

PLAY BALL! SPORTS AS PARADIGMS OF MASUCLINE PERFORMANCE IN
THE TWENTIETH CENTURY UNITED STATES

by

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(Under the Direction of DAVID SALTZ)

ABSTRACT

This study examines the culture of baseball and football as paradigms for masculine performativity. The goal is to establish a new way to examine the construction of masculine behavior in United State popular culture. After establishing how both baseball and football present distinct performative images of masculinity, a materialist reading of plays and films representing both sports will reveal how images of gender identity extend into the United States' popular culture.

INDEX WORDS: Gender, Masculinity, Performative Acts, Baseball, Football, Western, Film, Drama, Theatre, Babe Ruth, Grantland Rice, Jimmy Stewart, John Wayne, Walter Camp

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents, who encourage me to love and accept everyone.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Judith Butler's seminal essay "Performative Acts and Gendered Construction" introduced a new concept in gender identity: gender performativity.¹ Butler argues that gender is constructed performatively and must be contingent upon historical context. She suggests that performative acts constitute identity, rather than the reverse. Continuing the work of previous feminist scholars by separating gender from sex, she identifies how conceptions of the feminine are constructed and explores how they can be constructed differently. We can surmise that if feminine identity is the product of performative acts read in a historical context, the same must be true for the construction of masculinity. My goal is to examine performative masculinity in twentieth century United States. What social performances are specifically associated with masculinity? How do those performances help to shape contemporary masculine identity? While there is significant work on the construction of masculinity, there does not seem to be a clear or consistent definition of what constitutes masculine identity in contemporary U. S. culture.

Most recent scholars who discuss the performance of masculinity in contemporary culture cite Peter Stearns' 1979 book, *Be a Man! Males in Modern Society* as a theoretical foundation upon which to construct their own examination of masculine identity.²³ In a review of Stearns's work, William O'Neil identified *Be a Man* as the first book length study of masculine identity in western culture.⁴ Stearns surveys perceived masculinity across modern western history into his contemporary time. The introduction

to his survey is anthropological in nature, tracking masculine behaviors through the progression of western culture. While his thesis claims to track the inconsistencies in accepted masculinity of western society, it's ultimately a very positivist examination. Stearns presents broad and sweeping generalizations about masculinity, as he sees the multiplicity of masculinity in the west as a problem to be solved, rather than a trait to be studied. In his attempt to consolidate different cultural images of masculinity, he constructs a linear evolution of behavioral cause and effect. Searching for thread through each era, Stearns refers to the completely undocumentable concept of a prehistoric hunter gatherer society. The most troublesome aspect of his work is that it seems to approach identity in the opposite way that Butler suggests. Stearns examines the performance of masculinity as determined by identification: because I am a man I must do these things. Stearns seems to want there to be a platonic image of masculinity, and while he presents some logical connections, such an essentialist view is not helpful in contemporary gender studies. Despite the outdated approach to gender identity, other scholars cited Stearns's description of social expectations for the masculine in western society as typical qualities of masculinity. Citations of Stearns's work on masculine identity, and passive agreement with the qualities associated with masculine behavior still do not produce a tight definition of masculinity. Even acknowledging its inconstant nature and the interplay of nationality, class, and race as contributors to its construction, there is an apparent reticence to define the terms of that construction. White heterosexual masculinity has traditionally functioned as the norm from which other identities are derived.

Constructing Masculinity and *Be a Man!* both rely on a personal relationship with the masculine to outline an image to be studied. Masculinities association with the norm

makes it difficult to define in terms of what it *is*; as it seems to be defined mostly by separation from what it is not. As cultural beings, we seem to rely on knowing manliness when we see it. But the absence of a frank discussion of the expectations for masculine performance further justifies my study. Over reliance on a perceived norm limits our ability to understand the nature of masculinity and its continued evolution in popular culture.

In lieu of published scholarship detailing accepted qualities of masculinity, an inductive analysis reveals qualities associated with masculinity that are repeatedly mentioned in scholarship across several disciplines. One quality that comes up again and again is physical toughness. Strength and physical prowess is the most implicit of masculine qualities, and the successful performance of toughness is typically considered a show of masculinity. Self-sufficiency, likely an emotional performance of toughness, is also mentioned as a strong indicator.⁵ Finally, anxiety about being perceived as weak or dependent leads to the last quality I have found, anti-femininity (either in the form of isolation from or heterosexual domination over the feminine). In the opposite sex, masculine culture sees the opposite of its qualities, to be masculine, one must be separated from the feminine. In her essay, “Gosh, Boy George, You Must be Awfully Secure in Your Masculinity!” Eve Sedgwick acknowledges typically masculine behavior of avoiding perception as feminine while calling for a restructuring of the identifying factors for masculinity.⁶ The agreement about the qualities most closely associated with masculinity, based on individual patterns of observation is a good foundation upon which to begin an examination of masculine performance. This short list of measureable qualities will be how I examine the performances of masculine roles.

Far from being objective behaviors, perceived qualities could account for masculinity depending on a cultural response to behavior rather than an identification of specifically defined actions. While these qualities are not essentially definable, there is agreement among scholars about their association with masculine performance. A key part of the scholars' agreement in the qualities associated with masculinity is the contested nature of masculinity itself. Images of masculine qualities are presented in positive and negative light and scholars who are in support of and against masculine behavior point to similar identifying qualities. These agreements in otherwise conflicting views establish a foundation for the examination of western masculinity. Agreeing on the concept of masculinity is seemingly easy, defining the paradigm for its performance is less so.

Performing Masculine Qualities

The association between masculinity and sport is evident in popular culture and taken for granted among scholars. Sports is an institution that many scholars connect to masculinity. Stearns acknowledges the connection in his work, in stating that: "Many workers judged that sports, combined with other leisure prowess, distinguished them from more effeminate middle-class men..."⁷ Stearns presents sport as a performed separation from the feminine a cultural indicator of masculinity. Even watching sports functions as participation and is associated with masculine behavior as much as playing them.⁸ If sport is a performative genre, an artificially constrained environment with clear rules, then we can easily track sports participation as an identifying performative act. In sports, we can objectively determine the success of a performance both by objective scoring and by a players' public popularity. Examining sports' relationship to masculinity

will reveal new information about the idea of masculinity. I will identify images of masculinity in sports that became prominent in twentieth century United States popular culture and explore how they became naturalized.

Sports and Masculinity

Sports' connection to masculinity in the United States stems from the concept of muscular Christianity in English boys schools in the mid nineteenth century. In "Sport and Religion: Culture, History and Ideology," Andrew Parker and Nick J. Watson describe the way boys schools transformed unruly pastimes into structured and codified games.⁹ Headmasters equated athletic prowess with moral strength and viewed fields of play as a means to develop physical presence, courage, judgment under pressure, and endurance of pain — qualities deemed integral to a boy's development into manhood. Thomas Arnold, head teacher of the Rugby School from 1828-1841, is credited with pioneering the use of sports as a part of the curriculum. Thomas Hughes cataloged his efforts in the novel *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, which tells the story of a boy who developed character during his time at Rugby school.¹⁰ The shift described in Hughes's novel was happening across Britain. Concerns of moral virtue and physical endeavor led to the establishment of core values that eventually came to establish the connection between sport and religion, defining a well-rounded man as being of sound spirit, mind, and body. Sport facilitated the convergence of all these three aspects of masculinity.

In addition to the institutionalization of masculine development there was also a celebration of the separation between men and women. Masculinity was defined in negative terms, as non-feminine, rather than as a positive construction of maleness.¹¹ Institutional emphasis on the division between the two genders helps to explain why boys

were encouraged to play sports while girls were sheltered from them. The need for a separation stemmed from a fear that the static nature of church and religion would encourage effeminacy. Muscular Christianity was a way to confront the condition and get back to the masculinized practices that previously dominated the faith.

The European model of masculinity traveled with the colonies to the United States, where men proved their gender through a separation from the effeminate. As the colonies began to imagine themselves as autonomous cultures, their view of European nobility became lumped in with the effeminate. A distinctively American notion of masculinity became integral to the emerging national identity. Men began to separate themselves from their European counterparts by embracing what made their lifestyle distinct in America. Masculinity in the United States is exemplified through images of autonomy, pragmatism, and perseverance.

The early nineteenth century offered a fertile platform on which American men could construct their own masculinity. Westward expansion gave men the opportunity to own and work land independently. Separating themselves culturally from the “effete” bankers of Europe, men in the United States began crafting a rougher “blue collar” version of masculinity. Their new version of masculinity was challenged when rapid industrialization coupled with the abrupt halt of expansion at the Pacific Ocean hindered men’s ability to continue living completely autonomously. Michael Kimmel discusses the economic impact of industrialization on masculine culture in his article, “Baseball and American Masculinity.” Before the Civil War, nearly ninety percent of men in the United States were farmers or owned their own small business. By 1870, it was sixty-six percent. The percentage of independently employed men continued to drop so that by 1910 it was

less than thirty percent.¹² As cities grew, more men took jobs in larger factories they did not own. Women began to work outside the home as well, closing the separation between the genders. The lack of separation between genders provoked anxiety among men and exposed a need for something that would again make them more distinct from women.

All men in the community did not universally experience the “crisis” of masculinity and the desire to create separation could extend beyond gender lines. The men most directly affected by this perceived crisis were white middle class males. The patriarchal nature of United States culture put the white middle class male demographic able to concern themselves with their cultural position. Lower economic classes would have been more concerned with financial survival, and in the case of non-white men or women, achieving the same objective rights were a larger concern than cultural perception. Though it was referred to a crisis of masculinity, it was closer to a crisis of personal perception. The need for a symbolic expression of their hegemony led middle-class white men to turn to sport, institutionalizing masculinity in a way like the headmasters of the European countries from which they sought to differentiate themselves. They sought mechanisms to amplify and reinforce the distinctively American images of masculinity had already begun to take shape. For the middle-class men, sports were an obvious solution, as it allowed for exclusivity from women as well as showcasing economic superiority by having the free time to invest in a leisure activity.

Baseball and football are sports created in the United States and thus are closely connected to national identity. Because organized versions of both sports only allow men to play, participation has become closely associated with masculine identity. A person’s success on the baseball or football field will therefore illustrate his masculine qualities.

Both sports function as a paradigm through which a person might perform their masculinity. While baseball and football's paradigms of masculinity present vehicles through which a person might perform their gendered identity, and while both sports are also closely associated with national identity, the paradigms require significantly different behavior. Ideal images of success in baseball and football are in conflict with each other.

In baseball, success on the field is tied to a respect for the traditions and superstitions of the game. In the popular imagination, the sport embodies the cultural spirit of the United States, and plays and films that about the sport tend to reinforce this idea. A baseball player embodies the historical and symbolic weight of the game. Dreams of becoming a ball player in the United States are heavily romanticized in fiction and media coverage. The enjoyment of the game is tied directly to national culture and success on the field is tantamount to success as a citizen.

In the case of football, a player's success is attributed to the embrace of controlled violence implicit in the game. To play football — with its capturing and surrendering of territory — is to play at war. The sport has never been safe for those that play it. The aggressive behavior necessary to football is neither necessary, nor even acceptable, in a baseball game. Though baseball is, as the “national pastime,” the quintessential American sport, football, in fact, is currently vastly more popular in the United States.

Both sports enjoy massive popularity in the United States, and they also present very distinct images of masculinity. The practice of playing and watching both baseball and football amounts to separate processes for performing qualities associated with masculinity. They are both accepted ways to do masculinity in contemporary United

States. My project is to identify and define these two paradigms of masculinity as they co-exist in twentieth century America. I will examine each one on its own terms (baseball, and football) to illustrate how each sport's culture has contributed to a unique paradigm of masculine performance. Identifying how they influence concepts of masculinity in U. S. popular culture will help us to determine how they coexist as conflicting paradigms of the same identity.

Literature Review

While there is a great deal of scholarship devoted to individual aspects of my research, this dissertation will be the first study that focuses on the differences between images of masculinity in different sports. It is my goal that examining masculinity as a series of paradigms rather than essentialist behaviors will pave the way for future scholarship on masculinity.

Peter Stearns's *Be a Man! Males in Modern Society* is of vital importance to my own. His examination of the construction of masculinity is the point from which all other scholarship in this field should grow. In his survey, the qualities of masculine behavior that are taken for granted in much of masculine studies are identified and empirically analyzed. Though he is more concerned with presenting the problem of the construction of masculinity than solving it, Stearns's work created the field of study that I am attempting to expand. My work will take the qualities he discusses and examine how they are affected and reinforced by sports in popular culture.

One aspect of my research will examine each sport directly, identifying the ways that athletes and popular sports present images of gender. Michael Messner's *Out of Play: Critical Essays on Gender and Sport* establishes organized sports as a site for

gender construction. Messner is primarily concerned with sport and women, specifically the ways that women are treated and represented in the typically patriarchal culture of sports. My research focuses directly with construction of the masculine image in the United States through sports and Messner's initial acceptance that sport is a traditionally masculine environment reinforces my position. *Out of Play* is focused on feminine gender construction but his critical foundation is useful for exploring a system through which images of gender are solidified in sport.

The most closely related study to date is Deborah Tudor's 1997 book *Hollywood's Vision of Team Sports: Heroes, Race and Gender*. Tudor lays the groundwork for a great deal of the study of sports films that would follow over the course of the next 20 years. She provides an overview of the different ways sports broadcasting and films can be studied to illustrate cultural ideologies. While she acknowledges differences between sports, she does not explore how the different performances of masculinity in sport relate to each other. Her work will be invaluable to my study as I seek to complete my own materialist readings of sports films and the sports they depict.

Seán Crosson's *Sport and Film* examines the development of the sports film as a genre. In his study, Crosson looks at the genre as it relates to masculinity. His examination of sports films' portrayal of national identity— their affirmation of the American Dream — and their relation to gender, class, and race, offers a significant source for this study. Crosson's book is representative of the large body of research that has blossomed since Tudor's book into the sports film as a genre. In Richard C. King and David J. Leonard's *Visual Economies off/in Motion: The Sports Film* (2006), the authors discuss the popularity of the sports film even though it does not enjoy the same critical

attention as other genre films. They also devote a significant portion of their book to the pedagogical opportunities involving the sports film by offering sample syllabi geared towards teaching both the history and the cultural implications of the genre. *Sport and Society's* March 2008 issue was devoted entirely to the sport film, indicating that the genre is gaining critical traction in sociological fields as well as in film studies scholarship. Largely, the scholarship represents sport as an allegorical device through which an ideology is communicated. It is my hope to look at sports from the other direction. I will examine the way that sports have influenced the construction of gendered images in national culture beyond the stadiums. By doing so, I hope to expand the understanding of sports' influence on gendered images and national identity in the United States. Another contribution of this project will be to expand this analysis beyond the realm of film studies to encompass plays and theatrical productions about sports, and the analysis of sporting events themselves through the lens of performance studies. Addressing the image of masculinity in three distinct performance genres — film, theatre, and sports — will help to unmask these genre-specific representations as symptoms of a broader cultural project to define gender identities.

Methods

As with most current studies involving gender performativity, my methodological starting point will be Judith Butler's work. I will be predicating my study on the assumption that gender, as Butler has famously argued, is culturally constructed. By analyzing the cultures surrounding both baseball and football, I will establish the distinguishing characteristics of gendered performance in each sport.

Richard Schechner's *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, includes both sports and theatre, in his chart of performance genres but sharply distinguishes the two.¹³ He cites the lack of a scripted outcome and symbolic reality as the defining differences between them. My analysis will emphasize the similarities rather than the differences between the two performance genres. To this end, I will utilize the expansive definition of theatre that Paul Woodruff proposes in *The Necessity of Theatre* (2008), which construes sport to be a species of theatre, and not merely of performance. Woodruff suggests that sporting events can be read in the same way that films or theatrical productions are.

I will devote two chapters to each sport and its correlating paradigm of masculinity; illustrating the ways that the sport's ideal participant defines that particular form of masculinity. I will use my list of masculine qualities to identify how each sport defines the masculine role differently. After the first chapter establishes the paradigm's characteristics, the second chapter will examine plays and films that exemplify it. I will analyze plays and films that showcase the use of the sport in question to represent the paradigm of masculinity. The materialist readings of theatrical productions in Jill Dolan's *The Feminist Spectator as Critic* will provide a model by which to read the ideologies at play within narratives within and fictional representations of each sport.

After establishing each sport's definition of their individual paradigm of masculinity and illustrating how fictional representations establish a mythology through which gendered images are naturalized in popular culture, I will conclude with an examination the relationship between both paradigms in the same cultural sphere.

I will begin with baseball, outlining a brief history of the development of the game itself. As baseball grew in popularity, its influence on identity in the United States also grew. I will identify how journalists and players worked in tandem to construct a mythology that established a model for ideal baseball behavior. By focusing more on the development of images of the sport in popular culture I will illustrate how it became a paradigm for masculine performance in the United States. Babe Ruth serves as a personification of ideal baseball qualities. Ruth's persona functions as a model to be emulated to establish masculine qualities in baseball's paradigm of masculinity. His immense popularity reinforces the influence baseball has on popular culture in the United States.

After illustrating how the paradigm of baseball functions as a culturally accepted ritual for masculine performance I will identify images of masculinity in United States popular culture that are unrelated to baseball but operate within the same paradigm. Images of the baseball paradigm in popular culture that do not mention or relate directly to the sport of baseball reinforces the influence of the paradigm on identity formation in the United States.

Finally, examining the steroid scandal of the early 1990s I will identify how the paradigm has become so important for the formation of national and masculine identity that popular culture seeks to protect the ideologies associated with baseball. Protection of baseball's ideologies involves both the punishment of players who transgress the spiritual rules of the game, and the preservation of records held by ideological heroes of the game. The preservation of the ideologies associated with the paradigm further reinforces its influence on masculine identity in the United States.

Building upon my observations about baseball's relationship to masculine identity in the United States, I will then examine at fictional representations of the sport. Embodiment of baseball on stage and in film gives further insight into the relationship between baseball's paradigm of masculinity and established images of masculinity in popular culture.

First, examining films and plays that present baseball as an idealized version of masculine behavior will reinforce how the paradigm has shaped the culture of identity in the United States. These plays and films further contribute to the mythology of baseball by establishing more heroes to emulate and solidifying a code of behavior. *The Sandlot* presents baseball as a ritual through which boys can become men. *Bull Durham* suggests a systematic process for teaching the spiritual rules of baseball and that there is an implicit connection between success as a man and success on the baseball field. Finally, *Damn Yankees* presents baseball fandom as a religion, suggesting the teams we support has moral implications and establishes spectatorship as a viable process of participation in baseball's paradigm of masculinity.

Second, an examination of films and plays that challenge the positive impact of baseball's paradigm will serve dual purposes. *Take Me Out* challenges the heteronormative view of baseball masculinity. *Back! Back! Back!* offers a fictional account of the steroid scandal of the early 1990s, illustrating the collapse of baseball's idealized façade. *Moneyball* examines the real-life success of the Oakland Athletics after they abandoned the traditional way of playing baseball, challenging the importance of a romantic view of baseball. These cases serve as evidence of the far-reaching influence of baseball as a cultural image by paralleling many of the details and ideologies that are

celebrated in the previous section, illustrating how baseball and popular culture continue to affect each other.

Adopting a similar approach to baseball I will start with the history of football, as it relates to United States popular culture. I will trace the sport's rise to popularity among the affluent college men in the early 1900s and illustrate how that contributed to its popularity throughout the rest of the nation. By highlighting key influential figures in US history and their direct relationship to football I will reveal how football was intended to function as a ritualized performance of masculinity in the US.

Much of my analysis will focus on the inherent violence of the sport, presenting football as a haven in which men can perform or recall their performance of behaviors less acceptable in a more civilized culture as socially constructed in the U. S. mainstream society? I will draw a parallel between football and the western genre, suggesting they present a similar environment in which men can practice the ritualized behaviors discussed above. Football is a ritual in the performative sense, a proving ground for masculinity in modern U. S. culture.

Continuing my comparison between football and the western genre, I examine images of cowboys through the football paradigm of masculine performance. Highlighting the ways in which their ideally football behavior establishes their masculinity will illustrate the influence of football's paradigm on popular culture and its relevance to the contemporary vision of man in the United States. Using the parallel between images football's culture and the western genre, I will examine cases that present football as a haven for masculinity. Fictional representations of football reflect our cultures' reception of the sport and offer insight into what a successful football

player, and, therefore, successfully masculine performance in football's paradigm of behavior looks like.

Television programs offer a unique version of embodiment. A faster production schedule and longer form narrative (stories told over an entire season, rather than a single two-hour program) allows a more nuanced representation of football. *Playmakers* and *Ballers* present different images of professional football to differing degrees of success. Conflicting images of football and its impact on the participants also illustrate the influence of the National Football League on its own cultural image.

Varsity Blues showcases an idealized vision of football when a reluctant player learns how to better function in society through his forced participation. *Any Given Sunday* challenges sex-specific gendered identity through its portrayal of a female owner, adopting masculine qualities to find success in the culture of football. Finally, *Colossal* offers a representation of the ritual of a football game in a live stage performance, connecting the performance of masculine qualities through football's paradigm with the performative act of playing football itself.

After establishing the influence and scope of both paradigms of masculinity, I will conclude with an examination of their relationship to each other within United States popular culture. Are they competing images? Do they co-exist? Do they fulfill each other as symbiotic parts of a more complex view of masculine identity? Brief studies of fictions where both paradigms are practiced will establish how the conflicting patterns of behavior serve a similar cultural function and can present the same perceived gender identity. Understanding how different performative acts can produce the same gendered image calls for a shift in the perception of the construction of masculinity.

CHAPTER 2

BASEBALL

The purpose of this chapter is to examine how the sport of baseball has become a symbolic performance of masculinity and nationality in the United States. An examination of baseball during the height of its popularity will reveal parallels between characteristics of the ideal baseball player and the ideal American man. Though the image of masculinity in the United States has grown much more complicated since baseball's golden age, the characteristics associated with baseball remain a significant part of the normative American masculine image, and is now tied closely with nostalgia for a recalled "better" time. I will focus on baseball between the 1920s and the 1960s in order to show the growth, sustaining, and decline of baseball's position as national past time in the United States.

Baseball offers a significant platform for the performance of masculinity in the United States. Physical and emotional toughness, and self-sufficiency are required in order to play the game at a high level. The practice of these qualities in a familiar social activity like baseball offers a platform upon which a person can perform their masculinity. The obvious physical strain of an athletic activity provides the opportunity to perform physical toughness. Emotional toughness in baseball comes from the acceptance of failure such as committing an error or striking out, and distancing the individual failure from one's performance in the game as a whole. As a baseball player one must be able to forget previous missteps in order to continue to perform at his highest

level. Finally, baseball's rules encourage self-sufficiency in offensive plays. During an "at-bat" a player faces the entire opposing team by himself. To be a good baseball player is to exhibit these qualities.

In addition to technical proficiency, social behavior associated with its culture is also necessary for baseball's paradigm of masculinity. Despite the European roots of masculine performance in the United States, the paradigm of national and gendered identity in the US focuses on its separation from what is perceived as European.

Baseball and the American Dream

Baseball's position as a primary arena for modeling the performance of American masculinity stems from the ideological values associated with its culture. Those values in turn stem from the participants in the sport both as active players and spectators. As an ideal version of baseball exists in the imaginations of both groups, successful performance is curated by public reactions to certain acts. As the participants determine the most effective way to succeed (i.e. win) the spectator's reaction determines whether the performance (i.e. entertainment) is effective. This is true of any culturally defined activity, and in the case of baseball, the U. S. public shapes baseball's ideology. The development of national culture in the United States has coincided with the growing popularity of the sport.

The notion of the American Dream has a significant effect on the nation's acceptance of baseball as its national pastime. First coined by James Truslow Adams in his book *The Epic of America*, the term has been used to describe the foundation of the culture of the United States. Adams describes a dream:

of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position.¹⁴

Adams specifically defines the dream as counterintuitive to Europeans, thus generating a separation between European and American culture. From that separation, an autonomous identity can be forged, which Adams codifies with his description of men and women, both of whom able to achieve everything of which they are capable. For Adams, in the United States regardless of the advantages or hardships faced by someone at their birth, they are able to achieve the same amount of success as anyone else, so long as they are personally capable. Here, the notion of fairness seems to be the thru-line of Adams's argument. Everyone in America gets the same opportunity to succeed. This parallels the way a baseball game is organized. Each team has exactly the same number of opportunities to score points or stop their opponent from scoring. There is no game clock; time does not run out on a baseball team, they simply fail to effectively capitalize on their opportunities.

Adams's definition of the American Dream is obviously problematic when one considers the many groups of people who are not, as Adams suggests, "able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position"¹⁵ Adams

elides the gross inequalities that women and non-white men faced—and to a large extent continue to face—in American society.

In his book *America's National Game*, Albert Spalding emphasizes baseball's democratic nature: "the son of the President of the United States would as soon play ball with Patsy Flannigan as with Lawrence Lionel Livingstone.... Whether Patsy's dad was a banker or boilermaker would never enter the mind of the White House lad. It could be quite enough for him to know that Patsy was up in the game".¹⁶ Here Spalding echoes Adams's sentiments and connects baseball to the idea of The American Dream. The suggestion that anyone, regardless of social status, should be able to play the game so long as they have the skills to compete serves to reinforce the ideological parallels between the American Dream and baseball.

Essentially every sport is founded upon the idea of fair play. At the beginning of any contest, the opposing teams have the same score. In most sports the strategy centers on trying to limit the opposing team's opportunities to score. In football, for instance, it is theoretically possible for one team to remain on offense for the entire duration of the game. This strategy, while improbable, would prevent the opposing team from even having an opportunity to score. Baseball, however, requires that both teams have the same opportunities, regardless of the length of the contest.

Adams's definition indirectly alludes to the possibility of failure as well. His caveat that people are able to fully attain everything of which they are capable presupposes that some people are more capable than others. Adams's suggestion that the US affords opportunity to each according to their own ability¹⁷ implies that some people will achieve more than others simply because they are more capable. There must be a

losing team in a baseball game, but in baseball the losing team has only itself to blame for its loss.

Due to parallels between the game and the notion of the American Dream as described by Adams, a baseball game could be viewed as a ritualistic celebration of the notion of opportunity in America. American spectators participate in a reenactment of their daily lives when they watch a baseball game. Each player has his turn at bat, his opportunity to achieve a success; his individual worth is tested in the atmosphere of the game. Individual success, however, is not enough for a team to win. The team must work together to build individual successes in order to score points and to prevent the other team from doing the same. Baseball is played every day of the week with series happening back to back followed by a brief respite, just like a work week followed by a weekend. Success is not generated by one moment of triumph, but rather by a steady and continued effort.

For example, a salesman watching a player struggle at bat might empathize with the player's struggle. Maybe he recently experienced a similar failure in trying to promote a new product. The salesman might watch the same player in the outfield make a difficult catch, preventing his opponent from scoring and keeping the team's chances of winning alive. Now the salesman is reminded that while his new product is not as popular as he would like, he is able to make his quota through other the sale of more steady products. Our salesman is reminded that continued effort is rewarded finally when he watches the player, bolstered by his success on defense, knock the game winning run in on a stand up double.

This empathetic response may extend even further. Perhaps the player, in whom our salesman sees himself, has just been called up from the minor leagues. Our salesman, anxious about a possible upcoming promotion might take some comfort as he watches the player's continued work be rewarded with an opportunity to perform on a higher level. He might also take comfort in the player's success at his new level, perhaps the salesman is also capable of handling the larger workload that a promotion would entail. As the salesman leaves the baseball game he feels invigorated, and redoubles his efforts in his own professional life. Men see themselves in baseball in this way. The practice of playing becomes a metaphor for anything a man's daily life, and the success and failures become hits and strikeouts in his own personal game.

As we examine the development of the game from impetus to national pastime, we will uncover the ways in which baseball functions as a performative expression through which one can identify oneself as masculine. The public development of the game happened in tandem with the reconstruction of the nation after the civil war. Possibly due to the game's ubiquity among people all over the country, baseball became a metaphor for the nation in many ways.

Baseball's Beginnings

After the Civil War, increased industrialization as well as more regulated labor removed the central process through which masculinity was performed in the United States. This combined with social shifts such as women's participation in college and public elections meant that the previously accepted expressions of masculinity were no longer viable. The perceived crisis that was limited middle class white men inspired a pro-male movement in an effort to return the vitality and virility to men that they once

possessed. The social conditions were perfect for baseball's emergence into popularity, making it not only a patriotic activity, but also a moral one. But, where did it come from?

The often-repeated origin myth of baseball begins with a group of men playing a game of townball in Cooperstown, New York at some time during the summer of 1839, and Abner Doubleday, after watching this game, drew up a diagram for how the men ought to stand in a new version of the game.¹⁸¹⁹ The players were spread out into a diamond shape, and while there were eleven men on the field as opposed to nine, the shape would be recognizable today as a baseball positions. While this story evokes many aspects of the sport, it happens to be untrue. There well may have been one or many games of townball played in Cooperstown during the summer of 1839, but Doubleday didn't see any of them. Doubleday, a civil war hero, is attributed with the development of the rules by the creative memory of a nameless man, recounting the story to baseball commissioner Albert Spalding who published the story as fact while promoting his sport. Doubleday spent his summer that year at West Point, and may have never even seen a professional baseball game.²⁰

In 1911, Albert Spalding published "America's National Game," in which he extols the values of the sport to which he dedicated most of his life. Though he mentions in the foreword of his book, that he does not wish for it to be considered a history of baseball, he does detail an account of the original development of the rules of the game. A commission was appointed at his suggestion in 1907 to investigate the nature and merits of the game of baseball. They found "*First*—That Base Ball had its origin in the United States" and "*Second*—That the first scheme for playing it, according to the best evidence obtainable to date, was devised by Abner Doubleday, at Cooperstown, New

York in 1839.”²¹ Spalding, goes on to include the statement of the commission chair, A. G. Mills, revealed that “circumstantial statement provided by a reputable gentlemen” was the basis for their findings about Doubleday. In his statement, Mills credits Spalding for finding the gentleman (who is not named in the statement). Mills closes his statement report with this:

It is possible that a connection more or less direct can be traced between the diagram drawn by Doubleday in 1839 and that presented to the Knickerbocker club by Wadsworth in 1845, or thereabouts, and I wrote several days ago for certain data bearing on this point, but as it has not yet come to hand I have decided to delay no longer sending in the kind of paper your letter calls for, promising to furnish you the indicated data when I obtain it, whatever it may be.²²

Spalding makes no further mention of the data that would make a connection between the mystery diagram that Doubleday might have drawn up, and the diagram that Wadsworth (a member of the Knickerbocker club) brought to the club that might have substantiated his claim. It is curious that while the commission submitted its report in 1907, by 1911 when Spalding published his book, no such proof had arrived. Or if it did, Spalding did not deem it necessary to include the documentation.

More systematic research into the history of baseball traces the origin of the sport to 1842, when a group of men, members of the New York Knickerbocker Baseball Club (NYKBC), blended and augmented two popular British games: rounders and cricket into what we now recognize as baseball. The NYKBC, made up of businessmen in New York, stressed the importance of the amateur nature of the sport. By stressing the recreational nature of baseball, the NYKBC ensured that the only people who would be able to play

the game were men that had leisure time. After they ran out of space in the city, the men of the club needed to spread out, and in their searching found a field just across the Hudson River in Hoboken, New Jersey. The field they found, that overlooked the river was called Elysian Fields. While the men finalized the rules and their play generated a great deal of interest, some times drawing a crowd of over a hundred spectators. In 1845 they played the first officially recorded baseball game in history against a local cricket team. Despite the fact that they lost, the game generated enough interest that other clubs began to develop and play each other.

While not historically accurate, Spalding's version effectively tapped into deeply entrenched conceptions of American national identity. The game, as Spalding tells it, was born in a rural town, evoking images of the pastoral, conceived in the imagination of a civil war hero, suggesting that America's pastime is purely indigenous, with no influence from outside cultures. Indeed, in his book *America's National Game*, Spalding specifically describes the baseball player as a champion of the "native" sport.²³ Having a successful participation in the Civil War to his credit, Abner Doubleday was nothing if not American. This origin gave a country that was asserting its socio-economic independence a sport that was all its own.

The pastoral aspect of this story is also important to Spalding's vision of the sport, It encourages concepts of muscular morality that were becoming popular in the nation. Pamphlets sung praise to the health benefits of country air. Some went so far as to suggest that the city life was mortally dangerous to children.²⁴ Suggesting that a number of young men enjoying the country that their fathers fought to make their own inspires

more romanticism than a group of upper class entrepreneurs passing their leisure time in a major city.

A running theme for baseball, which I will illustrate throughout this chapter, is that what is said or understood to be true is likely more important than what actually happened. Despite the fact that we know Abner Doubleday's actual involvement in the creation of the game of baseball is almost nonexistent, the baseball hall of fame is housed in Cooperstown, New York. Despite the fact that we know baseball was likely developed in the streets of New York City, it is collectively viewed as a celebration of the pastoral. And finally, despite the fact that it has always been a business enterprise, baseball is the everyman's sport, a pastime that men are expected to understand as a part of their performance of adult masculinity.

This is true for the history of the sport as well as for the expectations of participants. Of course, a baseball player was expected to be a skilled athlete and to score runs or prevent them depending on his position. However, a baseball player was also an ambassador for the culture of baseball. This was illustrated when Spalding took a team of all stars on a world tour of baseball, playing exhibition games on every continent save Antarctica. Players were representing the sport by playing the game for different people who had never heard of baseball, and they were also representing the culture of the game. The players embodied the sport and their own national identity.

The Greatest Baseball Player

Discussion of the characteristics baseball in the abstract helps to develop an understanding of what the sport itself means to national culture, but what do they look like when put into practice. Other than the mechanical throwing, hitting, running, and

catching involved in the sport how does a baseball player embody the performative characteristics discussed earlier, and what does that look like? What is an ideal baseball player?

In his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman discusses the part a person plays in their daily interactions with observers. A person seeks to convince his observer of certain details about his life.²⁵ In the case of baseball, the player seeks to convince many observers of the fact that he or she is good at the sport. This is not dissimilar from any professional seeking to sell their wares or services to a customer. In order to do this, aspects of an individual's front may be dramatized in order to suggest worth. The dramatization of a baseball player's display of skill also happens to be entertaining to the public. Exemplary skill in a sport with so much potential for dramatic self-expression leads to fame in national fantasies.

The dramatization of baseball player's life both on and off the field is largely due to the media's coverage of the sport as it gains popularity. The journalists contribute to the popularity of the players they cover by keeping them in the public consciousness. Players begin to live in public consciousness and grow beyond themselves in its collective imagination. More characters than people by the time most crowds see them play in person players become cultural archetypes. The archetypes created in public imagination are the basis for the paradigm of masculinity performed through baseball. Aspects of great players become the roadmap for gendered performativity.

An ideal baseball player must excel in two categories. First, he must show great skill in the mechanics of the game: a great player must be great at the game. Second, he must embody characteristics that the public has come to accept as a part of the game. He

must fit within the understood narrative of a baseball player. The public wants a player to be capable of great things on the field but also be approachable as a person you might meet on the street. It wants its player to win but — only in the right way. The notion of fairness is fluid, but the core idea is that a crowd would rather watch its team lose than win through some advantage not deemed morally acceptable. Finally, other players and spectators alike will generally revere the player. Respect from opponents validates a player's greatness in public eye; appreciation from someone who is invested in one's failure is a step towards an objective judgment of greatness. I will argue that the best embodiment of an ideal baseball player is Babe Ruth, because he is successful in both categories.

The details of Ruth's life contribute to his status in public imagination. There are many aspects of his young life that are contested. Though he was not an orphan, Ruth spent the majority of his adolescence in a school for wayward boys, ostensibly because his parents had difficulty managing his rambunctious nature. Ruth's parents gave legal custody to St. Mary's Industrial School for Boys. Here, Ruth met Brother Matthias, the prefect of discipline at St. Mary's. Matthias recognized Ruth's natural athletic abilities and nurtured those skills, giving Ruth something to focus his energies into. If we look at Ruth's personal life, we see the American Dream at play again. While not technically an orphan, his humble childhood is likely part of what made him popular among fans. Despite his disadvantages, Ruth was able to achieve everything of which he was capable. When people watched Ruth hit a homerun, they saw themselves rising above their circumstances to achieve their own personal greatness.

George Herman Ruth's transition to the Great Bambino perfectly fits Adams' description of the American Dream. He seems to be someone who achieved the fullest extent of his potential regardless of the circumstances of his birth. With no advantages to his name save for his talent and work ethic, Ruth became the single most important sports figure in the United States. The convergence of the narrative of his life and incredible feats he accomplished in the game make him the ideal baseball player, and an image of masculinity to be emulated by other men in the nation.

Though he would be known for hitting homeruns, Babe Ruth was a talented all-around player. He started his major league career as a pitcher for the Boston Red Sox and was supremely effective in that position. Some analysts think he could have been a hall of fame pitcher, Red Sox manager, Ed Barrow recognized that Ruth's hitting, even as a pitcher attracted larger crowds on the days when he played. Ruth was assigned to the outfield on the days he did not pitch and eventually shifted positions completely. Ruth was eventually sold to the Yankees as a part of a multifaceted cash deal. Ruth flourished in New York, playing the most exciting baseball the nation had ever seen. During his career as a Yankee, Ruth broke the single season homerun record three times, eventually hitting sixty homeruns in a single season and setting a record that remained untouched for thirty years. It was also during his time in New York that Ruth's interactions with the media and fans began to construct a public persona that would make his name synonymous with success in baseball for all time.

There is evidence to suggest that Ruth might have been the best baseball player in terms of on field performance. However, trying to measure Ruth's on field skill against other players does not benefit our discussion. Ruth's skill on the field, while related to his

success as a player, is not why he has become immortalized. George Herman Ruth became “the Babe” because of the public’s perception of him. Ruth’s interaction with journalists so completely that he is revered as a mythological figure. Ruth’s skill is less important to this examination as his public persona and reputation. It is the Babe, and not George Herman Ruth we are concerned with here.

Famed sports journalist, Grantland Rice developed a relationship with Ruth as he was starting his baseball career. The words Rice used to extol Ruth’s personality and in-game performances helped to shape the public image of Babe Ruth. Throughout Ruth’s career Grantland Rice was his most ardent supporter, hyperbolizing his triumphs and explaining away his missteps. His enthusiasm led him to create nicknames for the Babe. Coining the names “The Great Bambino” and “the Sultan of Swat” for Ruth, Rice’s suggested monikers stuck and remain connected to Ruth’s identity long after both men have died. By creating a persona in the Great Bambino or the Son of Swat, Rice elevated Ruth’s status beyond being known, or liked, to being revered. Rice’s hyperbolic stories about how far and high the Babe hit a homerun became truth in the minds of the listeners and readers across the country while the Babe’s continued dominance of the league granted credence to Rice’s words.

The Babe’s image is the product of collaboration between Rice and Ruth. Ruth hit more homeruns than anyone had ever seen before, and Rice wrote heroic poetry about his swing.²⁶ Rice’s recounting of the Ruth’s exploits off the field made Ruth larger than life for people that had not met him. As the Babe grew in popularity on the field, his off field activity became more pertinent to readers and journalists. Slowly the cycle of sports journalism turned him in a character whose narrative was created by Rice.

In *Performance Analysis and Popular Performance: A Manifesto*, Phillip

Auslander suggested that, in the case of musicians, a performance can be separated into three layers. The real person, the performance persona, and the character make up all of the aspects of a musical performance.²⁷ Utilizing Auslander's model when reading Ruth's cultural impact allows for a clearer separation between the aspects of Ruth's performance as a baseball player and as an American man. When examining the case of Babe Ruth's famous called shot, we can examine the construction of Ruth's persona through the collaboration of his personal performance and the further reporting of the journalists that helped to create the text of his masculinity in the imagination of the nation.

In game three of the 1932 World Series, Babe Ruth and the Yankees were playing against the Chicago Cubs in Wrigley Field. During the fifth inning Ruth was up to bat and after four pitches (two balls and two strikes), possibly in response to the heckling he was receiving from the Cubs' dugout, Ruth held up his hand with two fingers pointing to the center field stands. With the next pitch Ruth connected and hit the ball out of the park in the exact direction he had just pointed. The fans, despite being supporters of the home team, realized what they had just witnessed and cheered for Ruth solely due to his audacity and accomplishment in that moment. The Yankees went on to sweep the Cubs and win another World Series for New York.

Babe Ruth's famous "called shot" is a strong part of Ruth's persona as a godlike hero of the game. We are not concerned here with whether or not Ruth did in fact call a home run before he hit it. Rather this well-known moment in Ruth's legend offers a great starting point for the examination of the different layers of performance at play in the development of Ruth's persona. We will start with the first layer of performance

according to Auslander, the real person. In 1932 Ruth was approaching the end of his career; this would be his last world series. While he was no longer at the apex of his physical abilities, he had experience and a resilience in the batter's box to get hits. His home run proved objectively that he was still a relevant talent in the game. These are the realities of who Ruth was on the day. The real person was a baseball player who hit a homerun.

During the game, Journalists reported that Ruth's demeanor was boisterous, with back and forth heckling between he and members of the opposite team. He took two pitches for strikes and players in the opposing dugout began to sound his failure. Ruth responded to the needling Cubs by holding up two fingers to signal that it had only been two strikes against him. Ruth's easy nature when encountering jibs by other people was not uncommon, but facing two strikes, any player would be encouraged to focus on the upcoming pitch. Ruth's demeanor under the intense pressure of the moment, willing to trade barbs with other players evidences his constructed persona. The Babe that spectators came to see was one of a rough demeanor, as quick to laugh at himself as an opposing player. Ruth's actions here were consistent with the persona he had created.

Finally, Ruth pointed deep into the centerfield bleachers and let everyone in the stadium know exactly where he was going to hit the next pitch. When his bat connected and the ball went sailing into the stands directly where he pointed the crowd that had been so vehemently cheering against him was silenced. As Ruth rounded the bases Cubs and Yankees fans alike started cheering, not for the player but for what they had just witnessed. Grantland Rice's account of the moment was printed in his syndicated column in the Evening Star (Washington D.C.).

Two strikes whistled over the plate as the crowd roared. As the second strike swept across, the Babe looked at the Cub bench and held up two fingers. His beaming countenance wore a broad grin. He then pointed to center field. And around five seconds later his famous line drive lash—no much higher than Carnera’s head—sailed across the barrier.

The whiplike action of his wrists and arms, working together with a perfect body spin, was as fine a piece of coordination as I have ever seen. ... He first built up his act with a mixture of comedy and kidding, farce and humor, and then he turned it into drama. ... No one else in sport could have developed such a plot and then finished the story with such a flaming finale. He called the turn in advance, and then he put everything in his 225 pounds carried into the most tremendous swing and lash his big bat had ever know.²⁸

After writing about the play itself, Rice describes Ruth as a performer. His “act” being the at bat, and Ruth, according to Rice, crafted a profound performance in which the audience was set up for his towering home run by the preceding two strikes. Ruth is no longer a baseball player but a character. The Babe that hit the fateful homerun is not the same Ruth and yet they are not the same. The Ruth who plays baseball inspired the mythical hero that Grantland Rice wrote about.

Rice gives us an excellent example of the writing style associated with sports journalists at the time. In addition to reporting the score and statistics, Rice becomes a storyteller. By evoking the dramatic tension of Ruth’s at bat for his readers, Rice attempted to recreate the experience of being at the game. For many fans, Rice’s description of the game’s events was the only account they had access to. Rice’s articles functioned as a lens through which much of the public viewed Babe Ruth. While it was

Babe Ruth that hit homeruns, it was Rice who transformed Ruth's skill on the field into herculean feats, and created a mythological hero in the collective imagination of the nation. Babe Ruth and Grantland Rice collaborated to create the Great Bambino, the embodiment of baseball's spirit, and therefore, an embodiment of masculinity in the nation.

Rice's final collaboration with Ruth came in the form of Ruth's obituary "Game Called." After spending much of his career bolstering Ruth's skill on the field, Rice wrote candidly about his personal experiences with Ruth beyond the game: "He was a rough rowdy, swaggering figure, more profane than anyone I ever hope to meet again, with a strong sense of decency and justice and fair play. He was a sportsman, if ever I saw one. He wanted no advantage at any start."²⁹ Here, Rice outlines an image of American masculinity in line with that described by Truslow Adams in his description of the American Dream, and echoed in Spalding's discussion of the game itself. The character of Babe Ruth is what set him apart. His spectacle spilled beyond the park as well. Ruth's rough by kind persona dovetailed with the ideology that Albert Spalding suggested decades previously. Through Ruth, the public saw a man raised from almost nothing by his bootstraps who even at the height of fame never took himself too seriously. Ruth had become a metaphor for the America that baseball was intended to represent.

The Ball-Player as a Paradigm for Masculinity

Ruth's public persona established a paradigm of masculinity that became pervasive throughout American popular culture and normative in American society at large. As we have seen in our analysis of Ruth, this persona is defined by the following characteristics: strength, integrity, nurturing, a common demeanor, and perseverance. These same characteristics can be found in myriad performances of masculinity in US

popular culture. A close examination of another popular culture persona exhibiting these characteristics will illustrate how the paradigm extends beyond baseball.

James (Jimmy) Stewart, enjoyed a great deal of success as a Hollywood actor. Stewart was born in 1908, which would have made him nine years old the year that Ruth set his single season homerun record. As a child it is likely that Stewart would have followed Ruth's career as a baseball player. His work as a professional performer contributed to the construction of a persona that exhibited the same characteristics found within the baseball paradigm. Following Auslander's model, I analyzed Ruth's performance of masculinity by breaking it down into three parts: the character, the persona, and the actual person. Applying these same categories to the construction of Stewart's gendered performance will illustrate its similarities to Ruth's performance.

We will first examine the characters that Stewart portrayed, and then I will discuss how his on-screen performances contribute to the construction of his public persona. While Auslander's model includes the real person as a part of the makeup of a performative character, James Stewart the person is less pertinent to our discussion of performance paradigms as we are more concerned with the cultural impact of his public image. Nevertheless, it will be necessary to engage with Stewart as a person to clarify the contrast between his personal life and the character Jimmy Stewart. To distinguish between the three aspects of Stewart's performance, I will use the name *James Stewart* when referring to the actual person, *Jimmy Stewart* to refer to his persona, and the character names to refer to characters Stewart portrayed in his films. Where Ruth's work on the field and his public appearances inspired character of the Babe for the public at large, the characters that Stewart embodied on film contributed to his persona more

significantly than his direct interactions with the public. While both men represent a public image of masculinity they have come to their respective representations from opposite performative directions. This should not come as a surprise as Stewart's profession directly involves purposeful creation and performance of characters for the public.

Stewart's characters that most embody baseball's paradigm of masculinity are Jefferson Smith in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939) and George Bailey in *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946). The characters portrayed in both of these films defined the persona of Jimmy Stewart in US popular culture. Similar to the creation of Ruth's character, Stewart's characters were the product of collaboration. Frank Capra directed both *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, and *It's a Wonderful Life*. Capra worked with Stewart for the first time on his academy award winning film *You Can't Take It With You* (1938). Their collaboration on the other two films solidified Stewart's persona as an everyman in the public. Similarly to the way that Ruth and Rice worked together to create the Babe, Capra's work with Stewart created Jimmy Stewart.

Stewart's breakout role, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939) put him in the national spotlight and first introduced his public persona to the nation. In the film, Jefferson Smith is selected to replace a recently deceased US Senator specifically because of his wholesome image and supposed naivety. Smith is shepherded through the capital's inner workings by crooked senator Joseph Paine, who suggests that Smith propose a bill in order to keep him busy while Paine and his conspirators try to push a graft scheme through congress. When Smith's proposed bill conflicts with Paine's plans, the Senator and his companions launch into a campaign to remove Smith from office. Smith attempts

a filibuster to expose the crooked politician's schemes and prove his innocence before he can be removed from his post. During the twenty-four hours that Smith speaks, he specifically discusses the details of the scheme as well as espousing the virtues of freedom in America. Despite his best efforts, Smith succumbs to fatigue and faints on the senate floor. Paine, racked with guilt over harming such a good and innocent man attempts suicide but is stopped by a fellow senator. Afterwards, Paine bursts into the chambers and admits to the whole scheme, proclaiming Smith's innocence.³⁰

Stewart's portrayal of a stuttering, and simple politician being confronted with the more cynical political process in the capitol illustrates each of the characteristics associated with baseball's paradigm of masculinity. By breaking down how Stewart's portrayal of Jefferson Smith exhibits each aspect of the baseball paradigm of masculinity I will illustrate the parallels between Stewart's and Ruth's masculine performativity.

The culminating sequence of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* revolves around Jefferson Smith's filibuster. During the sequence he must stand and speak until the senate will see the truth of his words. Though the filibuster technically fails when he loses consciousness, Smith shows incredible physical strength by standing and speaking to the senate for over 24 hours before his body gives out.

Smith is only able to push himself to his physical limits because of his commitment to doing the right thing. Smith believes in the truth and his integrity will not allow him to go along with the corrupt senators plan. His unwavering commitment to doing the right thing is what ultimately convinces Paine to confess to his wrongdoings. Smith's filibuster shows his perseverance, he will not rest until the senate believes him. It is ultimately his body and not his spirit succumbs to exhaustion. Smith's perseverance is

connected to his simple moral structure. Operating in a binary system where things are either right or wrong, telling the truth is right, and he does so without fail. Smith's morality is connected to national identity as well here. He is a good man and a good American because he stands up for what he believes is right. The ultimate reward for his integrity is not a victory in the traditional sense but that others follow his example of honesty.

The governor only considers Smith as an candidate for senator because his children are so fond of Smith as a scout leader, and Smith's desire to create a permanent campsite for the boys in his state is what initially exposes the corrupt senators' plot to Smith. Smith's greatest support during his filibuster comes from the Boy Rangers in his hometown. When the more politically entrenched senators use their influence to get the papers to publish false information about Smith, the Boy Rangers begin to distribute their own stories about Smith's filibuster. This leads to a violent confrontation between the boys and newspapermen ordered to silence any unauthorized stories about Smith. Smith's nurturing personality is highlighted through the actions of his opponents. Hurting children in order to preserve an illegal scheme, the corrupt senators present an example of what not to do. That these events are juxtaposed with Smith's speech about American ideals also presents the men's actions as un-American.

Smith's fish-out-of-water portrayal when he first arrives in Washington is reminiscent to that of Jonathan from the early American play *The Contrast*. Jonathan, who is an unsophisticated man being introduced to a fast moving urban environment for the first time, ultimately triumphs due to his honesty and patriotism. Similarly, Smith's commitment to doing what is right ultimately shifts the cynical political machine, and he

is rewarded for remaining steadfast to his ethics. Because he is so out of place among the metropolitan and fast moving politics of Washington, Smith comes to embody the persona that early American men suggested about themselves.

Stewart was nominated for the best actor academy award for his performance as Jefferson Smith. This film not only introduced Stewart as an embodiment of American masculinity it also catapulted his popularity as an actor. After his success, Stewart was drafted into the air force in 1940 where he served for World War II. Stewart's commitment to serve further established his every day persona. Just as men in the US might have related to Jefferson Smith, they would have admired a movie star who embodies same aspects of masculinity he performed just a year before. Not only his characters but Stewart himself became a man to be emulated.

James Stewart's performance creates a character that presents all of the aspects of the paradigm of masculinity. His work with director Frank Capra parallels the collaboration that Ruth and Rice participated in, to create the persona of an ideal baseball player. Both Jefferson Smith and George Bailey are ideal American men because they embody the same qualities that made the Babe so popular beyond the baseball field. Similarly, the popularity of Stewarts public persona as an everyman suggests that these qualities are the product of a larger collaboration between the public at large and the personas of the pop culture figures. By rewarding the men who performed the qualities of masculinity with popularity, adoration, and ultimately emulation the public helped to encourage the creation of this paradigm of masculinity.

As an artist, however, Stewart's singular persona exposed a creative challenge. In an effort to avoid being pigeonholed into one type of character, Stewart began to actively

pursue roles that challenged the wholesome everyman character that made him famous. He portrayed men of less strict integrity and began to explore the gray areas of moral ambiguity in his characters. Even as he avoided the next George Bailey's and Jefferson Smith's, however, Stewart's persona created juxtaposition between persona and character in his later career that further complicated the paradigm he had come to embody. The public knew Stewart to be a "good man" and so his characters that did not embody all of the qualities they had come to expect expanded the collective image of masculinity.

Complicating Baseball

Long after he retired, Babe Ruth remained a mythological figure that served as an ideal against which other players were judged. A classic example of the weight given to the Babe's myth in the culture of baseball is the difficulty Roger Maris encountered when he challenged Ruth's record in 1961. Playing for the Yankees, Maris hit 61 homeruns by the end of the season, breaking Ruth's single season record. By 1961, however, the season had been extended so that Maris played 162 games, giving him eight more games in which to hit homeruns than Babe Ruth had. Maris's journey to sixty-one took him the entire extended season, prompting fans, journalists and even the baseball commissioner to diminish his accomplishment. When Maris's homerun ball and bat were put on display in the baseball hall of fame the number of homeruns Maris hit appeared with an asterisk next to it. In addition to explaining the difference between the two players' seasons, the asterisk represented the reverence given to Ruth that Maris battled for the entirety of his season.³¹

Throughout his season, Maris struggled with mixed reactions to his historic achievement. He was the polar opposite of Ruth, typically avoiding reporters and mostly giving short answers when he was forced to talk to them. This strained relationship with

the press did not do much for his public image while he worked towards over taking one of the most beloved figures in recent memory. Maris was playing for the Yankees, the same team as Ruth. In some cases, fans were so protective of Ruth's accomplishments that they booed their own team.³²

Maris's sixty-one home runs signaled a complication in the image fans were comfortable with when he toppled a supposedly unbreakable record by the greatest player of all time. In the public eye Maris was not just chasing a number; he was chasing a hero, and by coming so close made the hero seem mortal again. Perhaps there was more than one way to play the game. And if so, perhaps there is more than one way to be a man in the US.

Most significantly for our purposes, as Maris challenged the Babe's heroics, he also presented a different persona. While Ruth relished the spotlight and cultivated a positive relationship with the press, Maris preferred to keep to himself. The time when he was chasing Ruth's single season record is reported as one of the most trying periods of his personal life.³³ Maris was not the larger than life hero that Ruth was and was not beloved like Ruth was. No Grantland Rice fashioned Maris's accomplishments as heroic feats. Maris was not even the most popular player on his team during the 1961 season, as Mickey Mantle had already captured the imagination of Yankees fans. Roger Maris was just a baseball player. His embodiment of masculinity was complicated by the fact that he was not universally loved like other heroes of the game.

Though he was not the paragon of baseball success that Ruth was, in many ways Maris embodied the same aspects of masculinity made popular by Ruth. Maris was also a family man, and while he did not appreciate the extra attention from the press he was

polite when speaking with journalists, sometimes frustratingly so.³⁴ When he hit his sixty-first homerun, his teammates had to force him back out of the dugout to raise his cap to applauding fans. Maris never got to see the asterisk removed from his stat; he died six years before commissioner Fay Vincent erased the caveat to his accomplishment.

The question of whether Maris's homeruns "counted" became further complicated in 1998 when Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa succeeded in overtaking Roger Maris's home run record, which by then had stood for over thirty years. Even though they played for different teams in the same league, both Sosa and McGwire famously supported each other's success.³⁵ Before the end of the regular season Sammy Sosa had hit sixty-six home runs and Mark McGwire had hit seventy. Possibly due to their increased willingness to participate in the media coverage or maybe because the mentality of the fans had also shifted, both McGwire and Sosa were widely supported across the nation.

When Babe Ruth rose to popularity he brought baseball with him. Similarly, when McGwire and Sosa began their homerun race, popularity for the sport itself began to rise as they came closer to breaking the record. The game had suffered after the strike in 1994. When the players and the owners were unable to come to an agreement before the World Series was cancelled many fans lost faith in the game and stopped watching. The strike caused a shift in public perception of the game so that it no longer represented the qualities that were initially associated with the sport. Instead of seeing heroes who epitomized the American Dream, fans were disenchanted with what was perceived as rich men trying to get richer off other rich men. When McGwire and Sosa began hitting homeruns they rekindled public interest in the game. Baseball was created as an embodiment of what it meant to be an American, and homeruns are the most exciting and

immediately rewarding aspect of the game. If there is anything that can save baseball's reputation in popular culture, it is homeruns.

After waiting three decades to see Maris's record broken, fans did not have to wait long for McGwire's fall. Three years later Barry Bonds hit seventy-three homeruns in what seemed to be an unbelievable performance. By hitting so many homeruns so easily, Bonds raised suspicion among the rule makers that he might be cheating somehow. There were concerns that Bonds among other players was using performance-enhancing drugs to gain an unfair advantage on the field. The suspicions did not go away and under a great deal of pressure from congress, the Mitchell Report was released in 2005. The report was a comprehensive examination of the use of performance-enhancing drugs in contemporary baseball.

The Mitchell Report found that Bonds, McGwire, and Sosa, in addition to many other major league baseball players, had used some form of performance-enhancing drug during their career. The home run race, and the excitement surrounding the heroics of the game, was met with doubt and disappointment. Barry Bonds now holds both the single season and all time home run records but the way that he achieved those records is a question of integrity for popular culture.

When Bonds hit his 756th career home run amid allegations of steroid use, a fashion designer named Marc Ecko purchased the ball at an auction. He then conducted a national online contest to determine what he would do with the ball. He offered three choices to the public. First, he would donate the ball as is to the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, NY. Second, he would donate the ball to the Baseball Hall of Fame but with an asterisk engraved above the logo on the ball. Third, he would shoot the ball to the

moon. When the contest had ended there was overwhelming support to put the asterisk on the ball. The hall agreed to display the ball with the augmentation.³⁶

Through its development, baseball's popularity in the United States has given it a prominent position in which to reflect and augment popular images of masculinity and national identity. When Babe Ruth rose to popularity in the game he accomplished things many people didn't think possible. Ruth changed the way the game was played and enjoyed, and as he did so he dictated what an ideal player might look like. Ruth's image of an ideal baseball player also informed the image of an ideal man. The influence of his persona extends beyond the game of baseball to American popular culture. This is evident due to his continued influence through reference in contemporary popular culture. Though Ruth doesn't hold any current records now, his name is synonymous with the game and players are still compared to him in terms of success in the game. That comparison to Ruth, is less about skill and more about the successful performance of the attributes he embodied speaks to the paradigm of masculinity he helped to shape. Bonds's homerun ball sits in the same hall of fame as Ruth's because he accomplished the same thing. But Bonds's ball is marked (by the public) because he did not go about his accomplishments the right way. The asterisk serves as a physical reminder of the aspects embodied in baseball and what parts of the game are important.

Baseball serves as a metaphor for the performance of masculinity in the United States. The popularity of the sport in the national culture led to emulation in other areas. This is due in part to the collaboration between players and journalists to create meaningful narratives that reinforce the image in popular culture. The parallel extends as we look to films and theatrical plays that recreate or represent baseball. These fictions

serve the same purpose as sports journalists during baseball's development, which is to collaborate with the sport itself and create works of fiction that utilize the celebrated aspects of the game to reinforce ideals associated with the sport and, in so doing, with American masculinity.

CHAPTER 3

BASEBALL FICTION

In the previous chapter I discussed the ways that baseball's national popularity grew to influence images of masculinity in the United States. Its influence was rather illustrated when baseball's paradigm of masculinity appeared elsewhere in United States popular culture, for example, in James Stewart's everyman persona in films such as *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and *It's a Wonderful Life*.

This chapter will examine the ways that representations of baseball on stage and screen either affirm or challenge its associated images of masculinity and national identity. Representing the culture of baseball on the stage or screen allows filmmakers and theatre artists to either reaffirm or challenge values associated with it. A deep connection between gendered and national identity associated with baseball necessarily connects the affirmation or challenge of the values associated with the United States' popular culture. In particular, insofar as baseball is an affirmation of the American Dream, a play that establishes baseball as an inherently good thing will simultaneously affirm the ideals of the American Dream. Plays and films that affirm the values of baseball, and subsequently the American Dream create a mythology in which heroes can be looked to as models for emulation. These films and plays portray a platonic image of baseball and the values associated with it. A play or film that challenges baseball's cultural images, will also challenge the associated images of masculine a national identity. This chapter will also discuss the representations of baseball that challenge the

values initially associated with the game in popular culture. Though they may not challenge the influence or value of baseball itself, less idealized images of the participants balance the idealized imagery presented in the preceding chapter.

Presenting seemingly conflicting views of baseball culture will reveal a complete picture of baseball's relationship with masculine culture in America. Reconciling the differing representations will reveal the essential aspects of the baseball's paradigm of masculinity. The prevalence of both affirmation and challenge speaks to baseball's influence on national popular culture. We will also see how the development of baseball's culture and the values associated with it have in turn influenced and been influenced by images of masculinity in popular culture in the United States.

Baseball as Simulacra

In the previous chapter I discussed baseball's connection to the idea of the American Dream. The development of the game correlates with the development of a national identity and much of what Albert Spalding wrote in his book initially chronicling the development of the game parallels the sentiments of James Adams in his description of the American Dream. Since its creation the game has been connected to the ideal of national identity and the two concepts work together to develop a concept of the American man.

Baseball offers men and boys a system through which they can perform their masculinity. It also creates a culture in which successful players can become models for ideal performance of the sport and through it, masculinity. I have mentioned Babe Ruth as the ultimate example of the ideal player as he enjoyed a great deal of success on the

field, but also cultivated a persona that aligned with the abstract values associated with the game.

Fictional representations of baseball illustrate the game as it exists in popular culture. Films and plays that represent baseball are fictional they are naturally viewed in opposition to a “real” baseball. These films and plays recall an idealized version of baseball, that never existed. The cultural image of baseball is made real by fictional accounts, which are essentially copies with no originals, or what Jean Baudrillard calls simulacra.³⁷ This false image has in turn influenced public perception of the sport by engendering nostalgia for a baseball that never existed.

Each work presents a slightly different embodiment of the simulacrum of ideal baseball and a different model for men in the US to emulate. We can track the development of the ideal American man as he relates to the game of baseball through each film. The importance of baseball is highlighted through religious imagery in the films. Presenting baseball as a ritual that might be practiced, allows it to also exist as a liminal space through which boys might be trained to be more masculine. *Bull Durham* (1985) illustrates a process through which a naturally talented athlete is systematically trained to become an ideal baseball player. It also establishes the major league as a level of play to be revered and emulated. The ideals of professional baseball are further elevated in *The Sandlot* (1993). The boys’ reverence for the game guides their choices through the summer and encourages their growth into men. The film utilizes religious imagery to illustrate the importance of baseball to the characters’ identities. The notion of baseball as a religion is developed further in the musical *Damn Yankees* (1955), with Joe

Hardy's literally religious devotion to his team illustrating the moral responsibility a baseball fan.

Each of these films capitalizes on a version of baseball that never existed. Their presented images evoke nostalgia in order to generate importance. However, the image of baseball they are presenting could be considered hyperbolic. For these films, the simulation of something that only exists in the imagination of popular culture in the United States helps to create an image of the nation itself that also does not exist. Through these films we can see the creation of masculine identity as dictated through popular culture's vision of baseball. Baseball's simulacrum informs popular culture's view of masculinity in the United States.

Million Dollar Arm with a Five Cent Head

The film *Bull Durham* offers an example of the systematic training of an ideal baseball player. Crash Davis is a minor league catcher who has spent most of his career traveling in the minor leagues from team to team. He is traded to the Durham Bulls not for his skill as a catcher, but for his knowledge of the game. They have a new and exciting talent (Calvin "Nuke" LaLoosh) at pitcher, and the management needed Crash to teach him how to handle himself professionally.

This storyline recalls what we know about Babe Ruth's persona. For Nuke to *play* baseball well is not enough. All of Nuke's athletic talent is useless if he cannot *be* or *perform as* a baseball player. Throughout the film, Crash teaches Nuke how to carry himself like a professional ball player. As Nuke learns from Crash the team begins to play better. While Crash teaches Nuke how to be a better player, Nuke's girlfriend, Annie

Savoy, encourages him to listen to Crash, in addition to offering her own advice on how to be a better player.

Crash's education of Nuke deals less with his abilities as a pitcher than his performance as a major league ball player. As Nuke becomes better at embodying a baseball player his skill on the field increases. Nuke's improvement on the field as he takes Crash's advice reinforces the idea that in order to be an ideal baseball player you must do more than possess the necessary athletic ability to physically perform on the field. Three parts of the film exemplify Nuke's development beyond skilled athlete into ideal baseball player. The selection of his nickname establishes the beginning of his education. Nuke is punished by Crash when he doesn't play the game "the right way" illustrating his struggle with the growth. The film's culmination in Nuke's successful performance in an interview as a professional ball player establishes his success as an ideal player.

The film opens at the beginning of baseball season. We are introduced to Calvin LaLoosh on his first game as a professional baseball player. After he misses warm-ups for the game, the managers find LaLoosh in the locker-room having sex with a baseball groupie. Instead of apologizing for being unprepared LaLoosh mentions all of the great players have a nickname and asks the manager what his name should be. The exchange establishes two things for the audience. First, LaLoosh's query about a nickname illustrates his desire to be great. The main narrative of the film is concerned with LaLoosh's development as a ball player, and that development coincides with his intellectual and emotional development as a man. His desire to be great or ideal player parallels his development as a man. Secondly, it establishes him as a talented player who

lacks the correct mentality. After his first night with Annie, he corrects his teammates telling them to call him Nuke. His acceptance of the nickname as given to him by Annie further demonstrates his willingness to become better.

Part of what established Babe Ruth as an ideal player was his elevation to character in popular culture. A fair majority of people in the US would not recognize the name George Herman Ruth, while a slight minority might not recognize the name Babe Ruth. In the case of Ruth and in the film a nickname establishes a baseball player as larger than himself. When Nuke says that all of the great baseball players have a nickname it prepares the audience for the introduction of Crash. We never learn his real name because it isn't pertinent to the story or to who he is. The importance of nicknames in the film suggests that success in the sport of baseball is performed. One must actively portray an ideal player rather than simply be skilled at his position.

Crash's authority on the game is immediately recognized because of his name and it is illustrated during their first meeting. LaLoosh challenges Crash to a fight at a bar over who would get to dance with Annie. Outside, rather than fight, Crash tells LaLoosh to hit him with a baseball. Given LaLoosh's profession this seems like a simple task, and a dangerous challenge for Crash to issue. Crash ultimately prevails when he is able to talk enough to get into LaLoosh's head, forcing him to make a mental error and to miss his throw, it is pertinent that this exchange happens before LaLoosh gets his nickname. The scene illustrates Crash's dominance over LaLoosh, and also further reinforces the suggestion that an ideal baseball player possesses more than talent. Crash does not possess the same talent as Nuke, but he better understands how to be a baseball player, and that makes up the difference. After being humiliated in front of his team mates, LaLoosh goes

to punch Crash. Crash easily dodges his attacks and hits LaLoosh, knocking him down. This illustrates to the audience that Crash's dominance over LaLoosh extends beyond the baseball field and into other masculine displays, such as fighting. The film suggests that because Crash is a better player, he is also a better man.

After Nuke receives his nickname and accepts his position as Crash's protégé, there are several moments in the film when he challenges Crash's authority or is disciplined in one way or another for playing the game the incorrectly. One of the things that Nuke does more than once is to shake off Crash's signs during a game. Both instances illustrate Nuke's lack of understanding of the game, however, the progression of his mistakes illustrates growth as a player.

The first time Nuke shakes off Crash's signals it is because he is headstrong and overly aggressive. Crash has already told Nuke to stop trying to strike everyone out, that strikeouts are fascist. For the following batter, Crash signals for him to throw a curve ball and Nuke shakes him off, wanting to throw "the heater." Crash calls time and goes to the mound, explaining that the current batter is a first pitch fastball hitter and would be looking for it. Nuke puffs his chest out, in a gesture similar to when he tried to fight Crash, saying he wants to "announce his presence with authority." Crash goes back to the plate and tells the batter exactly what pitch Nuke is about to throw. When Nuke's fastball is hit out of the park Crash goes back to the mound, Nukes says "It's like he knew what I was about to throw" and Crash replies "It's because he did. I told him."³⁸

Crash's betrayal could be read as a re-establishment of his authority over Nuke, but it is also a lesson in the nuances of pitching. Nuke needs to learn to recognize that different situations require different tactics in the game. Crash gives up a homerun to the

opposing team because the lesson for Nuke to learn is more important than necessarily winning the game. Playing the game the “right way” is an integral part to being a successful baseball player, and Crash’s insistence that Nuke avoid “fascist” strikeouts, and throw situationally correct pitches reiterates that point to Nuke. The idea that a particular play could be considered politically unsound establishes a parallel between successful performance of baseball and that of national identity. This parallel in further solidifies the connection between baseball and America.

The second time that Nuke disregards Crash’s signals is later in the film. Rather than being too aggressive, Nuke is trying to take the lessons he has learned to heart. He doesn’t shake off Crash because he is bullheaded, but because he thinks the situation calls for a different pitch. Crash uses this opportunity to teach Nuke a different lesson. Crash does not approach the mound this time and instead just talks to the batter “This asshole’s throwing a two hit shut out and he’s waving me off? Petey, here comes the deuce, and when you speak of me, speak of me well.” Again, Crash tells the batter what pitch is coming and again the batter hits a homerun. Crash goes to him after the homerun and admires the hit. Nuke says “you told him what I was going to throw didn’t you” and Crash says “yep.”³⁹

Again, the initial reading of this exchange could be that Crash has to be in charge of the plays while they are working together, however, it could also be interpreted as another lesson in the right way to play the game for Nuke. Nuke was not trying to be headstrong in this instance, which shows that he learned from the previous time. Instead he did not trust his team. This goes back to what Crash was saying about fascist strikeouts. Baseball is a team sport and a pitcher should rely on the rest of the field to

support him. This includes trusting the catchers signals in a game that has been going very well. Nuke's reaction to the homerun also shows his growth. He was not bewildered like the previous time; Nuke simply recognized the lesson and corrected his actions.

By the end of the film, Nuke and Crash have begun to work very well with each other and their synchronicity has had an effect on the rest of the team. The Durham Bulls enjoy a winning streak that lasts for several weeks, and the whole team is playing unprecedentedly good baseball. All streaks must come to an end, however, and the team has difficulty when Nuke's father comes to see him play. This throws him off of his game, which leads to anxiety among other players. As Nuke and Crash go, so does the team, and after a close call at home plate Crash loses his temper, yells at the umpire and is ejected. After his ejection the team spirals and loses by a large margin, ending their winning streak.

After the loss, while Nuke is introducing his father to Annie, he gets a phone call informing him that he has been called up to the majors. Nuke was called up to the majors after one of the worst losses of his minor league career. The timing of his promotion further illustrates the message of the film that the successful performance of an ideal player is more important than winning. Nuke lost the right way, and proved himself as an ideal ball player.

Having achieved his goal of making it to the highest level of the game, Nuke looks to his mentor to share the good news. When he finds Crash, drunk in a bar, Nuke wants to celebrate his triumph but he doesn't know that the team released Crash now that Nuke no longer needs a teacher. Crash is not in the mood to celebrate and instead tries to pick a fight with Nuke. In a reversal of the scene in which they meet, Nuke keeps his

calm and defends himself successfully against Crash by knocking him down. At the beginning of the film, one of the men had knowledge of the game and the other had talent. By the end of the film Nuke possesses both and is shown to be a better man because of it. There is nothing left for Crash to teach him and it is time for Nuke to go on to greatness.

Nuke's final scene in the movie is a televised interview when he spouts the clichés that Crash taught him earlier in the film. Nuke completes the construction of his persona of an ideal player with well-delivered lines. During the interview he utilizes things that he learned from Crash and from Annie and successfully portrays an ideal player.

Bull Durham presents a world in which everyone involved recognizes and respects the great importance of the team and the game. Crash is revered as a leader on the team because of his unparalleled knowledge of the game; even the manager comes to him for advice. *Bull Durham* presents an image of baseball as the ultimate undertaking for a person and the people in the film that cannot play find a way to be close to the game. Annie's devotion to baseball is highlighted at the beginning of the film, her first line in the film is "I believe in the church of baseball."⁴⁰ So the film suggests that it one is morally obligated to participate in baseball in whatever way they can. The suggestion that in order to be a good person one must love baseball extends to the performance of masculinity in the United States. Nuke's systematic training in the nuances of baseball reinforces the image of an ideal baseball player as an ideal man. As he takes the lessons he learned from Crash about baseball he becomes not only a better player on the field, but a better lover to Annie, and a better fighter against Crash. Nuke's training as a baseball

player improves his performances in other aspects of masculinity, and his faith in the game to improve himself is illustrated through his acceptance of Annie and Crash's lessons.

The film contributes to the mythology of the game of baseball through its presentation of an unattainable image of baseball. Throughout the film, the characters discuss the major league. They refer to it as "the show" and it is discussed as a sacred place. It is so sacred that the film never depicts life in the major league. The only detailed description of life in the show is Crash's retelling of his experiences. The way that the men listen to Crash's story reinforces the reverence that Annie expresses at the beginning of the film. The major league is not something that the normal players will ever get to experience. That the league needed to bring in Crash specifically to train LaLoosh suggests his importance as a player. When LaLoosh is finally promoted to the major leagues he is only shown through the television. LaLoosh's mediated separation from the rest of the characters reinforces the heightened world of the major leagues. LaLoosh perfectly recites the statement that Crash taught him. "I'm happy to be here and I just want to help the ball club. You know I just want to give it my best shot and the good lord willing it will work out."⁴¹ The film showcases the creation of a godhead in LaLoosh, and his proper recitation of Crash's words functions as an incantation. With his talent and now his knowledge and ability to play baseball the right way, he has been elevated higher than normal men can achieve. If Annie believes in the church of baseball, LaLoosh's journey is the canonization of a saint. Once he has become a part of the other world, he cannot interact with his minor league teammates or even with Annie. Once he became Nuke, LaLoosh could only function as an example for other men.

The creation of a hero like LaLoosh elevates baseball to a ritualistic practice, similar to a religion. What we see in *Bull Durham* is the creation of an object for worship, and baseball is the system through which those objects are created. Annie Savoy establishes baseball as a religion, and in religion one is not meant to be god but to worship god. The other players on the team will not achieve the same level as Nuke, and even though they will likely never play in the major league the men on the team continue to play. The film thus attaches masculine identity to participation and appreciation of correct play rather than ultimate success.

You're Killing Me, Smalls

In *Bull Durham* baseball is presented as a ritualistic practice where successful performance includes reverence and emulation of great players. In *The Sandlot* the characters, being boys, are further removed from professional play but their reverence for and emulation of the game's archetypes is evident. In the film, their play serves as a metaphor for their masculine development during the summer. The summer the boys spend together symbolizes a liminal moment in their lives. The transition to masculinity is especially highlighted for two of the characters: Scotty Smalls (played by Tom Guiry), and Bennie Rodriguez (played by Mike Vitar). The boys experience the game in different ways but both of them encounter a miraculous moment that illustrates baseball's importance to their development. The summer the boys spend together functions as a liminal space before they transition to manhood. Several moments in the film highlight the way that the boys' devotion to the game of baseball influences their choices off of the field.

The perceived claustrophobic nature of the city stilted boys' masculine development. Baseball parks provide an escape from the urban. This is in contrast to basketball, which is inherently an urban sport. Baseball and basketball are pastoral and urban because of the space in which they are played; baseball in a park and basketball in a gymnasium. Because the setting is connected so directly to the successful performance of baseball, and its ability to develop masculinity, the field of play takes on ritualistic connotations similar to that of the game itself. There are several instances in which a film or play portrays the major league baseball park as a sacred space, either by framing the architecture so that it resembles a cathedral, or by highlighting a person's awe-filled reaction as they enter.⁴² Similarly, when Scotty Smalls first sees the lot where the boys all play baseball, he hides and watches how the other boys play together, impressed by their skill and also by the way they never take sides or keep score. The lot will be the location of Smalls's development into an American boy, and also aligns his trajectory for masculine development later in life.

In *The Sandlot* (1993) the pastoral quality of the baseball field is reinforced. Here, the pastoral functions much as it does in many pastoral comedies from the English Renaissance. In Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, characters that leave the city for Arden are transformed by the space. These transformations lead to self-discovery, forgiveness, and reconciliation. In *The Sandlot*, Smalls's relationship with his stepfather is improved after he spends time on the lot. It is only after Smalls understands the significance of the Babe Ruth ball and they recover it that he is able to call his stepfather "dad." Smalls's time on the field also helps him develop his own identity. By presenting the lot as a "Green Space," the film establishes a supernatural element to the lot's ability to transform the

boys. By focusing on boys playing the game rather than professional players, this film affirms claims made by Albert Spalding in his history of the game about baseball's value for the development of masculine values in boys.

When he and his father are trying to play catch Smalls gets his glove in front of the ball but it breaks and hits him in the eye. The glove was a gift from his grandmother and was made out of plastic rather than leather. Smalls refers to the glove as a toy. Insinuating that a "real" leather glove is not. His grandmother was not able to give him a real glove, as this is something that he must receive from another man. In the same way, Smalls is able to fool his mother with a counterfeit Babe Ruth ball while his stepfather is out of town on business.

Smalls does not know how to play baseball, and his deficiency affects every aspect of his socialization. When he first meets the other boys he cannot catch or throw a ball and his inability to accomplish the simplest task prevents him from playing with them. His father died when he was younger and he has had no one to teach him how. His stepfather, Bill (played by Dennis Leary), is a dedicated fan of the game as shown by his impressive trophy room. However, because Smalls has not had the chance to play baseball up until this point, he has trouble communicating with Bill. Though Bill tries to teach Smalls to play catch, it is clear that he doesn't know how to help Smalls. At the beginning of the film, Smalls has been isolated from all of the other males in his life because he can't play or understand the game of baseball.

The introduction of Bennie Rodriguez finally allows Smalls to develop as a baseball player and boy. Bennie recruits him to play with the team even though Smalls embarrassed himself the day before. Bennie ostensibly recruits him because they need a

ninth player to complete the team, but the way that he protects Smalls from the initial ridicule of the rest of the team, and the way that he works with Smalls to help him fit in better, suggests more altruistic motives. Bennie's ability on the field sets him up as the natural leader of the group. As in *Bull Durham*, the rest of the team gravitates to the most ideal player as a leader, and also as in *Bull Durham*, baseball is depicted as a ritualistic and liminal activity. While no one refers explicitly to the "church of baseball" in *The Sandlot*, the plot contains several miraculous moments that reinforce the spiritual significance of baseball in the world of the film. Each of the miracles helped to educate the boys on how to play the right way and become ideal men.

The first miracle is getting the rest of the team to accept Smalls into the group. Smalls cannot catch or throw, and he has missed another ball in the outfield. Bennie goes and tells Smalls to hold his glove in the air and "I'll take care of the rest."⁴³ Bennie stands at home plate, spits on the ball, tosses it in the air and hits it far into center left field where Smalls is standing. Smalls, stands with his eyes closed, gloved hand in the air, saying over and over again "please catch it, please catch it." As he prays to baseball, or Bennie, or whomever might help him catch it, the ball falls perfectly into his glove. Smalls looks into his glove with disbelief and then throws the ball to second base perfectly. Bennie's hit recalls Babe Ruth's legendary called shot, and was an unbelievable feat. However, none of the boys look to Bennie and say good job. Instead, they all congratulate Smalls for making a good catch. The miracle was not Bennie hitting the ball directly into Smalls's glove; it was making Smalls a part of the group with one swing of his bat. After that moment, Smalls is in the group and his worthiness is never again questioned.

Bennie knew that the team needed a ninth player to play the game, and when he asks Smalls to play with them it reinforces the notion that every boy should be able to play baseball regardless of their social or economic status. In order to include Smalls into the game, Bennie gives him a spare glove, and stands up to his friends who do not want to play with him. When Bennie hits the miraculous pop fly, and Smalls catches it, the only person who even acknowledges what Bennie accomplished is Smalls who gives him a “thumbs-up” after everyone says he can stay.

The second miracle in the film is the appearance of Babe Ruth to Bennie in a vision. After they have lost a baseball autographed by the Babe himself over the wall into the junk-yard where a terrible beast of a dog resides, they try several different tricks to get the ball back from him. Each one fails. The following night Babe Ruth appears to Bennie and tells him that an opportunity to be great is not something to be passed up. No tricks will help them get back the ball, he will have to rely only on his skills as a player in order get the ball back. The appearance of the Babe, a figure who all of the boys revere, reminds Bennie to trust in his abilities.

The supernatural vision comes to Bennie, who is the only player destined for greatness in baseball out of all of the boys. Bennie’s room is littered with baseball paraphernalia, including pictures of great players, baseball cards, and bobble head toys. Bennie notices a vibration in his room, the toys on his dresser start to nod, and the lights begin to flicker. The sound of cheers grows from Bennie’s closet and the door opens to reveal Babe Ruth. All of the effects that precede Ruth’s revelation establish Ruth as an otherworldly figure. As Ruth walks into Bennie’s room he is depicted in black and white with a heavy film grain. Ruth appears to Bennie in a familiar way. The only images of

Ruth that Bennie had ever seen were old photographs. As a part of the photographic effect, a halo of light surrounds Ruth. It parallels Ruth's appearance with that of an angel. Bennie is star struck, he begins invoking all of Ruth's names until Ruth quiets him and tells him they do not have time. As the black and white film grain begins to fade away Ruth becomes more real to Bennie. Bennie is being elevated to Ruth's level so that they can speak. The miraculous appearance of Babe Ruth in his room inspires Bennie to do what it takes to become a legend. Bennie's vision leads to the third miracle in the film, the vanquishing of the beast.

Bennie, now the anointed hero of the group, puts on a baseball jersey for the first time in the film. His decision to wear his Dodgers jersey when he faces his trial suggests the uniform has the quality of a vestment. He also ceremonially puts on shoes imbued with the power to make him run faster and jump higher. Properly prepared, he jumps the fence and grabs the sacred ball and jumps back over the fence. The other boys congratulate him, but his trial has just begun. The dog jumps the fence in pursuit, and Bennie must run for his life for the sake of Smalls, whose stepfather owns the autographed ball they are trying to retrieve. After a chase that tours the whole town, Bennie returns to the lot and hops the fence back into the junkyard, the dog follows, bursting through the fence to chase him. Bennie is trapped and exhausted, he has nothing left. That is when the fence gives way and falls on the terrifying beast. The lot itself rewards Bennie's sacrifice and he is finally triumphant.

With the dog pinned underneath the fence the boys all realize that it is not a threat. The beast is just a dog that is now hurt and stuck under the fallen fence. Smalls recognizes this first and goes to help it. As soon as Smalls lifts the fence the dog runs out

and begins to lick his face. Smalls's show of sportsmanship is rewarded when the dog leads the boys to where he was burying all of the baseballs. The best reward the disciples of baseball could hope for is the ability to keep on playing, and now they have enough balls to play forever.

With the fence wrecked and the dog possibly hurt, Bennie and Smalls have to knock on the door of the owner to tell him what happened. A blind man comes to the door and they explain to him that they were trying to retrieve their ball and that they knocked down the fence. The man accepts their apology and trades the ruined Babe Ruth ball for one signed by the entire 1927 Yankees team. The man's gift saves Smalls from his stepfather's punishment and also allows him and Bennie to be closer to major league baseball, which just like in *Bull Durham* is higher than they could hope to achieve.

Ultimately Bennie and Smalls are on different trajectories. Smalls's masculine development is tied directly to his experiences on the baseball field, but he will not be good enough to play professionally. He participates through appreciation. At the end of the film we see that he has become a major league baseball commentator, Bennie on the other hand is destined for greatness. Smalls is calling a game for the Los Angeles Dodgers, and at the conclusion of the film he sees Bennie "The Jet" Rodriguez, taking a lead off from third. Bennie steals home as Smalls excitedly calls the game for his station. Bennie's greatness is illustrated in two ways at the end of the film. First, the nickname that he earned when he out ran the beast stuck with him through the rest of his career. Bennie's nickname reinforces the importance of the performative in successful baseball play. Like Crash and Nuke, the Jet leaves his name behind to join the hallowed halls of professional baseball. In Bennie's vision, Babe Ruth tells him that legends never die.

Bennie Rodriguez is a very talented baseball player, but the Jet was a legend, destined for greatness.

The Sandlot offers both of the ways a boy can perform masculinity through baseball. Smalls plays the game but his recognition of Bennie's greatness is his true participation, and Bennie's play is inspired but like any legend he needs a witness, someone to tell his story. For the audience, the two function in a symbiotic relationship similar to that of Grantland Rice and Babe Ruth. *The Sandlot* also illustrates how someone who does not have the skill to play baseball professionally can still participate in its successful performance. Being a fan serves the same performative function as playing professionally. Smalls offers an example of performance of reverence for baseball, and through that he also learns how to successfully perform masculinity.

You Gotta Have Heart

The film *Damn Yankees* (1958), based on the 1955 musical was adapted from a novel titled *The Year the Yankees Lost the Pennant* (1954) by Douglass Wallop. The musical uses the devil's bargain trope to suggest a parallel between baseball fandom and morality. In the story, a fan, Joe Boyd, sells his soul in order to support his team. The story reinforces the importance of baseball fandom to the successful performance of masculinity through baseball. Ultimately Boyd escapes the devil's clutches through his successful performance of the attributes of baseball's paradigm of masculinity. That it takes a supernatural event to transform Boyd into a professional ball player further establishes the separation between "regular" men and the mythological heroes that play baseball. Boyd's suggestion that he would "sell his soul for a long-ball hitter" shows that

support of his team is absolute.⁴⁴ His actions suggest that, to him, baseball is of a higher sacred place than Christianity; for Joe, baseball is the only system of morals.

Boyd, an older man, is desperate for his team, the Washington Senators to win the pennant. He suggests that he would sell his soul for a long ball hitter (the perceived missing piece for his team's success). A character named Mr. Applegate appears before him and offers to transform him into a player who will make the difference for Boyd's hapless Senators. Boyd must offer his soul as payment for Applegate's help. In addition to offering up his soul, Boyd will have to leave his wife and anything else connected to his identity as Joe Boyd behind in order to complete his transformation. Boyd hesitates upon realizing he must leave his wife alone. It is one thing for him to give himself up for his team, but another entirely for him to abandon his wife. Applegate, in his haste to make a deal with Boyd, offers an escape clause for their contract. Boyd will have until the end of the regular season to decide if he wants to return to his old life.

Boyd initially hesitates to agree to Applegate's terms because of the agreement's effects on others. He is worried about his wife, and his promise to take care of her. Applegate does not normally give escape clauses in his contracts but it is clear that it is the only way that Boyd will agree to the terms. Boyd shows integrity in his desire to stay faithful to his wife and his display is the only reason that he has an opportunity to save himself from Applegate's plans. At the beginning of the musical, the audience is shown that the benefits of playing the "right way" extend beyond the game of baseball into everyday life.

In *Damn Yankees*, Joe must change his last name to avoid being recognized in the town that he lives. Applegate does to protect the secrecy of their agreement and possibly

in an effort to further separate Joe from his old life. The name change suggests a transformative aspect of professional ball. Joe Boyd, the real, everyday person, could never play professional ball. He must become Joe Hardy in order to succeed in the major league.

The power of a name for a baseball player is further reinforced with the song “Shoeless Joe from Hannibal Mo.” The Senators’ beat reporter says “I’ve got it. Shoeless Joe Hardy... That’s what everybody is going to call him. I’ll give this club some publicity.”⁴⁵ Her recognition that a great player needs a character in order to be successful echoes, the creation of Nuke in *Bull Durham* and Bennie “the Jet” Rodriguez in *The Sandlot*. The difference for Joe is that his greatness is not developed over the course of the story. It is gifted to him through ill-gotten means. Joe’s struggle is not whether he will be a successful player on the field; rather, his desire to play the game the right way is the main conflict in the story.

Gloria is a female beat reporter for the Senators, and is a source of anxiety for Van Buren, the team manager. When Joe initially tries out, while everyone else is watching him hit homerun after homerun and becoming more excited about the prospect of winning, Gloria wants to find out who he is and where he is from. She asks Applegate about Joe. Applegate responds by dodging her questions, repeating his name and offering some vital statistics like his height and weight, and refusing to tell Gloria where Joe came from. Gloria’s suspicions are initially ignored by everyone else either because she is a journalist and perceived as oppositional or because she is a woman.⁴⁶ When she is able to ask Joe himself, Joe says he’s from Hannibal Missouri (his wife’s home town) and that seems to satisfy everyone. He recounts an anecdote about cold air coming down from

Canada that his wife remarked to him in the first scene.⁴⁷ It is never specified if Joe is actually from Hannibal. While that does not mean he absolutely did not grow up there, invoking the place that his wife comes from, and repeating something she said to him when he supposedly was not listening to her suggests that Joe is still thinking of his old life, and his wife even through the excitement of playing professional ball.

When the audience is introduced to the Senators, the team is recovering from a particularly disappointing loss to the Yankees. The manager is talking to some of his starters and trying to encourage them to continue despite last night's failure. They sing a song entitled "You Gotta Have Heart."⁴⁸ "Heart," in the case of the song, refers to their perseverance despite their perceived inadequacies. In the song they specifically discuss all of the team's shortcomings: they are missing a great pitcher, a great hitter, and even sardonically mention that they do not have a great ball club, but they do have heart.⁴⁹

The players' perseverance is rewarded after they finish singing when Joe (now transformed) enters with Applegate and asks for a try out. Though they are initially dubious about an unknown player just walking off of the street but after the manager watches him hit a few pitches from their ace, he is convinced sign Joe. Applegate makes good on his promise to Joe by imbuing him with legendary skills. The Senators start to win games, and things begin to go well for the team. They begin to win and climb the standings with the help of their new star player.

Despite his success on the field and the adoration from both the team's owner and the manager, Joe is being pulled in two directions. He misses his wife, and in an effort to be close to her, he rents an extra room in his old home as Joe Hardy. Applegate, recognizing Joe's reluctance to fully commit to his new persona, enlists the help of Lola

to help shift Joe's attention from his old life to the excitement of the new one. Lola long ago gave up her soul for something that she desperately wanted and now must do whatever Applegate wants for eternity. When her initial advances are spurned, Applegate gets angry that she is not able to win Joe's attention, but Lola is intrigued by Joe's steadfastness. Applegate must take matters into his own hands. He stirs scandal in the neighborhood where Joe's wife lives, insinuating that her living with a young man as a boarder might be inappropriate, forcing Joe to leave in order to protect his wife's reputation. Just as he separated Joe from his name, Applegate physically separates Joe from his old life by not allowing him to stay with his wife.

Applegate also stirs rumors about Joe's fictional past, insinuating that he gambled on baseball in Mexico and had to leave in disgrace. The scandal forces the commissioner of baseball to have an emergency hearing to determine whether or not Joe will be eligible to play in the deciding game between the Senators and the Yankees. Unfortunately, that game happens the day after Joe's last chance to back out of his contract with Applegate. The time that Joe misses dealing with Applegate's scandal means that he has to decide between supporting the team he loved enough to sell his soul for, and his wife, to whom he pledged his life. For Joe, it is no contest, he intends to return to his wife, but will wait until the last moment to support his team. Applegate having a plan for that as well manipulates the circumstances of the hearing so that Joe misses his window. With Joe fully under his control, Applegate plans to force Joe to lose the game against the Yankees. Having lifted the hopes of all of the Senators fans, a loss when they were so close to the pennant would prompt despair among the entire fan base. According to

Applegate: taking away Joe's ability to do his best and forcing him to play the game the "wrong way" would kill him.

Joe's integrity is his salvation again when Lola, inspired by his goodness, drugs Applegate so that he sleeps through most of the game. Joe gets the opportunity to play his best and support his team. By the time Applegate wakes up, most of the game is over, and when he arrives there is only one more chance to get Joe to fail. With the Yankees at bat, and Joe playing in the outfield, Mickey Mantle hits the ball deep in to the outfield, right to Joe. Applegate takes this opportunity to strip Joe of all of his skills and youth, transforming him back into Joe Boyd as he runs for the fly ball. Despite being his old self, Joe pushes himself and is able to make the catch, winning the game for the Senators. If he had not denied Lola's advances initially she would not have been impressed by him, and likely would not want to help him at the end of the musical. She prevents Applegate from being at the game to limit Joe's abilities, and saves him from Applegate's clutches despite the punishment that she will likely receive. When Joe is transformed by back to Joe Boyd, he is released from his contract and is able to go home to his wife. Applegate appears to Joe asking him to reconsider, but Joe will not listen and the musical ends with Joe singing with his wife to drown out Applegate's protestations.

Like *Bull Durham* and *The Sandlot*, *Damn Yankees* presents baseball as a system for the development and practice of masculinity. Joe, having spent his entire life loving baseball, is able to follow the examples that the game presented to him despite a moment of weakness. In *Damn Yankees*, Joe's skill is not in question. Joe Hardy will always be able to win the game, no matter what. Instead the play raises questions about winning the "right way."

In *Bull Durham*, Crash plays the game the right way. He is good enough to be a minor league baseball player but despite spending some time in the majors, he will never be great in that way. Crash's acceptance of that limitation allows him to recognize Nuke's abilities and help Nuke develop as a ball player off of the field. The recognition of his position in the game, despite his disappointment, makes Crash a good man in the performative sense. Joe gets to spend time in the major leagues as well, but immediately recognizes that he does not belong there. Joe wants to live his life as Joe Boyd, and be with his wife. He gets to make a catch against the Yankees as Joe Boyd and that is his reward for playing the right way.

In *The Sandlot*, Smalls recognizes Benny's greatness. The film is a retelling of the moment when Smalls saw Benny become a legend. Smalls enjoyed the game but ultimately was meant to become a great appreciator of baseball. Appreciation in Smalls's case is as integral to his development as a man as playing the game itself. As Smalls learns how to play baseball he also learns how to interact with other boys and how to be man, himself. Joe Boyd might be a Smalls that has grown old, who has grown up loving baseball.

Joe's appreciation for baseball itself is not something that is directly referenced in *Damn Yankees* except in the first song that supposes that all men love baseball.⁵⁰ Instead Joe illustrates his respect for the values of baseball in his actions throughout the musical. The novel, *The Year the Yankees Lost the Pennant* specifically illustrates Joe grappling with the nature of fair play as he is deciding whether or not to take Applegate up on his offer. Ultimately it is Joe's responsibility to support his team however he can. His self-sacrifice reinforces the religious connotations of baseball in *Bull Durham*, and the

Christian imagery in *The Sandlot*. Like the other two films *Damn Yankees* presents the participation in and appreciation of baseball as a religion. Men might look to baseball as a system through which to practice their morality.

The Game that Does Not Exist

None of the fictions I have discussed accurately portrays the life of a baseball player. None was meant to. Each presents an idealized vision of baseball. Baseball is the most important thing to everyone in the world of *Bull Durham*, and the game's importance to the characters reinforces the idea it should be the most important thing to the audience as well. *The Sandlot* suggests that baseball is synonymous with national identity. The idealized setting and time period represents a conglomeration of typical images of life in the United States. Finally, baseball is so important to Joe Boyd in *Damn Yankees!* that he sells his soul in order to support his team.

We see Baudrillard's concept of simulacrum at work here. The audience knows that the images of baseball presented here are not *real* baseball, but idealized versions. The truth is that there is no *real* baseball. There cannot be a true portrayal of the baseball these cases represent, and their "false" versions of it disguise that fact. These films and plays create the image of baseball that they do not accurately represent. With this concept in place, they can use baseball as an allegorical tool through which to examine other aspects of life. In the case of all three, masculinity is the explored concept, reinforcing baseball's connection to images of masculinity in United States popular culture.

Bull Durham, *The Sandlot* and *Damn Yankees!* do not represent a single vision of masculine culture; each represent variations on the ideology of baseball. Each of the case studies comes from a different decade and is illustrative of the cultural assumptions of

that time period. For our purposes, each of the fictions should be examined as historical artifacts to give us insight into the development of the idealized image of baseball as it has developed with United States popular culture. The thematic similarities between the three fictions offer some insight into baseball's influence on masculine images in the United States.

The narrative focus of *Bull Durham* is Nuke's training as a baseball player. Nuke learns from Crash Davis and Annie Savoy. In the film, Crash teaches Nuke how to behave like a baseball player, while Annie uses poetry and unconventional instruction to help Nuke learn to focus and perform better on the field. Nuke's systematic education teaches him into the ideal baseball player archetype. LaLooshe's transformation from Calvin into Nuke is a repeatable process through which a player with enough talent can adopt a persona like Babe Ruth. The film illustrates baseball as a metaphor for the American dream; everyone has the same opportunity and is able to achieve everything of which they are capable. Like Adams's ethos about American culture, the assumed image of success in *Bull Durham* is fairly narrow. The depiction of success is primarily heteronormative and white in *Bull Durham*. All of the main characters were white and there was very little racial diversity in the supporting cast as well. The only featured character of color is from Cuba. This is a reflection of conservative image of masculinity in the 1980s.

The Sandlot, which was released five years after *Bull Durham*, attempts to address the issue of race more directly than *Durham*. The most notable attempt to include men of color in the image of successful baseball performativity is the scene at the end of the movie with Mr. Mertle (played by James Earl Jones). After the Bennie

retrieves the Babe Ruth ball, he and Smalls have to talk to Mr. Mertle to tell him what happened to the dog and the fence. The boys learn that Mertle also played baseball professionally, despite the fact that he was not let into the major leagues because of his race. In the film Mertle recalls that he played baseball against Ruth. The scene serves to suggest that while he was not as famous, Mertle was as good a player as Ruth. By featuring a character of color equal to Ruth in skill (prevented from playing with him because of his race), and able to share a field with him, the film opens up the idea that baseball is for men of all races. Mertle's presence in the film, however, is very limited, and his inclusion at the end of the film rather than throughout separates him from the through narrative.

Damn Yankees! is the oldest of the three case studies. The musical opened in 1955, eight years after Jackie Robinson became the first player of color to play for major league baseball. By the time the musical opened there were only 15 black players in the league.⁵¹ The musical represents baseball's participants accurately for its time period. Of the cases studied, *Damn Yankees!* is the least racially diverse, but it is also the most accurate portrayal of the culture of baseball during its time period.

The American Dream Exposed

Issues of race and cultural assumptions notwithstanding, the idealized romantic view of baseball can oversimplify the role that baseball plays in masculine development. The next three cases do not represent a platonic view of baseball. Instead, they challenge baseball's moral structure by examining race, sexuality, and the ideal of playing the game the "right way" even at the cost of losing. Itamar Moses's 2008 play *Back Back Back* examines the integrity of the contemporary game. This play revisits ideals of deciding

between winning the wrong way and washing out of the league but keeping your integrity. The 2011 film, *Moneyball* challenges the notion of the American Dream by showcasing the economic disparity between baseball clubs in the major league. The film illustrates how the league is departing from traditional baseball values. Finally, Richard Greenberg's 2003 *Take Me Out* questions cultural assumptions about sexuality and masculinity. Can someone be "masculine" in the United States if they are homosexual? The play directly challenges issues of race and sexuality assumed in the three idealized and uncomplicated images of baseball discussed above.

While they challenge certain practices, ultimately the plays do not question the ideals of baseball itself. Rather than suggesting a flaw in baseball's overarching paradigm, each film critiques deviations from baseball's underlying ideals. Most importantly, each of the following cases complicates the relationship between masculinity and baseball. The complication offered by fictions like these encourages a shift in cultural assumptions about the implementation of baseball's masculinity rather than the idea itself. As the concept of gender itself becomes more complicated in popular culture, images of gendered performativity necessarily follow suit. Shifting assumptions about the constructed image of baseball allows the connection between masculinity and baseball to remain relevant. Ultimately these cases reinforce the validity of baseball as a system for masculine performativity by advocating modifications in the way the game is practiced.

"The Onliest Thing I Can Do is Throw"

Baseball's image of masculinity has historically been of a hetero-normative, white, family man. Richard Greenberg's Tony Award winning play *Take Me Out*

suggests that race and sexual orientation are not — or need not be — inherent in the way baseball defines masculine performativity. Darren Lemming is a mixed-race centerfielder for the New York Empires (a fictional professional baseball team). Darren has just been signed to a major contract and is in the process of leading the team to their third championship in a row. As a superstar and a leader of the team, he publically comes out as homosexual.⁵² The other players' reactions to Darren's initial announcement and their adjustment to the shift in social environment in their locker room illustrate public anxiety at the prospect of a masculine homosexual man. Darren's own personal struggles serve to humanize the image of a great baseball player. The play seeks to normalize baseball, while at the same time viewing the romance of the game through a cynical lens and challenging the ideology presented by the previous three plays and films.

The characters' treatment of race juxtaposed with their anxiety about sexuality suggests a liberal view of baseball. The team includes members representing a number of different cultures and no one is ostracized for their ethnic background. The way that the men interact despite different cultural backgrounds paints a picture of baseball as an ethnically welcoming institution. Considering baseball's strict segregation during the game's development into a national pastime, the image of baseball as post-race reinforces the idea that baseball in practice is different from the ideals of baseball. If the practice of baseball can be expanded to include players of color, it should be no trouble to include other Others.

Darren is introduced to the audience as a great ball player, a "five tool player of such incredible grace, he'll make you suspect there is a sixth tool."⁵³ Kippy Sunderstorm, the team's shortstop who functions as the play's narrator, begins the play by saying that

the whole mess started with Darren and then immediately backtracks: “mess does not flow forth from Darren.”⁵⁴ Kippy’s unwillingness to accept that Darren is capable of creating “messes” suggests to the audience that Darren is a great player and establishes him as an elevated persona; Darren is similar to Babe Ruth in that the cultural image of Darren is cannot be viewed negatively. Kippy is searching for where to begin his story and ultimately decides that the mess began “one morning when Darren Lemming said to himself ‘what the hell? I’m Darren Lemming and that is a *very good thing*’⁵⁵ Darren’s confidence in the play could be considered be off-putting. He is dismissive of other members of the team that are not as successful as he. The way that he communicates with most of the people around him suggests an air of superiority. The play establishes that he is a great player from the start, and Darren is aware of his status and acts the part.

Darren has already transcended what once would have been a major obstacle to his success as a player: his mixed-racial identity. Indeed, his own post-racial ideals have worked to his benefit for most of his life. At the beginning of the play Kippy refers to Darren as a “one-man-emblem-of-racial-harmony” and “a black man who had obviously never suffered.”⁵⁶ Darren even refused to describe himself as either black or white, suggesting instead that he was black *and* white.⁵⁷ Darren’s perceived racial contradiction reinforces his persona as a symbol for cross-cultural harmony in baseball. Darren is black and white, supremely talented and well loved by almost everyone. He is baseball and he is proof that baseball is post-race. As a persona representative of baseball’s values, Darren is in a position to shift the practices of baseball in order for them to fit better within the core ideology of the game.

Darren comes out as a homosexual in a press conference that starts the dramatic action of the play. Darren displays his confidence when his business manager, Marzon Mason, tells him that he admires Darren's bravery for coming out and Darren responds that he does not think he was brave. "It's only brave if you think something bad's gonna happen.... [T]hey don't...to me."⁵⁸ Darren's attitude towards his sexuality presents an idealized view of baseball and masculinity in which one is able to perform masculinity through baseball despite his sexuality. Because of his skill at the game and fairly affluent upbringing, until this point Darren has not encountered any challenging social or professional difficulty.

After his announcement (maybe because of it) the team beings? falls into a slump as their bullpen pitching suffers. To emerge from this slump, the organization brings up a new hot-shot reliever from the minor leagues, Shane Mungitt. However, while Mungitt is an excellent pitcher and the team begins to win, he does not gel with the rest of the team. He keeps to himself in the locker room and does not introduce himself to anyone. Mungitt's introduction to the locker room when it is already in transition was difficult for the players but he was helping the team win so any awkwardness was, for the most part, forgiven. Unfortunately, in baseball, with success comes attention, and in a press conference Mungitt, remarkably, uses an epithet for every race and sexuality represented on the team.

Well I tell ya, it's a pretty humblin' thing. I'm just this kid outta nowhere and alluva sudden—WHAM, I'm on this team. An' it's a pretty funny team, ya know. A pretty funny buncha guys. Now, don't get me wrong. I don't mind the colored people—the

gooks an' the spics an' the coons an' like that. But *every night* t'hafta take a shower with a *faggot*? Do ya know what I'm sayin'?"⁵⁹

Unpacking Mungitt's incendiary statement reveals issues with the racism within the practice of baseball's paradigm of masculine performativity. First there are similarities between the beginning of this statement and that of Nuke's platitudes that he is taught to say by Crash in *Bull Durham*. Mungitt's statement, "Well I tell ya, it's a pretty humblin' thing. I'm just a kid outta nowhere" serves the same purpose as Nuke's "I'm just happy to be here and I want to help the ball club."⁶⁰⁶¹ Here both pitchers showcase a common attitude. However, Nuke goes on to talk about the sport of baseball in the abstract, saying nothing inflammatory, while Mungitt discusses his personal feelings about the other ball players. While humorous, the platitudes that Nuke recites also serve to make him more generic. By not saying anything that distinguishes him he also avoids being offensive to anyone. Nuke has no opinions, he is an extension of baseball and by being an abstract extension of baseball he is universal. Mungitt's statement is an extreme example of the way personal opinions can exclude a player from public acceptance.

At the beginning of his statement, Mungitt seems to indicate that he does not mind being on a team with people of a different ethnicity. Baseball's connection to the concept of the American Dream is built on the idea of everyone receiving the same opportunities no matter their social or economic situation. However, when James Truslow Adams wrote about the equality of the American dream, it only really applied to white males. Social inequities continue to be an issue in the United States in contemporary popular culture. Everyone could be given the same opportunities, but they are not. Mungitt's racial epithets serve the same function. He does not mind playing with

members of the other race but he does not treat them equally. The ambiguous nature of his racially violent language suggests ignorance rather than hatred. However, his words are unacceptable and Mungitt is suspended from the team indefinitely.

The team's reaction to Darren's announcement is mostly positive. Darren had not come out to anyone besides Skip, the manager, before his announcement. Skip's reaction was that Darren's announcement would change nothing. Other members of the team express their support of Darren but ultimately the shift in the social environment of the locker room creates some anxiety among members of the team. Ultimately Kippy is able to explain what has happened to another player.

Look at us now. How we turn from each other. How, when we turn *to* each other we maintain eye contact. Before, this wasn't necessary. We were Men. This meant we could be girlish. We could pat fannies, snap towels; hug. Now... What do we do with our stray homosexual impulses? ... We've lost a kind of paradise. We see that we are naked... We might want to assume a defensive hostility an aggression. The danger there is we become Shane Mungitt.⁶²

When Kippy delivers the monologue he and several other characters are in the shower and completely naked on stage. This creates a humorous metatheatrical moment in the play but it also forces the audience to confront their own assumptions when confronted with several men standing in a shower together. Is the image necessarily sexual? Are the men being sexualized just because they are standing in front of other people in the nude? Kippy's assessment of their locker room issues illustrates their struggle with the redefinition of masculinity in baseball. When no one was gay, no one had to worry about that aspect of his social assumptions. Once Darren came out, he

opened up the possibility that other members of the team might be gay. Not only were some of the players uncomfortable being naked in front of each other, but they had to confront why. Kippy's reference to Eden parallels baseball and religion. The paradise Kippy refers to is the players' uncomplicated social environment. However, the metaphor also refers to the uncomplicated view of masculinity as it relates to baseball's paradigm of masculine performativity.

Darren is forced to confront social inequity for the first time. His economic status and skill on the baseball field have protected him from experiencing racial oppression. His decision to come out publically was likely tied to his elevated status in baseball. Darren felt invincible so he did not feel like he needed to hide anymore. After Mungitt's statement there was an outcry of support for Darren. Mungitt takes this support as an insult. Darren finds the outcry of support worse than epithets or hatred because compassion puts him lower than those caring for him. Darren is someone to be envied, not pitied. Kipp tells him that he likes him better now, finds him more human. Before Kipp thought Darren was sort of godly, and Darren muses that it sounds like a demotion.⁶³

Darren's demotion from his godly status represents the play's challenge to masculine performativity through baseball. Darren did not consider his sexuality a secret. It was something he had not mentioned, because it did not matter to him. So when his teammates and fans began to like him despite his sexuality it meant there was something about him to be forgiven. Darren's homosexuality normalized him for Kipp, and that was the worst thing for Darren. Great baseball players are elevated above personhood in

public imagination. Darren's sexuality made him just another one of the players, not great.

The team's support of Darren does not come without some trepidation. Some players are uncomfortable with the idea of having a gay man on the team. Ultimately, however, Darren's skill is impossible to ignore. The players are all paid to win games and anyone that might help a team win will be welcome. After his announcement, Darren plays incredibly well but the team does not. When they bring in Mungitt the team starts winning again. When Mungitt makes his incendiary comments and is suspended the team continues their slump. The club's decision to reinstate him illustrates the logic with which a successful baseball team operates. When the play begins the team needs Darren because he is a good player, and the management does not care what his sexuality is. The management also does not care that Mungitt is a bigot. Darren is an incredible hitter, and Mungitt is an incredible pitcher and that is all that concerns the front office.

When upper management ignores Darren's request for Mungitt to stay off of the team, Darren is confronted with his own limitations. It does not matter how good he is, Darren is still just a player. Darren's reaction to this situation is to want to quit baseball. After discussion with Kippy and Mars, Darren decides to play through to the end of the season, but his decision is financially motivated. Between his financially motivated decisions and his initial unwillingness to support the team, Darren is not carrying himself like a romantically great baseball player. His actions are selfishly motivated and his performance on the field has no reverence for the game. Through all of this Darren continues to play exceptionally well, and he continues to be supported by fans of the team. They do not, however, know how difficult of a time he is having.

Darren's isolation comes to a head when his best friend, Davey Battle, rejects him. When Battle's team comes to play the Empires he and Darren have a chance to talk for the first time since Darren's revelation. It is revealed that Darren only came out because he felt encouraged by Davey to be true to himself. So when Davey calls Darren a pervert, the betrayal is worse than anyone else's anxiety or tension. Darren lashes out at the only other person who has outwardly mentioned his sexuality as a negative, Shane. He comes on to him in the shower, leaving Shane in such a state of duress that he throws a wild pitch during the game, striking and killing Davey, who is up to bat.⁶⁴

The motivation and responsibility for Davey's death is purposefully left unclear. Is it Shane's fault because he can't control his emotions? Did he overhear Darren telling Davey to "drop dead" and naïvely take him literally? Is it Darren's fault for attacking Shane in the shower, knowing fully well that Shane has difficulty processing feelings? Could it be Darren's fault for wishing death upon someone in a religiously superstitious sport and accidentally calling for a freak accident? Shane ultimately threw the ball and therefore faces punishment. He is banned from baseball, the only thing he knew how to do. The tragedy of his punishment is his complaint about being thrown into situations in which people are asking him what he is thinking. Why should it matter what he thinks if he is there to pitch. He did not mean to hit Davey but because of his previous statements people assumed it was hate motivated.

By the end of the play Shane proves himself to be as bigoted as suspected by showing no remorse for killing Davey because of his race. Shane's lack of remorse may speak to his emotional issues beyond racism, as it is also clear by the end of the play that he did not hit Davey on purpose. As he realizes he will not be allowed to pitch anymore

because of his previous statements Shane exclaims “I’M NOT S’POSE TA TALK! I’M S’POSE TA THROW!”⁶⁵ His sentiment, though seemingly just, illustrates the importance of performing baseball. Shane complains that he only encountered problems when people asked him what he thought and asked him to talk. However, who he is in the public eye dictates who he is as a baseball player. Similar to Nuke in *Bull Durham*, it is not Shane’s skill that is in question but his ability to *be* a baseball player. The “talking” or performance Shane wishes he could have avoided is as much a part of success in baseball as his fastball.

Shane’s difficulty in the play signals a shift in the dynamics of baseball performance. Baseball’s connection with the American Dream includes the suggestion that everyone should be treated equally. However, the practice was far different from the ideal. Systemic segregation and acceptance of racism among the players meant that everyone was not treated equally. The segregation represents a failure in practice of the ideal performance of baseball. The traditional practices of baseball represent a failure to adhere to the ideals espoused in Spalding’s book. While Shane might have been an accepted and even celebrated player during the development of baseball, his isolation and eventual removal in the play suggests that major league baseball is shifting its practices and therefore aligning itself closer its initial ideals.

Darren’s new business manager, Mars, is also a homosexual. This revelation prompts a defensive remark from Darren as to the purpose of his hire. Mars was not assigned to Darren because of his sexual orientation but rather because of his recent professional success with other clients. Mars, the only person in the play not directly employed as a baseball professional, represents the view of baseball from outside. As part

of his preparation for Darren's account he begins to research baseball. As he learns more about the game, Mars becomes captivated. His view of baseball is the simulacrum created by the other films and plays. He makes a direct connection between baseball and democracy, paralleling the connection Albert Spalding made between baseball and the American Dream. Mars's interactions with Darren illustrate the tension between what is believed about baseball and what it actually is.

Mars and Darren represent exceptions to sociological rules in a number of different ways. As an accountant primarily whose success has been dictated by objective financial decisions, one might expect him to be unmoved by the emotional aspect of baseball. While Darren, as a star player at the height of his career, might be expected to appreciate the superstitious aspects of the game. Darren does not care about baseball however, and Mars cares very much. At the end of the play Darren, having just won the World Series is still contemplating retiring, and it is Mars's protests that convince him not to retire the next day.

As a gay man, Mars's participation in baseball as a fan extends that aspect of performativity beyond hetero-normativity in a similar fashion to Darren. Mars mentions to Darren that since he came out, many people in the gay community have become more interested in baseball. Though it was not his direct intention, Darren coming out expanded the fan base of baseball and made its masculine performativity more universally accepting.

Baseball's expansion to include homosexual men within the acceptable image of masculinity seems inevitable by the end of the play. Mars's enthusiasm about the World Series reinforces the mutual acceptance between homosexual and baseball culture. Bruce

Bawer's 1994 book, *A Place at the Table*, provides useful insight into the socio-political concerns of being a publicly gay man.⁶⁶ Though his arguments were somewhat controversial in the gay community, Bawer's contention that his sexuality should not be politicized parallels a significant theme of *Take Me Out*.⁶⁷ Darren's feelings about his sexuality as they relate to his public image mirror Bawer's. The play suggests that Darren's sexual orientation should not have a bearing on his masculinity or his status as a player. Just like Darren, all Mars needed was a seat at the table of baseball. Mars did not realize that he wanted until he experienced the game for the first time. Darren's sexuality forces a shift in the understood social structure of the locker room, and the consequences of that shift make him question his desire to continue to play baseball. Mars, however, shows the audience the benefits of the expanded image of baseball. Mars's remarks at the end of the play: "Yes. It was. A fuck of a season. It was...tragic. It *was*—tragic."⁶⁸ Mars's realization about the nature of tragedy illustrates the transition that baseball goes through with Darren's revelation. The season has been tragic in the Aristotelian sense for all the players involved. The catharsis connected to the loss of Darren's friend as well as everyone's purging of their anxieties connected to Darren's sexual orientation will ultimately provide healing and a more balanced social structure in the culture of baseball.

Back Back Back

The suggestion that the way a team plays should be more important than whether or not it wins is at the heart of baseball performativity. The overly romantic view of how professional baseball players approach competition stems from the constructed image of baseball prevalent in more nostalgic representations like those discussed earlier. Itamar Moses's *Back Back Back* challenges the suggestion that fair play is more important than

winning. The play is based on the performance enhancing drug (PED) scandal of the early 2000s, during which several baseball players were called before a congressional hearing to account for their use of PEDs. The play fictionalizes names and events leading up to the hearing and after, opting to examine the question of ethics in the use of PEDs in baseball.

The players' justification for starting the use of PEDs and then for continuing raises questions about the falsehood of "fair play." The idea that a player might have an emotional connection to the team for which he plays is another issue questioned in *Back Back Back*. Players are often traded several times throughout their careers, and they are expected to perform to the best of their abilities regardless of which ball club is paying them. Finally, the play questions the nobility of losing the "right way" by representing tension between what is believed about baseball's ideology and what is necessary for objective success as a professional baseball player. Though more ambiguous than *Take Me Out*, *Back Back Back* is less an indictment of baseball than a lament for trust, lost because of the scandals.

Moses's play presents the most cynical view of baseball out of all of the cases examined. None of the characters present an uncomplicated image of an ideal player as suggested in the earlier cases. The use of PEDs does not adversely affect any of the characters in any financial or professional way, and the one character that chooses not to use them is not rewarded for his steadfastness. The play also challenges the value of team support in professional baseball. Each character is traded to several teams throughout the play. The fluidity of each players' "allegiance" insulates them from any sort of camaraderie one might expect them to experience as a part of the team. In the world of

Back Back Back a player must work only for himself, because there is no real loyalty; a portrayal that is reinforced by the characters' interactions with each other after they have been traded to other teams.

The play consists of media interviews with and conversations between three professional ball players over the course of several seasons. Raul is a Hispanic baseball player who has developed a system for the use of PEDs that he and Kent, an "All-American, golden boy type," implement for themselves.⁶⁹ At the beginning of the play they are established, successful players and have won more than one pennant. Raul broaches the subject of PED use to Adam, a rookie sensation who is dealing with nerves about his first World Series game, Kent immediately shuts him down. After Adam leaves, Kent explains that he does not want to get Adam to use PEDs because Adam is not a power hitter. According to Kent, Adam's game is based on speed and extra muscle mass might slow him down. Kent's concern for Adam's success is ambiguous. It is likely that Kent is using Adam's playing style as an excuse to protect Adam from the ethical issues of cheating, and raising the obvious question about Kent's own ethics. Why does Kent want to keep Adam from using PEDs while he himself is continuing to thrive on them? Kent and Raul have a conversation about the ethics of using PEDs in major league baseball. Raul's justification complicates the idea of fair play in baseball.

This is the only way to *make* it fair. They are watching us *all the time* guy. Is he hot? Is he slumping? We gonna hold on to him or cut him loose? For a few healthy years, Kent. And there's two ways it can go. Don't pan out and get traded like a chump? Or blow up like a superstar, go free agent, and get paid. You want to play with a handicap? You be my guest. But not me.⁷⁰

Raul's suggestion that their profession is inherently unfair challenges the understood values of baseball. Its paralleled existence with the notion of the American Dream, in which everyone is given the same opportunity for success, comes into question as "fairness" is dependent on pre-existing circumstances. Raul asks Kent if he ever worries about the fairness of his having grown up in an affluent community where he had access to better-than-average baseball facilities. Kent responds that he does not. Raul then asks Kent if he knows where Raul grew up. Kent does not know. Raul suggests that the more modest socio-economic environment where he grew up is a handicap. Now that he is performing at the highest level, Raul is going to do whatever he can to be better than the other players around him in order to continue to enjoy his success. The idea that there is a right way to play, is irrelevant to Raul because they (the owners, the general managers and anyone else who makes decisions about player personnel on the team) are always watching to make sure he is valuable to the club. For Raul the only thing that dictates his value is objective production.⁷¹

Raul's viewpoint challenges the suggestion that someone can lose the right way. For Raul, losing is the worst thing. When he brings up the difference between his and Kent's circumstances while they were growing up it was not only to illustrate that they had different starting points for their journey to the majors. Raul has more to lose, farther to fall if baseball does not work out for him. It is in his best interest to do everything he can to stay successful and relevant for as long as possible. There is no honor for Raul in losing, no moral victory that is worth his losing his place on the team. Raul and Kent's conversation at the beginning of the play establishes a view of baseball minus the values

with which it is traditionally associated. Each character's fate is not dependent on their integrity, or any other aspect of baseball's paradigm of masculine performativity.

Though it has always been a part of the game, the process of trading does not line up with the romantic ideals of baseball. Being traded is something that most ball players will have to deal with at some point. Even Babe Ruth was traded to the New York Yankees from the Boston Red Sox. *Back Back Back* illustrates the performance involved in being a professional ball player by portraying the characters playing for several different teams over the course of the play. Almost every scene in the play has the characters in the uniform of a different major league baseball club. In several of the scenes the player is talking about the trade in a positive light, they talk about how the move is a good thing and they are looking forward to working in a better environment for one reason or another.

The frequency with which the players are traded emphasizes the isolated nature of a baseball player's professional career. Any support they might show towards their team is for the benefit of the performance of a player who plays the "right way." If they cared so much about the team they were on, it would be difficult for them to make the transition as quickly as they have to. Kent, Raul, and Adam all play for several different teams and they are all publically enthusiastic for where they end up.

Raul's line at the beginning of the play about being traded exposes the falsehood of any players' happiness about being traded. The audience gets a glimpse of both sides of the performance as the play includes televised interviews with the players in which they "act" happy about the change. The difference between the nothing that Raul and Kent say to the media and what Nuke says in *Bull Durham* is negligible. They both know

they are saying things that are not true for the benefit of the character they are constructing. The only difference is the tone with which the scenes are being presented. By the time Nuke delivers his speech we as an audience know the real him. We see Nuke as an earnest player who has learned his lesson about what is important in baseball. The characters in *Back Back Back* are all cynical and do not care about baseball any further than how it helps them in the immediate sense.

In *The Sandlot*, Bennie Rodriguez wears an LA Dodgers hat throughout the film. At the end, Bennie is playing for the Dodgers. The suggestion is that Bennie worked hard and was such a legendary player that his favorite team recruited him where he remained for his entire career. There is no discussion for the love of one team or another in *Back Back Back*, there is no interaction with fans, and the players are only concerned with the media as much as they are required to be. In *Back Back Back* the players are concerned with their jobs. There is no romance and no outpouring of emotion. Everything is business, and any betrayals are selfishly but not personally motivated.

Adam is the only character in the last scene of the play. It ends with him coaching a new player during batting practice. Adam is the youngest of the three players in the play and has had the shortest career, presumably because he did not use PEDs. Raul's predictions about being traded and playing with a handicap come to fruition for Adam. He is the rookie of the year his first season and then fades into mediocrity. By the time he makes it to the All-Star game, ten years later, Kent has been flourishing and is on track to break Babe Ruth's single season home run record. The play seems to be suggesting that results are more important than process, a notion that is in stark contrast to the cultural ethos of more nostalgic images of baseball.

When Adam and Kent see each other at the All-Star game, the two players have a conversation about cheating. The difference between this conversation and the one that Raul and Kent had at the beginning of the play is that the latter asked whether it was ethical to use PEDs in baseball and Adam and Kent's conversation accepts that PEDs are cheating and Adam wants to know why. Adam asks Kent why he cheated and why he is still cheating. Kent's justification is that his ability to hit homeruns, and his connection to Babe Ruth through the chase for sixty-two. He suggests that after the Black Sox scandal fans had given up on baseball, and that it was only when Babe Ruth started hitting homeruns people began to get excited about the national pastime again. Kent's homerun chase is coming after the first time in history that an entire season was cancelled because of a labor dispute. And like Babe Ruth, Kent's homeruns are inspiring the public to get excited about baseball again despite being disillusioned by the players' and owners' greed. Kent does not deny cheating, he simply says that he is saving baseball, and his argument is the same as Raul's.

Back Back Back does not portray any actual baseball players but it follows recorded events closely enough that the players that the characters are meant to represent are clear. By using real events and fictional characters the playwright is able to suggest motivations without putting words into the mouths of actual people. In addition to legally protecting himself Itamar Moses is commenting on the separation between the public personas and private lives of baseball players. In the previous section I discussed the separation between the general public and the people that get to play professional baseball. On the one hand such a separation means that participation in the sport elevates the players to a mythological status. The players become characters in stories about their

exploits. The dehumanization can be negative for the player in that their accomplishments become bigger than they are. Mark McGwire hit seventy homeruns in his 1998 season with the St. Louis cardinals. His use of steroids has largely diminished the goodwill he enjoyed when he broke Babe Ruth's record.⁷² By using a different name and vague references Itamar Moses reduces McGwire to a disappointment. This is paralleled in the final moment of the play. Adam who is giving batting practice to an unseen rookie sees him hit a homerun. Rather than excitement he exhibits melancholy because Adam can no longer see a homerun without questioning where it was fairly earned. The play is a representation of the disillusionment of the fans of baseball. If baseball fans cannot trust the magic of a homerun how can they trust the greatness of baseball? And if they can't trust the greatness of baseball, it no longer serves as an example to emulate.

The primary focus of *Back Back Back* is the ethics of baseball. Each character's relationship to the use of PEDs presents a murky ethical dilemma. Neither of the characters who use PEDs seem to face any legitimate consequences. Raul and Kent meet on opposite sides of the congressional hearing to determine the extent of PED use in baseball. Even at the hearing, Kent is under no obligation to admit to any wrong doing his answer neither confirms nor denies his involvement with PEDs. Kent's only concern is getting into the hall of fame and Raul assures him that the hearing will not affect his being voted into the hall because the only thing the fans care about is the homeruns. Raul's suggestion that fans do not care about the ethics of the game represents the voice of the playwright.

The date of the play's original publication provides significant context for the play's theme. When *Back Back Back* was originally published in 2008, Mark McGwire had retired from baseball and had not yet admitted to the use of PEDs. Barry Bonds, another controversial baseball figure, had overtaken McGwire's single season record of seventy homeruns. In 2007, when the play was in process, Bonds broke Hank Aaron's all time homerun record, effectively taking all of the homerun records away from supposedly clean players like Ruth, Maris and Aaron. Based on the timing of the play, one might read it as a eulogy for the ideal image of baseball, and what it represented. Cheating players are being rewarded with success and accolades and even exposure does not seem hinder the use of unfair advantages baseball. The image of baseball that Moses creates no longer represents an ideal masculine image.

Since the play was published, there have been shifts in the discussion of PEDs and McGwire's 2010 admission to PED use offers vindication to the sentiment of the play. McGwire's decision to publically admit his transgressions could be read as a self-sacrificing attempt to restore the integrity of the game. When he admitted his abuse of steroids, McGwire would have expected a negative reaction. Due to his struggles on the hall of fame ballot, he could have waited until he was voted in before publically admitting any wrongdoing. McGwire's public reason for doing so was to help establish a cleaner version of baseball.⁷³ As of 2016 Mark McGwire's eligibility has ended for the to be voted in to the baseball hall of fame via traditional ballot.⁷⁴ McGwire must have known that by coming clean he might have ruined his chances to be honored in the hall. Hence, we might regard him heroically, though he played baseball "the wrong way", his decision to come clean suggests a personal shift back in line with the aspects of ideal

masculinity according to baseball's image. The other way to read his decision, however, is as a last, desperate attempt to gain goodwill among the journalists responsible for inducting players. His admission in 2010 was four years into his eligibility and his waning popularity might have prompted him to try a different tactic to get enough votes to enter the hall. In either case, by appealing to the honor of the journalists, whether a true indication of his remorse or not, McGwire reinforced the importance of the idea of fair play in baseball.

Back Back Back can be read as an indictment of the entire institution of baseball. Adam's final look of despair at the end of the play suggests that he no longer can find anything in baseball he can trust. Ultimately, however, this play can be read as an homage to the true religion of baseball by striving to expose how the practice has gone astray. Just as a church pastor might plan a revival in order to redirect his congregation back to the path of righteousness, *Back Back Back* reinforces the values associated with baseball's paradigm of masculinity by illustrating how the game has shifted away from its original values and ideals.

“How Can You Not Be Romantic About Baseball?”

Back Back Back focused on actual events in baseball history but fictionalized the identities of the main characters, while *Take Me Out* is completely fictional, down to the team itself. “The New York Empires” is obviously meant to recall the Yankees but none of the events of the play directly correspond with anything that has actually happened in public history. The final baseball dramatization I will be discussing tries to illustrate baseball as it really is, directly depicting real events from baseball history and using the actual names of the people involved.

The 2011 film, *Moneyball* follows the Oakland Athletics' 2002 season. Under the general management of Billy Beane, the Athletics were able to replace several key players, enjoy a successful season and make the playoffs. Beane's difficulty comes from the personnel budget of the A's. Because each baseball club is its own franchise, some teams have a larger budget to field a team than others. In the 2001 American League Divisional Series against the New York Yankees, the A's had a budget of 39 million dollars, while the Yankees had 114 million. The A's lost in the final game of the series mostly due to their lack of resources. The film is about how Beane dealt with the economic inequity and found a way to field a team that was as good as the Yankees for less money.

Ostensibly, *Moneyball* challenges the image of baseball as an ultimately fair and democratic game. The teams with more money will tend to win more because they can afford to pay what it takes to get good players. The teams with more money will always be in a better position to succeed. In *Moneyball*, baseball is not an idealistic, even-field activity that transforms boys into men. Instead, it is a business that capitalizes on the nostalgia of national identity.

Billy Beane achieves success for his team by recruiting excellent players who had been overlooked by the larger clubs. Each of the players that Beane recruits has been excluded because of a perceived flaw. Beane works with Peter Brand to look at the statistics of all of the available players to find a quantitative way to assess their value to the organization scientifically and objectively. Thematically, *Moneyball* departs from imagery of baseball players proving themselves at tryouts. Rather than showing each of the selected players in action, the audience is shown a series of numbers and charts,

which illustrates Beane's shift in thinking. He is no longer looking for great *players*. He simply wants *wins*, and in order to get them he needs runs. To Beane, players are only numbers. Forgoing the image of the great player for hard numbers becomes his advantage. However, it also represents a departure from baseball's ideal.

By choosing to go against a traditional way of playing the game, Beane does not play the game the "right way" and in doing so, limits his players' opportunities to prove themselves as well. He must work against a great deal of pushback from other members of the ball club. His different style of management affects the farm system scouts and the manager the most. His interactions with them highlight his lack of reverence for baseball's traditions. In baseball, a sport built on the importance of tradition and respect for how things are done, and Beane's refusal to respect those traditions leads to personal confrontations with other players and members of team management.

Beane's ultimate success through unconventional methods vindicates his style of play. Though on the surface his untraditional approach seems to violate the spirit of the game, in a very important respect it represents a return to the spirit of equality originally suggested in Albert Spalding's book. By re-establishing equality among the teams in baseball, Beane helps to reshape what it means to be a successful baseball player — and thus a man in the twenty-first century.

Billy Beane's willingness to go against the traditions of baseball likely stems from his own previous experience as a player. The film features a flashback sequence that illustrates how Beane decided to play professional ball instead of going to college. The high-school-aged Beane sits at his kitchen table as a scout for the New York Mets offers him a sizeable signing bonus and the promise of greatness in baseball. We then see a

series of clips tracking his decline from promising rookie to mediocre journeyman. Finally Beane decides to quit baseball and become a scout, trying to secure a career for after baseball. Playing baseball the “right way” failed Beane and his experience with the traditional way of scouting and developing players likely influenced his approach to developing new players. The scenes showing his career as a ball player provide context for his decision-making process as a general manager. As a manager Beane witnessed baseball tradition fail yet again with the inequities facing his ball club. Without enough money to acquire the good enough players, Beane’s club, the Athletics, cannot compete with the well-funded teams that can afford access to top level talent. Continuing to run the team the same way despite being at a disadvantage essentially guaranteed failure. Beane’s frustration exemplifies one of the ways in which the ideal practice of baseball has been abandoned in the major leagues. As portrayed by Brad Pitt, Beane eventually comes to embody every aspect of the idealized man that had formerly been associated with the great baseball player.

Beane’s baseball career was a such disappointment because of his raw physical talent. After retiring, rather than slowing down, Beane continues to cultivate his physical strength. Rather than watching the baseball games live, he works out in the gym with the game playing on the television. Beane keeps himself in peak physical condition despite the fact that his career does not require it. His strength is a part of his identity, and his idealized performance of masculinity.

Beane’s integrity is showcased through his decision at the end of the film to remain with the Oakland A’s. Beane was offered more money than any general manager had ever been paid to come work for the Red Sox. Beane almost takes the job but

ultimately decides to remain in Oakland so that he can win with the team that initially believed in his system. Beane's decision to stay with Oakland illustrates his integrity. By refusing to take the money offered to him he actively works against the system that fostered his initial problem. Staying with the A's for less money prevented the Red Sox from being able to use their larger budget as an advantage over the smaller team.

Though Beane is portrayed as a stoic and possibly uncaring manager to the players, his interactions with his daughter show a different person entirely. He encourages her interest in music. When he is with his daughter, Beane's entire demeanor changes. His voice is warmer when he talks to her and he is actively concerned about her feelings. When she is worried he will get fired he calms her fears and reassures her that he will be fine. Beane's care for his daughter is reinforced at the end of the film when he decides to stay in Oakland while listening to the song she wrote for him.

Beane's commonality is part of the main theme of the film. The A's are a small market team, and the lack of financial support is what forces Beane to alter the way that he works. The film illustrates the financial disparity between the A's and other better funded teams in several ways. Early in the film Beane is attempting to broker a trade with the Cleveland Indians and is treated condescendingly in the meeting. The manager of the Indians is unwilling to make a trade with Beane because there is no one in his "price range."⁷⁵ Beane is repeatedly reminded that his club has less money than Cleveland, and has to leave empty handed. His trip to Cleveland exemplifies the disparity between the teams and illustrates the trouble with the state of baseball.

We also see the more common level of the Oakland A's in their facilities. A new player is surprised to learn he has to pay for sodas in the clubhouse and the offices where

Beane works are dingy and old fashioned. Beane's assistant, Peter Brand (played by Jonah Hill) does most of his work in a cramped basement room with computers that are at least a decade old.⁷⁶ Every time a park other than Oakland's is shown, the audience is confronted with an image of opulence. The functionality of Oakland's park encourages the audience to support what Beane is trying to do. There is little waste in Oakland because they cannot afford to.

Beane's commitment to his new style of baseball requires a great deal of perseverance. He is met with challenges from everyone he works with and must stand by his ideas in order to succeed. Initially it looks like his idea is not going to work, as the team continues to lose games despite utilizing his system. Beane's belief that what he is doing will work establishes him for the audience as an ideal man.

The film establishes Beane as possessing all of the traits of an ideal man while it suggests that the traditions of baseball are obsolete. It is ironic that by utilizing the traditional values of baseball, Beane is bringing about a shift in the way the game is played. Ultimately, Beane's journey affirms the American Dream so closely related to the sport of baseball by dismantling many of the core assumptions about how the game is to be played.

The irony of Beane's masculine performance lies in the way that he transforms the performance of baseball players. Beane's approach to managing players looks only at their production of certain aspects of their game. By doing so, he reduces players to a number. In order to be successful in baseball and in the performance of masculinity himself, Beane had to disregard other players' performances. Through his tactics, Beane embodies the thing that he demolishes. His style of play signals a shift in the thinking of

baseball as a paradigm for masculine performance. *Moneyball* represents all of the aspects of masculine performance through the man that removes performance from baseball.

Creating Baseball

All of the fictions discussed, whether by affirming or by challenging practices and assumptions in baseball culture reinforce the importance of the game to American popular culture. In the first three cases, baseball is idyllic. Men and boys turn to baseball in order to know how to be better versions of themselves. Its value is never questioned and it is impossible to be a good player without being a good person. The systematic process parallels that of a moral structure or a religion. The first three fictions showcase baseball as it is intended to function, and establish the ideal practice of the sport.

The baseball that *Bull Durham*, *The Sandlot*, and *Damn Yankees* represent does not actually exist. By presenting a simulacrum of baseball the fictions document an image of baseball in popular culture. Though it does not exist and never existed in the way each work presents it, the image functions as evidence of baseball's impact and importance to masculine identity in the United States.

The more contemporary dramatizations seem to subvert the idealized view of baseball. They present a complicated view of the sport that illustrates the ways in which baseball as imagined in the first three case studies is unrealistic. In doing so however, the dramatizations do not suggest that baseball in its idyllic form should be discarded. Rather, they present individual deviations from the ideal within the sport. The illustration of baseball's failure to live up to the ideal form initially presented suggests a desire to fix

baseball. These images of baseball reinforce a popular desire to retain the value of baseball that the earlier fictions depict.

Each of the plays and films examined in this section illustrate baseball's importance to the development of masculine identity. Whether by presenting an image of baseball in its perfect form or by highlighting how it should change, each of these plays and films are evidence of baseball's impact on popular culture in the United States. The underlying values of baseball remain important in popular culture.

The ideal image of baseball presented in the first three studies remains a litmus test against which the public can judge the practice of baseball as a sport and as a performative act. The unachievable image presented in the first three case studies is a simulacrum of baseball. No actual player or game could live up to the presented examples any more than a small town's market could live up to the idealized image of Americana presented in Disneyworld's "main street USA." Like Baudrillard's example of American simulacrum, baseball in its idealized form conceals the fact that it is a representation of something that does not exist. The more contemporary dramatizations that were meant to subvert the image of baseball end up reinforcing it but suggesting that it is a goal to be achieved.

CHAPTER 4

FOOTBALL

On November 25, 2009 in Detroit, the Lions hosted the Cleveland Browns for a 1:00pm football game. After trailing for most of the game, the Lions were able to come back for a victory. The team was bolstered by the efforts of rookie quarterback, Matt Stafford. During the game Stafford became the youngest player in the history of the NFL to throw five touch-down passes in a single game, including the game winning score as time expired. In addition to Stafford's statistically impressive day, he wore a microphone that recorded all of his interactions during the game. This recording, intended for the casual fan who wants to know more about what is happening in between the plays of a football game, showcases Stafford in an ideal masculine performance within the culture of football. At the end of the game, Stafford takes the field with 1:47 left to play and must score a touchdown to win the game. He leads his team down the field and as the clock runs out of time he scrambles around, avoiding rushing defenders and finally throws the ball to his receiver in the end zone. As Stafford throws the ball, C. J. Mosely, a 315-pound defensive tackle crashes into Stafford, lifting him off of his feet before slamming him into the turf. Stafford's pass fell incomplete, but a pass-interference penalty on the defense meant that the Lions would get one more play from the goal line. Stafford has stood up from many hits during the hard-fought game but this time he does not get up. He does not even move. As the team trainers rush to his aid, Stafford stirs, pushes the swarm of concerned people away and begins to jog back to the line of scrimmage before collapsing again in pain. He goes to the sideline and allows the trainers to examine his

shoulder until he hears a timeout has been called. Even though he left the field with an injury he can return for the next play because of the timeout. Stafford, his left shoulder injured so severely he can barely move it, pushes the team doctors away a second time and runs onto the field to tell the coach he can play. He lines up under center, takes the snap and throws a one-yard touchdown pass to Branden Pettigrew. This was the second and final win of Stafford's rookie year.

Stafford's performance during the game highlights the qualities of an ideal football player. He maintains his composure under pressure. He is fast enough to avoid defenders and strong enough to throw the ball accurately and for impressive distances. Finally, he shakes off an incredibly painful injury to do what is necessary to win. As a successful football player, Stafford embodies many of the qualities associated with the paradigm of masculine performance as defined through the culture of football. A vastly popular and exclusively American sport, football offers a significantly influential image of masculinity in United States popular culture.

The previous chapters highlighted the impact baseball has had on the development of masculinity in the US. However, football presents an entirely different paradigm. Where baseball promotes a nurturing attitude and fair play, football is concerned with aggression and winning above all. The purpose of this chapter is to define and dissect the image of masculinity that football promotes and to illustrate how that image has shaped the successful performance of masculinity in United States popular culture.

Origin

Though football and baseball are distinct from each other, the two sports share some similarities in their developmental history. Both sports are modified from popular British pastimes and both sports had officially codified rules, established shortly after the civil war. However, though they both enjoyed a sharp increase in popularity as industrialization generated more leisure time for the middle class, baseball and football were aimed at different groups. While baseball was developed under the auspice of equal participation, football was developed in the Ivy League. The sons of bankers and more affluent population of the country shared more similarities with the perceived effete dandies in England and Europe than the rest of the country. So their studies at Yale and Harvard were supplemented with sport.

Initially the men played rugby, a sport developed in the country from which they sought to separate themselves. Difficulty with interpretation of the Rugby Football Union rules largely contributed to the inception of football as a different sport. When the players in the US had difficulty in interpreting terms such as “dead ball” or “heel out,” and without veteran players to clarify the meaning of ambiguous terms, the players created their own interpretations adapting the game to its new cultural home.⁷⁷ As the style of football changed, university play set itself apart from both soccer and rugby and it became more recognizable as a masculine and nationally identifying activity. The popularity of the sport in the universities and competitive spirit among players and spectators alike established the field as a performative space. Players could create their identity as men and as Americans by performing well on the field. It was difficult for

opposing teams to agree on the specifics of each contest, however, because each school had different versions of similar rules.

After several intercollegiate disagreements and in an effort to prevent further confusion, Princeton invited Harvard, Yale, and Columbia to meet and establish a system of rules that they could all agree upon that would solidify the way the game was played. This took place on November 23, 1876 when eight students representing four universities established the basic rules of the game, so popular today. Twenty-two of the sixty-one rules drafted that day are still in the contemporary NCAA rulebook. In addition to drafting the rules the schools represented agreed to play each other every year and that additional games could be scheduled as tiebreakers in order to crown a champion every year. With these agreements the Intercollegiate Football Association was born.⁷⁸

Though Yale had a representative at the meeting, they refused to join the IFA over a dispute in the rules regarding the number of players on the field and points registered for scoring touchdowns. Despite not joining, Yale was allowed to participate in the games, subject to expected action by the Yale Football Association. By not immediately joining, Yale's representatives put themselves into a unique bargaining position. In the first year of play they were able to convince Princeton to play them according to the rules they wanted rather than the official IFA rules. Yale won the game against Princeton and with it the inaugural IFA championship.⁷⁹

Yale would remain outside of the IFA until 1879 when the rules regarding touchdowns were changed and the number of players per side was reduced from fifteen to eleven. Yale's desire to change the rules was a tactical concern. The style of play they engaged in was better suited to a more open field where smaller, quicker players would

benefit from having fewer players to work around. The yearly meeting among the participating teams meant that each team had an opportunity to shape the rules around their own strategy. Each teams' innovations in strategies during the season inspired different rules meant to regulate or eliminate perceived unfair advantages. The fluid nature of the rules created an environment in which football could be separate from modified rugby and come into its own as a sport on an accelerated timetable. Where baseball's rules are built on tradition and respect for the way things "were done," football is an expression of adaptation.

The adaptive spirit of football came to define the sport itself. Players that were able to use the rules to their full advantage were able to be more successful. Rather than having a traditional style of play that each player would aspire to, players that were able to bend the rules without breaking them, or were able to break them without getting caught were typically more successful. Though cheating was looked down upon, early football was could be compared as easily to rugby as it could to an organized brawl and learning what you could get away with was part of the skill of the game. The suggestion that winning is more important than playing by the rules, or that ends justify means is an aspect of football's paradigm of masculinity that we will return to.

Every year aspects of football were added or modified and in many cases the aspects added are foundational parts of contemporary football. The line of scrimmage, forward blocking, and the forward pass are all the result of the exploitation of a loophole in the rules that later became included in the rules. Having representatives from each team meant that a proposed rule change would only be implemented if a majority of the teams saw a potential benefit from it.

Innovation and American-ness

As football grew in popularity, more schools began to develop and field teams; though their participation was welcome, only the original four universities were permitted to participate in the annual rule-making sessions. Football was initially developed to best fit the style of the cadre of representatives for the IFA. As most of the representatives focused on a brute force style of play (slamming the ball forward against a wall of defenders), the rules encouraged new teams to emulate the teams most successful as heavy squads. In some cases, circumstances prevented that possibility and innovation was necessary for success.

Henry Pratt, a former captain in the United States army founded the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in 1879. The first school of its kind, Carlisle was a boarding school for Native Americans designed to acclimate American Indians to the shifting culture of the nation. After football was introduced to the school, the students organized themselves and even scrimmaged with other local schools. After an injury, however, Pratt saw the violence of football as counter-productive to the goal of the school. Pratt's concern was motivated by an understanding of the prevalent racism towards Native Americans. Football was still developing the rules and from the outside much of the play probably looked like a brawl. People watching the men from Carlisle play might only see mindless violence and attribute it as evidence that the men could not function in American society. It is ironic that the sport that affluent white men used to prove their masculinity was deemed too violent for the Native Americans attempting to assimilate themselves into American culture. Pratt relented when a significant group of students presented their arguments to him, highlighting the positive aspects of the sport. Pratt's

conditions for the reinstatement of football at Carlisle were: first, there would be no slugging, he was concerned onlookers would use that sort of violence on the field as evidence of his school's failure to civilize the men. Secondly, they were to beat the best teams in the nation.⁸⁰ Pratt's conditions would allow the men of Carlisle to publically perform their American-ness in the same way as their more affluent and white countrymen, proving themselves to be "real" Americans.

When the Carlisle Indians met Yale on August 24, 1896, Yale was widely considered to be the best team in the country. Despite being heavily favored, Yale gave up their first score in seven games when a Carlisle player recovers a fumble and returns the ball all the way down the field for a touchdown. After the play, Yale settled into their style of play and physically dominated the smaller Carlisle players to score twice and take the lead. Close to the end of the game a Carlisle running back lateralled the ball to his teammate as he fell. The player ran around the scrum and was seemingly able to break from the defenders to score a game tying touchdown. The spectacular play was called back by the referee (a Yale man) who claimed that the play was over due to his whistle. The nearly four thousand onlookers cried foul and when the game ended they cheered the losing players from Carlisle as they left the field.⁸¹ The "moral victory" of the Carlisle squad is significant because of the cultural implications of a non-white team's success on the pitch. The opposing fans' cheers verified Pratt's hopes for having his students be accepted as Americans. The players of Carlisle were accepted as Americans because of their performance on the field.

Though they lost, the opposing fans' approval signaled the efficacy of football as an identification as Americans. Pratt recognized this and hired Pop Warner as a

professional coach, doubling down on football as a performance of American-ness. In addition to national identity, much of the style of play for the Carlisle players exemplified aspects of masculinity connected to football's paradigm. By facing the physical punishment to achieve their goals they perform the physical strength and toughness associated with masculinity. In addition to their physical endurance, the men of Carlisle had to employ unconventional tactics to win. Pratt's second caveat for the men to participate in football was that they must win. In football like in war, winning is more important than fair play. Carlisle's loose interpretation of the rules contributed to the development of the rules while performing the ruthless nature of football.

Carlisle's football team was undersized in comparison to the highly-recruited players of Harvard and Yale; they needed to adopt a different style of play in order to be successful. In doing so, they further revolutionized football's rules and reinforced the culture of adaptation and ingenuity associated with successful football performance.⁸²

The nature of Carlisle's loss likely encouraged the innovations they would employ in the following years. The obvious size disadvantage of Carlisle was bad enough without having a Yale man as the referee. If Carlisle wanted to win they would likely have to find a different way to compete. Glenn Scobey "Pop" Warner, from Cornell, was hired to coach the Carlisle players and Pratt doubled down on the importance of the sport to his students' assimilation. Warner recognized the necessity to play a different style of football with the smaller players and began devising unconventional or "trick" plays that allowed the Carlisle players to bypass the superior strength of more elite squads with chicanery as opposed to brute force. As Warner would devise plays such as the hidden ball trick his argument for the validity of each tactic was usually "the rules don't say I

can't."⁸³ In response to this the IFA committee members would change the rules during their meeting every off season to try to prevent whatever Warner had devised the previous year.

Despite the tricks Carlisle employed while playing, no amount of misdirection could allow them to avoid the contact implicit in the game. The players still had to face opponents that were bigger, faster, and stronger than them. The Carlisle men proved their masculinity by facing a physical beating and not backing down. In addition to the improvisation and strategy a man of football must be willing to sacrifice physical pain in order achieve a goal. Carlisle's team performed their masculinity by meeting their opposition head on despite uneven odds.

Necessary Roughness

Because Carlisle refused to play the game in the way that the rest of the IFA, the original teams continued to change the rules to encourage the physical style of play they were accustomed to. As the rules continued to change the game became more dangerous. In 1904 twenty-one players died playing football. After so many deaths and one hundred and fifty injuries, president Theodore Roosevelt was compelled to intervene. Roosevelt had been a proponent of football since he played for Harvard. He believed that football was essential to building moral character while also preventing men from becoming effeminate in the increasingly mechanized society he found himself in. "Of all games, I personally like foot ball the best, and I would rather see my boys play it than see them play any other. I have no patience with people who declaim against it because it necessitates rough play and occasional injuries."⁸⁴ Still, despite his support of football,

Roosevelt felt he needed to intervene as the large number of public deaths so directly related to football could lead to a call to abolish the sport all together.

In addition to needing to make football safer in order for it to survive, Roosevelt had a personal reason as well. His son was playing for Harvard's freshmen team. A father's care for his son is a strong motivator. Being such a supporter of the sport, Roosevelt likely wanted his son to be able to benefit from the same hard knocks education that he felt shaped him. As a leader of the nation, the extension of that thought process suggests that he wants all men in the United States to benefit from the virtues engendered through football. Roosevelt's position as the nation's leader gave football a significant position in the shaping of American masculinity.

Roosevelt invited representatives from the IFA and had them redraft the rules in order to make the game less deadly but no less rough. In fact in selecting the people who would change the rules, Roosevelt suggested he wanted "reformers who ate roast beef and who were able to make their blows felt in the world."⁸⁵ Roosevelt's desire was to make the game safer while keeping the rough playing style that he found so important to his development as a man. Unfortunately, the rule changes implemented in 1904 did not do much to stem the tide of injuries and violence. 1905 saw more deaths than the previous year, and the implemented changes had to be further augmented. The problem with football was not just the lax rules surrounding violence on the field but the general mindset of violence on the field. In a game about physical domination, players were always looking for ways to hurt the other team in order to beat them. The term "put out of business" came to mean, in football nomenclature, to injure a player so severely they cannot return to the game. One of the dangers of a game in which players are encouraged

to do anything they can to win is that cheating is indirectly encouraged. While ingenuity has always been encouraged in football, a play style that requires the injury of another player to be successful puts all players at risk.

This issue continues to plague the game. Roosevelt's desire to reform football in order to make it safer was genuine. Nonetheless, he continued to extol the violent spirit of the game: "I personally like football best, and I would rather see my boys play it than see them play any other. I have no patience with the people who declaim against it because it necessitates rough play and occasional injuries."⁸⁶ The sentiment Roosevelt articulates is at the heart of the football paradigm of masculinity. In this view, rough play and injuries are not just acceptable risks for participation but are integral to what makes football desirable. The violence necessary for success in football seems likely to spill outside of the game; are people who embrace violence as is an essential element of their identity as successful football players be able to separate that aspect of their identity completely from their everyday life?

An Ideal Football Player

The regular injuries, associated with football, are likely due to the violence involved in the game. Roosevelt's desire to make the game safer (not kill people) was fraught with difficulties because success in football requires violence. Roosevelt was trying to limit injuries without changing the natural progression of the game. Players line up on either side of the line of scrimmage and then while one side tries to take territory, the other side tries to prevent them. Any additional rules beyond the desire to take or defend territory have been developed to encourage, safety, entertainment, or fair play. It is a war game and in it players take on the roles of members of an army facing an enemy.

A successful player will have many of the same qualities as a soldier. A football player might be presented in popular culture to embody the qualities associated with a soldier because the excitement of the game is derived from a recollection of notions of war.

The behavioral qualities most closely associated with masculinity in the United States are physical and emotional toughness, self-sufficiency, and anti-femininity. Football provides an outlet through which a person can showcase these qualities and reinforce their gendered identity in popular culture. Matt Stafford's performance during his game against the Cleveland Browns showcases these qualities. Stafford's record breaking performance belies physical and emotional toughness. He could athletically avoid tackles and accurately throw the ball for incredible distances. In addition to his strength and speed, Stafford uses chicanery to facilitate his team's success. There is a moment in which Stafford tricks the defense into jumping offside to get extra yards, he also taps players on their helmets in the huddle while specifically saying that he is trying to draw attention to them so that the defense will not look for the actual play. Stafford shows his physical toughness in the face of pain and violence throughout the game as he is hit and thrown to the ground repeatedly, always getting up and continuing to play as if he felt nothing. It is only when C.J Mosely, levels him and he is truly injured that he shows any kind of acknowledgement to his difficulty. Stafford, at great danger to his own well-being, fights his way past his doctors and back on to the field to support his team. Doing all of this on a football field where women are specifically excluded contributes to Stafford's un-femininity. He cannot be feminine because he is playing football professionally.

Stafford's individual performance exemplifies the qualities associated with football's paradigm of masculinity but he would not be considered the greatest player of all time. It is difficult to identify a single greatest football player because of the team mentality of the game. When Babe Ruth hit a homerun it was his ability and control that allowed him to do it. In a baseball at bat, a single player faces the other team in its entirety. When Matt Stafford threw his touchdown passes, each one was thrown to a different player on the team. In order for the pass to be successful for a touchdown, his offensive line had to prevent players from tackling him before he could throw the ball, and his receivers had to avoid defenders and be standing in the right place, and catch and run with the ball. Just like a soldier who must do his duty for the sake of his regimen, a football player loses himself in the anonymity of his team and performs his one job so that the team can be successful.

Modern football's most iconic figure, would likely be Walter Camp. Camp's contribution to football lies more in the development of the rules and philosophy of the game than in his play on the field. While Camp's time as a Yale football player was highly decorated, his success came as a pioneer of the sport itself. His service on the committee that created and augmented the rules of the game was punctuated by a significant influence. Walter Camp's ideas about what football should be largely influenced the game's existence in the shared imagination of American popular culture. In 1886 Camp wrote an article detailing the divergence between American football and rugby. "The game and laws of American football" dealt directly the necessity of the development of an American version of Rugby which became football as we know it today. His involvement with the IFA through the initial development of the game

extended beyond development of rules and into the shaping of public policy and the selection of the first All-American teams. Camp's book *American Football*, detailed the rules and strategies involved in the game of football and also solidified his place as the foremost expert on the game.

Camp spent forty-seven years in the service of football. He was a rule maker and an editor for football. His devotion came from the value he attributed to the game. Camp believed that football hardened men into greatness, and he saw the sport's value to American masculinity. Julie Des Jardins's book *Walter Camp Football and the Modern Man*, chronicles Camp's relationship to the game of football. She highlights the connection that Camp saw between football and the way it counteracted the "forces of feminization" in America.⁸⁷ Camp's evangelical ideas about what football should be largely contributed to its image in American popular culture. Camp spoke to and about American boys often. He would distill his ideas into memorable quips that communicated his ideas about the boys. "Education and discipline may make a good boy, but you will have to add pluck and initiative if you would make him a success." "Better make a boy an outdoor savage than an indoor weakling."⁸⁸ For Camp ideal masculinity is connected to the ways a man exists outside of the scope of societal expectations.

Camp's contribution to the development of football's rules was influenced by his views on masculinity. His prominence meant that much of his ideas about masculinity became the foundation for football's performativity. His expectations for a successful football player are still evident in contemporary football. Football players are still expected to be aggressive, willing to step outside of expectations in order to win, and

stoic in the face of pain or adversity. In some cases, the expected performativity extends beyond the game.

Violent Performance

Erving Goffman famously suggests that we can read every encounter between people as a small play or a scene being played out.⁸⁹ An athlete's performance of self is the performance of a character created by the athlete for an audience that in some cases consists of the entire nation. However, each person's self is not homogeneous; we act differently in different situations based on what is culturally appropriate. By utilizing Goffman's theories on social interactions in an examination of a professional football player's relationship with the public, I will illustrate the ways that an athlete's performance is similar to an actor's.

In his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman discusses the part a person plays in their daily interactions with observers. A person seeks to convince his observer of certain details about his life.⁹⁰ In the case of football, the player seeks to convince many observers that he is good at the sport. This is not dissimilar from any professional seeking to sell wares or services to a customer. In order to do this, aspects of an individual's front may be dramatized in order to suggest worth. In the case of a professional football player, dramatization of what the individual does is also entertaining to the public. Exemplary skill in a sport with so much potential for dramatic self-expression leads to fame and becomes the focus of national fantasies.

Super Bowl champion running back Ray Rice was dismissed from his team in 2015 when footage was released that depicted him viciously attacking his then-fiancé Janay Palmer in a casino elevator during the off season. The footage was released after

the NFL's disciplinary committee had handed Rice a two-week suspension for his involvement in the incident. His full dismissal from the team only took place after the footage of the incident was released to the public.⁹¹ The NFL's evident attempts to cover up the horrific violence that one of their most beloved players committed called into question the values of the league for many spectators.

At its core, Rice's legal and professional situation touches on differing definitions of the term *performance*. Performance can refer to the objective success on the field measured by positive yardage, touchdowns, and overall reliability (fumbles, knowledge of the playbook, and success under pressure). In that sense, Rice was an excellent member of the Ravens organization and an example of success for other players in the NFL. It can also refer to performance as a public figure in an entertainment setting. Rice's prominence as a personality in the NFL contributed to the difficulty of the situation the organization was placed in when the initial investigation of his assault case began. Rice, just like any football player in the NFL, is expected to perform both on the field and off, and the performances can be at odds with each other.

Without excusing his actions, it is possible to see a correlation between Rice's on field practices and his violent behavior off the field. He is a professional athlete, playing a sport that essentially requires violent aggression on a daily basis in order to be successful. Playing the position of running back requires Rice to run, head first, into men who are actively trying to hurt him. The nature of the sport suggests that a predisposition toward aggression and violence would give any player a psychological advantage in the game. Ray Rice, playing at the highest level of the sport, would be hard pressed to succeed if he did not adopt such an aggressive attitude on the field. The difficulty arises

when we remember that the whole purpose of the sport is to entertain. The reason the NFL exists at all is because people watch its games. The reason it is so popular in the United States and also globally is due to the positive cultural image projected by the league itself and by extension the players' public perceptions. So now we have players who spend up to six days a week in an environment where their financial success and physical well-being depends on aggression and violence who are required to immediately turn off their aggression and become beacons of goodwill and family values upon leaving. It likely takes time to mentally and emotionally shift away from such a hyper-kinetic environment.

During the investigation into his assault the Roger Goodell, the league commissioner, highlighted Rice's history of outstanding behavior and his leadership among other players in the Baltimore Ravens organization.⁹² This statement became more dubious as the footage as well as Rice's fiancé's behavior during press conferences indicated that the filmed domestic violence was not the first such incident. Media coverage began to call Goodell, and by extension the NFL's values, into question. The overwhelming popularity of the NFL in U. S. culture was likely the reason for Goodell's desire downplay the incident in the media. When it came out that not only was Rice's assault much worse than initially reported, but the NFL disciplinary committee was aware of the full extent of his violence, it became clear that the NFL was more interested in their national brand than the protection of individuals. While this is not the first time that an NFL player has been caught or accused of a violent crime, the blatant attempt to downplay the incident asks the question: "How many incidents like this one have been successfully covered up and subsequently ignored by the public?"

A stage or film actor might train for years to learn to portray a character convincingly in a production while holding onto his or her own personality (sometimes unsuccessfully). The separation between real life and the performative space is a luxury that athletes do not enjoy. Where an actor can say to himself or others “that was not me, that was a character I was portraying,” an athlete has no such recourse. Ray Rice is always Ray Rice whether he is on the field smashing into an opponent or out on a date with his fiancé.

A professional actor will also typically only represent him or herself in the public eye. In Ray Rice’s case and in the case of other athletes, their actions and the handling of are determined by the organization that their actions most directly affected. A production can say: “This actor is not a representation of what we want our message to be, but he is portraying this character that does.” The actor’s actions in a play as a part of his or her character are understood not to be parallel to the choices of the actor his or herself. An organization like the NFL cannot say, “Oh, Ray Rice has done this terrible thing, but when he puts the uniform on he’s a Raven and no longer Ray Rice.” What an athlete does on the field is directly connected to him. Ray Rice’s aggressive personality is what made him a great running back, but it is the same aggression that could have led to violence off of the field.

A recent study into the neurological aspects of motor control in elite athletes offers more insight into what may be going on for athletes having to separate their on-field performances from their regular life. In *Efficient Foot Motor Control by Neymar*, Eiichi Naito and Satoshi Hirose measured the synaptic activity in Brazilian soccer player Neymar da Silva Santos Júnior’s (Neymar) brain while he ran through basic soccer drills

involving foot motor control. The findings of the study revealed that Neymar used significantly less of his motor cortex to move his foot as non-professional athletes. Naito and Hirose suggest that Neymar's training over-the-years has contributed to his exceptionally efficient use of the motor cortex use when moving.⁹³ The implication is that Neymar is able to perform at the highest level because he reacts more automatically to the trained movements rather than thinking about them. In a sport like soccer or football, a player's ability to react immediately and correctly in a split second is often the difference between success and failure. Neymar scores goals because he doesn't think about his movement on the field. Similarly, Ray Rice was a successful running back because he trained himself to react aggressively, without thought, whenever he saw a gap or an angle around the defenders.

The implication of the study is that Ray Rice may have punched his fiancé, at least in part, as an automatic reaction to his years of practice in reflexive violence. Neymar thinks less when he is moving his foot because repeated practice has made those movements reflexive. Ray Rice would never be expected to punch anyone on the field and would be punished both legally and in the game if such an event occurred. However, if constant practice of a particular motor skill leads to neurological efficiency in motor control, could the same practice in aggression or violence lend itself to a similar efficiency in a heated situation, such as a verbal altercation? In a stage play, every actor needs a backstage. A private space provides actors with an opportunity to prepare themselves for their performance. It also serves as a reminder to them that their character does not reflect their true self. Many actors have fallen into trouble because they were not able to separate a performance from their selves. An actor who is forced to remain "in

character” will likely have difficulty separating him or herself from the character they are performing.

The NFL’s desire to curate their image in the United States extends beyond attempting to control the narrative of off-field player news. Shortly the merger between the NFL and the AFL, Charles Sabol was commissioned by the newly formed NFL to create NFL Films, a production company dedicated to documenting the NFL. While the company was tasked with archiving the early days of the NFL, Sabol’s aesthetic significantly contributed to the decision to hire him.

Using grand scores and booming narration, the documentary series established a mythology of the NFL and sought to create their own narrative for football games and seasons. Showcasing the players as stoic warriors, and champions, capable of super human feats presented football as a heroic undertaking that serves as a vehicle through which men can prove their masculine qualities.

Like Grantland Rice’s flowery reporting, Charles Sabol’s filmmaking sought to capture the experience of football rather than simply reporting statistics. Rice’s descriptions of moments in iconic players’ careers, like Babe Ruth helped to establish his image in popular culture. Ruth would not have been a hero without Rice to record his exploits. Similarly, the image of the NFL as a gridiron, and the iconography of warrior players striving and struggling to success would not exist without the popular images memorialized in Sabol’s work.

Taking an active approach for the presentation of the game to influence audience experience speaks to the business savvy of the NFL. To spread the popularity of the sport, the NFL needed to express why football is valuable to American culture. They did

so by establishing themselves as an expression of American identity. While Charles Spalding wrote about the parallels between baseball and the American dream, the NFL presented the football player as a heroic warrior. Showcasing successful football players embodying qualities associated with masculinity in the United States contributes to the social value of the sport in American popular culture.

NFL Films presented an idealized version of football that was shaped by the League itself. From an early point in time they were responsible for their public image in a much more hands on way than other sports. Many of the lasting images from NFL films are recalled in other representations of football on stage and film. Presenting football players as stoic warriors on film certainly helps to illustrate a common parallel between the sport and a literal battle between two armies (an intended connection that has been discussed earlier) presents difficulty when the warriors of football begin to fight off of the field.

Ends and means in football

Ray Rice's situation is unfortunately not unique, except that there is published evidence of his transgression. Before the public was able to see exactly what happened in the elevator, Rice was only facing a two-week suspension and simple battery charges. While the charges and suspension were published the extent to what happened was not readily available for the public and so with only conjecture as to what happened, many people who were fans of Rice's were willing to give him the benefit of the doubt and assume it was a terrible accident rather than a horrific act of violence. Faced with empirical evidence the NFL had no choice but to act accordingly and suspend Rice indefinitely. By the time the second video surfaced, Rice had played his last down of

professional football. After receiving evidence that Rice has attended counseling and has taken legitimate steps to prevent such an event from occurring again, the NFL has since reinstated Rice, and he is an eligible free agent; he has not, and likely will not be signed by another team.

The reason that Rice's career ended likely has less to do with his violence and more to do with his production as a running back. It is instructive to contrast Rice's case to Adrian Peterson's, who was accused of domestic abuse. Adrian Peterson is likely one of the best running backs of all time. He is one of a very few to have rushed for more than 2000 yards in a season and has enjoyed a surprisingly steady performance at a position that usually involves a steep drop off in productions. On September 12, 2014 Peterson was indicted for "reckless or negligent injury to a child" due to signs of abuse found on his 4-year-old son. After pleading "no contest" to the charges Peterson was reinstated for the 2015 season and started as a Minnesota Viking. Both players were excellent running backs for their respective franchises and there is very public evidence of both players' violence towards women and children and both players admitted to wrong-doing and took steps to correct their behavior. A significant difference between the two is their 2013 production. In 2012, the year that Rice and the rest of the Ravens won the Super Bowl, he rushed for 1143 yards and scored 10 total touchdowns. Rice's contributions to his team that year were quite evident. In 2013, Rice rushed for 660 yards and scored only 4 touchdowns.⁹⁴ After losing nearly half of the production from his previous year, Rice's contribution was expected to continue to decline. Peterson rushed for 2097 yards in 2012 and scored 12 touchdowns. In 2013, rather than declining like Rice, Peterson rushed for 1266 yards and scored 10 touchdowns.⁹⁵ Peterson played in

2015 after being reinstated, while Rice, though he was an accomplished veteran of the game and fully eligible, did not. It would seem based on what happened with the two players, that success as an NFL player is based more on the results than the way one achieves them.

In baseball's paradigm of masculinity, a player is judged not only by his production on the baseball field but by his public persona. For example despite his hall of fame caliber play, "Shoeless" Joe Jackson's career will forever be marred by his (possibly unwilling) participation in the Black Sox scandal.⁹⁶ In baseball, you cannot be celebrated as a good player without being perceived as a good person. Conversely, in a *USA Today* article about Peterson's trial, Houston resident Bill Fleishman was interviewed after his own court appearance just before Petersons. "Hopefully we will all see him back on the football field, because the guy can play."⁹⁷ Fleishman's statement mirrors what we saw take place in 2014 and establishes a key difference between the concepts of successful performance of baseball and football.

Football Players and Cowboys

In the previous chapter on baseball I examined Jimmy Stewart as a popular embodiment of the baseball paradigm of masculinity. Similarly, John Wayne's on screen persona powerfully represents the football paradigm of masculinity. Born Marion Morrison, in 1907, Wayne enjoyed a very lucrative career as an actor, finding most of his success in westerns.

The western is significant to the concept of American masculinity in many of the same ways as football. Both romanticize the frontier as a metaphor for US culture and identity. The connection of the western to the frontier is explicit: one of the defining

aspects of the genre is that its stories are set in locales at the western edge of U.S. expansion. The relationship between football and the frontier is subtler but no less compelling, as Sal Paolantonio suggests in his book *How Football Explains America*. Paolantonio draws a direct correlation between the rules of football and the concept of manifest destiny. He argues that rule changes to the game in the late 1800s gave football the identity that we closely associate with it today. He specifically points to the scrimmage and down limit. The scrimmage rule requires both offense and defense to return to their side of the possession line for the beginning of every play. The significance of this rule change means that each play in football resembles a territory dispute. The four down limit forces a side to advance or surrender. As with the concept of manifest destiny, a team must advance or face failure. For Paolantonio, each touchdown is a symbolic completion of the United States' westward expansion.⁹⁸

Arthur Redding draws an intriguing comparison between John Ford's *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* and Frederick Jackson Turner's seminal essay "The Significance of the American Frontier to American History," which argues that much of American identity comes from the collective memory of a now-non-existent frontier. As Redding points out, Ford's film deals directly with the United States' relationship to the concept of the West. *Liberty Valance* is not an isolated performance for John Wayne. In the same way that Jimmy Stewart exemplifies the baseball paradigm of masculinity, Wayne's onscreen persona offers an example of an ideal performance of football's paradigm of masculinity. Like Stewart, John Wayne's persona was not entirely his creation.⁹⁹ John Wayne became the recognizable personality the public is accustomed to through his onscreen performances. Many of his most famous performances were

developed in collaboration with director John Ford. The characters Wayne depicts in Ford's films exhibit many of the qualities associated with the football paradigm of masculine performativity. By examining two examples of Ford's view of the cowboy as performed by Wayne, I will illustrate how the characters the two men created exemplify the American masculinity. *Stagecoach* and *The Searchers* will serve as the best examples of Wayne's portrayal of the frontier cowboy.

John Wayne's first film with John Ford was *Stagecoach*. The film depicts nine people on a dangerous crossing across the frontier. Though they were previously friends, this film was the first professional collaboration between John Wayne and John Ford. It was also Wayne's first major success as an actor. The film follows several different people riding a stagecoach across the prairie while avoiding the pursuit of Geronimo and his warriors. Wayne plays the Ringo Kid, a fugitive who broke out of prison to avenge his father and brothers' murder.

Thematically, the film deals with the indistinct line between the frontier and "civilized" society. Each of the characters riding in the stagecoach have different reasons for traveling but the way they interact suggests that each character falls either into civilized or frontier society. While the nature of the division between the characters is not my focus here, that theme in *Stagecoach* does set up the environment through which I will draw a parallel between the Ringo kid's persona and that of a football player. The three aspects — inhuman athletic ability, results based attitude, and stoicism — are all evident in the Wayne's portrayal of the Ringo Kid. The Kid's relationship with the other characters in the play highlights his inability to thrive within society. The film paints his

outsider status as a good thing, implying that the Kid's persona should be accepted in popular culture.

The audience's introduction to the Ringo Kid establishes him as an outsider. The stagecoach, still being escorted by the cavalry, crosses a river when we hear the sound of a gunshot, and a quick cut reveals Wayne with a saddle over one arm and cocking a rifle in the other, smiling. Ostensibly the Kid's smile reflects his relief from being rescued after his horse has gone lame. The audience will also associate the Kid's happiness as a contrast from everyone else in the coach. Wayne's calm demeanor as he sits on the floor of the coach immediately changes the atmosphere among the other passengers. Some of the people are annoyed by his presence but others are encouraged by it. The coach is better equipped to handle any issues it might experience now that he is with them. He thrives in the frontier, and his self sufficiency in the face of harsh conditions is what proves his masculinity for the audience. The film's implicit approval of Ringo Kid's existence outside of the strictures of civilized society establishes his actions in the film as honorable. His masculine qualities parallel those of football.

The Ringo Kid showcases his athletic prowess when Geronimo and his followers attack the coach. During the attack, the stagecoach races to the cavalry outpost, its final destination. The Kid puts himself in harm's way by climbing on top of the coach and shooting at the warriors. Significantly the Kid is the only person on the coach, including his arresting sheriff, who engages the natives with no cover. Not only does he put himself in danger by exposing himself to the natives' attacks, he does not have anything secure to hold on to while fighting. Despite the danger, and his unstable position, the Kid is able to

find his mark more often than not. We see his athletic ability and concentration within a hectic situation during this climactic portion of the film.

Despite his best efforts, and those of the other men in the coach, the natives are able to catch up to the coach. They shoot the driver, who drops the reins for the horse train. The Kid again shows his impressive athletic prowess by jumping from horse to horse in order to get the reins under control and steer the wagon to the safety of the oncoming cavalry. Throughout the entire sequence of the attack the kid, technically under arrest at the time, defends the coach from attack, helps the driver after he was shot and climbs onto the horses to steer everyone from danger. While other members of the party do fight back, by shooting, the kid is the only one who moves, and the only one who does more than one thing in order to save the party. His impressive athletic feats are highlighted as idyllic masculine behavior, as the other men in the coach hold their own but are outperformed by the Kid.

The kid's entire purpose for being on the coach represents his results-based attitude toward life. He is willing to do whatever it takes to come out successful. We see this directly in two ways. First, Ringo breaks out of prison in order to avenge his father and brother's murder. The audience does not see how he accomplishes this, however, it is clear that in order to accomplish his task he would have needed to disobey understood guidelines of prison and possibly hurt someone.

The kid also performs some chicanery when he faces the Plummer brothers. The scene is staged to make the audience anticipate a climactic face off. The brothers approach from one end of the street while the kid walks from the other side. The audience wonders what the kid might say to his opponents. Is he going to appeal to them, let Luke

Plummer apologize for his actions? Instead before the brothers get into range with their pistols, Ringo drops to a prone position with his rifle and begins firing. Facing three-to-one odds he remarkably walks away from the conflict unscathed, likely because we worked outside of the expected rules. Similar to the ingenuity of the football players at Carlisle university, the kid operates outside of the expected sequence of events in order to overcome a disadvantage. It is not cheating but it is outside of what would be considered standard play.

In the world of the film, operating outside of acceptable societal standards to the point of committing violence is justified because for the kid it is a matter of honor. Ringo must break out of prison, and must confront his father and brother's killers and having completed that, his actions are seemingly forgiven. The Marshal's treatment of Ringo after he returns from the gunfight might be considered too lenient. When the kid surrenders to Marshal Wilcox, rather than arresting him, he sends him off to get married. The reasoning for this seems to be that Ringo is a good kid who was put in a difficult situation. Like a football player who avoids being arrested because he helped to win a national championship, the Kid's actions on the stagecoach, helping to fight off Geronimo, have absolved him of his wrong doing, including attempting to escape just before the final leg of their trip. The parallel between current football culture and the romanticized view of the frontier is evidence of a widely accepted view of American masculinity, which this work attempts to, like flashlight in the thick of night, reveals ethos that make for "American man" or the persona of an U.S. male.

If we accept Paolantonio's comparison, we can see football and the Western genre as a response to anxiety about the effects of a lost frontier on American masculinity.

Wayne's persona as a frontier man is introduced in *Stagecoach*, his first major success. In total the two men made twelve films together, but the persona created in their first collaboration shaped Wayne's entire career. In his analysis of Wayne and frontier culture, Arthur Redding suggests that Wayne never plays anyone other than John Wayne in any of his films.¹⁰⁰ Redding's analysis of Wayne includes suggesting his persona is that of a man who lives between the savagery and civilization. Wayne's later films explore his persona as an outsider from society and the consequences of that separation.

Twenty years after *Stagecoach*, Wayne and Ford collaborated on *The Searchers* (1956) to present an older version of the same frontier persona. Once again, Wayne's performance manifests the football paradigm of masculinity, highlighting the character's stoicism, uncanny ability as a fighter, and willingness to live outside of accepted social rules to accomplish his goal. However, in this later incarnation, Wayne's character is complicated by his inability exist within civilized society. Wayne plays Ethan Edwards, a man who returns to the home of his brother in west Texas after being away for eight years. Beyond mentioning that he fought in the Civil war and the Mexican American war, Ethan does not speak much about his time away. After an attack on his brother's ranch leaves much of his family dead and the two daughters kidnapped, Ethan must use his abilities and his understanding as a frontiersman to get his daughters back.¹⁰¹ Over the course of the film Ethan employs tactics that range from distasteful to nearly unforgivable to get to his nieces. Here we can draw a parallel between the frontier and the football field. Ethan's ability and willingness to do what is necessary for success in the frontier matches a professional football player on the field.

When his nieces are kidnapped by the Comanche, Ethan is the community's only hope to get them back. However, the same mindset that keeps him alive almost leads to him killing Debbie rather than let her live as member of the tribe. When it is time to offer mercy, Ethan is incapable and Martin's intervention is the only thing that saves Debbie from her supposed rescuer. Ethan however is unable to make the transition back into society.

The opening and closing shots of the film highlight Ethan's isolation. The film opens from a black screen as Martha (played by Dorothy Jordan) opens a door revealing the sprawling landscape of the frontier. As she walks out onto the porch the camera follows and the full color of the west Texas desert fills the screen. The doorway frames Martha as she looks out into the horizon. The opening sequence of the film serves to transport the audience in to the mythical representation of the frontier.¹⁰² The stark contrast between the dark doorway frame and the brilliant colors of the sky and plateaus establish the frontier as preferable to the dark indoors of civilization.

As in *Stagecoach*, John Wayne's character exists exclusively in the frontier in *The Searchers*. The audience only sees Ethan approach the homestead after it has been completely enveloped within Ford's vision of the frontier. The main conflict of the film stems from incompatibility between civilized people and the frontier. Ethan is able to help his family, civilized people, to recover their child in the frontier because he is of the frontier. Like the Ringo Kid, Ethan is able to help in the frontier but is ostracized by civilization.

The closing shot of *The Searchers* once again illustrates Ethan's isolation from the rest of civilized society. He returns to the Edward's homestead, framed by the same

doorway featured in the beginning of the film. Carrying a rescued Debbie in his arms, Ethan sets her down on the porch of the house, physically transporting her back to civilization. She is embraced by her family and they enter the house. Ethan, framed by the doorway, hesitates and then moves aside as Martin and Laurie enter arm in arm. The film ends as Ethan turns away from the home. The doorway that symbolized a gateway to the freedom of the frontier at the beginning now represents a constricting boundary for Ethan. The camera tracks back into the house, symbolically returning the audience to civilization. Ethan, however, like the Ringo the kid, returns to the freedom of frontier.

The overlap between Wayne's portrayal Ethan Edwards in *The Searchers* and the Ringo Kid from *Stagecoach* exemplify a standard for masculinity that parallels football's paradigm of masculinity. The men's isolation from the rest of society contributes to a romantic view of the frontier as a place where "men could be men" and prove themselves. At the end of *Stagecoach* the Kid must head to his prairie home to avoid because he is a fugitive; he is legally unable to remain in civilized society. Ethan, an older, more experienced iteration of Ringo's persona, does not even attempt to enter society after his job is finished. His hesitance at the door suggests a longing to return to civilization, but Ethan turns away from what is left of his family and civilized society as a whole. Ethan and Ringo's isolation is typical of Wayne's characters. Rooster Cogburn in *True Grit* (1969), Jake McCandles in *Big Jake* (1971), and his final role of J.B. Books in *The Shootist* (1976) all exhibit aspects that coincide with football's paradigm of masculinity.¹⁰³ They all are unable to live in civilized society as a result of spending too much time in the frontier.

All of these characters possess the skills and abilities to prove their masculinity in the frontier. However, each of the characters also has difficulty functioning in civilized society. The audience marvels at these characters' abilities in the old west, but the characters remain outside of civilization. In *The Searchers*, Ethan Edwards's abilities and instincts allow him to successfully track his niece across a treacherous landscape. His instincts ultimately prevent him from being able to return to society however, and without Martin's intervention he would have killed her upon seeing her in Apache dress. The same survival instincts that allowed Ethan to flourish in the frontier prevent him from functioning outside of it. Similarly, the mentality that allow Ray Rice to be successful on the football field lead to his public and violent outburst. The frontier and the football field are proving grounds for masculinity in the collective imagination of American culture. Anxiety about the feminization of men necessitated the creation of an environment that women were unable to inhabit, where men could prove themselves without distraction. Many of the characters that John Wayne portrayed, most notably the frontier heroes were either fully isolated from or failed to successfully interact with women.

Carl Freedman has analyzed the way the characters John Wayne portrayed are often separated from women. He coins the term "post-heterosexuality" when describing several of Wayne's iconic performances, suggesting that Wayne's persona is so masculine that being associated with women would lower his status as a man.¹⁰⁴ Freedman's analysis reinforces the suggestion that the frontier mythology was created to separate men from women, western social construction of a man's identity formation, with masculinity being avoidance between men and women.

Examining the aspects of football's paradigm of masculinity reveals several qualities a man might possess or aspire to in order to successfully perform his gender. A consequence of functioning outside the strictures of civilized society is the separation from femininity. While professional baseball does not allow women to play, there was a precedent set during the second world war during which women played baseball so that it would not be necessary to suspend the game all together. Fast pitch softball is also considered to be a feminine version of baseball where women can enjoy the American values associated with baseball in a "safer" environment.¹⁰⁵ Other sports that involve contact, such as basketball, hockey, or even rugby (the sport from which American football was derived), have leagues designated specifically for women. Football, however, exists only for men. There is no professional women's football league.¹⁰⁶ Football's insulation from the feminine reinforces American masculinity's definition as that which is not effeminate.

Why might the films in question glorify the heroics of someone who is ultimately incompatible to the world in which we live? Ethan Edwards thrives in the frontier but at the expense of many people he encounters. The isolation that the men experience ostensibly suggests that their inability to function in society is a shortcoming. Perhaps they have spent too much time away, or perhaps this is a sacrifice some heroes must pay in order to make the frontier safer for society as the cities grow and multiply. Western heroic narrations or actions are binaries, allowing for strict demarcation between men and women, with border crossers being seen with horrific disdain, and where patriarchy reigns supreme.

The difficulty with this reading is the positive way in which the frontier itself is portrayed. In *The Searchers* John Ford's use of color and darkness makes the open freedom of the frontier seem preferable to the claustrophobic darkness of society. Perhaps, in these films the fault is not in the frontier heroes but in society itself. Reading Ford's films as a patriarchal critique of a feminine society that does not allow men to be true to their nature accounts for both Wayne's performances and the positive treatment of the "savage" frontier.

Edward's success at restoring his niece to her home, and protecting Martin so that he can return to society to marry his sweetheart is self-destructive. His efforts support the institution that is slowly destroying his way of life. We might read the western as an example of men being "too masculine." This suggests Ford's and others films function not only a patriarchal critique of society but a sort of underhanded compliment to the men of the frontier. "Why, oh why, were they so manly that they tamed the only place that men could be men?"

After the supposed death of the frontier, the so-called crisis of masculinity led men in the United States to search for outlets to avoid the oncoming "feminization" of young boys in more civilized communities than their previous generations grew up in. The desire to create a haven from feminization is the impetus for the development of organized football at Universities where men were both physically and figuratively removed from the frontier. The same anxiety of gendered identity can be seen in Hollywood's development of a mythology of the west. In both football and the western, the heroes prove themselves through a mentality and actions that would not be acceptable

in normal society. Football has become a space, representative of the frontier, in which a man can perform his masculinity separated from feminized society. So true!!

Wayne's cowboy characters are emblematic of the myriad popular-media portrayals of the football paradigm for masculinity. Clint Eastwood's *Man with No Name* in Sergio Leone's *Dollars* trilogy (*A Fistful of Dollars*, *For a Few Dollars More* and *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*) exhibits all of the qualities found in the persona that Wayne pioneered. Jeff Bridges reprised Rooster Cogburn in the 2010 remake of *True Grit*, and Russell Crowe's portrayal of outlaw, Ben Wade, in the remake: *3:10 to Yuma* (2007); both films offer contemporary examples of the familiar persona. All of these cases illustrate a paradigm of masculinity that parallels the qualities associated with football. The continued relevance of both the western and football in popular culture illustrates the continued significance of the football paradigm of masculinity.

This pattern of masculine representation parallels the fundamental ethos of football culture: To successfully prove his masculinity, a man must be successful in a crucible where his skills are tested. A man must not allow himself to be fully civilized because with that comes feminization. The systematic separation from society allows a man to maintain his masculinity as culturally defined in the United States. Indeed!

Is a conception of masculinity that requires separation from society is sustainable? Basing one's identity on a series of actions and a mentality that are unacceptable in day-to-day life creates a tension between successful performance of one's identity and co-existence in one's community. The creation of an unattainable ideal, like Wayne's heroic characters in a mythical frontier, gives men something to aspire to, but it also drives a wedge between men and women in the community. In the next chapter we will explore

those tensions as they are evidenced through fictional portrayals of football culture in films and plays.

CHAPTER 5

FOOTBALL FICTION

In the previous chapter I illustrated how the growing popularity of football in the United States, and the development of its culture coincides with anxiety about the feminization of society. We see evidence of the sport's influence through similar images of masculine performance elsewhere in American culture. In its representation of the frontier, the Western genre offers a patriarchal critique of a society that without a wilderness, dooms men to feminization. The football field became a representation of that mythical place in which men could perform their masculinity without threat of being ostracized from the rest of their society. Students attending university, a decidedly subdued environment where violence is forbidden, proved their masculinity on the football field where they kicked and punched each other to suggest that they would be as reliable in an untamed wilderness as they would behind the inevitable desk job that awaited a majority of them. Masculinity as represented through football, is embodied through the performance of traits such as impressive feats of athleticism, stoicism in the face of pain or difficulty, and a prioritized view of winning. In football, the ends justify the means and winning is more important than adhering to any sort of unwritten code. These traits are represented in fictions about the sport, both on the college and professional level. By isolating the embodiment of these particular aspects in fictional representations of football, I will identify a clear view of football as it exists in the imagination of United States popular culture.

In this chapter I will examine how representations of football in films, plays and television reinforce the images of masculinity and national identity associated with the sport. Whether they affirm its value as a masculine identity or question how it affects society, the fictions serve to establish a mythology of football. Seemingly conflicting views of football culture will serve to create a complete view of its influence on masculine and national identity in the United States.

Glorifying History

As with baseball, football's cultural identity in the US is influenced by the professional league. The NFL's monopoly on the image of professional football in the United States reinforces the importance of that image to the financial viability of their brand. Establishing NFL Films created an opportunity for the league to have a direct influence on the culture of football in the United States. The mutually beneficial relationship between televised games and journalistic coverage has translated to more interest in the sport and higher ratings for sports broadcasting. Likely due to the more visible national profile, the NFL has capitalized on the television industry to become a household commodity.

The popularity of the NFL contributes directly to cultural acceptance of football as a contemporary vehicle for the performance of masculinity. I have discussed how the images established in their iconic documentaries influenced football as a paradigm of masculinity. Football exists as an escape from civilized (feminized) society, however, its cultural popularity is threatened by its uncivilized nature. In order to continue growing in popularity the NFL needed to make football more acceptable for mainstream, "civilized" society. Because much of the NFL's cultural currency comes from its presence on

television and other forms of media, they are incentivized to curate representations of football to align with mainstream society.

The divide between what socially acceptable behavior and the masculine performance associated with football creates a conflict between outside interpretations of the sport and the branded image the NFL would prefer to project. By comparing two fictional television shows' representation of professional football I will illustrate how the NFL attempts to shape the image of professional football in United States popular culture. Both ESPN's *Playmakers* (2003) and the HBO produced, *Ballers* (2015) showcase performative qualities that align with football's paradigm of masculinity, but the NFL's apparent contribution to the success of one and failure of the other illustrates how they actively construct football's image in the United States. The NFL's influence over fictional representations of football in the United States establishes the league as an arbiter of masculine culture.

2003's *Playmakers* aired for one season on ESPN and was cancelled, despite critical and commercial success. A significant difference between the two programs' circumstances is the NFL's approval of one via licensing and perceived disapproval of the other. I will illustrate how the programs' handling of difficult issues associated with the sport such as domestic violence, chronic injury, and homosexuality contributed to the NFL's decision to endorse one over the other. In 2003, *Playmakers*, a television show depicting the lives of players on a fictional professional football team nicknamed the Cougars, aired on ESPN.¹⁰⁷ This marked the first time that ESPN attempted to create fully scripted dramatic content. The show was conceived as a sports version of procedural dramas such as *Law and Order* in which the stories are pulled from the headlines, but

have been fictionalized.¹⁰⁸ The show enjoyed excellent ratings and won a GLAAD award for its depiction of a closeted gay football player.¹⁰⁹ Despite commercial success, the show was polarizing among critics, some of whom felt that the show was a glorified soap opera that unfairly depicted professional football players in a negative way. Others, including former player Deon Sanders, said that it accurately depicted the darker side of the league.¹¹⁰

The plot of *Playmakers* does not focus on one character; instead, each episode closely examines the life of one or more player. Each character's narrative presents a different issue facing professional football players. Some players struggle with substance abuse, others with issues of domestic violence. One character is a closeted homosexual and another fears that he is losing himself in the violence he is encouraged to commit on the field. After one season the show was cancelled by ESPN. Though there was no official word on the NFL's opinion of the show, the show's creator suggests that the cancellation was because the show portrayed football players outside of NFL's curated image. While the NFL was never mentioned in the show, a connection was implicit, if only because there is no other professional football league in the United States.

The dramatization of domestic violence, drug use, and exploitation of the players by management in *Playmakers* is not a part of the vision of professional football the NFL tries to showcase. We can read ESPN's decision to cancel the show as a protection of the cultural image of football. Whether due to pressures from the NFL, or just because the network lost interest in the project and wanted to focus on sports journalism, the death of *Playmakers* preserves football's image of fictional escape.

HBO's *Ballers*, a program that similarly dramatizes the lives of fictional professional football players, premiered in 2015 and is currently entering its third season of production.¹¹¹ Like *Playmakers*, *Ballers* dramatizes hot-button issues surrounding professional football like chronic injuries, financial instability, and difficulty maintaining relationships. The program enjoys a larger production budget than *Playmakers* and is licensed by the NFL. Having actual NFL teams mentioned in discussions between the characters reinforces the image of the program as realistic. By licensing their brand, the NFL purchased the ability to shape their own cultural image and thus the image of football through fictional representation. The NFL's control over the image of football on such a large scale, by extension gives them influence over the image of masculinity in the United States.

The program's narrative focuses on a recently retired professional player named Spencer Strasmore (played by Dwayne Johnson) who is trying to establish a post football career in his former team's city, Miami. Spencer's difficulty acclimating to his new life and lifestyle serve as the main catalyst for much of the series' drama. Strasmore's lingering injuries from years on the field and his precarious financial situation are hinted at in the first episode. They continue to bother him while he attempts to launch a career as a financial advisor, capitalizing on his friendships with other younger players in the league. Throughout the show, Strasmore presents qualities associated with football's paradigm of masculinity. He is hyper-competitive and projects an image of self-sufficiency throughout the program. However, the most notable quality of masculinity he projects is his physical toughness. Dwayne Johnson played college football at the University of Miami, and then enjoyed a highly successful career as a professional

wrestler before becoming an actor. His physically imposing stature has become as much a part of his characters as his portrayal of different characters' emotions and thoughts. Johnson tends to play against his stature in *Ballers*, often portraying Strasmore as a man is trying to leave the practice of physical intimidation behind with his football career. Strasmore does his best to ignore his chronic injuries, both to his hip and head to hold onto the toughness he had as a player and continue to project his image of self-sufficiency.

Despite the seriousness of the issues that *Ballers* seeks to engage, critics find the tone of the program too light.¹¹² The show's writer and executive producer, Evan Reilly, suggested that while they wanted to be aware of the issues regarding concussions with professional football, they did not want to go "too dark" with it.¹¹³ The fear of putting off a potential audience with more realistic but less palatable subject matter influences the image of the program itself. The program is possibly more entertaining for avoiding uncomfortable topics, however, the NFL's influence on the program brings the validity of the image into question. Does this fiction accurately reflect masculine culture in the United States or does it represent a commodification of gendered performance?

The NFL's mutually beneficial relationship with ESPN created another complication in the airing of *Playmakers*. ESPN's business model is established on reporting the news of popular sports and by promoting their popularity, they add viewership to their programming. It is in the best interest of ESPN to encourage the mainstream popularity of the NFL, as it has a direct influence on the popularity of their programming. Cancelling a program that might reflect poorly on the image of football culture in the United States is an acknowledgement of the influence fictions have on a

cultural image. A preexisting association between ESPN and the NFL would reinforce the validity of an image of football, fictional or not, on ESPN. ESPN reports more than game scores, they report on sports events as a news source and so any images aired on the network are meant to be taken as truth. *Playmakers* was meant to be considered fiction, but the network complicates that image and blurs the line between fictional and direct representation of the sport.

The NFL's decision to endorse *Ballers* is a proactive attempt to shape their image in mainstream popular culture. Their involvement in the creation and production of the show illustrates a reaction to the *Playmakers* run and cancellation. The NFL's active presence in football fiction illustrates the importance of fiction to national perception of football culture. The stories created about football help to shape the mythology surrounding it. Because the NFL has an explicit interest in shaping their brand to an ideal image it is difficult to trust *Ballers* as an accurate representation of professional football as it exists the shared imagination of the United States. An examination of the unlicensed pieces will present a clear vision of what football is in the United States, and how its practice reinforces qualities typically associated with masculinity.

Football as a Haven for Masculinity

In the previous chapter I discussed the connection between football and the frontier, identifying parallels between aspects of masculinity as related to football culture and those found in the the mythology of the western genre. The western and football both relate to the crisis of masculinity that coincided with the end of the frontier and the industrialization of the country.

The Western presents a world in which a man could exercise his true nature without fear of the feminization of modern “civilized” society. Characters like John Wayne’s Ethan Edwards from *The Searchers*, or Clint Eastwood as the Man with No Name from Sergio Leone’s *Dollars Trilogy* thrive in the harsh environment of the wild west. They are so attuned to it that they are unable to function in regular society. Like the demi-gods of Greek tradition, our cowboy heroes must live on the higher plane of legend because they cannot live among us, mere mortals. The heroes of the west offer examples of embodiment for men to emulate, not in deed, but in mentality and attitude.

Football functions as a space where men can practice the same escape they watch in westerns. A live embodiment of the environment simulated in the western contributes to the immediacy and excitement of masculine escape. Though men are not necessarily playing the game, attending a football game offers an opportunity to be a more active participant than watching a film. On the football field, violence is not only allowed, it is encouraged. The intense physical competition encourages men to push themselves physically in a way they might not have another outlet for, while the rules distill down to a contest of capturing and defending territory. Geographical conflict extends beyond the field as well. A high school team might look forward with anticipation to the contest with the team from across town every year. In this example, a team might seek to conquer their town, and then their region, and ultimately the state. Football allows men to practice the act of conquest in a repeatable vacuum. Fictional representations of football establish a mythology of heroics associated with the game. The following fictions represent football, like the mythical old west, as a separate space that insulates men from the

feminizing influences of regular society. Each piece showcases football culture as a separate space in which the men playing are free to explore their true natures.

I Don't Want Your Life

Varsity Blues (1999) follows several high school football players during their senior season. It represents football's separation from society in many ways. The film's plot recalls the significant events from the H. G. Bissinger's *Friday Night Lights*, in which a star player is injured and the team must rally together to find success. James Van Der Beek stars as Jason Moxon or Mox, the second string quarterback who is disillusioned by the small town's dedication to football and wishes to escape. By examining the details of the film's setting and the plot of I will reveal how it reinforces the football culture as an expression of masculinity in the United States.

When starting quarterback, Lance Harbor (played by Paul Walker) suffers a season ending knee injury, Mox is thrust into the spotlight and must become a leader for his team. Mox's re-introduction to football provides the audience with a gateway into the world that the players have lived in for the past four years. His difficulty fully buying into the towns devotion to football, though he has played football his entire life. Mox's refusal to unquestioningly obey Coach Kilmer (played by John Voight) is the main conflict of the film. *Varsity Blues* showcases several aspects of masculine performativity among each of the players while representing the relationship between football and the rest of the town. For the boys in the fictional town of West Canaan, football is an important part of their development into adulthood.

The setting of *Varsity Blues* recalls both the ideal frontier and a masculine paradise. The film is based in a fictional small town in Texas where the population is

completely devoted to football. Setting the film in Texas recalls the mythological western frontier. The frontier, as imagined by John Ford and other prominent filmmakers of the western genres, functions as an escape from the feminizing society. West Canaan, Texas functions as a modern version of a frontier town where football replaces gun-fighting. Here, because football is the most important thing, men are able to perform their masculinity without fear of being ostracized or alienated from their society. The name of the town itself, West Canaan, recalls the Canaan promised to Abraham in the Old Testament of the Bible. For Abraham, Canaan was the land God promised for him and his family to thrive. In *Varsity Blues*, naming the town West Canaan connects football culture to religious culture, suggesting divine providence in the game. Throughout the film, the boys' relationship to football is likened to religious obligation. Mox's voiceover during the opening credits of the film states:

In America, we have laws. Laws against killing, laws against stealing, and it's just accepted that as a member of American society you will live by these laws. In West Canaan Texas there is another society which has its own laws. Football is a way of life....As a boy growing up in West Canaan Texas you never question the sanctity of football. You just listened to what the coaches said and you did your best to try to win. Win at all costs.¹¹⁴

With this expository statement we are introduced to a community that exists outside the realm of normal American society. West Canaan is a society of football, which takes on its own system of rules that supersede the rules of "normal" American society. That West Canaan exists outside on the fringe of accepted society parallels ideals associated with the frontier of western mythology. Between the biblical references to a

promised land, and the physical location of the town, West Canaan is presented a paradise of masculinity.

Mox's introduction also recalls one of the key aspects of football's paradigm of masculinity and that as to win at all costs. The boys are brought up to do exactly what they are told and the culture of football in the community makes it easy to indoctrinate them into football culture. The entire community revolves around the tradition of football in West Canaan. Mox's resistance to this culture illustrates the friction between the paradigm of masculinity and a society where men cannot be free to practice it.

As an above average student with a critical demeanor, Mox functions as a gateway between the audience and the culture of football. Mox has played all his life, and is talented enough to play on the varsity squad of the highly decorated Coyotes. He also gets accepted to Brown University on an academic scholarship. At the beginning of the film, Mox is happy to sit on the bench and be with his friends (all starters). While everyone around him is devoted to the game and trying to get every bit of glory out of it that they can, Mox considers his final season an inconvenience on the way to higher education and ultimately a life outside of West Canaan.

When Mox is thrust into the spotlight after the star quarterback, Lance Harbor (played by Paul Walker), has a career ending knee injury. His first experience on the field is to lead the team on a game winning touchdown drive which he scores himself. Between the adrenaline of the game and the cheers of the crowd Mox finds the happiness he experienced when he was younger and must revisit his feelings about football. Despite the trouble that the players get into and the physical and emotional pain they experience throughout the film, Mox's reintroduction to football ultimately affirms the virtues of

football as a paradigm of masculinity. Mox's difficulty balancing expectations for his devotion to football, and his desire to separate himself from the culture stems from his interactions with Coach Kilmer. Kilmer is established as a militaristic coach who does not tolerate dissent, Kilmer's leadership strategies conflict with Mox's attitude about football, and indeed, life itself.

The first time we see Kilmer and Mox directly interact is during the first game of the film. Kilmer is absorbed in coaching his players on the field while Mox sits on the bench apparently studying his play book. We cut to over Mox's shoulder to see that he is using the playbook to disguise that he is reading Kurt Vonnegut's, *Slaughterhouse Five*. Like a bored school child might hide a comic book in his math text during class, Mox's interests exist outside of football. There is an obvious parallel between Mox, who is forced to suit up but does not play, and Billy Pilgrim, the soldier who refuses to fight in Vonnegut's novel; a close reading of the intersections between the two protagonists' narratives might be fruitful for further research. For our purposes, it is enough to note the parallel between Mox's refusal to play football and Pilgrim's objection to killing as counter to the culture they are in.

After the game, as the players walk back to the locker room, Kilmer grabs Mox's play book and finds the contraband novel. He threatens Mox, "If your father hadn't played his heart out for me I'd cut your ass."¹¹⁵ Kilmer threatens Mox with what he is looking forward to. It functions as a legitimate threat because Mox needs football despite the fact that he does not want to. Here we see evidence of Judith Butler's theory about gender performativity at work. In order to successfully keep his identity in his culture, he must play football. Playing football is what make him "normal" in the eyes of his friends

and family. Characters discuss the possibility of his not playing football three times in the film, and each time the idea is framed as negative, despite his apparent desire to be rid of football. In, “Performative Acts” Butler suggests that human acts can produce and maintain oppressive conditions for individuals.¹¹⁶ In the case of *Varsity Blues*, Mox is oppressed by the social conditions of the town. His desire to be free from football, and the society surrounding it is outweighed by the social pressure to adhere to the strictures of masculine identity in West Canaan; he must play football and he must obey his coach, because his identity is shaped around those two aspects.

Coach Kilmer’s attitude towards football exhibits aspects associated with football’s paradigm of masculinity performativity. Specifically, his results-based attitude toward the treatment of his players is likely why he is so successful as a coach. His notoriety as a winning football coach earned him the respect of the entire town, and further encouraged each player on his team to deny their individualism and focus their energies on winning for the team, and ultimately for the town. Because West Canaan is a paradise of football culture, and because in football culture winning takes precedence over style of participation, Kilmer’s victories on the field granted he and the players a fair amount of latitude in the rest of the town. For the players on the team that means they can carouse with each other, and get up to mischief that functions as comic entertainment during the film. For Kilmer, it means that his word is taken for granted for the majority of the film. Father’s watch him verbally chastise their sons during practice for entertainment.

Kilmer’s identity revolves around winning, and while he successfully performs masculinity in West Canaan, that performance leads to the mistreatment of his players in

an effort to win football games. He encourages his star player to take injections of cortisone into his knee in order to keep playing rather than let him rest and fully heal. When Lance Harbor takes a bad tackle he tears every ligament in his knee, ruining his chance to ever play football again, and stripping him of his identity as a football player. Playing through pain, and sacrificing yourself for the good of the team are aspects of football culture, however, Kilmer's treatment of his players is abusive. Kilmer's attempt to inject cortisone into the knee of injured running back, Wendell Brown, incites a mutiny among the players who refuse to play for him anymore now that they have seen that he does not care about their well being.

After Lance's injury, Mox is put into the game to lead the team. Though he has not been able to practice and despite his reluctance to commit his identity to football, Mox is a talented player. He leads his team down the field and when he cannot understand the signals from the sideline, calls his own number and runs the ball in for a touchdown to win the game. All of his teammates come over to congratulate him while the entire town cheers, and he is overwhelmed with a sense of triumph.

As Mox becomes acclimated to the spot light he begins to change. After his triumphant victory, his girlfriend sardonically asks him "What's it feel like to be a god?"¹¹⁷ She represents his connection to civilized society and the world outside of football. As he begins to play more, Mox begins to take on aspects of the masculine paradigm. He begins to focus more on football, trying to bring in unconventional plays in order to keep the defense guessing and also to "have a little fun." He begins to act more and more like a football player, and others take notice. The head cheerleader, Darcy (played by Ali Larter) begins to see Mox's skill with the football as a ticket out of town.

She unsuccessfully tries to seduce him away from his current girlfriend in a narrative that suggests that their roles as quarterback and cheerleader are more important than who they are as people. Despite his refusal of her advances, his new attitude and the rumors about him and Darcy encourage Mox's girlfriend to break up with him. She doesn't date football players. When Mox protests that he's always been a football player, she tells him he was not; he was something different. Prompting him to question the cost of all of the popularity and accolades he has been receiving.

This attitude in particular leads him to clash further with coach Kilmer, as his attempts to innovate with the offense is again read by Kilmer as disobedience, despite his winning, and being a good leader for his team, Kilmer refuses to accept Mox in the same way he did Lance because Mox is not playing the "right way." Mox's refusal to follow the rules of Kilmer's society of football signals a frontier within the frontier of West Canaan, where Mox is free to play football how he wants to rather than following arbitrary rules. Ultimately triumphant, Mox's separation from society reinforces the value of a separate society to successful masculine performativity.

When Mox calls the wrong play in his first game but scores a touchdown, everyone cheers except Coach Kilmer. Kilmer is more upset that Mox disobeyed him than he is happy they won. Kilmer's inability to adapt to the changing atmosphere of the team with Mox's addition ultimately leads to his downfall. It becomes clear that Kilmer is more focused on keeping the status quo than on leading his team to victory, as he begins to stifle Mox's creativity and imposing harsh punishments in order to keep him in line.

At the end of the film, Kilmer tries to convince Wendell to inject his knee with cortisone, Mox threatens to quit the team rather than have Wendell risk more permanent injury. The team joins him and all refuse to play for the coach. At this point Kilmer physically attacks Mox, choking him on a training table until the rest of the team pulls him off. After the climactic confrontation in the locker room during halftime of their championship game, Kilmer realizes that the entire team would rather quit than play with him. His defeated and lonesome walk down the tunnel is framed similarly to Shane riding into the sunset. Kilmer's inability to function in regular society means that he must leave. Without a team to coach he loses his identity and simply packs his things and leaves the town.

With coach Kilmer gone, the players are free to embrace football in the way it was intended. Mox's speech to get everyone ready to play establishes the film's view of an ideal football culture:

Before this game started, Kilmer said, '48 minutes for the next 48 years of our lives.' Well I don't agree with that at all, alright? I think that's dead wrong. Let's go out there and we'll play the next 24 minutes for the next 24 minutes, and we'll leave it all out on the field. We have the rest of our lives to be mediocre, but we have the opportunity to play like gods for the next half of football! But we can't be afraid to lose! There's no room for fear in this game. If we go out there, and [give it less than our all] because we're scared, then all we're left with us is just an excuse. We're always gonna wonder. But if we could out there and give it absolutely everything . . . then that's heroic. Let's be heroes¹¹⁸

Mox touches on two very important aspects of football culture. First he establishes football as a temporary escape from the normal life. Twenty-four minutes for

the next twenty-four minutes establishes the fleeting nature of football. They will all have to return to the real world eventually, like their fathers. As in Altman's discussion of genre films, football is a temporary escape from established social rules. It only works if those participating eventually return to society. The finale of the film presents Mox as an ideal football player because in addition to successfully performing all of the aspects of football culture, he is able to return to society, having proven himself as a man.

While *Varsity Blues* clearly illustrates the close parallels between football and the western as genres of performance, it also illustrates some significant differences in the way the football field and the western frontier function as havens for masculinity. In a western, a cowboy may live autonomously for their entire life. John Wayne made a career playing characters is so masculine, they cannot function in regular society. A football player however, must be able to return to regular society after the game is over. Being successful on both sides of that line is difficult because success in each context requires a completely different mindset. Mox is unique, and indeed heroic, because he is able to succeed as a football player and then return successfully to society when the game is over.

Win or Lose Like a Man

“On any given Sunday you can either win or you can lose, but the point is: can you win or lose like a man.”¹¹⁹ That line, repeated twice (once at the beginning, and again at the conclusion) in the film identifies the ultimate theme of Oliver Stone's *Any Given Sunday*. What does it mean to win or lose like a man? In answering this question, the film also underlines football's connection to masculinity in United States culture. The film's plot is similar to that of *Varsity Blues*, focusing on a conflict between an established

coach and a talented new player. In addition to the conflict among the players and coach, the *mise en scene* of *Any Given Sunday* recalls repeated images from early NFL Films productions. The film draws on contextual parallels to establish football as a haven of masculinity through its casting. Al Pacino's turn as Tony D'Amato, the head coach of the fictional Miami Sharks, evokes a connection between the coach and other masculine characters played by Pacino. However, the film's divergence from an established formula for images of football asks vital questions about the nature of masculinity as it is related to biology; images of masculine performance by a female character in *Any Given Sunday* separates the performance of masculinity from its typically associated sex.

Recalling the romanticized image of football presents the players as heroic, and the world of professional football in *Any Given Sunday* is a haven for the extraordinary men that inhabit it. The opening sequence of the film portrays the players as inhuman expressions of masculinity. The first image is of the field itself. At the line of scrimmage feet and hands line up on opposing sides of the ball. A close-up of the centers' hand as it grips the football shows dirt and small cuts from the day. We see the eyes of Cap as he surveys the field, he looks across the line to the defenders. We see only helmets and visors as the players stalk threateningly toward the quarterback, and an animal's growl further suggests the players' savagery. When Cap looks to the right to see his receivers poised and ready to sprint down the field for him, we catch our first view of a full person. By showing only parts of the players up until this point, director Oliver Stone imagines the players as larger than life. They appear to us as giants and the only way the audience is able to see the entire field is through the eyes of Cap. Within the first three minutes of

the film, Stone has established the world of football as a separate domain for the ultimate versions of warriors that, as I will illustrate, serve as ideal examples of masculinity.

There is a battlefield set with both sides perfectly still, muscles tensed and ready, and so Cap shouts the signal and the ball is snapped. The entire sequence leading to this point has been in slow motion. The moment the center snaps the ball into Cap's hands, the entire world springs to life. The opposing sides of the line crash together in a shot that resembles cavalries charging into each other. The sound of pads slamming together and heavy foot falls of the men struggling against one another replaces the atmospheric hum of anticipation. The audience is watching a battle. The camera moves quickly, and figures flash across the screen faster than the eye can focus. Stone's technique serves two purposes here. The constant motion confuses the audience and suggests that football in real time is more than a normal person could comprehend, further establishing the field as a difficult test for only the highest form of man. It also allows him to let the audience fill in the gaps in focused action with their own imagination. Stone uses, the already established mythology of football to allow the audience to expand on each members' personal ideal image.

The camera focuses on a defender avoiding his blocker and streaking to Cap. As the audience follows the line backer in his pursuit of Cap, we see another opposing player flanking the quarterback from the other side. The defensive backs simultaneously crash into Cap high and low, spinning him around in a sickening twirl before he lands hard on the turf, clutching the football. Just as quickly as the action started it all stops. Their job done, the opposing players return to their side of the line and the camera pans back to show the entire stadium full of fans cheering for the violence they just witnessed. We see

familiar shots of fans clapping, cheerleaders waving pom-poms and a mascot dancing on the sidelines. Stone's introduction of the audience and familiar symbols of a football game contextually ground what he has presented in the image of football as it exists in American popular culture. He also draws a distinct line between the world that football players inhabit during a game and the society in which the games are sanctioned and watched by members of the community.

With the elevated environment established, after we witness the injury on the field and the audience is separated from the normal world, owner, Christina Pagniacchi (played by Cameron Diaz) is introduced. Diaz's conventionally attractive feminine body juxtaposes her portrayal of Pagniacchi as a successful participant in Stone's elevated world of football. Pagniacchi's desire to be involved with the management of the team and to participate in football requires her to perform many of the same behaviors and attitudes as her male counterparts. Pagniacchi's presentation of a masculine self is integral to her ability to succeed as an owner and guide the team to a playoff victory. By highlighting the specific moments that Pagniacchi successfully portrays aspects of football masculinity, I will illustrate how her character presents a challenge to the male-dominated culture of football. Pagniacchi's masculine performativity, despite her feminine body, establishes football's image of masculinity as a concept that is not dependent on sex.

The first aspect of masculinity she presents is the drive to win no matter what. After Cap's injury she sheds no tears for her star quarterback; she immediately gets on the phone to explore her options to replace him. Though she later expresses concern about his health, it is only so far as he can help the team win. If the head coach is a

military general, Pagniacchi is the politician who shapes policy and supplies the army with soldiers.

When third string quarterback, Willie Beaman (played by Jamie Foxx) is successful and helps to turn the team around, Pagniacchi convinces the team doctor to prolong Cap's physical therapy, even though he's healthy enough to play. Though not technically illegal to keep a player from playing longer than necessary, she works outside of accepted modes of operation for the team in order to ensure victory. Like Mox making changes to the offense and refusing to play by Coach Kilmer's strict rules, Pagniacchi shifts her strategy from her father's accepted way of winning; her choices make many of the players and coaches who are used to the status quo uncomfortable, but her ability to adapt with the changing landscape of the game is vital to success in football. When her team loses after Cap's injury, Pagniacchi manifests another aspect of masculinity— isolation from the effeminate. Her mother tries to comfort her, suggesting that she should not take football so seriously: “[Your father] died ‘cause of this. I don’t want you to take anything so seriously, honey.”¹²⁰ Christina rejects her mother's encouragement and sends her home. Pagniacchi's mother pulls her towards the feminine both by asking Christina to discount the importance of winning as well as her being physically close in proximity. She avoids her mother's feminine influence by refusing to philosophically engage her and sending her home. Pagniacchi refuses to engage her mother because she sees that her mother's feminine nature prevents understanding of the importance of winning in football. The physical presence of Christina's mother draws her perception closer to the feminine. I have discussed separation from the feminine as a purpose of sports in the

United States at length; American culture defines the masculine as that which is not feminine.

In addition to her isolation from the feminine, Pagniacci avoids typically feminine behavior. Near the end of the film, after the league commissioner (played by Charlton Heston) has an exchange with her, he remarks “I honestly believe that woman would eat her young.”¹²¹ By disparaging her supposed lack of maternal instinct the commissioner suggests that Pagniacci has separated herself from the feminine. The most extreme versions of football’s paradigm of masculinity include the rejection of romantic entanglement, significantly characterized by John Wayne’s “post-heterosexual” persona. Because she needs to take action as an owner, Pagniacci rejects her romantic partner at the beginning of the film, simply stating she would not be good company for him that evening. He protests, reminding her that he is leaving town for a trial and will be unavailable to her later, but Pagniacci is unmoved; any comfort he might provide would distract from her first priority. She reinforces her masculine persona when she tells him to kick their asses, further implying the importance of winning to his own social status.

Pagniacci’s rejection of romantic entanglement is vital to her masculinity because of her female body. She cannot successfully participate in the world of football if she is viewed as a potential mate. Her masculine image is reinforced when she visits the locker room after a victory. The scene presents Pagniacci interacting with the players in various states of undress. As she enters the room, Pagniacci is framed next to a fully nude man, juxtaposing her masculine performance with the male body. The celebratory atmosphere is halted upon her entrance as the men in the room do not know how to react to her (possibly intrusive) presence. Pagniacci dictates the nature of her interaction by directly

confronting the disconnect between her body and her persona. She chides a player as she walks “Pete, don’t stiffen up on me.”¹²² Her denial of sexuality as it relates to her body challenges a default correlation between the two. She directly defines her terms of masculine interaction, and discourages the players’ definition of her gender based on her body.

Pagniacchi makes her way to Willie Beaman to congratulate him for his success on the field. After thanking her Beaman propositions Pagniacchi, inviting her out on a date. She politely refuses him and corrects his pronunciation of her name as she leaves. After her exit, Beaman is awestruck and his teammates shout affirmation to his failed attempt. While this moment is not a pivotal point in the film’s narrative, Pagniacchi’s interaction with Beaman is crucial to the image of masculinity presented in the film. Beaman’s propositioning Pagniacchi despite her position of authority plays upon hetero-normative assumptions about Pagniacchi’s sexuality, based on her conventionally attractive female body. The nature of Pagniacchi’s rejection solidifies her status among the men and allows her to continue to compete among them. Despite having the wrong body, she is performing masculinity. A physically weaker man not strong enough to do the things necessary to compete as a football player could still be perceived as masculine due to the characteristics he exhibits.

Diaz’s performance as Pagniacchi might also be read as drag. I have already established that Pagniacchi’s success in the world of football owes to her ability to effectively perform aspects of masculinity associated with the sport. Her interactions in the locker room capitalize on her acknowledgement of typical hetero-normative gender/sex relations in order to subvert them. Though drag may stereotypically be

associated with appropriation of a proper gender through parodied performance of those symbols, we benefit from an expanded view of the practice here. In her essay, “Imitation and Gender Insubordination,” Judith Butler discusses an expanded view of drag: “Drag constitutes the mundane way in which genders are appropriated, theatricalized, worn and done; it implies that all gendering is a kind of impersonation and approximation.”¹²³

Pagniaci’s impersonation of a franchise owner is steeped in the gendered performance to which football is associated.

Pagniaci does not dress as a man, nor does she self-identify with male pronouns, but she does impersonate and approximate masculine behavior throughout the film. Through Butler’s statement, we can read Diaz’s performance as a subversion of traditional gender roles through drag. Pagniaci’s masculinity without parody or physical imitation is more subversive because it further separates male-ness from masculinity. Pagniaci is masculine without being male. Butler continues: “...It seems, there is no original or primary gender that drag imitates, but *gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original*; in fact, it is a kind of limitation that produces the very notion of the original as an *effect* and consequence of the imitation itself.”¹²⁴ Butler’s suggestion that the act of imitation is what creates the original notion of gender gives significant weight to Diaz’s turn as Pagniaci. Her masculine performance, and the men’s acceptance of it serves to reinforce traditional masculinity and even contributes to the creation of it.

Because she was an established commodity before *Any Given Sunday*, Diaz’s previous roles haunt her performance and, as explained in Marvin Carlson’s seminal work, *The Haunted Stage*, further inform the audience’s reading of her performance as Pagniaci. Carlson suggests that an actor’s previous roles can influence their public

perception, which will, in turn, shape an audience's reading of subsequent performances. He refers to this phenomenon as "ghosting" and suggests that it is often inevitable on contemporary stages and screens. Diaz is no exception and her audience will take her performance in context with other images they associate with the actress.

Diaz gained international stardom after she played Mary in *There's Something About Mary* (1998). In the film Diaz's character opposed typically feminine behavior; the narrative was driven by men's reactions to the combination of her atypical personality and beauty. After this film many of Diaz's roles complicated the hetero-normative view of femininity by juxtaposing Diaz's eroticized female body against atypical behavior. Audiences will remember Diaz's Mary when watching her Pagniacchi, thus shaping their reading of her character.¹²⁵ The ghost of Diaz's performances encourages the audience to read the characters as complications to typical gender/body association. The use of football to showcase her gendered performativity establishes the sport's significance to masculinity in the United States.

Al Pacino's performance as coach Tony D'Amato hints at a connection between football's performative type and the gangster trope. Like the cowboy, the gangster is defined by the same masculinity as football, embodying the same aspects that are associated with the sport. Like Diaz, Al Pacino's performance is haunted by his previous roles. Pacino's turn as Michael Corleone in *The Godfather* films embodied many of the same characteristics that are associated with football culture. The gangster film, like the western, and football itself, presents a world in which the less socially acceptable aspects of masculinity are encouraged. In *The Godfather*, the line "it's not personal, it's business" is repeated several times throughout the film.¹²⁶ This mantra excuses the violence

committed by the Corleone family. The ruthless violence of the family is not a personal or emotional attack, but rather part of the drive to win at any cost. Like a football player who concusses his opponent only to shake his hand after the final whistle, for the gangster, winning is the most important thing. Pacino's previous performances as a gangster established a persona that audiences would recognize in Tony D'Amato.

D'Amato claims to have invented the titular line of the film, "on any given Sunday you can win or you can lose. Question is can you win or lose like a man." He begins the mantra twice in the film, only to have it completed by Pagniacchi at the beginning of the film, and by Willie at the conclusion, when he and D'Amato decide to team up. Pagniacchi claims that her father coined it and while the true ownership of the phrase is never fully settled, the repetition of the phrase evidences its importance to them all.

Learning to play the game "like a man," and using it as a foundation of one's masculinity is the main theme of the film. D'Amato was trying to teach Beaman how to win and lose like a man, while Pagniacchi was proving her ability to do the same. Each of the characters had their own version of masculine performance and each of them used football to prove themselves masculine. Throughout the film, D'Amato's coaching is called into question as his decisions lead to turnovers and failures on the field. Facing pressure from Pagniacchi and insubordination from Beaman, D'Amato seems to be "losing" for much of the film. As he adapts to his changing environment and is able to come out ahead, winning the game to make the playoffs and finish a successful season. His ability to lose "like a man" on his given Sundays is D'Amato's ultimate performance of masculinity. During the film's epilogue, D'Amato takes a job with a new team, and

takes Beaman (now his protégé) to be his starting quarterback. His success both on and off the field is a side effect of the way he carries himself among his colleagues.

“YOU CANNOT HURT ME”

For the final case study, I want to examine the representation of football on stage. Playwright Andrew Hinderaker attempts to capture the performance of football in *Colossal*. The play blends traditional acting with modern dance and choreographed violence to recreate football as a live performance. Hinderaker describes the play as “absolutely taking a look at the prevailing paradigm of masculinity as expressed through the sport of football.”¹²⁷ Hinderaker’s play was awarded a rolling world premiere in 2014 from the National New Play Network. The play’s successful premiere in theatres in different regions of the country signals the continued growth of football’s influence on American popular culture.

Colossal is relevant to our discussion here for three reasons. Ostensibly, the plot of the play offers a character study of a man whose identity is directly tied to his football career. Here again we see a view of masculinity similar to the previous cases. The narrative reiterates the importance of football to masculine culture in the United States. The characters exhibit behavioral aspects that tie their masculine identity to their performance on the football field. Despite the familiar events of the narrative, *Colossal* challenges a hetero-normative view of masculinity. Because of his attraction to the strength and behavior of another football player, Mike’s ideally masculine performativity is not diminished by his romantic relationship with his teammate. The form of the production, itself, also offers fertile ground for examination. *Colossal* represents football itself as a performative form. The production accomplishes this by mirroring identifying

features of a football game. If football is a representation of the masculinity, *Colossal* offers another layer. By mimicking the performance of football itself, Hinderaker's piece serves as a performance of the performance of football masculinity.

The plot, which focuses on a severely injured player's recovery, examines how masculinity affects different relationships between men. Mike must come to terms with his new life after a catastrophic injury paralyzes him from the waist down. He is taunted by his previous self, Young Mike, whose masculine identity was fueled by his success on the field. As Mike grapples with the memory of his former self he attempts to restore his relationship with his estranged father and make progress in his physical recovery in order to eventually walk again. Mike's interaction with Damon, his father, and Jerry, his physical therapist reveals the similarities between his and Young Mike's personalities. As Mike explores his memories, and slowly allows himself to talk about what happened with Jerry and then with his father, we learn that he was in a romantic relationship with the other captain of the football team. Mike's injury, we learn, was because he lost control while trying to protect his lover and hit his opponent the wrong way.

The does not present Mike's story in chronological order. The plot tracks Mike's recovery since his injury, while using memory flashbacks to show Young Mike's development from dancer into football player. Because he spent most of his childhood mastering control of his body, Young Mike's natural strength and agility gave him an advantage on the football field. Young Mike is presented as the embodiment of an ideal player. He is agile, quick, and relentless in his pursuit of victory. Young Mike's (and Mike's) Mike's relationship to Young Mike offers a dissection of masculine identity as it relates to the football field and off it. Young Mike's bravado is backed up by his

impressive build and prowess on the field, while Mike struggles to find a voice now that those parts of himself were taken.

Mike's relationship with his father, Damon, is challenged because of his commitment to football. Mike owes much of his athletic prowess to his father hereditarily and because of his commitment to making Mike a dancer. Damon is the artistic director of a successful modern dance company of which Mike was a member. When he learns that Mike wants to play football Damon worries about Mike's safety and forbids him from participating. After the ultimatum from his father, Young Mike chose football and effectively severed ties from his father. Mike is the "anti-Billy Elliot," "The only son in the history of the United States to disappoint his dad by choosing football over dance."¹²⁸ That Damon's response is so abnormal it must be commented on in the play proves the influence of the sport. In addition to Mike's relationship to his own identity, *Colossal* tracks how he repairs his relationship with his estranged father.

Mike's competitive nature is illustrated in the competition he has with himself. The production includes a scoreboard that tracks his struggle with Young Mike to determine whether he will move on in his life or continue to relive the past in his memory and imagination. Keeping score, tracking who wins and who loses, is obviously an important part of the game of football and a vital part of the football paradigm of masculinity. Mike scores his own life like a football game, suggesting the influence that the game continues to have on him. Mike's internal competition drives the narrative of the play. The score changes based on whether or not he decides to open up to his father or to his occupational therapist. As he shares how he feels, discusses the true circumstances of his injury, and attempts to move towards recovery in order to walk again, Mike scores

points. Every time he pushes someone away, or holds himself back physically or emotionally from the people trying to help him, Young Mike scores. The nature of the scoring system suggests that in order for Mike to fully recover he must let go of the time he spent in football. Similar to the other case studies, Mike has difficulty living outside of the world of football.

Mike's physical therapist, Jerry, is aware of the difficulty of Mike's transition, specifically because the transition was not Mike's choice:

When you've stunned a city's worth of screaming fans into silence...

Well I get that it's insulting, when I want to strap you into a belt...

So I can help you stand...

So you can take the first step towards taking five steps with the assistance of a walker.¹²⁹

Jerry, who has worked with other injured football players, understands that Mike's identity is so tied to his football career that in order for him to function effectively, he must let go of his identity as a football player. Mike must face his vulnerability after completing super human feats as a football player. Football here is expressed not as a haven or retreat for temporary recuperation but a heaven from which one falls or is cast out.

Mike revisits the moment that he got injured several times throughout the play. He watches the game tape until the moment before the injury happens and then hits pause. At the end of the play Mike finally decides to watch the injury, reliving the moment of the catastrophic injury and forcing Young Mike to play out his inevitable fall from invincibility. Mike presses play and the audience finally sees the collision that

caused his injury. The audience witnesses Young Mike break in front of them; he is carried off stage “Like a procession. Like a funeral.”¹³⁰ Young Mike’s “death” signals Mike’s acceptance of his new identity. Mike will no longer live in the world that Young Mike championed. When he opens up to his father, Damon, Mike is able to complete a “sit-stand” that represents his first significant step towards physical recovery.¹³¹

Mike’s sit-stand illustrates his acceptance of his inability to play football anymore and his resolve. It is a performance of his masculinity. Mike is not masculine because he played football. In addition to his physical prowess, Mike’s behavior showcases masculine qualities that are key to success at football. This is evidenced at the end of the play when he finds success in his new body. We might recall the mantra from *Any Given Sunday* about whether or not one can lose like a man. Mike takes a figurative and literal loss when he gets hurt playing football. He loses a distinct part of himself, but his eventual triumph is that he loses like a man. Mike’s inability to play football is a blow to his masculinity because he will no longer have his haven, but he does not lose his masculine qualities simply because he no longer has an ideal outlet for them.

As a dancer Mike could demonstrate a mastery of his body that gave him the physical skills to excel in football. After an altercation he discovered his love of football violence. Football became an outlet for a part of Mike’s personality that he became obsessed with:

YOUNG MIKE: That first time I got hit? I liked it.

MIKE: It hurt like fucking hell.

YOUNG MIKE: That split second.

MIKE: That flash.

YOUNG MIKE: Everything goes white.

MIKE: And for a second—

YOUNG MIKE: You think—

MIKE: I am dead.

YOUNG MIKE: And then...

MIKE: You open your eyes.

YOUNG MIKE: And Jesus Christ—

MIKE: Oh my god—

YOUNG MIKE and MIKE: I AM ALIVE.

YOUNG MIKE: (to his father) I'm alive. Goddamnit I'm alive and you look at that guy in the eyes and you tell him

ALL PLAYERS: YOU THINK YOU CAN HURT ME?!

YOUNG MIKE: YOU CANNOT HURT ME. You are nothing to me.¹³²

Young Mike's discovery, his explanation to his father, and Mike's memory of it illustrate football's connection to masculinity. Young Mike (and Mike) felt invincible after being hit. They push through pain to come out of the other side unscathed. Young Mike exalts in his invulnerability, fully dominating his opponent by shrugging their own efforts off as nothing. Dancing shaped Mike into a remarkable physical specimen, but football tested and ultimately proved his masculinity.

Mike's separation from his father is a performance of his masculine identity. Masculinity must isolate itself from the feminine. Young Mike's decision to isolate himself from his father's less masculine character runs parallel to other cases I have discussed earlier. He likens himself to Cameron Diaz's character in *Any Given Sunday* by

distancing himself from the feminine. Damon's rejection of the violence in football, because of the risks implicit in participation, would limit Young Mike's expression of masculinity. Like Pagniacchi, and like John Wayne's persona, Young Mike cannot thrive in a feminized environment and his separation from his father functions as his own riding into the sunset. It is only after the "death" of Young Mike that Mike is able to return to his father, and the real world.

Pagniacchi, and Wayne's persona both isolate themselves from romantic entanglement as a part of their masculine performance. Young Mike, rather than avoiding romantic entanglement finds himself sexually attracted to the hyper masculine. His relationship to Marcus, co-captain of the football team presents a unique point in the discussion of masculinity and romantic love. Mike's attraction to Marcus is based on Marcus's own masculinity. Does being drawn to masculine qualities could suggest a less diluted masculinity in Mike, or does it put him in a position of the feminine?

The audience is introduced to Marcus as Young Mike's love interest when he suggests that he could hurt Young Mike after his proclamation of invulnerability. The spark between them occurs because of Marcus's ability to physically compete with Young Mike. During a tackle drill the audience sees Marcus tackling Young Mike repeatedly, then when they perform it in slow motion we see the intention behind the violence. Marcus wraps his arms around Young Mike and lifts him off the ground in a move that more closely resembles a dance than a tackle. They perform their love for each other through their shared in-game violence. As leaders of the team they are alike in ability and hierarchy, meaning that neither of them give up social status by associating with the other. Their relationship shows us, again, that heterosexuality is not necessary

for masculinity. Both Young Mike and Marcus thrive in a hyper-masculine environment and are lifted up as examples by their coach several times throughout the play. Their success on the field indicates their masculinity, and being made leaders of the other football players raises their social status among the other men.¹³³

In addition to the plot, the play's production style evokes football's paradigm of masculinity. The play is presented in the form of a football game. It consists of a "pre-game" warmup, four fifteen minute quarters and a halftime show. As a symbolic representation of a football game the play evokes many of the same aspects that a spectator might expect to see during an actual game. The production is able to offer commentary on football culture itself as it relates to masculinity in United States popular culture. It does so through the representations of violence, the showcase of competition, and ultimately in its portrayal of football as a separate style of theatrical performance that does not physically exist in the play. As I examine each of these aspects I will illustrate how the live production of *Colossal* offers an immersion into the performance of masculinity through football, rather than a story about it.

At the beginning of the play, the actors recreate a kick-off return. The audience sees players in full football pads crash into each other on stage. The visceral collisions are meant to evoke the violence associated with football's paradigm of masculinity. The actors are expected to run into each other with the force of an actual football player and in most theatres the audience will be much closer to the action than a spectator at an actual game. The production relies on the physical prowess of the actors to perform the violence in a controlled environment.

A spectator may go to a football to see athletic heroics and bone crunching hits. They might do this to perform their masculinity vicariously through their attendance, and shouts of approval at the action they see on the field. Though the representation is a more controlled environment than on the actual football field, the premise of *Colossal* is that the actors are exerting themselves as fully as if they were football players. Hinderaker makes this clear in his staging notes: “One of the guiding principles of this piece is that everyone in the cast is emotionally and physically exhausted by the end of the performance.”¹³⁴ The physical and emotional exertion of the actors is a part of the production. In this way it becomes a representation of the experience of football in addition to a story about football players.

The play’s use of a score board and opposing sides also evokes the idea of a football game. One of the central aspects of football’s paradigm of masculinity is the importance of winning. One might expect someone recovering from a life altering event to reconcile with his former identity. To accept it and move forward as a sum of the two parts. The competition between Mike and Young Mike, illustrates their competitive edge. It is not a personal grudge between them. Mike does not hate Young Mike, and Young Mike even encourages Mike to play harder midway through their competition. However, they will not reconcile. They cannot, just as two football teams with no previous interaction cannot reconcile in the middle of the game. There must be a winner. When Mike decides to play the tape, revealing the hit that caused his injury, he wins. Young Mike is carried off the field, and the audience does not see him again. The intense competition of a football game, like the violence that characterizes it is an integral part of *Colossal* in production.

Colossal offers an intensified representation of the experience of attending a football game. The production is especially ambitious in its scope because of the difficulty of recreating violence in a controlled and close environment. Much of the excitement of any sporting event is in its unpredictability, and theatre seeks to present the illusion of unpredictability while keeping the contract of safety with the audience. In order for *Colossal* to be successful it must inspire the same uncertainty in the audience that they might feel while watching a football game. Football's connection to masculine performativity is directly related to its unpredictability and brutal violence. Because anything can happen at anytime, a football player, like a cowboy, or a gangster must be prepared for anything and capable of defending himself. The excitement a spectator feels while watching a star player succeed in this environment stems from the danger that they are constantly in. With no danger of injury or uncertainty of outcome, say in a rehearsed, movement based production, a spectator will not have the same response to the action. By including Mike in the play, the production reminds the audience of the impending consequences of such an unforgiving environment. Throughout the play the audience gets to know Mike before and after his injury inevitably working towards the gruesome moment when they re-enact the moment of the injury. This scene must be jarring. The production hinges upon the audience reacting to this as if it is actually happening, which legitimizes the danger of what they've been watching for the rest of the production.

The performers in *Colossal* are meant to actually hit each other with the force and violence expected in an actual football game. They also lift weights and run practice drills throughout the production, each physically taxing activity meant to capture the visceral world that the players live in. The characters move around in a flurry of graceful

and impressive gestures and feats of strength and agility, which juxtaposes Mike's stillness in the wheelchair. Mike is the audience's entry in to the world of football but he is simultaneously a participant and a spectator himself. Like the audience Mike lives vicariously through the action he watches with the audience, supposing himself a part of the action.

Colossal offers a representation of the shared experience of football. We see the hyper competition among the players, seeking to best each other either by lifting more weights, or just physically dominating their opponent by tackling him to the ground. The score board, prominently placed, reminds the audience that the most important thing is winning. Mike's personal struggle with the loss of his masculine identity creates a parallel between the him and the audience as they both watch incredible physical feats. The production represents the act of participation and watching football in a performance of masculine football culture.

CONCLUSION

Each of the cases discussed above, whether affirming or questioning the value, presents issues directly related to football, and defines the cultural rules for the world of football. By presenting football as a world separated from the feminine, they establish football as a haven for masculinity. The films present stories of heroes who find success in the world, and become examples of ideal masculinity. Each piece presents football as dangerous and the players have difficulty inserting themselves into “normal” society. Rather than presenting the difficulty in living both in football and the real world as a problem, football is celebrated specifically because it is incompatible with regular society. By identifying these common themes throughout all of the cases we can see how popular culture in the United States has endorsed a correct practice of football that is recognizable to people who may have little or no knowledge about the game itself. The behavioral aspects associated with success in football become a paradigm for masculinity in the United States, where the popularity of the sport boosts the reach of football culture.

The cases here represent a consistent image of football as a haven for masculinity though to different degrees. Some view football as a separate culture, in which participation means losing one’s ability to exist in civilized world, while others imagine football as a crucible where one’s masculinity is proven after which they can return to society as a “true man.” In the haven of football, we see common behaviors rewarded. Hyper competitiveness, mental and emotional toughness, and self-sufficiency are showcased in each of the cases to varying degrees. In each of the cases, successful

performance of these behaviors is rewarded with objective success in the world of the story.

The popularity of football in the United States makes it fertile ground for fictionalizing. Because it is a recognizable image, artists can use it as a structure through which to tell other stories. The close association between football and successful performance of masculine leads to a direct correlation between the heroes' success and their performed masculinity.

As we have seen, baseball and football represent two very different paradigms for the performance of masculinity in twentieth century American culture. Baseball's version of masculinity showcases strength, paternal care, perseverance, and non-elitist behavior, while football emphasizes aggression, mental and physical toughness, self-sufficiency, and anti-femininity. How do these two conflicting paradigms of masculinity coexist in the same environment? At least three options are possible. First: they might co-exist as alternatives for the performance of masculinity: there are football men and baseball men and both exist independently of each other. Second, they might compete with one another. Finally, they may coexist peacefully together in one person, complementing and balancing one another.

One way to ascertain the relationship between these two paradigms of masculinity in US popular culture is to consider works of fiction in which the two paradigms are embodied side by side. One of the most striking examples of such a work is the western *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence* (1962). John Ford's film stars the two actors I have identified as exemplifying each of the two paradigms: John Wayne (as Tom Doniphon), the paradigmatic football man, and Jimmy Stewart (as Ransom Stoddard), the

paradigmatic baseball man. My examination of baseball's paradigm of masculinity included Jimmy Stewart's on- and off-screen persona as an idealized performance of baseball masculinity. Stewart's performance in *Valence* as Ransom Stoddard in a struggle against lawlessness in the frontier town of Shinbone showcases his masculine qualities as defined within baseball's paradigm. John Wayne's turn as Tom Doniphon, the rough cowboy who unofficially runs the town when Ransom arrives, showcases a performance of masculinity as defined within the football paradigm. Their relationship between the two men in the frontier highlights the conflicting images of masculinity, and presents them in the inconstant setting of a frontier town in the developing United States.

The narrative of *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence* tracks the process through which the frontier town of Shinbone came under law and order.¹³⁵ The conflicting paradigms of masculinity are images of performative identity rather than real people. As Senator Ransom Stoddard arrives in town, his stage coach is held up by highwaymen. When Liberty Valence finds that Ransom is a lawyer he viciously beats Ransom with a whip. Tom Doniphon rescues Ransom and brings him into the town of Shinbone where he is nursed back to health. In an upcoming vote for statehood many ranchers are opposed because it would prevent them from grazing their cattle on the open range. Ransom helps to run the meeting to elect state representatives for the upcoming vote and is nominated as state representative. Valence comes to the meeting and physically threatens Ransom. For the first time, Ransom contemplates leaving to avoid bloodshed. He is wavering between leaving town and staying to help repay the family that took him in when they discover that Valence has beaten Dutton Peabody almost to death. Pushed too far, Ransom calls him out to challenge him in the street. Ransom is not a fighter and

he is a terrible shot. Despite knowing he will likely be killed, and despite enduring humiliation and torture as Valence toys with him by shooting around him and in the arm, Ransom preserves. To everyone's surprise, Ransom shoots Valence, killing him. Weeks later at a political convention, Ransom is nominated to represent his state in Washington. His popularity is boosted by his new fame for killing Valence. Ransom feels guilty and does not want to accept the nomination for so dubious a reason. Tom Doniphon pulls him aside to assuage his guilt. He recounts the events of the fateful night and reveals that while Ransom faced Valence down on the street, Doniphon watched from the darkness and was the one who actually shot and killed Valence. As Ransom walks back into the convention area we return to the present where Ransom is finishing his story. The editor tears the story up telling Ransom "This is the west, sir. When the legend becomes fact, print the legend."¹³⁶

The relationship between Ransom Stoddard and Tom Doniphon illustrates a great deal about the two paradigms of masculinity. The two men's reaction to the social environment of Shinbone showcases the difference in their masculine behavior. Ransom's response to Doniphon's good natured ribbing and Valence's torment illustrates his baseball behavior. He refuses to deal with conflict through violence and even after acknowledging that violence is the way of the land refuses to buy into it. Doniphon's attempts to help Ransom acclimate to the frontier environment are incompatible with Ransom's ideals. Tom advises Ransom to get a gun and be tougher or leave. For Tom, the frontier is a haven for his hard way of life, he lives outside of the town and lives a self-sufficient life. Ransom refuses to change his ideals to fit into the frontier opting instead to focus on the law, following his own code of honor.

Tom sees the frontier as a proving ground: you are either tough enough to survive or you cannot live there. The intense competition, and physically aggressive characters of Shinbone present a challenge for him, and his domination of the environment is a point of pride for Tom. He encourages Ransom to prove himself in the same way. Ransom refuses to let go of his code of behavior. Instead Ransom seeks to continue the American dream by bringing statehood to the frontier town and with it, equal treatment for all the citizens. Ransom remarks during a school lesson that a lot of people forget the part about all men being created equal in the declaration of independence. Ransom embodies the baseball paradigm of masculinity through his dedication to fairness and reverence for the rules of play (in his case, the law and order he wants to bring to Shinbone). Tom's reliance on himself and his desire to prevail, despite written (or unwritten) rules illustrates his practice of the football paradigm of masculinity.

The culmination of the film reveals how the two paradigms function in popular culture. I have illustrated that football functions as a haven outside of normal society where men can practice their masculinity. Ransom's arrival in Shinbone is an intrusion. Ransom is successful in bringing civilization to the frontier, and the football paradigm of masculinity is replaced. Both Valence and Doniphon represent ideal football paradigms even though they directly conflict with each other. Ransom's civilization changes their environment so that they cannot survive there anymore. Doniphon's decision to kill Valence in cold blood follows the football paradigm of behavior and certainly illustrates his hyper competitive and violent qualities. It also represents a resignation to the changing times. After the killing we never see Doniphon in an honored position of the town, instead his behavior becomes erratic and he removes himself from the town. Like

Ethan Edwards in *The Searchers*, Doniphon cannot be accepted into civilization and must exist outside of it. Ransom is rewarded for his perseverance and sticking to his ethics like Jefferson Smith in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. Like Smith, others around Ransom see his goodness, and someone near him changes their behavior to save him. It is ironic that to support the baseball paradigm of masculinity, Tom Doniphon must embody the football paradigm of masculinity.

Though Doniphon and Ransom seem to co-exist during for much of the film, the end characterizes football culture's existence outside civilized society. As Ransom affects change in the frontier town, civilizing it, we see the conflict between the two paradigms of masculinity brought to fruition. Ransom's performance of baseball masculinity overtakes the football paradigm overtime as the frontier town progresses towards civilization.

We see the same dynamic again in *Lethal Weapon* (1987).¹³⁷ Roger Murtaugh (played by Danny Glover) presents a image that relies on baseball's paradigm of masculinity. He is partnered to Martin Riggs (played by Mel Gibson) who represents masculinity as performed through the football paradigm. The characters' introductions highlight the difference between the two paradigms of masculinity.

Murtaugh's introduction showcases his connection to his family and a domestic life. He is taking a bath when his family bursts in on him to sing happy birthday with a cake and candles. The audience sees him interact with his children and wife in a paternal way. The pastoral image of suburban neighborhood with freshly mowed lawn and big perfect house recalls images typically associated with the American dream, further connecting Murtaugh's actions with the baseball paradigm of masculinity.

Rigg's masculinity is performed through the football paradigm of masculinity and is presented in contrast to Murtaugh's. For his introduction, the sequence of shots mirrors Murtaugh's, highlighting the differences between the two men's. Rather than a suburban house in an affluent neighborhood, the camera pans across a sandy beach. The sand of the beach recalls the frontier desert, and highlights Riggs's isolation from the rest of civilization. Riggs awakes alone in his house with no friends or family, only a dog for a companion. Riggs does not bathe to prepare for his day, instead he opens a beer and finishes his cigarette. There are visible scars on his back and chest from previous fights and his impressive, muscular physique is showcased as he walks through his trailer.

The conflict and cooperation between the two characters illustrates how the two paradigms of masculinity co-exist in American society. Both Riggs and Murtaugh are presented as masculine and in a sympathetic light in the film; neither character is presented as being more masculine than the other and both are successful police officers. The conflicting masculinities are a central aspect to the narrative of the film as their different tactics and attitudes are successful in different situations.

Riggs is having trouble living in society. He served in Vietnam as an assassin and has an extensive history of sanctioned violence either in the military or as a police officer. Like the cowboy of the frontier, Riggs lives on the edge of society but also works to preserve it. In many of the situations they find themselves in, Riggs's aggression and willingness to work outside expected behavior is beneficial to the case and saves Murtaugh's life. However, Riggs is in awe of Murtaugh's family, and when he joins them for dinner, he not only sees what he is protecting with his work as a police officer, but his suicidal thoughts are quelled at the idea of a family of his own. Riggs's former life as a

husband and his view of Murtaugh's family suggests that he wants to join society but his persona prevents it.

Initially, the two men do not work well together. Murtaugh does not trust Riggs because he is so clearly troubled, and Riggs is hesitant to open himself up for any other loss. After they spend a day together they see what the other can do and understand the benefits to their opposing personalities. When Riggs wakes Murtaugh up with coffee, showered in a clean shirt, he is beginning to change himself to match Murtaugh's lifestyle. And Murtaugh sees how Riggs's skill as a soldier will help him in the case, even adopts his aggressive behavior at the end of the film when he is facing his daughter's kidnappers.

Throughout the film, Murtaugh is presented as a more emotionally stable person. He is a good cop, has a large family that loves him and is the de facto leader of his and Riggs's partnership. However, when Murtaugh's daughter is kidnapped at the end of the film and they must go outside of society to retrieve her, Riggs's skills come into play. Riggs coaches Murtaugh on what to expect during their fight and when they are captured, it is Riggs's skill as a fighter and his aggressive personality that saves them. Murtaugh needs Riggs to survive in the harsh environment outside of society, and Riggs wants to help Murtaugh preserve his way of life and rescue his family.

At the end of the film, Riggs goes to Murtaugh's home again to thank him and say Merry Christmas. He is leaving when Murtaugh insists he come inside for Christmas dinner. Riggs's exit recalls Ethan Edwards refusing to enter the home at the end of *The Searchers*, suggesting that Riggs will continue to live on the outskirts of civilization. However, when Murtaugh invites him inside Riggs accepts, illustrating his desire to live

in society rather than continue his football persona of masculinity. Riggs gives Muraugh the bullet he carried with him as a symbol of his personal change and because of that change he is able to come inside and function in society again.

In *Lethal Weapon* we see a more contemporary example of the conflict of the different masculine paradigms in the United States. As in *Liberty Valence*, though both paradigms are presented sympathetically they are ultimately in competition with each other. The frontier town of Shinbone becomes no place for a cowboy like Doniphon, and Martin Riggs's decision to abandon his isolation illustrates a shift in his own paradigm. Football's paradigm is romanticized and revered as a strong masculine performance but when presented alongside the baseball paradigm it is abandoned or defeated. In American popular culture, the baseball paradigm is constructed as a process for living in the culture, while the football paradigm is how it was created.

A Few Good Men (1992) presents the two masculinities in direct conflict with each other, culminating in the iconic scene between Lt. Daniel Kaffee (played by Tom Cruise) and Col. Nathen Jessup (played by Jack Nicholson).¹³⁸ Kaffee challenges Jessup for breaking the law and ordering a punishment that led to a soldier's death. Jessup is unapologetic because according to him the preservation of a system of masculinity that is unforgiving and hyper aggressive is the only way to preserve the society that is convicting him of murder: "...my existence, while grotesque and incomprehensible to you, saves lives."¹³⁹ We can see the football, or warrior paradigm of masculinity being romanticized in Jessup's speech. His arrest after Jessup's challenge to Kaffee presents a paradox of masculinity in the United States. Both paradigms of masculinity are revered and practiced. Though we revere the warrior, and though we look to football as a

ritualized performance of masculinity, United States popular culture has no place for the practice of aggression in civilized society. I have presented many examples of positive images of both paradigms in popular culture and in narratives found in each sport. But when presented together, football's haven of masculinity must ultimately be abandoned so that its practitioner can return to the real world.

This work is, at its heart, a historical analysis. My examination is of images of masculinity in the twentieth and early twenty-first century; I take the concept of gender as a binary system is taken for granted in the twentieth century for the purposes of this study. These paradigms of masculinity in the early 20th century were defined in relation to white patriarchal men. I have illustrated how the dominance of two paradigms of masculinity in the United States presented a spectrum of masculine behavior and images. Moving forward there are likely to be more, and with more paradigms there will be more identities and interactions among those performing masculinity. Viewing masculinity as a constructed identity rather than a cultural norm from which other identities are judged will no doubt encourage a better understanding of the interaction between them.

As we move into the 21st century, a growing global perspective presents more influences on gender performance and views both the masculine and feminine in more fluid terms. The role of women is changing and other international paradigms of masculinity will become more influential on popular images of masculinity. Defining the paradigms for the construction of typical masculinity in Twentieth Century United States gives a strong foundation from which to track how the changes in cultural ideals and outside influences change the way we perform gender roles. On this cultural trajectory, defining gender in terms of the binary between masculine or feminine is breaking down.

Indeed, the project of defining what is masculine even in performative act or image seems outdated in current society. Investigating how those images fit into a new concept of gender will present new avenues for the study of its construction and performed identity in a new era.

¹ Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Construction: An Essay in

Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (December 1988). p520

² Peter Stearns, *Be a Man! Males in Modern Society Second Edition*, Holmes and Meier, New York: 1990.

³ There are too many citations for a complete list but a brief list of the more prominent works will suffice to evidence the importance of Stearns's work. *Masculinities* (Connell, Robert William, and Raewyn Connell. Univ of California Press, 2005), *The Myth of Masculinity* (Pleck, Joseph H. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), *The Modernization of Fatherhood: A Social and Political History* (La Rossa, Ralph. University of Chicago Press, 1997), *Speaking from the heart: Gender and the social meaning of emotion* (Shields, Stephanie A. Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁴ William L. O'Niell "Be a Man! Males in Modern Society (Book Review)." *American Historical Review* 85, no. 5 (December 1980): 1171. *Humanities International Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 15, 2017).

⁵ Derrick M. Gordon, Samuel W. Hawes, Allecia E. Reid, Tamora A. Callands, Urania Magriples, Anna Divney, Linda M. Niccolai, Trace Kershaw "The Many Faces of Manhood: Examining Masculine Norms and Health Behaviors of Young Fathers

Across Race,” *American Journal of Men’s Health*, Vol. 7, Iss. 5 (September 2013). p395

⁶ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Gosh, Boy George, You Must be Awfully Secure in Your Masculinity!” *Constructing Masculinity*, ed. Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis, and Simon Watson, Routledge (New York, 1995). p15

⁷ Peter Stearns, *Be a Man!* p104

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ Andrew Parker and Nick J. Watson “Sport and Religion: Culture, History, and Ideology,” *Movement & Sport Sciences* No. 86 (2014) p72.

¹⁰ Parker and Watson “Sport and Religion” p73. Though the story is supposedly based on the life of his brother, George Hughes, Thomas studied under Arnold when he attended Rugby from 1834 to 1841.

¹¹ Michael A. Messner, *Out of Play: Critical Essays on Gender and Sport*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007.

¹² Michael S. Kimmel, “Baseball and American Masculinity,” *Sport, Men, and Gender Order*. p57

¹³ Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, New York: Routledge, 2002 p8.

¹⁴ James Truslow Adams, *The Epic of America*, Boston, Little, Brown, and Company, 1931

¹⁵ Adams, *Epic of America*

¹⁶ Albert Spalding, *America’s National Game: Historic Facts Concerning the Beginning Evolution, Development, and Popularity of Baseball, with Personal Reminiscences of its Vicissitudes, its Victories, and its Votaries* San Francisco, CA : Halo Books, 1991. p3

¹⁷ Adams, *Epic of America*

¹⁸ Townball was a bat and ball game similar to rounders that was a popular group activity. The rules were like that of baseball, but not standardized in terms of positions or specific boundaries of play.

¹⁹ There is some discrepancy here in which some sources use the term “boys” playing, while others use “men” when describing the players of the game in question. For my purposes I have used “men” as the distinction refers to the game as a part of the players’ development into “manhood.”

²⁰ Doubleday and Cooperstown. Ken Burns

²¹ Spalding, *America’s National Game* p12.

²² *Ibid.* p14.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Michael S. Kimmel, “Baseball and American Masculinity.” p57

²⁵ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959., p21

²⁶ Grantland Rice, “Son of Swat”

²⁷ Phillip Auslander, “Performance Analysis and Popular Music: A Manifesto,” *Contemporary Theatre Review*. 2004, vol 14 iss 1. p6.

²⁸ Grantland Rice, quoted by John Evangelist Walsh in “Babe Ruth and the Legend of the Called Shot,” *The Wisconsin Magazine of History*, Vol. 77 No. 4 (Summer 1994) p248.

²⁹ Grantland Rice “Game Called” *The Best American Sports Writing of the Century*, ed. David Halberstam and Glenn Stout, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999.

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- ³⁰ *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* dir. Frank Capra, performed by James Stewart, Columbia Pictures, 1939, DVD 2008.
- ³¹ Roger Kahn “Chasing History: In pursuing the home run mark in '61, Roger Maris battled both the glare of the spotlight and the huge shadow of the Bambino” *Sports Illustrated*, 10/07/1998.
- ³² Sam Donnellon “Roger Maris: His all-around talent was overshadowed by '61 Season” *Baseball Digest*, Vol. 57 Iss. 12 (December 1998)
- ³³ Donnellon, “Roger Maris” *Baseball Digest*
- ³⁴ Roger Kahn, “Chasing History” *Sports Illustrated*
- ³⁵ Jason Catania, “A Retrospective on the Home Run Chase of 1998’s Impact on MLB” *bleacherreport.com*, September 3, 2013.
- ³⁶ Jack Curry, “Barry Bonds ball goes to the Hall, asterisk and all” *New York Times*, Wednesday July 2, 2008.
- ³⁷ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations and Simulacra* translated by Sheila Faria Glaser, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994
- ³⁸ *Bull Durham* dir. Ron Shelton, performed by Kevin Costner and Tim Robbins, Metro Goldwyn Mayer : Distributed by Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, DVD 2008.
- ³⁹ Kevin Costner and Tim Robbins, *Bull Durham*
- ⁴⁰ Susan Sarandon, *Bull Durham*
- ⁴¹ Tim Robbins, *Bull Durham*
- ⁴² There are several examples of the baseball parks being portrayed as highly sacred spaces. Some examples include the *Major League* (1989), in which Jake Tayler

(played by Tom Berenger) rounding the bases after hitting an imaginary home run, and *The Rookie* (2002) which used low angled shots of Globe Life Park in Arlington in order to make it seem larger than life when Jimmy Morris (played by Dennis Quaid) first walked in as a major league player.

⁴³ Mike Vitar, *The Sandlot*, dir. David Mickey Evans, Twentieth Century Fox 2013, DVD

⁴⁴ George Abbott and Douglass Wallop, *Damn Yankees*, Richard Adler Music and J & J Ross Co (1983). p9

⁴⁵ Abbott and Wallop, *Damn Yankees*. p39

⁴⁶ Gloria's position in the musical is similar to that of Annie Savoy in *Bull Durham*. They are both outsiders, but as observers and lovers of their respective teams, both of them offer insight that ultimately becomes the crux of their respective stories. In both *Durham* and *Yankees* the characters seem to be exceptions that prove the rule about baseball's inherent masculinity.

⁴⁷ Abbott and Wallop *Damn Yankees*. p27-29

⁴⁸ Richard Adler and Jerry Ross, "You Gotta Have Heart," in *Damn Yankees*, Richard Adler Music and J & J Ross Co (1983). p21-27

⁴⁹ Adler and Ross "Heart." *Damn Yankees* p23-24

⁵⁰ Adler and Ross "Six Months out of Every Year." *Damn Yankees* p2-8

⁵¹ Jack O'Connell, "Robinson's many peers follow his lead." mlb.com, accessed December 31, 2015.

⁵² Richard Greenberg, *Take Me Out*, Faber and Faber (Aug 2003). p7

⁵³ Greenberg, *Take Me Out*. p5

⁵⁴ Greenberg, *Take Me Out*. p5

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- ⁵⁵ Greenberg, *Take Me Out*. p7
- ⁵⁶ Greenberg, *Take Me Out*. p5-6
- ⁵⁷ Greenberg, *Take Me Out*. p25
- ⁵⁸ Greenberg, *Take Me Out*. p32
- ⁵⁹ Greenberg, *Take Me Out*. p45
- ⁶⁰ Greenberg, *Take Me Out*. p45
- ⁶¹ Tim Robbins, *Bull Durham*
- ⁶² Greenbert, *Take Me Out*. p53-54
- ⁶³ Greenberg *Take Me Out*. p51
- ⁶⁴ Greenberg *Take Me Out*. p93-95
- ⁶⁵ Greenberg *Take Me Out* p106
- ⁶⁶ Bruce Bawer, *A Place at the Table: The Gay Individual in American Society*, Simon & Schuster (New York, 1994).
- ⁶⁷ Lee Dembart, "Gay Pride and Prejudice: A PLACE AT THE TABLE: The Gay Individual in American Society, *By Bruce Bawer*" latimes.com (December 12, 1993), accessed February 29, 2016.
- ⁶⁸ Greenberg *Take Me Out*. p116
- ⁶⁹ Itamar Moses, *Back Back Back*, Faber and Faber Inc (New York, 2009). p4
- ⁷⁰ Moses, *Back Back Back*. p24-25
- ⁷¹ Moses, *Back Back Back*. p24
- ⁷² *Back Back Back* was first performed in 2008. As of that time McGwire maintained his silence about the use of steroids. In 2010 during an interview with ESPN he admitted to the use of PEDs at several points during his career. While the play

itself indirectly accuses McGwire of the use, it was not factual until two years later. For the purposes of this dissertation, McGwire's public perception is more important than whether or not he actually used PEDs and whether or not the use was unethical.

⁷³ "McGwire Apologizes to La Russa, Selig" January 12, 2010, ESPN.com news sources, accessed February 29, 2016.

⁷⁴ Craig Edwards, "What happens to Jim Edmonds and Mark McGwire after falling off the Hall of Fame Ballot?," January 7, 2016, vivaelbirdos.com, accessed January 31, 2016.

⁷⁵ Brad Pitt, *Moneyball*, dir. Bennet Miller, based on the book by Michael Lewis, performed by Brad Pitt, Los Angeles CA: Sony Pictures, 2011.

⁷⁶ Brad Pitt, *Moneyball*

⁷⁷ David Riesman and Reuel Denney, "Football in America: A Study in Cultural Diffusion," *American Quarterly*, vol. 3, no. 4 (Winter, 1951). p313-314

⁷⁸ David M. Nelson, *The Anatomy of a Game: Football, the Rules, and the Men Who Made the Game*, University of Delaware Press, (Newark: 1994). p33-34

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p34

⁸⁰ Sally Jenkins, *The Real All-Americans: The Team that Changed a Game, a People, A Nation*, New York: Doubleday, 2007.

⁸¹ Robert Krulwich and Jad Abumrod "Ghosts of Football Past" radiolab.org, accessed April 2, 2016.

⁸² There are complicated politics at play here. While Pratt may have developed his school and process in the spirit of goodwill, his slogan of "kill the Indian, save the man"

is highly problematic. Pratt wanted to remove traces of native American culture from his students, essentially whitening them so that they would better fit into what he saw as a progressive society. For each of the moments of acceptance and triumph that I will discuss, there are people who lost their ability to communicate with their families and even died due to the difficult conditions at the school.

While the school presented an option for survival for Native Americans it was not an entirely positive undertaking.

⁸³ The hidden ball trick was a play during which the quarter back would hid the football in a specially sewn pocket in the back of the running backs jersey.

⁸⁴ Theodore Roosevelt to Walter Camp, March 11, 1895, Walter Camp Papers, Yale University Archives, New Haven.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Julie Des Jardin, *Walter Camp: Football and the Modern Man*, (New York: Oxford University Press 2015). p5

⁸⁸ Jardin, *Walter Camp*. p150

⁸⁹ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959. 97.

⁹⁰ Goffman, *The Goffman Reader*, 21.

⁹¹ Louis Bien, "A complete timeline of the Ray Rice assault case," published November 28, 2014, accessed December 11, 2014, <http://www.sbnation.com/nfl/2014/5/23/5744964/ray-rice-arrest-assault-statement-apology-ravens>

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- ⁹² Bien, “A complete timeline...” sbnation.com.
- ⁹³ Eiichi Naito and Satoshi Hirose, “Efficient Foot Motor Control by Neymar’s Brain,” *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 8 (2014) accessed December 9, 2014, doi: 10.3389/fnhum.2014.00594.
- ⁹⁴ “Ray Rice Career Stats” accessed July 7, 2016,
<http://www.nfl.com/player/rayrice/941/careerstats>
- ⁹⁵ “Adrian Peterson Career Stats” accessed July 7 2016,
<http://www.nfl.com/player/adrianpeterson/2507164/careerstats>
- ⁹⁶ Dave Brown “MLB denies reinstatement of ‘Shoeless’ Joe Jackson,” September 1, 2015, accessed July 7, 2016. <http://www.cbssports.com/mlb/news/mlb-denies-reinstatement-of-shoeless-joe-jackson/>
- ⁹⁷ Bill Fleishman quoted by Eric Prisbell and Brent Schrottenboer, “Adrian Peterson avoids jail time in child abuse case,” USA Today Sports, November 4, 2014, accessed July 7, 2016.
<http://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/nfl/vikings/2014/11/04/adrian-peterson-minnesota-vikings-child-abuse-plea-deal-misdemeanor/18466197/>
- ⁹⁸ Sal Paolantonio, *How Football Explains America*, Chicago, IL: Triumph Books, 2008.
p 43.
- ⁹⁹ I use the term “persona” here as defined by Phillip Auslander in “Musical Personae” in *The Drama Review*. I discuss Auslander’s model more in depth in my previous chapter on baseball (pp. 16).
- ¹⁰⁰ Arthur Redding "Frontier Mythographies: Savagery and Civilization in Frederick Jackson Turner and John Ford." *Literature/Film Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (2007) p317.

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- ¹⁰¹ Frank S. Nugent, *The Searchers*, dir. John Ford, Warner Brothers (1956).
- ¹⁰² *The Searchers*, dir. John Ford.
- ¹⁰³ John Wayne's final performance in *The Shootist* was not directed by John Ford, but his performance was autobiographical in its parallels with Wayne's previous characters and his own personal life and public persona, much of which was developed through collaboration with John Ford. There are fruitful examinations of this performance as it relates to Wayne's understanding and acceptance of his public identity.
- ¹⁰⁴ Carl Freedman, "Post-Hetero Sexuality: John Wayne and the construction of American." *Film International* (16516826) 5, no. 1 (2007).
- ¹⁰⁵ Many of the rules of fast-pitch softball are purposefully "less" than baseball. The field of play is shorter, they play for less innings, and the ball itself is supposedly less likely to cause injury than a baseball. The name itself "soft" ball is meant to indicate a less intense version of the national pastime. Despite this however, there are parts of softball that are more difficult than baseball. The pitching for instance benefits from a shorter field of play, giving the average softball batter less time to react to a pitch than a baseball player, despite the ball travelling slightly slower. It would be worthwhile to explore a direct comparison between the two sports in another work.
- ¹⁰⁶ While broadcast on national television, the Legends Football League (formally the Lingerie Football League) does not currently pay or offer any kind of health insurance to its players. The LFL represents the closest a woman can come to participating in professional football in the United States.

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- ¹⁰⁷ John Eisendrath, *Playmakers*. ESPN Original Entertainment, Bristol, CT, 2003.
- ¹⁰⁸ James Andrew Miller and Tom Shales, *Those Guys Have All the Fun: Inside the World of ESPN*, (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2011), 821.
- ¹⁰⁹ “Playmakers Awards,” accessed December 11, 2014
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0375411/awards>
- ¹¹⁰ Richard Sandomir, “PRO FOOTBALL: Citing N.F.L. ESPN Cancels ‘Playmakers’” published February 5, 2004, accessed December 11, 2014,
<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/02/05/sports/pro-football-citing-nfl-espn-cancels-playmakers.html>
- ¹¹¹ “Ballers (TV Series 2015-),” accessed January 25, 2017
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2891574/>
- ¹¹² Brian Lowry “TV Review: Ballers,” *Variety*, 16 June 2015. p100
- ¹¹³ Evan Reilly quoted in “Ballers: Inside the Episode #4,” YouTube video, 3:16,
uploaded by HBO, 12 July 2015,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Phj_JjKk4uk
- ¹¹⁴ W. Peter Iliff. *Varsity Blues*. Directed by Brian Robbins. Performed by James Van Der Beek. United States: Paramount Pictures, 1999.
- ¹¹⁵ John Voight, *Varsity Blues*.
- ¹¹⁶ Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” *Theatre Journal*, Vol 40, No 4 (December 1988). p528
- ¹¹⁷ Amy Smart, *Varsity Blues*
- ¹¹⁸ James Van Der Beek, *Varsity Blues*

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- ¹¹⁹ Oliver Stone, *Any Given Sunday*, performed by Al Pacino, Los Angeles CA, Warner Brothers, 1999. DVD
- ¹²⁰ Ann-Margret, *Any Given Sunday*.
- ¹²¹ Charlton Heston, *Any Given Sunday*.
- ¹²² Cameron Diaz, *Any Given Sunday*.
- ¹²³ Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," *Women, Knowledge and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy*, ed. Ann Garry and Marilyn Pearsall, (New York: Routledge, 1996). 378
- ¹²⁴ *ibid.* 378
- ¹²⁵ Coincidentally, in the same year that *Any Given Sunday* was released, Diaz appeared in *Being John Malcovich* (1999) as Lotte Schwartz, wife of Craig Schwartz (played by John Cusack). Through Lotte, Diaz portrays typically feminine aspects. Lotte is a devoted wife who supports her husband and wants to start a family with him. Lotte Schwartz is like Pagniacchi, however, as Diaz's makeup and costume palette downplay her femininity, creating the same disconnect but reversed. Pagniacchi is masculine despite her feminine appearance, as Schwartz is feminine despite her masculine appearance.
- ¹²⁶ *The Godfather*. Directed by Francis Ford Coppola. By Francis Ford Coppola and Mario Puzo. Produced by Albert S. Ruddy. Performed by Al Pacino.
- ¹²⁷ "Working in the Theatre: Colossal – Olney, MD," YouTube video, 20:55, posted by "American Theatre Wing," February 24, 2015.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H5nKqMogJBY>
- ¹²⁸ Andrew Hinderaker, *Colossal*, 29.

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- ¹²⁹ Andrew Hinderaker, *Colossal*, 20 (ellipses in original).
- ¹³⁰ Andrew Hinderaker, *Colossal* 75.
- ¹³¹ A sit stand refers to the process by which a recovering patient is strapped to a therapist who uses his/her strength to assist the patient in standing. Mike's sit-stands are juxtaposed against his former self setting a personal weightlifting record.
- ¹³² Andrew Hinderaker, *Colossal*, 36-37.
- ¹³³ It is curious that they must continue to hide their sexuality. Their conversation including a mention of the changing expectations in the world of professional football, and the lamentation that "changing ain't changed" illustrates a continued anxiety about the connection between masculinity and sexuality. An exploration of performance and simultaneous denial of the homoerotic in football culture would be worthwhile in an extended version of my study.
- ¹³⁴ Andrew Hinderaker, *Colossal*, 3.
- ¹³⁵ *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence*, directed by John Ford, performed by John Stewart and John Wayne. USA: Paramount, 1962. DVD.
- ¹³⁶ *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence*, directed by John Ford, performed by Carleton Young. USA: Paramount, 1962. DVD.
- ¹³⁷ *Lethal Weapon*, directed by Richard Donner, written by Shane Black. USA: Warner Brothers, 1987. DVD 2000.
- ¹³⁸ *A Few Good Men*, directed by Rob Reiner, written by Aaron Sorkin. USA: Columbia Pictures, 1992. DVD.
- ¹³⁹ *A Few Good Men*, performed by Jack Nicholson.

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