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Sporting the Glass Jaw: Views on Women in Sports

Abstract

Sport is still understood as a traditional bastion of masculinity that exalts physical qualities such as strength and speed, and psychological traits such as aggression and perseverance, deeming women's participation undesirable and unnecessary. Nevertheless, women for decades, in strict separation from men or within so-called "women's sports", were achieving results worthy of the attention of even the fiercest sceptics. Because of its nature founded in physicality, sport is still relatively seldom the area of political struggle for gender equality, although female athletes have occasionally done more for positive outcomes of that struggle than is acknowledged. In this paper, I discuss the ambivalent nature of sport contributing, on the one hand, to the essentialisation of genders in their differences and the petrification of power relations between them, and containing, on the other, indications of destruction or at least of corruption of the traditional, hierarchically established gender norms. The paper consists of four parts. In the first introductory part, I explain the reasons for concentrating my discussion on formalised competitive sports and approaches I am using. While emphasising the biopolitical aspects of the subject, I start my analysis with the description of a proclaimed guiding principles of contemporary sports contained in the spirit of Olympism. In the second part, I discuss the ontology of sport contained in the ideas of the founder of the modern Olympic Games Baron Pierre de Coubertin and the consequential factors influencing women's participation in sports. These range from the perception of women's allegedly debilitating physical and psychological traits, through hypersexualisation of female athletes' body, or the attitude that it is not feminine enough, to the accusations that female athletes harm their health jeopardising, for example, the basic feminine duty – that of motherhood. In the third part, I put de Coubertin's arguments in the contemporary context emphasising the relevance the concept of hegemonic masculinity has on the contemporary understanding of masculinity and the role of sport in maintaining it. In the last, fourth part, I discuss emancipatory aspects of sports, concluding on their ability to disrupt both essentialised femininity and essentialised masculinity.

Keywords

sport, women, women's sports, Olympic spirit, Pierre de Coubertin, gender, emancipation

Introduction

Most Croatians do not have a problem recollecting the 2017 Wimbledon gentlemen's singles champion. In 2017, Swiss Roger Federer beat Croatian tennis player Marin Čilić winning the Wimbledon title. It is uncertain if the same kind of knowledge can be expected in the case of the winner of the 2017 Wimbledon ladies' singles championship. Her name is Garbiñe Muguruza Blanco, she is a Spanish Venezuelan tennis player, and she won the Wimbledon title by beating United States' Venus Williams. Although I am

aware that this possible knowledge discrepancy primarily exists because of, in the first case, emotional investment following the participation of a national (Croatian) tennis player, fact remains that even if that was not the case the name of the female champion for most people in Croatia and beyond would stay unknown. One of the main reasons for the above is that there is still a huge gap between media coverage of men's and women's sports in favour of the former, with the latter being often considered boring, unattractive and non-lucrative.¹

Although women started competing in Wimbledon Championships in 1884 (the first Wimbledon female winner was British player Maud Watson), seven years after the first Wimbledon Championships, it seems that many people, including journalists, forget that women play tennis. In 2017 when British tennis player Andy Murray was interviewed after a Wimbledon match that he lost to Sam Querrey, a reporter started his question by referring to Querrey as the first US player to reach a major semi-final since 2009. Andy Murray corrected him by saying that Querrey was the first male US player to reach a major semi-final, since from 2009 Serena Williams alone has won 12 Grand Slam Tournaments and her sister Venus reached the Wimbledon semi-finals.²

In this paper, I will concentrate, from a philosophical and feminist perspective, on ideological obstacles and emancipatory potential of women's participation in contemporary sports. Under the term *contemporary sports*, I understand sports as we know them for the last two and a quarter centuries, that occur parallel to and in dependence of the advanced industrial societies. While discussing contemporary sports, my focus will primarily be on formalised competitive sports, which means that I will mostly neglect those forms of human activity implicit to the concepts of leisure and of physical education.³ The first reason for my selection is that formalised competitive sports offer a clear insight into the workings of biopolitics of sport where gender serves as one of the foundations for games of power. It is through formalised competitive sports that biopolitical power relations have been established which, since the 19th century and the founding of the modern Olympic Games, have served to educate and socialise the future proclaimed rulers of the world – white upper class men. The second reason for my selection is that formalised competitive sports usually increase the existing problems stemming from the inclusion of gender difference in sport. They do so by introducing into this already explosive concoction equally laden elements of social reality such as media representation and market and political interests. Also, because of their mainstream nature and their exposure to the conventional public eye, formalised competitive sports often reproduce and petrify existing social injustices, of which I will primarily focus on those experienced by women. However, precisely because of their omnipresence in public life they have the capacity, which they sometimes demonstrate, to change existing social relations by introducing gender emancipatory phenomena and trends, some of which I will mention here.

Although the dominant perspective from which the topic of sport is tackled in this thematic issue is bioethical, I have decided to use biopolitical more than bioethical approach.⁴ The reason for that choice is a necessity of understanding a broader (bio)political perspective which, in my opinion, lies at the heart of many bioethical topics and problems concerning women, making them even more controversial and complex than they already are.

Strictly speaking, the most popular contemporary bioethical concerns regarding women in sports covering topics such as sex verification, sex segregation, transgender athletes, etc., are closely related to the biopolitics of sex or the establishment of social and political power over individuals and groups based on their perceived biological sex.⁵ I understand biopolitics in the Foucauldian sense meaning politics that govern populations by controlling, regulating and disciplining different bodies.⁶ It does so through various arenas, sports being one of them. It seems that especially in sports this “microphysics of power”⁷ gets its favourite playground since they are often all about “disciplining bodies, shaping thoughts, and displaying the product of this process as an exemplar to an audience”.⁸ Bodies are disciplined until docile through practices that govern the self and the Other whereby the Other is often demonised and discriminated against. That is why the story of sports is intricately linked to the story of the state and of phenomena such as imperialism, colonialism, nationalism, classism, racism and sexism.

Workings of the biopolitics of sex can be wonderfully observed on the contemporary understanding of sports that was several decades ago summed by the *father* of the modern Olympic Games Baron Pierre de Coubertin. For de Coubertin Olympic games promoted a certain philosophy of life (Olympism) whose fundamental principles emphasised the blend of sport, culture and edu-

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Cf. Janet S. Fink, “Female athletes, women’s sport, and the sport media commercial complex: have we really ‘come a long way, baby’?”, *Sport Management Review* 18 (2013) 3, pp. 331–342, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2014.05.001>; Cheryl Cooky, Michael A. Messner, Robin H. Hextrum, “Women play sport, but not on TV: A longitudinal study of televised news media”, *Communication & Sport* 1 (2011) 3, pp. 203–230, doi: <http://doi.org/10.1177/2167479513476947>; Mary J. Kane, “The better sportswomen get, the more the media ignore them”, *Communication and Sport* 1 (2013) 3, pp. 231–236, doi: <http://doi.org/10.1177/2167479513484579>.

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Andy Murray, “Tennis women make the same sacrifices as men”, *BBC News* (18 September 2017). Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-41082938> (accessed on 24 December 2018).

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Louise Mansfield, Jayne Caudwell, Belinda Wheaton, Beccy Watson, “Introduction: Feminist thinking, politics and practice”, in: Louise Mansfield *et al.* (eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of feminism and sport, leisure and physical education*, Palgrave Macmillan, London 2018, pp. 1–15.

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I thank Lev Kreft for his observation regarding the biopolitical nature of my work after my presentation at the international conference “Ethics, bioethics and sport” held in Zagreb and Varaždin (Croatia), 23–24 March 2018.

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In Michel Foucault’s words: “To say that power took possession of life in the nineteenth century, or to say that power at least takes life under its care in the nineteenth century, is to say that it has, thanks to the play of technologies of discipline on the one hand and technologies of regulation on the other, succeeded in covering the whole surface that lies between the organic and the biological, between body and population. We are, then, in a power that has taken control of both the body and life or that has, if you like, taken control of life in general – with the body as one pole and the population as the other.” – Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–1976*, translated by David Macey, Picador, New York 2003, p. 273.

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Michel Foucault, “Governmentality”, in: Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, Peter Miller (eds.), *The Foucault Effect. Studies in Government with Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1971, pp. 87–104.

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Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*, Vintage Books, translated by Alan Sheridan, New York – Toronto 1995.

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Niko Besnier, Susan Brownell, Thomas F. Carter, *The Anthropology of Sport: Bodies, Borders, Biopolitics*, University of California Press, Oakland, California 2018, p. 202.

cation while reintroducing the ancient ideal of *Kalos K'agathos*⁹ and the accompanying idea of balance between body, will and mind. Avery Brundage, the president of the International Olympic Committee from 1952 to 1972, nicely explained the latter:

“In the enlightened ‘Golden Age’, true culture was well rounded, requiring both physical and mental training. Philosophers, dramatists, poets, sculptors and athletes met on common ground. Plato, the great thinker, was also a great athlete and won honors in the games (...) There was truly a marriage of fine arts and sport! Man probably more nearly realized that proud and happy condition of a sound mind in a sound body than ever before or since.”¹⁰

While there is no doubt that Olympism promoted many beautiful ideals,¹¹ not all historians were convinced on the sincerity of its promoters. Florence Carpenter and Jean-Pierre Lefèvre claim that aside from the proclaimed Olympic idealism, for de Coubertin and his associates the Olympic Games were primarily the means to promote and spread the European aristocratic and masculine values.¹² The intrinsic and partially hidden aspect of these values were often classism, sexism and racism that were firmly rooted in European society of the time, and which still hold some of their positions in today’s sports. Consequently, contemporary sports with Olympic Games as their more prominent exemplar were recognised not as accidental but as deliberate tools in adjusting the working classes to the new capitalist regime, of pacifying colonised groups and in maintaining gender relations.¹³

Although many were happy at the time to equate ancient and contemporary sports, this was not even remotely possible since both were specific products of their social environment and historical context, carrying both their good and their bad qualities. Contemporary, in comparison to ancient sports, are further differentiated by the establishment of a strict codification system providing stable structure and easy dissemination worldwide, and by the emergence of voluntary sports associations on the local, national, regional and international levels whose authority is being supported by international sports law.¹⁴ Behind both of these processes, starting from 19th century Great Britain and North America, was a belief in the intellectual, physical, moral, religious, political, sexual and racial superiority of their originators.

“Muscular Christianity, one of the most significant ideological forces in both the development of modern sport in Britain and its early globalization, was explicitly based on the convergence of masculinity, physical activity, asceticism, racial purity, and the white man’s burden.”¹⁵

Any threat to aforementioned superiority meant severe sanctions and humiliation of the alleged offenders. The reasons behind that lie in the fact that the meaning and role of sports are, to some extent, different from what they seem at first glance. In my opinion, sports are the images of what nations consider themselves to be, or what they want to become, writing into them their fears and their hopes, their memories and their visions of future, their values and their vices. Conservative, misogynistic, racist or xenophobic values not only will find their place in the sports but they will also enhance them. In other words, sports are as discriminatory and oppressive as the societies in which they take place are.

Societies that safely keep gender difference will continue to do the same in sports, deeming women unfit to participate in the aforementioned training for “world dominion”. That was indirectly expressed in the attitude of de Coubertin himself.

De Coubertin’s arguments against women in sports

Unlike Wimbledon, for participation in the Olympic Games women have waited longer or shorter, depending on whether we are referring to the old or

the new Olympics. The Ancient Olympics starting around 8th century BC in Greece did not have female competitors except in those cases when women were the owners of the victorious racing stables.¹⁶ In the contemporary Olympics, women appeared in the 1900 Paris games, four years after the first games, when from 997 competitors, only 22 were females. Women competed in tennis, sailing, equestrian events, golf and croquet.¹⁷ The founder of the International Olympic Committee and the contemporary Olympic Games, Pierre de Coubertin, was openly hostile toward female athletes. He considered their participation in the Olympics “impractical, uninteresting, unaesthetic and improper”,¹⁸ believing that their only task was “that of the role of

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“The idea of Kalos K’agathos was the guiding ideal of the ancient Athenian conception of education – being a person both good and beautiful. ‘Good’ (agathos) referred to moral development and ‘beautiful’ (kalos) referred to physical beauty, and together they referred to the ideal of a fully developed mind in a superb body, later echoed in Juvenal’s dualistic tag: mens sana in corpore sano.” – Vasil Girginov, Jim Parry, *The Olympic Games explained. A student guide to the evolution of the modern Olympic Games*, Routledge, London – New York 2005, pp. 7–8.

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David C. Young, *A Brief History of the Olympic Games*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden, Oxford – Carlton 2004, p. 80.

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Girginov and Parry listed the following: individual all-round harmonious human development, towards excellence and achievement, through effort in competitive sporting activity, under conditions of mutual respect, fairness, justice and equality, with a view to creating lasting personal human relationships of friendship, international relationships of peace, toleration and understanding, and cultural alliances with the arts. – V. Girginov, J. Parry, *The Olympic Games explained*, p. 9.

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Florence Carpentier, Jean-Pierre Lefèvre, “The modern Olympic Movement, women’s sport and the social order during the inter-war period”, *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 23 (2006) 7, pp. 1112–1127, p. 1113, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523360600832387>.

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Lois Bryson, “Sport, drugs and the development of modern capitalism”, *Sporting Traditions* 6 (1990) 2, pp. 135–153. Also: “As an aristocrat, he [de Coubertin] was interested in the education of the masses (also through sports), but more importantly as a strategy to make the masses ‘manageable’ and more controllable for the ruling élite. Therefore, the objective was not so much to promote

greater equality between parties, but rather to preserve order in an era characterized by social tensions and internal rebellions.” – Cosimo Di Bari, “The contemporary relevance of Pierre de Coubertin: sports ‘experienced’ between communication and education. Introductory note”, *Studi sulla formazione 2* (2016), pp. 229–242, p. 230, doi: http://doi.org/10.13128/Studi_Formaz-20211.

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N. Besnier, S. Brownell, T. F. Carter, *The Anthropology of Sport*, pp. 41–45.

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John J. MacAloon (ed.), *Muscular Christianity in Colonial and Post-Colonial Worlds*, Routledge, Abington – Oxfordshire 2007; according to: N. Besnier, S. Brownell, T. F. Carter, *The Anthropology of Sport*, p. 45.

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D. C. Young, *A Brief History of the Olympic Games*, p. 113.

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International Olympic Committee, *Factsheet: Women in the Olympic Movement* (22 January 2016). Available at: https://stillmed.olympic.org/Documents/Reference_documents/Factsheets/Women_in_Olympic_Movement.pdf (accessed on 24 December 2018).

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“In our view, this feminine semi-Olympiad is impractical, uninteresting, ungainly, and, I do not hesitate to add, improper. It is not in keeping with my concept of the Olympic Games, in which I believe that we have tried, and must continue to try, to put the following expression into practice: the solemn and periodic exaltation of male athleticism, based on internationalism, by means of fairness, in an artistic setting, with the applause of women as a reward.” – De Coubertin cited in: Martin Polley, “Sport, Gender and Sexuality at the 1908 London Olympic Games”, in: Jennifer Hargreaves, Eric Anderson (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Sport, Gender and Sexuality*, Routledge, London – New York 2014, pp. 30–38, p. 31.

crowning the winner with garlands”.¹⁹ Most of his attitudes about the nature of the Olympic Games and arguments against women’s participation in them could be determined paradigmatic for understanding the problems female athletes and those who wanted to become one dealt with throughout the last two centuries and are still dealing with today.

De Coubertin’s arguments against women’s involvement in the Olympics can be reduced to two major strands both heavily oriented toward the alleged properties of women’s bodies: The first one pertained, in comparison to men, to the lower physical capacities of women’s bodies because of which they were unsuitable for sports.²⁰ De Coubertin considered women’s bodies fragile, glasslike, and being primarily designed for childbirth and not for heavy physical burdens.²¹ The irony that escaped him is that childbirth itself is a heavy physical burden that usually takes great bodily strength and effort, same strength and effort much needed in the achievement of an important sports result. Gynaecologists of that time were especially loud to demonstrate how activities such as running can harm women’s bodies, lower their wombs and cause sterility.²² Varieties of this attitude are still present today in the form of uncritical conclusions on the harmful effects on female health of activities such as heavy lifting. Women are also still actively dissuaded from certain sports (combat sports or bodybuilding, for example) since it is believed that they are not suitable for the delicate female nature and (or) appearance.

In the 19th and 20th century, the differences between men and women, when it comes to physical performance, have been observed not only regarding speed and strength but also regarding the quality of their body compartment and movement. Causes of these differences were sought in biology. Although there is no doubt that biological differences between men and women regarding average oxygen-carrying capacity, bone and ligament size and muscle mass to body weight ratio favour men in sports activities based on strength and speed, when it comes to endurance, the gender gap decreases. This led to a conclusion that the longer the event, the better the chances of women achieving equal or better results than men, with long-distance running, technical climbing and swimming as examples.²³ Despite this, women were officially allowed to participate in the famous Boston Marathon very late, in 1972, and the first female Olympic marathon took place even later, in 1984.²⁴ It is important to note that the difference between the male and female best time on one of the toughest races in the world, Hardrock Hundred Mile Endurance Run, running through the mountainous part of Colorado and with the cut off time of 48 hours, is less than five minutes. Emily Baer finished eighth overall in 2007 while stopping several times during the race to breastfeed her baby.²⁵

While the reasons for differences in speed and strength between men and women can be found in their biology, the same cannot be said, argues Iris Marion Young in her famous essay “Throwing like a girl”, regarding their differences in body compartment and movement. Reasons for those differences were traditionally also sought in the physiology and anatomy of women’s bodies but when they were not found there, many, usually male, experts concluded on the existence of an obscure “feminine essence”, for which no one knew exactly what it was, except that doing sports is not one of its attributes.²⁶ Young evokes Simone de Beauvoir, and her insisting on the relevance of human experience on the construction of femininity and masculinity (i.e. the relationship between the situation and the existence)²⁷ and claims that women’s body compartment and movement are not biological traits but a direct consequence of historical, cultural, social, and economic circumstances.²⁸ In other words, *feminine essence* for Young is

“... a set of structures and conditions that delimit the typical situation of being a woman in a particular society, as well as the typical way in which this situation is lived by the women themselves.”²⁹

Torn between the immanence and the transcendence, women live their bodies in different ways than men, safekeeping their fragile, powerless and vulnerable self from the engagement in the world’s possibilities. “Girls and women”, says Young, “are not allowed to use their full bodily capacities in free and open engagement with the world, nor are they encouraged as much as boys are to develop specific bodily skills”.³⁰ The implications of such beliefs can be seen on their restrained body comportment and movement and the later decision not to get involved in sports. In other words, female athletes are disregarded as such, even before they become athletes. In addition, although women are competing today, their athletic abilities are often determined as less worthy of media coverage and financial compensation.

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Linda K. Fuller, *Female Olympians. A mediated socio-cultural and political-economic timeline*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2016, p. 27.

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F. Carpentier, J.-P. Lefèvre, “The modern Olympic Movement, women’s sport and the social order during the inter-war period”, p. 1113.

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For example: “... in public competitions, women’s participation must be absolutely prohibited. It is indecent that spectators should be exposed to the risk of seeing the body of a woman being smashed before their eyes. Besides, no matter how toughened a sportswoman may be, her organism is not cut out to sustain certain shocks. Her nerves rule her muscles, nature wanted it that way. Finally, the egalitarian discipline that is brought to bear on the male contenders for the good order and good appearance of the meeting risks being affected and rendered inapplicable by female participation. For all these practical reasons as well as sentimental ones, it is extremely desirable that a drastic rule be established very soon.” – De Coubertin cited in: L. K. Fuller, *Female Olympians*, pp. 27–28.

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Gertrud Pfister, “The medical discourse on female physical culture in Germany in the 19th and early 20th centuries”, *Journal of Sport History* 17 (1990) 2, pp. 183–198.

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Meaghan Brown, “The longer the race, the stronger we get”, *Outside Magazine* (May 2017). Available at: <https://www.outsideonline.com/2169856/longer-race-stronger-we-get> (accessed on 24 December 2018). Cf. Beat Knechtle, Thomas Rosemann, Christoph Alexander Rüst, “Women cross the ‘Catalina Channel’ faster than men”, *Springer-Plus* 4 (2015) 332, pp. 1–9, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40064-015-1086-4>.

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The first woman to run the Boston Marathon was Kathrine Switzer in 1967. She sent an official registration signing it as K. S. Switzer. Boston Marathon’s organizers realized she was a woman only on the third mile of the race. The race official rushed to Switzer and tried to remove her physically from the race or at least to tear off her number, but the members of her team from Syracuse University blocked those attempts. This event had a tremendous impact on the history of women’s marathon participation and probably influenced significantly the change of Olympic rules. See: Kathrine Switzer, “The real story of Kathrine Switzer’s 1967 Boston Marathon”, *Kathrine Switzer Marathon Woman* (March 2017). Available at: <http://kathrineswitzer.com/about-kathrine/1967-boston-marathon-the-real-story/> (accessed on 24 December 2018).

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Christopher McDougall, *Born to run: A hidden tribe, superathletes, and the greatest race the world has never seen*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York 2009, p. 195.

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Iris Marion Young, *On female body experience: “Throwing like a girl” and other essays*, Oxford University Press, New York 2005.

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Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, translated by H. M. Parshley, Jonathan Cape, Thirty Bedford Square, London 1956, pp. 669–672.

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I. M. Young, *On female body experience*, p. 29.

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Ibid., p. 31.

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Ibid., p. 43.

The second de Coubertin's argument was founded on his concerns regarding women's tantalizing bodies on the sports field.³¹ In his opinion, the female athletes, usually dressed in scantier and thinner sportswear than the male, deflected the viewer's attention from the sport toward carnal pleasures, thus corrupting the Olympic spirit. The celebrated balance between the body, will and mind, whose true existence obviously laid only in the being of a man, should not be disturbed by the parading of women's bodies. What can be concluded from de Coubertin's views is that he saw men not only as the sole athletes but as the sole audience as well, since he was not equally concerned with the morals of the female audience.

Today de Coubertin's arguments regarding the audience's morals seem to have disappeared, being replaced by the objectification, commercialisation and hypersexualisation of women athletes' bodies. And it is not just the way athletes look; whole sports are, in the words of Jennifer Hargreaves:

"... visibly and systematically sexualized: the performers conform to the female norm of heterosexuality; the routines contain 'ultra-feminine' postures and gestures, sensuous symbolism, sexually suggestive movements, and even sometimes provocative poses bordering on the erotic."³²

It became obvious that the role of women in the sports fields is to enthrall the audience not only with their athletic abilities but also with their bodily capacity to cause sexual arousal as well.³³ Media coverage of female athletes additionally diminishes their physical capacity and consequent athletic performance and transforms them into objects of sexual desire.³⁴ Tennis players, volleyball players, surfers, figure skaters and gymnasts regularly experience not only sexualisation of their bodies but their pornification as well.³⁵ For example, sports organisations and commissions often promote women's sportswear that is too short, excessively tight and skimpy. Unfortunately, the excessive sexualisation of women's clothing is just one part of the problem. Depriving women and girls of the right, especially when it comes to certain sports (such as gymnastics), to choose their clothing, a right that male athletes have, is an entirely different set of issues that directly threaten gender equality as a whole.³⁶

From sportswear to makeup and body maintenance, female athletes understand that sexy, camera-friendly, stereotypical feminine look is needed for the acquisition of good sponsorship contracts. This business model proves to be very lucrative for many of them, often deeming their athletic abilities and sport performances secondary or even irrelevant. Although this trend, especially from the postfeminist perspective, can be considered emancipatory for women, I do not find it as such. In my opinion, the idea that conforming to the social norms that treat women as objects can be liberating is paradoxical. In other words, freely making oneself an object of commercial, sexual and political exploitation will not make that self and all other similar selves free from commercial, sexual and political exploitation. If objectification of one's body is the only choice a woman has to succeed, then she has no choice, and she has no freedom.

(Self) sexualisation of women's bodies (and sports) should not only be understood as a historical abandonment of Victorian conservatism or a pragmatic commercial decision for gaining sports royalties and sponsorships but a consequence of sociohistorical changes in the last centuries regarding the dissolution of gender roles. Changes did not affect only women but men as well who, it is often said, are confused about being men in today's society. In that

context, sport becomes the last bastion of masculinity, the only commonplace for boys' socialisation and an all-male environment for quelling fears of male social feminisation.³⁷ This is why women athletes are perceived as intruders, pathological, they are considered masculinised (*butch*), lesbians, unfeminine, not being real women, and consequently, they are often sex-tested.³⁸ Furthermore, although sex verification has been presented as having its benefits in preserving fair play through preventing male athletes in their alleged attempts to achieve sporting success competing as women, it is also used as an ideological mechanism of keeping a strict separation between men and women, especially in those cases when women's results endanger their "natural" infe-

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F. Carpentier, J.-P. Lefèvre, "The modern Olympic Movement, women's sport and the social order during the inter-war period", p. 1113.

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Sports that J. Hargreaves has in mind are primarily gymnastics, ice-skating and synchronized swimming. They "are characterized as 'feminine-appropriate' because they affirm a popular image of femininity and demonstrate their essential difference from popular images of sporting masculinity". – Jennifer Hargreaves, *Sporting females: Critical issues in the history and sociology of sports*, Routledge, London – New York 1994, p. 159.

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Although they are not the subject of this paper, the discussion should not entirely exclude women whose primary, if not the only, role is the *entertainment through sexual arousal* at the sports field such as ring girls in boxing, cheerleaders in football, grid girls at races, event hostesses in tennis, etc.

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Cf. Charlene Weaving, "Smoke and Mirrors: A Critique of Women Olympians' Nude Reflections", *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy* 6 (2012) 2, pp. 232–250, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2012.666993>; Charlene Weaving, Jessica Samson, "The naked truth: disability, sexual objectification, and the *ESPN Body Issue*", *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 45 (2018) 1, pp. 83–100, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00948705.2018.1427592>.

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To be fair, today male athletes are being subjected to sexualisation trends as well, playing on sports fields and in the media presentations carefully thought out hyper-masculine roles of modern warriors and heroes. A good example of this is Tongan taekwondo practitioner and skier, Pita Taufatofua, who caused a great stir at the 2016 Olympics when he appeared at the opening ceremony as a flag bearer wearing nothing but a mat wrapped around the waist and covered in oil. See: Susan Chenery, "The incredible story of Pita Taufatofua, Tonga's shirtless Olympic flag bearer", *The Guardian*

(2 January 2019). Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2019/jan/02/the-incredible-story-of-pita-taufatofua-tongas-shirtless-olympic-flag-bearer> (accessed on 24 December 2018).

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Although in London 2012 Olympics female beach volleyball players were permitted by The International Volleyball Federation to wear less revealing uniforms (unlike previous bikinis), their new clothes were still significantly shorter and tighter than male. See, for example, Ellie Krupnick, "Olympic Volleyball Uniforms: Bikinis No Longer Required for Women", *Huffington Post* (28 February 2012). Available at: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/olympic-volleyball-uniform_n_1385879 (accessed on 24 December 2018). Although there are some moderately convincing arguments regarding functionality and practicality of tight uniforms during sports activities, the same cannot be said for very impractical skirts in sports such as lacrosse, boxing or badminton, in the last two being no longer mandatory. Another example are mandatory women's leotards in gymnastics being considered by many as fundamentally sexist. See, for example, Carly Stewart *et al.*, "Ease of Movement and Freedom of Corporeal Expression? Femininity, The Body and Leotards in Trampoline Gymnastics", *Leisure Studies Association* 110 (2010), pp. 63–76. Also, for an interesting discussion on women's artistic gymnastics from Foucault's perspective see: Natalie Barker-Ruchti, Richard Tinning, "Foucault in Leotards: Corporeal Discipline in Women's Artistic Gymnastics", *Sociology of Sport Journal* 27 (2010) 3, pp. 229–250, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.27.3.229>.

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Shari L. Dworkin, Cheryl Cooky, "Sport, sex segregation, and sex testing: Critical reflections on this unjust marriage", *The American Journal of Bioethics* 12 (2012) 7, pp. 21–23, p. 21, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15265161.2012.680545>.

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Ibid.

riority. Consequently, many female athletes probably choose hypersexualisation as a defence against possible accusations of abandoning the heteronormative matrix, filling the media space less with the results of their outstanding physical performances and more with proofs of their femininity.³⁹

Sports and hegemonic masculinities

It has already been said that gender sports relations were being seriously disrupted in the last two centuries, with the emancipation of women being the primary cause of the said disruption. That emancipation was manifested, on the one hand, through women gaining rights and freedoms and, on the other, through fundamental changes regarding the understanding of femininity (and masculinity) and female (male) nature. Thus, many long-standing prejudices about women's intellectual, moral and other capacities were brought into question, and consequently, many obstacles women faced in the family and private life, in the field of education and the labour market started to dissolve. Feminist theorists and scholars have shown that numerous differences between men and women, on which the hierarchy between them was established, were either non-existent or socially founded, hence mutable or relative. While the changes affected more or less all social fields in the West, the sports proved to be more resistant to them. At the same time, feminist groups and gender mainstreaming advocates were, in my opinion, slow in recognising the importance of sports in constructing gendered reality. Paradoxically, by turning a blind eye to sports, deeming them an insufficiently important field of feminist struggle, feminists unintentionally confirmed sports as a dominantly or even exclusively male realm.

The construction of sports as a male realm can be partially explained by introducing the well-known concept of *hegemonic masculinity* and the role sports had in maintaining and reproducing it. Hegemonic masculinity is a theoretical concept belonging to Raewyn Connell who borrowed Gramscian term “hegemony” to describe one certain type of masculinity that

“... embodied the currently most honoured way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimized the global subordination of women to men.”⁴⁰

In sports and beyond, hegemonic masculinity implies being primarily white, middle-class and heterosexual,⁴¹ able-bodied and morally superior, meat-eating and iron-pumping, assertive, aggressive and competitive, exercising control over personal life, and dominance over somebody else's life. At the same time, it implies a deep disregard for alternative masculinities, femininities and especially feminine physicality.

In addition, sports are still perceived to be an extension of or even an antidote to warfare, as one of the main, although tending to become obsolete today, activities of real *manly men*. That is why the language of sports is filled with war and combat metaphors. Furthermore, to win a race, to score a goal or to lift a bar is never just that, since in the media environment and in cheering communities sport success often bears the patriotic connotations of the homeland's defence. This is how the historian J. A. Mangan, while using appropriately selected anthemic words, explains why the relationship between sports and war is not just a metaphorical one:

“Heroes of sportsfield and battlefield have much in common. They are both viewed as symbols of national prowess, quality and virtue. The warrior and the athlete are crucial to the perceived

success of the state. The sportsfield and battlefield are linked as locations for the demonstration of legitimate patriotic aggression. The one location sustains the other and both sustain the image of the powerful nation. Furthermore, the sportsfield throughout history has prepared the young for the battlefield. Throughout history sport and militarism have been inseparable.”⁴²

The dark side of this blend of militarism, usually coming paired with nationalism, and sport was evident during the Cold War. Cold War battles that broke out between the two world powers – the United States and the Soviet Union – and their allies took place in space, science, education, and in sports. The most striking example was that of East Germany whose athletes, around 10000 of them, were given anabolic steroids and other substances in the late 1960s to improve their performance. The main idea behind doping of these popularly called “diplomats in tracksuits”, a practice firmly supported by East German government, was to show not only athletes’ skill and artistry but also the superiority of socialist over the capitalist system as well.⁴³ State-sponsored doping systems were found in former Czechoslovakia,⁴⁴ Russia⁴⁵ and China.⁴⁶

Thanks to the technical advancements, making physical strength obsolete not only in the labour market but also increasingly on the battlefield as well, sports remain the last line of defence for traditional, hegemonic masculinity. And this could be one of the reasons why female athletes are still having such a hard time. Of course, things are getting better. On the International Olympic Committee’s website, we find that women in 1928 made up only 10% of the contestants and that they reached 40% of the total in late 2014

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Similar practice of sexual objectification can be noticed with Paralympic athletes whose media presentations treat their disability as something to be minimized or hidden, often promoting ableist and sexist ideologies. Cf. C. Weaving, J. Samson, “The naked truth: disability, sexual objectification, and the ESPN Body Issue”, p. 97.

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Raewyn W. Connell, James W. Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic masculinity. Rethinking the concept”, *Gender & Society* 19 (2005) 6, pp. 829–859, p. 832, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243205278639>.

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Cynthia Hasbrook, Othello Harris, “Wrestling with gender. Physicality and masculinities among inner-city first and second graders”, in: Jim McKay, Michael A. Messner, Don Sabo (eds.), *Masculinities, gender relations and sports*, Sage Publications, Inc. – Thousand Oaks; London – New Delhi 2006, pp. 13–30.

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James A. Mangan, “Prologue: Combative sports and combative societies”, in: James A. Mangan (ed.), *Militarism, sport, Europe. War without weapons*, Frank Cass, London – Portland, Or. 2003, pp. 1–9, p. 1.

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Cf. “First-Ever Olympic Medals Awarded to Women Boxers”, *The International Olympic*

Committee (10 August 2012). Available at: <https://www.olympic.org/news/first-ever-olympic-medals-awarded-to-women-boxers> (accessed on 24 December 2018).

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“CZECH REPUBLIC/FILE: ATHLETICS: Documents show a systematic campaign of athlete doping in Czechoslovakia’s former communist regime”, *Screenocean – Reuters* (20 August 2006). Available at: <https://reuters.screenocean.com/record/722497> (accessed on 24 December 2018).

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Rebecca R. Ruiz, “The Soviet Doping Plan: Document Reveals Illicit Approach to ‘84 Olympics”, *The New York Times* (13 August 2016). Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/14/sports/olympics/soviet-doping-plan-russia-rio-games.html> (accessed on 24 December 2018).

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Maxwell J. Mehlman, *The Price of Perfection: Individualism and Society in the Era of Biomedical Enhancement*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 2009, p. 134.

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“Key dates in the history of women in the Olympic Movement”, *The International Olympic Committee*. Available at: <https://www.olympic.org/women-in-sport/background/key-dates> (accessed on 24 December 2018).

at the Winter Olympics in the Russian city of Sochi.⁴⁷ At the 2016 Summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, women made up 45% of the total participants.⁴⁸

Although women have been competing in boxing since the beginning of the 18th century, the last Olympic sport in which women's participation was introduced in 2012 was precisely this one.⁴⁹ It is worth noting that in the same year at the London Summer Olympics, the men's Japanese football team flew to the games by business class while the women's team travelled by economy class.⁵⁰ This last example shows that unfortunately, permission to participate is not necessarily followed by equality in participation, the latter depending on a number of factors that politics has only an indirect impact on. More precisely, despite the top sports results of female athletes, women in comparison to men are still less involved in sports activities, have a more difficult access to sports infrastructure, more often are exposed to violence and sexual harassment, are underrepresented in management boards of sports organizations and federations,⁵¹ and their sports are less visible in the media and systemically underfinanced.⁵²

Sports and emancipation

Thus far, it has been suggested that there is not much space for female athletes to contribute to women's emancipation. Contemporary competitive sports not only mirror many facets of patriarchal society but also, by their focus on the physical aspect of human beings, enhance them. As a deliberate biopolitical product, they contain elements that maintain the existing gender relations of power. Then, does it make sense to talk about the emancipatory aspects of sports? To some extent and with a great deal of caution, yes. I will mention several ways in which, in my opinion, female athletes contribute to gender equality.

Women in sports, by their very practice, show a capacity that they have historically been denied – the capacity to fully and freely engage their bodies with the world around them. Particularly in traditionally *non-women's* sports, they testify, by their very own examples, the falsity and cultural construction of notorious *feminine essence*. By proving themselves able to run, jump, kick and throw, without losing their uteruses or fainting from pain, they call into question de Coubertin's views that their bodies do not have the needed capacities for doing sports. However, it is not just that athlete's physical traits disrupt the usual deterministic understanding of women's functioning in a history marked by passivity, weakness, vulnerability and submissiveness. Said disruption also happens through women's display of willpower, persistence, courage and sturdiness, their capacity for leadership, strategic thinking and teamwork. Not only do women have the necessary skills to play sports but in some sports disciplines they are also approaching or even outperforming men – the equestrian events, ultramarathons and long-distance swimming being some of the examples.

Although under great pressure, many female athletes resist the societal demands placed on them regarding how they should look, how they should behave, and how they should act. Even under extreme media scrutiny and under accusations of being a man, or at least that her increased testosterone level gave her an unfair advantage, Caster Semenya, South African runner and 2016 Olympic gold medallist, refused to submit to the public's demands

for a more feminised appearance.⁵³ By not willing to comply, women athletes contribute to the redefinition of not only sports or what it means to be a female athlete but also what it means to be a woman (and man) in general. Their achievements disrupt traditional essentialising definitions of femininity and masculinity by blurring the lines between male and female sports, male and female capacities, male and female bodies and sometimes even between men and women themselves. By doing that, they are threatening some of the most fundamental canons of Western civilisation, founded on patriarchal establishment of hierarchies and ensuing oppression. This is why the backlash against them is ever so often extremely cruel and vicious, too cruel to be dealt with by athletes who are often teenagers. Most of them spent their lives in gyms and on athletic fields, not on feminist consciousness-raising meetings or at the faculties studying social sciences and humanities. They should not be judged too harshly because they often choose to conform. However, subversion is always possible.

Even though I have stated previously that conformity cannot lead to liberty, there are cases when bad reasons for directing interest towards women's sports can lead to the emancipation of said sports and their female athletes. When Gina Carano or Ronda Rousey entered mixed martial arts, this sport discipline shared the fate of other women's sports. In a world where the primary source of valorisation is being bigger, faster, better and stronger, and in which the idea of violence against women in most people causes great discomfort, women's mixed martial arts did not have a good chance of acquiring a larger audience. However, it still happened. Many men started watching women's MMA, and it soon gained almost similar promotion as men's did. What initially attracted the audience was not the beauty of the sport itself, but the beauty of the athletes and Carano and Rousey were willing participants in that spectacle. Hypersexualisation of these and other female athletes followed by their star status and fan worship also attracted those viewers that

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Kuang Keng Kuek Ser, "See 120 years of struggle for gender equality at the Olympics", *Public Radio International* (17 August 2016). Available at: <https://www.pri.org/stories/2016-08-17/see-120-years-struggle-gender-equality-olympics#targetText=The%202016%20Rio%20Olympic%20Games,participants%2C%20according%20to%20the%20IOC> (accessed on 24 December 2018).

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Barry Bearak, "Women Finally Get Their Chance to Be Contenders in Olympic Boxing", *The New York Times* (5 August 2012). Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/06/sports/olympics/women-participate-in-olympic-boxing-for-first-time.html> (accessed on 24 December 2018).

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Kharunya Paramaguru, "Why Are Some Olympic Women's Teams Flying Coach While the Men Fly Business?", *Time* (20 July 2012). Available at: <http://olympics.time.com/2012/07/20/why-are-some-olympic-womens-teams-flying-coach-while-the-men-fly-business/> (accessed on 24 December 2018).

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Morana Paliković Gruden, *Rodna ravnopravnost u sportu. Prijedlog za strateške akcije 2014.–2020.* [Gender equality in sport. A proposal for strategic action 2014–2020], Croatian Olympic Committee, Zagreb 2018.

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That in sports there are not only *sticky floors* but *glass ceilings* as well demonstrates Forbes' "The world's highest-paid athletes list" that contains not a single woman among the 100 best-paid athletes. Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/athletes/list/#tab:overall> (accessed on 24 December 2018).

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See, for example, Tshisalive, "This is how Caster Semenya handled her dad when he told her to wear dresses", *Times* (10 August 2017). Available at: <https://www.timeslive.co.za/tshisa-live/tshisa-live/2017-08-10-this-is-how-caster-semenya-handled-her-dad-when-he-told-her-to-wear-dresses/> (accessed on 24 December 2018).

admired, besides athletes' bodies, their technique, gutsiness, aggression and willingness to hurt and bleed just like their male counterparts.⁵⁴ And although I am partially sceptical regarding women's emancipation through blood and violence, I do find refreshing the social recognition of the fact that women sometimes can be bloody but not victims and can be violent but not hysteric. By freeing their bodies and movements through sports, women learn, and they teach other women self-respect and the existence of the world of freedom that follows from breaking gender rules and norms. They clearly and irrefutably demonstrate what was traditionally denied to women – that their bodies are capable, that their minds are balanced and that their wills are strong. And while universities and scientific institutions, academies and corporations are filled with capable and smart women, most of them cannot reach the kind of recognition in the public eye as women medallist can. Although heavily underrepresented in the media and in leadership positions of sports institutions and organisations, disadvantaged in situations where money, fame and honours are shared, underprivileged on and off the sports' field, some of them do rise to become heroes, saviours of state reputation and bearers of the finest features of national identity. When watching the game of national representatives, gender, gender roles and their breaking can sometimes become secondary or irrelevant to national pride and the joy of winning. Building and strengthening of collective identities through sports is often realised through identification with sport heroes and their values. To identify with a female hero, hero that works hard, plays hard, suffers and wins, can, in my opinion, make a change in perception of heroes and of women. Janica Kostelić, famous Croatian World Cup alpine ski racer and four-time Olympic gold medallist managed to do just that. By no means a "typical female", she successfully resisted being victimised by stereotypes and prejudices towards women and athletes. While, as is often the case with famous female athletes, she was unable to escape the shadow of her patriarchal father and trainer, in the public eye she imposed herself as a person who made her own decisions. Cool and composed, witty and sometimes dorky, she became an object of admiration for generations of Croatian citizens, significantly influencing the popularisation of skiing in Croatia. Although the places of national heroes throughout history have been largely reserved for men, and the entry of women into these positions is justifiably a great success, the latter should be taken with some caution that should naturally follow any politicisation of sport. The problem lies in the fact that by entering politics into sports, both male and female athletes become pawns in games of power that inherently deny their freedom and their emancipation.

Women athletes bring into question hetero-hegemonic norms (like Caster Semenya) as well as racial and class assumptions of sports success. Women's increased sport participation and success, especially of women of different races and religions, help them achieve freedoms and respect in those countries where their freedoms and respect have been denied. In some multi-ethnic communities (for example Albania, Russia and Afghanistan), sport was consciously used as a policy measure to encourage women's emancipation⁵⁵ while in China it helped many women break through the constraints of poverty, thereby becoming a path to upward social mobility.⁵⁶ These and other aspects of sport, I believe, show the disadvantages of negating the social complexity it carries. Although sport is still one of the toughest areas of traditional "biological" patriarchy, its potential capacity for breaking through restrictions should not be ignored.

Ana Maskalan

Imati staklenu bradu: pogledi na žene u sportu

Sažetak

Sport se još uvijek razumijeva kao tradicionalni bastion muškosti koji veliča fizičke kvalitete poput snage i brzine te psihološke kvalitete poput agresivnosti i izdržljivosti određujući sudjelovanje žena nepoželjnim i nepotrebnim. Bez obzira na to žene su desetljećima, u strogoj razdvojenosti od muškaraca ili u takozvanim »ženskim sportovima«, postizale rezultate dostojne pažnje i najvećih skeptika. Zbog svoje prirode zasnovane u tjelesnosti sport je još uvijek rijetko područje političke borbe za rodnu ravnopravnost, premda sportašice povremeno više doprinose pozitivnim ishodima te borbe no što im se pripisuje. U ovom radu raspravljam o ambivalentnoj prirodi sporta koji, s jedne strane, doprinosi esencijalizaciji rodova u njihovoj različitosti te petrifikaciji međusobnih odnosa moći, a s druge strane sadrži pokazatelje destrukcije ili barem kvarenja tradicionalnih, hijerarhijski uspostavljenih rodnih normi. Rad se sastoji od četiri dijela. U prvom, uvodnom dijelu objašnjavam razloge svoje usmjerenosti na formalizirane kompetitivne sportove te pristupe koje koristim. Naglašavajući biopolitičke aspekte teme analizu započinjem opisom proklamiranih vodećih principa suvremenog sporta sadržanih u duhu olimpizma. U drugom dijelu raspravljam o ontologiji sporta sadržanoj u idejama osnivača suvremenih Olimpijskih igara baruna Pierrea de Coubertina te o posljedičnim čimbenicima koji su utjecali na sudjelovanje žena u sportu. Raspon spomenutih čimbenika seže od percepcije ženskih fizičkih i psihičkih osobina kao manjkavih, preko hiperseksualizacije tijela sportašica ili pak tvrdnji da nisu dovoljno ženstvene, do optužbi da ugrožavaju vlastito zdravlje dovodeći u opasnost primarnu žensku dužnost – majčinstvo. U trećem dijelu de Coubertinove argumente smještam u suvremeni kontekst, naglašavajući važnost koju koncept hegemonijske muškosti ima u suvremenom razumijevanju muškosti i ulogu sporta u održavanju iste. U posljednjem, četvrtom dijelu, raspravljam o emancipatornim aspektima sporta, zaključujući o njegovoj sposobnosti destrukcije kako esencijalizirane ženskosti tako i esencijalizirane muškosti.

Ključne riječi

sport, žene, ženski sport, olimpijski duh, Pierre de Coubertin, rod, emancipacija

Ana Maskalan

Glaskiefer mit Stolz tragen: Ansichten über Frauen im Sport

Zusammenfassung

Sport wird nach wie vor als traditionelle Bastion der Männlichkeit verstanden, die körperliche Qualitäten wie Kraft und Geschwindigkeit sowie psychologische Merkmale wie Aggression und Ausdauer hervorhebt und die Beteiligung von Frauen als unerwünscht und unnötig erachtet. Nichtsdestotrotz erzielten Frauen jahrzehntelang in strikter Trennung von Männern oder in sogenannten „Frauensportarten“ Ergebnisse, die selbst die Aufmerksamkeit der schärfsten Skeptiker verdienen. Aufgrund seiner in der Körperlichkeit fundierten Natur ist Sport immer noch relativ selten ein Bereich des politischen Kampfes für die Gleichstellung der Gender; wengleich Sportlerinnen gelegentlich mehr für positive Ausflüsse dieses Kampfes getan haben, als es anerkannt wird. In diesem Beitrag erörtere ich die zwiespältige Natur des Sports, die einerseits zur Verwesentlichung der Gender in ihren Unterschieden und zur Versteinerung ihrer Machtverhältnisse beiträgt und andererseits Hinweise auf Zerstörung oder zumindest Zerfall

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See, for example, James Macdonald, "Examining the Growth and Popularity of Women's Mixed Martial Arts", *Bleacher Report* (1 August 2014). Available at: <https://bleacherreport.com/articles/2148497-examining-the-growth-and-popularity-of-womens-mixed-martial-arts> (accessed on 24 December 2018).

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Jim Riordan, "The social emancipation of women through sport", *The International*

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N. Besnier, S. Brownell, T. F. Carter, *The Anthropology of Sport: Bodies, Borders, Biopolitics*.

der traditionellen, hierarchisch festgelegten Gendernormen enthält. Das Paper besteht aus vier Teilen. Im ersten einleitenden Teil erkläre ich die Gründe für die Konzentration meiner Diskussion auf formalisierte Leistungssportarten und Ansätze, die ich verwende. Während ich die biopolitischen Aspekte des Themas akzentuiere, beginne ich meine Analyse mit der Schilderung der proklamierten Leitprinzipien des zeitgenössischen Sports, die im Geiste des Olympismus einbegriffen sind. Im zweiten Teil gehe ich auf die Ontologie des Sports ein, die in den Ideen des Begründers der modernen Olympischen Spiele, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, enthalten ist, und auf die sich daraus ergebenden Faktoren, die die Teilnahme von Frauen am Sport beeinflussen. Diese Faktoren reichen von der Perzeption der angeblich beeinträchtigten physischen und psychologischen Merkmale der Frauen, über die Hypersexualisierung des Körpers von Sportlerinnen oder die Einstellung, dass sie nicht weiblich genug sind, bis zu den Anschuldigungen, dass Sportlerinnen ihre Gesundheit schädigen, indem sie beispielsweise die weibliche Grundpflicht gefährden – die der Mutterschaft. Im dritten Teil habe ich die Argumente von de Coubertin in den zeitgenössischen Kontext gestellt und die Relevanz des Konzepts der hegemonialen Männlichkeit für das gegenwärtige Verständnis der Männlichkeit als auch die Rolle des Sports bei deren Aufrechterhaltung unterstrichen. Im abschließenden, vierten Teil diskutiere ich die emanzipatorischen Aspekte des Sports und schließe daraus, dass sie in stande sind, sowohl die verwesentlichte Weiblichkeit als auch die verwesentlichte Männlichkeit abzuschaffen.

Schlüsselwörter

Sport, Frauen, Frauensportarten, olympischer Geist, Pierre de Coubertin, Gender, Emanzipation

Ana Maskalan

Porter une mâchoire de verre : considérations sur les femmes dans le sport

Résumé

Le sport est encore considéré comme le bastion traditionnel de la masculinité qui exalte les qualités physiques telles la force et la vitesse, mais également les traits psychologiques telles l'agressivité et la persévérance, où la participation des femmes est jugée indésirable et non nécessaire. Néanmoins, depuis des décennies, dans une stricte séparation des hommes ou dans les sports que l'on appelle « sports féminins », les femmes ont obtenu des résultats qui méritent l'attention du plus féroce des sceptiques. En raison de sa nature qui se fonde sur la corporéité, le sport est encore rarement l'objet de lutte dans le domaine politique pour l'égalité des genres, bien que les sportives féminines ont avec le temps d'avantages contribué dans ce domaine que ce qui leur est attribué. Dans cet article, je discute de la nature ambivalente du sport, d'un côté, de l'essentialisation des genres dans leurs différences et de la pétrification des relations de pouvoir entre eux, de l'autre côté, des indications de destructions qui y sont présentes, ou du moins de corruption, des normes de genre traditionnellement et hiérarchiquement établies. Ce travail est composé de quatre parties. Dans la partie introductive, j'explique les raisons de l'attention portée dans la discussion sur les sports de compétitions qui ont subi une formalisation et les approches dont je me sers. En mettant l'accent sur les aspects biopolitiques du sujet, je commence mon analyse par une description des principes proclamés comme principes directeurs du sport contemporain présents dans l'esprit de l'olympisme. Dans la deuxième partie, j'aborde l'ontologie du sport telle qu'on la trouve dans les idées du fondateur des Jeux olympiques modernes, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, et des facteurs indirects qui ont influencé la participation des femmes dans le sport. Cette gamme de facteurs commence par les prétendus faiblesses physiques et psychologiques et va jusqu'à accuser les sportives féminines de nuire à leur corps et de mettre en danger, par exemple, leur obligation féminine majeure qui est la maternité, et passe par l'hypersexualisation du corps des sportives, ou encore, par l'affirmation qu'elles ne sont pas suffisamment féminines. Dans la troisième partie, je mets les arguments de de Coubertin dans un contexte contemporain en insistant sur l'importance que la conception hégémonique de la masculinité occupe dans la compréhension contemporaine de la masculinité et sur le rôle que le sport joue pour maintenir cette conception. Dans la dernière partie, je discute des aspects émancipatoires du sport et je conclus qu'ils sont capables d'ébranler autant la féminité essentialisée que la masculinité essentialisée.

Mots-clés

sport, femme, sport féminin, esprit olympique, Pierre de Coubertin, genre, émancipation