Sporting Violence in Argentina during the Interwar Years: The Cases of Boxing and Fencing

Cesar R. Torres
SUNY Brockport

Abstract

This article explores the representations of, and meanings ascribed to, boxing and fencing in Argentina during the interwar years. The focus is on the participation of Argentine fencers and boxers in the Olympic Games from the first official Argentine delegation in 1924 until 1936, year of the last Olympic festival before World War II interrupted it through 1948. This article begins by reviewing the trajectory of boxing and fencing in Argentina through the early 1920s. What emerges is a story that illuminates the variegated ways in which sporting violence was legitimized and converged with aesthetics, gender, national identity, pedagogic, and class issues.

Keywords: Sport; Fencing; Boxing; Violence; Argentina

Resumen

Este artículo examina las representaciones de y los significados atribuidos al boxeo y la esgrima en Argentina durante el período de entreguerras. El foco es la participación de los esgrimistas y boxeadores argentinos en los Juegos Olímpicos desde la primera delegación oficial argentina en 1924 hasta 1936, año del último festival Olímpico antes de que la Segunda Guerra Mundial lo interrumpiera hasta 1948. Este artículo comienza reseñando la trayectoria del boxeo y la esgrima en Argentina hasta comienzos de la década del veinte. Lo que emerge es una historia que ilumina las diversas maneras en que la violencia deportiva fue legitimada y convergió con cuestiones de estética, género, identidad nacional, pedagogía y clase.

Palabras clave: Deporte; Esgrima; Boxeo; Violencia; Argentina

crtorres@brockport.edu

Fencer Roberto Larraz, who represented Argentina in four consecutive Olympic Games from 1924 to 1936, winning the bronze medal in the team foil competition in 1928 in Amsterdam, once said that "with a blade in his hand, a man is either a gentleman or a murderer."[1] To avoid this dilemma, Larraz explained, fencing emphasizes urbanity and gentlemanliness.[2] Boxer Arturo Rodríguez Jurado was Larraz's fellow Olympic team member in 1924 and 1928, winning the gold medal in the heavyweight category in the latter edition of the event. When asked about what motivated him to embrace boxing at a young age, Rodríguez Jurado answered that, much like all boys, he thought "it was great fun to bash your classmates."[3] Even more, Rodríguez Jurado contended that this attitude represented "the vanity of the young boy who wants to become a man through violent acts."[4] Rodríguez Jurado made his Olympic debut at age 17 while Larraz made his at age 26. Regardless of their age at the time of these respective debuts, both sportsmen's comments point to an often overlooked commonality between boxing and fencing: their violent connotations, latency, and origins.

Both boxing and fencing originated in Ancient times and have since taken various forms in different cultures around the world. It was in Europe that, during the seventeenth century, boxing and fencing began to undergo a series of changes that progressively led to their codification into globally standardized practices. Historian Gerald R. Gems remarked on a shared turning point in this process, arguing that the modern characteristics of boxing developed "as initial forms of dueling with cudgels and swords transitioned into fistic encounters among combatants, particularly among the lower-class who lacked the means for sophisticated weaponry."[5] As Gems also remarked, "fist fights also proved to be a less deadly means to settle altercations and presumed affronts to one's honor."[6] Dueling with swords in order to achieve justice continued for a long time but swordfights would eventually evolve into a regulated pursuit practiced by gentlemen. The codification of fencing and boxing set limits that contained their violence, restricting it to a level that made both practices safer and more palatable to society.[7]

With these limits, boxing and fencing found their way into the competitive program of the Olympic Games late in the nineteenth century. Such inclusion, as well as the fact that the popularity of and participation in boxing were on the rise while fencing's appeal was on the decline, did not erase the public's view of boxing as barbaric and primitive. By contrast, fencing would lose much of its association with danger and be perceived as a sport governed by strict decorum. This disparity could be attributed to the perception that, as writer Joyce Carol Oates posited, "boxing is the only sport in which the objective is to cause injury: the brain is the target, the knockout the goal."[8] Even if this characterization of

boxing is exaggerated, perhaps this was the violence that Rodríguez Jurado evoked, if only implicitly, when reasoning on why he had initially embraced the sport, for it seems manifest that success in boxing requires the ability to land punches on opponents that often result in pain and injury.[9]

On the other hand, typical characterizations of fencing not only avoid references to pain, injury, or violence, they also highlight its gallant nature, and thus, its differences with boxing. For instance, Aldo Nadi, a renowned Italian fencer, admitted in an oblique comparison of fencing to boxing that the former "is a *contact* sport," which he justified by explaining that fencing involves "a contact of steel, not of fists or bodies."[10] Journalist Bruno Lessing went even further, contending that, compared to fencing, boxing was a "vulgar pastime" and that "fencing is a far better, far cleaner, and far more satisfactory exercise."[11] Despite these portrayals of fencing as a more elevated and safer sport than boxing, the technical rules established by the International Fencing Federation, the sport's international governing body, stipulates that "hits achieved with violence" violate the "character of a courteous and frank encounter"[12] that all fencers must preserve. This seems an admission not only of the dangers that fencers still face, but also of fencing's latent violence, which justifies the extensive protective equipment that fencers are required to use and, as Larraz explained, the need to emphasize courtesy and established etiquette.

Boxing has maintained its literal violence front and center, which might help explain the sport's metaphorical appeal. Conversely, fencing has suppressed its literal violence and taken it to a metaphorical plane. Whereas the regulations and protective equipment adopted in boxing have not substantially subdued the sport's risks and violent character, those adopted in fencing have.[13] Yet, whether fencers actually cause pain or injury to opponents or not, this is what their moves were originally meant to accomplish and still symbolize. While different in this respect, both sports share a violent genealogy. This article explores the representations of, and meanings ascribed to, boxing and fencing in Argentina during the interwar years. The focus is on the participation of the Argentine fencers and boxers in the Olympic Games from the first official Argentine delegation in 1924 until 1936, year of the last edition of this multisport international festival before World War II interrupted it through 1948. To better accomplish its goal, this article begins by reviewing the trajectory of boxing and fencing in Argentina until the beginning of the 1920s. Given the characterization of boxing and fencing above, this article adopts a comparative perspective. The analysis of these two sports is appropriate not only because of their often overlooked commonality, but also because during the interwar years Argentina sent equivalent teams to the Olympic Games and had notable performances. What emerges is a story that illuminates the variegated ways in

which sporting violence was legitimized and converged with aesthetics, gender, national identity, pedagogic, and class issues.

The Unfolding of Boxing and Fencing in Argentina

In his early account of the origins of British sports in Argentina, published in 1932, Eduardo A. Olivera described the arrival and dissemination of athletics, cricket, golf, polo, rackets, soccer, swimming, tennis, and yachting, but does not mention boxing.[14] The same goes for Víctor Raffo's 2004 sequel in which he concentrated on athletics, cricket, soccer, polo, rowing, and rugby.[15] The lack of reference to boxing in these studies might be explained by the tenuous connection that the sport seems to have had with the British community in Argentina, at least when compared to those other sports. In 1829, the *British Packet, and Argentine News* reported a "boxing match" between an Englishman and a North American in Buenos Aires suggesting "that it is only the commencement of a series of these *polite sports* now in agitation" and at the same time "professing our total ignorance of, and want of taste in the *sublime* art of *Pugilism*."[16] Whether or not the series continued, an Englishman by the last name of Cox opened a boxing gymnasium in that city in the early 1860s, a period in which some of the other British sports were introduced in Argentina, albeit without much success. By the 1870s, a small group of French migrants established an academy in Buenos Aires to teach different kinds of physical exercises, including savate, a French form of combat that allowed the use of hands as well as feet. Somehow both savate and boxing began to be increasingly practiced but the process by which they spread has not been sufficiently explored. Carlos Delcasse, a former student in the academy who went on to have a successful political career, practiced and promoted savate and boxing, among other sports, in his large house. Sailors from the United States and England passing through Buenos Aires engaged in boxing matches, sometimes for money, both on and off their ships, involuntarily advertising the sport. In 1892, whether because of its dissemination and in an attempt to arrest it and/or because it was considered an unsuitable activity, municipal authorities were compelled to prohibit boxing in Buenos Aires.[17]

The prohibition to box was not strictly enforced. In 1896, Jorge Newbery, an Argentine whose father was an émigré from the United States, challenged Delcasse to a boxing match that many consider was the first in the country to be held under recognized rules. Newbery, who had just returned to Argentina from his studies in the United States, where he boxed at Cornell University, and was half Delcasse's age, won the match handily. Both contestants would

continue promoting boxing well into the new century. Newbery taught boxing in Delcasse's new house while sailors from the United States and England passing through Buenos Aires drew attention to boxing, shifting it away from savate. By the turn of the century, Newbery had a good number of young men from aristocratic families practicing and disseminating boxing. Progressively, boxing lessons began to be offered in clubs, such as Club de Gimnasia y Esgrima de Buenos Aires and Club del Progreso, among others, and private academies. Early in the 1900s, the latter brought a number of boxers of African descent from the United States for a series of exhibitions in which Newbery took part. Two sailors, Patrick MacCarthy from Ireland and Daniel Donnelly from the United States were convinced to stay in Argentina to further boxing. The former fought with Abelardo Robasio in what many argue was the first professional match in the country in 1903. The latter had fought professionally in his country. Both taught the sport in clubs, but also in their own academies for many years.

Although still restricted to reduced circles, interest in boxing increased during the first decade of the twentieth century, which led to the creation of Boxing Club Buenos Aires, the first of its kind, by Newbery and other members of the aristocracy in 1908. Other clubs ensued and tournaments were organized that popularized boxing. Notably, the 1910 Juegos Olímpicos del Centenario, a sport spectacle organized in Buenos Aires as part of the centennial celebrations of Argentina's revolution for national independence, seem to have featured boxing. A few years later, former heavyweight world champion Jack Johnson's global boxing tour included a stop in Argentina.[18] Other foreign boxers also fought in the country. By the end of the decade, Luis Ángel Firpo, who would soon become the first boxing idol in Argentina, started his career in International Boxing Club, one of the newly established clubs. Increasingly, the practice of boxing spread beyond the sons of well-to-do families. The augmented interest in boxing gave way, fourteen years after a similar but failed effort, to the creation in 1920 of the Federación Argentina de Box (FAB), the sport's national governing body. In 1922, Argentina sent a boxing team to the Jogos Latino-Americanos, a sport spectacle conceived as part of Brazil's centennial celebrations held in Rio de Janeiro. That same year, the Asociación Argentina de Box (AAB) emerged to rival the FAB. The mayor of Buenos Aires offered a solution to the tension that existed between the two institutions. He announced that if the FAB and AAB merged, the prohibition of boxing would be lifted. The two bodies, indeed, merged and, as promised, the prohibition of boxing was lifted.[19]

Even though the prohibition had not prevented the dissemination of boxing, its legalization furthered the popularity of the sport in Argentina. What also contributed to this disseminating process was Firpo's career, especially his match with Jack Dempsey in New York for the heavyweight championship

on September 14, 1923, the first sporting event to be broadcasted by radio in Argentina. The public's expectation was enormous. For instance, writers Julio Cortázar and Adolfo Bioy Casares admitted that they anxiously awaited the match and that Firpo's loss was sorely disappointing.[20] The experience was so powerful that Bioy Casares briefly took up boxing and, seven decades later, would write a novel in which the protagonist, Luis Ángel Morales, is considered by his friends as a hero very much like his boxing namesake.[21] Cortázar would also write about boxing.[22] The match between Firpo and Dempsey captured the imagination of Argentine men from all walks of life and was a turning point in the expansion of boxing, its approval among the general public, and even its ability to elicit admiration. The perceived magnitude of the match was such that September 14 was declared Boxers' Day in Argentina.

Unlike boxing, fencing was not legally prohibited in Argentina, but it remained a sport practiced in exclusive institutions and by members of the upper class. Occasionally matches and exhibitions were organized in large venues, such as theaters, drawing numerous spectators. This was especially so when prominent foreign fencers were called to show their qualities. For instance, the match in 1903 between Italian Agesilao Greco and Frenchman Lucien Mérignac and the one in 1904 between Greco and Alphonse Kirchoffer, another Frenchman, received considerable attention. Both matches took place in Buenos Aires and gathered large crowds that considered them tests of the celebrated Italian and French schools of fencing.[23] Italian and French masters deeply influenced Argentine fencing throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, the credit for introducing fencing to Argentina usually goes to a European without apparent ties to either Italy or France: Gibraltarian Andrés Facundo Cesario. He arrived in Argentina in 1833 and soon opened a *salle* in Buenos Aires. Autocratic political leader Juan Manuel de Rosas, who then had extensive influence over the country, is said to have instructed Cesario to close his *salle*, and he was only able to resume teaching fencing in Argentina once Rosas was overthrown in 1852. In 1871, Cesario established along with Italians Pablo Casciani and Juan Bay the first fencing academy in Buenos Aires. Given the careers of Casciani and Bay, it could be argued that Cesario, who passed away in 1879, as well as the academy, capably promoted fencing.[24]

Bay was hired in 1874 to teach fencing at the Colegio Militar de la Nación to future army officers, a position he held until 1898. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, fencing became widespread in military and civilians circles. Several *salles* were installed in private residences and, slowly, specialized clubs were established to satisfy the growing demand for teachers and appropriate facilities to practice the sport. Club de Gimnasia y Esgrima de Buenos Aires and Club de Esgrima, established in 1880 and 1885, respectively, exemplify this

process. These clubs, along with several others, were established through the initiative of members of the elite, including Delcasse and Newbery, and served as centers where men were socialized in the mores of their class. The *salle* of the patrician Jockey Club, opened in 1897 with great pomp, rapidly became a point of reference for fencing in Argentina. Declared by its members as unique in the Americas, the *salle* was directed by Italian Eugenio Pini, an admired fencer. Pini had come to visit his fellow countryman Luis Scarani, a fencing teacher at Club de Gimnasia y Esgrima de Buenos Aires, but, impressed with the Jockey Club's *salle*, decided to take the job and stay in Argentina, where he spent the rest of his life, becoming a key advocate of fencing in civilian and military circles.

In 1897, Pini was also chosen as the director of the recently created Escuela Militar de Esgrima, which operated in the Jockey Club's *salle* until its facilities were built. Pini hired a number of teachers, including Italians Victor Ponzoni and Escipión Ferreto, and Argentine Juan Bay, son of the eponymous Italian fencing master. Pini took a small group of graduates of the Escuela Militar de Esgrima's first cohorts to Europe several times during the first decade of the twentieth century, where they fenced in various countries. These graduates, which included Ernesto Carbone, Aniceto Rodríguez, and Luis Centenari, would further disseminate the sport among army as well as civilian men. Other fencing teachers, mainly from Italy and France, added their efforts to the fencing effervescence. Among them were Italian Ernesto de Marinis and French M. Oudenot, and later Italians Nedo Nadi and Cándido Sassone as well as Frenchman Georges Noirfalise. Soon, domestic tournaments in both military and civilian circles were organized with greater frequency. Subsequently, Argentine fencers began to participate in international tournaments such as the 1910 Juegos Olímpicos del Centenario held in Buenos Aires and an event held the same year in Santiago de Chile that celebrated the centennial of Chile's revolution for national independence. These tournaments were coupled with exhibitions, now incorporating Argentine fencers, such as the one Rodríguez, who later directed the Club del Progreso's *salle*, had with Italian Athos de San Malato in Buenos Aires in 1916.

All this fencing activity led to the formation of a national bureaucracy around the same time that boxing leaders created the FAB. The Federación Argentina de Esgrima (FAE) was formed in 1921 and by the end of the year it was affiliated to the International Fencing Federation.[25] Obviously, its officials came from the same class that cultivated the sport. Until the FAE's creation, Larraz observed, the clubs had worked independently from each other and the new institution provided as much direction as coordination.[26] The first opportunity to display the FAE's leadership came during the 1922 Jogos Latino-Americanos. Much like

boxing, Argentine fencing was represented at the event and both sports would soon thereafter begin their work to include teams in the first official Argentine delegation to the 1924 Paris Olympics.[27] In contrast to boxing, Argentine fencing was not popular because, as Sandra Gayol argued, its promoters never wished their sport to be so as they feared that its gentlemanliness would degenerate if the masses adopted it.[28] Albeit not popular, fencing was well established in 1920s Argentina and, like boxing, a sport progressively embraced by the lower-class, it was bound for the Olympic Games. Journalist Juan José de Soiza Reilly gave testimony of the state of fencing in Argentina and its self-proclaimed values in an article commemorating the one hundredth anniversary of the sport in Argentina in which he celebrated all of those who "contributed to spreading through the country the art that teaches men to be gentlemanly."[29] Despite its notable teachers and performers, fencing, perhaps to the delight of its promoters, remained a sport practiced by the elite and never captured the imagination of the country. This lack of acceptance, coupled with the transformation of its literal violence into metaphorical violence, might have prevented writers of the stature of Bioy Casares and Córtazar from exploring "the art that teaches men to be gentlemanly."

Interpreting Violence in Boxing and Fencing

In spite of their different trajectories and distinctive peculiarities, by the 1920s Argentine boxing and fencing each had incipient but stable bureaucracies together with a solid number of practitioners that seemed to reflect the aspirations of their leaders. The social sanction of boxing and fencing possibly reflected the attenuation of their level of violence and the control of the latter, enabled by their codification. Yet, this sanction was not universal and some groups continued to criticize the violent nature of both sports, especially boxing. Among such groups was the Partido Socialista, one of the most vociferous. *La Vanguardia*, its official newspaper, printed numerous articles opposing their practice. For instance, early in January 1924, deploring the death of a boxer in the Province of Entre Ríos, *La Vanguardia* condemned the activity as "outrageous and repugnant savagery," wondered whether boxing was indeed a sport, and took *La Nación*, a mainstream newspaper, to task for describing the death as an "accident."[30] The following month, the socialist newspaper, arguing that boxing was "a school of stupid and useless violence" and a "new source of irresponsible criminality," demanded that the prohibition to box be reinstated in Buenos Aires.[31] The Socialists' effort to reinstate the prohibition to box in Buenos Aires, presumably the largest and most important market for the sport,

was fruitless, but the Socialists had partial, and temporary victories in 1932, when the small cities of Bahía Blanca and Campana prohibited boxing.[32] That same year, Octavio C. Fernández, an influential physician in the development of sport medicine in Argentina, published an article in which he argued that boxing did not offer any benefits.[33]

While these prohibitions and indictments did not ignite any forceful political or social campaign against boxing or fencing, throughout the 1920s and the 1930s both sports were described by mainstream media as well as practitioners and officials in a way that, intentionally or not, furthered their legitimacy and portrayed them as acceptable pursuits. This was achieved by emphasizing qualities that shifted the attention away from the violence of boxing and fencing. These qualities were mainly aesthetic features. That is, the violence of boxing and fencing, albeit never denied, was aestheticized to elevate their practice to an art form. The references to boxing as artistic are plentiful during the interwar years. Here are just a few examples. In the late 1910s, *Caras y Caretas*, a popular magazine, printed an article by Belgian writer Maurice Maeterlinck, who had been awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1911, praising boxing and categorizing it as art.[34] At the turn of the 1920s, César Viale, an aristocratic promoter of both boxing and fencing who briefly presided over the FAB, depicted boxing as "the most honorable art of defense," "the art of punching," and "a thoroughly artistic activity when practiced with conscience and high principles."[35] Early in the 1930s, De Soiza Reilly highlighted that the art of boxing "should not be only the art of coldly landing punches; it should be the art of risking one's life with the passion of a titan."[36] De Soiza Reilly's was an infrequent attempt at articulating what "artistic" meant in the context of boxing, for most references left such meaning unspecified and appeared to assume that the sport's aesthetic qualities were evident. *La Nación* also provided an interpretation of what artistic boxing could mean while assessing the performance of the boxing team at the 1936 Berlin Olympics, which included one gold, one silver, and two bronze medals. Notably, it did so by referring to violence. The unidentified reporter argued that the Argentine team possessed a "polished technique" and was the best of the tournament, but complained that it did not reach the first place because referees seemed more prone to appreciating "senseless violence" rather than "the noble art of pugilism of yesteryear."[37] For *La Nación*, the art of boxing included violence, so long as it was not pointless, although it was not clear when it turned so.

Much like boxing, fencing was repeatedly portrayed as an artistic endeavor. Pini was an archetypical exemplar of this view. In the preface of his 1902 book on teaching and practicing fencing, he referred to his "long artistic career" in the sport and to fencing as "our art."[38] Exactly 30 years later, in his book on the

travails of Argentine fencing at the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics, Pini spoke of the "art of fencing" and characterized the sport as a "noble art."[39] In the years between these two pronouncements, he consistently remarked that fencing was a "most noble art."[40] As seen in the previous section, De Soiza Reilly also thought that fencing was an art, a position shared and advanced by Viale and Román López, a president of the FAE.[41] Competitions were obviously perceived to be arenas to demonstrate the art of fencing. In this regard, fencing teacher Domingo Lombardini argued that the sport's Olympic tournaments were a "great artistic event."[42] In the 1920s, Delcasse, a promoter of fencing and boxing who served one term in Congress as a member of the Partido Autonomista Nacional, wrote in a short review of a book on fencing by Italian Enrico Lancia di Brolo that the sport was "the noble art of attack and defense."[43] Alfredo Palacios, the first Socialist elected to Congress in Latin America, was taught fencing by Delcasse and while they disagreed on political matters, they shared a passion for the sport. In 1938, Palacios lauded, in contrast to his party's position, "the noble art of fencing," adding that it was "a complete discipline because it educates, at the same time, both the body and the spirit."[44] Two years earlier, *La Prensa*, a mainstream newspaper, extolled Argentine fencing for its "refined and artistic technique."[45] In turn, *Caras y Caretas* affirmed that fencers were "practitioners of the noble and difficult art of 'touching without being touched.'"[46] These crude elaborations did not add anything of significance to explain what made fencing an art and its practice artistic. Such imprecision, common to depictions of fencing and boxing, did, however, serve as a rhetorical device to cloak them with an aura of respectability.

Boxing was also legitimized by its having been depicted as a science. That said, the references that liken the sport to a science are far fewer than those that claimed it was an art form. Pierce Egan in his *Boxiana*, published in 1812, first labelled boxing "the sweet science of bruising." Egan's book was an account of pugilism in England in the early nineteenth century. Subsequently, commentators would eventually drop the last part of the description, shortening it to "the sweet science." Consider, for example, *The Sweet Science*, published in 1926, by British Trevor C. Wignall and the now classic eponymous book by A. J. Liebling, published in 1951, which popularized this description of boxing. Interestingly, there were references in Argentina linking boxing to science even before Wignall published his *The Sweet Science*.[47] From 1913 to 1928, *Caras y Caretas* ran a comic strip written and illustrated by Manuel Redondo titled *Sarrasqueta* after its protagonist.[48] In a 1921 installment, Sarrasqueta narrated what he had learned in order to get ahead in life. In addition to a variety of subject matters, he was shown to "command fencing" and to have been practicing "scientific, artistic, and literary boxing."[49] Two years later, in an installment in which Sarrasqueta

advised on how to avoid being attacked, he challenged readers as follows: "If you have the courage, train as [Luis Ángel] Firpo does in the scientific art of boxing, and if someone tries to attack you, make him groggy in the first round and then knock him out."[50] Redondo's *Sarrasqueta* suggests the popularity of fencing and boxing during the 1920s as well as their rightful place among other legitimate sports. Noticeably, while the violence of boxing was not denied in this comic strip, it was portrayed as simultaneously possessing elements of both science and art. Accepted within the confines of the ring, boxing violence was construed as a scientific art that was also accepted outside of such confines, at least if its techniques were exercised for self-defense.

Boxing was legitimized by descriptions that explicitly associated it with fencing. In an interesting and somewhat incongruous formula, Viale called boxing "fencing with fists."[51] Similarly, advocating action to protect boxing from potential corrupting influences, *La Nación* also called it "fencing with fists."[52] This happened early in 1924, when Argentine officials were discussing the preparations of the first official delegation to the Olympic Games that would take place later that year in Paris. A few years after Raúl Landini won the silver medal in the welterweight category at the subsequent Olympic Games in Amsterdam, a journalist commented that Landini had beaten plenty of "true fencers with fists" in his career.[53] As seen, given their shared violent genealogy, the conflation of fencing and boxing should not be surprising. In this respect, Maeterlinck advanced that the sword and the fist complemented each other.[54] However, it could be argued that promoters of boxing sought to associate it with fencing not because of these sports' supposed complementarity, but rather because, despite their shared violent genealogy, fencing was perceived as less violent than boxing. Not for nothing Viale remarked that boxing prohibited hand-to-hand combats and that referees immediately separated boxers when fighting stopped because of tie-ups.[55] The implication was that fencing was cleaner that boxing and that, when understood as "fencing with fists," boxing required contestants to keep a certain distance between them that made the sport more acceptable.

Another salient feature of boxing and fencing during the interwar years was their articulation as important avenues to learn and prove a certain masculinity as well as to disseminate this understanding in the public sphere. This was made explicit early in the 1920s by Malcolm R. Crew, secretary of the Physical Department of the Young Men's Christian Association's (YMCA) branch in Buenos Aires. Crew maintained that boxing and fencing, along with the other physical activities and sports offered by the YMCA, were "contributing very materially to the boyhood and manhood of the entire Republic."[56] The belief that boxing and fencing were sports apt to propagate images of boyhood and

manhood extended well beyond the YMCA. Pini thought that fencing was a "virile sport" and Viale, that boxing was the "most virile and positive of the sports."[57] Viale did not argue why that was the case, but it could be conjectured that the comparative assessment of virility had as much to do with the explicit violence of boxing as with its requirement of power and toughness. It was precisely because of these qualities that he recommended boxing to "the fathers who want strong sons who will become all-around men."[58] Viale was convinced that boxing "holds the ultimate secret for those functions of life that require, materially or morally, striving or competing."[59] Towards the end of the 1930s, in an article targeting young men, *Caras y Caretas* echoed the view that exalted boxing as a preferred sport to teach how to be manly. The first line read "boy, learn to punch and . . . to receive punches." Then, the article incited young men to practice boxing "as a healthy and virile sport." It also highlighted that "the only strong man is the one who knows not only how to punish, but also how to bear the punishment of worthy, gentlemanly, and strong rivals."[60] The message was unambiguous: boxing, through the violent treatment of self and others, developed strong men. Fencing, with its own brand of violence, was also believed to do so. Palacios, thought it was "an essentially virile art" and proposed that its mastery demanded like no other sport "the possession and control of the masculine virtues,"[61] whatever those may be.

Given the emphasis on masculinity, it is not surprising that boxing and fencing were reserved almost exclusively for men. For example, the article in *Caras y Caretas* that incited young men to box did not mention young women. A 1925 article in the same magazine explained that boxing had conquered the "feminine element," but only as spectators. It informed that many a young women attended matches and that, once those concluded, they rushed to the ring to embrace the winners. Moreover, the article speculated that if women decided to box, physicians would prohibit the activity based on the disastrous results that would ensue.[62] A few years earlier, Italian female fencer Melina Guardabascio Vita travelled to Argentina to showcase her skills and promote fencing among the country's women. Upon her arrival she was honored by fencing clubs in Buenos Aires, gave lectures on the sport, and even shared the *piste* with men.[63] Guardabascio Vita then launched her promotional campaign but faced significant opposition. A chronicle told of older women being horrified by the prospect of women's fencing and, in spite of her efforts, Guardabascio Vita was unable to popularize it. Some women fenced in private but they were not ready to fence in public. The Italian's efforts, though, were not futile and by the early 1930s Larraz and his fellow fencer Vito Simonetti formed what was presumably the first female fencing team at Club de Gimnasia y Esgrima de Buenos Aires with a small number of curious women. In 1933, the FAE orga-

nized the first female tournament and, the following year, a female tournament was judged by a female panel, including Guardabascio Vita, albeit presided by a man. Female fencing slowly grew and, by 1935, there were about 100 female fencers in Buenos Aires while La Plata, Rosario, Córdoba, Tucumán, and Mendoza also had female fencers.[64]

Such growth did not mean that female fencing was rapidly or easily accepted. Some men complained that fencing required unfeminine poses and ridiculed women. In turn, some women responded by arguing that it was an elegant sport, worthy of them. Notice that while male fencing was associated with virility, and consequently masculinity, female fencing was associated with assumed feminine virtues like elegance. Journalist Luis Pozzo Ardizzi made it clear that Herminia Russ, a Swiss female fencer residing in Argentina, worked in a fashion boutique and was thus feminine. His point was that female fencing could be compatible with established notions of femininity.[65] The absence of any reference to virility, or any other assumed masculine traits, in descriptions of female fencing is explained by the dissonance that such reference would have had with the prevailing ideal of femininity. Not even those who believed that fencing benefited men and women alike dared to associate female fencing with power or toughness.[66] Pozzo Ardizzi, among others, encouraged women to fence but always within the boundaries of the notion that female and male fencing were different and required dissimilar qualities. In this regard, fencing seemed to differ from boxing: women could engage in metaphorical violence but not actual violence. Women's boxing did not seem to have had too many, if any, visible promoters. Yet, progress was not remarkably swift for female fencers: even though there had been a foil competition for women since the 1924 Paris Olympics, Argentine women only debuted at the 1948 London Olympics. By contrast, Argentine men had been members of the country's Olympic delegations since Argentina officially started participating in the ecumenical event in 1924. Female boxers, from Argentina and beyond, had to wait much longer, almost a century, to become Olympians. The construction of masculinity and femininity related to fencing and boxing during the interwar years clearly point to the gender logic prevailing in Argentina, which in sport favored the expression of men's virile characteristics.[67]

As the embodiment of virile characteristics, boxers and fencers, and more generally all sportsmen, were supposed to represent and charged with representing the nation in international sport competitions like the Olympic Games. Sociologist Daniel Fridman and historian David Sheinin have remarked "the centrality of national Olympic boxing teams that represented the colors of the country [at the Olympic Games between 1924 and 1952]."[68] In this regard, cultural anthropologist Eduardo Archetti has said in relation to their success

that Argentine boxers frequently become the "fists of the nation," not only because of their strength and courage, but also for their boxing finesse or, to put it in the equivocal language used at the time, their "science" or "art."[69] This illustrates how sport functions in the public sphere to express and also generate particular images that link active bodies and their capacities to national identities. Ten days before the boxing competition began at the 1924 Paris Olympics, track and field athlete Enrique Thompson, writing for *La Nación*, reported that experts who had seen them training admired the endurance, combativeness, and power of Argentine boxers.[70] Another article informed that French boxers praised the virtuosity of their Argentine counterparts.[71] In their Olympic debut, Argentine boxers went on to win four medals (two silver and two bronze). Boxers were not the only sportsmen strongly associated with the nation. If they had become the fists of the nation, fencers had become those who carried its weapons in times of peace. In a farewell gala in honor of the fencing team that would compete at the 1924 Paris Olympics, held in the patrician Jockey Club days before the team sailed for Europe, López, then president of the FAE, let the young men know what they had been chosen to represent and what their duty was. His speech, given after the exhibition bouts were concluded, left no doubt in the minds of the first Argentine Olympic fencers. In the most salient passages, López pronounced:

> You are going to cross your weapons, in gentlemanly battle, with the strongest fencers of the Old Continent; to demonstrate once again, the nobility and vigor of our race, of that race of courageous and selfless men who gave us our homeland, to the cry of liberty and independence, launched on May 25, 1810. You are going to make manifest that the Argentine Republic, great for its progress, for its culture, for its intellectuality, is also great in sport and worthy of occupying a prominent place in the ranks of universal sport.
> You are ambassadors of a mission of peace and concord, that should necessarily flatter your feelings as citizens and gentlemen, as is that of achieving triumphs, to deposit them upon your return at the foot of the glorious white and blue flag, sacred symbol of our Argentine nationality. With you, go our thoughts, accompanying you are our wishes for your triumph, which, if it materializes, will be the best present that you could offer the homeland on the 108th anniversary of its declaration of independence.[72]

While fencers could not match the performance of their boxing teammates and did not win medals to offer at the altar of the nation, as López so strongly

wished, several advanced beyond the initial rounds of their events. The best results were Larraz's fifth place in foil and Horacio Casco's eighth place in sabre. However, neither the fencing delegation's performance nor López's odd linking of the fencing team to the nation pointed to an incident that demonstrated even more forcefully the desire of FAE officials that fencers promote internationally the national identity of Argentina. After all, these fencers were going to manifest the virtues that led the country in the revolution for independence over one hundred years earlier. The incident also demonstrated these officials' anxiety over who was most capable of embodying the Argentine national identity, which also indicates, perhaps obliquely, the anxiety over immigration still lingering in 1920s Argentina.[73]

Late in January 1924, the FAE informed that the fencing team that was to participate in that year's Olympics would be formed based on the results of a tournament that it had organized in November of the previous year. The FAE established that all Olympic fencers had to be native Argentines. Given the fencing officials' insistence on this point, the Comité Olímpico Argentino (COA) admitted in March that the fencers selected met the required qualifications to be included in the Olympic delegation but refused to act accordingly in light of the exclusion of naturalized Argentines. In a letter to Henri de Baillet-Latour, president of the International Olympic Committee, Ricardo C. Aldao, president of the COA, declared that the FAE's position was not only "absurd," but also that it had generated "an explosion of ridiculous chauvinism." Further, Aldao explained that the COA would not change its mind "unless the federation modifies its attitude."[74] The FAE responded announcing that it did not need naturalized citizens to form its team. A group of national sport federations stood firmly behind the FAE. However, fencing officials realized, or were shown, that precluding naturalized Argentines from trying to make the team was unconstitutional. In the end, the FAE and the COA agreed to organize supplementary trials open to both naturalized and native citizens. Although many of the FAE's affiliates fought this agreement, it was ultimately endorsed. The supplementary trials were held in late April attracting a disappointingly low number of fencers. With the nationalistic squabble settled, the COA approved the list of fencers submitted by the FAE, which seemed to have understood that, at least legally, native as well as naturalized Argentine fencers could carry the nation's weapons in times of peace and represent it internationally.[75]

Eight years later, the FAE would be embroiled in yet another nationalistic controversy that echoed that of 1924. In 1932, the debate was not about whether naturalized fencers could try out for the Olympic team that would compete in that year's Los Angeles Olympics, rather it was about whether a foreign national could serve as the coach of the Olympic team. Apparently, the

FAE's bylaws stipulated that the coach of any team competing abroad had to be a native Argentine. That stipulation was removed before the selected team travelled to Los Angeles, which allowed the FAE to name Cándido Sassone, an Italian who had been coaching in Argentina for a number of years but was not a naturalized citizen, as the team's coach. For Pini, a naturalized Argentine himself, this constituted an "antipatriotic" decision and he argued that there were plenty of native Argentine coaches who were as qualified as the best in Italy or France, the sport's leading countries. López concurred that this was an "antinational" decision and complained that, with Sassone at the helm, the team had lost its Argentine character. In protest, several fencers, including Luis and Héctor Lucchetti, members of the team that won the bronze medal in the team foil competition at the 1928 Amsterdam Olympics, resigned from the team that would compete in Los Angeles. The FAE reacted penalizing them with an indefinite ban to fence, which was eventually lifted. Diminished, the small team did not live up to expectations. Critics were displeased with its substandard performance and argued that it was largely a result of the FAE's actions.[76] The pressure against Sassone was ultimately effective and he did not travel to Los Angeles, which meant that the fencing team did not have a coach.[77] The stance that Olympic delegations should include Argentines who truly represented the virtues of the nation transcended fencing in 1932. Complaints abounded to the extent that the COA felt compelled to publicly clarify that the Olympic team included only four naturalized Argentines, about ten percent of the sportsmen. None was a fencer and one, Rafael Lang, was a boxer. As the COA clarified, these naturalized Argentines had grown as sportsmen in Argentina and were thus representatives of the nation's sport.[78] In Los Angeles, as in all the Olympic Games of the interwar years, the fists of the nation and the hands that carry its weapons were, one way or the other, truly Argentine.

A final salient feature of boxing and fencing during the interwar years was their rationalization as sports with potent pedagogic import. That is, their own brands of violence were justified as useful in accomplishing desired social outcomes. Viale consistently expressed this view. In 1907 he had organized a private boxing gala in Buenos Aires that was cancelled by the police, invoking the prohibition on boxing that was in place at the time. Viale, activating his networks of connections, was able to secure a meeting with Carlos Torcuato de Alvear, the city's mayor at the time. According to his account, Viale told Alvear that the prohibition prevented "an indispensable sport to replace the knives and pistols, which we use now to end our arguments and brawls." Viale also emphasized that boxing "will be a great antidote against those undesirable customs."[79] Almost fifteen years later, Viale, along with the newly created FAB, reiterated boxing's pedagogic potential when renewing their efforts to have

the prohibition on boxing overturned. They argued that, in the most civilized countries, "the king of the sports" was legalized and that its practice had brought "positive results" to these countries. These promoters of boxing further argued that the education of the character, the fortification of the body, and the discipline and gentlemanliness acquired in the ring improved the individuals who practice the sport as well as society as a whole.[80] In the mid-1920s, *El Gráfico*, the most prominent sport magazine, agreed that the ring was "a school of good education" that taught boxers many valuable lessons.[81] More than a decade after the prohibition on boxing was finally overturned, an article in *Caras y Caretas* insisted that boxing taught those who practiced it to keep emotions under control and that it was far better than the "cowardice of carrying a weapon" to defend oneself.[82] By the same token, Maeterlinck exaggeratedly wrote in the same magazine that the practice of boxing guaranteed peace and docility.[83]

Boxer Lidoro Oliver, who reached the quarterfinals in the lightweight category at the 1936 Berlin Olympics, agreed with the defense of boxing based on its beneficial effects on self and others. Lidoro thought he was an exemplar of the power that boxing had to shape young men into productive members of society. Shortly before embarking for Europe, Oliver confessed that as a youngster he was prone to violence and liked to pick fights. Once he took up boxing, Oliver admitted, he stopped doing so. "In this sense," Oliver said, "boxing did me a lot of good." Ironically, he did not inform his parents when he took up boxing at age fourteen, knowing that they would disapprove of the decision.[84] Boxer Raúl Villarreal, a teammate of Oliver in Berlin who won the bronze medal in the middleweight category, also admitted that, before taking up boxing, he frequently picked fights.[85] Boxer Leonardo Gulle, another member of that team, revealed that by 1936 he had been boxing for seven years but that it was the first time in his boxing career that his mother was happy because she never wanted Gulle to fight.[86] Similarly, the mother of boxer Oscar Casanovas, who won the gold medal in the featherweight category in Berlin, was uneasy until she saw him back in Buenos Aires. The woman declared being afraid that Casanovas would get hurt and that the gold medal, the laurel wreath, and the national anthem and flag were not as important as her son's health.[87] Anticipating the argument that the sport's violence led to undesirable outcomes, Viale and the rest of the boxing promoters, explained in their defense of boxing that in other sports such as equestrian, rugby, and car racing there were also accidents due to circumstances that were impossible to predict.[88] *El Gráfico* defended boxing violence, linking the sport to democracy and maintaining that its practice gave the sons of the working-class the opportunity to break free from oppressive misery and to get ahead in life.[89] For boxing promoters as much as for boxers, the teachings and other beneficial consequences of boxing clearly outweighed its risks.

Given that the kind of violence in each sporty was different, promoters of fencing did not have to evaluate its teaching and other beneficial consequences of the sport in relation to its potential risks. Nonetheless, they did highlight the pedagogic value of fencing. As already seen, De Soiza Reilly implied this when articulating fencing as "the art that teaches men to be gentlemanly." Likewise, Larraz pointed in the same direction when suggesting that the principles taught by the sport transformed men with a blade into gentlemen rather than murderers. Palacios detailed such principles: fencing sharpened agility and intelligence, instilled character, developed intent, infused combative and defensive energy, and inculcated nobility in fighting.[90] Viale lauded the well-known handshake with which fencing bouts ended because it signified a "gentlemanly epilogue" that, encapsulating these principles, solved whatever issues had arisen in the heat of competition.[91] For Rubén Barabino Devoto, a fencer and fencing judge, fencing was "a gentlemanly sport" whose regular practice constituted an "education of the character."[92] It is noteworthy that whereas the violence of boxing was depicted as a means to teach self-restraint and to control violent behavior outside the ring, the violence of fencing was described as a means to teach practitioners how to be a gentleman in polite society.

There was a class connotation in these alternative uses of boxing and fencing, respectively. As Archetti aptly remarked, while in the 1920s it was still possible to find boxers from the upper ranks of society mixed with the sons of working-class families, by the 1930s the former had disappeared from the rings.[93] In 1936, Félix D. Frascara, a journalist with *El Gráfico*, drove this point home. After describing the prospect of all the sports represented in the delegation, he wrote of the "poor and deserving bunch of boys" that have become one of the highest points in any national Olympic delegation.[94] By then, boxers had won eleven medals, including four gold. That year at the Berlin Olympics, they added four more medals to the count, including two gold. Rodríguez Jurado recalled that, at the 1924 Paris Olympics, four members of the boxing team were from working-class families and four from affluent ones. He put himself in the second group, which he called "privileged boys," and called the other group "scruffy boys." Rodríguez Jurado claimed to be the only boxer that alternated between both groups but clarified that within this division according to class everything went very well.[95] Regardless of how much these groups actually interacted, the words Rodríguez Jurado used to refer to them, which was common at the time, suggests a belief that the scruffy boys had to be tamed while the privileged kids had to become gentlemen. Boxing would thereafter be populated only by working-class men while fencing would keep its traditional social basis. No wonder, then, that boxing and fencing violence took pedagogic forms considered appropriate to each of their respective audiences.

Conclusions

In mid-1941, when what historian Tulio Halperín Donghi called the "world's storm" was already roaring over Europe, Francisco A. Borgonovo, an Argentine sport official, toured the Americas as an ambassador of the inaugural Pan-American Games that were scheduled to take place in Buenos Aires at the end of the following year.[96] Although the event was not held until 1951, during his ambassadorial tour Borgonovo unwittingly offered an account of the state of boxing and fencing in Argentina at the beginning of World War II. Detailing the facilities that the Argentine organizers planned to use in the projected 1942 Pan-American Games, Borgonovo explained that the boxing competitions would "be held at Luna Park which contains 5,000 seats and standing room for 35,000 persons." By contrast, the fencing competitions would be held at Club de Gimnasia y Esgrima de Buenos Aires, where "2,500 persons may witness these events."[97] Both the boxing and fencing competitions planned for the failed 1942 Pan-American Games were reserved for men. It is telling of the comparative popularity of these sports that the event's organizers felt compelled to choose a venue for the boxing competitions that accommodated sixteen times as many spectators as the one chosen for the fencing competitions. These choices are a strong indication that while both sports had vibrant communities of practitioners and were welcomed by the Argentine public, the preference was for the literal violence of boxing rather than the metaphorical violence of fencing.

What Borgonovo's unwitting account of the state of boxing and fencing in Argentina at the beginning of World War II did not intimate was the representations of, and meanings ascribed to, both sports during the interwar years, especially during the country's participation at the Olympic Games. Aware of the criticisms advanced by opponents of boxing and fencing as much as the violent character of the sports, their defenders constructed and appealed to narratives that were meant to legitimize their practice. Their efforts focused on shifting the public's attention away from the violence of boxing and fencing and reconceptualizing it. Both sports were aestheticized and presented as endeavors with artistic qualities. Along the same lines, the arts of boxing and fencing were articulated as being scientific in nature. Neither what "artistic" nor "scientific" denoted in the context of boxing and fencing was elucidated, but it could be argued that it was loosely related to the specific skills and strategies involved in each sport. Boxing and fencing were also endorsed as the embodiment of masculine potentialities that were at the same time national potentialities. Thus, boxers and fencers were supposed to represent and charged with representing these potentialities in international sport competitions like the Olympic Games. Lastly, boxing and fencing were sanctioned as endeavors with potent pedagogic

import. That is, they could be instrumentalized to achieve desired social ends. While education of the character and its ensuing benefits were typically mentioned, this took a different connotation depending on the social origins of each sport's practitioners. Boxing was believed to control the violent tendencies of its working-class base while fencing taught its upper-class base the mores of gentlemanly conduct.

The legitimizing arguments advanced by defenders of boxing and fencing demonstrated a concern with rationalizing both sports' violence. In their view, neither the violence of boxing nor the violence of fencing was necessarily crass or gratuitous. On the contrary, it was presented as artistic, scientific, masculine, national, and pedagogic. That is, boxing and fencing were portrayed not only as genuine sports, but also as individually and socially valuable. The efforts to legitimize these sports seemed to have paid off. In this regard, Sheinin contended that, "the late 1940s and early 1950s represent a nadir in the popular and political association of boxing with the barbaric."[98] At least for a while, boxing was perceived as an elevated and useful form of violence. Violence in fencing was also perceived as elevated and useful. What's more, it was no longer perceived to be the preserve of men, as three female fencers were included in the Argentine delegation to the 1948 London Olympics. Further civilized by the legitimizing narratives of the interwar years, the violence of boxing and fencing became even more palatable to society and both sports became entrenched, albeit temporarily, in the landscape of Argentine sport, a position that they had enjoyed since Argentina's official debut at the 1924 Paris Olympics.

Notes

1. Roberto Larraz, "Una reseña de la actividad esgrimística en nuestro país," *La Nación* (Buenos Aires), August 10, 1941, sect. 2, 7.
2. Ibid.
3. Félix D. Frascara, "Recuerdos del 'Mono' Rodríguez Jurado," *El Gráfico* (Buenos Aires), March 2, 1935, p. 27.
4. Ibid.
5. Gerald R. Gems, *Boxing. A Concise History of the Sweet Science* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), p. 9.
6. Ibid.

7. For a history of fencing, see Richard Cohen, *By the Sword. A History of Gladiators, Musketeers, Samurai, Swashbucklers, and Olympic Champions* (New York: Random House, 2002).
8. Joyce Carol Oates, *On Boxing* (Garden City, NY: Dolphin/Doubleday, 1987), p. 93.
9. For an introductory analysis of violence in sport, including boxing, see pages 238-241 of Robert L. Simon, Cesar R. Torres, and Peter F. Hager, *Fair Play. The Ethics of Sport*, 4th ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2015) and Danny Rosenberg, "Violence in Sport," in Cesar R. Torres (ed.), *The Bloomsbury Companion to the Philosophy of Sport* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 262-275. See also, Jim Parry, "Violence and Aggression in Contemporary Sport," in Mike McNamee and Jim Parry (eds.), *Ethics and Sport* (London: E&F Spon, 1998), pp. 205-224. It should be acknowledged that prizefighting and amateur boxing have different regulations and formats, which might promote different fighting styles and strategies. Yet, their central purpose remains largely the same.
10. Aldo Nadi, *On Fencing* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1943), p. 13.
11. Ibid, pp. 13 and 14. Bruno Lessing was the pseudonym used by Rudolph Edgar Block.
12. International Fencing Federation, *Rules for Competitions*, accessed June 15, 2016, http://static.fie.org/uploads/8/4 4436-book%20t.pdf.
13. See, for example, Peter A. Harmer, "Getting to the Point: Injury Patterns and Medical Care in Competitive Fencing," *Current Sports Medicine Reports*, 7:5 (2008), pp. 303-307; Patrick Murphy and Ken Sheard, "Boxing Blind: Unplanned Processes in the Development of Modern Boxing," *Sport in Society*, 9:4 (2006), pp. 542-558; and Giulio S. Roi and Diana Bianchedi, "The Science of Fencing. Implications for Performance and Injury Prevention," *Sports Medicine*, 38:6 (2008), pp. 466-481.
14. Eduardo A. Olivera, *Orígenes de los deportes británicos en el Río de La Plata* (Buenos Aires: L.J. Rosso, 1932).
15. Víctor Raffo, *El origen británico del deporte argentino: Atletismo, cricket, fútbol, polo, remo y rugby durante las presidencias de Mitre, Sarmiento y Avellaneda* (Buenos Aires: n.p., 2004).
16. *British Packet, and Argentine News* (Buenos Aires), October 24, 1829, p. 3.
17. Unless otherwise indicated, this paragraph along with the next three are based on the following sources: Jorge A. Demárcico, *Historia del boxeo aficionado en la Argentina*, vol. 1 (Buenos Aires: Federación Argentina de Box, 1997), pp. 9-14; Horacio Estol, *Vida y combates de Luis Ángel Firpo* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Bell, 1946), pp. 11-59 and 263-298; Gems, *Boxing. A Concise History of the Sweet Science*, pp. 39-40, 65-66, 91, and 93-95; Alejandro Guerrero, *Jorge Newbery* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1999), pp. 22-56; and César Viale, *El deporte argentino* (Buenos Aires: Librería de A. García Santos, 1922), pp. 45-54 and 125-131. For a history of savate, see Jean-François Loudcher, *Histoire de la savate, du chausson et de la boxe française (1797-1978). D'une pratique populaire à un sport de compétition* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000).
18. Apparently, special permissions were occasionally granted to stage boxing matches in Buenos Aires. Some matches were staged outside the city limits.
19. For analyses of the *Juegos Olímpicos del Centenario* and *Jogos Latino-Americanos*, see Cesar R. Torres, "Tribulations and Achievements: The Early History of Olympism in Argentina," *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 18:3 (2001), pp. 59-92 and Cesar R. Torres, "'Spreading the Olympic Idea' to Latin America: The IOC-YMCA Partnership and the 1922 Latin American Games," *Journal of Olympic History*, 16:1 (2008), pp. 16-24.

20. Adolfo Bioy Casares, *Memorias. Infancia, adolescencia y cómo se hace un escritor* (Barcelona: Tusquets, 1994), p. 29 and Julio Cortázar, "El noble arte," in *La vuelta al día en ochenta mundos* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno, 1968), pp. 69-72. See also, Ingrid Proietto, "Bioy Casares, ese deportista…", *El Gráfico*, May 24, 1994, pp. 24-28.
21. Adolfo Bioy Casares, *Un campeón desparejo* (Barcelona: Tusquets, 1993).
22. See his short stories "Torito," in *Final del juego* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1966), pp. 127-136 and "La noche de Mantequilla," in *Alguien que anda por ahí y otros relatos* (Madrid: Alfaguara, 1977), pp. 211-231.
23. "Asalto Greco-Merignac," *Caras y Caretas* (Buenos Aires), September 12, 1903, p. 47 and "L'incident Greco-Kirchoffer," *Armée et Marine-Armes et Sports* (Paris), December 1, 1904, p. 1067. See also William Gaugler, "Epic Encounters between Italian and French Fencing Masters, 1881-1911," *The Sword* (July 1988), pp. 12-15.
24. Unless otherwise indicated, this paragraph along with the rest of this section is based on the following sources: Roberto Juan Cristiani, *Reseña histórica del cuerpo de Gimnasia y Esgrima del Ejército y su proyección en la vida nacional. Algunos aspectos de su evolución entre 1897-1960* (Buenos Aires: Comando en Jefe del Ejército. Dirección de Estudios históricos, 1967), pp. 11-65; Sandra Gayol, "Refugio de hombres mundanos: el arte y la ciencia de las armas en la Argentina moderna," in Sandra Gayol and Marta Madero (eds.), *Formas de historia cultural* (Buenos Aires and Los Polvorines: Prometeo and Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento, 2007), pp. 220-228; Larraz, "Una reseña de la actividad esgrimística en nuestro país;" J.D.M., "La esgrima en Buenos Aires," *Caras y Caretas*, August 12, 1916, p. 31; Hernán Antonio Moyano Dellepiane, "Asaltos de armas en tiempos de Roca," *Revista Cruz del Sur*, 4:8 (2014), pp. 301-341; and Juan José de Soiza Reilly, "Cien años de esgrima en la República Argentina," *Caras y Caretas*, October 29, 1932, pp. 22-28.
25. See *L'Escrime et le Tir. Revue Mensuelle Internationale Illustrée du Monde des Armes* (Paris), December 1921.
26. Larraz, "Una reseña."
27. Fencing and boxing had one unofficial representation in 1904 and 1920, respectively. See Cesar R. Torres, "Like Father, Like Son: The Tale of Francisco Carmelo and Carmelo Félix Camet at the Olympic Games," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 19, 4 (2002), pp. 179-191.
28. Gayol, "Refugio de hombres mundanos," p. 228.
29. De Soiza Reilly, "Cien años de esgrima," p. 28.
30. "¿Es un deporte el box?," *La Vanguardia* (Buenos Aires), January 1, 1924, p. 2. For a discussion of the socialist view of sport, see Dora Barrancos, "Ideas socialistas en cuerpos sanos (Argentina, 1920-1930)," in Pablo Scharagrodsky (ed.), *La invención del "homo gymnasticus." Fragmentos históricos sobre la educación de los cuerpos en Occidente* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2011), pp. 423-439 and Ricardo Martínez Mazzola, "Gimnasia, deportes y usos del tiempo libre en el socialismo argentino (1896-1916)," in Pablo Scharagrodsky (ed.), *Miradas médicas sobre la cultura física en Argentina, 1880-1970* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2014), pp. 275-299.
31. "Negocio inmoral y 'deporte' peligroso," *La Vanguardia*, February 17, 1924, p. 1.
32. "Prohibióse el box en Campana," *La Vanguardia*, July 22, 1932, p. 1.
33. Octavio C. Fernández, "Gimnasia, deportes y defensa," *La Vanguardia*, July 9, 1932, p. 3.
34. Maurice Maeterlinck, "Elogio del boxeo," *Caras y Caretas*, July 7, 1917, pp. 153-154.
35. Viale, *El deporte argentino*, pp. 45, 108, and 51.

36. Juan José de Soiza Reilly, "Los deportes criollos triunfan en el mundo," *Caras y Caretas*, November 7, 1931, p. 134.
37. "Metódicamente preparada la delegación argentina constituyó un alto valor," *La Nación*, August 17, 1936, p. 5.
38. Eugenio Pini, *La esgrima de espada* (Buenos Aires: Félix Lajoune, 1902), pp. vii and viii.
39. Eugenio Pini, *Historia de la esgrima argentina en la X Olimpiada de Los Angeles* (Buenos Aires: Gadola, 1932), pp. 34 and 6.
40. A. Vaccari, "Conversaciones con Eugenio Pini," *Caras y Caretas*, March 11, 1917, pp. 55-56.
41. César Viale, "El consabido apretón de manos," *Caras y Caretas*, February 19, 1921, p. 51 and "Alcanzó lucimiento el festival en honor de los esgrimistas," *La Nación*, May 15, 1924, p. 10.
42. Pini, *Historia de la esgrima argentina*, p. 56.
43. "Los libros," *Caras y Caretas*, July 29, 1922, p. 118.
44. Alfredo L. Palacios, "El maestro Rodríguez; campeón de la esgrima argentina cumple 35 años en la pedana," *Caras y Caretas*, November 5, 1938, p. 26.
45. "Roberto Larraz actuará por cuarta vez consecutiva en una olimpíada mundial," *La Prensa* (Buenos Aires), May 7, 1936, sect. 2, 2.
46. J.D.M., "La esgrima en Buenos Aires," p. 31.
47. See Gems, *Boxing. A Concise History of the Sweet Science*, pp. xi-xiii.
48. See Manuel Redondo, *Sarrasqueta* (Buenos Aires: Biblioteca Nacional, Editorial Las Cuarenta, y Centro Cultural de la Cooperación Floreal Gorini, 2008).
49. "Sarrasqueta sabio," *Caras y Caretas*, September 24, 1921, p. 52.
50. "Sarrasqueta y los asaltos," *Caras y Caretas*, May 19, 1923, pp. 126.
51. Viale, *El deporte argentino*, 51.
52. "Temas del momento," *La Nación*, January 27, 1924, sect. 2, 1.
53. Héctor A. De Oromi, "Landini, maravilla a medias," *Caras y Caretas*, April 28, 1934, p. 108.
54. Maeterlinck, "Elogio del boxeo."
55. Viale, *El deporte argentino*, p. 51.
56. Malcolm R. Crew, Physical Department Activities in the Buenos Aires Y.M.C.A., circa 1920. "Argentina. Buenos Aires. Building Records. Physical Education. Publications. Miscellaneous," Kautz Family Young Men's Christian Association Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis, Minnesota.
57. Pini, *Historia de la esgrima argentina*, p. 35 and Viale, *El deporte argentino*, p. 53.
58. Viale, *El deporte argentino*, p. 53.
59. Ibid.
60. "El niño y la escuela," *Caras y Caretas*, June 5, 1937, p. 142.
61. Palacios, "El maestro Rodríguez," p. 26.
62. "Algo sobre el box," *Caras y Caretas*, March 18, 1925, p. 116.
63. "Se realizará el miércoles una academia de esgrima," *La Nación*, February 3, 1924, sect. 2, 5 and "Actualidades de la semana," *Caras y Caretas*, December 29, 1924, p. 72. Some sources listed the name of the Italian female fencer as Evelina Guardabascio Vitta. See Dionisio Petriella, *Los italianos en la historia de la cultura argentina* (Buenos Aires: Asociación Dante Alighieri, 1979), p. 14.
64. Luis Pozzo Ardizzi, "En Buenos Aires hay más de cien mujeres que practican esgrima," *Caras y Caretas*, January 5, 1935, pp. 6-8.

65. Ibid.
66. "La esgrima: deporte para las mujeres," *Caras y Caretas*, January 16, 1932, p. 5.
67. For the development of women's sport and an analysis of gender logic and sport in Argentina during this period, see Patricia Anderson, "Sporting Women and Machonas: Negotiating Gender through Sports in Argentina, 1900–1946," *Women's History Review*, 24:5 (2015), pp. 700-720; Patricia Anderson, "*Mens Sana in Corpore Sano*: Debating Female Sport in Argentina", *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 26:5 (2009), pp. 640–653; Pablo Scharagrodsky (ed.), *Mujeres en movimiento. Deporte, cultura fisica y feminidades. Argentina, 1870-1980* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2016); and chapter 1 of Brenda Elsey and Joshua Nadel, *Futbolera: A History of Women and Sports in Latin America* (Austin, TX: University Texas Press, 2019).
68. Daniel Fridman and David M. K. Sheinin, "Wild Bulls, Discarded Foreigners, and Brash Champions: US Empire and the Cultural Constructions of Argentine Boxers," *Left History*, 12:1 (2007), p. 59.
69. Eduardo Archetti, *El potero, la pista y el ring. Las patrias del deporte argentino* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2001), pp. 97-102. Boxing has functioned to make and express national identities in numerous Latin American countries. See, for example, the chapters by David M. K. Sheinin ("Boxing in the Making of a Colombian *Costeño* Identity") and Michael Donoghue ("Roberto Durán, Omar Torrijos, and the Rise of Isthmian Machismo") in David M. K. Sheinin (ed.), *Sports Culture in Latin American History* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015); and Louis A. Perez Jr., *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999). For the case of Argentina, see David M. K. Sheinin, "The Last Champions: Boxing, Violence, and American Cultural Influences in 1970s Argentina," *Latin American Essays*, no. 19 (2006), pp. 79-39 and Fridman and Sheinin, "Wild Bulls."
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81. "La democracia en el ring," *El Gráfico*, January 23, 1926, p. 23.
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