

Sunday, May 26

Sports and Spectatorship III

Held not only in Scotland but globally where Scottish emigrants relocated, Highland Games are heritage events, community gatherings attended by those eager to celebrate or reconnect with their Scottishness. Similar to the Gaelic Games in Ireland, the Highland Games are part of an



effort to preserve Scottish culture, particularly that of the highland clans who lost power in the 18th century after the English defeated rebel Jacobites in 1746 at the Battle of Culloden. Further legislation and military force set the stage for the Highland Clearances and forcible eviction and migration of Scots. 1836 marks the earliest record of a Scottish games in the United States, evidence of the large numbers of Scots who resettled there.

The games are mostly known for their heavy events—hammer throwing, stone throwing, caber toss (lots of things being thrown), tug-of-war, and wrestling—and the athletes will be the ones in traditional highland dress, i.e. the kilt. The other events performed in traditional dress are Highland Dancing and Piping. Although there are a handful of professional or semi-professional athletes to travel the circuit of games, most participants are locals, and that includes the spectators.



You will be sitting on the same hillside with mothers, fathers, grandparents, uncles, and families that go back generations. We will be welcomed, but we will be noticeable as visitors at a primarily local event. This will offer a significant contrast to an event like the Hooley Show where the performers expected you to be new to their culture. But embrace this status and be a curious, respectful visitor. If someone smiles at you, smile back, and take that opportunity to ask them a question about what you are watching. Consider how this changes your experience of spectatorship, how it compels you to be less passive in your participation.

Also, this is a festival. Sit and watch for a while or stand up and wander around. There will be local trade tents looking to sell you various handicrafts and food. You are also free to wander the gardens of Blair Castle and tour the house.

#UKinMay assignment:

- Post two images with captions, one showing “local” and the other “global” spectatorship.