

Veijo Hietala: Wrestles with Myths! – Sports in Modern and Postmodern Media Culture

The paper discusses the role of sports in creating and reinforcing myths in the age of audiovisual media culture. The starting point is Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia* (1936-1938), a "documentary" of the 1936 Berlin Olympics. Apparently for the fear of "glamorizing" Nazism, many – especially Anglo-American – media historians and theorists fail to mention the pioneering role of *Olympia* in the making of modern media sports – similarly as they "forget" that the Berlin Olympics was also the first televised sports event in the world.

The paper argues that, in a way, Riefenstahl's film seems to claim that actually the whole heritage of ancient Greece is revived and delivered to the present by the athlete's body and, eventually, by the Nazis and Germany. Thus, *Olympia* made explicit the mythology of nation but also many other myths implicitly associated with sports, such as mythology of gender, i.e. that sports is largely a male sphere. The paper attempts to demonstrate that the same myths still prevail in media sports in so called postmodern era. As an outstanding example of postmodern sports the paper discusses professional wrestling. Some earlier theorists (e.g. Barthes, Fiske) have connected it to the grotesque or Bakhtin's concept of carnival, but the present paper proposes that wrestling actually makes explicit and exaggerates the transgressive tendencies that lie behind the seemingly disciplined and rule-bound appearance of modern and postmodern (media) sports.

Taina Kinnunen: National Warriors and Ideal Bodies – Representations of Male Body in the Sports News on TV

In this article I trace the ways male body is presented in sports news by the Finnish TV channels. In my interpretation I use the views of a French sociologist Michel Maffesoli. Maffesoli regards sports fan culture and, on the other hand, passionate caring of the body as forms of "tribalism" in the post-modern age. The idealized male body is interpreted to represent the community at two levels: nationality and a transnational way of life centered on the body maintenance. The TV viewer is connected to these communities by television. In both cases, the top sportsman can be viewed as an embodiment of the idealized masculinity that is widely adopted both by the Finnish and Western culture in general.

It is clear that the so called traditional masculine sports hero, quiet, controlled and usually a performer of individual sports, still has a high status in the hierarchy of Finnish sports publicity. Further, the hegemonic masculinity of the Finnish society, represented by the sports heroes, and, on the other hand, by the male sports journalists, is white, heterosexual and working-class oriented. The traditional male athlete has long been a representation of Finnishness as a matter of course. However, a new media oriented sportsman has come out. It is obvious that especially in the future, the "aesthetic" sportsmen, who not only behave pleasantly but look perfect, will be the most idealized sports celebrities. Considering the role of the television in the everyday life of people, the aesthetic sportsman will

widely serve as an ideal for men's gender identity work. Accordingly, the pressures towards the performance and looks of the top sportsmen will further grow.

Sanna Valtonen & Sanna Ojajärvi: The Shapely and the Beautiful. Women and men in the imaginaries of sports culture

The article deals with gendered sports culture in the media. The analysis is based on monitoring exercise programmes on television, sports and exercise magazines and sports and exercise-oriented Finnish internet sites during one week (week 35/2002). It focuses on gendering practices and their consequences: How, in practice, do imaginaries make themselves more available to one gender than another? What kind of ideological consequences do these imaginaries have? What kind of material do they offer for constructing active subjectivities or doing identity work?

It seems that mediated sports culture is gendered in a very traditional way. In the media imaginaries, women are re-presenting sports whereas men perform it. Also the motivation for practising sports is gendered – while men are expected to enjoy competition and improving their performance, women are assumed to enjoy the results of exercising: weight loss and improved body shape. It also seems that sports media, which address men, are specialised in one sport and its technique, whereas women's media are general in their area of interest: magazine-like and looks-oriented. Thus, it can be concluded that men are expected to choose their areas of interest whereas women are interested in all sports and exercise culture in a 'womanly' way.

Gendered images are not only representing what genders are like; they also produce two considerably different cultures. Grasping representations and analysing them can be considered a modest effort to point out and re-articulate existing undemocratic symbolic practices.

Aki Järvinen: Simulations of Sports and Stardom

The article discusses sports games played via computers and game consoles. The genre of sports games is one of the most popular among digital game genres. The analysis focuses on the concept of simulation and the specific nature of the player experiences that emerge from interacting with these playable simulations.

The paper presents case analysis of two sports games, *Pro Evolution Soccer 2* and *Transworld Snowboarding*. Their particular structure in creating a simulation of their respective sport is analysed. The audio-visual means and trends of sports games are also discussed.

The author argues that interest in sports games is motivated and fulfilled by the varying roles – from manager to field player – that sports games provide for the player. The ability to play in the 'shoes' of big sports stars in the context of professional sports spectacles (professional leagues, competitions, etc.) is another feature of sports games that makes them popular. Sports games are consumed in the larger context of sports as a form of popular culture. They incorporate traits of role-playing games, but the context of role-play is transformed from the traditional fantasy and science fiction settings to the world of professional sports.