

**David Rowe and Geoff Lawrence, *Sport and Leisure : Trends in Australian Popular Culture*. (Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990). Index, pp. 271.**

This is another welcome volume edited by Rowe and Lawrence. This time there is a broader focus which includes leisure as well as sport. For those concerned with teaching this provides a welcome addition to the literature. We will soon be able to design subjects on sport and leisure with reasonable ease drawing extensively on local material. For those not involved in teaching perhaps some of the chapters can be skipped, others, such as the one on people's reactions to poker machines, provide a good read.

The introduction tells where the theoretical analysis of sport is at and in particular locates Australian analysis. The editors point out that they have aimed to represent a wide range of theoretical approaches to sport and leisure. However they have maintained coherence through the sharing by the writers of certain 'domain

assumptions'. These essentially are that 'sport and leisure are profoundly social in character and that they are the sites of both material and cultural conflict' (p. 17).

Almost all the contributions have quite visible theoretical support, which enhances greatly the teaching value of the material (though may make it somewhat tedious to other readers). Teaching on topics of popular appeal has its advantages in tapping into students' interests but has the potential problem that students are not normally encouraged to be critical, particularly of that national idol, sport. Hence there is a pressing need to provide students with appropriate theoretical frameworks so that they cannot avoid taking a critical approach. Theoretical sustenance is drawn by the various writers from a fairly wide range of sources though neo-marxism, challenged by post-modernism might best sum up the approaches. It is encouraging to see the strong neo-marxist element because of the tendency of post-modern to leach the politics out of social interaction.

The sporting section is reasonably predictable, something which certainly does not detract from its usefulness and general interest. The themes are all of central importance and include 'the commercialisation of sport, the "mass mediation" of the experiences of sport, the production of gender identity through sport and the commoditisation of the body' (p. 17).

We have Bruce Wilson's analysis of the commercialisation and gradual internationalisation of Australian Rules Football and Rugby League. He teases out the implications of this for the more localised interactions and attachments of traditional fans. The role of the media is a major focus here as it is in the following chapters, the next of which is Geoffrey Lawrence's analysis of the reportage of soccer violence in Britain, which draws out the implications for Australia.

Patrick Heaven and David Rowe and then Toby Miller turn to questions of the manner in which masculinity and femininity are constructed through sport. The sporting section is concluded with articles addressing the commoditisation process. Lindsay Fitzclarence discusses the manner in which the body becomes an instrument, 'a shell to be remade according to the dictates of fashion and popular image' (p. 106) and money making. Ian Harriss's article follows this discussing the outcome of the commodification of cricket through the

Packer initiatives. He suggests this has resulted in a post-modern conception of cricket with a 'loss of interest in depth, essence and substance. Instead the emphasis is on surface, spectacle and pastiche' (p. 109).

Part II of the Reader is devoted to leisure and to me this is the more fascinating part, probably because this is an even more neglected area of sociological research and general scholarship than sport. Jim Mackay provides a long, meaty, introductory article bulging with valuable statistics drawn from the major surveys on the topic. We find out, for example, about the most popular leisure activities of men and women, how much time is spent on various activities and differences between income groups. Data on elite athletes show that females are more likely to come from higher socio-economic backgrounds than males though the expected relationship throughout the data is that leisure, and sport in particular reproduce the general inequalities of the society. There is much here that is of interest and clearly this data will prove invaluable to teachers for some years to come.

Betsy Wearing and Stephen Wearing take up the gender inequality theme and point to the manner in which government policies are oriented to make leisure activities to the detriment of women's interests. The remaining articles in the section deal with a range of areas little explored in the sociological literature. These are Bob Stewart on the health and fitness industry, Rob Lynch on working class poker machine gamblers, Gay Hawkins on the large theme park in the western suburbs of Sydney, Australia's Wonderland and Eileen Clark on national parks. Finally we have Jon Stratton locating tourism as leisure, within capitalism.

This is a useful book of readings which like all such books defies a neat review. Suffice it to say that it covers a wide range of topics and will make a valuable addition to any academic or student's collection in the area of sport and leisure. It consistently provides up-to-date bibliographic material, is for the most part readable and always informative. The theory that underpins the analyses reflects well theoretical developments in other parts of the discipline. Herein for me lies a possible worry. I share the domain assumptions of the editors and contributors that sport and leisure are 'sites of both

material and cultural conflict'. I am concerned that as post-modernist analysis becomes more fashionable, we may as sociologists become too concerned with the 'spectacle and pastiche' and focus less on the social relations and issues of power that are involved.

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