

## Book Reviews

### Sport and the Media

David Rowe, *Sport, Culture and the Media: The Unholy Trinity*. Buckingham, Open University Press, 1999. pp. 193. Glossary of key terms, references, index, A\$39.95.

Lawrence Wenner (ed.), *MediaSport*. London, Routledge, 1998. pp. 336. References, index, US\$31.95.

Sport, culture and the economy continue to fuse in conjunction with those international economic, cultural, social and political flows that constitute the process of globalisation. Simultaneously, the synthesis of sport, culture and the media represents a firmly entrenched and frequently taken for granted feature of late-capitalism. Critically, there is little evidence to suggest that the blending of sport, culture and the media, and the unprecedented growth and emergence of new media synergies, will slow or decline. Yet within academic circles (cultural studies, communication studies and sociology of sport) there remains a lack of critical work interrogating shifting power relations and contemporary cultural formations that are framed and (re)produced through mediated sport. The two volumes reviewed here are an important contribution to this needed examination.

David Rowe embarks on an ambitious analysis of the relationships between sport, culture and the media; relationships that are 'always everywhere in process, influencing and being influenced by each other in a perceptual dance of assertion and counter-assertion' (p. 7). *Sport, Culture and the Media* consists of two sections. The first, 'Making Media Sport', focuses on the processes that shape the production of media sports texts; the second section, 'Unmaking Media Sports Text', examines the interrelationships between the reading, deconstruction and production of media sports texts.

As a volume in the series *Issues in Cultural and Media Studies*, *Sport, Culture and the Media* sets out to provide a comprehensive and engaging introduction to the 'media sports cultural complex'. One strength of the book is that it exposes readers to many aspects of the core components of the relationships between the media, sport and culture; another strength is its readability and the absence of dense theoretical jargon. Rowe discusses in a clear manner numerous issues surrounding the production of media texts and the political/cultural economy of the sports media. On the other hand, the book rarely delves deeply into specific issues. For example, the first chapter traces the emergence of sport, the mass media, and their relatively recent fusion in a mere twenty-four pages. Other areas are similarly thin. A chapter on sports journalism focuses primarily on the reputation and status of journalists while other issues (such as the complex relationship between editors and journalists, and the relationship between sport journalists and their key sources such as team owners and members of local business communities)

remain unexamined. Readers are left without an adequate sense of a 'typical' day for a sports journalist, while other important work and studies surrounding the profession of sports journalism are ignored.

In a similar vein, 'Unmaking Media Sports Text' touches on many pertinent and contemporary issues surrounding textual readings of media productions. Yet important literature examining gender, race and sexuality within the various cultural productions of the 'media sports cultural complex' is not cited. Furthermore, it is clear that Rowe has chosen to avoid detailed, and often complex theoretical issues in favour of a broad perspective of the workings and textual productions of the media sports cultural complex'.

The structure and organisation unfortunately disrupts the flow of the book at different points. For example, placed between two seemingly intricately related sections – 'Working in Media Sport: The Discipline of Sport Journalism' and Taking Us Through It: The Art of Sports Commenting and Writing' – is a chapter on the political economy of the sports media. This would have been better placed after the first chapter that offered an overview of the socio-historic relationship between the media and sport. Nevertheless, *Sport, Culture and the Media* provides a comprehensive introduction for an undergraduate or practical-oriented audience; we can only assume that these audiences were Rowe's primary target. Scholars and students searching for a more theoretically grounded and detailed work might turn to *MediaSport*.

Edited by Lawrence Wenner, *MediaSport* is a notable collection of essays by prominent scholars. It builds on Wenner's earlier groundbreaking work *Media, Sports, and Society*. This is a difficult task given the latter's highly favourable reception in academic circles. Drawing on models used in communication studies and cultural studies, *MediaSport* attempts to capture the broad set of relations and interaction between media sport institutions texts and audiences in contemporary society.

*MediaSport* is more theoretical and more challenging than *Sport, Culture and the Media*. *MediaSport* engages most of the important and complex issues surrounding texts, audiences and media sport institutions. Chapters deal with globalisation, nationalism, commodification, gender, race, sexuality, heroism and violence. While *MediaSport* may at times lack the theoretical strength and practical depth of its predecessor, *Media, Sports and Society* (e.g., Sut Jhally's evocative overview of the sports/media complex and Richard Gruneau's case study in television sports production), it deals with a broader range of topics.

One oversight in *MediaSport* is the lack of analysis of production in media sport institutions. While this is a complex and often difficult area to research, a complete cultural analysis must consider this stage in the broader circuit of culture and consumption. A description and theoretical analysis of the broader social changes that have transformed culture and its relationship to sports and the media would also have bolstered *MediaSport*. Nevertheless, this work will serve as a good resource for senior undergraduate students and postgraduates. It will certainly challenge them to consider all aspects of the relationships between sport, culture and the media.

An in-depth discussion and analysis of the broader role of advertising in the contemporary media sport landscape would have strengthened *MediaSport* and *Sport, Culture and the Media*. The two works discuss certain aspects relating to advertising as a critical feature in the 'media sports cultural complex', but this area requires more substantial analysis. Nonetheless, both works provide a timely and much needed assessment of the heightened fusion of sport, culture, and the media.

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### **Soccer in the Twenty-First Century**

Gerry Finn and Richard Giulianotti (eds), *Football Culture: Local Contests, Global Visions*. London, Frank Cass, 2000. pp x + 306. Notes, bibliography, index, US\$26.50.

Jon Garland, Dominic Malcolm and Michael Rowe (eds), *The Future of Football, Challenges for the Twenty-First Century*. London, Frank Cass, 2000. Pp xiv + 238. Notes, bibliography, index, US\$24.50.

Garry Robson, *'No One Likes Us, We Don't Care', The Myth and Reality of Millwall Fandom*, Oxford, Berg, 2000. pp xi + 203. Notes, bibliography, index, •14.99.

Football faces many challenges as it adjusts to 'industry' demands in the new millennium. Faster-paced matches require more athletic players, the proliferation of digital television stations demand more fixtures, while new transfer systems and passport irregularities bankroll international legal conglomerates. At this juncture in the game's development, many scholars postulate on how 'planet football' will adjust to such demands. The three works reviewed here tackle this issue in diverse ways. In so doing they variously predict downfalls and successes.

In *Football Culture: Local Contests, Global Visions*, Finn and Giulianotti present ten essays that discuss and analyse the development of traditional and contemporary football fan cultures. The impact of football on national and local identities in 'traditional' football countries such as Uruguay, Argentina, Scotland and Italy, is considered alongside emerging football cultures in Australia, the USA and Japan. It concludes with an epilogue that explores different ways in which these old and new frontiers may merge in co-operation or diverge in conflict.

*The Future of Football* adopts a multi-disciplinary approach to discussing current and future issues. Garland, Malcolm and Rowe assemble the contributions into five sections: Football Economics and Law, Football Politics, Football and its Communities, Football Crowds and Policing, and Football Players and Referees. Each section comprises three essays. The