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Sport as Symbol: Images of the Athlete in Art, Literature and Song

Mari Womack

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Upon first consideration, sport and art seem to occupy separate, even opposing, realms - sport, associated with physical prowess, and art, with the highest reaches of the human mind. But because sport is such a powerful metaphor for so many human experiences, it has found its way into artistic traditions all over the world. Part One of this book provides a basic understanding of sport as symbol. Part Two gives attention to animals as adversaries and traces the origins of sporting art back to the hunt. Part Three considers humans competing against humans in combat sports, ball games, stick-and-ball games, and racquet sports, as well as in warfare. Part Four concentrates on contesting with oneself in races and sports of grace and beauty such as gymnastics, figure skating and ice dancing. The book concludes with a discussion of the athlete's relationships to society.

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