

WHANNEL, GARRY. *Media Sports Stars: Masculinities and Moralities*. London: Routledge, 2002. Pp x+216. Appendices, notes, bibliography and index.

As you read through *Media Sport Stars: Masculinities and Moralities* one thing becomes abundantly clear: *We're not in Kansas anymore*. Garry Whannel's book explores the relationship between sport, media and culture primarily through an examination of the athletic "role models" of professional sports in the United Kingdom. Although occasionally veering into the sports world of North America, this work concentrates on British sport, and frankly, this is the strength of the book.

Whannel organizes his book into three parts. In the first part, "The Tales they tell of men," Whannel introduces and examines five themes: "the supposed 'crisis' of masculinity; the development of media sport, stardom and the heroic; narrativity; and the culture of sport" (p. 15). In this section he quickly defines sporting culture as an almost exclusively masculine enclave and tries to establish a solid theoretical foundation for the remainder of the book. Whannel describes how the world of sport is supported by the continual production of narrativized sporting histories that are endlessly recycled by popular media forms. Knowledge of these sporting narratives, he argues, produces "an exclusive form of cultural capital, which is part of hegemonic masculinity" (p. 15). Whannel reminds his readers that masculinity is never a singular item but rather that there are always contesting ideas of masculinity always shifting in relation to specific historical moments.

The second part, "From Sporting Print to Satellite," analyzes the "process of sport star construction in its historical context" (p. 79). Whannel begins with briefcase studies of early twentieth century athletes, Jack Johnson, Jack Dempsey, Fred Perry and Babe Ruth, to consider how issues of race and domesticity impact the fashioning of masculine ideals. Next Whannel focuses on issues of class and nostalgia as he delves into the post-World War II masculinity represented by Joe DiMaggio, Roger Bannister, and Stanley Matthews. This is followed by "Pretty boys, the 1960s, and Pop Culture," (p. 109) a study of the flamboyant sports stars, Muhammad Ali and George Best, and how their anti-establishment postures complicated their "heroic" athletic exploits. Whannel concludes this section by directing his attention towards Ian Botham and "the rise of competitive individualism and the work ethic [that] paralleled the rise of Thatcher, Reagan and monetarism" (p. 131).

In the third and final part, "The Restless Vortex of Celebrity," Whannel examines contemporary British sports stars, Paul Gascoigne, David Beckham, Linford Christie and Ian Wright. In his exploration of the current sporting moment, he describes a "new" narrative pattern of sport celebrity that follows the rise, fall, and therapeutic redemption of the male athlete. This new sports celebrity is significant because, as he convincingly argues in this book, the "images of sport stars function . . . as means by which temperatures and pressures of social relations and practices can be gauged" (p. 215).

Garry Whannel, however, is not taking the temperature of the *world* of sports but rather the body of Great Britain. It seems strange, for example, that nowhere in Whannel's book is there any mention of hip hop culture or the rise of women in sports; two items that are a major part of the contemporary American sports world. But in a country with a much smaller black population and without Title IX, these omissions are understandable and illuminating. In addition, Whannel's discussion of the relationship between "Lad" culture and the rise of men's magazines (like *Loaded* and *Maxim*) and sporting masculinity seems both specific to Great Britain and applicable to recent changes in male body image in the United States.

For analogous reasons, however, the sections in the book that do focus on non-British sports figures (such as Babe Ruth and Joe DiMaggio) are the weakest parts of the book. His brief discussion of Tiger Woods as the "new black sporting hero" (p. 177), for example, includes references to Michael Jordan, Arthur Ashe, and Magic Johnson that do not reflect the fact that the sports involved, tennis, golf, and basketball, resonate extremely differently and dissonantly in American culture. This consideration for the dissimilar cultural characteristics of various sports is lacking in the British-centered parts of the book, as well. The masculinity constructed around cricket may be far different from that of English football, but this aspect is left unexplored.

Despite these occasional missteps, *Media Sports Stars* is a well-thought out examination of sporting masculinity, but its real power is that it prompts readers, particularly North American readers, to consider that sporting culture relates not only to historic specificities, but geographic and national specificities as well. It is a reminder that representations of masculinity are always in competition and that culture is never singular.

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