

Response to “Shifting Kayfabe in Hardcore Wrestling and Beyond”

Nicholas Davidson
Tusculum University
ndavidson@tusculum.edu

Tim Wilson
Tusculum University
twilson@tusculum.edu

“Shifting Kayfabe in Hardcore Wrestling and Beyond” furthers the conversation on hardcore professional wrestling’s role in the maintenance and redefining of kayfabe. Oglesby brings in the works of Faber and Conquergood to illuminate the parallels of hardcore professional wrestling as a form of extreme performance art. The discourse of Oglesby on the ultraviolent presentation of hardcore professional wrestling also is an important observation in that these actions are not necessarily the culprit of both short- and long-term health consequences that many professional wrestlers encounter because of their participation in the industry. Yet, as the author also excellently formulates, these actions can be most effective in gaining legitimate reactions from a potentially skeptical crowd. This is a fascinating observation and one that warrants further conversation. Hardcore professional wrestling matches present audiences with moments of discomfort, but also are intended, when done “correctly,” with the safety of the performers in mind. Anecdotally there are stories of hardcore wrestlers noting that they often feel comfortable in their matches because they know that who they are working with knows what they are doing. Then as any other form of professional wrestling, this presents the importance of wrestler competency of their craft. Just as the wrestler doing a piledriver must know how to safely deliver the move, so too must a hardcore or deathmatch wrestler know how to use foreign objects to draw investment and reaction while also not causing legitimate life-threatening harm to their opponent.

Oglesby continues by offering a proposed “shifting of kayfabe” in professional wrestling as opposed to its deterioration. For instance, Oglesby raises the examples of stiffly worked matches incorporating heavy strikes and elements of mixed-martial-arts. These matches are indeed ones that draw captivating reactions from audiences, and there is nothing “fake” about an open palm strike tearing open a wrestler’s chest. This presents what we believe to be an opportunity for further inquiry into the reshaping of what constitutes kayfabe and its parameters over the course of professional wrestling’s

popularity. What really is kayfabe in the contemporary world of professional wrestling, and is there one way to achieve its maintenance? Hardcore professional wrestling is one way to elicit humanistic concern and curiosity within professional wrestling, as is a snugly and stiffly worked match. As these genres continue to generate more exposure and popularity, we ought to also be asking ourselves how their practice actively reconfigures one of professional wrestling's core elements, that being the existence of kayfabe.

Works Cited

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- Faber, Alyda. "Saint Orlan: Ritual As Violent Spectacle and Cultural Criticism." *TDR: The Drama Review*, vol. 46, no. 1, 2002, pp. 85-92.