CHAPTER FOUR

Diving into the Past

Greg Louganis, Queer Memory, and the Politics of HIV Management

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In 1988 Greg Louganis was one of the most celebrated athletes in the world. He left the Seoul Olympics with two gold medals, just as he had four years earlier in Los Angeles, making him only one of two Olympians ever to win consecutive medals in both platform and springboard diving. His accomplishments were especially noteworthy because Louganis swept the events after hitting his head on the diving board during a qualifying round. At the time, he was also the only diver in Olympic history to score over 700 points in a single competition. By the time the San Diego native retired he had collected an unprecedented 47 national titles and 13 world championships. For all these reasons, Louganis is frequently described as "quite possibly the greatest ever at his sport."[1] He retired a national hero at the top of his game.

But for all of that glory, Louganis was also an HIV-positive gay man who was often received with undisguised animus in the years following his departure from the sport. Like many athletes, Louganis shied away from discussions of his sexuality during his diving career but rumors about his private life had swirled for years. These ruinous whispers had a significant impact on his ability to attract sponsors and sustain himself after he stepped away from the pool. Whereas stars such as Mary Lou Retton garnered over one million dollars in sponsorships after the 1984 Olympics, Louganis was unable to land significant endorsement deals.[2] Companies such as General Mills elected not to lionize him on the Wheaties cereal box

because he did not appeal to their "wholesome demographics."[3] The mere conjecture of being gay in Reagan's America was enough to sideline Louganis's popularity and stunt opportunities to be politically visible or economically prosperous.

In 2016 General Mills reversed course and announced that Louganis would be featured on the coveted Wheaties box as part of their so-called "Legends Series." Wheaties, the self-proclaimed "breakfast of champions," has been an iconic cultural site for acclaimed athletes and professional sports teams since the 1930s. It has long extolled those competitors coming off the wake of meaningful victories and memorable personal achievements. The decision to profile Louganis on the box was unusual, then, because his record-setting accomplishment of winning four gold medals in Olympic diving had happened decades earlier. General Mills may have once found the association between an HIV-positive gay man and their quintessentially American product to be taboo but halfway into the second decade of the new millennium this stigma appeared to recede. Louganis's placement on the box provided an expedient means to market the Wheaties brand and attract consumers.

This essay explores the queer memory politics of lauding Louganis decades after his triumphs. I argue that his presence highlights an ongoing tension in rhetorics that focus on LGBTQ people and those who are HIV-positive. On the one hand, the Wheaties box spotlights the ways queers continue to be a lucrative consumer base for expanding corporate profits and generating revenue. On the other hand, Louganis's image performs significant cultural work in an age where representations of, and conversations about, HIV-positive people are increasingly rare. HIV has morphed into a chronic condition for those with access to life-saving medications and such advancements have had the perverse effect of quelling exchanges about its social and medical complexities. Louganis's appearance on the Wheaties box animates a sliver of HIV's history, one that moves us from the dire calamity of the 1980s into the present-day stabilization of the crisis, even as this visual rhetoric is negotiated within the parameters of his carefully curated biography. Contrary to many contemporary memory projects, including a number of recent high profile documentaries about AIDS activism, Louganis embodies not the vivaciousness and precarity that underwrote HIV for so many years, but a meticulous image of control, bodily maintenance, and personal transcendence. Louganis is the perfect representation of management, hard work, and luck. The sporting world, which has long been steeped in homophobia and heterosexism, acts as the contextual backdrop to this stalled tribute, accentuating the calculated nature of this memory text and the intersecting impulses of celebrity, economic opportunism, and public health. To further investigate this unusual, if otherwise banal, cultural artifact I first look to scholarship that engages the politics of memory, especially as it relates to HIV/AIDS activism, in order to contextualize the period in which the Wheaties box emerged. I then contemplate how Louganis is both a reflection of, and ultimately resistant to, neoliberal discourses by looking to his status as an out athlete and his continued efforts to combat HIV.

PUBLIC MEMORY: BREAKING THE SURFACE

Scholars of public memory have long maintained that glancing backward into the past is an exercise in rhetorical invention. Far from a naturally occurring phenomenon or experiential process, memory is discursively constructed by those invested in the past and habitually suited to the needs of a politically-fraught present.[4] Kendall Phillips observes that the "ways memories attain meaning, compel others to accept them, and are themselves contested, subverted, and supplanted by other memories are essentially rhetorical."[5] Public memory is, according to Charles Morris, "a purposeful engagement with the past," an exercise that is "forged symbolically, profoundly constitutive of identity, community, and moral vision, inherently consequential in its ideological implications, and very often the fodder of political conflagration."[6] Who gets to stand in as representative of a community's past, who is permitted to be heralded a regional and national hero, and who is rhapsodized in cultural locations both sacred and profane is deliberately crafted and often decidedly partisan.

Public memory's circuitous and fragmentary character draws attention to the symbolic contestation waged over historical events, revered figures, and consecrated grounds. The attachments that civic actors forge to particular memory sites are guided by personal affinities and cultural narratives much more than they are a recitation of historical facts. The recent debates over confederate monuments, for example, illustrates the ways vital contextual matters can be jettisoned by those making appeals to abstractions such as "heritage" when it is well known that the statues were erected during integration and not following the Civil War. Laura Doan contends that memory "seeks an affective connection with a past already known to fulfill political aspirations in the present."[7] In this way, collective memory is enacted through everyday performative repertoires and encounters with the past. It is an "active political practice" that is essentially constitutive in nature.[8]

Despite the entrenched character of communal narratives, memory's affective possibilities are more polysemous than unidirectional. Memories can be dispiritingly hegemonic, yes, but their rhetorical composition guarantees that both negotiated and oppositional readings are always possible. The mythos constituted by memory can serve the needs of the status quo but can also provide the fodder to "disrupt and transform conditions that make survival necessary."[9] The inclusion of previously maligned and marginalized groups into memory narratives can simultaneously perpetuate hegemonic logics and present the means to disrupt dominant

histories. Chronicling the lives of queer athletes can yield fuller accounts of the past and furnish the rhetorical resources for addressing structural heterosexism.

Sport provides a "common archive" of public memories and proffers insight into a culture's desired image of the past.[10] Stephen Wieting and Judy Polumbaum remind us that which sport "icons, relics, and events are selected from the past for retrieval, how they are packaged to serve the present collective ends, and what use the elements and package will have in the future are all contested grounds."[11] The presence of LGBTQ people complicates such ephemeral repositories, in part because that which is marked as "queer" has frequently been antithetical to that which is conventionally desirable. The normative force of sport and memory invariably calls attention to the violent erasures of LGBTQ people, even if such recollections sometimes attempt to hegemonically incorporate queer communities into narratives emphasizing nationalism, exceptionalism, and individual fortitude. As Michael Butterworth rightly notes, memory texts derived from sport "are not innocent references" to moments in the past.[12] They are imbued with affective attachments, ideological impulses, and unassimilable remainders.

Of course, amorphous power structures such as heterosexism and nationalism are sustained through memory practices and are not easily subverted. Scholars have warned that the political scaffolding that organizes public memory presents countless opportunities to co-opt its rhetorical contours. Marita Sturken cautions that the "changeabilty of memory raises important concerns about how the past can be verified, understood, and given meaning."[13] J. Jack Halberstam likewise expresses concern about the commodification of memory and the ways it can be used to reinforce draconian normativities.[14] The potential to polish over troublesome and oppressive histories becomes especially complicated when corporate interests articulate their bottom line to past injustices.[15] It is in the economic interest of brands to assert their dedication to inclusion, to forward (sometimes specious) arguments about diversity, and to highlight how they have made amends with a troubled past. Sport is no exception to these logics, particularly in light of the assumed LGBTQ consumer demographic, which is thought to be in the hundreds of billions of dollars.[16]

Although many scholars are wary of corporate articulations to public memory, some have exalted the gains to be made by closely aligning movement goals to the market. Arguing against broad charges of homonormativity, these thinkers find the secular possibilities of neoliberalism to be at least partially empowering. Deirdre McCloskey, for example, has argued that many of the strides made by LGBTQ people have come about because of the influence of corporate enterprises. She writes, "the market is not the enemy of queers. The restaurants and bars from which the drag queens exploded in political action in the 1960s in San Francisco then in New York were after all profit making-entities."[17] McCloskey concludes that the "enemies were the gender cops, not the owners of coffee houses."[18] In the desire to attract and retain consumers, brands have often embraced LGBTQ people and, to a lesser extent, their tumultuous histories.[19]

The LGBTQ community has repeatedly struggled over the best practices for remembering the past. In many LGBTQ enclaves, there remains a tendency to overlook people of color in queer histories, a habit of erasing trans bodies, and a bias toward centralizing the voices of cis white men. Debates over how to represent the Stonewall uprising, for example, have been waged over screenplays, monuments at the location of the bar, the political commitment of pride parades, and in the pages of LGBTQ genealogies. In this vein, a spate of memory work has attempted to capture the early years of the AIDS crisis and the struggle of activists to hold bureaucrats accountable for institutionally sanctioned queer genocide. Numerous documentaries about ACT-UP, for example, have steadily been released over the last decade. Films including *United in Anger, How to Survive a Plague, We Were Here,* and *Vito* all venture to narrate the history of HIV/AIDS and its devastating ramifications on queer communities. These mnemoscapes also include productions such as HBO's adaptation of Larry Kramer's play *The Normal Heart* and the network miniseries *When We Rise*. This is to say nothing of the rich collection of scholarship that documents the rise of groups such as ACT-UP, Queer Nation, and the Lesbian Avengers.

The Louganis box appeared on shelves in the midst of this memory work, not as a politically charged artifact that equips interlocutors to mourn or reflect, but as a mundane product whose representation of Louganis illustrates physical strength, discipline, and tenacity. Louganis himself is perhaps best remembered for his accomplishments *despite* the fact that he hit his head during that qualifying round in Seoul. That visceral scene, with its affective transmission of mediated pain and fear of contaminated blood, lingers in the collective consciousness, reiterating both risk and triumph, health and illness, nationalism and its discontents. In this vein, the box speaks to a politically finessed past, a contained vision of HIV in the present, and a future brimming with possibility.

THE NARRATIVE OF CHAMPIONS

Louganis is no stranger to the power of narrative and the politics of collective memory. The diver was the subject of the Emmy-nominated documentary *Back on Board* in 2014, a narrative that hues closely to his 1995 autobiography. This film garnered Louganis an unusual amount of media attention by juxtaposing his storied career against his sometimes turbulent personal life. The production revealed that Louganis was in dire financial straits and showed him auctioning off many of his possessions to retain his California home. Unlike the image of triumph and accomplishment that audiences are accustomed to seeing, Louganis is situated as

a person with an extraordinary past, but whose problems are familiar to those who lived through the worst of the so-called "great recession." At the time, Louganis even discussed the prospects of living in an RV should he be forced from his residence. A pivotal scene in *Back on Board* contrasts Louganis's financial plight to his earlier fame, explicitly tackling the homophobia that prevented him from profiting off of his accomplishments. Viewers find Louganis at the International Swimming Hall of Fame, looking at memorabilia, and taking stock of the athletes who had appeared on the Wheaties box. He is not among them. An online petition was filed by fans shortly thereafter and executives at General Mills took notice.

The attention brought by *Back on Board* and the Wheaties box landed Louganis a spread in *ESPN The Magazine's* 2016 "body issue." This annual special issue features an array of athletes posing nude to accentuate their athletic dexterity. Louganis was 56-years-old when he appeared in the buff. His body is sculpted and trim, indicating that he has continued to monitor his health and exercise regularly. The photos harken back to the days when Louganis sat for a now iconic photoshoot with Herb Ritts, as well as the time he donned a strategically placed sheet for *Playgirl* in 1987. Despite his misfortunes and serostatus he is situated as a study in health and athleticism in middle age. Louganis openly discusses being HIV-positive with ESPN and reiterates, as he has countless times over the years, that the diagnosis left him feeling isolated and clinically depressed. The dual themes of managing HIV and modeling health continue to shape his persona three decades after he announced his serostatus. Thirty years on and Louganis is still publicly fused to his diagnosis. HIV is more than a medical condition, it's central to Louganis's identity.

The Wheaties box is the chronological centerpiece of these recent memoryscapes, connecting Louganis's highly visible past to a contemporary political context. *Back on Board*, the cereal box, and the magazine spread all revisit Louganis's achievements to highlight his continued discipline and celebrity. But it is the Wheaties box that is most fascinating because of its nostalgic flair. It extols Louganis's athletic accomplishments while allowing audiences to articulate personal knowledge of Louganis, including his notoriety in the LGBTQ community, to their consumptive habits. It would be easy to castigate the box as apolitical or economically opportunistic, especially considering the steep decline in Wheaties sales in recent years, but its potential to reach diverse audiences through different emotional registers also suggests that this banal product is not detached from political life.[20] The familiarity that consumers bring with them to the box is couched in affective notions such as victory, perseverance, and survival. These fragments of knowledge are also distant enough from the political malfeasance of the 1980s that an understanding of HIV as individually managed, and not a product of institutional mendacity, can be conjured by consumers.

The photo on the front of the box shows Louganis performing an inward pike dive that was taken while he was preparing for the 1984 Olympics. His form is characteristically symmetrical and the black and white contrast outlines his muscular physique. Louganis hit his head attempting a reverse 2 ½ pike and the semiotic remainder of that event invariably informs the visual rhetoric adorning the box. The front of the box also bears his name and lists the gold medals he won in 1984 and 1988. The back of the box applauds his many accomplishments outside the Olympics and features inspirational quotations for "becoming a champion."

Louganis has insisted that he was not overtly political for much of his life, but mentions in *Back on Board* that he has come to realize the inevitable connection between sport and politics. Louganis's biography, *Breaking the Surface*, suggests that he has been politically inclined for much of his career, even if inadvertently. At the Montreal games in 1976 he helped an athlete from the former Soviet Union defect to Canada.[21] After the 1984 games Louganis was part of the effort to allow Olympic athletes to attract sponsors while maintaining their amateur status.[22] His speech to the US Olympic Committee during their planning of the Atlanta games is nothing short of revelatory. He argued that an anti-LGBTQ ordinance in Cobb County, GA should disqualify that municipality from hosting any part of the games.[23] The committee agreed. In 1995, the year his memoire was published, he condemned the Olympic committee for not directly addressing the issue of HIV.

The political tendencies of athletes, especially in the context of product endorsement and advertising, are frequently and unsurprisingly more subtle than overt. The image of the pro-athlete metonymically represents exceptionalism and the latitude they are given to transgress from the norm is often directly correlated to their celebrity or ability. But not always. Muhammad Ali, for example, was not put on the Wheaties box until 1999. General Mills shied away from the boxer's outspoken politics, which they believed would not resonate with their (presumably white) consumer-base.[24] Louganis was never as politically controversial as Ali so his omission came about not because of his political orientation (which is assuredly racialized in Ali's case) but because of speculation about his sexuality. Still, in both instances it is impossible to completely erase the remainder of their political legacies and the attachments consumers bring to the kitchen table. Louganis's politics may be sanitized as "safe" for resale but that positioning depends on the expectation that audiences will bracket all that they know about him. His sexuality and HIV status, once used as mechanisms of stigmatization, have become symbols of transcendence, success, and status.[25] In this way Louganis's migration from margin to center mirrors the movement of LGBTQ people from social periphery to political prominence.

General Mills offered discrepant explanations for eschewing Louganis in the 1980s after the petition to put him on the Wheaties box began to circulate. One spokesperson commented that no person from the 1980s involved in the decision-making process remained at the company.[26] Another representative remarked, "There's so many great athletes and so much competition to get on the box. In 1984 and 1988 we had Mary Lou Retton, America's sweetheart, and Michael Jordan—who were both very deserving. We stand by our choices back then."[27] The patronizing label of Retton as an object of affection, what Toby Miller calls a "white American darling," and not an athlete (she is regarded by General Mills as the first woman to appear on the Wheaties box) hints both at the troubling frames used to maintain the image of profit-making athletes and the purity rules that underlined the corporation's deliberations.[28] Louganis has stated that he now finds General Mills to be an inclusive brand but the above statements indicate a rhetoric familiar to LGBTQ people, one that places them in a hierarchical relation to heterosexuality that is celebrated by virtue of its structural ubiquity. LGBTQ people are instructed to simply wait their turn. This is to say nothing of the economic disparities between LGBTQ people and their heterosexual peers, which is also highlighted by the occasion.

Louganis's Wheaties box may be indicative of LGBTQ "progress" but it also underscores the continued perils of the closet in professional sports.[29] We know that Louganis is queer and HIV-positive by virtue of his widely-circulated biography and the ways his life struggles were exacerbated by his career as a professional athlete. His persona is made intelligible in part by the attachments consumers bring to his story, not simply by the encoding performed by the manufacturer. This semiotic wink energizes a familiar rhetorical form, one in which publics read the sexualities and gender identities of athletes retrospectively, regularly applauding their talents and bravery after they depart the sporting world. Caitlyn Jenner, Jason Collins, John Amaechi, Billy Bean, Glenn Burke, Wade Davis, and Esera Tuaolo all declared their sexuality or gender identities after they had left their respective sports. The cereal box reminds us how athletes are encouraged not to reveal facets of their identity in order to protect their livelihood. It is worth remembering that Martina Navratilova lost $12 million in endorsement deals after she came out in 1981; Billie Jean King lost them all.[30] This is likely the reason there is currently no out athlete among the four major sports in the United States, just as there were none in 1988 when Louganis was competing. The branding tendencies of high profile athletes in the context of neo-liberalism is a carefully calculated matrix of risk, profitability, and public image. Despite this absence, a number of out athletes compete in American sports such as soccer, volleyball, softball, track and field, cycling, boxing, and diving.

The Louganis story is, in many respects, a series of deferred spectacles that invite continual reassessment of his past. Even with all that we know about Louganis there has been a repeated necessity for audiences to reinterpret his public persona. Louganis has been rhetorically reconfigured at least three times following major events in his life. The first of these retrospective interpretations found audiences revisiting his life in sports after he came out. Fans again reacquainted themselves with his celebrity after he revealed he was HIV-positive. Finally, a more inspiring narrative about his accomplishments that did not require the whitewashing of his sexual orientation or HIV status has emerged at the exact moment that we are on the brink of containing the HIV epidemic. Notably, this reiteration of Louganis's persona has evolved as our understandings of sexual orientation and HIV have matured.

Louganis's coming out in 1994 illustrates the complexities of navigating the treachery of a heterosexual imaginary, one in which being queer and HIV-positive compromises quotidian life, including the job security and requisite income required to stay alive. The Olympian did not publicly come out until the Gay Games when he appeared, via a pre-recorded message, to wish participants well. Even then, Louganis only indirectly announced his sexual orientation. He concluded his well-wishes by stating "Welcome to the games! It's great to be out and proud!" Louganis has been criticized for not coming out earlier in his career, something he has openly discussed.[31] The diver has defended his actions, noting that the few sponsors he managed to attract had morals clauses in their contracts and he could have been fired for being gay.[32] He also admits that he was afraid to be open about his sexuality because the press might have discovered that he was HIV-positive. Louganis was so concerned about being outed as HIV-positive that he did not use health insurance to purchase medication, yet another way sexuality and economics converge in this case study.

When Eve Sedgwick published *Epistemology of the Closet* she described in great detail the conundrum that confronted LGBTQ people in the 1980s. According to Sedgwick, gay people could never be in the closet completely because someone, somewhere, might have knowledge that they are queer.[33] Conversely, even after a person comes out, someone could claim they always already knew about their sexuality. This epistemological privilege is not easily relinquished, a fact too many queers have learned firsthand. Louganis occupies this liminal space and makes no secret of the fact that he has always been read as gay, and in other ways non-normatively queer. As a child, for example, Louganis was adopted, struggled with a learning disability, and was taunted with racial epithets because he is Samoan. His outsider status is revisited constantly in *Breaking the Surface*, resisting easy castigations of homonormativity or unreflective assimilation. It was certainly no secret to the diving community that Louganis was gay and his achievements always drew disproportionate attention to his personal life. As is the case for many queer athletes, success is often the catalyst for scrutiny.[34] Still, Louganis had been involved with men at least since 1976 when he was 16. Prior to coming

out he had a stint in the Broadway production of Paul Rudnick's play *Jeffrey*, a gay comedy about living with HIV. His subtle statements about intergenerational love and critiques of age of consent laws are also noteworthy. Louganis has been reinvented with each biographical turn. But there are few issues fused to Louganis like that of HIV.

BLOOD IN THE WATER

Louganis's image is publicly conjoined to both his HIV-diagnosis and the visceral image of his head striking the diving board in 1988. Even his own autobiography, which is otherwise narrated chronologically, opens with that fateful dive. Louganis realized that someone was going to profit off of his life story and decided it would be him. As a result, he took pains to control how his sexuality and his serostatus were unveiled. He revealed his HIV-status with the release of *Breaking the Surface* and through a series of interviews with Barbara Walters, *People* magazine, and Oprah Winfrey. The response to Louganis's announcement instigated panicked speculation that he may have exposed other athletes to HIV when he hit his head on the board. Transmitting HIV in an Olympic-sized pool filled with chlorine is virtually impossible. Scientific logic, though, did not dissuade many media outlets from ginning up a scandal. Louganis had to repeatedly dismiss accusations that he posed a threat and has gone as far as asserting that he "never bled in the pool."[35] As a one reporter put it: "If it had been almost any other disease, everyone would be talking about his courage. But it was the AIDS virus. And it was the dive Louganis missed on his way to that medal that everyone is talking about now."[36] Some also criticized him for not warning the doctor who examined his wound in Seoul, something Louganis regrets. Notably, this stood in sharp contrast to the treatment given to Magic Johnson after he came forward with his HIV-status four years earlier. Reporters consistently, and rightfully, assured their readers that the odds of HIV-transmission on the basketball court were almost non-existent. Louganis received no such sympathy from the press.[37]

Louganis confronted a series of unthoughtful and reckless attacks after he went public with his serostatus. In the mid-1990s an irrational fear of people with HIV/AIDS loomed and Louganis consistently managed uncomfortable exchanges with grace. Barbara Walters for example, pressed Louganis about whether he had AIDS. From a medical perspective, based on his t-cell count, Louganis did in fact have AIDS. He fully admitted as such to millions of viewers to educate the viewing public (and perhaps sell a few books). Louganis was also disciplined by the politics of respectability on more than one occasion. Take this invasive line of questioning on *Larry King Live*:

King: "How would a smart guy like you practice unsafe sex?"
Louganis: "I'm not following."
King: "How did you get AIDS?"
Louganis: "I'm sure I was probably exposed before they knew about unsafe sex."
King: "So you're pretty sure about that?"[38]

The efforts Louganis put forth to combat such stigma highlights an ordinary, though exceptionally visible, political disposition that worked slowly to combat aspersions directed at people who were living with HIV/AIDS. To be sure, I am not suggesting that the public recalls every bit of activism that Louganis performed when they are confronted with his image on a cereal box— most of us do not. Rather, I want to draw attention to the fact that Louganis's persona is publicly wedded to HIV and these many instances have coalesced as a part of his appeal.

In this way, the Wheaties box is politically purposeful and is not simply a product of unreflective neoliberalism. Morris rightly notes that the "tragedy of AIDS is in an important sense a tragedy of public memory," one marked by "a lost generation of memory agents who serve as markers of a gay male past."[39] Louganis is a notable exception to such claims, being a bridge to a time underscored by paranoia, stigma, and hopelessness. The placement of the box in public arenas such as grocery stores and private enclaves like people's homes continues needed conversations about HIV and its labyrinthine memory politics.

In an age where HIV has largely fallen out of sight, Louganis's presence performs significant work in keeping it visible. The Olympian has contended that, for this reason, the Wheaties box means more to him now than it would have in the past. As he relayed, "Getting it now means people will see me as a whole person— a flawed person who is gay, HIV-positive, with all the other things I've been through."[40] Indeed, Louganis refuses to separate his HIV-status from the image of himself on the Wheaties box. NPR commentator Ari Shapiro asked Louganis what he intended the Wheaties box to communicate to a new generation that might not know him. Louganis answered:

> In a word, hope because when I was diagnosed back in 1988, I was 28. Six months prior to the Olympic Games, I didn't expect to see the age of 30. And here I am today at 56 and really living and thriving— that HIV isn't a death sentence. Also the important factor, too, is that I share my experience with my HIV meds. It hasn't been easy. I wouldn't wish my drug regimen on anyone, so prevention, prevention, prevention, education, education, education. You know, those are the kinds of things that I try to convey to the younger generation that— you know, that's coming up.[41]

In an era of PrEP technologies, one in which the tide of the epidemic may at long last be turning, the obtrusively colored Wheaties box feels almost nostalgic: it marks a time gone by, where the specter of AIDS felt like a death sentence and the possibilities of living into middle-age were grim. At the same time, it

potentially propels exchanges about HIV in the present, highlighting the long road that people with HIV have taken and our collective journey toward a cure. Perhaps that is the contemporary exigence served by this memory project. Louganis has become emblematic of a renewed hope, rather than a tragic ending. His muscular physique, his optimistic attitude, and his personal endurance is now metonymically connected to the dawn of the end of AIDS. Doan rightfully notes that collective memory "confirms and consolidates, distills and simplifies" and the Wheaties box could fortify such unreflective impulses.[42] At the same time, its circulation holds the potential to initiate dialogue among a generation that might finally witness the eclipse of AIDS.

MAKING A SPLASH

Louganis has mentioned in passing that fans often approached him with Wheaties boxes that had his picture pasted on them for years before the "Legends" series was released.[43] With few options for publicly expressing the gratitude they felt for Louganis coming out as both gay and HIV-positive, his followers made due with the options that were available to them. Their efforts highlight the symbolic significance of tributes like the Wheaties box and the extent to which participatory cultures can generate memories essential to the survival of queer communities. Even as Louganis strove to remain apolitical as a diver, his life was, to some extent, always politically meaningful.

Narratives about queer athletes are not only about figures who had to overcome homophobia to clinch victory, but also about audiences who have had to transcend the obstacles put forth by heterosexism in order to incorporate LGBTQ people into the mythos of American sport. Consumption allows one perverse form of participation, one that permits people to express this evolution, even if such performances are often private, non-spectacular, and potentially even apolitical.

When Australian Olympian Ji Wallace came out as HIV-positive in 2012, he credited Greg Louganis as blazing a trail for people like himself. The ongoing reverberations of Louganis's life herald a legacy that was at once necessary and of its time. Even with the confines of commercial enterprises like the Wheaties box, Louganis's biography gives space to a multitude of issues that continue to challenge LGBTQ and HIV-positive people. Like others before him, Louganis has admitted to struggling with depression and suicide attempts and was a survivor of sexual and emotional abuse from a former partner. These aspects of Louganis's life story are overlooked, but their memory could inspire hope in countless queers who consistently confront such issues. If only we remember them.

NOTES

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2. He did manage to secure endorsements from American Express and Speedo. See Greg Louganis, *Breaking the Surface* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 1995), 146.
3. Elizabeth Daley, "Greg Louganis Will Finally Get His Wheaties Box," *Advocate.com*, April 5, 2016, http://www.advocate.com/sports/2016/4/05/greg-louganis-will-finally-get-his-wheaties-box.
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6. Charles E. Morris III, "My Old Kentucky Homo: Lincoln and the Politics of Queer Public Memory," in *Framing Public Memory*, ed. Kendall R. Phillips (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 94.
7. Laura Doan, "Queer History/Queer Memory: The Case of Alan Turing," *GLQ* 23, no. 1 (2017): 122.
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11. Wieting and Polumbaum, "Prologue," 10.
12. Butterworth, "Militarism and Memorializing," 253.
13. Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 2.
14. J. Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 47–8.
15. Doan, "Queer History," 123.
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CHAPTER FIVE

Touching Ali

Rhetorical Intimacy and Black Masculinity

LISA M. CORRIGAN

In their award-winning book *Blood Brothers: The Fatal Friendship Between Muhammad Ali and Malcolm X*, Randy Roberts and Johnny Smith provide the first full-length account of the friendship between the Greatest of All Time and the fiery black Muslim orator. Writing about the similarities between the two men, Roberts and Smith note, "Malcolm X and Cassius Clay seemed the product of the same DNA. Both thrived on center stage surrounded by an audience. Standing beneath the spotlight—at Malcolm's pulpit or in Clay's ring—they responded to the thundering sound of applause and the deafening chorus of boos. Neither man could resist a platform, an interview, or a debate. Both enjoyed sparring with words and manipulating other men's fears with sensational language. They were both fighters."[1] Roberts and Smith provide a reconstructed account of the Ali-X relationship between their first meeting in June 1962 through Malcolm's assassination in February 1965. Via private papers, FBI reports, interview transcripts, personal interviews with witnesses, and media reports, they reassemble a compelling account of "two of the most important black men of the 1960s."[2] The iconicity of both Ali and X heightens our interest in them as individuals, but as friends they occupy a much larger space in public memory. While *Blood Brothers* demonstrates the rhetorical and political collaboration between the two men, it fails to provide a critical account of the ways in which the closeness between them was a transformative intervention into discourses of race and gender. Likewise, where rhetorical

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