Baseball at the Precipice of a Watershed Moment in the Production of the Popular

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By 1919, Babe Ruth, pitching and batting for the Boston Red Sox, had put the Dead-Ball Era in the grave with his amazing feats of power at the plate. The Great Bambino single-handedly pulled baseball out of the nineteenth century, and with his bat and glove revitalized the sport that had wallowed through the dominance of spit-ballers and groundouts. At least, this is what baseball's mythology tells us. Unsurprisingly, this popular mythology minimizes the importance of baseball's darkest hour, the Black Sox Scandal, in which members of the Chicago White Sox conspired with gamblers to throw that year's World Series. In fact, the game in 1919 was not being remade by the Great Bambino, but rather was in turmoil as the public turned against a game now suspected of being rigged. These two narratives are almost irreconcilable. It is difficult to see how 1919 could both be a year of triumph and of darkness for the sport. Furthermore, it is difficult to understand how baseball could have so quickly rebounded from an event that so undermined the public's trust in one of America's most popular institutions. In exploring this topic, I argue that baseball's recovery and resurgence is tied to the rise of advertising as a culture industry in the United States. Drawing on James Cook's formulation, I will show that baseball took advantage of this rise of advertising as a culture industry to prop up its greatest star, Babe Ruth, and move past the Black Sox Scandal. In considering advertisements and newspaper articles from 1919 to 1927, I will show that consumers of the sport came to have what

Cook describes as a "split consciousness" in which they were aware of the Black Sox's crimes through the older medium of newspaper but allowed themselves to be influenced through baseball's advertising to accept the role of Babe Ruth as a savior of the game.

1919 in Boston: The Dead-Ball Era and Babe Ruth

Baseball, in some form, has existed since the middle of the nineteenth century. Early baseball history is full of amateur teams, barnstormers, failed professional leagues, and the establishment of formal rules of play and the two Major Leagues: the National League and the American League. By 1903, these leagues were sending their champions to compete against one another in the World Series, which quickly became immensely popular. Despite the sport's growing popularity, the game itself was lost. The rules of the period discouraged offensive play, and batting statistics were the lowest ever seen in the sport's history. Of the sixteen worst offensive seasons in baseball history when measured by runs scored per game, all but three took place between 1904 and 1919.[1] Put simply, the game on the field was not exciting. Batters could hit, as evidenced by average batting averages in the period, but not for power, as evidenced by extremely low slugging percentages.[2] Without power strokes by real sluggers, runs were less likely to cross the plate, and pitchers' earned run averages were among the lowest ever seen. Even Ty Cobb, the sport's greatest talent in the period and the 1911 Most Valuable Player, hit no more than nine home runs in a season until 1921, with those nine coming in his 1909 season.[3] The ball was "dead." It would not leave the park, and offensive numbers suffered as a result.

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[1] Baseball Reference: MLB Stats, Scores, History, and Records, Baseball-Reference.com, https://www.baseball-reference.com/.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*

Though wallowing in sub-par offensive numbers, the sport did have stars beyond Cobb. The Dead-Ball Era also saw the rise of George Herman Ruth, Jr., better known as the Babe. Having made his debut in 1914 with the Boston Red Sox, Babe Ruth made a name for himself as an excellent pitcher who could also hit when necessary. His career earned run average was 2.28, an excellent mark. While pitching, he won the World Series three times with the Red Sox, capturing the title in 1915, 1916, and 1918.[4] However, driven by a desire for more playing time, the Babe switched to playing outfield, allowing him to go to the plate every day. His offensive numbers soared. His 1919 season was one of the finest on record at the time. He got on base in almost half of his plate appearances. His slugging percentage was .657. He was worth 9.1 wins above replacement. Most importantly, he hit twenty-nine home runs, a new record.[5] In one season, Ruth had defied baseball's Dead-Ball Era. For him, the ball had come back to life. His offensive output was unmatched. The *New York Times* described his play as, "the greatest baseball ever staged."[6] Sportswriter Burt Whitman, writing for the *Boston Herald*, noted that Chicago White Sox manager Kid Gleason considered Ruth, "the greatest hitter I ever saw."[7] The *Herald* would later declare Ruth the "King of Swat," and demanded that baseball "hand the laurel wreath to Big Babe Ruth of the Red Sox. He established himself as the

[4] Baseball Reference.
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] "Babe Ruth Clouts 2 More Home Runs," *The New York Times*, August 25, 1919, TimesMachine: The Archive of the New York Times.
[7] "Ruth is Hardest Hitter Kid Gleason Ever Saw," *The Boston Herald*, August 2, 1919, NewsBank.

boss slugger of all time."[8] Ruth's offense was prolific, and baseball's fandom loved it.

Ruth followed his historic 1919 season with yet more success. In 1920, he hit fifty-four home runs. In 1921, he reached fifty-nine. He was worth 11.8 wins above replacement in 1920, 12.8 in 1921, and 14.1 in 1923.[9] The rest of the league followed his example, with runs per game increasing to 4.87 and average slugging percentage increasing to .401 by 1922. Baseball was leaving behind its Dead-Ball past and emerging into the Live-Ball Era. Later sportswriters and baseball historians accredited this change to Ruth's breakthrough in the 1919 season. Baseball researcher and sabermetrician David Gordon, for example, argues that the Live-Ball Era could not have begun without the paradigm shift that Babe Ruth started.[10] He writes: "it would take the example of an extraordinary talent, ex-pitcher Babe Ruth… to change the landscape… Ruth worried about nothing but swinging the bat as hard as he could and sending balls flying over the fence."[11] According to Gordon, Babe Ruth essentially taught the rest of baseball how to play the game. His superior approach at the plate caught on among Major Leaguers, and with enough of his counterparts playing the game better, baseball's offense rose and broke out of its Dead-Ball past. Alongside

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[8] "Babe Ruth's Smashes Cause Yanks' Downfall," *The Boston Herald*, September 9, 1919, NewsBank.

[9] Baseball Reference.

[10] Sabermetrics is a movement in baseball research dedicated to the empirical study of the game and its statistics. It stands in contrast to older methods of researching baseball players, such as through the use of scouts. Among the most notable sabermetricians are Billy Beane, General Manager of the Oakland Athletics, and Bill James, who coined the term in reference to the SABR, the Society for American Baseball Research. *The Baseball Research Journal* is a publication of that organization.

[11] David J. Gordon, "The Rise and Fall of the Deadball Era," *Baseball Research Journal* (Fall 2018), https://sabr.org/journal/article/the-rise-and-fall-of-the-deadball-era/.

developments in pitching and baseball construction, the Babe forged baseball into a more entertaining sport. Today, it is widely accepted that Babe Ruth played an integral part in transforming baseball into the sport it has become.

1919 in Chicago: The Black Sox

While Babe Ruth was lighting the world on fire in Boston, darker developments were transpiring in Chicago. Despite his spectacular season, Babe Ruth could not propel the Red Sox into the World Series in 1919. Instead, the Chicago White Sox represented the American League in that year's Fall Classic. Led by Shoeless Joe Jackson, Chick Gandil, and Lefty Williams, the team looked primed to at least compete for the title. However, apparent disaster struck them in their series against the Reds. Williams lost three games, and fortuitous fielding errors and strikeouts seemed to benefit Cincinnati alone. The White Sox bemoaned the superior luck of their opponents, and the press was shocked at fluke plays that continually allowed the Reds to win games. The *New York Times* noted how, "Chicago has been saying all along that the Reds have been playing in luck."[12] The *Albuquerque Journal* was quick to spot the hilarity of the White Sox's ineptitude: "As expert baseball it was as funny as a sack race. It would never have happened just as it did if the sun had not entered the lists and blinded the visiting fielders. It was all the funnier for the reason that the Sox were nine runs behind at the time."[13] To the outside world, it seemed as though the White Sox had just choked, beaten by rotten luck and the

[12] "Cincinnati Again Beats White Sox," *The New York Times*, October 7, 1919, TimesMachine: The Archive of the New York Times.
[13] "Reds Grab the Deciding Game in Battle for World's Title," *The Albuquerque Journal*, October 10, 1919, NewsBank.

superior Reds. The truth, however, was much worse for the sport.

In fact, eight members of the White Sox had colluded to intentionally lose the World Series. Paid off by gamblers, these players committed fielding errors, pitched awful games, and intentionally struck out at the plate. Rumors spread about the supposed fix throughout the 1920 season. By September, the press picked up on the rumors, with the *New York Times* reporting that the president of the American League had been made aware of the scandal.[14] A grand jury was called to determine whether a crime had been committed. Some of baseball's most powerful voices were called to testify, including the president of the American League, the team president of the Chicago Cubs, and the owner of the White Sox.[15] Called, too, were the White Sox players themselves, and under the pressure of a grand jury testimony, Lefty Williams confessed to the crimes, naming his co-conspirators.[16] By the end of October, multiple gamblers and White Sox, including Williams, Jackson, and Gandil, were indicted and placed under arrest.[17] The scandal threatened to seep into the National League, as well, where teams, including the Phillies, Cubs, and Reds, were similarly met with suspicion.[18] The scandal overwhelmed the press's usual sports coverage, as papers across the county ran stories about the White Sox turning state's witness or the potential

[14] "White Sox Would Not Dare Win, Rumor Says," *The New York Times*, September 24, 1920, TimesMachine: The Archive of the New York Times.
[15] "Baseball Probe Gets Under Way," *Trenton Evening Times*, September 22, 1920, NewsBank.
[16] "Williams Tells of Bribery," *The New York Times*, September 30, 1920, TimesMachine: The Archive of the New York Times.
[17] "Thirteen Indicted in Baseball Fixing," *The New York Times*, October 30, 1920, TimesMachine: The Archive of the New York Times.
[18] "Mystery to the Reds," *The New York Times*, October 1, 1920, TimesMachine: The Archive of the New York Times.

collapse of the American League itself.[19] The American and National League owners alike worried that the sport was on the brink of collapse.

The sport worked hard to repair its public image. With public confidence at an all-time low, owners struggled to maintain fan bases and the profits that accompanied them. In November of 1920, the owners of both leagues raised up Kenesaw Mountain Landis as the first Commissioner of Baseball. Landis was well known and well trusted by the public. A federal judge for the District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, Landis loved baseball and knew how to hand down harsh punishments. The press cheered his appointment. The *New York Times* lauded his ability to "strike terror into the hearts of criminals."[20] The message was clear: Commissioner Landis would cleanse baseball of its dirty past. In 1921, he attempted just that, banning the eight leading White Sox from baseball for life.[21] Shoeless Joe Jackson, Lefty Williams, Chick Gandil, and even state's witness Eddie Cicotte would never play in the Major Leagues again.

Despite Landis's efforts, the sport was still not seen as clean by the press. The medium continued to search for dirtiness in the sport. In 1924, the *New York Times* reported on a supposed bribery of Jimmy O'Connell, outfielder for the New York Giants.[22] Landis banned him from the sport.

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[19] "Expect Cicotte Squeal on Pals," *The Miami Herald*, November 18, 1920, NewsBank.; "New National League Makes Explanation for the Public," *Salt Lake Telegram*, November 9, 1920, NewsBank.

[20] "Baseball Peace Declared: Landis Named Dictator," *The New York Times*, November 13, 1920 TimesMachine: The Archive of the New York Times.

[21] "Firing 'Black Sox' Timely Procedure," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 19, 1921, NewsBank

[22] "Landis Says Series Will Not Be Stopped," *The New York Times*, October 3, 1924, TimesMachine: The Archive of the New York Times.

In 1925, the minor league team in Nashville was accused of throwing games for their opponents from New Orleans.[23] Landis personally questioned the accused. In 1926, the use of resin to dry pitchers' hands caused a stir, as it had previously been hidden to the public. People worried that cheating had again permeated the sport.[24] Landis publicly came to the defense of the pitchers, declaring the practice fully legal. Still, seven years after the White Sox threw the World Series, these were the types of scandals that continually plagued baseball. Following the Black Sox Scandal, the floodgates had opened to reveal baseball's sins. Try as he might, Landis was not able to keep baseball's shortcomings out of the spotlight of the traditional media. Fans, through the press, were continually made aware of scandals. The press repeatedly brought attention to baseball's dark side, stymying the industry's attempts to reconstitute its image.

This period in baseball's history has usually been considered from a social historical perspective. Baseball historians have traditionally focused on the economic factors surrounding the Black Sox Scandal. Of great importance are the reserve clause in players' contracts, which prevented players from unilaterally leaving teams to seek higher pay elsewhere, and the wealth inequality between players and owners. From this perspective, the Black Sox were merely seeking a higher pay that the team and its owner had denied them, and so had sought illegal compensation for their labor through gambling. In selecting Commissioner Landis, the owners had stepped in to stop this practice. Landis ensured that players who took these extreme steps would never profit off of baseball again, and so enforced the power of the capitalist owners over their

[23] "Landis Sifts Scandal; Eichrodt Questioned," *The New York Times*, August 23, 1925, TimesMachine: The Archive of the New York Times.
[24] "Pitcher May at Any Time Call for Pinch of His Drying Powder," *Seattle Daily Times*, April 1, 1926, NewsBank.

workers. In *Eight Men Out,* famed baseball writer Eliot Asinof takes this position. He notes how important the Landis appointment was to the owners, and how the reserve clause prevented players from demanding fair wages for their labor.[25] However, viewing baseball's 1920s in this way ignores the fact that scandals continued to plague baseball, even as the Commissioner tried to stop them. This social history of the period cannot adequately account for why scandals persisted if Landis supposedly reasserted the owners' power. Further, it ignores how baseball was able to mount a comeback despite the public's extreme lack of faith in the sport by 1921. Further still, it does not take into account how the period's picture of baseball as a clean sport championed by Babe Ruth was able to coexist with a very different picture of baseball as a dirty sport of cheating and gambling. A cultural perspective, rather than a social one, provides a convincing account that provides answers to these issues. The cultural perspective, in asking how cultural developments impacted baseball's fans' view of the game, can address why scandals persisted past Landis's intervention and how baseball was able to recuperate its image in the public's eye. By focusing on culture industries rather than economic concerns, the era of 1920s baseball becomes clearer.

Advertising as Baseball's Savior

Though baseball spent the 1920s getting knocked around in newspapers, journalists were not the only important force in the media of the period. The 1920s also saw the rise of advertisements as a cultural driver. As Roland Marchand argues in his *Advertising the American*

[25] Eliot Asinof, *Eight Men Out: The Black Sox and the 1919 World Series* (New York: Owl Books, 1963), eBook, chap. 3.

Dream, the twenties marked the first time that advertisements became truly "modern." In previous periods, advertising had been held in low regard, linked with scam products and disreputable businessmen. It had a "Barnum image," as Marchand describes it. In the twenties, however, advertising gained reputability. Between 1920 and 1925, the Art Directors Club commissioned exhibitions that put advertisement front and center, the Harvard Business School gave awards for the contributions of advertisers, and famous artists began to do work for advertising firms.[26] For the first time, advertisers were able to help facilitate commerce on a national scale, and to influence the popular concept of "desirability." Towards this end, advertisements changed form. Advertisements from the first decades of the twentieth century had largely focused on products. Advertisers would spend their advertising space arguing for why their product was superior to its competitors. By the 1920s, advertisers had shifted their focus to evoking a personal, emotional response from the consumer. They attempted to tie their products to the individual, and so attempted to appeal to the consumers' identities "as individuals to retain a sense of control in an expanding mass society."[27] Importantly, in committing to a personal appeal, advertisers more regularly began turning to important figures and celebrities in their ads. Celebrities, as real people, had a more personal appeal than products alone. For example, Fleischmann's Yeast, one of the most successful advertisers of the 1920s, employed the image of "England's Great Surgeon Sir W. Arbuthnot Lane" to suggest health benefits in its yeast.[28] In advertising directly to the consumer's emotional drive,

[26] Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985): 8.
[27] *Ibid*, 12.
[28] *Ibid*, 17.

modern advertisers made themselves an integral part of 1920s popular culture.

Further, advertisements of the period often portrayed "social tableaux," which Marchand describes as, "sufficiently stereotypical to bring immediate audience recognition."[29] This is to say that the figures within the advertisements existed within an idealized image of society more broadly. Advertisements did not purport to resemble life as consumers may have experienced it. Instead, it encouraged them to envision a world in which society was better, or in which they occupied a higher place in society. Women in advertisements were often portrayed as free and modern. They could pursue high fashion and be good wives while forging their own paths and experiencing modern leisure activities.[30] Men, meanwhile, were largely portrayed as quintessential American businessmen. Males in advertisements never held lower class jobs and were always successful in their ventures.[31] Couples' children were always well behaved and deferent to their parents, a far cry from the picture of unruly children that frightened parents in the twenties.[32] All of these pictures were, of course, unrealistic. Most Americans simply did not have the time or resources to realize this social tableau. However, advertisements made them feel as though they could. Advertisements allowed Americans to conceptualize themselves as part of a superior version of their own society, a better world into which the trials of actual life did not reach. Advertisements encouraged consumers to connect the product with hope for a better life, and so

[29] Marchand, 166.
[30] *Ibid*, 188.
[31] *Ibid*, 189.
[32] *Ibid*.

further opened the consumer to an emotional response to the advertisement.

The 1920s saw the rise of advertisements as a popular medium for the first time. Baseball, like other industries, moved to take advantage of the transformation to bolster its own brand. Whereas baseball lacked control over the newsrooms that continually brought light to baseball's scandals, advertising provided baseball a medium in which it could be portrayed in an ideal way. Baseball could put forward a picture of itself that was clean, progressive, fair, and balanced. Though far from reality, advertising allowed baseball to construct its own social tableau. Front and center at baseball's social tableau was everyone's favorite rising star and savior of the game, Babe Ruth.

The Babe in Baseball Advertisements

In the multi-media advertising blitz of the 1920s, Babe Ruth makes continuing appearances. Now playing for the New York Yankees in the nation's largest market, Ruth, who continued to hit home runs at rates never before seen, was a perfect draw for the nation's fans. Around New York, Babe Ruth jingles popped up, promoting Babe Ruth and baseball to New Yorkers on the street and in sheet music available for sale. In 1922, for example, famed composer George Groff, Jr. composed a song entitled "Babe Ruth." Perhaps predictably, the song's topic was Ruth's successes on the field. The song goes: "My hat is off to you Babe Ruth, in business or in fun, while you've been making homers Ruth, I have not made a run."[33] This sheet music was available to consumers for twenty cents and was a clear pitch to support the national pastime and its hero,

[33] Jeremy Gold and George Graff, Jr., "Babe Ruth," World Music Publishing Corporation, New York City, 1922, Notated Music, https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200033292/.

Babe Ruth. The song captures the social tableaux of the period, making note not of Ruth or the game's failures, but of the "fun" Ruth has while playing and the hope of the subject to emulate Ruth's slugging prowess. This picture of the sport is an unrealistically pleasant one, one that draws an emotional and hopeful response from the consumer. This song was followed in 1923 by E.S.S. Huntington's "Babe Ruth Blues." Unlike "Babe Ruth," this work was for distribution in popular theaters around town. Actors at the theater would sing this work to the audience. Huntington's work, however, is similarly unapologetically pro-baseball and pro-Ruth: "Oh! Oh! you big Bambino, you are the king of swat we know, The crowds I'm gonna foller, When I get there I'll holler."[34] Here, the subject is arriving at the ballpark with mythically large crowds to support Babe Ruth. The subject overtly references Ruth's status as the King of Swat, a heroic title bestowed on Ruth for his successes. Of course, this picture, too, is romanticized. It ignores the larger, scandalous issues surrounding baseball. But this is the point. This jingle, while promoting baseball, invites consumers to think of baseball emotionally; as a space in which they could march with their fellow man and holler at sports to their heart's content. It allows them to accept the social tableau and have an emotional reaction that allows baseball to endear itself to them. It works to cover up some of the dirtier aspects of the sport that were fully known to baseball consumers. These jingles were not unique in the period. Others include Ed G. Nelson's 1920 "Oh You Babe Ruth!" and Harry Tierney's 1922 "Babe

[34] E. S. S Huntington and Paul R Couch, "Babe Ruth Blues," Phonographic Records and Music Rolls, Akron, Ohio, 1923, Notated Music, https://www.loc.gov/item/2016571678/.

Ruth." The jingle was an important aspect of baseball's attempts at public rehabilitation in the 1920s.

Aside from their jingles, baseball also attempted to fight the press on its own turf. Babe Ruth made many appearances in advertisements in print media in the 1920s. He endorsed many products, as well as baseball itself. Presenting this social tableau in the papers themselves allowed baseball to compete directly with the newspapers' narratives. Because newspapers reached a large audience, baseball could rehabilitate its image in the minds of a large number of Americans. Many advertisements ran in newspapers in New York, home of the Yankees. Appealing to Babe Ruth's built-in fan base, these advertisements tried to reach the hearts of New York baseball fans. In New York's *Evening World*, advertisements ran promoting a Babe Ruth homerun contest. The boy who could hit the most home runs would be entitled to a hundred dollar prize, the ad claimed.[35] The event was sponsored by Rosenwasser Brothers Shoe Company, which also made Babe Ruth's signature shoe, and so even boys who could not hit long home runs would be given pairs of shoes for their participation. Far from linking baseball to any scandals, this advertisement linked it to wealth and to charity. Later that year, the *Evening World* ran advertisements for Babe Ruth brand chocolate-coated ice cream baseballs.[36] The only images in the ad are of Babe Ruth, a baseball, and ice cream. Babe Ruth and baseball are linked with a sweet treat of childhood, not gambling and crime as consumers may have read in other stories. Some advertisements sought to sell baseball gloves, the most fundamental piece of baseball gear. They sold Babe Ruth gloves, with Babe Ruth's

[35] *The Evening World*. (New York, NY), Aug. 2 1922. https://www.loc.gov/item/sn83030193/1922-08-02/ed-1/.
[36] *The Evening World*. (New York, NY), Oct. 5 1922. https://www.loc.gov/item/sn83030193/1922-10-05/ed-1/.

signature right in the leather.[37] Consumers could come to own their very own piece of Babe Ruth memorabilia. Of course, the memorabilia were not truly linked to Ruth in any real way. His signature was merely stamped into the leather; he did not sign them himself. Still, the ad allowed the consumer to think of themselves as connected in some meaningful way with Babe Ruth, and so removed their focus from the more dour realities surrounding baseball at the time.

Babe Ruth even dominated advertisements outside of his home in New York. In 1922, for instance, baseball began to advertise official "scorers," scorecards for professional baseball games. In its *Washington Times* advertisement, there is no example photo of the scorecard, but rather a large photo of Babe Ruth.[38] The scorecards being advertised are linked not to any local Washington Nationals player, but to the Babe. Even fans of the lowly Nationals could connect their baseball fandom with the player who had revolutionized the sport. The advertisement makes no allusion to any scandals, only to the fun of watching a game and keeping score of hits and outs. The ad ran in editions throughout August and September of that year, ensuring that if consumers saw any stories about baseball, they also saw Babe Ruth and his scorecard. In Kansas, Babe Ruth's name was evoked in advertisements for Life O'Wheat Breakfast Cereal and E.V. King's photography.[39] Though these advertisements were unlikely

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[37] *The Evening World*. (New York, NY), Apr. 6 1922. https://www.loc.gov/item/sn83030193/1922-04-06/ed-1/.
[38] *The Washington Times*. (Washington, DC), Aug. 30 1922. https://www.loc.gov/item/sn84026749/1922-08-30/ed-1/.
[39] *The Topeka State Journal*. (Topeka, KS), Oct. 7 1920. https://www.loc.gov/item/sn82016014/1920-10-07/ed-1/.; *The Topeka State Journal*. (Topeka, KS), Jul. 12 1921. https://www.loc.gov/item/sn82016014/1921-07-12/ed-1/.

to have had express approval from Ruth himself, the implication is the same. The advertisements remove Ruth from his actual circumstances. Gone are his and baseball's ties to cheating in sports and illegal gambling. Evoking Ruth apart from these contexts once again allows the consumer to picture him and his occupation differently. Apart from baseball's reality, Ruth could be an expression of American greatness. In South Carolina, the *Union Daily Times* ran advertisements for Babe Ruth's silent film *Headin' Home*, a biopic.[40] The film was a work of nearly complete fiction, having largely constructed Ruth's childhood from scratch. The fictional nature of the film worked to separate baseball fans even further from reality. Fans wanted to exist in world separate from baseball's true issues, a world in which Babe Ruth's upbringing was ideal and his prowess unmatched. The advertisement allowed consumers to imagine this world, drawing them into the social tableau and far away from baseball's scandalous reality.

In advertisements in New York and elsewhere, Babe Ruth was a celebrity extension of baseball. Babe Ruth, having already saved the sport from itself once on the field, evoked the image of pristine and proper sport that baseball was failing to evoke in other media, most notably the press. By exiting his reality and entering into the consumers' imagined reality, Ruth's image could influence consumers' views on baseball, stripping away the numerous scandals of the 1920s and replacing them with a heroic image of a clean and American sport. In keeping with Marchand's concept of social tableaux, advertisements centered on Babe Ruth provided consumers with a separate reality that evoked their emotional response and desire to view the national pastime as triumphant and honorable. Consumers were able to see this reality in advertisements,

[40] *The Union Daily Times*. (Union, SC), Nov. 14 1921. https://www.loc.gov/item/sn86071063/1921-11-14/ed-1/.

pushing the true reality of gambling and cheating to the back of their minds.

Indeed, advertising, at least in the long run, seemed to be a successful way for baseball to rehabilitate its image. After a drop in attendance following the Black Sox Scandal, attendance had grown to over ten million fans by 1930. Following the Great Depression and World War II, that number topped twenty million in 1948. By 1973, attendance grew to thirty million, and added another ten million by 1978.[41] By the 1980s, teams were spending a combined two hundred sixty-eight million dollars on players' salaries. In 1997, that number topped one billion dollars.[42] Far from being destroyed by its greatest scandal, baseball lived to realize its consumers' hopes for a better sport. Baseball became the true National Pastime, and its successes, not its failure, dominate its fans' shared memories of baseball history.

The 1920s as a Watershed in the Production of Popular Advertising

Though Babe Ruth's presence in advertisements for baseball and other businesses certainly worked to push this idealized reality on consumers, it is not immediately clear why this view would have been accepted so readily by consumers and fans. After all, printed advertisements were presented in the very same pages that had damned baseball for its moral transgressions. Advertising jingles may not have met the same immediate resistance, but their reach was limited to consumers of the theater or to those who would have bought sheet music for home use. Journalism was a more established media, and its reach was large and

[41] Baseball Reference.
[42] *Ibid*.

influential. Advertising was just coming into its own as a respectable medium. Journalism had the more commanding presence. However, it is advertising's youth that allows a closer look at its impact. As the 1920s marked the first time that advertising gained popularity and mass appeal, the 1920s function as a "watershed in the 'production of the popular,'" in James Cook's words.[43] As advertising gained a mass audience, it also took on new characteristics as a cultural entity.

When a culture industry becomes massified, it opens itself up to conflict. Cook argues that this conflict happens necessarily, and that it is never limited to a simple fight between capitalist and consumer. He opines that there are "struggles that often take place within and across culture industries."[44] This is apparent in the differing pictures of baseball that advertising and the press put forward in the twenties. As described, advertising's image of baseball was much rosier than that of the traditional press. Babe Ruth advertisements pushed an image that was far removed from the reality of the day. Meanwhile, the press pushed a much darker image. After the Black Sox Scandal, papers continued to publish about scandals of less and less importance. For example, though the use of pitchers' drying agents was fully legal, the press pursued it as though it may be a scandal, forcing Commissioner Landis to publicly defend the proper rules of the game.[45] These two pictures of baseball are in conflict and are mutually exclusive. Baseball could not have been simultaneously a bastion of honor and innocent athleticism and of cheating and conspiracy. These two culture

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[43] James Cook, "The Return of the Culture Industry," in *The Cultural Turn in U.S. History: Past, Present, and Future* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 298.
[44] *Ibid*, 303.
[45] "Pitcher May at Any Time Call for Pinch of His Drying Powder," *Seattle Daily Times*.

industries, the older press and burgeoning advertising, clashed in their pictures of 1920s baseball.

Further, this conflict was not between the upper and lower classes in a way that may be recognizable to social historians. It is not as though the advertisers were publishing the view of the working people to conflict with the elitist view of the press. No, these media were both to the service of capitalists. Business and baseball owners used advertising as a way to further their own economic gains, as selling scorecards would have boosted box office returns and selling cereal, photographs, or shoes would have boosted sales in those fields. Newspaper owners' goals were to sell newspapers; publishing scandalous stories about America's favorite sport helped them to do so. Nowhere is there a working class view. The working class that consumed baseball, newspapers, and advertisements did not have a horse in this race. This is in line with Cook's assessment of watershed moments in the production of the popular. Though "the production of the popular has never simply unfolded according to some inexorable logic of capitalist expansion," the production of the popular does involve large-scale conflict between capitalist entities.[46] Cook uses entertainment centers and commercial interests in his example. In this case, the conflict exists between the capitalist pressrooms and advertising firms.

Despite the fact that most people had no real influence over the content produced by the press or by the advertisers, the picture of baseball in the 1920s that persists to the present day is rooted in the images that these media created in that period. Though baseball fans are quick to accept the triumph of baseball over its gambling past, the Black Sox Scandal remains tied to the sport's early days.

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[46] "Pitcher May at Any Time Call for Pinch of His Drying Powder," *Seattle Daily Times*.

The conception of the 1920s found in the minds of consumers in that decade persists. Yet, these conceptions remain irreconcilable. The 1920s cannot be both a point of great hope for the sport and of a fundamental failure in baseball's structure. The press's insistence of the dirtiness of the sport and advertisers' social tableau of an ideal baseball are fundamentally at odds. They can no more both be true than if the 1990s was both an era of labor progress and strikes and labor disputes, or if the 2000s was both an era of athletic advances and widespread use of performance-enhancing drugs. The conception of the 1920s is split.

The Split Consciousness of the Baseball Consumer

At this point, it is clear that audiences were aware of both the Black Sox Scandal and of the positive image of baseball put forward in advertising. They knew that the sport was tainted, and yet they came to accept that it was clean, or at least that it could be cleaner. It is also clear that these competing ideas of baseball were being put forward by differing culture industries, the former by the older industry of the press and the latter by the new industry of advertisement. Capitalists controlled these industries and used them to further their own business goals. Yet, while consumers largely accepted the advertisers' tale of baseball as a clean sport, they never fully lost sight of the press's tale of the Black Sox, as evidenced by its continual presence in baseball discourse in recent decades. Academics would come to consider the scandal "Baseball's Single Sin," in the words of David Voigt.[47] The Baseball Hall of Fame refuses to seat banned players, and so while the Black Sox are not inducted, their legacy persists with every new class. In 2000, ESPN ran an Eliot Asinof story

[47] David Quentin Voigt, "The Chicago Black Sox and the Myth of Baseball's Single Sin," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 62 no. 3 (Autumn 1969): 306, JSTOR.

entitled, "The Black Sox Scandal is Forever."[48] The legacy of the Black Sox remains, if only in the background.

This presence of the Black Sox idea in the background of baseball's imagination lends itself to Cook's formulation of a split consciousness in the consumers' minds. Cook describes how consumers are shaped by culture industries. In this case, the advertising culture industry has shaped the attitude of baseball consumers. It has led them to believe that baseball is a clean sport with honorable stars like Babe Ruth. Having undergone this shaping at the hands of advertisers, baseball fans have become better consumers, as evidenced by the rebound of the sport in the period following the Black Sox Scandal and its immense growth in the decades to follow. In this way, the advertisers' shaping has paid off. However, Cook also describes how consumers are conscious of this shaping. Culture industries are not able to fully hide their influence from their consumers. Though it may seem like the influencing happens seamlessly, this is not the case. In fact, consumers are aware that the culture industries are changing their attitudes. Cook writes that consumers' consciousness is "at once shaped by culture industry formulas and conscious of the shaping."[49] Clearly, baseball consumers are aware in this way. Even in the 1920s as advertising came into the spotlight, consumers encountered baseball's scandals in the older industry of the press. Babe Ruth advertisements in newspapers found themselves juxtaposed with articles about gambling in baseball. Even as they were being shaped by advertisements, consumers could not and did not miss the reality of scandal. It is clear that the consumer consciousness remained split in this way.

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[48] Eliot Asinof, "The Black Sox Scandal is Forever," *ESPN.com*, July 26, 2000, https://www.espn.com/classic/s/2001/0726/1231415.html.
[49] James Cook, "The Return of the Culture Industry," 307.

Though 1919 is widely viewed heroically for Babe Ruth's breakthrough, the Black Sox Scandal could not be erased from the fans' shared consciousness. From Hall of Fame asterisks to academic study to modern articles in sports journalism, the Black Sox Scandal persisted despite consumer consciousness being shaped at the hands of an advertising industry that benefited from pushing the incident as far outside of the collective memory as possible.

Because the advertising industry arose as a culture industry in the 1920s, it can be examined in terms of Cook's formulation. Babe Ruth's heroic 1919 season that propelled him into baseball lore provided a means for the advertising industry to establish a social tableau in the minds of consumers by featuring Ruth as a celebrity extension of baseball. This conflicted with the reality being presented in the press; that baseball was consumed in gambling scandals, most notably the Black Sox Scandal, that not even Commissioner of Baseball Kenesaw Mountain Landis could contain by himself. Papers all over the country ran concurrent stories about baseball conspiracies and Babe Ruth advertisements. While consumers would largely accept the heroic narrative being presented in advertising, the juxtaposition of these conflicting narratives ensured that the Black Sox Scandal remained in fans' collective memory of the period. The 1919 season has claimed a triumphant connotation because of Babe Ruth's ending the Dead-Ball Era because of advertising's arrival as a culture industry, but it also inspired this split consciousness in a Cookian sense, in which baseball consumers' attitudes have been shaped in a way such that they are aware of the change. This accounts for the positive attitudes about 1920s baseball that persist even while baseball fans remain aware that the sport's darkest hour took place in the same period.