Chapter 8: The history of events: ideology, representation and historiography

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INTRODUCTION

The words "history" and "events" are closely associated. Two of the key entries provided by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, for example, define "history" as that "branch of knowledge which deals with past events, as recorded in writings or otherwise ascertained" and as a "series of events (of which the story is or may be told)". Yet if the notion of history as interpreting flows of events is largely taken-for-granted – at least, in popular conceptions of the nature and purpose of historical study – the practice of studying the history *of* events, defined as specially organised and non-routine temporary gatherings, has seldom received close scrutiny.

This, of course, is not to say that scholars have ignored the provenance of specific types of events or have failed to recognise their wider historical context (e.g. see Shone and Parry, 2001: 8-16; Berridge, 2007: 5). For example, there are considerable literatures on events such as World's Fairs, circuses and arena spectacle, princely pageants, celebrations of political revolution, public executions, and sporting mega-events (Gold and Gold, 2005). Moreover, given that many events are defined by occurrences such as anniversaries, it is rare for accounts of their development to lack a historical dimension. Even recently-founded events attract narratives that seek to situate them deep in local, regional or national tradition due, at least in part, to reasons that mirror the benefits (including economic) that close association with the past is felt to confer (Lowenthal, 1985: xxiii). Nevertheless, most researchers have treated the crafting of event histories *per se* as being largely unproblematic. Certainly, there have been relatively few attempts to connect them with the growing scrutiny of what Burrow (2009: xvi) recognises as "the plurality of 'histories' and the interests embodied in them".

Against that background, this chapter explores the contribution that explicit analysis of historical writings can make to the study of events. In particular, it explores three related propositions. The first concerns "narrative", understood here as a structured account, rendered in textual form, of a sequence of events that occurred in the past. We argue that the history of events *per se,* like other forms of history, puts forward narratives that are shaped by their authors and by the contexts in which those authors are situated, rather than offering value-free and "objective" accounts of reality. This point is substantiated in the next section by reference to histories that derive as much from the world of practice as from the writings of academic historians, culminating in a case study that shows how ideologies have influenced the narratives put forward over time in histories of a specific event: namely, the Festivals held annually at Salzburg in Austria since 1920.

The second proposition continues the story-telling theme, noting that it is important to recognise the ways that events can be used to represent specific causes and to understand the consequences of doing so. In this regard, we point to the importance of the rich and multifaceted concept of "representation" (Gold and Revill, 2005). Representation has a dual character. On the one hand, we think of it as meaning an image, likeness or reproduction of something. As such, representations normally have some tangible form, such as icons, banners, statues, stage sets or modes of dress – each and any of which may well have a symbolic content. On the other hand, representation is also a process. In this sense, it means to speak or campaign for something; an activity that inevitably involves holding and acting upon certain sets of ideas and values as opposed to others. Working on that basis, we can note that the underlying reasons for staging many forms of event are connected with advancing or consolidating a cause. Looking back, we can readily identify the role that events such as rallies, exhibitions and festivals have played in propelling artistic or political movements forward in support of radical causes. Equally, we can identify a much larger generality of events that serve to affirm existing views and support dominant discourses in society. To gain greater insight into the issues at stake**,** therefore, the second section of this paper surveys ideas essential to an understanding of representation before presenting a case study of the Visit of

George IV to Edinburgh in 1822; an event, orchestrated by Sir Walter Scott, which occupies a key place in the history of modern Scotland.

The third proposition concerns "narration", or the way in which the story is told (Munslow, 2007: 4). Here, we argue that understanding of the history of events would benefit from more explicit recognition of the multiple ways in which that history has been, and could be, written. To develop that point, the final third of this chapter draws examples from the history of the modern Olympic Games both to identify the prevalence of a dominant discourse and to indicate the insights available from alternative historical approaches.

IDEOLOGY

The idea that histories are shaped by the interests of specific groups, usually the ruling classes, is readily apparent when dealing with the subject of events. From the Age of Antiquity, for example, recorded accounts of the staging of civic and sacred festivities conventionally reflected the prevailing regimes' interpretations of important moral lessons (Brandt and Iddeng, 2012). In Medieval Europe, where administration of justice turned public executions into spectacular events that drew large audiences, court records preserved for prosperity the accounts of the trials of the accused overlain with the theology of Good and Evil (Turning, 2009; Merback, 1989). In more recent times, the written histories of events such as festivals or exhibitions were frequently written either by their organisers or by scholars who supported their endeavours (e.g. Cole, 1853; Hitchcock and Johnson, 1932). So-called official histories have generally sought to justify and, if necessary, vindicate the views and actions of dominant groups and "downplay inconsistencies and contradictions that marginalized groups might wish to highlight (Penuel and Wertsch, 1998: 23).

These and many other potential examples (e.g. see Gold and Gold, 2005: 23-48) point to a degree of agency that means that it is impossible to treat historical texts as unadulterated factual sources. Rather, the history of events, like any other

brand of history, is a form of discourse that represents an authored narrative (or collection of such narratives), with the impossibility of removing the "author-historian" and his or her value-set from the equation (Munslow, 2007: 3). On that basis, rejection of the idea that historians can produce "objective" descriptions of flows of events, uncontaminated by their own attitudes and values (Burke, 1999: 396) has emphasised the need to understand, in the context of their own times, "the material and/or ideological situatedness" of the historians who shape and structure the past through their writings (Munslow, 2000: 143).

The question of "ideological situatedness" is worth pursuing further, notwithstanding the notoriously wide-ranging nature of the term ideological' relating, as it does, to a "family of concepts" that includes ideas, beliefs, political philosophies, *Weltanschauungen* and moral justifications (Plamenatz, 1970: 27). In Marxist discourse, the word "ideology" had pejorative overtones, referring to a "limited material practice which generates ideas that misrepresent social contradictions in the interest of the ruling class" (Larrain, 1983: 27-8). From this standpoint, ideologies are justifications which can mask specific sets of interests (Bell, 2000: 414). Another definition – and one that is used here – takes ideology to be a pervasive set of ideas, beliefs and images that a group employs to make the world more intelligible to itself; a meaning that leaves untouched the question of whether or not the representation is false or oppressive (Mitchell, 1986: 4). Ideology is sometimes conceived as being part of a conscious process of manipulation, but equally can operate by being a frame, embedded in commonsense wisdom, which helps to make sense of experience. The following case study illustrates this point, by reference to the changing histories written about a specific event in relation to their underlying ideologies.

>>>CASE STUDY STARTS>>>

The Festspiele, held annually at the central Austrian city of Salzburg from late July through August, is one of Europe's oldest and most prestigious arts gatherings. Now possessing three component Festivals (Opera, Drama and Concerts), the 2010

Festspiele attracted just under 250,000 paying visitors from 72 nations. The festival's original rationale derived substantially from an allegiance of local interests that sought to strengthen the city's cultural standing. This had roots in the 1870s with attempts to establish a music festival to build upon historic connections with Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart – conveniently overlooking the fact that the composer, who was born in the city in 1756, was only too keen to leave its "stifling provincialism" for "glittering" Vienna in 1781 (Gallup, 1987: 2). This failed to gain significant local support, but a more sustained campaign began in 1903 with suggestions for a theatre festival. While this and subsequent initiatives failed to produce a festival before 1914, the Festspiele finally came to fruition in August 1920 in the very different conditions that prevailed in the aftermath of the First World War.

The literature produced by those who had supported the creation of the Festspiele embraced two different readings of history that co-existed in uneasy alliance. One reflected collective recoil from war, centring on Enlightenment principles that "only art could bring the people [of Europe] together again" and, for reasons primarily linked to local boosterism, deemed that Salzburg was "the perfect place for it" (SFS, 2007: 2). The other shifted the emphasis in favour of a nationalist project intended "to support the creation of a new Austrian identity" after the First World War, based on "tradition and cultural restoration" (Lasinger, 2010). Salzburg could act as a new symbol for that identity and, given the demise of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, could serve to reassert Austria's prominence on the European cultural scene. Noticeably, those who supported this view particularly favoured locating the new Festival venues in the park where, in the seventeenth century, the first opera to be performed in a German-speaking country was staged – an event deemed crucial "in Salzburg history-mythology" (Steinberg, 2000: xii and 55).

The ideology of pan-Germanism simmered as an influence on writings about the history of the Festival throughout the interwar period, with allusions back to a golden age of German Enlightenment and to the work of early romantic thinkers (Steinberg, 2000: 84) existing alongside the overt statements supporting the

ideology of European artistic cosmopolitanism. The former ideology, however, would eclipse the supposedly "decadent" ideology of cosmopolitanism after Germany's annexation of Austria in 1938 through the imposed *Anschluss* or "union". For the next six years, the Festival became overtly part of the propaganda apparatus of the Nazis, responding to Goering's dictum that it should be "a festival of the 'German soul'" (Gallup, 1987: 108). It was now presented as a symbol of the convergence of Germany and Austria and as a forum for Aryan culture. As such, the Festival's history as well as its programme was rewritten to reflect the cultural theories of National Socialism (Kriechbaumer, 2009).

After the Second World War, efforts were quickly made to remove explicit Nazi ideology from the history of the event. This reopened both the programme and its supporting historical interpretations to the ideological agendas typical of the years from 1920 to 1938. With that development, the ambiguity between cosmopolitanism and nationalism re-emerged, especially with propagation of the new, postwar definitions of Austrian national identity (Lasinger, 2010). Over time, further challenges appeared that the festival's historians needed to take on board, such as the new context of closer European integration (with Austria having joined the European Union in 1995). Yet, even here, the tendency was to return to established narratives and ambiguities. The 2007 Festival Society's President, for example, quoted with approval the view offered by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, one of the founders of the modern Festspiele, that Salzburg lay at "the heart of the heart of Europe" (SFS, 2007: 2). His intention was to point to the continuing relevance of the Festival's unchanging purpose, but he unwittingly also evoked the older and continuing ideological debate. More than nine decades after its establishment, an event that appeared to be a culturally cosmopolitan festival could still be regarded equally as a culturally nationalist festival in disguise (Steinberg, 2000: xiii). Moreover, what appeared to be a seemingly benign comment about "the heart of Europe" extracted from the history of an event could actually prove to mask pervasive ideological conflict.

>>>CASE STUDY ENDS>>>

REPRESENTATION

Any understanding of representation necessarily starts with two ideas. The first is that the material objects and ideas that we understand as "representations" are a pivotal part of culture; indeed to Stuart Hall (1997: 15) representation "connects meaning and language to culture". If one thinks of culture as 'any aspect of social exchange that communicates attitudes, values and opinions' (Gold and Revill, 2004: 9), then events will clearly play their part in the process by offering frameworks within which all manner of behaviours, performances, objects, values and ideas can be represented and communicated. The nature of the exchange may be largely one-way, with organisers representing the world as they see it to participants or there may be true dialogue and, possibly, the emergence of new understandings.

The second idea is that representation can be viewed as much as an expression of power as culture. Considered as such, representations can contain important messages about those who produced them and about the interests of the people for whom the representations were being designed. When read carefully, a representation may also say much about whose views and values are accepted as valid or true, and whose interests are marginalised or even simply not represented. In the present context, we can note that events are frequently an integral part of the wider political process in which the making and interpretation of representations both reproduces and remakes, or creates anew, the social relations on which they initially depend. These ideas lead us to think about the role of representations in society as one that, on the one hand, takes account of structures and contexts and, on the other, pays due regard to creativity and transformation, negotiation, dialogue and contest between different sets of social groups with particular interests. The ensuing case study explores these issues further, taking the example of the painstakingly organised visit of the Hanoverian King George IV to Edinburgh, the capital of Scotland, in 1822.

>>>CASE STUDY STARTS>>>

The entries of visiting monarchs, conquering heroes and high-ranking foreign dignitaries into cities were occasions for lavish ceremony in Europe from the Age of Antiquity through to early modern times. These usually involved ceremonies performed at the city boundary to signify symbolic passage between one realm and another, followed by celebrations that might involve feasts, plays, concerts, street decorations (such as triumphal arches, tableaux and installations), games and tournaments, and even the staging of mock battles (e.g. Greengrass, 2004). While at one level these occasions were a welcome occasional addition to the annual cycle of cultural festivities, the sheer expense involved testifies to the importance of their other purposes. *Inter alia*, these could be to signify appropriate homage to a monarch, to cement diplomatic relations with a foreign power, or to recognise the contribution made by military commanders and the armed forces – all of which could be regarded as of sufficient political importance to the city to justify the extravagance and effort involved.

The practice of staging entries largely passed out of common use after the early eighteenth century, but the visit of George IV to Edinburgh in August 1822 provided a spectacular exception (Gold and Gold, 1995: 72-74). It was an occasion born out of the dynastic history of the United Kingdom. The Union of the Crowns of England, Ireland and Scotland in 1603 saw the Scottish King James VI leave for England where he established his new base, quickly becoming an absentee monarch as far as Scotland was concerned. Indeed by the early nineteenth century, no British monarch had visited Scotland since 1633. This long hiatus would end in 1822, when a visit was thought expedient in order to address a diverse set of political goals. First, faced with the growth of radical protest over worsening economic conditions, the Scottish Establishment wished to counter opposition by orchestrating a huge upsurge of loyalty to the government in the person of the monarch. Secondly, the monarchy also needed to improve its poor standing in the light of the divorce proceedings brought by George IV against Queen Caroline and the latter's death in August 1821. Thirdly, senior Government figures including the Prime Minister Lord Liverpool and Foreign Minister Lord Castlereagh wanted to find an engagement that

might preoccupy the King and distract him from attending the Congress of Nations at Verona in October 1822. Finally, Scottish landowners wanted to enhance their position since they were beginning to attract criticism over their land policies, especially over the Highland Clearances (Devine, 1989). The visit gave them an opportunity to present themselves in a paternal role as clan chiefs.

Almost two centuries of absence, however, meant that the usual stock of customs, protocols and observances appropriate for receiving and addressing ruling monarchs had atrophied; a case of tradition needing to be invented, more or less from scratch (Hobsbawm, 1983: 1). In looking for ways to organise a potential visit from King George IV and clothe it with symbolic meaning, Edinburgh's Lord Provost turned for assistance to the poet and historical novelist Sir Walter Scott. It was a natural choice. The leading Scottish writer of his day, Scott had generated a passion for Scottish scenery and history through his writings. He was also an historian and antiquarian, whose *imaginative* views of the past shaped the way that the Scots saw themselves and their country (Brown, 1979). Perhaps most significantly, Scott's detailed knowledge of the past and his role in Edinburgh society placed him in a unique position to influence the representation of Scottish culture.

The programme for what the Duke of Atholl called 'one and twenty daft days' (Prebble, 1988) saw the King sail from Greenwich (London) on 10 August 1822, arriving at the port of Leith four days later. His official entry to Edinburgh on 15 August was accompanied by an elaborate ceremony of welcome. There then followed a full schedule of pageants, receptions (*levees*), balls, processions, military displays, plays and banquets before the royal party finally departed for London on 29 August 1822. The idea of public spectacle was all important. This was "orchestrated in various ways: by control of the routes taken by the royal procession through the city; by the marshalling and costuming of the citizenry; and by various temporary erections, which included a series of 'triumphal arches' through which the king passed" (Dorrian, 2006: 32).

For Scott, the opportunity to act as pageant-master of this ambitious and lavish programme afforded an opportunity that few novelists had ever had. The arbiter of which historic sources he regarded as authentic and which voices were authoritative, he was able not just to reinvent courtly protocol but also perhaps to restore Scottish pride and identity. Crucially in this respect, he sought to repair the still simmering rift between the Hanoverians and the Jacobite supporters of the Stuarts by presenting George as both the heir of the Stuarts and the Chief of Chiefs. In constructing this creative exercise, he effectively proffered notions of an 'imagined community' akin to those put forward by Benedict Anderson (1991), in which historical texts, monuments, symbols and artefacts are drawn upon to construct a relationship between a people and a nation-state.

As part of that thinking, the streets of Edinburgh were transformed in preparation for the visit. The triumphal arches were erected, galleries and stands for spectators were constructed, and decorations were put up. Ground was levelled where necessary as, for example, outside the County Rooms so that Judges and others could witness the royal procession. Newly-installed gas lighting illuminated the area around the Palace of Holyroodhouse, with an immense bonfire prepared for lighting on Arthur's Seat. Renovations, repairs and redecorations occurred throughout the city, with the interiors of key public buildings transformed. Edinburgh residents throughout were to be an indispensable ingredient in the show as performers who might convey key ideas about Scottishness through their attire and stage-managed actions. Here Scott had called on friends for advice about various aspects of the project. These included William Murray, the Actor-Manager of the Theatre Royal, who advised upon pageantry and interior design and the actress Harriet Siddons who advised on style and fashion. Leading artists of the day, including J.M.W. Turner and David Wilkie, were allocated special viewpoints in order to record the scene.

As Master of Ceremonies, Scott wrote a pamphlet entitled "HINTS addressed to the INHABITANTS OF EDINBURGH AND OTHERS in prospect of HIS MAJESTY'S VISIT. By an old citizen". At one level, this supplied information about the timetable for the

visit, advice on what to wear and about etiquette and behaviour generally. At another level, however, Scott's aims clearly transcended simply putting on a masque or pageant. Representation was the heart of the matter: 'this is not an ordinary show -- it is not all on one side. It is not enough that we should see the King; but the King must also see us'. In other words, this was Scotland displayed, a visual representation of national unity literally cast in Highland clothing.

The Highland connection was all-important.   Scott had persuaded the King to wear Highland dress as part of the ceremonial, although he only wore it on one occasion: the *levee* for Scottish noblemen and gentlemen. The emphasis on tartan was not Scott's influence alone – he was advised, for example, by the soldier and antiquarian David Stewart Garth – but Scott was primarily responsible for conflating Highland identity and Scottish identity in this manner. It was not universally accepted; indeed many lowland Scots both at the time and subsequently disavowed that connection. As one commentator noted:

> "With all respect for the generous qualities which the Highland clans have often exhibited, it was difficult to forget that they had always constituted a small, and almost always unimportant part of the Scottish population; and when one reflected how miserably their numbers had of late years been reduced in consequence of the selfish and hard-hearted policy of their landlords, it almost seemed as if there was a cruel mockery in giving so much prominence to their pretensions. But there could be no question that they were picturesque -- and their enthusiasm was too sincere not to be catching" Lockhart (1906: 421).

Nevertheless, such voices were muted at the time, with the allure of monarchy working to authenticate the proceedings and the idea that what was on show was an accurate representation of the quintessential Scotland. In the process, Scott (1822: 6) took liberties with social history. Having a free hand, he recast the King's relationship to Scotland and its people:

"King George IV comes hither as the descendant of a long line of Scottish Kings. The blood of the heroic Robert Bruce -- the blood of the noble, the enlightened, the generous James I is in his veins. Whatever Honour Worth and Genius can confer upon Ancestry, his Scottish Ancestry possesses. Still more he is our kinsman."

He went on to say that not only can the old Scottish families claim a relationship, but that "in this small country, blood has been so much mingled, that it is not to be doubted by far the greater part of our burgesses and yeomans are entitled to entertain similar pretensions. In short, we are THE CLAN, and our King is THE CHIEF" (*ibid*: 7). As a result, he called for political differences to be buried. Part of the new ground for consensus would certainly come from the adoption of the reinvented Highland tradition and its symbols as the favoured foundation myth for Scottish identity.

>>>CASE STUDY ENDS>>>

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND OLYMPIC HISTORIES

The recognition of ideological shaping of historical texts and the importance of representation as conveyed by European arts and cultural festivals offer two perspectives on the construction of event histories. Closer attention to historiography – defined as the academic study of the way that "history has been and is written" (Furay and Salevouris, 2010: 223) – offers another. Although the discipline of historiography has ancient roots (see Breisach, 1983), it has gained considerable popularity over the last 50 years with the growth of a more reflexive view amongst historians about the purpose and limitations of historical knowledge. This has contributed to a more critical reading of traditional approaches and, in turn, underpinned the growth of alternatives. It has also emphasized the importance of recognizing that the activity of history-writing is embedded in the intellectual climate of the times. While the implications of these points have as yet impacted lightly on the history of events, there are grounds for suggesting that closer engagement with

the main lines of historiographic debate would bring benefits, particularly when interrogating the origins and continuing meaning of events such as arts, sports and cultural festivals. This contention is admirably exemplified by considering historical writings about the foundation of the modern Olympics.

Some background on the Olympics-as-event, however, is necessary first to gain an understanding of the intricate dialectical relationship between tradition and modernity in historical narratives about the Games. Despite the last classical Games having been held in 393 AD, knowledge about them and their significance for the classical world had never faded from the European consciousness. The idea of appropriating the title 'Olympic' had appealed to organizers of sporting events from the seventeenth century onwards in England, Scandinavia, North America and, significantly, Greece (Gold and Gold, 2017: 25-7). The key developments, however, occurred in the 1890s under the leadership of Baron Pierre de Coubertin, who campaigned successfully for the revival of the Olympics as a way of addressing the "democratic and international" dimension of sport. An international Sports Congress that he organized in 1894 supported the re-establishment of the Games and laid down key principles for a festival open to competition by amateur sportsmen, with its founding ideals enshrined in a Charter of 'fundamental principles, rules and by-laws', now normally known as the Olympic Charter, and underpinned by a humanist philosophy known as "Olympism" (see below). A new organisation known as the International Olympic Committee (IOC) would be responsible for controlling the Olympic movement and selecting host cities for the Games (*ibid*.: 27-28). In essence, they perceived their task as resuscitating an event that represented the quintessence of ancient cultural achievement to which Western civilization in general, rather than the late nineteenth-century Greek state, was heir. They enthusiastically organised the event around a romanticised notion of the Games as a *panegyris* – a festive assembly in which the entire people came together to participate in religious rites, sporting competitions, oratory and artistic performance. At the same time, they studiously rejected the idea that the *panegyris* itself should have a permanent home, which inevitably would have been in Greece. That outlook, which had ideological overtones in terms of maintaining the IOC's control over the events, effectively

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imbued the modern Olympics with an internationalist stance, able continually to move to new host cities without loss of purpose (*ibid.*, 2017: 27-28).

In the ensuing years, the IOC would play a key role in nurturing the historical record of the Olympic movement. Besides meticulously compiling written records of the proceedings of its own assemblies and committees and playing a general role as the guardian of Olympic traditions, the IOC has encouraged the process of writing the history of the Olympics in a variety of ways. *Inter alia*, these include maintaining the movement's archives at Lausanne, providing a museum and actively supporting Olympic museums elsewhere, sponsoring symposia and other gatherings and, perhaps more directly, by requiring the Organising Committees of host cities to compile Official Reports for each Games – documents that have landmark status not just for scholarship about the Olympic festivals but also more generally for the understanding of sporting mega-events.

Whig History

Not surprisingly given their leading role in the revival of the Olympics, the IOC and Coubertin have always taken central place in the history of the Games. For the first few decades, the official history of the Games followed a style of historicising known as the "Whig interpretation". In general terms, this was the title that Herbert Butterfield (1931), in a polemic essay, first applied to an approach that "purveyed a conception of progress as the central theme of English history, dividing historical agents into canonized forefathers and mere obstacles" (Burrow, 2007: 473). *Sensu stricto*, he applied the expression to the thinking of a specific group of nineteenth-century historians, flippantly referred to as "Whigs", who saw the condition of Victorian England as the outcome of a Grand Narrative in which progressives had vanquished reactionaries to bring about the "superior" state of the modern world (Bentley, 2005: 5-6). More generally, though, Whig history came to stand for historical narratives that selectively viewed the past in terms of the march towards ever greater achievement and enlightenment, replete with heroic figures who advanced the cause and villains who sought to hinder its inescapable triumph.

Given the timing of the revival of the modern Games, it was always likely that Whig interpretations would influence the history of the Olympic movement in the same way that they did in many other areas of historical scholarship at the turn of the twentieth century. For the Olympics, these histories particularly centre on the foundation of the IOC and the "visionary" role played by Pierre de Coubertin. When writing about Coubertin's role in early sports promotion in France, for example, Eugen Weber (1970: 15-16) commented that

"Sport played an important part in what Coubertin described in a fencing term as possible *parades* against the industrial civilization that he disliked and feared. Industrial civilization stood for the four Sancho Panzas of the Apocalypse: greater comfort, specialization, exaggerated nationalism, and the triumph of democracy. Sport and education could provide remedies to all these evils and counter them to foster a human progress which Coubertin conceived as the unlimited development of individual capacities."

In 1920, Coubertin provided an overview of the history of the early Games (Müller, 2000: 476-7). His survey surveyed progress made from Athens 1896 to Antwerp 1920 where:

"At long last, the primordial nature of these festivals was understood – festivals that are above all, at a time of dangerous specialization and regrettable 'compartmentalization', festivals of human unity… [Antwerp 1920] has shown the universe, in radiant relief, the educational, moral and social dynamism that restored and modernized Olympism harbours." (*ibid*: 477)

Coubertin's views, however, were always more complex than those of many of his supporters. For example, his support of the modernising element present in Whig history was never conflated with modernism's more iconoclastic rupture with the past (Bentley, 2005) and his belief that nationality was the "indispensable core of individual identity" meant that his "internationalism was never cosmopolitan"

(Guttmann, 2002: 2). By contrast, his supporters were less inhibited, often prone to making triumphalist claims that projected the path of the Olympic movement towards idealistic, even utopian goals. In that manner, for instance, the Reverend Robert Courcy-Laffan, a British member of the IOC from 1897-1927, urged his audience at the closing banquet for London 1908 not forget that:

> "[the] Olympic Games in London are only an episode in a great Movement and a great life. The first revival took place at Athens in 1896. What is 12 years in the life of a Movement that sets out before it those great ideals: of perfect physical development, of a new humanity, the spreading out all over the world of that spirit of sport which is the spirit of the truest chivalry, and the drawing together of all the nations of the Earth in bonds of peace and mutual amity?" (Miller, 2008: 57)

Challenging Orthodoxy, Mapping Alternatives

These and countless similar statements to be found in official documentation laid down the lines of a pervasive Whig historical narrative that for many years provided the dominant discourse for the Olympic movement. The past was interpreted from the point of view of the present. The narrative seamlessly linked together a set of hallowed but largely imagined origins (see Hobsbawm, 1983: 1), applauded the struggle and vision of the pioneers (especially Coubertin) in re-establishing the Games, celebrated progress made up to the present and looked ahead to the completion of a historic project. The adverse experiences associated with particular festivals (Lenskyj, 2000; Yarborough, 2000; Barney at al, 2004; Cohen and Watt, 2017) have eroded Whig optimism, but the spirit of that interpretation has retained sufficient vitality to provide a powerful orthodoxy that later historians have contested.

The nature of the resulting contestation has taken many forms: some fully articulated and others still primarily exploratory. One source of reappraisal has come from the work of critics whose work broadly fits into the framework of the

history of ideas, the sub-discipline that focuses on "the historical investigation of the textual and cultural remains of human thought processes" (Kelley, 1990: 3). Brownell (2005), for example, dissected the triadic relationship between nineteenth-century Western classicism, the modern nation-state of Greece and the revival of the Olympic Games, arguing for the importance of reasserting the importance of the Greek state in the Games' revival (also Koulouri, 2005). Loland (1995) showed that the concept of "Olympism" – described as "a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind" (IOC, 2007: 11) – has functioned effectively primarily because it possessed an important but permissive vagueness (see also MacAloon, 1981). Segrave and Chatziefstathiou (2008: 31) provided another perspective on Olympism in a discussion of the way that it was influenced by Coubertin's distinctive notions of beauty, which they argue tended towards "exclusivity, elitism and the atomization of self". It is possible to speculate that these values contributed to the failure to develop a satisfactory cultural programme at Olympic events that could match the sports programme. Schantz (2008) argued that the universality allegedly present in Olympism founders in the face of a "civilizing mission" that still promotes "Western or westernized sports exclusively".

Another and more radical source of critical reappraisal has come from historians influenced by the "cultural turn" in the arts and humanities. Booth and Tatz (2000: xv; quoted in Bale and Christensen, 2004: 3) made the textually subversive suggestion that the capital letter should be removed from the word "Olympism". Their argument was that the original Games merited upper case because they were named after Olympia, but that the notion of Olympism no more deserved a capital than "liberalism, humanitarianism, fascism or utopianism". To use upper case tended "to deny its status as an ideology and instead, to hypostatize it, to present it as something substantial or unchanging" (*ibid*). Booth (2004), in a related analysis of post-Olympian historiography, categorised the various styles of writing about Olympic events, with a seven-point spectrum ranging from traditional narrative to deconstructionist history, which holds that past events are explained and acquire their meaning as much by their representation as by their "knowable

actuality" (Munslow, 2007: 14). As yet few studies have attempted such analysis, but two exceptions are studies by Brown (2001), who applied Foucauldian discourse analysis to early editions of the *Revue Olympique*, the IOC's official journal, and by Møller (2004) who studied of the transgressive qualities of doping at Olympic events.

Historians have also applied textual analysis to the way that media constructions have influenced understanding of past Olympic events. Dyreson (1989: 26-7) commented on the way that the organisers of the Winter Games at Salt Lake City 2002 used Native-American iconography to sell the arguable contention that the United States had no racial barriers in sport. Lennartz (2008) used examples of the first three modern Games, with particular reference to the staging of the marathon competitions, to show how erroneous media reporting has been taken as fact by later writers who have never bothered with verification. Finally, Hughson (2010) examined official film footage and associated archive materials from the 1956 Summer Games at Melbourne to reveal the tensions between two different tropes of "Australian-ness", namely, imagined cultural diversity and neo-liberal multiculturalism.

CONCLUSION

In drawing this chapter to a close, we perforce recognise the limitations of the foregoing analysis. Given the lack of any consolidated body of comparative scholarship on the history of events, we have sketched some directions that such a history might follow, using examples principally relating to festivals, a royal visit in the spirit of a classical entry, and the Olympic Games. Naturally, the extent of the lessons that can be drawn for other forms of events will vary, among other things, according to the scale, frequency, duration, spatial extent and perceived importance of the events concerned. Nevertheless, many of the basic principles may be said to enjoy a broad applicability. These include: the idea that historical accounts of events are invariably ideologically-constructed rather than "objective" and "value free"; understanding that historical events bear the impress of contemporary ideas about "representation"; acknowledgment that histories can be written in many different

ways; and recognition that harnessing contrasting approaches to historical knowledge can provide very different perspectives on the same event. Building on these points, if the guiding aim of historiography is to further understanding by bringing about "an informed reading of texts" (Spalding and Parker, 2007: 148), then the goal of a historiography of events would logically be to assemble and synthesise the knowledge about events that comes from analysis informed by conscious reflection on the nature of historical approaches, methods and sources. At its best, it is an analysis that will say something not just about the origins of events, but will also supply insight into their continuing purpose.

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