

## **Legacies of 2012: Putting Women's Boxing into Discourse**

### **Abstract**

This article explores some of the promises of legacy following the summer games in 2012 and demonstrates some of the cultural changes which are made possible in relation to thinking about gender and sport. The article uses Foucault's idea of ideas being 'put into discourse' to show how women's boxing in 2012 was taken seriously as an exciting sport and has had an impact upon the cultural hegemonic masculinity of boxing. Legacy involves incremental changes and shifts in ways of thinking which open up new ways of doing sport.

**Key Words:** discourse, legacies, boxing bodies, women's boxing, changing identities

Women's boxing became legitimate at the 2012 London games following some debate about whether it should or should not be included. In the discussion which follows I focus on this particular example which is expressive of change, albeit incremental, but nonetheless contested, change, in the 2012 games. Legacy, in terms of increased participation in sport or higher success rates, for example in medal capture in future international events and as expressed by breaking past records, is more usually measured quantitatively. For example, to take the case of women's boxing, legacy could be seen as being secured through increased numbers of women training at gyms and engaging in the sport competitively, with ultimate expression in a greater number of medals being won at Rio in 2016. I use the case study of women's boxing in order to explore an example of the possibilities of cultural and social legacy as expressed in the promises of the present which are projected into the

future. In so doing I aim to suggest an additional strand to the understanding of legacy, whereby the future is not simply defined as either a prediction made in the present or utopian dreams, but also as informing what opportunities the present affords for transformations, widening participation and greater democracy (Woodward, 2012b). My example takes an approach to legacy as a cultural inheritance which makes it possible to think differently.

In this article I focus upon cultural change in terms of new ways of thinking which can include thinking the unthinkable. I use Michel Foucault's conceptualisation of the processes of the generation of knowledge as expressed in being 'put into discourse' (Foucault, 1981:11). These processes involve a combination of different elements which make it possible to think about and give expression to something as possible which hitherto had been inconceivable (even if the body practices encompassed had been part of everyday life, they were not named and classified). By being named and recognised, a new discourse is put into common currency and understood collectively. My aim is to show that one legacy of 2012, which can be identified is that women's boxing can be taken seriously.

Foucault uses the concept of putting into discourse to demonstrate how, for example a set of body practices, dispositions and ways of acting and thinking become organised into a category of person or in some cases a figure which becomes embedded in culture and in the apparatuses of power, Foucault's focus was on sexuality (Foucault, 1981) and he suggests that the homosexual person was put into discourse, by legislation, the interventions of the state in intimate lives and through medical discourses and practices. The process of putting something-or someone into discourse can be productive or constraining, and often both at the same time. For example, the naming of homosexuality and the construction of a category of person

who is so called, sets controlling boundaries on sexuality and pleasure through classificatory systems, but also provides recognition and identification which makes it possible to fight for and secure gay, and more recently, lesbian, bi, trans and queer rights.

My focus is upon the more productive elements of putting into discourse, by showing some of the ways in which, in 2012, it became possible to think seriously, rationally and routinely about women boxers and women engaging in pugilism competitively without introducing ideas about it being parodic, bizarre or sexualised.

### **Temporalities and the Impact of Legacy**

How do you evaluate the legacy of 2012? Legacy was one of the terms most frequently invoked before, during and now after the games as part of the justification and rationale for such massive investment, albeit in the 'greatest show on earth'.

During the games themselves we more frequently heard events described as 'amazing', 'unbelievable' and 'incredible', by athletes and commentators alike (Woodward, 2012b), but there is however, a link between the excesses of the euphoria of real time experience of sport and the possibilities of legacy. What is particularly pertinent to the discussion here is the possibility which the intensity of the experience of sport evident in the 2012 Olympics offers for securing a more enduring legacy and the forms which such a legacy might take.

The British Library Sport and Society web page includes the department of Culture Media and Sport aspirations for the 2012 Olympic legacy as:

- to make Great Britain a great sporting nation
- to inspire
- to show off London's multicultural heritage
- to regenerate parts of the East of London

- to make the Olympic Park a sustainable space

(British Library 2012, 2013)

The evaluation of legacy remains inflected by hopes and dreams but making sense of the idea of legacy can accommodate futurity and relate past, present and future. It is not too soon to discuss legacy, especially its qualitative rather than its quantitatively measured capacities. Most criteria of evaluation focus on quantitative aspects, such as increased numbers of participants in sports or improved access to facilities created by building infrastructures of the games (Cashman, 2006, Davies, 2012, Gold and Gold, 2007, including the Cultural Olympiad, Scott, 2013), but demonstrating the interconnections between the cultural promise of the Olympics and a transforming, albeit incrementally, cultural terrain, may not have to involve taking the long view. One of the resources for providing a cultural legacy is through the archiving of intellectual contributions to the debate, which, of course, combine the qualitative and the quantitative (British Library 2012, 2013, British Library Legacy 2013). Changing how particular sporting practices are seen and experienced now can also disrupt future discursive regimes. In the case of boxing what started to happen in 2012 can be seen to sow the seeds of possibilities of re-thinking gendered identifications within sport and might also disrupt some of the performance of hegemonic masculinity more widely.

Legacy was put onto the agenda well before 2012 with organisations like Legacy Trust (Legacy Trust, 2012) which was set up in 2007 with the stated aims of combining celebration of athletic achievement and legacy: these games were not just going to be a mega spectacle, they were going to last. Sponsors of the games, such as Lloyds TSB, made much of the promise of legacy, at least beyond 2012 (Woodward, 2012a). Legacy implies endurance, the passing of something worthwhile and valuable

in the context of the Olympics and Paralympics from one generation to the next. However, sport is very much concerned with the immediacy of the present (Woodward, 2012b). So intense are the pleasures and satisfactions as well as the emotional affects of failure and despair, in the present, that we feel they must surely last and provide the possibility of securing something valuable in the future. The concept of legacy is contested, not only in the understanding of what it entails, but also in relation to the timescale involved and especially how what counts can be evaluated.

### **Banking on Legacy and Quick Returns?**

Lloyds Banking Group's Art of Sport project demonstrates many of the defining features of the legacy of the Olympics, namely the promotion of grass roots community engagement and the encouragement of young artists and athletes and the promotion of social cohesion through the promise of elite success as well as of community engagement for its own sake. The promise of Olympic legacy in relation to sporting practices is as much about mass involvement as elite achievement, at least in the rhetoric of legacy. What is distinctive about this project is the perceived difficulty of measuring impact. The bank prefers quantitative evaluation.

One of the dominant discourses of the evaluation of legacy is informed by an understanding of infrastructures as financial and economic within a logic which links levels of expenditure to desirable outputs. According to the Lloyds Banking Group, the first and one of the primary sponsors of London 2012 (2012a) the games should benefit the UK by £16.5bn (Lloyds Banking Group Report, 2012). Such monetary benefits suggest an outcome, which is clearly quantitative and stresses expectations for return upon a massive scale of financial investment. The estimate is based on

infrastructural analyses at the level of global investment rather than in relation to specific communities in particular parts of the UK, beyond the hitherto underdeveloped areas of east London, would be the major beneficiaries. The bank suggests that the building of 3,850 affordable homes in east London is predicted to generate improvements in health and a reduction in crime. Temporality is expressed through prediction: returns are to be correlated to the extent of the initial investment. Lloyds Banking Group chair suggests trickle own benefits from what the bank's chair calls 'the most important sporting event the UK has ever staged...(which) has impacted on our economy in a way that cannot be ignored and the ripples are being felt right across the UK' (London 2012: The Olympic Legacy, 2012:14).

My approach differs from these more usual assessments of legacy. Firstly, I want to suggest not only a different time scale but a different approach to temporality. Rather than focusing on prediction, I am looking at the present, the 'real time' of the games and what the 'now' might deliver about how things might be: promise and possibility rather than the utopian dreams or quantifiable predictions, which are more usually the alternative views of futurity (Grosz, 2005). Secondly, my critique is one based upon the concept of transformation and the promise of legacy as modest and incremental and my focus is upon cultural possibilities rather than quantifiable, immediate, social or economic outcomes. Legacy may necessarily be about developments over time, what one generation leaves to the next, but it is possible to conceive of the future within the present and to explain the temporality of futurities by exploring how we hope for what is to come in the present (Woodward, 2012b). The experience of the present is enhanced too through reflections upon the past, not least in sport where past records are cited with the hope of new records to be set and the promise of even greater achievements in future. In 2012, most commentators in the UK, especially in

sports where team GB had high hopes, mentioned the legacy of Beijing and what the legacy of London might offer for Rio. In women's boxing, of course, the success of London had no past at the Games (beyond an exhibition at St Louis in 1904) and the present incorporated the future and not the past except as a significant silence.

### **Temporalities and the impact of Legacy**

Legacy includes past expectations and comparisons, investment in the moment of 'real time' in the present and projections into the future and how the future will construct the past of this sporting moment (Woodward, 2012b). What constitutes legacy is socially constructed and embedded in social processes and practices, as is the experience of time in which legacies are made-or not made. Theorists of temporality argue that time, although inevitably forward moving, is social (Adam, 2004, 1995, 1994, 1990, Zerubavel, 1985, 1981) and the social and cultural processes through which time is experienced and measured are constitutive of the experience of the passing of time.

Following the Olympics and Paralympics in 2012 there were numerous reports of increased participation in a number of sports. In the case of women's boxing the increased number of women going to the gym was attributed to what was called the 'Nicola Affect' of Nicola Adams's gold medal success (ITV Women Boxing, 2012). Whether boxing has actually become a more popular sport among women might be open to question but more women joined boxing gyms immediately after the games and over a period of time there has been an increase in the number of women taking up different forms of boxing, including mixed martial arts (MMA) and Thai boxing (Woodward 2013). In order to constitute a legacy of 2012, it might require a more extended passage of time but the example demonstrates how legacy can be presented

in sport with the immediacy of real time (Woodward, 2012b), in the present moment Whereas legacy more commonly suggests transference and accumulation over generation, sport privileges the intensity of live action in the present. The language of legacy in sport often embraces ideas of well being and the pursuit of a healthy fit lifestyle through care of the embodied self for individuals and the wider community (Woodward, 2009).

The 2012 Olympics were not only the London Games, but actually described as the ‘Legacy Games’. 2012 was the year when legacy was most frequently invoked and reiterated as one of if not the most important outcome of this mega sporting event. At the time of writing, in early 2013, discussion of legacy persists, in spite of the temporal dimensions of legacy as that which is passed from one generation to the next. Not even a year has passed and yet assessments abound. Some of this disappointment is clearly an expression of the dismay felt not only at increased investment but the converse for many communities and the closure of grass roots facilities. We are far enough away from the summer of 2012 to begin to hope for some materialization of enduring outcomes or, at least, not such an immediate betrayal. This temporal distance also generates some fears that nothing will materialise.

As I write in 2013, media outlets abound with takes of disappointment; schools facilities (Guardian, 2013, Mirror, 2012) are closing as are leisure centres and open access facilities like the Don Valley stadium in Sheffield, the first ‘city of sport’ and home of gold medallist, heptathlete Jessica Ennis (Don Valley, 2013).

Legacy, in the case of the London Games, was and is an aspiration and a projection into the future: the promise of legacy was built into the bidding process and the rationalisation which justified the massive expenditure demanded from host cities and

nations seeking to stage the greatest show on earth. Legacy is an element of the infrastructures which bind us together and which make up the Olympics.

One of the most powerful infrastructures which bind us together is and was invoked in the evaluation and promise of legacy is that of financial investment, which was marked in the run up to 2012, but is often configured around the community dimensions of the promise of enduring legacy for the games, including looking forward to Rio in 2016 (Woodward, 2012b). I include this illustration as an example of attempts to quantify legacy in order to demonstrate what might be missing in such conventional techniques of measurement and evaluation. I use the Lloyds banking Group, having conducted research with the bank as a case study in the run up to the games in order to explore the tensions between the promotion of elite athletes and what the bank called local heroes in its Lloyds Private Banking Art of Sport funding project which brought together the bank's asset management clients with young artists and young athletes in order to promote and develop the work of early career artists and athletes under the auspices of the 2012 London Games (Woodward, 2012a).

### **Can Boxing pack a punch? Can it last?**

In London 2012 the final of the women's flyweight boxing was held at the Excel arena in London on August 9<sup>th</sup> 2012 at 16.15. Team GB's Nicola Adams fought the Chinese champion Ren Cancan. In the semi finals Adams had already defeated India's MC Mary Com. This was competition of some significance and not without contestation outside rather than inside the ring. However, inside the ring this was a fast moving competition, fast moving and clean. In round 2, Adams landed a great left on Cancan, followed by a right to the temple. Adams looked good and by round 3 was

dancing. The coup de grace was a left hook to finish it off (Woodward, 2012b). These are not just my words; they are the kind of language used in commentaries of the fight such as those on the BBC (BBC Medals, 2012, Nicola Adams Stats 2012).

Adams's gold medal was the culmination of a long journey, for women's boxing as well as for the athlete herself. The build up to this fight can be traced through a process of conflicting feelings and emotions as well as a circuitous narrative of institutional resistance and negotiation, which resulted in the decision in 2009 of the IOC to include the women's sport in the Olympics.

Boxing is probably the most contentious sport (McIllvanney, 1996, Sammons, 1988, Sugar, 2006, Sugden, 1996) if not the most dangerous in terms of mortality rates (Woodward, 2006, Woodward, 2013) but it is a sport in which there have been calls for a ban, not least from the British Medical Association. Boxing has a long history of association with illegal, quasi legal activities, with pivotal points of alliances with the Mob (Mitchell, 2009, Sammons, 1988). It is not only the direct corporeal contact of boxing and its imperative, legitimately in the professional game, to render one's opponent unconscious, which makes the sport the subject of such controversy. Boxing's histories include tales of heroic endeavour and of dreadful exploitation (Marqusee, 2005 [2000]).

Boxing is also however, a sport with a genealogy of heroic narratives embodied in athletes like Muhammad Ali (Early, 1999, Hauser, 1991 Marqusee, 2005 [2000]) and re-imagined in a whole range of films (Woodward, 2006). Women's boxing has been and even now remains even more contentious (Hargreaves, 1994) although things have been changing even prior to 2012, with more women at the gym (Heiskanen, 2012, Woodward, 2013). The women's sport is often understood within a discourse of moral outrage and expressions of fear for women's well being. Opposition to

women's participation inferred women's corporeal frailty and might have been underpinned by the threat of the sexualisation of women in the sport through the ways in which spectatorship operates in boxing. There are elements of voyeurism which haunt pugilism as a public entertainment which are even more acute when women are the performers given the saturation of sexualisation of representations of women in what has more recently been termed pornification in what Ariel Levy calls the raunch culture (Levy, 2005) of hyper sexualisation which passes for the empowerment of young women in the west, but which more likely further reinstates patriarchal oppressions..

In the run up to 2012, anxieties were expressed by those in the business as well as outside about whether women should be permitted to engage in pugilism, notwithstanding both the long history of women's boxing, albeit unlicensed, and the inclusion of women in Olympic competitions like judo, taekwondo and wrestling. For example Amir Khan, who turned professional after his silver medal in Beijing in 2008 expressed his concerns after the IOC decision in 2009 stating that women shouldn't box (BBC Khan 2009) but by 2012 he was expounding on Nicola Adams's technique and predicting a great future in the sport for the gold medallist (Guardian Women's Boxing, 2012, Guardian Adams's Gold 2012). Some of this discussion, as in other sports (Woodward, 2012b) centred on clothing. It was suggested that women boxers should wear skirts in case the casual viewer failed to recognise that he (sic) was watching the women's competition. Some of the debate, for example in football, was located in discussion about cultural values and traditions, for example in relation to Muslim women, but in boxing the main criterion seemed to be about knowing which sex you were watching. The suggestion that women wear skirts was abandoned.

The inclusion of women's boxing as a legitimate amateur sport can be seen as an institutional achievement which created the possibility of a more lasting legacy by admitting women to a sport from which they had hitherto been denied formal, licensed access (Hargreaves, 1994, Heiskanen 2012). This is one aspect of women's boxing being put into discourse through a bio politics of legitimising particular body practices and opening up possibilities for negotiation. Regulatory practices embodied in the governing bodies of sport have significant impact upon what might turn into legacy (Woodward, 2009).

Women's boxing in the Olympics is both consonant with the regulations of the men's sport and distinctive (Woodward, 2013). There is no heavyweight category for women; in the Olympics there are just three weight classes, with the heaviest being middleweight. Women's fights at all stages of the competition and in each weight class are enacted within the same frame work as the men's fights, albeit with fewer weight classes. There is a construction of difference and inequality in and through the governance of sport but as most proponents of the women's sport agreed, this was a start.

In 2012, a significant dimension of the discursive possibilities of the inclusion of women's boxing is that it made possible the heroic figure of the woman who is a boxing champion. The endurance over time which makes up legacy in sport, which is so well illustrated in western boxing, is its legends, myths, heroes and histories, not least the sport's heroes of whom one if not the most famous must be Muhammad Ali (Hauser, 1991, Marqusee, 2000, Remnick, 1998). Boxing more than any other sport is classified not only through its regulatory bodies' classifications of body practices, times and spaces, as all are, but also by historical periods. Boxing has golden ages, times of 'when we were kings' which makes its heroes (Boddy, 2008, Mitchell, 2009,

Powley, 2011, Sammons, 1988, Woodward, 2006, 2013). Heroic narratives and heroic figures have lacked visibility for women in the history of boxing even if they have always participated (Hargreaves, 2000)

Women have boxed, all through the nineteenth century when they had very little visible presence (Hargreaves, 1994, 2000, Woodward, 2013) and at the end of the twentieth century there were women who might have been deemed to have achieved the status of boxing heroes; women about whom stories were beginning to be told and legends made. Such women however, were often exalted through their familial connections and categorised more through their famous fathers than their own, certainly not insubstantial achievements in the ring and in competitive boxing. The most notable were Leila Ali and Nancy Frazier who were the daughters of the Greatest, Muhammad Ali and ‘Smokin’ Joe Frazier respectively, such is the fame and heroic status of these giants of boxing legends, especially Ali.

What has contributed to the exclusion of women from boxing and underpins some of the debate about whether or not women’s boxing should have been permitted by the IOC to at the Olympics, is not only the anxieties about the quantifiable damage and measured body practices in the ring and women’s capacities or not to endure the corporeal stresses of the sport, but the desire to protect the heroic narratives in which so much of hegemonic masculinity is invested (Woodward, 2006). It is not so much body weight and embodied endurance and resilience which have denied women the possibility of legacy, but exclusion from boxing’s histories and legends which has denied women the possibility of a future as well as a past. Boxing legends so often invoke the narrative of escape from the ghetto and the route which boxing has traditionally afforded migrant and oppressed men out of poverty and into self respect.

In the lead up to 2012, there was significant media coverage of the involvement of Afghan women in boxing (BBC Asia, 2012). Given the exclusion of women from sporting competition and even sporting practices under the Taliban this was seen as a major, if contradictory break through. For women to chose so unlikely a sport was initially perceived as unlikely, but women have very good reasons for learning the self respect and self defence that goes with boxing and being 'able to look after yourself' as male boxers so often report in the gym (Woodward, 2006). Afghan women boxers put the sport onto the agenda in different and often disruptive ways in the period leading up to 2012.

During the games themselves we heard stories of the life choices of boxers like Katie Taylor and especially Nicola Adams which has opened up new ways of thinking which can inform a cultural legacy. These narratives included the traditional biographical journey not dissimilar to that followed by young men on the margins taking the boxing route out of the ghetto. In the case of Nicola Adams this route was produced within a discourse of the intersection of different inequalities (Guardian Women's Boxing, 2012). Adams had experienced marginalisation through her class position and sexuality and as a black woman. Boxing has traditionally been a sport for the investment of physical capital chosen by migrant young men but what is significant about the ways in which women's boxing was put into discourse in 2012 is the inclusion of gendered exclusion and the politics of difference in relation to sex gender and sexuality. Whether large numbers of young women take up the sport or not, it is now at least on the agenda. Sex gender and sexuality are now more explicitly part of the assemblage of what makes up boxing and its culture.

This is not a romanticised view because this route has often been marred by corruption and exploitation within the sport and boxing has as many bad guys as good

guys and its fair share of those who are both, the best known among whom must be Mike Tyson (O'Connor, 2002). Women's stories too are ambivalent, if in different ways. Commentaries on women boxing in 2012 were still informed by the ghost of the sexualisation of women that is manifest in the wider cultural terrain and takes particular forms in sport, especially boxing. For example, the Daily Mail's commentator reflects upon the ambivalence of subjecting women athletes to the same aggressive beer fuelled cultures of spectatorship which men's boxing can attract (Daily Mail, 2012). The run up to 2012 also saw debates about clothing and the suggestion that women need to be differentiated by their clothing which reflected some of the inconsistencies in the representation of women and men boxers. 2012 is not a simple story of progressive moving forward into a new field securing a legacy of legitimacy and participation for women's boxing but the counterbalance to the persistence of sexualisation is the serious, informed commentary which the women's events also attracted in 2012 (BBC Medals 2012, 2013, Guardian Adams' Gold 2012). However, the stories that have been told and the credibility afforded to boxing, have validated and exalted the sport at pivotal points, hence the narratives of 'the greatest' and invocation of 'kings' as well as serving to exclude women, ostensibly on the ground of enflashed practices and cultural references to the fragility of femininity, but more substantially, because the assemblage of diverse elements which has made boxing culture, including its heroic legends, have made it impossible to put women into the mix as serious contenders. At least Terry Molloy in the film *On the Waterfront*, (1954) could have been a contender; for most women boxers contention was never even on the agenda.

In 2012 the boxing legend and world champion of the 1950s Barbara Buttrick, known as Battling Barbara (WBAN, 2013). Yorkshire born Barbara Buttrick started her

career in the fair ground booths, bare knuckle fighting but, at least within women's boxing is recognised as a pioneer in promoting the sport internationally (Hargreaves, 2000, Woodward, 2013). In 2012 she achieved some wider recognition as part of the Cultural Olympiad with an exhibition which also served to reinstate women's boxing as a sport with a history (Guardian Archive, 2013).

The discursive mechanisms which also create the promise of legacy have been a key element in the process of putting women's boxing into discourse. The BBC television commentary for example made significant inroads into establishing the women's amateur sport as 'real' boxing. There were no attempts to sexualise or infantilise the women boxers and their events whatever the peripheral discussion in media coverage (Woodward, 2013). Size matters in boxing but the language of size when used in relation to women boxers was largely consonant with boxing categories and the hard hitting possibilities of a flyweight, rather than any attempt to infantilise the boxer or render her endeavours superficial and ineffectual. Commentary was conducted in the language of boxing and its techniques (BBC, 2012). One example of synergies between commentary on men's fights and those of women was in relation to the comparisons which were made between, for example Nicola Adams's performance in the ring and her heroes, notably Muhammad Ali in terms of agility and speed and her ability to dance out of trouble in the ring.

### **Conclusion**

Legacy is difficult to assess. It is not a simple cost benefit analysis audit even in those areas of infrastructural impact which lend themselves to quantifiable measurement. Financial investment should generate returns. In the case of sport the returns might take the form of community cohesion, improved health and well being, reduced crime rates, as well as the anticipated success of the Olympics in relation to the

infrastructures of housing and facilities in the host city, not to mention even greater medal capture in subsequent competitions. Shifts in ways of thinking are all elements in what makes up these more measurable changes and I have argued that these transformations through what it is possible to think and what becomes visible and spoken are important, if incremental and often micro rather than macro level elements in the assemblage of forces which makes up change and ultimately constitutes legacy. Women's boxing in 2012 made it possible to think the unthinkable and to start telling stories about women like M C Mary Kom, Ren Cancan, Katie Taylor and most especially of Nicola Adams. It becomes possible to locate women's engagement in the set of body practices and compliance with a set of sporting regulations within an established time frame and to describe their performance in the same discourse as men's engagement in the same activities. The idea of women boxers being put into discourse means that their pugilistic practices as defined and classified by the regulatory bodies of boxing and the IOC now coalesce to produce a recognisable sportsperson, namely the woman boxer who can be a medallist and a serious contender.

The mystique of masculinity is disrupted as is some of the dark side of boxing. It is the dark continent of boxing which generates much of its excitement ( McRae, 2005, Woodward, 2006), but what women's boxing in the 2012 Olympics showed is that the women's sport is fast moving and entertaining. Women's boxing was not a parody of the men's sport as Joyce Carol Oates once suggested (Oates, 1985); it was just as good to watch as a sport which requires speed, honed and refined techniques as any men's amateur boxing.

The rules changed and facilitated participation in the sport of boxing for women. Institutional change and transformation of regulatory frameworks can create

possibilities for legacy as of course, most importantly can financial investment in apparatuses of change. I have argued that legacies are made possible, albeit through marginal, incremental change by the shifts in cultural practice which reconfigure, in this case what we think of as normal for women in sport. Putting new ways of thinking into discourse can lead to a redefinition of the field which provides the infrastructures for the securing of legacy. It is not just about quantifiable increased numbers of participants in women's boxing; nor is it only about the visibility of the sport. What matters is how things change, how the women's sport is produced as meaningful. In 2012 women's boxing, in particular amateur boxing at the Olympics became a serious sport which was discussed, critiqued and made meaningful within a discursive framework of sporting techniques within the genealogy of boxing. Of course there were tensions and undercurrents but this is also what makes boxing exciting. The extent of change and the outcomes remain less certain. Boxing is not a sport which is growing and its golden days may be over, but women's involvement in 2012 may have done something to halt the decline and demonstrate the excitement and the skill and competence of the noble art which could be a substantial legacy with wider reach in the redefinition of gendered identities as well as sporting practices.

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