

# Ritual in the “Church of Baseball”: Suppressing the Discourse of Democracy after 9/11

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*Baseball was among the most prominent American institutions to respond to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Tributes at ballparks across the country promised comfort to millions in shock but soon developed into rituals of victimization that affirmed the Bush administration's politics of war, discouraged the expression of dissenting opinions, and burdened the nation with yet another disincentive to reflect constructively on its response to terrorism. This essay views the aftermath of 9/11 as a quasi-religious social drama in which ballpark tributes became a ritualized vehicle for a belligerent patriotism that sought unity at the expense of democratic discourse.*

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On October 12, 2003, the Chicago Cubs and Florida Marlins played in the fifth game of baseball's National League Championship Series. Thousands of Chicago fans, hoping to see their team end a 58-year World Series drought, made their way to Miami's Pro Player Stadium and provided loyal and raucous support for the visiting Cubs. When the game reached the seventh-inning stretch, Cubs fans enthusiastically began singing “Take Me Out to the Ballgame,” but they were quickly silenced by the stadium's public address system and the remaining fans who belted out “God Bless America” instead. One fan in a Cubs hat and jersey lamented, “Come on, it's a baseball game!” Only after the public display of patriotism had subsided were Cubs fans able to perform their song.<sup>1</sup>

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These opening observations reveal more than a struggle for singing supremacy among fans. There is important symbolism located in the public discourses surrounding sport. The turn to “God Bless America” was not unique to Florida, and its significance extends beyond replacing one ritual with another.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the Cubs–Marlins playoff game is representative of a rhetorically constructed notion of patriotism that was displayed consistently in the aftermath of terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 and during the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. Given that sport has long served as an arena of political expression, it is not surprising that it was featured among the most prominent symbols of American democratic culture after 9/11.<sup>3</sup> In addition to speeches from government officials, community prayer services and vigils, and televised concerts, sport arenas generally—and baseball parks specifically—became sites of memorializing. And given the pervasiveness of sporting events, these tributes provided one of the nation’s most public and ritualized responses to September 11.<sup>4</sup>

Part of sport’s appeal is revealed by its analogous relationship to religion. Joseph Campbell argues that centuries of Enlightenment-based rationality have eroded society’s need for organized religion.<sup>5</sup> However, the mythological and cosmological order provided by religious institutions remains a human need, and many point to sport as an appropriate vehicle for a kind of religious experience. In his editor’s note to *The Gospel According to ESPN*, Jay Lovinger paraphrases Voltaire’s famous statement, arguing that if sport “mythmakers” did not exist, it would be necessary to create them.<sup>6</sup> Sociologist Harry Edwards has suggested that “if there is a universal popular religion in America, it is to be found within the institution of sport.”<sup>7</sup>

More specifically, baseball and its quasi-religious rituals are uniquely constitutive of American national identity. Joseph Price states that “baseball, as America’s national pastime, commands religious respect because its rituals and symbols manifest an underlying mythology that should be called religious.”<sup>8</sup> Given this symbolic role, baseball had a unique opportunity—perhaps responsibility—to respond to September 11. As Major League Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig claimed, “It was necessary to heed the words of President George W. Bush, who urged US citizens to return as soon as possible to their normal way of life.”<sup>9</sup> Selig’s comments were an acknowledgement that baseball performs a political function. They also hinted at the degree to which baseball may be used ideologically to discipline the notion of what is “American” and, consequently, what is not. This ideological impulse can be enacted by the sport of baseball itself, but specifically has been demonstrated in the ritual performances of tributes at ballparks after September 11, 2001.

Many sportswriters agreed with Selig’s intimation that baseball’s ceremonies of tribute—as well as providing a compelling end to the regular season and a dramatic World Series—did offer some comfort and sense of normalcy in the fall of 2001.<sup>10</sup> Larry Stone, describing fans of the Seattle Mariners, commented that:

They came to show their patriotism. They came because they love baseball, and the Mariners. They came to heal wounds and to show that terrorists couldn’t stop them from coming. Some came with trepidation, many bathed in red, white and blue regalia, all with heavy hearts and cluttered minds that were finally ready for diversion.<sup>11</sup>

Stone's comments reflect the popular opinion that sport is about recreation and diversion.<sup>12</sup> However, September 11 tributes continued in baseball and other sports well past any time during which sport might reasonably have been called strictly diversionary. In fact, the ritual performances of ballpark tributes served to spotlight terrorism and the continuing American response, thereby ceasing to divert attention at all. Moreover, as baseball became a ritualistic performance of American faith and patriotism, it supported George W. Bush's declaration of war against evil and the subsequent invasion of Iraq.

My purpose is to examine the ways in which the "national pastime" functioned rhetorically after 9/11 and the US invasion of Iraq to constitute national unity—a unity that threatened, ironically, the very democracy it sought to preserve. These quasi-religious rituals of ballpark tributes helped to transform the communal healing process into an endorsement of the politics of war. They were enacted in a larger rhetorical context of defining national unity in opposition to "evil" or "evil-doers," thus contributing to what Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe call a "radical otherness."<sup>13</sup> As Jacob Torfing states, "Our political actions will tend to be guided by the illusion that the annihilation of the antagonistic force will permit us to become the fully constituted 'we' that we have always sought to be."<sup>14</sup>

Ballpark rituals participated in a discursive formation that defined Americans not only by who they are, but by who they are not.<sup>15</sup> Understood as a constitutive force of American identity, baseball helped reproduce the boundaries that define what it means to be "American" and justified further the need for a foreign policy motivated by (real or imaginary) external dangers.<sup>16</sup> Although baseball did not act alone in this construction, it did play a significant role in the social drama. And since baseball is so often viewed as a symbolic expression of what *is* American, its role extended far beyond simply healing, or providing a "diversion."<sup>17</sup> At stake in this rhetorical construction is a concern about democratic practice in public culture. As a growing number of scholars argue, democratic expression increasingly is at risk of being silenced in the name of consensus and unity.<sup>18</sup> This "mistaken emphasis on consensus," as Mouffe calls it, was on display in the baseball ceremonies that symbolically invited observers to stand by a restricted interpretation of America and its foreign policy.<sup>19</sup> As this study argues, ritual ceremonies at baseball games after September 11 may be understood as an assurance of a particular social order in support of a presidential rhetoric of war. In the process, they fostered a unity that suppressed the discourse of democracy.

### **Social Drama and Ritual**

Eric Rothenbuhler claims that "ritual is seen as an expression of social order that has the power to constitute it, and therefore functions in creating, maintaining, and adapting it."<sup>20</sup> But in order to evaluate baseball rituals as constitutive—and re-constitutive—of social order, it is useful to understand ritual in dramatistic terms. Kenneth Burke offers drama as the defining metaphor for understanding human motivation and action.<sup>21</sup> He is concerned primarily with the ways in which people use

symbols to act within, or even to transform, a designated hierarchy or social order. In particular, when we face doubts about a given social hierarchy, we look to rituals of purification as a response.<sup>22</sup> Too often, we do this through a “victimage” ritual, in which a scapegoat emerges as “the sacrificial animal upon whose back the burden of these evils is ritualistically loaded.”<sup>23</sup>

Burke’s notion of the scapegoat is similar to the “radical otherness” described by Laclau and Mouffe. As Mouffe argues, the production of an absolute antagonist creates a misguided belief that we can achieve a unity that preserves the hierarchical order. Although a certain degree of political consensus is desirable within democratic culture, she claims that “conflicts and confrontations, far from being a sign of imperfection, indicate that democracy is alive and inhabited by pluralism.”<sup>24</sup> The health of a democracy, therefore, depends on its dramatic enactment as a robust field of contested opinion. To this end, Douglas Lummis suggests that “democracy exists only as a practice, not in specific liberal institutions, and therefore must be exercised vigorously to get and stay healthy.”<sup>25</sup> Discourse that produces an absolute sense of “us” or “them” threatens democratic pluralism.

Indeed, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, democratic pluralism suffered. Robert Ivie argues that the Bush administration used a rhetoric of evil in order to “trump” any legitimate discourse that might question the need for war.<sup>26</sup> Bush and others, meanwhile, ironically claimed that both their words and actions were advancing the cause of democracy. This claim was supported symbolically by a turn to the American flag and US Constitution as democratic representations that made America strong as well as a target for terrorism. The use of such symbols frequently was ritualized, for ritual as a form of action in social drama typically is motivated as a response to a conflict or crisis.<sup>27</sup>

Yet, the concept of ritual itself is “complex, even contradictory.”<sup>28</sup> At its most fundamental level, ritual functions as the performance of a broader mythology. Historically, rituals have existed as a means of affirming religious values and practices, and so have provided the dramatic enactment of “one of the essential elements of religious life.”<sup>29</sup> Bruce Lincoln suggests further that “among the many aspects of religion that promote social integration perhaps none is more powerful and important than ritual.”<sup>30</sup> Contemporary social mythology, meanwhile, still exists to provide stories that “explain something” or solve some kind of problem.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, they establish hierarchical social relations and “are also concerned with distinguishing local identities, ordering social differences, and controlling the contention and negotiation involved in the appropriation of symbols.”<sup>32</sup> Rituals not only may affirm values and norms but also may become instruments of political or ideological control.

To this extent, we can view ritual as “a control and container for human action.”<sup>33</sup> Some have noted that ritual can be used as a method of manipulation, while others have argued that ritual is problematic because it is intrinsically conservative in nature.<sup>34</sup> However, the effect of ritual may work only if there is active participation from those who receive and interpret its invitation.<sup>35</sup> When this occurs, the persuasive potential of myth is powerful. As Joachim Knuf suggests, “Participation in ritual is tantamount to a subjection to its intent. The implementation of the ritual action plan

therefore involves participants in forms of behavior that not only symbolize a certain order of the world but execute this order."<sup>36</sup> However, as James Ettema points out, part of the complexity of ritual is the fact that participants need not passively accept it, and they can instead resist or oppose its performance.<sup>37</sup> The power of baseball rituals, then, ultimately depends on their acceptance or rejection by the community. Following 9/11, ballpark tributes became ritualized to the extent that they articulated a delimited definition of a people and its enemies, compelled millions of fans to submit to quasi-religious performances, and consequently restricted democratic deliberation.

### **A New National Religion?**

Rituals, of course, are found beyond the traditional institutions of organized religion. They also are manifest in social and cultural arrangements often labeled as "civil religion." As Robert Bellah argues, civil religion is a uniquely American attempt to create public rituals and symbols that are "perfectly in accord with the will of God."<sup>38</sup> In an essay responding to reactions to 9/11, Carolyn Marvin notes that civil religion—a term she views synonymously with patriotism or nationalism—"may be the most authentic religion in the modern West."<sup>39</sup> In addition, she suggests that civil religion is most visible at moments of crisis and warns of its dangers:

US civil religion does do things. It kills. It commands sacrifice. It transforms infants, non-believers, and converts from other national faiths into Americans. It even mobilizes churches, synagogues, and mosques. It offers patriotic instruction in efficacious spells and rituals that believers will put to work when crisis comes.<sup>40</sup>

When the crisis came after 9/11, perhaps no institution better embodied civil religion than that of sport.

### *The Mythology of Sport*

Steven Overman declares that "in a secular culture where sport often acts as a form of civil religion, public sports ceremonies have displaced religious ones."<sup>41</sup> Sport, in fact, long has played a notable role in the reflection, construction, and maintenance of American cultural values.<sup>42</sup> Echoing Overman, scholars from various disciplines have identified the mythical and religious imagery often attributed to sport. Richard Powers, for example, notes that "sports have their myths, legends, and historical figures; their hierarchy of leaders and followers; their greater and lesser saints and demons; their ethical systems and arcana of mystical discipline."<sup>43</sup> Harry Edwards observes that "sport has a body of formally stated beliefs . . . its ruling patriarchs . . . its 'gods'—star and superstar athletes . . . its shrines . . . [and] its 'houses of worship' spread across the land where millions congregate to bear witness to the manifestation of their faith."<sup>44</sup> More explicitly, Shirl J. Hoffman claims that "sports events take on properties of rituals and, like the rituals of religion, may reinforce the community's commitment to society's core values."<sup>45</sup> Varda Burstyn adds that "more than any other church, sport and its associations have become the great cultural unifiers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries."<sup>46</sup>

In 1976, *Sports Illustrated* writer Frank Deford speculated that a nationwide decline in church attendance could be attributed to the rise of professional football (played primarily on Sundays). He also remarked that Karl Marx himself would see modern sport as the “opiate” of the masses.<sup>47</sup> Deford’s claim illustrates a crucial point: that sport is not merely a *reflection* of culture, but that it functions ideologically to *produce* and *reproduce* culture, including political culture. George Sage argues that specifically in the United States “sport inculcates values and norms that bolster the legitimacy of the American political system. National loyalty and patriotism are fostered through sport rituals and ceremonies that link sport and nationalism.” He adds that sport is a means of social control because “anything that is not in agreement with the reigning hegemony is censured.”<sup>48</sup> Others agree that sport is a dramatic enactment of patriotism and nationalism, and, as Burstyn summarizes, “this ritual practice generates and sustains a mythology . . . that is ideologically laden.”<sup>49</sup> While all sports manifest ideology, they do not do so equally.

### *The “Church of Baseball”*

More than any other sport, baseball embodies the mythology and ideology of American culture. It has the deepest history of the nation’s major sports and has long been referred to as the “American game” or the “national pastime.”<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, it is a celebration of “rugged individualism” and “American exceptionalism,” a myth in which “citizens regard the American way of life as though it were somehow chosen by God, uniquely important to the history of the human race.”<sup>51</sup> It is a myth that privileges American hegemony and further defines outside threats to America. It can be heard in the words of the President, who declared, in his 2003 State of the Union address, that “this call of history has come to the right country. . . . The liberty we prize is not America’s gift to the world, it is God’s gift to humanity.”<sup>52</sup> American exceptionalism takes its form in the traditions and character of the game of baseball, and in the ballpark itself, which provides a pastoral sanctuary from the world outside.<sup>53</sup> Given that baseball’s history complements the nation’s history, and that it is played on a daily basis, the game’s capacity for ritual and symbolic expression is, indeed, unique.

While baseball—its history and imagery—is rooted in cultural mythology, it has a distinctly religious quality as well. This quality frequently has been illustrated, and occasionally exploited, in baseball literature and film. The movie *Bull Durham*, for example—recently identified as the “greatest sports movie of all time” by *Sports Illustrated*—opens with a soliloquy from baseball mystic Annie Savoy, in which she concludes, “The only church that truly feeds the soul, day in, day out, is the church of baseball.”<sup>54</sup> The beauty of the line is that it reveals the ritual quality of playing the game every day, something no other sport can claim. Baseball’s religious appeal resides in its serenity, in the fact that games are played in “cathedrals,” and in its heavy reliance on ritual that rivals even religious services.<sup>55</sup>

The specific rituals of baseball enable the game to provide a religious experience for its daily congregation of fans. As Charles Prebish notes, “No religious service would be complete without ritual chants and hymns” such as “Take Me Out to the Ballgame.”<sup>56</sup>

The opening "hymn"—the national anthem—debuted before baseball games toward the end of World War I and became institutionalized during World War II when teams scheduled the anthem for every game in order to "show their patriotism."<sup>57</sup> These acts provide a communal experience and produce a unity among the participants. The game and the season are performed in accordance with a strict liturgy that guides not only actions on the field, but the values that allow them to be interpreted.<sup>58</sup> The field itself undergoes "consecration" rituals before the game can be played.<sup>59</sup> But perhaps it is the reassurance baseball grants us that is its most powerful ritual. As Tom Boswell states, "Baseball is the religion that worships the obvious and gives thanks that things are exactly as they seem."<sup>60</sup> This statement hints at the ideological effect baseball can have, which is further summarized by Michael Novak when he claims that "baseball is as close a liturgical enactment of the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant myth as the nation has."<sup>61</sup>

I do not mean to suggest here that baseball *is* religion. It is a game and a business. But, overly romanticized notions about the game's spiritual inspirations notwithstanding, the clarity of religious imagery in baseball gives it a quasi-religious symbolic power. It is a power that can guide values and provide social order, and consequently can be a convenient tool of political ideology as well. In Richard Crepeau's assessment of baseball during World War II, "it may seem far-fetched to suggest a link between baseball and the foreign policy of the United States, yet as the National Pastime baseball was linked to all aspects of American life."<sup>62</sup>

Others support Crepeau's assertion, and do not find it far-fetched at all. Colin Grant argues that "the singing of national anthems prior to the beginning of professional games is a further indication of the link between sport and the modern religion of nationalism."<sup>63</sup> Dan Nimmo and James Combs add that "the dramaturgy of the pregame patriotic ritual . . . invokes a sense of communal unity and deference to the political values symbolized by the game."<sup>64</sup>

Those values that baseball symbolizes are culturally conservative, just as are the rituals that preserve them. Jane Forbes Clark, Chairman of the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, illustrates these values and their historical relationship. "Reaching across generations and bridging different heritages," Clark states, "baseball embodies fair play, ingenuity, and teamwork—core attributes of the American character. Baseball serves as a common legacy of a diverse people—it truly is our national game."<sup>65</sup> Because baseball's history is deeply connected to the nation's history, it possesses a capacity for a nostalgic idealization of American society.<sup>66</sup> As many scholars have noted, moments of crisis often lead to a turn toward nostalgia.<sup>67</sup> While this move need not necessarily be ideologically conservative in force, the link to values and attitudes of the past is more conveniently appropriated by a conservative politics.<sup>68</sup>

This point deserves further attention given the shift toward conservatism in American politics that has occurred in the past thirty years. Stephen Depoe, in his history of American liberalism, suggests that the return of the Republican right as symbolized by Ronald Reagan was based, in part, on defining Democrats as the party of moral lassitude.<sup>69</sup> The perception that Democrats—therefore, liberals—were morally bankrupt, coupled with the attacks against "tax and spend" policies, catapulted conservative politics into the mainstream. Embedded in this conservative philosophy is

a privileging of “orthodox and traditional religious values.”<sup>70</sup> This is displayed regularly by President George W. Bush, who campaigned in 2000 on a platform of “compassionate conservatism,” an ideology that explicitly draws on religion and what Bush calls “faith-based” initiatives.<sup>71</sup> In addition, political conservatism privileges “traditional cultural values” and a “nationalistic or patriotic spirit.”<sup>72</sup>

It is at this point that ideas about religion, ritual, nation, and baseball converge. Rothenbuhler argues that patriotism and nationalism function religiously, and that the use of national symbols at sporting events embodies the power of ritual. Highlighting the religious quality of these events, he observes:

A church, its architecture and furnishings, special times for attendance, special clothes and manners of conduct, the activities that begin, conduct, and conclude a service, are all rituals . . . that allow controlled contact with the sacred forces of a community. These same structures can be observed in nationalist and patriotic ceremonies.<sup>73</sup>

Given its capacity to demonstrate a simultaneously religious and political disposition, it is of little surprise that an institution like baseball would play such a prominent role in the healing process after the September 11 attacks.

### **Baseball Tributes and Ritual Drama**

The terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, DC were unprecedented in their scope and their effect on the American public.<sup>74</sup> On the evening of September 11, 2001, President Bush opened his remarks to the nation as follows:

Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts. The victims were in airplanes, or in their offices; secretaries, businessmen and women, military and federal workers; moms and dads, friends and neighbors. Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror.<sup>75</sup>

Bush’s initial words did much to frame subsequent discussions and reactions to the attacks. Immediately, he framed the issue in terms of good and evil, a theme he featured consistently thereafter. He also made clear the degree to which the American “way of life,” and therefore the social order, had been shaken. It became morally imperative, therefore, for an American response that could affirm the hierarchical order. Within this context, baseball can be seen as a part of such a rhetorical effort. In the process, ballpark tributes moved from healing ritual to a potential exercise in ideology that could preserve a privileged interpretation of national identity.

### *Playing Ball After the Attacks*

Following the 9/11 attacks, Commissioner Bud Selig contemplated how quickly Major League Baseball should return to regularly scheduled games. “I’ve agonized over this,” he stated. “I wanted to do what was the socially right, responsible thing. I was under a lot of pressure. Everybody had different opinions.”<sup>76</sup> Selig ultimately chose the following Monday, September 17, as the date to resume play. Erik Brady of *USA Today*

foregrounded the extent of baseball's role after the tragedy by stating that "the national pastime served as an international rallying point in Pittsburgh and five other North American cities Monday when baseball returned after a self-imposed 6 days of darkness."<sup>77</sup> While baseball's international influence may be overstated here, it is clear that the game was to be seen as an instrument of healing. Selig himself commented at the time that "we are a social institution. As such, I hope that the game, and the games, will contribute to the nation moving forward, to helping people."<sup>78</sup> Further, the attitude of the players, as expressed by Trot Nixon of the Boston Red Sox, was that they could "be part of the antidote for all of this stuff because the game can take some of the focus off all of the tragedy."<sup>79</sup>

In order to become such an antidote, baseball did more than simply return to the field. Each organization made elaborate plans to provide religious-like ritual experiences that would heighten a sense of national unity. In Denver, for example:

The plan, according to Colorado Rockies owner Jerry McMorris, is to have the flag held up by players, coaches and managers from both the Rockies and Arizona Diamondbacks. Perhaps, as a sign of national unity, the players will be intertwined. . . . In the stands, every fan can wave the miniature US flag they received as they entered the stadium. Everyone will sing the national anthem together.<sup>80</sup>

Once the games actually began, these themes were displayed prominently in ballparks across the country. In Pittsburgh, the Air Force Reserves sang the national anthem.<sup>81</sup> In Boston, players wore jerseys with sewn-in American flags and fans received cardboard placards with the flag on one side and "God Bless America" on the other.<sup>82</sup> Even Canada was involved "as fans at SkyDome [in Toronto] and Montreal's Olympic Stadium were handed miniature versions of Old Glory at the gates."<sup>83</sup>

One of the more elaborate ceremonies took place in what is often called the best baseball town in America, St. Louis, where "as area firefighters unfurled a huge American flag in center field, a video tribute was played on the scoreboard accompanied by the chilling Lee Greenwood song, 'Proud to be an American.'"<sup>84</sup> While the "hymns" and symbols of these rituals created a sense of religious ceremony, others specifically noted the role of individual actors in the drama. *Boston Globe*, sportswriter Bill Griffith commented on the St. Louis ceremony in this way:

Legendary Cardinals broadcaster Jack Buck stood proud and symbolic before 30,528 fans at Busch Stadium to welcome baseball back into the fabric of American life. . . . Buck's place in the game's history was secure long before last night, but after conducting a ceremony that will be seared into the memories of all who watched, he became the Billy Graham of baseball.<sup>85</sup>

The image of broadcaster as clergyman further invoked religious ritual. And given the extent to which Americans had been affected by September 11, these rituals, it would seem, helped "inspire the United States through one of its greatest periods of patriotism."<sup>86</sup> As Frank Deford wrote, "In times of widespread grief, such as now, a sporting event can provide . . . group catharsis. A game can serve a certain larger community as a wake does family and friends."<sup>87</sup>

Meanwhile, the National Football League held its own Sunday rituals of tribute. Football's ceremonies were similar to those in baseball in that they included moments of silence, large flags, and communal hymns. But because baseball was played every day, ballpark tributes quickly became the more familiar ritual. As such, they became transformative acts, where rituals of grief and tribute evolved into rituals of nationalism and support for the president. The 2001 World Series—played partially in New York—was an early display of this national fervor. Malcolm Moran of *USA Today* described the scene in Yankee Stadium for the third game of the series:

With his nation under the latest alert for a terrorist attack, President Bush, aiming to project an air of normalcy, strode to the mound Tuesday night at Yankee Stadium to make the most symbolic pitch of any World Series. . . . As extended cheers descended and cameras flashed, Bush, wearing a blue FDNY jacket in tribute to the New York City Fire Department, gave a thumbs-up. After a moment's pause, he threw a looping strike to Yankees backup catcher Todd Greene. The crowd of more than 57,000 responded with a unified chant of "USA, USA, USA."<sup>88</sup>

In his book *Bush at War*, Bob Woodward also references this moment. As he describes the above scene, he observes how one of the president's chief advisors responded to the unity of the crowd. "Watching from owner George Steinbrenner's box," he writes, "Karl Rove thought, It's like being at a Nazi rally."<sup>89</sup> Rove's reaction does not necessarily mean that the Bush administration intentionally orchestrated these ceremonies to achieve political ends. However, it is an acknowledgement that baseball could perform rhetorically a politics of affirmation for the president's foreign policy.

As the season came to an end in November, President Bush himself referenced the importance of baseball ritual: "People are going about their daily lives, working and shopping and playing, worshipping at churches and synagogues and mosques, going to movies and to baseball games."<sup>90</sup> This return to normalcy represented a return to order, one which, in part at least, was articulated through the rituals of baseball. By season's end, certain elements of the ballpark tributes could be characterized as fixed ritual: "God Bless America" replaced "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" as the preferred hymn; large American flags were unfurled in the middle of the playing field; majestic bald eagles flew about the stadium; American fighter planes screamed across the sky; and fans knew to bring pre-made signs of tribute, ready for their chance to show their patriotism on television.<sup>91</sup>

### *Baseball "Shall Not Forget"*

By the time baseball began its 2002 season, President Bush had made clear that in order to heal as a nation, Americans needed to remember September 11 and focus on the "war on terrorism." On the six-month anniversary of the attacks, the president stated, "We have come together to mark a terrible day, to reaffirm a just and vital cause, and to thank the many nations that share our resolve and will share our common victory. . . . America will not forget the lives that were taken, and the justice their death requires."<sup>92</sup> Bush had made the "we will not forget" theme the subject of previous speeches, and Major League Baseball (MLB) used nearly identical language

when it commemorated the anniversary of September 11.<sup>93</sup> While the National Football League kicked off its season with a September 5 game in New York, and the New York-based US Open tennis tournament paid tribute in the two weeks leading up to the anniversary, only baseball had games scheduled on September 11, 2002.

Baseball's theme that day was "We Shall Not Forget," echoing Bush's words. While each team's organization planned tributes at their discretion in 2001, the anniversary tribute was a unified effort by the league comprising several rituals. All fans received a t-shirt with an emblem featuring a red, white, and blue ribbon, MLB's logo, and the phrase, "We Shall Not Forget." These same images also were on fences, bases, and line-up cards, and each game held a moment of silence at 9:11 P.M. or during the seventh-inning stretch at day games. Following the moment of silence, stadium scoreboards played a video tribute, also titled, "We Shall Not Forget." Later, "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" again was sacrificed for "God Bless America."<sup>94</sup> In addition to these rituals, President Bush sent a letter to each stadium to be read before the start of the game. His message included the reminder that baseball had been "an important part of the healing process."<sup>95</sup>

Of these standardized rituals, perhaps the MLB video was most striking. It began with the terrifying images from September 11, 2001. Over these images appeared the words, "One year ago . . . a nation mourned . . . and then . . . the healing began." The last line appeared at the top of the image of an empty Yankee Stadium as the camera then moved to open blue sky. A series of images followed that included Cardinals announcer Jack Buck, the sounds of fans chanting "USA! USA!" and President Bush throwing his ceremonial first pitch in New York. Next, Chicago Cubs outfielder Sammy Sosa ran onto the screen with a miniature American flag, and the final text appeared: "We play . . . But . . . we shall not forget." The final line overlapped an image of the New York City skyline, with the World Trade Center towers intact. The video then closed with an image of the American flag.<sup>96</sup>

MLB's video contained multiple messages, which began with religious symbolism and then shifted to politically inflected images. The framing of the shot of Yankee Stadium elicited the idea that a ballpark is a kind of cathedral (in this case, *the* great cathedral of baseball), and the subsequent shot to the bright blue heavens suggested it was under divine guidance. The image of Buck recalled the earlier reference to the broadcaster as the "Billy Graham of baseball."<sup>97</sup> President Bush evoked confidence and strength, and the red, white, and blue were clear patriotic reminders. The sequence with Sammy Sosa was especially significant. Sosa reached celebrity status during the 1998 season, in which he and established superstar Mark McGwire chased baseball's single-season home-run record. Sosa was born in the Dominican Republic but became an American citizen in 1995 and thus symbolizes one interpretation of the American dream.<sup>98</sup> It is not unreasonable to read this sequence as tacit support for Bush and his vision of America. After all, if Sosa (through the symbolic link of the flag) supported the president, how could any patriot do otherwise?

Although MLB produced this video and dictated the details of the anniversary ceremonies, they did allow teams some latitude, which was most evident in New York during the game between the Baltimore Orioles and New York Yankees. Since Washington, DC did not have a major league baseball team, the Orioles were its default

franchise. The symbolism of having these two teams playing each other on September 11, 2002 was punctuated by the game's prime-time telecast on ESPN. Given this featured coverage, it is important to recognize the role of the media in performing and presenting these baseball rituals. David Rowe argues that national governments keenly invest in sport and televised sport "because of the highly effective way in which sport can contribute to nation building."<sup>99</sup> This vital linkage leads Rowe and his colleagues to view the "sport-nationalism-media troika" as a principal agent of communicating political ideology.<sup>100</sup> Like the fans at ballpark tributes, millions—perhaps even billions—of television viewers were exposed to the rituals.<sup>101</sup>

The New York pre-game ceremony began with the dedication of a memorial called "We Remember," which was unveiled in Yankee Stadium's famed Monument Park.<sup>102</sup> It featured the flag preserved from the World Trade Center, and the national anthem sung by the Boys Choir of Harlem. But the rituals also took on a distinct political quality, as evidenced by sportswriter Tyler Kepner's summary:

Representatives from the Army, the Navy, the Air Force and the Marines stood in the outfield, and the Yankees and Orioles stood on the baselines, arranged at random, during the ceremony. Challenger, the bald eagle featured prominently last October, took his place on the mound, though he did not swoop in from center field as usual. When four Navy F-18 Hornets flew over the stadium after the anthem, the applause reached its peak.<sup>103</sup>

The ritualized nature of these actions, as well as the solemnity of the occasion, allowed the ceremony to retain its quasi-religious character, while the symbols of military prowess and the prominence of nationalist imagery transformed the ceremony into a political statement. It served as a political rally just one day before President Bush spoke to the United Nations about a possible invasion of Iraq.<sup>104</sup> Just as the "war on terrorism" had shifted from Afghanistan to Iraq, ballpark tributes shifted from a ritual of healing to a ritual of rallying political support for a policy of war. In so doing, they helped to normalize Bush's rhetorical efforts and to reduce the likelihood of political opposition.

Throughout the fall of 2002, Bush continued his push for an invasion of Iraq.<sup>105</sup> Meanwhile, ballpark tributes continued as well. When the 2002 American League Division Series between the Anaheim Angels and the New York Yankees began on October 1, little seemed to justify the need for another ceremony, save for the New York location. October 1 has no significance for the events, a divisional playoff series pales in consequence to the World Series, and even the ceremony itself was symbolically awkward in the choice to have "God Bless America" sung by Ronan Tynan—an *Irish* tenor.<sup>106</sup> Game two on October 2 saw a virtual copy of the ceremony from the night before. As long as baseball was being played in New York, the tributes remained at a high profile. But the World Series between the Angels and San Francisco Giants moved the spotlight exclusively to California, far away from the scars of the terrorist attacks. Distance, in both time and miles, may have diluted the tributes to some degree. However, the World Series still featured the ritual pageantry of red, white, and blue, and singing the now-seemingly permanent "God Bless America" during the seventh-inning stretch.<sup>107</sup>

Just as it appeared that the momentum of these ceremonies was waning, the United States began military operations in Iraq on March 19, 2003.<sup>108</sup> To emphasize the need for unity, President Bush asserted that "division among us will only convince Saddam Hussein that he is right."<sup>109</sup> Coincidentally, the 2003 baseball season began less than two weeks later. Bud Selig again recognized baseball's role under these political circumstances. "I'm very proud of the role baseball played after 9/11 and through the World Series," he said. "It was magnificent. And I believe strongly that in its own way, baseball will be good for our country now."<sup>110</sup>

ESPN opened the season on March 30 with a broadcast of the world champion Anaheim Angels playing host to the Texas Rangers.<sup>111</sup> The game featured the predictable chants of "USA! USA!" and the display of a giant American flag. A new twist on the ritual added an enormous "U-S-A" specially mowed into the outfield grass. Other ballparks followed suit. Cincinnati, opening its aptly named Great American Ballpark, placed small American flags in every seat, welcomed performances by Lee Greenwood ("Proud to be an American") and Daniel Rodriguez ("The Singing Policeman"), and invited former President George H.W. Bush to throw out the first pitch, in "a pregame ceremony heavy on symbolism supporting the troops fighting in Iraq."<sup>112</sup> In Florida, "An American flag with the words OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM adorned the wall in left field . . . and a moment of silence was observed for those who have died in the war."<sup>113</sup> Once again, baseball's symbols invited fans to unite behind the administration and its politics of war. As Cincinnati Reds manager Bob Boone suggested, "Baseball has always been at the root . . . of things that have brought the country together."<sup>114</sup>

By the end of the 2003 season, millions of baseball fans had witnessed not only solemn tributes to those affected by September 11, but also a ritualized exercise in American patriotism and nationalism that coincided with the Bush administration's call to extend its "war on terrorism" into Iraq. Whether Bush consciously used baseball as a site for generating public support for war or Commissioner Selig intentionally sought to manipulate millions of baseball fans cannot be determined. But the rituals of flag waving, singing patriotic songs, and standing in tribute to military personnel and machinery clearly articulated a conforming attitude of assent.

### **Ritual and Resistance**

It would be a mistake to argue that ballpark rituals by themselves framed American discussions about September 11, the "war on terrorism," and the invasion of Iraq. It would be equally naïve to ignore the powerful role that baseball played in the nation's political drama. Although these rituals by themselves could not have guaranteed public support for a war in Iraq, they contributed rhetorically to the Bush administration's efforts to suppress democratic discourse and limit dissent. While dissent was not absent from public discourse about the war, it was rarely found within the cathedrals and culture of baseball.

Despite protests against Bush's policies in Afghanistan and Iraq, baseball appeared to give the administration its full support, even if only tacitly. During televised games,

broadcasters typically were solemn and offered frequent statements of support for American troops overseas. Following the MLB video on September 11, 2002, ESPN's Chris Berman called it "one of the most poignant moments at a ballpark you will ever see."<sup>115</sup> The multiple shots of the crowd seemed to confirm that the spectators shared his sentiment. In fact, in the hundreds of baseball games that were shown on various local and network channels, fans consistently displayed emotions of reflection and sorrow regarding September 11 or pride and resolve regarding the ongoing military response.<sup>116</sup>

Further, there apparently are no journalistic reports of protest or public opposition to any of these ceremonies. As for the opposition to an Iraqi invasion that took place on the streets of American cities, baseball's response can be summarized by Yankees pitcher Roger Clemens: "It upsets me a little bit that people aren't fully behind these men and women," he said. "This is a time when you want to rally and get behind people."<sup>117</sup> In general, baseball players were most likely to agree with such sentiments, as seen in the words of Diamondbacks pitcher Curt Schilling, who after the terrorist attacks wrote "God Bless America" inside his cap "because I can. It's one of the great things about being an American: We're allowed to express ourselves."<sup>118</sup> Evidently, this is a great thing so long as it supports the political status quo. In fact, the only visible initial protest from within the entire arena of sport seems to have come not from baseball, but from women's college basketball, where Toni Smith from Manhattanville College in New York showed her disapproval of the Bush administration by turning her back on the American flag during the national anthem throughout the 2002–2003 season.<sup>119</sup>

Through the 2003 season, baseball's closest brush with political protest developed over a scheduled tribute to *Bull Durham* to be held at the Baseball Hall of Fame in April, 2003. The Hall's president, Dale Petroskey, cancelled the ceremony because he feared that two of the film's stars, Susan Sarandon and Tim Robbins, would use it as a platform to continue their vocal protests against Bush and the war in Iraq. In a letter to the actors, Petroskey stated that "we believe your very public criticism of President Bush at this important—and sensitive—time in our nation's history helps undermine the US position, which ultimately could put our troops in even more danger."<sup>120</sup> Sportswriters were critical of the decision, lamenting that "speech isn't always free and dissent isn't always allowed."<sup>121</sup>

Ironically, it was only after this controversy that some acknowledged possible problems with ballpark tributes. Sportswriter Gwen Knapp, for example, said of military flyovers before games that "the ritual is fundamentally disrespectful to military operations. The presence of those planes at a sporting event trivializes their real purpose."<sup>122</sup> But still no one in the media argued at the time that the rituals in general were misplaced.<sup>123</sup> In the meantime, Petroskey issued an apology—though he did not reinstate the celebration—and Robbins remarked, "Actually, I had looked forward to going to [the Hall of Fame] and getting away from politics."<sup>124</sup> It is clear, however, that the only way to avoid politics in baseball was to avoid baseball itself.

Another incident from the 2001 season illustrates just how difficult it would have been to resist these rituals. In a game between the Cincinnati Reds and Milwaukee Brewers, most Reds players were caught unprepared for the seventh-inning rendition of

"God Bless America" in Milwaukee's Miller Park. While the Brewers players and coaches lined up on the top step of their dugout, only a handful of Reds were found on theirs. Cincinnati's broadcasters Marty Brennaman and Joe Nuxhall were embarrassed and upset. After they expressed their frustration on the air, the Reds' front office was inundated with emails, and Cincinnati sports radio was the site of a heated public debate. Manager Bob Boone responded angrily that "the uproar was because our announcers said it was an uproar. I guess our guys are not patriotic? That's crap and I resent that. . . . I resent the implication that my team is not a patriotic team. I resent it very much."<sup>125</sup> Boone's reaction revealed the deeply embedded perception that in order to be appropriately American, one must be publicly patriotic. In such an interpretation, any dissent was seen not as democratic expression, but as being un-American.

Accusations of being un-American prompted a rare critique of ballpark tributes, which occurred during the 2003 American League Divisional Playoff series between the New York Yankees and Minnesota Twins. When Twins manager Ron Gardenhire suggested that the lengthy seventh-inning stretch ceremonies at Yankee Stadium were adversely affecting his pitchers, Yankees owner George Steinbrenner questioned his patriotism. "He was critical of us in New York, because we spent too long celebrating America," Steinbrenner said. "And I'll fight him on that any day."<sup>126</sup> In response, Filip Bondy of the *New York Daily News* criticized the excessive display of patriotism during games at Yankee Stadium:

Soldiers of war march all over the field before the game, unfolding a giant flag. Rudy Giuliani . . . is introduced as "America's Mayor." An eagle flies across the Stadium. The eagle is supposed to represent freedom, but he is trained to fly nowhere, to his handler on the mound. In the seventh inning, we are told to stand and offer a moment of silence in remembrance of our armed forces. Again, if you dare to feel uncomfortable, if you think this is not the place or time for such introspection, you're un-American. . . . Ronan Tynan sings a stirring rendition of "God Bless America" that lasts forever, that belongs anywhere but between innings of a baseball game. None of this creeping nationalism has anything to do with baseball.<sup>127</sup>

Bondy's sharp tirade expressed a frustration that undoubtedly was felt by other fans and observers of baseball. Unfortunately, it is an opinion that too rarely was made public.

Steinbrenner's attempt to discipline Gardenhire into acceptable patriotic behavior is an additional indicator of the logic of ballpark rituals. Rothenbuhler suggests that rituals require voluntary participation but also acknowledges that "almost always, rituals are accompanied by a certain social compulsion. The costs that result from choosing not to participate may be such that we do not experience certain rituals as voluntary."<sup>128</sup> When Gardenhire questioned the need for an elaborate ceremony, it was not unlike questioning the integrity of a religious liturgy. Similarly, the Reds players who inadvertently missed a song of tribute may as well have skipped Holy Communion. And as the Cubs fans in Miami found out, singing the wrong hymn can quickly be overcome by more powerful voices. These parallels are not meant to overstate baseball's analogous relationship to religion. They should make clear, however, that the sanctity of the ballpark (as cathedral) constructed and constrained modes of participation during ballpark tributes.

From the resumption of play in September, 2001 to the end of the 2003 baseball season, there were thousands of ritualized performances of nationalism. They varied in length and scope but shared several common characteristics. Most notably, each of them featured a defiant and reactionary patriotism that all but eliminated the possibility for disunity. Fans, players, and organizations turned to comforting personalities like Jack Buck, boastful American anthems like “Proud to be an American,” passionate chants of “USA, USA,” and myriad symbolic deployments of the American flag. In addition, military demonstrations and presidential appearances (in writing and in person) further signaled American strength and resolve in the face of terrorism and war.

Despite these common elements, there is nothing about ballpark rituals that overtly prevents protest, and baseball itself need not be reduced to a symbolic stage for the larger political drama. In fact, it takes little imagination to envision the re-appropriation of these rituals. What might have happened, for example, if the *majority* of fans in a stadium sang “Take Me Out to the Ballgame” instead of “God Bless America”? Why couldn’t anti-war activists have arranged for a block of seats so that they could display “Attack Iraq? No!” placards instead of those printed with “USA”? And consider how the dynamics of so-called patriotic rituals would have changed if one or more players—especially star players—visibly chose not to participate in them.

During the 2004 season, one star player—Carlos Delgado of the Toronto Blue Jays—demonstrated his objections to the war in Iraq by refusing to come out of the dugout for the seventh-inning stretch if “God Bless America” was to be performed. Delgado justified his actions to the *Toronto Star*, stating, “I think it’s the stupidest war ever. . . . We have more people dead now after the war than during the war. . . . It’s just stupid.”<sup>129</sup> Until Delgado discussed his protest publicly in late July, however, virtually no one noticed that he was doing it at all. Consequently, although Delgado potentially re-framed the way some fans might view the war, he was by and large easy to dismiss and ignore. Sportswriter Ron Cook complimented Delgado’s sincerity and integrity because “his protest was personal, even respectful.”<sup>130</sup> I share an admiration for Delgado to the extent that he performed an awareness and commitment to matters of politics rarely seen in contemporary athletics. However, the very nature of his protest—silent and invisible—rendered it incapable of challenging the dominant narrative offered by the game. Meanwhile, no other paths of resistance were taken by players, media, or fans.

If baseball can be understood as a representative institution of American democratic culture, then the ways in which it performs (or fails to perform) democratically merit scrutiny and criticism. In the aftermath of unprecedented tragedy (for Americans), baseball could have been a site not only for communal healing but also for productively engaging the pluralism that the game does or should represent. For example, no one seemed to recognize the irony that many of the players on the field standing at attention to the American flag had no ability to speak the language that celebrates it.<sup>131</sup> It also was lost on those in the media that the games themselves might serve as agonistic models of ritual contest in which adversaries are defeated, but not framed as evil enemies to be eliminated. Instead, baseball’s rituals reduced the range of democratic participation to the use of symbols whose meanings became empty beyond their most fundamental nationalism.

### Baseball, Faith, and War

As Ivie argues, the shock of September 11 and the subsequent discourses surrounding it produced an environment in which democratic practice was blunted. "Instead of the rowdy, rhetorical deliberations appropriate to agonistic politics in a healthy pluralistic polity," he states, "the nation experienced a wave of patriotic fervor and political conformity."<sup>132</sup> Such conformity could be observed in a number of public spectacles, not the least of which was baseball. This conformity legitimized the discourse surrounding the "war on terrorism," a discourse that defined clear, rigid boundaries of good and evil. It produced a nationalism that David Campbell argues is a requirement of the "state in pursuit of its legitimacy."<sup>133</sup> And it justified an American foreign policy that has long been motivated by the fear that democracy and freedom are vulnerable to outside threats, and must be protected.<sup>134</sup> In the language of Chantal Mouffe, these rituals reduced pluralistic participation, sanctioned an antagonism toward a defined enemy, and weakened, rather than cultivated, democracy.<sup>135</sup>

Although ballpark rituals provided an early opportunity to mourn collectively, they evolved quickly into expressions of American nationalism and hegemony. By invoking rituals rooted in religious symbolism, these ceremonies conveyed an aura of national unity and a perception of a foreign threat that de-legitimized dissenting opinions.<sup>136</sup> In the end, they reinforced President Bush's declaration that only two choices remained after September 11: You are either with us, or you are with the terrorists.<sup>137</sup>

As the United States began its involvement in World War II, baseball commissioner Kenesaw Landis asked President Franklin D. Roosevelt whether or not baseball should continue in the 1942 season. In his response—named the "Green Light" letter—Roosevelt urged Landis to play on. "I honestly feel," he wrote, "it would be best for the country to keep baseball going."<sup>138</sup> Roosevelt knew that baseball's influence not only could help preserve national morale but also could help to secure public support of his administration's foreign policy. Similarly, George W. Bush benefited from baseball's politicized rituals after 9/11 and throughout the war in Iraq. More than any other sport performances, the daily rituals of baseball privileged an ideology of war and enacted American hegemony in a fashion that suppressed the very freedoms they alleged to celebrate and protect.

In *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, Kenneth Burke wrote about Adolf Hitler not only to identify a particularly destructive rhetorical strategy, but also to caution Americans against their own fascist tendencies veiled by the language of religion and unity. Such a tendency constitutes a false and belligerent patriotism based on an absolute division of good and evil that became a ritualized public spectacle at baseball games beginning late in the 2001 season. In the long run, if the nation is to come to terms with terrorism in the full complexity of its causes and its very real consequences, Americans must learn to look past the rituals of their "national pastime" and begin to nurture the very democratic practices their war president purports to protect.

## Notes

- [1] As I sat among my fellow Cubs fans that day, I quickly stopped singing in order to observe nearby fans. None of those who began singing "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" continued with it, and most eventually sang along with "God Bless America."
- [2] To be sure, the ritual of singing "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" has special significance for Cubs fans, who view the song as representing the legacy of their former broadcaster, the late Harry Caray.
- [3] Intersections of sport and politics have a long history, whether constructed by governments (Olympic boycotts), individuals (Jackie Robinson "breaking" the color barrier in baseball in 1947), or media (the 1973 "Battle of the Sexes" tennis match between Billie Jean King and Bobby Riggs). For further examples, see Jeff Merron, "10 Political Statements in Sports History," *ESPN.com*, February 28, 2003, online at <http://sports.espn.go.com/chat/sportsnation/story?page=politicalstatements-030228>.
- [4] President George W. Bush gave multiple speeches immediately following the disaster; several spontaneous church services were arranged, and countless universities held candlelight vigils; two major concerts—"America: A Tribute to Heroes," and "The Concert for New York City"—were attended by a wide range of recording artists, including Bruce Springsteen, Paul McCartney, and Celine Dion. For more on these concerts, see Corey Moss, "Post 9/11 Tribute Album and Singles: Big Plans, Not So Big Results," *MTV.com*, February 11, 2002, online at <http://www.mtv.com/news/articles/1452229/20020211/story.html>.
- [5] Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Creative Mythology* (New York: The Viking Press, 1968).
- [6] Jay Lovinger, "Editor's Note," in *The Gospel According to ESPN: Saints, Saviors, and Sinners*, ed. Jay Lovinger (New York: Hyperion, 2002).
- [7] Harry Edwards, *The Sociology of Sport* (Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press, 1973), 90.
- [8] Joseph L. Price, "The Pitcher's Mound as Cosmic Mountain: Religious Reflections on Baseball," in *From Season to Season: Sports as American Religion*, ed. Joseph L. Price (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 2001), 64–65.
- [9] In John Odell, ed., *Baseball as America: Seeing Ourselves Through Our National Game* (Washington, DC: National Geographic, 2002), 66.
- [10] For examples, see Hal Bodley, "Selig Does Good to Wait Until We're Ready," *USA Today*, September 14, 2001, 5C; Mike Lupica, "Ya Gotta Believe That This Team Has Helped Heal City," *New York Daily News*, September 28, 2001, 98; and Larry Stone, "Fans Show Patience, Pride and Patriotism," *Seattle Times*, September 19, 2001, D4, all online at <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>.
- [11] Stone.
- [12] For a discussion of this, see Robert S. Brown, "Football as a Rhetorical Site of National Reassurance: Managing the Crisis of the Kennedy Assassination," Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1996, 2–4.
- [13] In Jacob Torfing, *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe, and Žižek* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1999), 124.
- [14] Torfing, 129.
- [15] This language of negation serves as an extension of Kenneth Burke's theory of dramatism. For example, see Kenneth Burke, "A Dramatistic View of the Origins of Language," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 38 (1952): 251–64.
- [16] As explained by David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 61–68.
- [17] For examples of how baseball has been treated as a source of American identity, see Richard C. Crepeau, *Baseball: America's Diamond Mind: 1919–1941* (Orlando: University Presses of Florida, 1980); Allen Guttman, *A Whole New Ballgame: An Interpretation of American Sports* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Vivian Sobchack, "Baseball in the Post-American Cinema, or Life in the Minor Leagues," in *Out of Bounds: Sports, Media,*

- and the Politics of Identity*, ed. Aaron Baker and Todd Boyd (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 175–97; Nick Trujillo, "Interpreting (the Work and Talk of) Baseball: Perspectives on Ballpark Culture," *Western Journal of Communication* 56 (1992): 350–71; and Leon H. Warshay, "Baseball in Its Social Context," in *Social Approaches to Sport*, ed. Robert M. Pankin (East Brunswick, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1982), 225–82.
- [18] For examples, see John S. Dryzek, *Discursive Democracy: Politics, Policy and Political Science* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); John S. Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond: Liberals, Critics, Contestations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1996); Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London: Verso, 2000); and Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
- [19] Mouffe, 8.
- [20] Eric W. Rothenbuhler, *Ritual Communication: From Everyday Conversation to Mediated Ceremony* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998), 55.
- [21] Burke's general theory of dramatism is explored throughout his considerable volume of work. Perhaps most reflective of such a perspective are *Attitudes Toward History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1937/1984); *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1941/1973); *A Rhetoric of Motives* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1950); and *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952/1969).
- [22] See Stephen Bygrave, *Kenneth Burke: Rhetoric and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1993), 38–39.
- [23] Burke, *Philosophy*, 34, 39–40. Alternatively, Burke suggests that we may purify through a ritual of mortification, which requires self-reflection and critique.
- [24] Mouffe, 34.
- [25] Quoted in Robert Ivie, "Rhetorical Deliberations and Democratic Politics in the Here and Now," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 5 (2002): 280.
- [26] Robert Ivie, "Evil Enemy Versus Agonistic Other: Rhetorical Constructions of Terrorism," *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 25 (2003): 181–200.
- [27] See Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974), 37.
- [28] James Ettema, "Press Rites and Race Relations: A Study of Mass-Mediated Ritual," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 7 (1990): 310.
- [29] Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 79.
- [30] Bruce Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 89.
- [31] James O. Robertson, *American Myth, American Reality* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1980), 6.
- [32] Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 130.
- [33] James W. Carey, "A Cultural Approach to Communication," *Communication* 2 (1973): 6.
- [34] On manipulation, see Mary Douglas, *Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), 61; on the conservative nature of ritual, see Lincoln, 53.
- [35] Rothenbuhler, 55.
- [36] Joachim Knuf, "Ritual and Irony: Observations About the Discourse of Political Change in Two Germanies," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 80 (1994): 184.
- [37] Ettema, 311.
- [38] Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," *Daedalus* 96 (1967): 1–21.
- [39] Carolyn Marvin, "A New Scholarly Dispensation for Civil Religion," *The Journal of Communication and Religion* 25 (2002): 21–33.
- [40] Marvin, 32.
- [41] Steven J. Overman, *The Influence of the Protestant Ethic on Sport and Recreation* (Aldershot, UK: Avebury, 1997), 7.

- [42] See Sut Jhally, "The Spectacle of Accumulation: Material and Cultural Factors in the Evolution of the Sports/Media Complex," *The Insurgent Sociologist* 12 (1984): 41–57; George H. Sage, *Power and Ideology in American Sport: A Critical Perspective* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1998); Trujillo; and David Q. Voigt, "American Sporting Rituals," in *Rituals and Ceremonies in Popular Culture*, ed. Ray B. Browne (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1980), 125–40.
- [43] Richard G. Powers, "Sports and American Culture," in *Making America*, ed. Luther S. Luedtke (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 272.
- [44] Edwards, *The Sociology of Sport*, 261–62.
- [45] Shirl J. Hoffman, ed., *Sport and Religion* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1992), 7.
- [46] Varda Burstyn, *The Rites of Men: Manhood, Politics, and the Culture of Sport* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 19.
- [47] Frank Deford, "Religion in Sport," *Sports Illustrated* (1976): 92–99. This claim is repeated by Overman, who cites an essay by J. W. Loy, "The Cultural System of Sport," *Quest* 29 (1978): 60–72.
- [48] Sage, 117.
- [49] On patriotism and nationalism, see Dan D. Nimmo and James E. Combs, *Mediated Political Realities* (New York: Longman, 1983); David Rowe, *Sport, Culture, and the Media: The Unruly Trinity* (Buckingham, UK: Open University Press, 1999); and David Rowe, Jim McKay, and Toby Miller, "Come Together: Sport, Nationalism, and the Media Image," in *MediaSport*, ed. Lawrence A. Wenner (London: Routledge, 1998), 119–33; Burstyn, 20.
- [50] See Crepeau; Guttman; and Warshay.
- [51] On rugged individualism, see Warshay; on American exceptionalism, see Michael Novak, *The Joy of Sports: End Zones, Bases, Baskets, Balls, and the Consecration of the American Spirit* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 35.
- [52] George W. Bush, "State of the Union," White House Press Release, January 28, 2003, online at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/01/20030128-19.html>.
- [53] Sobchack, 180.
- [54] "The 50 Greatest Sports Movies of All Time," *Sports Illustrated*, August 4, 2003, 62–71; Tom Boswell, "The Church of Baseball," in *Baseball: An Illustrated History*, ed. Geoffrey C. Ward and Ken Burns (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 189.
- [55] On serenity, see Boswell; on cathedrals, see Philip Lowry, *Green Cathedrals: The Ultimate Celebration of all 271 Major League and Negro League Ballparks Past and Present* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1992); and on religious services, see Price, "Pitcher's Mound."
- [56] Charles S. Prebish, "'Heavenly Father, Divine Goalie': Sport and Religion," in *Sport and Religion*, ed. Shirl J. Hoffman (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1992), 48.
- [57] Glenn Dickey, "Star-Spangled Banner is Obsolete, Overused," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 16, 1996, B2, online at <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>.
- [58] Boswell.
- [59] Price, "Pitcher's Mound."
- [60] Boswell, 193.
- [61] Novak, 58.
- [62] Crepeau, 196.
- [63] Colin Grant, *Myths We Live By* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1998), 60.
- [64] Nimmo and Combs, 135.
- [65] Jane Forbes Clark, "Foreword," in *Baseball as America: Seeing Ourselves Through Our National Game*, ed. John Odell (Washington, DC: National Geographic, 2002), 15.
- [66] For example, see Roger Aden, "Nostalgic Communication as Temporal Escape: When It Was a Game's Re-construction of a Baseball/Work Community," *Western Journal of Communication* 59 (1995): 20–38.

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- [73] Rothenbuhler, 24–25.
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- [80] Mike Klis, "Rockies Plan for Tribute Upon Return," *Denver Post*, September 16, 2001, C11, online at <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>.
- [81] Brady.
- [82] Michael Obernauer, "Ballparks Full of Fans, Flags & Patriotism," *New York Daily News*, September 19, 2001, 114, online at <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>.
- [83] Obernauer. The article does not offer any description of how Canadian fans used, or did not use, their miniature flags.
- [84] Tom Haudricourt, "Patriots Come Out for Baseball," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, September 18, 2001, 5C, online at <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>.
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- [87] Frank Deford, "Let the Games Go On," *Sports Illustrated*, September 12, 2001, online at [http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/inside\\_game/deford/news/2001/09/12/deford](http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/inside_game/deford/news/2001/09/12/deford).
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- [89] Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 277.
- [90] George W. Bush, "President Discusses War on Terrorism," White House Press Release, November 8, 2001, online at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/11/20011108-13.html>.
- [91] As the baseball season ended and the sports calendar turned to football and basketball, those sports also acknowledged 9/11 in significant ways. Arguably, the most spectacular single

religious-political display came during Super Bowl XXXVI in February, 2002. For more on this event, see Joanne Ostrow, "Patriotism Takes Over Airwaves on Super Sunday," *Denver Post*, February 4, 2002, D11, online at <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>. Also, I make this argument with respect to institutions of American professional sport. An additional argument might explore the 2002 Winter Olympic Games held in Salt Lake City, Utah, which were unquestionably framed as a public response to 9/11.

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- [93] George W. Bush, "Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People," White House Press Release, September 20, 2001, online at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>.
- [94] "Baseball Reflects on Sept. 11 Anniversary," *ESPN.com*, September 12, 2002, online at <http://espn.go.com/gen/news/2002/0910/1429932.html>.
- [95] Michael Cunningham, "Firefighters Find Brief Relief at Miller Park," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, September 12, 2002, 7C, online at <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>.
- [96] *Baseball Tonight*, ESPN, September 11, 2002.
- [97] Significantly, Buck passed away earlier in the 2002 season; thus, he is in a sense immortalized through the video.
- [98] Bill Dedman, "It's a Race For the Record, But is it Also About Race," *New York Times*, September 20, 1998, sec. 8, 3, online at <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>.
- [99] Rowe, 22.
- [100] Rowe, McKay, and Miller, 133.
- [101] In 1998, for example, in addition to the more than 50 million fans that attended baseball games, over four billion watched them on television. In Price, 61.
- [102] Monument Park is where Yankee legends like Babe Ruth, Joe DiMaggio, etc. are immortalized on plaques behind the Yankee Stadium outfield.
- [103] Tyler Kepner, "At Yankee Stadium, Tributes and a Monument to Heroism," *New York Times*, September 12, 2002, D1, online at <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>.
- [104] George W. Bush, "President's Remarks at the United Nations General Assembly," White House Press Release, September 12, 2002, online at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/20020912-1.html>.
- [105] See John Donnelly, "Bush Intent on Regime Change Despite Global, GOP Dissent," *Boston Globe*, October 2, 2002, A1; Todd S. Purdum, "The U.S. Case Against Iraq: Counting Up the Reasons," *New York Times*, October 1, 2002, A19; and David E. Sanger and Carl Hulse, "Bush Appears to Soften Tone on Iraq Action," *New York Times*, October 2, 2002, A1, all online at <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>.
- [106] It could be argued, of course, that Tynan performs the same symbolic role as Sammy Sosa, a non-native so enamored with America that he cannot resist singing (literally) its praises.
- [107] Jeff Horrigan, "Angels Fans Say Hi to Mo, Sort Of," *Boston Herald*, October 20, 2002, B4, online at <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>.
- [108] This date refers to the timing in the United States. The invasion began in the early morning hours of March 20 in Iraq.
- [109] George W. Bush, "Global Message on Iraq," *White House Press Release*, March 6, 2003, online at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030306-10.html>.
- [110] Mike Klis, "Baseball Must Go On During Trying Times," *Denver Post*, March 30, 2003, C13, online at <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>.
- [111] "Texas Rangers vs. Anaheim Angels," *Sunday Night Baseball*, ESPN, March 30, 2003.
- [112] Mike Dodd, "Reds (White & Blue) Open Park, Fall 10-1," *USA Today*, April 1, 2003, 5C, online at <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>.

- [113] Tom D'Angelo, "Opening Day Chills and Thrills," *Palm Beach Post*, April 1, 2003, 11C, online at <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>.
- [114] Dodd.
- [115] "Baltimore Orioles vs. New York Yankees," *Wednesday Night Baseball*, ESPN, September 11, 2002.
- [116] This observation is based on viewing personally well over one hundred baseball games since play resumed on September 17, 2001.
- [117] Ken Davidoff, "Roger Backs Troops, Gives Protesters Rocket's Red Glare," *Newsday*, March 18, 2003, A85, online at <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>.
- [118] Mark Kiszla, "Freedom Hits Homer for U.S.," *Denver Post*, September 18, 2001, D1, online at <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>.
- [119] Smith's actions set off a media firestorm, and inspired lively debate on sports radio, Internet sites, and in newspaper columns and letters to the editor. Throughout the season Smith accomplished what baseball never did: she fundamentally employed the practice of democracy in order to question how it is defended.
- [120] Ira Berkow, "The Hall of Fame Will Tolerate No Dissent," *New York Times*, April 11, 2003, S4, online at <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>.
- [121] Ross Newhan, "Free Speech, or a Lot of 'Bull?'" *Los Angeles Times*, April 13, 2003, pt. 4, 7, online at <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>.
- [122] Gwen Knapp, "Bullheaded Decision by Hall President," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 13, 2003, B2, online at <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>.
- [123] One writer does argue that all political functions should be removed from sporting events. His remarks, however, are in reference to the Toni Smith controversy, not baseball rituals. See, Ron Cook, "Protester Should Play Games, Not Politics," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, March 2, 2003, D1, online at <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>.
- [124] Berkow.
- [125] Hal McCoy, "Radio Ruckus: Boone Backs Reds' Patriotism," *Dayton Daily News*, September 26, 2001, 1D, online at <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>.
- [126] Filip Bondy, "Play Ball, Not Boss' Patriot's Game," *New York Daily News*, October 7, 2003, 64, online at <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>.
- [127] Bondy.
- [128] Rothenbuhler, 10.
- [129] Ron Cook, "Games Better if Politics Don't Intrude on Fields," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, July 23, 2004, B1, online at <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>.
- [130] Cook, "Games Better."
- [131] A somewhat forgotten part of baseball's culture after 9/11 is the large number of Latin American players and an increasing number of Asian players.
- [132] Ivie, "Rhetorical Deliberations," 281.
- [133] D. Campbell, 11.
- [134] Robert Ivie, "Fire, Flood, and Red Fever: Motivating Metaphors of Global Emergency in the Truman Doctrine Speech," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 29 (1999): 570–91.
- [135] Mouffe.
- [136] It would be unfair to claim that there were no dissenting voices that challenged Bush following September 11. However, despite dissatisfaction with aggressive war policies, questions about the restrictions of civil liberties found in the Patriot Act, and spurious connections between Al Qaeda and Iraq, Bush still casually dismissed protesters, and enjoyed the support of 60 percent of Americans leading into the war with Iraq. For more, see Richard Benedetto, "Poll: Support of War is Steady, But Many Minds Not Made Up," *USA Today*, February 28, 2003, 6A, online at <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe>.
- [137] George W. Bush, "Statement By the President in His Address to the Nation."
- [138] In Odell, 60–61.

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