatory, amateur, graceful, beautiful, noble, and inspirational, and they denounce Roman spectacles as decadent, vulgar, spectatory, professional, brutal, inhumane, and debasing. Taking a broader approach, this work argues that sport and spectacle were not mutually exclusive but rather compatible and complementary. Especially at advanced levels, in ancient as in modern times, sport and spectacle have very much in common.

Why Sport History?

Sport is eminently worthy of study because it is both relevant and revealing. If historians want to understand fully the societies they study, it is imperative that we study people intently engaged in work, war, or play. Why does it seem so important that we win—or above all not lose—games? As if we were on a primordial hunt or a battleground, sport means something much more than just the activity itself. Also, the sports that groups embrace are not a matter of serendipity. Local versions of sport are adapted (or constructed) in interaction with cultural norms and tastes. Both sport and spectacle are central to the social life of groups and the operation of states.

From schoolchildren to weekend quarterbacks, from doctors to lawyers, from entrepreneurs to politicians, from the YMCA to the World Cup, sport permeates modern society. Sport is encouraged as a good thing, but it is fraught with problems. Violence in modern sport ranges from brutality on the field to riots in the stands and the streets. Sport is big business for the media and the stars, and franchises and stadiums affect the political and economic life of cities. Our modern vocabulary is rich in sporting imagery: home run, strike out, knockout, air ball, fumble, hat trick, Hail Mary, and more. The annual calendar of the United States is marked by sporting seasons, by opening day and the playoffs, with the championships of major sports as high holy days. In an age of high-definition big screen

televisions and satellite broadcasts, we still talk of traditions, legends of the game, and the good old days.

ABC's famous television program, "The Wide World of Sport" was prophetic, for the modern world is widely sports crazy. The United States comes to a halt for the Super Bowl and the World Series, and campuses succumb to "March Madness." Canadians faithfully attend hockey games like church services, praying for the holy grail of the Stanley Cup. World Cup losses are national disasters in Europe and South America. Great Britain obsesses over Wimbledon, the Premiership, and the FA Cup; but it shares cricket with India and the Caribbean, and it shares rugby with Australia and South Africa. The world of sport is a microcosm of the world itself, complete with controversies about corruption, excessive commercialization, drugs, and free agents disloyal to the teams that hired them at exorbitant salaries. Mass spectator sports are so much a part of our modern culture, lifestyle, and economy that sport history can be world history, national history, local history, social history, and also cultural history.

Our sports and our athletes represent us; they embody our identities and aspirations. In playing and watching sports, individuals, groups, and nations lay bare their characters and social values, as well as our common human nature. Situations of physical effort, stress, and rivalry show more about the character of people than is revealed in superficial and formal social settings. In the intensity of sport, we drop our veneer of socialization or civilization; we show our true natures, a human condition somewhere between animals and angels. We learn much about ourselves and others in examining how we prepare, compete, strain, and sweat—how we handle our greatest feats and defeats. In the "thrill of victory and the agony of defeat," the allure of unfettered emotionalism and the spectacular appeal of absolute effort, the physicality and atavistic intensity of sport force us to ponder the depths of both our modernity and our ancient heritage. Sport is a window into ourselves and into the past.

Why ancient sport history?

Sport was as popular and significant, as relevant and revealing, in ancient times as it is today, and an appreciation of the role of sport and spectacle is fundamental to understanding ancient societies. Few customs were as essential to Greek or Roman ethnicity, to the emergence, distinctiveness, and exportation of their cultures, as their sports and spectacles.

Collectively, Greeks saw athletics as central to their ethnicity, something distinguishing them from "barbarians." Unlike non-Greeks (*Pl. Resp.* 5.452c; *Thuc.* 1.6.5), Greek athletes were not ashamed to be seen in the nude. In Lucian's *Anacharsis* (9–10, 16), a fictional dialogue of c. 170 CE, a non-Greek Scythian prince, despite the explanations of the Athenian sage Solon, simply cannot grasp why Greeks—dirty, weaponless, nude, and in the full sun—engaged in violent boxing and wrestling matches, all for the sake of a symbolic prize.

It would be hard to overstate the significance of athletics for the Greeks—what the contest, the victory, and the victor meant to them. Sporting concepts,

including contest, prize, excellence, glory, and physical and moral beauty (*agon*, *athlon*, *arete*, *kleos*, *kalokagathia*), were central to Greek culture. Greeks saw sport as an index of manliness, a way to establish individual preeminence and social status, a way to honor gods and heroes in festivals, and as military conditioning, a therapeutic outlet for aggression, and part of a good education. To be recognized as a man of worth, one had to demonstrate especial skill or excellence, most effectively in war but also in other areas such as sport and hunting. The Greek male ethos of competition explains why Homer's Odysseus was so enraged when a non-Greek insulted him as "not an athlete" (see Chapter 3). It explains why extravagant impractical chariots were so prized, why boxing scars were worn with pride, and why Olympic victors were idolized. It also explains why athletic youths were eagerly courted and perhaps why women were excluded from even watching the Olympics.

Greek communities were proud of their athletes and athletic competitions, and any city-state (*polis*) worthy of the name had to have a gymnasium (*gymnasion*) as well as a theater (Paus. 10.4.1). Festivals and games promoted civic unity, and states lauded their victors with honors, rewards, and sometimes even heroization. Like their religion and language, sport was "Panhellenic" (i.e., shared by or common to Greeks); Greek colonists took their games with them to southern Italy and the Black Sea, and they kept their sport through Hellenistic and Roman regions and eras.

Enduring from the eighth century BCE to at least c. 400 CE, the Ancient Olympic Games were a showplace of Greek pride and identity. Greeks from all over the Mediterranean assembled at Olympia every four years for the games, as did famous Greek writers and artists. Later, Macedonians and Romans made announcements to Greeks assembled at the great games.

The Ancient Olympics were the most influential sporting phenomenon in Western Civilization, and they provided the inspiration for the Modern Olympics of 1896; but too many facile popular assumptions have been attached to that ancient pedigree. However inaccurately and anachronistically, the ancient games continue to be routinely associated with the Modern Olympics, even with the Winter Olympics. The resilience of Modern Olympic myths and rituals in the face of evidence and scholarship attesting ancient professionalism, corruption, and commercialism reveals much about modern culture and its notions of nostalgia, early purity, and decline. It remains tempting to hitch a ride on the Modern Olympic bandwagon but the historical relevance of the Ancient Olympics for the Modern Games has become hard to defend. Rather, the best reason for examining Greek sport lies in helping us understand ancient Greek culture and society, or the phenomenon of sport in general, and not in legitimizing the very different modern phenomenon. The Modern Olympics have become a cosmopolitan multicultural sporting spectacle, and we perhaps should expand our historical analogies from the Greek Olympics to include the spectacles of imperial Rome.

From chariot races to gladiatorial combats, spectacles were one of the most characteristic features of Roman civilization. Moderns want to trace the roots of our sport to Olympia, but we fear finding its roots in Rome. In their popularity,

scale, and spectacular architecture, Rome's mass entertainments seem very modern. The Romans were as passionate about their games as the Greeks, but, while we turn to the Greeks for inspiration, we have usually turned to Rome for warnings and moral lessons—often from an anachronistic Judeo-Christian viewpoint. Indeed, Rome offers insights into the allure of violent games and the mass psychology of crowds in an urban society, and scholars have applied models from sociology and anthropology to the role of displays and performances in Roman civilization. Rome also offers insights into spectacles as instruments of cultural and political hierarchy and hegemony. Greeks exported their games to affirm their ethnic superiority, preferring to limit participation in athletics to Greeks; but the Roman Empire so effectively spread the arena and the circus that provincials came to accept new games, like new cults and emperors, as part of living in a Roman world.

Word Games: Conceptualizing Sport and Spectacle

Some clarification of terms is in order. "Spectacle" is derived directly from Latin, but "sport" is not an ancient word. From *disporter* in Old French, and only indirectly from Latin *de-portare* (to carry away), sport is at best a vague, loose, and inclusive term. That the word is non-ancient, however, does not mean that there were no applicable ancient phenomena. Rather, the modern term can encompass several ancient Greek words (e.g., *agon*, *athlos*, *athleuo*, *paizo*, *gumnazo*, and *diatribe*). For example, *agon* could refer to a contest, the site, or the crowd, and it was applied to competitions of all kinds, from wrestling to politics (Scanlon 1988, 2002, 7–9; Goldhill and Osborne 1999, 2–3). In Latin, *certamen* had similar uses, while *ludere*, *ludus*, and *lusus* applied to play, game, sport, pastime, diversion, or amusement.

In ancient Greek and in modern English, "athlete" (*athletes*) usually suggests serious physical training, competition for prizes, and the goal of victory. "Physical education" refers to the instruction and exercise of the young to assist the health and general development of the body, which in ancient (as in modern) times could overlap with military training or conditioning, and contests. "Recreation" or "leisure" (or play) applies to nonwork, relaxation, and rejuvenation with pleasure or fun as the goal. In modern parlance, "sport" is used as a general rubric for all these areas as well as hunting, dance, and even board games. Herein, however, "sport" will refer more narrowly to public physical activities, especially those with competitive elements, pursued for victory or the demonstration of skill.

Greeks and Romans also had several words for spectacle, show, or performance. In Greek, a *thea* or *theoria* (from *theomai* or *theoreo*, to look on or view) was a sight, spectacle, viewing, wonder, or something worth seeing. A show or spectacle was a *thema* or *theoremata*, a spectator was a *theates*, *theamon*, or *theoros*, and a place of viewing was a *theatron*. In Latin, *spectaculum* meant a sight, spectacle, public performance, or stage play, as well as the facility (e.g., theater and amphitheater).⁵

Significantly, "athletics" (if not sport) and "spectacles" both have ancient pedigrees, and ancients did not see the activities and concepts as mutually exclusive or

incompatible. Pericles praised (and the Old Oligarch criticized) Athens' wealth of *diatribai*, meaning sports and spectacles from plays to torch races. The ancient writers Tertullian and Suetonius used *spectaculum* inclusively for many kinds of public performances.⁶ Greek and Roman epics contain both sport and spectacle. From an ancient perspective, "sport"—the modern term applied here to a cluster of ancient activities (notably athletics)—was a subset of "spectacle" (the modern and ancient term). Furthermore, many (Greek) sports were seen as spectacles (e.g., at Olympia), and many (Roman) spectacles were seen as sports (e.g., chariot racing). I clarify this neutral approach, based on ancient attitudes, because traditional sport scholarship used sport and spectacle as value-laden labels in a war of words.

While "athletics" and "spectacles" generally were positive terms to most ancients, in modern usage they often evoke different responses. Although our language is evolving with combined terms like "sporting spectacles" or "spectacular entertainments," people still apply traditional rhetorical distinctions to ancient physical entertainments. Sport (including athletics) is taken as natural, good, civilized, amateur, and manly, but spectacles are vulgar, decadent, professional, and dehumanizing.⁷ Within sport, a scale of goodness distinguishes amateur from professional sports and participatory from spectator sports. Without conscious irony, moderns speak of "professional sports" but "intercollegiate athletics" instead of "professional athletics" and "intercollegiate sports." Participatory sports are physical activities engaged in for recreation and the pleasure or healthy benefits of such participation. Their primary goal is the exertion and amusement of the participant. Participatory sport is amateur but often costs the participant money. Spectator sport may have similar activities but with more skills and more intense competition and with an emphasis on the amusement and comfort of spectators. Spectator sport is usually but not necessarily "professional" (i.e., with wages or significant material benefits for the athletes). Spectator sports, then, are "spectacles."

This work uses the terms sport, athletics, and spectacle, an imperfect mix of ancient–modern terminology, as devices to reduce the confusion of multiple ancient terms. In discussing sports and spectacles in both Greece and Rome, I concentrate on spectacular sporting contests in Greece and on Roman spectacles that include sporting elements. Such spectacular sports or sporting spectacles include various aspects: institutionalized public performances involving intense physical exertion and skill, rules or guidelines, management and supervision, some competitive aspects, some incentives, ritualized and non-mundane, held before an assembled audience, and with the suspense of non-predetermined outcomes. The action, force, and energy, compounded with the unpredictability of the outcome, which made ancient sporting contests spectacular (i.e., worth seeing, engaging, interactive), also made many spectacles sporting.

Pragmatically, I limit this study's focus somewhat. Music and gymnastics were both part of early Greek education, but I will not focus on music, poetry, drama, or dance. Musical and dramatic performances requiring skill and physical exertion often were public and competitive, and athletic contests had theatricality, but music and theater were seen as artistic more than athletic. When Greek authors wrote of

contests of “speed, strength, or wealth,” they meant athletic and equestrian contests. Some performances (e.g., military and choral dances) spanned categories, and music sometimes accompanied Greek sport (e.g., flutes) and Roman games (e.g., horns and water organs), but as supplements. Romans also distinguished theatrical shows, pantomimes, and mimes from chariot races and arena combats.

Challenges: Evidence, Chronology, and Modernism

By ancient standards, the popularity, pervasiveness, and longevity of ancient sport and spectacle left behind a relative wealth of documentation to support systemic analysis of broad patterns over ages and regions. From Homer to Suetonius, from Greek vases to Roman inscriptions, an abundance of literary and archaeological evidence exists, but the materials are diverse, disparate, and often fragmentary. Ancient sport historians must visualize a forest from a few scattered trees. Without box scores, record books, sport journalism, interviews, diaries, or tell-all biographies, we confront a millennia- and Mediterranean-wide jigsaw puzzle with missing pieces and no illustrated box cover.

Greek evidence

The evidence for Greek sport includes literature (history, myth, poetry, drama, and philosophy), sites, buildings and facilities, depictions in art (from vase paintings to statues), prizes, equipment, dedications, inscriptions, and even coins (Golden 1998, 46–73). Sculptors and vase painters routinely turned to sport, producing masterpieces such as the Charioteer of Delphi and Panathenaic amphoras. Archaeology and art history, especially epigraphy (and papyrology) and reexaminations of vase paintings and later texts, let us test and revise ancient literary accounts of how athletes trained, worshipped, competed, won and lost, and celebrated, and how they were motivated, rewarded, and commemorated.⁸

Although sport was a major part of Greek civilization, the few literary works specifically on sport (e.g., Lucian’s *Anacharsis* and Philostratus’ *Gymnastikos*) are limited and (with the exception of Pindar) mostly outside the traditional body of widely read classical works⁹; but sport was so much a part of Greek life that no genre is devoid of references or similes. Homer and Pindar, and their patrons and audiences, saw sport as worthy of poetry. Contests abound in Greek mythology, and funeral games were a stock element of ancient epic. Historians, including Herodotus and Xenophon, provide details and insights, and tragedians and Aristophanes often use athletic metaphors. Physical education was an issue for Plato and Aristotle, whose schools arose in the Academy and Lyceum gymnasiums. From Roman imperial times, Plutarch uses sporting anecdotes as moral examples, and Pausanias’ travel accounts provide an invaluable compendium of details. Classical philology continues to make essential clarifications of the role of sport in the vocabulary, verse, and vision of the Greeks and Romans.¹⁰

However aesthetically and rhetorically brilliant, literary sources on Greek sport present problems of (often very distant) hindsight, transmission, ideological biases, the influence of genre, context, moralizing, and credibility. Pindar was so busy applauding his clients that he often reveals more about mythology than about sport history.¹¹ Recently discovered Hellenistic victory epigrams from Posidippus record and applaud equestrian victories by male and female Ptolemaic royals (see Chapter 11). Pausanias is a treasury of information from monuments and inscriptions, but he also passes on legends and folklore, and he has his own postclassical Philhellenic (pro-Greek) perspective (see König 2005, 158–20; Newby 2005, 202–28). Literary evidence, of course, should be supplemented and tested with material evidence, which is often more independent and reliable.

Archaeology, both in its more popular form of discovering new finds and artifacts and in its other essential dimension of reevaluating previously discovered sites and objects, has been crucial to advancing our understanding of the proud, accomplished, and serious lives of ancient athletes. Archaeological revisionism, no longer deferring to literary accounts, has been sobering and refreshing; and every year brings more exciting discoveries, from remnants of monumental facilities to pottery and inscriptions.

Careful study of inscriptions has revealed the operation of Greek athletic festivals in early, classical, and postclassical times, including their survival and proliferation within the Roman Empire. Valuable inscriptions include victor dedications from Olympia, prize and victor lists from Athens, gymnasium regulations from Macedon, details of Olympic-style games at Naples (see Chapter 14), and dedications and honorific inscriptions from municipal festivals in the Greek East under the Roman emperors. Especially exciting is the discovery of inscribed letters by Emperor Hadrian concerning the operation of Greek games in the Roman Empire (see Chapter 15).

Major excavations at the four sites of the great “Panhellenic Games” (Olympia, Delphi, Isthmia, and Nemea) have revealed the significance of space, structures, and spectatorship in ancient sport.¹² Dramatic finds at Nemea include a stadium complex with an entrance tunnel, starting mechanism (*hysplex*), and “locker room” (*apodyterion*); and excavation of the Roman-era remains at Olympia has extended the life of that sanctuary into late antiquity.

Roman evidence

From satirical poems to imperial histories, from inscribed decrees to epitaphs on tombstones, the volume and variety of textual evidence for Roman spectacles attest a phenomenon whose chronological and geographical scope spans the whole history and territory of the empire. Roman writers often use metaphors or examples from the games in works of history, philosophy, and panegyric. Famous passages from Cicero, Ovid, Juvenal, and others are often critical or satirical, but epigrams by Martial (see Coleman 2006) applaud the shows at the inauguration of the Flavian Amphitheater (or Colosseum) in 80 CE. Countless books on Roman life invoke Juvenal’s indictment (10.78–81) of “bread and circuses” (*panem et circenses*)

and his approval of “a sound mind in a sound body” (*mens sana in corpore sano*). Petronius and Apuleius reveal procedural details of the arena, and imperial histories by Suetonius and Dio use anecdotes about spectacles to characterize the reigns of rulers. Similarly but less reliably, the *Historia Augusta*, a collection of biographies of emperors of the second and third centuries CE, often details spectacles. Ironically, much valuable evidence comes from Christian authors (e.g., Tertullian and Novatian) who wrote highly charged polemics and martyrologies condemning Roman spectacles as idolatrous rites (see Chapter 16).

Archaeological sources (e.g., reliefs, mosaics, equipment, and inscriptions), most of which suggest pride in the games, assist our understanding of Roman events and practices. From household lamps, ceramics, and statuettes to coins and graffiti, physical evidence shows that spectacles played a major role in the festival calendar, the social life, and the public space of ancient Rome and its empire for over a millennium. Recent discoveries of graves and bones of gladiators in Turkey and England have attracted great interest (see Chapter 15). Architectural ruins of facilities, some of them still monumental and still in use, bear witness to the spread of Roman games from Spain to Austria. Again, epigraphy provides abundant testimony from the epitaphs of charioteers and gladiators to municipal regulations about games. An imperial edict of 19 CE from Larinum prescribes intended societal norms at public entertainments, and an edict of 177 CE on the prices of gladiators shows the attentiveness of emperors to spectacles (see Chapter 15).

Works of art, especially mosaics, have much to offer. For example, the Zliten mosaic from Tripolitania in North Africa graphically reveals many features of the arena, and the Magerius mosaic from Smirat in Tunisia (see Figure 15.6) vividly depicts a staged hunt of leopards and the organizer of the show.¹³ Nevertheless, it is difficult to reconstruct transitory and ephemeral events by examining artifacts and texts created to memorialize and not just record the action (see Bergmann and Kondoleon 1999, 9–24). Studying spectacles involves multiple forms of visual, non-verbal performance artifacts (e.g., props, images, souvenirs, funerary and processional reliefs, and domestic mosaics) and physical sites associated with the production and memorialization of performances. Such artifacts seldom show exactly what the producer intended or what took place, but rather how the shows were remembered. Even if the producers’ intentions are clear, we have very little evidence from the spectators themselves.

Chronology: dates and cycles

The chronological systems in the West (BCE–CE, or BC–AD) obviously are later constructs but useful ones. Instead of firm facts and dead dates, however, ancient sport history is surprisingly kinetic. It lives and moves, sometimes more than we like. We weave the chronology together with synchronisms but the tapestry can unravel. Much of our early chronology rests on Egyptian pharaonic dynasties and pottery sequences, and most Bronze Age dates are far from certain. Greece itself had many local systems of dating, often by the names of leaders (e.g., kings and magistrates).

For Greek sport we have relied, rather naively, on dating events by reference to years of the Olympic Games, which were correlated with the names of the victors in the men's sprint (*stadion*) race for each Olympiad (one set of games or the interval between the close of one games and the start of the next). The sophist Hippias of Elis wrote his *Olympic Victor List* around 400 BCE, Aristotle worked on a list and introduced the sequential numbering of Olympiads, and others added materials over time. Unfortunately, information on early victors and Olympiads often seems unreliable.

Hippias' victor list was doubted even in antiquity; Plutarch (*Num.* 1.4) charged that Hippias had no authoritative grounds for his list. Recent scholarship has strongly challenged the accuracy of Hippias' early names and details, as well as the reliability of later assignments of absolute dates to numbered Olympiads by synchronisms and other systems.¹⁴ Moreover, many archaeologists now distrust the traditional date of 776 BCE for the first Olympic Games. The weight of earlier scholarship creates resistance to a recalibration of Olympiad dating, but we must admit the limitations of early chronological records.

As more Greek athletic festivals developed, especially in the sixth century BCE (see Chapter 7), care was taken to synchronize the scheduling of games. With colonization and more games, states and sanctuaries tended to work around the Olympics and the "Panhellenic" games. This continued when the Hellenistic and Roman eras brought even more athletic festivals and "Iso-" games (alike or patterned on earlier hallowed games).

For Roman history, our chronology is better but not perfect. Rome probably was not founded in monumental urban fashion in 753 BCE, as legend claims, and uncertainties remain about dates for the monarchy and early Republic. A system of dating years according to the names of the consuls (elected chief magistrates) provides increasingly accurate dates during the Republic, and Roman imperial chronology by years of the reigns of emperors is sound.

Our chronology for ancient sport history, then, is a vulnerable house of cards until the early sixth century for Greece and until the Middle Republic (264–133 BCE) for Rome, but recent discoveries and scholarship have improved our understanding of the records, calculations, schedules, and coordination involved in the world of ancient sport. That organizers used sophisticated astronomical calculations to help coordinate the scheduling of games was confirmed by recent research on the Antikythera mechanism (originally found in an ancient shipwreck in the Aegean Sea in 1901 CE). This astronomical device from c. 100 BCE uses bronze gears to calculate the cycles of the solar system. Amazed scholars realized that the mechanism could predict eclipses, and further examination with imaging technology revealed that a subsidiary "Olympiad" dial bears the inscribed names and calculates the cycle of the four great Panhellenic games (Freeth 2008; Freeth et al. 2008).¹⁵ Such calculation and coordination show the importance of games in the lives of sanctuaries and states. Even Roman emperors (notably Hadrian, see Chapter 15) were attentive to the efficient scheduling of contests throughout the empire.

Reception and modernism

Even with terms, evidence, and chronology at hand, ancient sport historians still face problems of perspective, reception, and perception.¹⁶ All the challenges that moderns face in seeking a sophisticated nuanced understanding of premodern society apply to ancient sport. Admittedly, total objectivity is impossible. As Thucydides (1.22.3) observed, different eyewitnesses to the same event see it differently, out of imperfect memory or partisanship. We are all cave-dwelling prisoners of our own cultures to a significant degree as we offer our impressions and imperfect conclusions.

Neither a fossilized positivist nor a fervent post-modernist, I view the historian of sport as an apologetically intrusive spectator of lost action. In trying to understand the past, in bringing our present mind to the evidence, we inevitably bend antiquity to our values and needs. We too often write history in the subjunctive, saying what could, might, or should have happened. We should be wary of anachronistic ideological agendas, of unconsciously imposing modern concerns, issues, and biases, in our reception and reconstruction of the distant and defenseless past.

While pursuing the sporting discourse between Greek and Roman cultures, we should not forget the ongoing discourse between modern and ancient thinking. If ancient and modern sport are significantly different, and if moderns conceptually think and optically watch in ways different from the ancients, perhaps the study of ancient sport seems doomed to a false start, or perhaps our studies can help us distinguish truly ancient from modern or pseudo-ancient elements in our sport (see Chapter 5 on Modern Olympic inventions).

Sport historians have long debated whether ancient and modern sport are fundamentally similar or different. Is sport as we now know it a thoroughly modern diversion or a stylized Paleolithic vestige? According to the “Modernist” school, associated with A. Guttmann, our ability to understand ancient sport is limited because the nature of modern sport, influenced by the industrial revolution, is fundamentally different in its secularity, specialization of roles, concern for equality and fairness, rationalization, bureaucratic organization, and quest for records.¹⁷ Critics of the Modernists feel ancient and modern sport share a singular universal nature as part of a continuum of sport from ancient to modern times, a ritualized but enduring heritage from mankind’s earliest emergence (see Chapter 2). Human nature is resilient but the Modernists have argued strongly that our games have changed to a significant degree with their technology of stagecraft, production, scoring, and record keeping, and with their ideological context and concerns about consistency and fairness in sport. Greeks and Romans had somewhat different systems of knowledge and different concepts of the self, the state, and the exercise of power. Also, the history of ancient sport suggests dramatic discontinuity in Late Antiquity with Christianity’s disdain of the body and the end of most ancient sports.

P. Christesen’s impressive (2012) study revives the Modernist debate with a broad and theoretical approach. Applying sport sociology to sport in Ancient Greece and Rome (and in modern Britain, Germany, the United States, and

more), he argues that sport functions similarly in ancient and modern societies. Through sport, we are socialized and coerced into compliance with social values, and we come to terms with some level of autonomy. We learn to deal with instincts and impulses rooted in human nature and still operative in complex modern societies. In educational systems and social institutions at large, the experience of sport can help make us well-adjusted members of society and thus help maintain social order.

Sports and Spectacles as Cultural Performances

A promising approach, which recognizes the problems but endorses the value of studying sport and spectacle, is to consider such activities as “cultural performances.” Cultural and symbolic anthropology regards cultural performances, such as sports, dance, and drama, not merely as inconsequential entertainment but as distinct systems of meaning by which cultural orders (e.g., values, norms, and status relationships) are formulated, communicated, and reformulated (MacAloon 1984). Cultural performances, including oratory, processions, and games, are made by (and they reflect) culture, but they also make (contest, encode) culture, especially in “performance cultures” such as Greece and Rome in which public competitions are prominent. Involving both metaphor and metamorphosis, cultural performances are fields of play with contestation, mimesis, and theatricality.¹⁸ Games can be seen as “forms of symbolic communication,” as a language as articulate as (and much faster than) the spoken word.¹⁹ Human action, especially ritualized, public, social action is communicative, and intensely physical competitions are dramatic performances with suspense and risk enhancing the experience.²⁰

Applications of theories of performance and spectacle from recent works on modern visual culture, with theoretical assumptions about media, mediation, and messages, and about gaze, gesture, and engagement, can be challenging; but it is common now to approach performances, rituals, and spectacles as crucial elements in the construction of identity, culture, and society. Tendencies to display and observation are rooted in human nature, and all societies have their own forms and forums for performance. Performance studies show that individuals and societies are constantly performing and presenting themselves²¹ and that spectacles always include some interaction and interrelationship (i.e., discourse, articulation, communication, negotiation, reciprocity, translation).

In the predominantly oral and visual cultures of antiquity sports and spectacles were communicative performances or displays that included mediation between viewers and viewed, actors and audiences. Isokrates (*Paneg.* 50.44) said that both athletes and spectators appreciate attention at contests; the spectators see the athletes struggling, and the athletes realize that people have assembled to watch them. Tertullian (*De spect.* 25) said that spectacles were places for “seeing and being seen.” The ancients held that the human eye had its own light, and they believed in the power of the outward gaze and the impact of arresting images. They did not

consume their sport and spectacles anonymously in dark movie theaters or privately in their homes. Ancient spectatorship was public, personal, and interactive.

Greece and Rome: Positive and Negative Classicism

In studying ancient sport, we should be wary of confusing investigation with evaluation, understanding with adulation, comprehension with condemnation. Should we take sides to champion Greek glory and condemn Roman guilt? Should we applaud the brilliant accomplishments of Greece and denounce the brutal excesses of Rome? Should we endorse what P. Brantlinger (1983, 9–12, 31–2) calls “negative classicism,” an elitist view of history that sees extensions of mass or popular culture, as in spectator sports or mass participation in sports, as contributing to the decline of empires and cultures. Although ancient and modern sport spectacles have striking parallels (e.g., the obsession with winning, violence, and professionalism), we should not pillage ancient sport for warnings about the moral collapse of modern societies and the decline and fall of world powers.

The supposedly exceptionally negative case of Roman spectacles has suffered by comparison with the supposedly exceptionally positive case of Greek sport. Modern biases have entrenched the myth of an incompatible antithetical dichotomy between the wise world of Greek sport and the wild world of Roman spectacle. Greek sport elevated but Roman spectacles debased human nature. The Hellenic purity of “man the player” (*Homo Ludens*) was corrupted by the Roman depravity of “man the killer” (*Homo Necans*). The glorious godlike Greeks were so much more civilized than the ruthless rabid Romans. The Greeks’ piety to their Olympian gods worked miracles, but the Romans’ impiety to Christians wrought massacres.

Until recently, we viewed Greek antiquity through a haze of romanticism. Works illustrated with scenes of bucolic Olympia, or serene Delphi on the heights of Mt. Parnassus, or the Parthenon on the Acropolis, presented Greek culture as natural, graceful, inspiring, and uplifting. The people who gave us democracy, philosophy, and the beauty of classical art and architecture held their games out of vitality and devotion, not out of boredom and lust. Rome was a bustling, dirty, unhealthy city. Its architecture was colossal, but it reeked of imperialism, autocracy, brutality, and decadence. Amateur Greek games were for cultured gentlemen, but professional Roman spectacles were for the idle vulgar mob.

For traditional Hellenists (admirers of ancient Greece), true ancient sport was Greek, noble, and familiar, so Roman games were crude and alien non-sports, or anti-sports. The conquering Romans supposedly were unwilling or unable to appreciate pure Greek sport,²² so their baser inclinations accelerated the corruption and decline of Greek sport. In epic movies and popular culture, Romans were obsessed with gladiators, blood, and murder in the arena. Symbolized by the Colosseum, spectacles were condemned by an enlightened minority of Romans (and by Christians), but to little effect. Cruel spectacles were a terminal defect, a

mortal wound, in that high civilization. For J. Carcopino (1975, 254), “The amphitheatre demands more than reproach. It is beyond our understanding” But cannot one people’s sin be another people’s sport? As D. Sansone (1988, 13) remarks, “We must be prepared to accept the fact that there are, and have been, societies of people who regard the standards that we consider to be decisive in connection with sport of little or no importance.”

Sports as Spectacle, Spectacles as Sport

This work looks unapologetically at the broad spectrum of sport and spectacle before, during, and after the “golden ages” of Greece and Rome.²³ With their many public athletic contests, the Greeks were distinctively agonistic, but to deny that there was sport in earlier cultures is chauvinistic. We now examine sport and competition in the broader contexts of Mediterranean, European, and comparative history (e.g., Fagan 2011; Fisher and van Wees 2011), and we recognize that sporting cultures traveled by trade and colonization, as well as by conquest and empire.

Historians still debate the origin(s) of sport (see Chapter 2), but clearly there was more assimilation than isolation in the Bronze Age, and the Hellenistic world into which Rome spread was cosmopolitan in sport and performance. We need to compare the Near East and Egypt to Greece and Rome, not just contrast Greece and Rome. Early Greece was heavily influenced from outside, and Hellenistic Greeks dominated large states, privileging some groups and excluding others through sport. Rome’s vast empire incorporated and perpetuated a host of sports and spectacles. To deny that Roman spectacles had any sporting qualities, or that Greek sports had spectacular features, is anachronistic Hellenism. Moving beyond the centers and the canon (the capitals, classical eras, and literary classics), ancient sport studies are taking the Greeks down from their pedestals and raising the Romans from their ruins.

Questions arise. Were the Greeks and Romans so good or so bad, so one-dimensional, or so different? Why did Greeks spend the time and money to travel to remote Olympia, and why did Romans of all stations flock to shows? Why were many of antiquity’s most famous sites and architecturally original structures venues for sports and spectacles, for exercise and recreation? How very different was the Roman circus, with its facilities, fans, and slaves, from the Greek hippodrome? Were the Greek officials—magistrates and monarchs—who organized, supervised, and financed athletic festivals so very different (in their motives, methods, pressures, and rewards) from Roman politicians and emperors? Did Greek boxers, who fought until injured or forced to submit, and sometimes died in the process, have nothing (e.g., training, skill, and virtue) in common with gladiators and beast fighters? Did not athletes, charioteers, and gladiators all aspire to victory, fame, and prizes in some form? Did not they all want to be memorialized and remembered as competitors and combatants? Why did both Greek and Roman society at large turn victors into heroes and stars, even as some intellectuals

lamented the wasted resources and misplaced adulation? Why, after initial mutual suspicion, did Greeks and Romans come to accept and endorse each other's games to a large degree?

The Greek Olympics and other Panhellenic Games were grand spectacles complete with violence, corruption, erotic overtones, merchandising, and other fringe activities, and political and economic exploitation; and Roman spectacles on their own terms—especially the circus but even the gladiatorial combats—included training, talent, dedication, and ideological integrity (e.g., procedures, values, and virtues). A closer look at the evidence shows that the Greeks came to appreciate Roman spectacles as they spread to the Hellenistic East and that Romans were capable of appreciating the sports of the stadium as well as the spectacles of the arena. Greek and Roman games had major differences but also similarities and cultural ties; both were popular, physical, and pagan. They drew competitors and spectators from afar because Greeks and Romans shared a passionate enthusiasm for sport. The Olympics and the games at Rome were just pinnacles of vast networks of local games and shows. Although some might prefer to perceive Greek sport through the gauze of ennobling Pindaric lyric, realistically, the appeal of ancient sport, both Greek and Roman, was visual and visceral.

Recent scholarship in fact has started to view Greek sports as spectacles, and it has become more acceptable to see Roman spectacles as sport or leisure—from the perspectives of the spectators and even many of the participants. Roman games, including those of the arena, do fulfill a broad definition of sport as a means whereby members of a society disport or entertain themselves.²⁴ Scholarship, including J. Toner's perceptive (1995) study, has become more balanced and sophisticated in approaching Roman spectacles, of all kinds, within the broader context of leisure and entertainment. Some still balk at the notion of violent spectacles as sport or as sporting, but their prominence in Roman leisure and recreation cannot be denied any more than we can deny the prominence of violence—symbolic, fake, virtual, and real—in modern sport and entertainment.²⁵ Roman sport was part of Roman civilization and also part of the broader history of sport in the ancient world; it was not an aberration unrelated to earlier sport or human nature.²⁶

Notes

- 1 Research accelerated in the 1980s with bibliographies and surveys: Weiler and Ulf (1988); Kyle (1983, 7–34); Scanlon (1984); Crowther (1985, 1990), followed by Kyle (1998); König (2005, 22–35, 2010, 1–16). Other useful resources include the annual surveys in *Nikephoros*, a journal on ancient sport; Crowther (2004); Golden (2004). Recent collections of essays include Nelis-Clément and Roddaz (2008); Wilmott (2009); König (2010); Papakonstantinou (2010); Fisher and van Wees (2011); Coleman and Nelis-Clément (2012); Christesen and Kyle (2014).
- 2 For example, Weiler and Ulf (1981); Poliakoff (1987, 134–47); Fisher and van Wees (2011).
- 3 Recent historiographical treatments include Kyle (2010a); Toner (1995); Weiler (2014).

- 4 Courses, texts, and sourcebooks on ancient sport have proliferated. For Greece Miller offers both the best textbook (2004) and sourcebook (2012) surpassing Sweet (1987) and Tyrrell (2004). On Rome, Dunkle (2008) reliably treats arena and circus spectacles, as does Futrell's (2006) sourcebook, surpassing Mahoney (2001). Crowther (2007), Dodge (2011), and Newby (2006) are brief texts suitable for sections of courses but Potter (2012) is more substantial for courses on ancient sport and spectacle.
- 5 Bergmann (1999) 16, defines "spectacle" broadly to include a wide variety of performances and venues, of actions and places, of things seen and places where they were seen.
- 6 Tertullian's work on spectacles condemned performances in the stadium, circus, amphitheater, and theater. Suetonius' lost work, the *Ludicra Historia*, mentioned by Tertullian, *De spect.* 5.8 and *Suda s.v.*, included both Greek and Roman contests.
- 7 For example, Gardiner's work, a popular textbook for decades, uses "professional" and "spectacular" pejoratively (1930, 99–116).
- 8 See Golden (1998, 2008); Scanlon (2002); Miller (2004); König (2005); Newby (2005); Christesen (2012); Potter (2012); Pritchard (2013).
- 9 On these and other relevant works of Imperial literature, see König's sophisticated (2005) work.
- 10 Larmour (1999) shows that sport was a common cultural currency in metaphors, slang, and narrative in drama. Other studies of genres or authors include Brown (1983); Kurke (1991); König (2005); Coleman (2006); Lovatt (2006); McDevitt (2009); Kyle (2010b).
- 11 Hornblower and Morgan (2007) is essential reading on the contexts and influence of Pindar's poems.
- 12 For example, Romano (1993); Morgan (1990); Sinn (2000); Miller (2004a, 2004b); Valavanis (2004); Scott (2010). For valuable essays, see Raschke (1988); Tzachou-Alexandri (1989); Phillips and Pritchard (2003); Crowther (2004).
- 13 Dunbabin (1978, 17–18, 65–87); Blanchard-Lemée, et al. (1996, 189–217).
- 14 See Shaw (2003) and Christesen's definitive study (2007), noted in Chapter 5.
- 15 For illustrations and bibliography, see Edmunds, M. et al. The Antikythera Mechanism research project (<http://www.antikythera-mechanism.gr>).
- 16 As König (2010, 16) comments: "Any representation of athletic activity is necessarily a tendentious attempt to impose a particular viewpoint." Writing about athletic activity is "...often an exercise of self-representation and self-definition for ancient writers."
- 17 Guttmann (1978, 15–55). Cf. Sansone (1988); Carter and Krüger (1990); Young (1996).
- 18 Goldhill and Osborne (1999, 1–29) explain performance studies as a discipline of cultural studies with mixed origins in theater, anthropology, sociology, psychology, rhetoric, and linguistics.
- 19 Bergmann (1999, 9–35) presents varied activities and multiple contexts as all part of a single phenomenon, a common tradition of thought, and a visual, symbolic performative art or language of spectacle from Etruscan and Hellenistic through Roman times.
- 20 Scholars increasingly apply "somatology" or the study of the display, images, and meanings of ancient bodies, especially nude males, as symbolic cultural "texts" (e.g., Stewart (1997); Osborne (2010)). Scanlon (2002) sets the Greek body in the context of eros, education, status, and socialization. Also, modern sport sociological theories (e.g., hegemony, functionalism) give insights on the treatment (e.g., diet, medical care, or abuse), disciplining, and display of bodies to assist (or challenge) social order; König (2005, 97–157); Christesen (2012, 12–28).
- 21 For example, Bell (2004) examines the political dimensions of interactions between audiences and ancient political figures as they perform and present themselves, notably at spectacles and shows. German (2005) applies performance theory to Late Bronze Age images of performances including bull leaping.
- 22 For example, Gardiner (1930, 49) claimed Italians "had long been brutalized by gladiatorial shows and craved an excitement which pure athletics could not give."
- 23 European ancient sport historians, e.g., Weiler and Ulf (1981); Decker and Thuillier (2004), have

- been models in broadening research. Guttmann (2004) is a work of astounding scope.
- 24 Defining sport thus Harris (1972, 13) includes Roman chariot racing and Greek sport under Rome, but he excludes arena spectacles. Anderson (1985) and Poliakoff (1987) exclude Roman gladiatorial and hunting spectacles on the grounds of morality and purpose.
- 25 Sansone (1988, 116–17) sees Roman gladiatorial fights as simply an intensified form of “sport.”
- Golden (2004, ix, 2008, 68–104), includes gladiatorial combat because it had competitive elements similar to Greek athletics. On gladiators as athletes, see Chapter 15.
- 26 Fagan (2011) sees the allure of staged violence as part of human psychology. Potter (2010, 2012) approaches both Greek sports and Roman spectacles as entertainments with interactions among performers, producers, and audiences.

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