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Abstract

This article engages with the 'canonical' work of Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz (1992) in re-examining aspects of the phenomenology of the media event, especially those of a global sporting nature. It considers a range of questions of 'gain' and 'loss' in 'being there', and of television-inspired changes to the experience of in-person attendance. Innovations in the viewing possibilities at global media events are considered in relation to forms of sociality during competitions such as the Olympic Games and the soccer World Cup. The discussion also notes the existence of significant variations in the 'script forms' of apparently similar media event types. Finally, it identifies interacting areas of focus important for an effective analysis of the dialectics of remote and proximate experience of global media events like the recent Sydney 2000 Olympic Games.

Introduction: Presence as Win and Loss

The paradox inherent within the concept of the global media event is, especially in epochal times, readily apparent. Events happen or they are not events, but to be media events what has happened must be recorded and relayed elsewhere, and to be global they must be seen to happen on the grandest of scales. In the making of mass visibility, the event is transformed into something else, a different phenomenon that can neither be reduced to 'embodied' experience nor to its representation. That is:

- to be an 'event' it must be specifically situated in time and space, with a limited number of visible participants, *but*
- to be 'global' it must overcome temporal and spatial constraints, and must make those who are not physically present feel as if they were, *and therefore*
- is subject to a particular regime of (audiovisual) media representation that simulates the experience of physical attendance whilst technologically enhancing it.

Many media academics (such as Dayan and Katz, 1992; Wark, 1994; Weber, 1996; Marriott, 2000) have analysed these interacting elements of the media event, and their consequences for the making of history, the moulding of collective memory, the politics of image manufacture, and so on. Such attention is entirely justified given the profound social, cultural, political and economic significance of global media events that are

scheduled and periodic (for example, the Olympic Games and the soccer World Cup) and unscheduled and intermittent (like the Gulf, Iraq and Kosovo wars). Each global media event invites a consideration of the dialectics of commonality and specificity proposed by their nature, content, organisation, host location, and history. In the case of this article, the particular emphasis is on questions that, in the first instance, are pragmatic:

- what is gained or lost by being physically present at or removed from a global media event?
- what does 'being there' mean under circumstances where an event is subject to saturation media exposure?

This article seeks both to draw on and reconsider elements of the influential work of Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz (1992: 146) on 'Media Events [and] the Live Broadcasting of History' and their eloquent case (made against, for example, MacAloon, 1984) that the reconstitution during media events of 'ceremonial space' in the home is not 'an impoverished and deviant experience' but an 'altogether *different* experience'. I will attempt this task by re-examining the nature and meaning of 'being there', and the televisually inspired changes to the experience of in-person spectatorship that have reconfigured – by means both of harmonisation and differentiation - the phenomenology of the media event.

Not all media events are 'global' (indeed, in the light of the international distribution of communication technology, the global media event must be regarded as an analytical rather than an empirical phenomenon), but claims to 'globality' are of particular interest because they go beyond the *voyeuristic* notion that 'the whole world is watching' to the *engagé* idea that 'the whole world is participating', despite the event being physically and geographically remote for most of the audience because of the limitations of venue capacity, distance and finance. The close analysis of 'being there' enables researchers to appraise and cross check proximate and remote experience of a mega–media sports spectacle and to reconsider participant and viewer expectations of them. This analysis sketches the theoretical and conceptual framework of a 'multi-point' observational research study during the Sydney 2000 Summer Olympics (yet to be 'written up') that incorporated a range of sites, from stadia to public 'screening' spaces to private homes. It would be premature to seek to present 'findings' here, although some preliminary comments can be made about the 'Millennial Games experience' [1]. This article is primarily concerned with how global media events like Sydney 2000 offer a dynamic range of viewing experiences and positions that require critical assessment.

This comparison of vantage points enables a reconsideration of the meaning of the 'inside' and the 'outside' of a global media event. It is, of course, impossible precisely to match the experience of unique moments when a human subject is differently situated in space, time and other contextual dimensions, but it is possible to develop our knowledge and understanding of how global media events negotiate these varying viewing positions. Within the category 'global media event' there are, in addition, different types. Dayan and Katz's (1992: 25) three-part typology of 'story forms, or "scripts", which constitute the main narrative possibilities within the genre', places sport under the rubric of

'Contest' as opposed to 'Conquest' or 'Coronation'. As noted below, however, events like the Olympics do incorporate elements of these scripts, while Dayan and Katz recognise that single events may contain more than one story form. There are, no doubt, other narrative genres or sub-genres not entirely captured by this typology, such as those devised to cultivate relatively underdeveloped audience segments. Toby Miller (1998: 107) for example, notes that the 'increased appeal by sportscasters to single women and gays' prompted 'NBC's humanizing narrativization of the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, which focused on emotional life histories rather than results'. Perhaps we might call such a script the 'Public Biographical'. Among sporting contests there are further differences of form, history, ideology, and mythology (Rowe, Lawrence, Miller and McKay, 1994). It is necessary, then, to examine what unites and distinguishes global sports events from other types of event and also from each other.

The Global Media Sports Event

In describing the 'Contest' story form of global media event, Dayan and Katz (1992: 26) state that:

> Contests range from the World Cup to presidential debates, from the Olympics to the Senate Watergate hearings. Their domain is sports and politics. They are rule-governed battles of champions. They enlist hundreds of millions of spectators. Sometimes they are defined as play, sometimes as real, but the stakes are always very high.

There is much that, metaphorically and in other ways, links sport and politics (Rowe, 1995), but there are also considerable differences in their manifestation as media events. However heroically gladiatorial one-on-one political debates or investigator-politician encounters might be, the predominant mythology of sport sets it apart from such secular domains as politics and economics, and draws it closer to the sacred domain (echoed more directly in the 'Coronation' story form and, in the 'sanctification' of charismatic sporting heroes and heroines, which are elements of the 'Conquest'). The sporting contest is distinguished by its mythologised separation from the prosaic world of budgets, policies and electoral majorities (as reflected in the popular saying 'sport and politics don't mix'). Sport in this sense is defined by its own metaphysics, a romantic 'other-worldliness' that proposes the quasi-religious transcendence of material institutions including – indeed, especially – the institution of politics.

When sport's own mythological hierarchy is exposed, the dynamic of external and internal differentiation is shown to have important consequences for the analysis of media events. The two premier global media sports events mentioned above – the soccer World Cup and the Olympic Games – vie with each other for supremacy, not least in terms of aggregate television viewing figures that, as Moragas Spa, Rivenburgh, and Larson (1995) have pointed out, are notoriously unreliable and inflated. The 1998 World Cup Finals in France, for example, claimed a cumulative world audience of 37 billion (Rowe, 1999: 172), while, using the less inflationary non-cumulative survey method, the 1996 Olympic Games claimed to have reached 2 billion people (Wilson, 1998: 135), the same

simultaneous viewing figure for another recent World Cup Final in the USA (Redhead, 1997: 139). But these apparently similar 'French inventions' have rather different competition structures and symbolic resonances (Cashmore, 2000). The classical symbolism and allusion of the Olympics demands that it represent (and market) itself in a much more abstract, universalist manner as the highest expression of a noble human spirit. The World Cup, although profoundly influenced at its inception by the Olympics, is projected as the most spectacularly global manifestation of a global *game* (The Official Website for France'98, 1998), rather than, like the Olympics, as a global *movement* (Hill, 1992).

While both the World Cup's and the Olympics' myth-laden representations are beset with contradictions, scandals and controversies – over national chauvinism, player and spectator violence, performance-enhancing drugs, commercialisation, institutional corruption, and so on (see Simson and Jennings, 1992; Jennings, 1996; Sugden and Tomlinson, 1998) - they highlight significantly different and semiotically potent frameworks of meaning as global media sports events. The less prominent tradition of *carnivalesque* crowd behaviour at the Olympics than is evident at the soccer World Cup suggests that here is an opportunity to observe and analyse variations in the *ethos* of media sports events and their corresponding impact on the 'performance' of spectatorship. More complexity still is provided by the recent tendency of brewers, leisurewear companies and other commercial enterprises to fabricate 'spontaneous' crowd displays by supplying selected spectators with bizarre merchandising material (such as gaudy wigs and clothing) and even paying them for doing so.

So, just as a single media event may possess (as Dayan and Katz (1992: 27) themselves acknowledge) more than one 'script', global media events devoted to the same cultural form – sport - may have quite different presentational styles. The soccer World Cup's self-consciously contemporary, unpretentious and carnivalesque qualities (Redhead, 1997) contrast with the romanticisation of classical antiquity and ethical universalism that marks the Olympics as media event (Tomlinson, 1996). While these projected meanings are by no means smooth or complete, the complex intermeshing of the 'Contest' and 'Coronation' scripts at the Olympics significantly influences its character as global media event, and the available modes of experiencing it and other such events on screen and in person. This point leads to another, more general consideration of what can be seen of the global media sports event and from which vantage point.

Stadium Seat, Armchair or 'Live Site'?

Ever since first radio and then television became a central institutional aspect of sport (Whannel, 1992), questions of physical attendance have become increasingly problematic, as they have in other areas of popular entertainment. In music, for example, there are difficult choices over attending 'live' performances as opposed to purchasing 'live' audio-visual recordings or, alternatively, selecting studio recordings that have never been and, indeed, could never be performed 'live' (Rowe, 1995). In the first instance, static-ridden radio signals and immobile single television camera images accompanied by stiff, formal commentary (with some variation in the British and American commentary

traditions) could deliver little more than a limited evocation of the sports event itself. As the reach, technology, grammar and mode of address of sports television developed (Wenner, 1998), the almost heretical possibility emerged that in some ways viewing at a distance might be a superior spectatorial experience, so confirming the early anxieties of sports clubs and entrepreneurs (later lavishly compensated by broadcast rights and corporate sponsorship) that too rich an audio-visual representation ('live' or delayed) of sports events would lead to the progressive loss of physically present, paying spectators (again, later compensated by remote, 'pay TV' viewers).

Sports events in the age of television have had to confront the potential for home watching to be not only cheaper, safer, more comfortable and less restrictive, but also a superior site for watching the event itself. Expert commentary, multi-camera angles (from panoramas to extreme close ups), split screens, 'wired' officials, directional microphones, action replays, super-slow motion, and so on, all enabled technical appreciation of the sports event itself to be enhanced (Rowe, 1996). One organisational response to the birth of the 'home stadium', therefore, was to bring many home comforts and facilities to the 'away stadium' – not just better seating (or, indeed, any seating), cleaner and more accessible toilets, and more hygienic food, but also huge television screens and electronic displays that supplied to the attending spectator what, ironically, they would not have missed in the lounge room, club or pub. The insertion of televisual infrastructure into the event itself is designed to overcome the problem for an 'in-person audience … unsure about whether it should not be at home, watching TV' (Dayan and Katz, 1992: 77) for fear of only 'attending part of the event', when with television 'everybody can attend the whole event' (p.95).

By bringing the apparatus of home viewing to the stadium itself, the spectatorial dynamic of televising major sports (and other) events is reversed – instead of transmitting images of unique spatio-temporal events to remote locations, the attending spectator is provided with multiple versions of what they have seen (or have not or could not) *as if they were absent*. The calculation is that this combination of experiences overcomes the disincentives of physical attendance. For it to be effective, the different aspects of being there – atmosphere, sensory experience, public performance, a heightened sense of 'making history', the unique *aura* (Benjamin, 1973) surrounding event, venue and participants - must come to the fore. In particular, attendance makes the spectator a key component of the spectacle itself, with often extravagant crowd behaviour – chanting, singing, cheering, music making, banner waving, and orchestrated group movements - critical to the embodied experience and media projection of the event.

Event *ambience* is important both for those who attend and for those viewing from a distance, with the lack of one key component - 'crowd atmosphere' – especially eroding the appeal of the television spectacle, to the extent that attendance may be subsidised or even permitted without charge largely for the benefit of the television audience, as if the spectators present were extras on a film set (Rowe, 1999). The central visual and aural importance of the crowd for media sports events is demonstrated by the tight-focussing of camera shots to give the impression of mass attendance when spectators are, in fact, sparsely distributed across large stadia, and the strategic positioning of microphones and

the raising of amplification levels that can turn the weak ambient noise of small crowds into what appears to be the deafening roar of an impassioned 'full house'. The prospect of the '"simulation" of the participatory crowd' (Redhead, 1997: 51), not unlike the use of canned laughter in television situation comedies, is presented by such manipulations of televised sport's sound and image. Indeed, in at least one documented case – Arsenal Football Club's use of 'Artists' impressions of a terrace crowd, and piped singing/chanting/cheering' (p.51) when full crowd attendance during one season was made impossible by extensive stadium reconstruction - the presence and activity of the audience has been quite literally simulated. Nonetheless, while many sports contests and other events less reliant on an overwhelming sense of occasion may tolerate such artifice, it is unlikely that global media events founded, however imperfectly, on the premise of recording history, can readily dispense with the audible and visible witness of a large attending crowd.

By becoming an integral element of both the *mise-en-scène* and the 'central casting' of the media sports event, the performative role of the in-person audience re-instantiates the 'unequal access' that television has claimed to erase. For Dayan and Katz (1992: 94) the 'loss' of the 'festival experience' for the non-attending spectator is offset by television's offer of 'compensation by removing invidiousness; neither power, nor money, nor dexterity gives advantage. As far as access is concerned, the structure of the broadcast is altogether different from the socially stratified audience on the spot'. Even 'television people' in the studio benefit in this way in relation to their colleagues 'at the event' (p.96). This claim that 'Television simulates what its presence has abolished: status difference among spectators' (p.97) can be contested given the social stratification of the television viewing audience's possession of large, flat screens or projectors (sales of which boomed immediately prior to the commencement of the 2000 Games), or digital sound and vision, or a personally owned as opposed to a communal TV set, or a pay TV subscription eliminating many advertising intrusions, and so on. More importantly for this article, it is questionable whether the democratic availability of the television broadcast is adequate compensation for the felt corporeal power of in-person participation. As part of the 'living text', the crowd is both witness and producer, caught and preserved for posterity – *en masse* and perhaps in individual focus - by the televisual gaze without necessarily (*pace* Debord, 1970) being subject to it.

The interdependency of television and crowd – the former with the power of representation, the latter with the power to supply or withhold crucially 'authentic' material for television to represent - is a complex system of entitlements, duties and strategies. For example, the use of televised 'reaction shots' of screen spectators in public (or quasi public) spaces outside the event is a device that extends the spectacle of the crowd beyond the stadium. In city squares with large television screens or pubs and clubs with subscription or free-to-air TV, a different kind of Olympic crowd assembles to view TV and to be viewed by it. Television in this way seeks to compensate those who did not or could not attend by giving them a 'bit part' in the festival, while implicitly reinforcing for the wider viewership the *aura* of the event and the ultimate desirability of seeing it three-dimensionally and of 'feeling it' through all available senses. At the Sydney 2000 Games, six inner city 'live sites' at locations including Circular Quay and

Darling Harbour carried all-day, big screen TV Olympic coverage almost twenty kilometres from the main Olympic site at Homebush Bay. Such viewing sites offer spectators a more grandly sociable, place-based vantage point than the home, with an additional carnivalesque ambience – and without the expense and constraint of formal, 'contractual' spectatorship.

Those at 'live sites' who sat on the grass in the Domain or in the small stands built before the screen at Pyrmont, or in the beer gardens of regional pubs, could share to a degree the *panoptical* platform of the television studio. Like home viewers, their gaze could be rapidly transported (in some cases frustratingly) between venues and events by Channel Seven's relayed free-to-air broadcasts. By contrast, spectators at Stadium Australia or the Aquatic Centre were limited to a much-reduced televisual service, with replays and close ups rationed, and no strategic switching between events to capture dramatic moments. The experiential synthesis occurring at public 'screenings' was evident in forms of crowd interaction – chanting before the screen and applauding the two-dimensional images of athletes – as well as in access to street art and musical performances at the same site as part of the officially sanctioned 'People's Games'.

The popularity of such public viewing of television – in many cases more uncomfortable and visually restrictive than stadium or home spectatorship – suggests that domestically situated television's 'compensation' for the 'loss' of the 'festival experience' is still, for many sports *aficionados*, inadequate. As Steve Redhead (1997: 30) notes in a different sporting context, pubs have become key sites for the television viewing of British soccer, largely as a negative response by traditional male fans to the introduction of more expensive, disciplined and *bourgeois* stadia spectating experiences and the wholesale capture of 'live' broadcast football by the pay TV broadcaster BSkyB at the expense of free-to-air television. Here, the intensified alignment of elements of masculine football and pub cultures (once at least spatially and temporally differentiated by the requirement to leave the pub to attend the game, and/or to return to it for the after-match *post mortem*) caused by restricting access to both stadium and home spectating has altered 'the "situational geography" of social life' (Meyrowitz. 1985: 6).

For Dayan and Katz (1992: 205), media events 'transform the home into a "public space"' and create new forms of leisure 'sociability' as viewers congregate before the screen, collectively experiencing the event and, in Durkheimian fashion, unconsciously celebrating their own sociality (although strategies for inclusion and exclusion in communal viewing, we should note, provide new possibilities for recreating the 'socially stratified audience'). However, in the case of sport they recognise – somewhat disapprovingly - the limits of the home as sociable space:

> The high holidays of football, soccer, and baseball - the Super Bowl, the World Cup, the World Series, and so forth – are among the mainstays of media use. Living-room celebrations of these games, and of the Olympics, involve rituals of conviviality, knowledgeable exchange, and a level of attention and sociability far exceeding that of everyday television. This sociability can reach disastrous heights, as in the parody of communitas which has marred recent European soccer matches and in the explosions of enthusiasm which may now be seen in the streets of cities

whose teams have just won a televised game; television spectators pour out of their homes and jam the streets in frenzied cavorting and motor carnivals (Dayan and Katz, 1992: 207).

Apart from its rather puritanical tone reminiscent of Leavisite and Frankfurt School-style mass cultural theory (Swingewood, 1977), this passage reveals the inability of television in such instances to contain and satisfy audiences and to turn the home into a truly public space. It also vividly demonstrates the strength of the impulse publicly to take part in media events, with the street celebrations (and sometimes protests) making the home viewer available to the televisual gaze and a participant in a widened conception of the event that stretches well beyond the spatio-temporal boundaries of the 'Contest' itself (as well as of its 'Coronation' and 'Conquest' dimensions). Seen from this perspective, in an inversion of Dayan and Katz's (1992: 146) position, home viewing of a media event is not just 'different' but is, indeed, an 'impoverished' (or at least an inferior) experience. But for them it is not a 'deviant' one, because deviancy is seemingly the province of the 'frenzied' television viewer released into the carnival of the streets from the prison of the pseudo 'public space' of the home.

This position, it should be added, does more than simply disapprove of certain expressions of sociability surrounding media sports events when they go beyond the boundaries of home and stadium. It also renders the domestic sphere as 'pacific' when, in fact, there is some research evidence that 'televised contact sports operate as a dramatic and meaningful catalyst within a cultural "setting" that can be conducive to domestic violence' (Sabo, Gray and Moore, 2000: 143), leading one journalist to dub the Super Bowl of American Football the "Abuse Bowl"' (p. 128). Malign forms of 'sociability', it should then be remembered, are not unknown among the home audience, however 'egalitarian' its access to the media event.

Irrespective of levels of anti-social behaviour among sports spectators in public and private spaces, questions remain about the persistence and significance of experiencing sports events in those spaces. In global media sports events like the Olympics (or, indeed, royal weddings/funerals) invested with such high moral and historical 'seriousness', it is questionable whether the 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) accruing to those who are co-present can ever be entirely offset by the remote audience, even if its technical vantage point – multiply framed and microscopically focused by television - is superior. Dayan and Katz (1992: 75) rightly note the inability of participants in public space to control how they are represented as 'symbols' by television. The shot selection of producers, for example, or the ventriloquism of commentators may turn them into no more than ciphers of broadcast versions of history. For this reason, 'events radically transformed by television' may become 'unrecognizable to people who attended them in person' (p.77), so problematising 'where the "real" event is actually taking place' (p.76) and which persons and institutions have the authority to interpret it.

The accumulated weight of televised versions of history will unquestionably lodge in the popular memory even for those who attended, and their semiotic power increase with the attenuation of living participants. But the enforced scarcity of the in-person experience,

as opposed to the automatic plenitude of its living room equivalent, seems to still tip the balance in favour of 'being there'. This is especially so with the provision of large stadia TV screens and practices such as the 'eavesdropping' of the in-person audience on the immediate after-event interviews with sportspeople once designed exclusively for the television audience. But there are many points on the continuum between lounge room and stadium with the potential to redraw this calculus of 'gain' and 'loss'. The innovative televisual enhancement of experiencing the event remotely, such as the aforementioned screen-based 'live sites' program at Sydney 2000, now offers a combined form of physical presence, crowd participation, and a sense of place and history analogous to attending the stadium itself.

Conclusion: The Meaning of 'Being There'

In this article I have covered a series of interactions between television, event and spectator, and now conclude briefly and provisionally by reflecting on them in relation to the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. Television's provision of a panoptical perspective from the home environment as compensation for not 'being there' was, as noted, partially countered by the spreading practice of importing components of the productive and consumptive infrastructure of television into the stadium itself. But at the events observed, in-stadium television provision was clearly inferior to its domestic equivalent (in terms of replays, multiple camera angles, advertising interruptions, breaking news, and so on). With regard to event sociability, substantial social interaction was evident at sites extending from suburban 'Olympic parties' to the stadium 'Mexican wave' to the new, temporary 'public spaces' at the live sites.

The dynamics of spectator performance similarly embraced behaviour explicitly devised for the television audience (like flag waving and 'mugging' for the camera) as well as equivalent acts of 'performing spectatorship' while viewing at home or in other less extensively visible contexts (engaging with peers and family members). An additional experiential component involved the specific history and nature of the 'mediated' event – in the case of the Olympic Games involving a powerfully articulated mythological structure, prescribed mode of representation, and repertoire of available scripts. Across this shifting terrain, 'being there' – a secure sense of position and presence – could take on many forms. For this reason, at Sydney 2000 many physically removed from the sports action will lay future claim to 'having been there', just as many Olympic ticket holders trained in sports watching by television will recall sights that were strangely 'unreal'.

Notes

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