

Cantelon, Hart and Gruneau, Richard, eds. *Sport, Culture, and the Modern State*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982. Pp. XV, 315, notes, bibliographies, \$12.95 (paper).

This book is a collection of essays originally presented at a 1979 conference held at Queens University—a conference that quickly attained near cult status among the growing number of sociologists and historians who have rejected the static empiricism that has dominated sport studies. Indeed, all the authors emphasize the use of social and political *theory* as a framework for analyzing *historical development*. As such, the book should have as wide an appeal with historians as it does with sociologists and political scientists.

Given the thrust of the essays, the book might have been more appropriately entitled, *Sport, Class Structure, and the Modern State*. Most of the authors either directly or indirectly link state agencies with the regularized social structures that govern human relations, life chances, domination, and subordination. The notion of culture, though of obvious importance, is quite secondary to class in the general scheme of this book.

This formulation is clearly set by co-editor Rick Gruneau in the book's initial chapter. In yet another of his masterful syntheses of theory and sport studies, Gruneau examines the central question of the state's role vis-à-vis civil society (i.e. class interests) and sport. After disposing of neutralist, reductionist, and structuralist positions, Gruneau borrows from Ralph Miliband and Raymond Williams in arguing that while state agencies most often "give institutional, legal, and coercive support to the rules and procedures" (p. 17) that maintain advantages for the dominant class, one must always remember that "we are dealing with contested and conflict-filled areas of human existence" (p. 27). Although gearing most of his essay toward capitalist societies, Gruneau concludes with similar comments about sport under state-socialism.

Virtually all of the remaining papers and reactions spin off this central thread; seven consider western capitalism, three examine Soviet socialism. Through them all, however, the authors tend to ask to what degree sport, as a

socially-constituted experience, or to what degree the state via sport, merely reproduces or reinforces the logic and structures supporting dominant classes'? Conversely, the authors ask to what degree can sport serve as a vehicle for opposing or even transforming social structures? The answers are mixed, uneven in clarity and evidence, but almost all are well informed by theory. The reader interested in simplistic blacks and whites must look elsewhere; even a quick perusal of contents indicates this.

Gruneau's introduction is followed by Ian Taylor's reappraisal of British football hooliganism, in which Taylor calls for an appreciation of hooliganism within the context of a more coercive state. After Wallace Clement's response of the first papers, the reader faces the formidable but rewarding task of grinding through one hundred pages of heavy theory—John Hargreave's analysis of "Sport and Hegemony," Rob Beamish's materialist view of "Sport and the Logic of Capitalism," and Alan Ingham's response to them both. The next three essays shift the theater to the Soviet Union. Henry Morton returns to the stage with a "reassessment" of Soviet Sport, a paper displaying little fresh research and even less relation to the kinds of theoretical questions asked by all the other authors. This is in especially sharp contrast to Hart Cantelon's Weberian analysis of the "Rationality and Logic of Soviet Sport" and James Riordan's reaction to both Cantelon and Morton. Curiously, the editors chose to hold Bruce Kidd's essay on "Sport, Dependency and the Canadian State" (and Colin Leys' reaction) until after the unit on Soviet sport. With its emphasis on the role that nationalized sport has played in advancing the interests of monopoly capitalism [read "American"] at the expense of local control and autonomy, Kidd's paper should be read before the last three. It is an honest attempt to anchor in solid context some of the constructs posed by Gruneau, Beamish, and Hargreaves.

Indeed, it is the theoretical foundation of the various essays that gives this book such richness and importance (and some problems as well). In their preface, the editors express the hope that the readings "contain important guidelines for future research and open up important areas of discussion and debate." This is surely the case. Despite their range of topics, most of the authors illuminate in some way the series of questions (noted above) that are quickly taking a central position in contemporary sport history and sport sociology. That is, does sport serve a "reproductive" or "transformative" role vis-à-vis socio-economic conditions'? Is sport an instrument of incorporation or resistance in the class struggle'? How can theory inform our research into these questions? North American readers will recognize the importance of these questions to the recent series of published exchanges between Rick Gruneau, Rob Beamish, and Alan Ingham. Naturally, it is no mere coincidence that all three contribute to this volume.

What one also finds here, however, is the profitability of scholarly interchange that takes the form of *criticism*. None of these authors agrees fully with the others' tack, and they are not afraid to say so. Throughout this book, and not just in the formal reactions, the reader enjoys the clarification of

strengths and weaknesses that is so often lacking in sport studies. The reactions by Ingham, Leys, and particularly James Riordan demonstrate how serious disagreements may be expressed without resort to ad hominem attacks (although perhaps the conference resulted in some!). One suspects that the free flow of criticism stems, in part at least, from the intramural criticism that is so much a part of the new left schools of theory that these authors are drawing on.

If the anchorage in critical theory provides much of the books strengths, however, then it is also the source of the books problems. Not the least of these concerns exposition and style. This is a particular problem in the most theoretically oriented chapters; those of Hargreaves and Beamish. Both are extremely important; both are sometimes torturous reading. Both authors are trying to collapse into a chapter what demands at least a separate book. Beamish's attempt to critique the field, present major components of Marxist materialism, and then take on Rick Gruneau 'in the reproduction-transformation debates-all in fifty pages-results in a vagarious essay. Hargreaves has more basic problems with exposition, such as this sentence (p. 111): "The reality is that international competition between the two superpowers in particular has meant the rationalization of social life, including sport, in these two types of societies is mutually determining, and nowhere perhaps is this more evident than in sport." Throughout the book, but especially in this section, one must be prepared to reread and backtrack a great deal in order to understand and appreciate the arguments about "correspondence," "rationalization," "hegemony," "use value," "social labor," and "dependency."

This is by no means intended as a summary dismissal of jargon-laden theory. To the contrary, Alan Ingham (pp. 199-200) employs Paul Piccone in an able defense of the need to use unfamiliar and sometimes abstruse concepts in an attempt to "demystify" social conditions. Yet Ingham does not go far enough in his discussion. One of the problems with the current stage of theoretical sport sociology is that the authors are necessarily trying to introduce concepts from *general* social theory and then analyze their applications in sport studies. But scholars like Gruneau, Ingham, Beamish, and Hargreaves, who read so widely, are often mixing the grammars of the social theorists who influence them. Hargreaves himself illustrates this nicely when he carefully defines the distinctions between "correspondence," "reproduction," and "hegemony" theory. His clear definitions are necessary because not all scholars would agree with them. One need only look at Cary Goodman's recent blast at organized play, *Choosing Sides: Playgrounds and Street Life on the Lower East Side*, for a contrasting approach toward hegemony. What this means is that abstruse concepts themselves must always be carefully introduced. To a large extent, each author is creating his own "grammar." Each must be careful to avoid the casual use of another's. While Hargreaves is careful in this section, he and the other authors are not always as clear as they need to be.

There is, however, another hazard to the presentation of theory. If the sport

sociologist is extremely adept at “transcribing” theory, there is a real risk that the reader, especially the novice, will be so gratified as to eschew the “primary” readings themselves, e.g. Marx, Weber, Williams, Giddens, Gramsci, Miliband, et al. This is true, for instance, with Gruneau, whose clarity of presentation has endeared him to sport historians. One suspects that Gruneau would be quite uncomfortable with the thought of being the author of “recipe book” accounts. He is far from it.

Theoretical sport sociologists, then, face special problems with style. Their message contains the most cogent defense of sport as an important area of scholarly inquiry. Yet they must not write with such density that they repel the audience that needs them most. And they must not allow their readers to assume either the accuracy or completeness of their “transcriptions.”

Readers must be alerted to a final caveat, which the editors themselves point out (p. xiii): “Empirical research, as a number of the contributors to the present volume indicate, is obviously a necessity here. . . .” One must read the abstract portions of this book with the clear understanding that the authors recognize their empirical shortcomings. At the same time, however, we must all hope for more of the “grounded” theory displayed by Taylor and Canelon, whose essays are clearly informed by research. Here the reader is able to examine the utility of theory in helping us understand life around us. One can contrast these with Hargreaves’ and Leys’ ungrounded (although interesting) suggestions about the attraction of sport for members of the working class. Both lack any context of time and place.

The point is, however, that sport studies need a closer, more intense collaboration between historians and sociologists of the kind represented in this book. As Philip Abrams argues in a recent article on “History, Sociology, Historical Sociology” in *Past and Present*, (May 1980), both groups have common goals:

Both seek to understand the puzzle of human agency and both seek to do so in terms of processes of social structuring. Both are impelled to conceive of those processes both chronologically and logically, as both empirical sequence and abstract form. Sociology must be concerned with eventuation because that is how structuring happens. History must be theoretical because this is how structuring is apprehended. History has no privileged access to the empirical evidence relevant to the common explanatory project. And sociology has no privileged theoretical access.

One only hopes that this significant volume gets more historians reading theory and more sociologists digging into *primary* sources. The authors and editors of *Sport, Culture, and the Modern State* have shown us some of the promise of such an endeavor.

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