Journal of Sport History, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Summer, 1985)

English Sports Spectators: The Restoration to the Early Nineteenth Century

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I

Modern sports began in England. About this there is no disagreement.[1] Although the roots of modern sports can be traced back to the early seventeenth century, the Puritans did more to hinder than to help the development of distinctly modern forms of sport. The crowd that came to watch the execution of Charles I in 1649 was a far cry from those who had flocked a few years earlier to see Robert Dover's "Olympick Games"-actually folk contests-in the Cotswalds.[2] The Puritans were concerned about proper hygiene and adequate exercise, but their condemnations of skittles and darts as diversions from prayer testified to their lack of enthusiasm for sport as such. The years of Cromwell's rule are sports history's blank pages. Unquestionably, the end of Puritan rule and the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 marked a shift in emphasis from piety to hedonism. "Merry England" had not disappeared completely during the Commonwealth and an anxious scrutiny of the state of one's soul did not vanish at the moment when Charles II resumed the throne from which his father had been driven, but theaters and racetracks reopened and there was a general sense that men and women were free, after years of repression, to enjoy traditional English sports and pastimes.[3]

Charles himself was no mean sportsman. He was a passionate tennis player who "did play very well and deserved to be commended," and his patronage helped establish the racecourse at Newmarket as the center of the English turf.[4] While Charles was certainly not personally responsible for the revival of English sports, his enthusiasm, and that of his court, can quite properly symbolize their recovered legitimacy.

1. See Herbert Schoeffler, *England: Das Land des Sportes* (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1935); Christian Graf von Krockow, *Sport und Industriegesellschaft* (Munich: Piper, 1972); Henning Eichberg, *Der Weg des Sports in die industrielle Zivilisation* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1973); Richard D. Mandell, Sport: *A Cultural History (N.Y.:* Columbia University Press, 1984), pp. 132-157.
2. See Joachim K. Ruehl, *Die "Olympischen Spiele" Robert Dovers* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1975).
3. See Maria Kloeren, *Sport und Rekord* (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1935).
4. Samuel Pepys, *Diary,* eds. Robert Latham and William Matthews, 11 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970-1983), 5:4.

The Restoration did not restore the political relationships of Tudor or Jacobean England. Similarly, the ludic restoration was something other than a replication of what had existed before the Commonwealth. Sports began in the late seventeenth century more clearly to approach their modern form[5]

In the seventeenth century, the English began systematically to quantify their sports and to move towards the invention of the sports record.[6] On May 24, 1606, John Lepton of York won a bet by arriving at Greenwich "by nine of the clock, as spritely and lusty as at the first day [of a five-day ordeal]; to the wonder of all, till another do the like."[7] For Lepton and the Londoners who greeted him, the wager was certainly more important than the recorded time and distance, and there was only a hint-"till another do the like"-that Lepton's achievement was a challenge for others to emulate. It was another two centuries before men began routinely to abstract the quantified performance as a mark to be equaled or surpassed not simply to win a wager but for the satisfaction inherent in the achievement. Nonetheless, the process of modernization had begun.

Given this admittedly sketchy historical context, what can one ask about seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sports spectators? There are, to start with, some fairly conventional but nonetheless important demographic questions: what was the class and gender composition of the crowds that gathered to watch traditional animal sports, (like bearbaiting, bullbaiting, and cockfighting), horseracing, combat sports (like swordplay, stickfighting, wrestling, and pugilism), and ball games (like cricket)? It is obviously impossible to answer these questions definitively without the kind of systematically collected data that are available in our own day, but careful scrutiny of the sources makes possible some tentative generalizations. There is also the question, especially salient to historians of the late twentieth century, of violence. Working with Norbert Elias' theory of a long-term "civilizing process" which has lessened the amount of expressive (as opposed to instrumental) violence in European society, Eric Dunning and Kenneth Sheard have shown that the transformation of medieval folk-football into the modern games of soccer and rugby has meant, until very recently at any rate, a diminution in the level of physical violence within the game.[8] Did the development of distinctly modern sports also bring about a civilizing process that decreased the amount of violent and disorderly behavior exhibited by sports spectators? It is, once again, impossible to offer a definitive answer, but informed speculation is better than no response at all.

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5. I have attempted a characterization of modern sports in *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports* (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1978); see also Eric Dunning, "The Structural-Functional Properties of Folk-Games and Modern Sports...," *Sportwissenschaft 3:3* (1973): 215-232.

6. On the concept of the sports record, see Richard D. Mandell, "The Invention of the Sports Record," *Stadion 2:2* (1976);250-264; Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record,* pp. 47-54.

7. Quoted in Kloeren, *Sport und Rekord,* p. 196.

8. Norbert Elias, *Ueber den Prozess der Zivilisation.* 2 vols. (1939; Bern: Francke, 1969); Eric Dunning and Kenneth Sheard, *Barbarians. Gentlemen and Players: A Sociological Study of the Development of Rugby Football* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1979). See also Eric Dunning, J. A. Maguire, Patrick Murphy, and John Williams, "The Social Roots of Football Hooligan Violence," *Leisure Studies* l(2) (1982): 139-156; Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning, *Sport im Zivilisationsprozess* (Muenster: Lit-Verlag, 1983); John Williams, Eric Dunning, and Patrick Murphy, *Holligans Abroad* (London: Routledge and Kegal Paul, 1984).

II

Animal sports like bearbaiting are clearly traditional pastimes and, as such, appear anachronistic to those with modern conceptions of what is and what is not an appropriate form of recreation. In retrospect, they can be seen as survivals even in the seventeenth century, when England's political and economic elite began to frequent the racecourse more often than the bearpit. Nonetheless, "blood sports" remained widely popular among the lower classes and drew some aristocratic spectators even in the early nineteenth century when the historian Joseph Strutt asserted that they attracted only "the lowest and most despicable part of the people."[9]

A twentieth-century scholar has asserted the contrary, namely, that these sports were "familiar to everyone, from the most sophisticated Londoner to the simplest inhabitant of a remote hamlet." This was indeed the case. In Tudor days, royalty led the way to the pits. Elizabeth I delighted in bearbaiting and, in 1591, prohibited theaters from performing plays on Thursdays because they interfered with "the game of bear-baiting, and like pastimes, which are maintained for her Majesty's pleasure. . . ." James I, too, "really enjoyed the butcherly sport."[10]

Reactions to the familiar and unfamiliar exhibitions of animal sports depended on gender, social status, and individual taste. Not unexpectedly, middle-class opinion was less than enthusiastic. Although Samuel Pepys was certainly no prude, he visited the bear-garden on August 14, 1666, and proclaimed it "a very rude and nasty pleasure."[11] John Evelyn's distaste is also obvious: On June 16, 1670, he was "forc'd to accompanie some friends to the Bear-garden . . . Where was Cock fighting, Beare, Dog-fighting, Beare and ***Bull baiting,*** it being a famous day for all these butcherly Sports, or rather barbarous cruelties. . . . " All in all, it was a "rude and dirty passetime."[12] Although the middle class was the first to turn away from "butcherly sports," there were plenty of middle-class Englishmen who relished them. We read, for instance, in the diary of James Woodforde (September 5, 1759), "I went to the Bear-baiting in Ansford." [13] there is no indication of disapproval. It is probably significant that Pepys and Evelyn were Londoners while Woodforde, writing nearly a century later, was a country parson. In England as on the continent, traditional sports survived in rural areas long after they had disappeared from urban centers.

There is ample evidence that Queen Elizabeth was not animal baiting's only female spectator. A German visitor to Elizabethan England, Thomas Platter,

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9. Quoted in Henry Alken, *The National Sports of Great Britain* (1825; London: Methuen, 1903). no pagination.

10. Christina Hole, *English Sports and Pastimes* (London: Batsford, 1949). p. 104; John Nichols, *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth,* 3 vols. (London: John Nichols and Sons, 1823). 3: 438n2; John Nichols, *The Progresses... of King James I, 4* vols. (London: J. B. Nichols, 1828), 1:36; 2: 259,308; C. L. Kingsford, "Paris Garden and the Bear-baiting,"Archaelogia 70 (1920): 168.

11. Pepys, *Diary, 7: 246.*

12. John Evelyn, *Diary,* ed. E. S. de Beer, 6 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 3: 549.

13. James Woodforde, *Diary of a Country Parson.* 1758-1802, ed. John Beresford, 5 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1924-1931). 1:12.

observed a "berenhatz" which culminated when a bear, old and blind, was beaten with sticks; it was convenient, thought Platter, that the bear garden lay just across the Thames so that the men and women ("weibspersonnen") of London hardly needed to travel for entertainment. [14] During Evelyn's 1670 visit to the bear-garden in Southwark, "One of the Bulls tossed a Dog full into a ladys lap, as she sate in one of the boxes at a Considerable height from the *Arena.* . . ."[15] John Houghton remarked in 1694 that bull-baiting was "a sport the English much delight in; and not only the baser sort, but the greatest ladies."[16]

Spectators were not always content to be passively entertained. Thomas Isham's diary (November 4, 1672) indicates that the passions aroused by bullbaiting led from watching to doing: "Borneford of Houghton had a bull, on which they set dogs. . . . After they had finished, the spectators wrestled with one another till five o'clock."[17]

Whatever the attractions of animal baiting, which must have been considerable for the sport to have survived in England for at least seven hundred years, baiting had one disadvantage which probably helped to bring about its belated demise. Baiting is intrinsically rather unattractive to the gambler in that the inequality of the animals pitted against one another makes calculation difficult. Cockfighting diminishes this difficulty. Unlike "throwing at cocks," a traditional Shrovetide "sport" in which boys threw sticks at the birds until they killed them, the cockfight centers on more or less evenly matched birds. To the excitement of deadly combat, cockfighting adds the thrill of representation. It may be that spectators felt personally involved in the fate of their favorite bulldogs and there is certainly iconographic evidence that John Bull frequently thought of himself as a bulldog, but the identification seems more strained than the French fondness for their symbolic cock. Who can doubt that Europeans, like the Balinese brilliantly studied by Clifford Geertz, have invested more than their cash in the cockfight?[18] The animals have symbolized their owners' and their backers' identity, sexual and otherwise. (As Geertz points out, the association of the cock with the phallus appears in many cultures.) In other words, English cockfights provide more than sadistic thrills; they allowed Englishmen (but not many Englishwomen) risky occasions for vicarious self-validation.

Cockfights were held in London from at least the 12th century, when William fitzStephen's famous description of London told of "scholars from the different schools" bringing fighting-cocks to their clerical masters on Shrove Tuesday; the entire morning "was set apart to watch their cocks do battle in the schools."[19] Centuries later, Sir Thomas Wyatt was said to have believed that the cocks taught courage and Henry VIII was fond enough of cocking to add a pit to

14. Thomas Platter, *Beschreibung der Reisen durch Frankreich, Spanien, England und die Niederlande. 1595-1600,* ed. Rut Keiser, 2 vols. (Basel: Schwabe, 1968). 793-795.

15. Evelyn, *Diary,* 3: 549.

16. Quoted in Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World* (New York: Pantheon, 1983). p. 144.

17. Quoted in Kloeren, *Sport und Rekord.* p. 40.

18. Clifford Geertz, *The lnterpretation of Cultures* (N.Y.: Basic Books, 1973). pp. 412-453.

19. Reprinted in *English Historical Documents: II, 1042-1189,* eds. David C. Douglas and George M. Greenaway (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1953), pp. 956-962.

Whitehall.[20] In seventeenth-century England, cockpits like the one in Shoe Lane continued to attract aristocrats, who were seated in front, as well as the plebeian spectators, who crowded into the back rows.[21] *The Loyal Protestant* for March 13, 1683, reported that Charles II "and most of the court went to see the sport of cock-fighting; where they received great satisfaction."[22] Pepys went to the pit in Shoe Lane on December 21, 1667, and marveled at "the strange variety of people," which included a Member of Parliament along with "the poorest prentices, bakers, brewers, butchers, draymen, and what not." Pepys was astonished at the large bets placed by men who looked "as if they had no bread to put in their mouths."[23]

Throughout the eighteenth century, cockfights were, in the judgment of a modern historian, "one of the diversions which cut sharply across class lines."[24] One of the best descriptions of the atmosphere is from Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach's visit to London in 1710, where he witnessed a cockfight at "Gras Inn":

> The people, gentle and simple (they sit with no distinction of place) act like madmen, and go on raising the odds to twenty guineas and more .... if a man has made a bet and is unable to pay, for a punishment he is made to sit in a basket fastened to the ceiling, and is drawn up in it amidst peals of laughter.[25]

When young James Boswell paid a visit to the Cockpit in 1762, he was struck by the "uproar and noise" and by the frenzied bettors. He was also upset by the cruelty which he perceived on the faces of the spectators and was "sorry for the poor cocks."[26] His empathy, if it was something more than the anxious young Boswell's projection of his own sexual uncertainties upon the hapless birds, was an anticipation of coming attitudes.

Although the visual arts rarely pictured female spectators at the eighteenth-century cockpit, the French traveler Béat Louis de Muralt reported that one saw mothers bringing their sons and wives encouraging their husbands to attend cockfights.[27]

As England moved from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, attitudes towards animal sports gradually changed. As early as 1737, *The Gentleman's Magazine* condemned "the rude Exercises of Cock-Throwing, Bull-baiting, Prize-fighting, and the like Bear-garden Diversions, (not to mention the more

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20. René Graziani, "Sir Thomas Wyatt at a Cockfight, 1539," *Review of English Studies 27* (August 1976): 299-303; Joseph Strutt, *Sports and Pastimes of the People of England,* ed. William Hone (1801; London: Thomas Tegg, 1838), p. 282.

21. Robert Ashton, "Popular Entertainments and Social Control in later Elizabethan and early Stuart England," *London Journal 9:1 (Summer 1983):* 9.

22. Quoted in Kloeren, *Sport und Rekord,* p. 36.

23. Pepys. *Diary,* 4: 427-428.

24. Robert W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society, 1700-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973). p. 49.

25. Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach, *London in 1710.* trans. W. H. Quarrell and Margaret Mare (London: Faber and Faber, 1934), pp. 48-49.

26. James Boswell. *London Journal,* ed. Frederick A. Pottle (N.Y.: McGraw-Hill, 1950). p. 87.

27. Beat Louis de Muralt, *Lettres sur les anglois et les françois,* ed. Charles Gould (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1933). p. 132.

genteel Entertainment of Cock-fighting).” It was charged that “these Brutal Sports . . . inspire the Minds of Children and young People with a savage Disposition and Ferity of Temper highly pleased with Acts of Barbarity and Cruelty.”[28] Many of England’s greatest poets-from Alexander Pope and James Thomson through William Cowper and William Blake to the Romantics-expressed their dislike for animal sports. The poet John Hamilton Reynolds, a friend of John Keats, wrote of a cockfight, “When it was all over, what remained in the mind, but the dirty dregs of brutality and vice?”[29] The poets were powerfully seconded by Quaker and Methodist reformers and by philosophical rationalists like Jeremy Bentham. By the end of the eighteenth century, even provincial newspapers like the *Bury and Norwich Post* agreed that “all such trainings of the mind of a people to delight in scenes of cruelty are as dangerous in their tendency to the public peace and order, as they are corruptive of the young and uninstructed, whose most natural principles (benevolence and compassion) they extinguish, and pervert their hearts to the contrary.”[30] In the words of a modern social historian, “The Victorian bourgeoisie which set the moral tone of cities like Manchester and Leeds were not likely to patronize the cockpit as the Preston gentry of the late eighteenth century had done. . . .[31] The opposition to blood sports was, in Keith Thomas’s phrase, a “combination of religious piety and bourgeois sensibility.”[32]

Bourgeois sensibility was a complex pheonomenon. The appeal to moral sentiment, voiced by poets, pietists, and philosophers, was interwoven with economic considerations. Animal sports ran counter to what historians now refer to as “the work ethic.” Such sports encouraged the lower classes in drunkenness, gambling, and absenteeism; in short, they “produced lamentable mill hands.”[33] In addition, less specific motives were also at work. Undoubtedly, the attack on the animal sports of the poor, like the condemnation of folk football, derived in large part from middle-class fears of uninhibited and tumultuous behavior. Behind the drive against animal sports was the Malthusian conviction that the English working class was “sunk in bestiality, improvidence, intemperance and lack of sexual restraint.”[34] William Howitt, who took delight in Methodist suppression of “dog-fighting, cock-fighting, bull-baiting, badger-baiting, boxing and such blackguard amusements,” had a Victorian sense of true happiness, which, he argued,

> does not consist in booths and garlands, drums and horns, or in capering around a May-pole. Happiness is a fireside thing. It is a thing of grave and earnest tone; and the deeper and truer it is, the more is it removed from the riot of mere merriment.[35]

28. Quoted in Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations,* p. 137.
29. Quoted in John Ford, *This Sporting Land* (London: New English Library, 1977), p. 69.
30. Quoted in Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations,* p. 137.
31. Robert D. Storch, “The Policeman as Domestic Missionary: Urban Discipline and Popular Culture in Northern England, 1850-1880,” *Journal of Social History 9* (June 1976): 496.
32. *Thomas, Man and the Natural World,* p. 159.
33. James Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. 26.
34. Robert D. Storch, “The Problem of Working-Class Leisure...,” *Social Control in Nineteenth Century Britain.* ed. A. P. Donajgrodzki (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1977), p. 141.
35. Quoted in Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations,* pp. 106, 156.

The contrast in imagery between the bearpit and the fireside could hardly have been more extreme.

Although an early bill to outlaw bullbaiting went down to defeat amid "Tory taunts," England's elite eventually joined the battle against "blood sports."[36] The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was founded in 1824 and middle-class sentiment finally prevailed, at least in the form of legislation, when bullbaiting was prohibited in 1835 and cockfighting in 1849. Many aristocrats of both sexes found themselves, however, in an awkward situation. They disapproved of the people's pleasure in a pitting a bear against a dog, but they themselves were passionate hunters whose pursuit of foxes ended with the hounds tearing the fox to bits. The essayist Sidney Smith scathingly satirized such selfish inconsistency:

> A man of ten thousand a year may worry a fox as much as he pleases, may encourage the breed of a mischievous animal on purpose to worry it; and a poor labourer is carried before a magistrate for paying sixpence to see an exhibition of courage between a dog and a bear! Any cruelty may be practised to gorge the stomachs of the rich, none to enliven the holidays of the poor.[37]

Henry Alken's very popular book, *The National Sports of Great Britain* (1825), laments the fact that, in the past, "animal misery was a grand and favorite source of pleasure" for women as well as men, but Alken saw little harm in a foxhunt. [38] Since the ordinary foxhunter did not control the hounds or shoot the fox, he (or she) was in a sense simply a spectator, more active than most, to be sure, but nonetheless an onlooker. It may have been awkward for the upper class to deprive the poor of such thrills while keeping them for themselves, but they managed to overcome what guilty consciences they may have had with threadbare arguments about the need to maintain equine stock and to rid the countryside of vermin, which, in a legal sense, foxes were.[39]

Perfectly aware of the class-determined double standard which deprived them but not their "betters" of gory spectacles, the poor protested. They continued to relish what Howitt had depreciated as "the riot of mere merriment," and they fought doggedly to preserve the traditional sports and popular recreations which had become an embarrassment to middle-class sensibility and a violation of the criminal. The miners of Northumberland, for instance, "loved dogfighting, prizefighting, and cockfighting" and saw no reason to give them up simply because their "betters" had developed inexplicably tender sensibilities[40] Bullrunning is a splendid example of the people's pertinacity in the face of organized reformist opposition. The sport, which may have ancient roots in fertility ritual, consists of pursuing bulls through city streets. When the town of Stamford prohibited the custom in 1788 on the grounds that it had been

36. Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast,* p. 15.
37. Quoted in Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations,* p, 153.
38. Alken, *National Sports,* p. ix.
39. On the social aspects of foxhunting, *see* David C. Itzkowitz, *Peculiar Privilege; A Social History of English Foxhunting, 1753-1885* (Hassocks, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1977).
40. Alan Metcalfe, "Organized Sport in the Mining Communities of South Northumberland." *Victorion Studies* 25 (Summer 1982): 475.

"productive of Vice, Prophaneness, Immorality, Disorder, Riot, Drunkenness, and Mischief," the magistrates provided the historian with an almost complete list of what it was that the middle classes did not like about the lower classes (only idleness is missing from the list).[41] Even with the assistance of troops, which had to be called out, the magistrates found themselves unable to enforce the laws. When the attempt at suppression was revived in the 1830s, at the request of the Home Office petitioned by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, popular protest took the form of riots which the local constables, in sympathy with local custom, were unable to quell. By 1839, "preparations took on minor siege proportions: 20 metropolitan police and 43 dragoons arrived in Stamford to assist the 90 local constables."[42] The authorities failed to prevent the bullrunning. The custom died in 1840, allegedly because the financial burden grew too great to maintain it.

Cockfights, dogfights, and rattings were outlawed too, but these sports had a great advantage over bullrunning or bearbaiting. The animals in question are small and ***relatively*** inexpensive. Cocks and dogs can be kept in the city without great inconvenience (and rats certainly abounded in Victorian London). The pit can be moved indoors and thus kept secret from the eyes of the police (who may, since they too are recruited from the classes most devoted to animal sports, pretend not to know what is going on). Not all the wealthy citizens shunned the pits, even in the early nineteenth century. Henry Alken's text informs us that dogfights were abominations that drew "the lowest and most infamous rabble," but his illustration shows men in top hats and coats; *they,* Alken assures us, were the exceptions who attended the pit at Tottenham Court Road where fights were conducted "respectably" and were thus able to attract "a few individual choice spirits of our Aristocracy."[43] Twenty-five years later, just before London's Crystal Palace Exhition of 1851 celebrated the moral and technological achievements of the Victorian era, Henry Mayhew investigated London's poor and paid a visit to a rat pit located in a pub. He found that the "front of the long bar was crowded with men of every grade of society, all smoking, drinking, and talking about dogs." When it came time to pit the dogs against the rats, the spectators clambered upon tables and chairs and hung over the pit. The scene was clearly not Mayhew's cup of tea: "These were all sewer and waterditch rats, and the smell that rose from them was like that from a hot drain."[44] The most famous illustration of this mid-century "sport" corroborates Mayhew's judgment about the gender of the devotees; the crowd is shown to be composed entirely of men. While Mayhew may have erred in asserting that the spectators came from "every grade of society," they are shown in top hats, coats, vests, and ties. Drawings cannot be taken as photographic evidence and Victorian dress was more formal

41. Quoted in Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations.* p. 127.
42. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations.* p. 132. On the difficulties of the police in this era, see Robert D. Storch, "A Plague of Blue Locusts," *International Review of Social History* 20:l (1975): 61-90.
43. Alken, *National Sports,* unpaginated text.
44. Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor, 4 vols.* (1861-1862; London: Cass, 1967), 3: 5, 7-8.

than our own, but it is nonetheless difficult to believe that the top-hatted spectators were all drawn from the lower classes.

Cockfights have survived into the twentieth century as a clandestine, mostly rural, mostly lower-class sport. Descriptions are rare, but cockfighting's appeal to the peasants of Flanders has been well portrayed by a Belgian novelist once renowned for his realistic explorations of Flemish character. In Maxence van der Meersch's *L'Empreinte du dieu* (1936), the middle-class protagonist, a successful writer, surprises the villain, a tavernkeeper and smuggler, at the traditional cockfight held annually in honor of the local saint. The barn is full of peasants and their wives, who are "more passionate, more vehement than the men, screaming out their bets with sharp, piercing voices, mingled together without minding in the least this dust, this filth, this brutality."[45] Were the English lower classes any different in their responses to clandestine cockfights?

III

By the early nineteenth century, urban elites had turned away from cockfighting, but upper-class Englishmen and Americans continued to sponsor horse races, on which large sums of money were wagered. It is, indeed, difficult to imagine a social history of Restoration England which did not describe the races at Newmarket, where Charles II and his court gathered to admire thoroughbreds and to back their admiration with large wagers. From the course at Newmarket the hoipolloi was intentionally excluded, but Newmarket was the exception.

When Uffenbach went to Epsom in 1710, he marveled at the vast unruly crowd. "One is certainly astonished at the tumult and hubbub made by the English on these occasions." Expecting a rough day, many females wore male's clothing and came on horseback rather than in carriages. The mounted spectators galloped along the course and sometimes interfered with the race. "Great unpleasantness can . . . arise," noted Uffenbach, "if one crosses the path of anyone racing and hinders him; for then all his backers fall on one."[46] As might be expected, eighteenth-century racing crowds were mostly male, even at Newmarket. Nineteenth-century Ascot, Epsom, and Goodwood attracted more women than most tracks, but there is no reason to think they came in proportion to their number in the population.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the noble patrons of the sport founded a whole series of yearly events many of which are still considered highpoints of the sporting season: the St. Leger (1776), the Oaks (1779), and the Derby at Epsom (1780). While such race meetings were arranged by and for the aristocracy, the lower orders were usually welcome "if they kept their place."[47] Commonly, the carriages of the wealthy lined the course so that lords and ladies were able to watch comfortably seated inside or atop their carriages while somewhat less privileged spectators drove whatever vehicles they were able to command. The hardy representatives of the urban poor trudged extraordinary

45. Maxence Van der Meersch, *L'Empreinte du dieu* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1936). p. 118.
46. Uffenbach, *London.* p. 107.
47. Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution* (N.Y.: St. Martin's, 1980). p. 19.

distances in order to stand on the edges of the course or watch from nearby treetops. The great races attracted some of the most "polyglot assemblies to be found in England."[48]

In the 1770s, grandstands for upper-class men and women became common, but races before 1840 were not gate-money events. Nineteenth-century entrepreneurs finally realized that fenced enclosures and gate money were ways simultaneously to control the crowd and raise considerable sums, but it was not until 1875, a generation after the period under consideration, that "Sandown Park opened its turnstiles as an enclosed course, entry to which required a fee from *all* race-goers."[49] Such instances of economic rationalization were part and parcel of the overall tendency to modernize the institution. They paralleled the introduction of more precise measurements of the horses' times (for which the stopwatch was invented around 1730) and with the incipient bureaucratization of the entire sport by such organizations as the Jockey Club.

Most of the great races were held some distance from London; those who wished to attend had to find lodgings. The great country houses were filled with aristocratic guests while the less fortunate spectators scoured the area seeking to rent rooms. They paid exorbitant sums and deemed themselves lucky to sleep two or three in a bed. The flood of spectators flowing to and from the races was itself a spectacle watched from village doorways and windows.

Newmarket continued to be the exception. As late as the 1830s, when the races at Epsom drew crowds of 100,000, Newmarket's seven annual meetings rarely attracted more than 500, "mostly of the higher classes, the majority on horseback, with perhaps a few close carriages and barouches for invalids and ladies."[50] Even in the early nineteenth century, the course had only one small private grandstand expressly for members of the Jockey Club, which had been founded around 1750 (not, of course, by jockeys but by "the owners and breeders, all rich and many titled").[51] When the Great Eastern Railway ran cheap excursions to Newmarket, the Club arranged for consecutive races to be run at different tracks miles apart so that only mounted spectators were able to see the finishes.[52]

Epsom and Ascot were different. Their popularity was comparable to that of the great sports encounters of our own day. The difference lies not in the magnitude of the event but in its character. The great races more closely resembled the chaotic bustle of a medieval fair than a modern sports event. Mary Russell Mitford's somewhat fictionalized description of a day at Ascot is a fine account of "that celebrated union of sport and fashion." Mary Coxe, a carpenter's daughter, goes off with her beau and joins "a dense and crowded population of all ranks and ages, from the duchess to the gypsy, from the old man of eighty to the child in its mother's arms.[53] Although the young people are

48. Ford, This Sporting Land, p. 91.
49. Wray Vamplew, *The Turf* (London: Allen Lane, 1976), pp. 18, 38.
50. J. C. Whyte, *History of the British Turf (1840).* quoted by Vamplew, *The Turf* p. 26.
51. William J. Baker, *Sports in the Western World* (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1982), p. 88
52. Vamplew, *The Turf;* p. 30.
53. Mary Russell Mitford, *Our Village* (1824-1832; London: J. M. Dent, 1936), p. 283.

not especially interested in the races themselves, Mitford explains that the festivity includes the marriages of those who fell in love the year before. Frith's painting, *Derby Day at Epsom* is a wonderfully detailed rendering of the colorful crowd as it appeared a few years after the visit of Mitford's amorous couple. It is a carnival atmosphere with its hawkers and vendors, gypsy fortunetellers, acrobats, minstrels, pickpockets, idle thugs, and lost children. That Frith portrayed the scene realistically is attested to by numerable reports including one of Charles Dickens' liveliest pieces of journalism. On Derby Day, wrote Dickens, it seemed that "all London turned out." The roads were jammed with

> barouches, phaetons, broughams, gigs, four-wheeled chaises, four-in-hands, Hansom cabs, cabs of lesser note, chaise-carts, donkey-carts, tilted vans made arborescent with green boughs and carrying no end of people, and a cask of beer,-equestrians, pedestrians, horse-dealers, gentlemen, notabilities, and swindlers by tens of thousands. ...[54]

The rich brought hampers from Fortnum and Mason and the gypsies brought their crystal balls and tealeaves. There was nothing like it.

Newmarket had little or no problem of crowd control, mostly because it had no crowds, but the great meetings of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were often disorderly, even by the standards of the day, which were more tolerant of rowdy behavior than ours are. When gentlemen sponsored a race, ordinary spectators "were tolerated if they kept their place." If they did not, "there might be a pitched battle."[55] *The Ipswich Journal* reported in 1749 of a riot when races were not run as expected. The common people were "so enraged. . . that they pulled down the Starting-post, Booths, Benches, etc. and made a large Bonfire with them in the Middle of the . . . Fields."[56] On another occasion, when the artist-jockey George Morland failed on the favorite at Mount Pleasant near Margate, he was surrounded by a mob "who used their whips on him." The unlucky Morland rode a winner in another race and was attacked by another mob allegedly composed of sailors, smugglers, and fishermen. [57] As late as 1822, *The Annals of Sporting* suggested that "people should go armed to Epsom and Ascot. . . ."[58] Although gate money for entry to the grounds and an additional charge for a grandstand seat eventually reduced the level of tumult, the excitement of the race, the carnival atmosphere, and the ready supply of ale usually guaranteed a number of fistfights. Indeed, one of the sidelights of a great race was a good fight by a pair of renowned pugilists. Local constables were helpless to prevent such spontaneous (but routinely recurrent) matches. If the prospect of a clandestinely arranged bareknuckles encounter generated a crowd of 20,000, it is also true, at least in Regency England, that

54. Charles Dickens, *Uncollected Writings from HOUSEHOLD WORDS,* ed. Harry Stone, 2 vols. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), 2: 305.
55. Cunningham. *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution.* pp. 19-20.
56. Quoted in Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations,* p. 51.
57. John Ford, *Prizefighting* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1971). p. 85.
58. Ford, *This Sporting Land,* p. 94.

almost any crowd of 20,000 was liable to generate an impromptu bout with delighted spectators eagerly betting on the outcome.

IV

Pugilism was, of course, an independent phenomenon which flourished on its own as well as in conjunction with the races, but major fights, like the Tom Spring-John Langlan bout of 1824, were often held at racetracks. (There is a fine print by James Clements of Spring, Langlan, and the crowd at Worcester track.) When planning an illegal bout, it was better to use facilities already in place than to arouse suspicions by erecting them in the middle of a meadow. In the course of the eighteenth century, pugilism gradually displaced various other (human) combat sports. (The term "pugilism" seems more appropriate than "boxing," which suggests the somewhat more civilized combats governed by the Marquess of Queensberry and subsequent rules.)

Wrestling, once proudly practiced by Henry VIII and patronized by his royal successors, slowly declined in status. John Evelyn's diary (February 19, 1667) tells of "a Wrestling-match for 1000 pounds in St. James's Parke before his Majestie" and "a world of Lords and other Spectators."[59] In time, such contests continued to lure the "buxom nymphs" and "jolly clowns" of the countryside but not the more sophisticated urbanites.[60] In 1737, 10,000 people were said to have gathered at Botley in Berkshire to watch the wrestling matches; it is hard to imagine such enthusiasm in London.[61] It is also wise to be skeptical of this and all other estimates of crowd size prior to the introduction of turnstiles and printed tickets.

Fencing was a popular spectator sport in Elizabethan days, when masters staged public exhibitions of their pupils' prowess and skilled fencers competed before vociferous crowds, but the popular swordplay of the Restoration and the eighteenth century was of a rougher sort. It was certainly not the elegantly formal sport practiced on the continent. Italian and French masters thought of their thrusts and parries as part of a geometric pattern, almost as a mathematical demonstration. Their matches often resembled a dance more than a contest. While English aristocrats too were attracted to this sort of exercise, they did not perform for the indiscriminate public. Meanwhile, London's lower classes flocked to witness swordfights which were often inelegantly bloody affairs. In June of 1663, Pepys went to see the fencers at the Royal Theatre in Drury Lane and found "a woeful rabble" whose noise made "my head ake all this evening."[62] In 1705, Thomas Brown graphically described an exhibition at the "Bear-garden":

> Seats fill'd and crowded by Two: Drums beat, Dogs yelp, Butchers and Foot-soldiers clatter their Sticks: At last the two Heroes in their fine borrow'd Holland shirts, mount the Stage about Three; Cut large Collops out of one another to divert the Mob, and make Work for the Suregeons: Smoaking, Swearing, Drinking,

59. Evelyn, *Diary,* 3: 476.
60. Ruehl, *Die "olympischen Spiele" Robert Dovers,* p. 193
61. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations,* p. 43.
62. Pepys, *Diary,* 4: 168.

> Thrusting, Justling, Elbowing, Sweating, Kicking, Cuffing, Stinking, all the while the Company stays.[63]

Undeniably, "the Mob" turned out to watch the commercially sponsored combats of London and other urban centers as the rural poor flocked to the stickfights and wrestling matches that accompanied annual fairs, but Uffenbach's report from the bear garden at Hockely in the Hole makes clear that the poor were not the only patrons of combat sports. There were

> wretched galleries with raised seats, like those on which the spectators sit at a play. But the common people, who do not pay much, are below on the ground. They tried with violence to clamber up on to the galleries and scaffolding, and when some would have hindered them, they cast up such monstrous showers of stones, sticks, and filth, and this with no respect of persons, that we were not a little anxious. . . . They behaved like madmen and things looked very ugly. . . ."[64]

There was, and still is, a tendency for combat sports to bring together the very top and the very bottom of the social scale. *The Loyal Protestant* for July 23, 1681, reported "a great Wrestling, and Cudgel-playing before His Majesty at Windsor" and an Italian visitor, Count Lorenzo Magalotti, noted that Charles II also attended public swordfights.[65] Combat sports continued to excite the interest of the nobility as well as the common people. A contemporary remarked that "most of the young Nobility and Gentry made it Part of their Education to march under [Figg's] warlike Banner," which certainly suggests matches watched as well as lessons taken.[66] The popular poet John Byrom wrote of "our commons and peers" who stared entranced while Figg fought within "half an inch distance" of them.[67] J.B. LeBlanc thought that only "la plus vile populace" patronaged Figg's entertainments, but numerous British and continental aristocrats seem to have been occasional if not regular spectators late into the "Age of the Enlightenment."[68]

There is little indication of a class-related difference in the eighteenth-century spectators' reaction to the inherent violence of combat sports. The German visitor Charles Louis von Poellnitz noted that spectators cheered when wounds were inflicted.[69] The same custom was noticed by the French traveler Antoine Prévost, when, a few years later, he visited James Figg's famous establishment, the boastfully named "Amphitheatre," opened in 1743. Prévost and a crowd seated in banks that reached to the vaulted roof witnessed cudgeling, fistfighting, wrestling, and-finally-a combat with sabres. When the redoubtable Figg sliced off part of his opponent's calf, the crowd shouted, *"bravo, bravo, ancora, ancora."*[70]

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63. Quoted in Kloeren. *Sport und Rekord,* pp. 42-43.
64. Uffenbach, *London,* pp. 88-89.
65. Quoted in Kloeren, *Sport und Rekord,* pp. 23, 26.
66. William Rufus Chetwood, *A General History of the Stage* (London: W. Owen, 1749), p. 60n.
67. Quoted in Kloeren, *Sport und Rekord.* p. 56.
68. Ibid.. p. 59.
69. Kloeren, *Sport und Rekord,* p. 50.
70. Antoine Prévost, *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité.* 8 vols. (1728-1756; Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1927). 5: 91

Voltaire worried highmindedly in his *Lettres Philosophiques* about "jeunes filles" who were exposed to matches between half-naked "gladiateurs," but these girls were not the cloistered daughters of dukes and earls.[71] Joseph Addison and Richard Steele sent their fictional Sir Roger de Coverley to a combat at Hockley in the Hole, where the sight of blood sends "a poor Nymph . . . into a flood of tears," but Addison and Steele wrote primarily for a middle-class audience.[72] Eighteenth-century noblemen almost certainly did *nor* bring wives and daughters to Figg's Amphitheatre or to the other exhibitions of combat and the women who were present were not likely to exhibit nymph-like sensitivity to the sight of blood. There is plenty of evidence that lower-class women were present at eighteenth-century combat sports and that they were a hardy lot. Uffenbach reported that an "Englishman sitting behind us, who had probably drunk a considerable amount, was making a vast uproar and throwing down whole handfuls of shillings. His wife, who was sitting with him, was also rather vociferous."[73] In one of the finest of Rowlandson's prints, *The Prize Fight* (1787), which probably portrays the 1786 bout between Richard Humphries and Samuel Martin, a few tubby females appear among the generally nondescript spectators.

The vociferous wife whom Uffenbach met assured him "that two years ago she had fought another female in this place without stays and in nothing but a shift. They had both fought stoutly and drawn blood, which was apparently no new sight in England."[74] Apparently not. César de Saussure reported a bout between an Englishwoman and an Irishwoman, probably the one publicized in *Mist's Journal* for November 20, 1725, and the *Guide des Etrangers (1729)* refers to "Amazones intrépides."[75] Saussure says that "il est rare de voir deux femmes faire les gladiateurs" and Prévost remarks that crowds were large *because* women's matches were rare, but James Peller Malcolm's *Anecdotes of the Manners and Customs of London* notes instances of female pugilists at Hockley in the Hole and what can only be referred to as "mixed doubles" at Figg's Amphitheatre, where Robert Barker and Mary Webb fought James Stokes and Elizabeth Wilkinson.[76] The most vivid account of female pugilism may well be from the memoirs of the late-eighteenth-century rake, William Hickey. At Wetherby's near Drury Lane, he went slumming and found two women

> engaged in a scratching and boxing match, their faces entirely covered with blood, bosoms bare, and the clothes nearly torn from their bodies. For several minutes not a creature interfered between them, or seemed to care a straw what mishap they might do each other, and the contest went on with unabated fury.

71. Voltaire, *Lettres philosophiques,* ed. Gustave Lanson, 2 vols. (Paris: Edouard Cornély. 1909), 2: 110n
72. Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, *The Spectator* (Nr. 436, July 21,1712), ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 34.
73. Uffenbach, *London,* pp. 90.
74. Ibid., pp. 90-91.
75. Quoted in Kloeren, *Sport und Rekord.* pp. 45, 56-57.
76. Kloeren, *Sport und Rekord.* pp. 45-46; Malcolm, *Anecdotes,* (London: Longman, Hurst. Rees, Orne, 1811) 2: 163.

Neither the men nor the women present, "promiscuously mounted upon chairs, tables, and benches," objected to the "unladylike" brawl. Hickey, who might be best characterized as a deviant middle-class rake, reveals considerable ambivalence about the thrillingly unsavory spectacle.[77]

As the variety of combats carried out at Hockley in the Hole and in Figg's Amphitheatre proves, there was no clear demarcation from the days of cudgel and sword to the era of the fist. Figg the swordsman and stickfighter became Figg the pugilist who then reappeared with his trusty cudgel. Nonetheless, there was a transition. Figg's successor John Broughton, the first popularly recognized champion of England, was clearly a pugilist, perhaps even a boxer.

In Broughton's day as now, there was a tendency for butchers and colliers to batter each other with their fists while the rich cheered them on. The Tex Rickards and Don Kings who promote twentieth-century matches have often risen from the same social stratum as the pugilists they pit against each other, but mid-eighteenth-century fights were, if not part of a traditional holiday or a commercial venture, likely to have been sponsored by the aristocracy. *The True Protestant Mercury* for January 12, 1681, reported a combat between a butcher and a footman in the service of the Duke of Albemarle.[78] Uffenbach reported in 1710 how some lords, to wile away the time before their boat left, casually offered a crown for which a pair of sailors stripped and fought.[79] The Duke of Cumberland was a renowned sponsor of fisticuffs. Under his patronage James Broughton fought the last of his battles in 1750. It was, indeed, a famous moment in the history of the sport when Broughton, battered and blinded by Jack Slack, was gibed by the Duke: "WHAT ARE YOU ABOUT BROUGHTON—YOU CAN'T FIGHT—YOU'RE BEAT!" To this Broughton answered, "I can't see my man, you're highness-I am blind, but not BEAT. . . ." He lost the fight and his noble patron lost several thousand pounds.[80] The Duke of Northumberland sponsored the famous black fighter, Bill Richmond, whom he brought to England. When aristocrats did not arrange the fight, they "honored" it with their presence. For a bout at Brighton's racetrack in 1788, "The town of Brighthelmstone was literally drained of its company, and the race-stand was crowded to excess with nobility and gentry; among whom was his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales."[81] When a nobleman spoke disdainfully of the boxing crowd at the Duke of Clarence's estate, Moulsey Hurst, the duke (later to be William IV) is said to have reproved him: "Be pleased to recollect, my lord, that we are all Englishmen here."[82] William Windham, Member of Parliament and Secretary for War and Colonies, once missed a debate in Commons in order to attend a prizefight. The tradition of aristocratic patronage continued into the early nineteenth century. Lord Byron, for in-

77. William Hickey, *Memoirs,* ed. Alfred Spencer. 4 vols. (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1913-1925), 1: 82-83.
78. Cited in Kloeren, *Sport und Rekord,* p. 35.
79. Ibid., pp. 63-64.
80. Pierce Egan, *Boxiana,* 5 vols. (London: Sherwood, Neely and Jones, 1829). 1: 58
81. Ibid., 1: 219-220.
82. Ford, *Prizefighting.* p. 149.

stance, admired John Jackson and decorated his firescreen with Jackson's pugilistic poses. "Here," wrote the noted sports journalist Vincent Dowling of Jackson's rooms, "all the elite of the fashionable world were daily assembled."[83] After 1802, "the fancy" (a term applied to all the sporting fans) were often found at the Fives Court in Little St. Martin's Street. After a visit there, the poet John Clare wrote enviously, "I left the place with one wish strongly uppermost, and that was that I was but a Lord to patronise Jones the Sailorboy."[84] Three-shilling tickets bought at the Castle Tavern admitted commoners to the floor, which held one thousand, while the scions of the nobility watched from a small elevated dressing room with windows on the court. Some of the finest sporting prints of the Regency testify to the elite's allegiance to the ring. George Cruikshank, for instance, did a famous print which appeared in the *Annals of Sporting and Fancy Gazette;* it shows the spectators in top hats and cutaway jackets, the very height of fashion, gathered at the Fives Court to back their favorite boxers. A few of the dandies emulated Byron and risked their physiognomies as well as their purses.

While the young nobleman was often an enthusiastic fan, he was far outnumbered by the rest of "the fancy," a term which the poet J.H. Reynold's thought appropriate for "those who deal in scientific knocks" but also

> For bull-dog breeders, badger-baiters—all Who live in gin and jail, or not at all.[85]

Washington Irving seems to have had some of the same thoughts. "What is the Fancy itself," he wrote, "but a chain of easy communication, extending down from the peer to the pick-pocket, through the medium of which a man of rank may find he has shaken hands at three removes, with the murderer on the gibbet."[86] What Irving does *not* point out is that the chain of social communication rarely included decent middle-class people like himself.

An account of the crowd at the boxing royal Cockpit in Tufton Street is even more graphic: jostling and pushing "to procure a front seat," there were

> flue-fakers, dustmen, lamp-lighters, stage-coachmen, bakers, farmers, barristers, swells, butchers, dog-fanciers, grooms, donkey-boys, weavers, snobs, market-men, watermen, honourables, sprigs of the nobility, Members of Parliament, mail-guards . . .[87]

Undoubtedly there were fewer barristers than butchers, but we shall never know exactly the social composition of the colorful throng.

Historians of sport can revel in the eyewitness information collected from the past and reported for his own time by the redoubtable Pierce Egan, who covered the ring for *Bell's Life in London* and other journals.** Typically, Egan's accounts begin with the groundswell of enthusiasm as word spreads. Tom Cribb

83. On Byron, see Carl Diem, *Lord Byron als Sportsman* (Cologne: Comel, 1950), p. 86; Dowling, quoted from Ford, *Prizefighting,* p. 132.
84. Ford, *This Sporting Land,* 104.
85. Quoted from Ford, *Prizefighting,* p. 148.
86. Ibid.. p. 163.
87. Ibid.: p. 150.
88. On Egan. see John C. Reid, *Bucks and Bruisers* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971).

has agreed to defend his title against Tom Molineaux! Since middle-class pressures had made prizefights illegal, a certain amount of discretion was necessary, but, given the refusal of noblemen and journeymen to accept the judgement of ordinary middle-class gentlemen, discretion was often little more than a hyprocritical show of deference to the letter of the law. The essayist William Hazlitt vividly described the pugilistic grapevine.[89] On the day before the fight, the roads leading from London to MousleyHurst or some other supposedly secret site in the vicinity of the metropolis were jammed with vehicles of every sort, "from the splendid barouche" to the "mud-cart," with horsemen, and with pedestrians.[90] The spectators en route to the fights were themselves a popular spectacle. When John Langan and Tom Spring fought near Chichester, the townspeople gawked: in Egan's slang, "the *mugs* of the *yokels* exhibited *gape-seed* enough to have filled a corn-chandler's shop."[91] As was the case with the great horseraces, inns were filled and overfilled and thousands took accommodations for the night in private homes and even in barns. Before John Gully's bout with Henry Pearce, "The innkeepers' prices soared gloriously."[92] Among those who simply had to be there were Lord Byron and his boxing instructor John Jackson. 93 When Ned Painter met Tom Oliver in 1820, the town of Norwich had "as much anxiety and interest upon the event as if it had been the election for a Member of Parliament."The fight "engrossed the whole of the conversation, even amongst the most polite and *tender* circles. . . .[94] Egan's detailed reports make it clear that few of the polite and tender women joined the crowds, but many were known to sigh their amorous responses to the sight of brawny boxers glimpsed from drawing-room windows.

The fancy never knew when a quick change in venue was necessary. On one occasion, the local constabulary ws determined to block a fight between Edward Neal and Philip Sampson. The affair was moved across the county line and the crowd followed the fight, literally for once. "Their mugs, wrote Egan, were "covered with perspiration, and their hind parts splashed all over with dirt."[95]

Invariably, Egan implied that *all* classes attended the fights, an assertion which, if true, would leave us to wonder who it was that made pugilism illegal and called out the constables to stop it. Undeterred by such thoughts in his propaganda on behalf of the sport he loved, Egan claimed that the 30,000 or more gathered in 1824 for the Tom Spring-John Langan match were "a union of all ranks, from the *brilliant* of the highest class in the circle of CORINTHIANS, down to the *Dusty Bob* graduation in society; and even a *shade* or two below that. Lots of the UPPER HOUSE [of Parliament]; the LOWER house, and the *flash* house." Egan felt the need of a George Cruikshank to portray the scene.

89. WilliamHazlitt, "The *Fight,"Complete Works,* eds. A. R. Waller and Arnold Clover, 13 vols. (London: J. M. Dent, 1902-1906), 12: 1-15.
90. Egan, *Boxiana,* 2: 241.
91, Ibid., 4: 374.
92. Bernard Darwin, *John* Gully *and His* Times (N.Y.: Harper and Brothers, 1935), p. 11
93. Ibid., pp. 11-12.
94. Egan, *Boxiana,* 3: 139.
95. Ibid.. 5: 584.

Since this bout was held at a racetrack, there was a grandstand, admission to which cost ten shillings. Those without the cash, including a number *of'Swells,* were seen sitting down in the *mud* with as much *sangfroid* as if they were lolling on a sofa, *tête-à-tête,* with some attractive, lovely, fair damsel." On the river which flowed by the track, ships were moored with agile spectators perched monkey-like on the masts and spars.[96]

Commitment was intensified by what can be called "representative sport." Local idols aroused partisan devotion while Irish boxers were often jeered at by the English fans. Egan, a broad-minded man, commented sympathetically, "Langan is not a black, but unfortunately he is an Irishman. . . ."[97] When Langan met Matthew Weeping from Manchester, "It was a kind of war between England and Ireland. . ." British Jews were able to cheer for Barney Aaron, "The Star of the East," who fought at Colnbrook, seventeen miles from London: "The road was rather thin of company; but the *Sheenies* . . . were numerous, and full of *frisk* and *fun.* . . ."[98] Egan thought the crowds of the 1780s and 1790s were prejudiced against Daniel Mendoza, and surely some were, yet a contemporary account from *Sporting Magazine* indicates that he was "decidedly the favourite" and "loudly cheered" when he fought Tom Owen in 1820-at the age of fifty-five.[99] Black boxers certainly aroused racist emotions which must have been especially strong when intensified by nationalism, as was the case when Tom Cribb fought Tom Molineaux, a former slave from Virginia. As Egan noted, the American

> had to contend against a prejudiced multitude; the pugilistic honour of the country was at stake, and the attempts of Molineaux were viewed with jealousy, envy, and disgust: the national laurels to be borne away by a foreigner–the *mere* idea to an English breast was afflicting . . .

No wonder interest exceeded "everything in the annals of pugilism."[100]

Preventing such partisanship from spilling over from ringside to ring was a perennial problem. The main event was usually accompanied by unscheduled fisticuffs and more than one fight came to a premature end when the spectators abandoned their assigned social roles and began to attack the pugilists.

The return to London was often boisterous and adventuresome. Men, women, and children who were unable to attend the match were eager to hear of the results, or simply to watch the milling thousands make their way back to the metropolis.

V

Pugilism flourished at the social edges of Regency England, despised by the reformist middle classes, for whom the unruly mob was a threatening image of potential revolution. Prizefighters were patronized by some (not all) of the

96. Ibid., 4: 287-288.
97. Ibid., 4: 308.
98. Ibid., 4: 365; 5: 164.
99. Carl B. Cone, ed., *Hounds in the Morning* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1981). pp. 159-160.
100 E gan, *Boxiana.* 1: 367, 414.

aristocracy and admired by the rural and urban masses, who resented the loss of traditional pastimes and reveled in occasions for emotional release. If the pugilist's ring was shoved off to the periphery of society's sense of itself, the cricket field was situated at the center.

Although the game goes back at least to the sixteenth century, when Guilford's borough records noted the reminiscence of one John Denwick, who, as a schoolboy, "did runne and play . . . at Creckitt and other plaies,"[101] the game first became an important social institution in the eighteenth century when rules were codified, customs fixed, and myths established. By the early nineteenth century, at a time when the tumults of folk-football had not yet been rationalized into modern soccer, London's Marylebone Cricket Club, which had been established in 1787, was seen as the game's most important single organization, but county cricket was strong and remained so for at least another century. In the Victorian era, the "players" (who received payment) gradually ousted the "gentlemen" (who did not), but cricket continued to be thought of as *the* English game until the twentieth century, when soccer finally displaced it.

By the early nineteenth century, cricket might almost be said to have defined what it was to be English. What speaker of English doesn't understand the judgment conveyed by the curt remark, "That's not cricket"? No doubt, this assertion about the cultural centrality of cricket is more true for rural than for urban England, but rural England still thought of itself even in the nineteenth century as the *real* England. The country squire played a far more significant part on the social scene than his French or German contemporaries. In playing his role, or roles, he was likely to appear as a cricketeer, bowling for a team that included his butler, the village wheelwright, and a number of other rural worthies. The sponsorship and active participation on the part of the upper classes may have made a difference in spectator behavior. Crowds assembled to play and to watch folk football were often disrespectful of their "betters." At Derby's traditional Shrovetide football match, "it was customary for unpopular or just well-dressed persons among the spectators to be 'dusted' with bags of soot or powder."[102] In comparison, cricket crowds were deferential.

Mary Russell Mitford was one of the first Englishwomen to write of sports from a spectator's point of view (or from any other, for that matter). *Our Village,* an evocation of English life in the early nineteenth century, contains one of the most famous of all accounts of cricket. "I doubt," she wrote, "if there be any scene in the world more animating or delightful than a cricket match." Of course, it should be a "real solid old-fashioned match between neighboring parishes, not some newfangled contest in London or Liverpool by people who make a trade of that noble sport." The village spectators are

> retired cricketeers, the veterans of the green, the careful mothers, the girls, and all the boys of two parishes. . . There was not a ten-years-old urchin, or a septuagenary woman in the parish, who did not feel an additional importance, a reflected consequence, in speaking of "our side." An election interests in the same

101. H. A. Harris, *Sport in Britain* (London: Stanley Paul, 1975). p. 36.
102. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations,* p. 79.

> way; but that feeling is less pure. Money is there, and hatred, and politics, and lies. [103]

Her account is pure pastoral. She describes a "middle landscape" set in some partly real, partly imaginary world between Nature, where wild beasts prey on one another, and the City, where man is a wolf to man. Her fictionalized description matches John Nyren's equally pastoral descriptions. In his books, whole counties turn out to watch but never interfere with play. His spectators are preternaturally patient. For him the game symbolizes rural virtues imperiled by an industrial age.

Of course, Mitford and Nyren romanticized. There were frequent disorders at eighteenth-century matches. In 1744, nobles and gentlemen complained of disorderly spectators at matches held at London's Artillery Ground. Access was thereupon limited to gentlefolk, benches were then provided for those willing to pay two pence or six pence and the number present at the games dropped from seven or eight thousand to a scant 200. [104] When Leicester met Coventry in 1787, there was "a pitched battle in the streets of Hinckley"; in 1792, Westminster boys broke windows on their way to a match and an irate citizen was taken to court for firing shots over their heads. [105]

By the mid-nineteenth century, cricket crowds were usually quite civilized. They were also quite patient, a necessary virtue when matches began to stretch into a second and a third day. It may be dangerous for anyone but an Englishman to speculate about cricket, whose arcane rules have frustrated generations of outlanders, but it seems possible that the length of Victorian and later matches symbolized the pace of life in a rural society not yet dominated by an industrial sense of time. What better way to evoke continuity than to go on and on?

And what better way to symbolize community than to have everyone assemble, not by external coercion but because it was, after all, the thing to do? Common to Mitford, Selincourt, and others who have described what the poet Edmund Blunden called "cricket country" is a conviction that *everyone* watched. A modern historian writes that "lords and statesmen, tradesmen and working men all played together without distinction of rank, or jostled one another happily amongst the spectators on the green edges of the grounds."[106] Contemporary evidence that everyone did indeed watch the village game can be found in an anonymous denunciation of 1743: "British Champion" complained about "crowds of idle spectators" in which lords and gentlemen mingled with butchers and cobblers."[107] And they all might have been at some useful work!

Eighteenth-century prints show the rural scene, with spectators scattered in small groups around the perimeter of the field. Although a few women played the game, it was socially sufficient if they were interested in their cricket-player

103. Mitford, *Our Village,* pp. 63-64, 67-68.
104. Dennis Brailsford, "Sporting Days in Eighteenth Century *England,"Journal of Sport History* 9 (Winter 1982): 49.
105. Ford, *This Sporting Land,* p. 87; Christopher Brookes, *English Cricket* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1978). pp. 71-72.
106. Hole, *English Sports.* p, 62.
107. Quoted in Harris, p. 41.

fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons. If Mitford is at all representative, most women were. Male children, like novelist Hugh de Selincourt's fifteen-year-old Horace Cairie, waited eagerly for the day when they might be invited to take their place among the men.[108] For the game to *serve* as a *rite de* passage, which it did, implies its cultural importance. It was also said to be a point of honor that play be fair. Nyren's classic, *The Young Cricketeers' Tutor* (1833), tells proudly of spectators who don't interfere with play when the ball is hit into their midst. "Like true Englishmen, they would give an enemy fair play."[109]

Derived as it was from a basis in historical reality, the pastoral myth took hold. The myth turned out to be more durable than the reality. Long after turnstiles, differential admission costs, ticket-takers, and grandstands created socially segregated seating, lyrical accounts—like Selincourt's or Siegfried Sassoon's, published in 1924 and 1929, respectively, continued to portray the game almost as Mitford had in *Our Village.* [110] There comes a moment, however, when the rosy haze of communal myth can no longer soften the harsh contours of conflict. In the religiously divided India of the 1930s the cricket grounds in Bombay and Calcutta physically segregated Hindus from Muslims from Europeans.[111] In the racially divided British West Indies of the 1950s, the British sat in the grandstand and the natives sat across from them. The cricket match became not a ritual of community but "a social drama in which almost all the basic conflicts within society are played out symbolically."[112] Clearly, the game of cricket has no intrinsic characteristics that make it an appropriate symbol for community rather than mutual hostility. It brought people more or less amiably together in a traditional society that assumed inequality and yet valued moments of ludic togetherness. It dramatizes and intensifies animosity in urban-industrial societies wracked by class conflict and on the verge of violent protest. It may be that cricket, once the very symbol of bucolic community, has declined in popularity because there is no longer any bucolic community to symbolize.

VI

The years from the Restoration to the early nineteenth century were marked by a diminution in the level of expressive (as opposed to instrumental) violence among sports spectators. To some degree, the decrease in spectator violence can be seen within a single sport. For instance, the "fancy" described by Pierce Egan were boisterous and disorderly and sometimes scuffled with constables

108. Hugh de Selincourt, *The Cricket Match* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1924).

109. Quoted in Hans Indorf, *Fair Play und der "Englische Sportgeist"* (Hamburg: Friederchsen, de Gruyter, 1938). p. 67.

110. Siegfried Sassoon, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* (N.Y.: Coward, McCann, 1929). pp. 52-81.

111. Richard Cashman, *Patrons. Players and the Crowd: The Phenomenon of* Indian *Cricket* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1980), endpapers.

112. Orlando Patterson, "The Cricket Ritual in the West Indies, *"New Society* XIII (June 26.1969): 988; for a complex view of both the pastoral and the conflictual elements of West Indian Cricket, see C. L. R. James, *Beyond* a *Boundary* (London: Hutchinson, 1963). For an insight into the treatment of colonials at soccer matches in French-ruled Algeria, see Pierre Louis Rey, *Le Football* (Paris: Hachette, 1979). p. 36.

arriving to stop a fight, but there were not the "Smoaking, Swearing, Drinking, Thrusting, Justling, Elbowing, Sweating, Kicking, Cuffing, Stinking" mob described by Thomas Brown a century earlier.[113] To some degree, the decrease in violence occurred as spectators shifted from one sport to another. For instance, as most of the traditional animal sports were eliminated or driven underground, horse races grew in popular favor. There is no reason to assume that John Bull simply trudged obediently from the closed bear-pit to the races at Epsom, but the racing crowds *did* grow and they were less disorderly than the crowds assembled for "blood sports."

The diminution was not linear and there never was a moment when sports spectators were not liable to become unruly, tumultuous, or even riotous, but there is good reason to believe that spectatorship participated in the "civilizing process" which led to the internalization of restraint and to the development of a stronger superego. Whether this civilizing process can be related directly to the rise of the modern state, which Norbert Elias believes to be the case, is less clear. Certainly, political authorities have become increasingly leery of Saturnalian release that threatens to turn into a rampage. The legal prohibition of most animal sports was related to political conceptions of civil order as well as to distinctly religious convictions about cruelty to animals and what such cruelty did to the men and women who observed and enjoyed it.

Political authorities were unable, however, to resist the pious demand that prizefights be banned, which, inevitably, made them less amenable to regulation and control. It may be, in this case, that Nonconformist religious opinion tied the hands of the more realistic legislators.

Economic factors have also been very important. The need for stable, punctual, sober, disciplined workers became a prime consideration for entrepreneurs, especially manufacturers, who were themselves dedicated to the more ascetic varieties of the protestant ethic. There is, however, a good deal more to commercialization than incipient Taylorization. The entrepreneurial instinct responded to the obvious fact that the popular desire for recreation can be commercially exploited. No cunning capitalist had to manipulate the masses in order to create a desire to watch sports spectacles. The trick was to corner a market already very much in existence. Figg's eighteenth-century establishment was an early step which had already been anticipated by the Jacobean petitioners who hoped (vainly) to erect an amphitheater on the south bank of the Thames. By the time Victoria ascended the throne in 1837, racetracks and cricket grounds had their grandstands and spectators were increasingly accustomed to the notion that they were supposed to pay for their pleasures with coin of the realm. With considerable property to protect as well as an obvious concern for larger and larger audiences, the owners had a vested interest in order. Although Marxist and Neo-Marxist scholars have held capitalism responsible for the violence which still disfigures modern sports, it seems more likely that the capitalistic instinct worked in the opposite direction. The decline

113. Quoted in Kloeren. *Sport und Rekord,* pp. 42-43

in violence was certainly the result of a complex of factors, but there is little reason to doubt that traditional tumultuous merriment brought in less of a return on invested capital than the controlled enthusiasm of the ticket-holders.

In short, political, economic, and religious factors combined to transform spectatorship as they transformed other institutions. English spectators of the early nineteenth-century were somewhat more civilized than their counterparts in the Restoration or the days of Queen Anne. What happened in the later nineteenth century, when hundreds of thousands of working-class men won the right to cease their labors on Saturday afternoon and watch their mates play the newly invented game of soccer, is another story.