

Butsch, Richard, ed. *For Fun and Profit: The Transformation of Leisure into Consumption*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990. Pp. v + 239. Notes. \$39.95.

This historical process whereby leisure became commercialized is rooted in the development of nineteenth-century industrial capitalism, and the subsequent struggles between the producers and the consumers of culture. *For Fun and Profit* is a first-rate collection of essays by a new generation of scholars from history, sociology, American Studies, and communications which explores the transformation of leisure in the United States and its relationship with the changing class structure from the early nineteenth-century to the present.

The volume begins with two fine and very useful essays on the historiography and theoretical perspectives of cultural studies. Richard Butsch's review of the rich historical literature on working-class agency, much of which has ignored questions of structure imperative to a thorough understanding of commercialized leisure, points to a more sophisticated theoretical focus on 'hegemony.' According to Butsch, such a conceptual orientation will enable us to explore the ways in which leisure becomes *embedded* in the fabric of everyday life: the ways in which leisure practices are shaped by the participation of people, individually and collectively, and the ways in which multiple class interests are expressed through these processes.

John Clarke's essay echoes these sentiments. According to him, the concept

of cultural hegemony can go far in resolving the “problematic politics of popular culture.” (p. 37) The analysis of popular culture has become polarized between two groups of proponents, which Clarke categorizes as ‘cultural pessimists’ and ‘cultural populists.’ The ‘pessimists’ see the imperatives of popular culture deriving from the dominant classes toward economic concentration and ideological incorporation; while the ‘populists,’ influenced by semiology and poststructuralism, emphasize the instability and volatility of meaning—the same cultural object or practice can be ‘read’ in highly different ways. Clarke sees inherent strengths and weaknesses in both positions, and suggests that we need to recognize the ways in which popular culture, although it may be a field of conflict, is “tendentally structured in dominance, tending toward the reproduction of domination.” (p. 42)

Stephen Hardy’s historical analysis of the influence of sporting goods on American sporting culture and the ways in which the emergent nineteenth-century industry aligned with other ‘providers’ to institutionalize certain types and styles of games illuminates how sporting goods entrepreneurs expanded their markets by creating a demand for specialized products. Industry growth depended on establishing ties with other specialists, like coaches, players, journalists, and league administrators. Hardy demonstrates how collectively they achieved hegemony, which was always challenged by players and spectators, such that “what actually occur[red] on the fields, on the playgrounds, and in the stands may [have] differ[ed] from what the provider intended.” (p. 93)

Kathy Peiss examines how early twentieth-century commercial leisure enterprises resolved the complex issues of gender within patriarchal social relations to ensure the growth of commercialized entertainment and recreation. According to her, leisure entrepreneurs solved the ideological and material barriers to women’s social activity in this evolving public sphere by inscribing a wide range of meanings and cultural forms for the ‘New Woman.’ By the early twentieth-century, these cultural messages and leisure forms enabled women to experiment with new social roles and effectively challenge dominant Victorian notions of gender.

Other essays trace the growing popularity of movie palaces and vaudevilles; the commodification of outdoor leisure; and an analysis of children’s leisure. While space doesn’t allow for all essays to be reviewed, three others should be briefly highlighted to demonstrate the thematic consistency of the volume in general.

Bruce McConachie discusses changes in the accepted relationship in the theater between actors and audiences, by relating them to the larger transformation in social relations. Whereas in the early nineteenth-century, the relationship between performers and managers to local elites was one of craftsmen to patron, by 1900, national merchandisers were selling their theatrical products to a national, homogenized audience, whose relationship was characterized by that of capitalist to consumer. Butsch’s second essay in the volume on the development of home video illuminates how this cultural trajectory set in

motion over a century ago, whereby spectators became private consumers, manifests itself today. He argues that the case of VCR demonstrates that "hegemony is more complicated than capital versus consumers, class expression versus social control." (p. 229) The changes in leisure resulting from the astonishing popularity of home video were not wholly planned by capital so much as they were shaped by consumer choices and small retailers. Thus, the power of capital is both limited by its own internal contradictions and by the actions of consumers, whose choices are made within boundaries created by capital.

The internal contradictions of capital are further illustrated in George Lipstiz's study of the emergent U.S. video medium's relationship with reggae music. On the one hand, music video enabled a historically-grounded oppositional culture to reach a mass audience in new ways (achieving a degree of commercial success that had eluded previous reggae musicians); on the other hand, music videos directed attention away from reggae's historical and social traditions, so that its overall message was effectively de-radicalized.

For the most part, the essays in this collection are highly-nuanced treatments which successfully integrate solid empirical research with much-needed theoretical/conceptual rigor. The collection's diversity reflects the growing and innovative state of the field in cultural studies and should be of wide interdisciplinary interest.

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