

**Dennis Hemphill, ed., *All Part of the Game: Violence and Australian Sport*. Walla Walla Press, Sydney, 1998. Bibliog. pp. 172. \$24.95.**

This is another welcome publication from the Sport and Culture Group at Victoria University of Technology in Melbourne. The Group has been very active in recent years in promoting the serious analysis of sport, publishing the handy *Bulletin of sport and Culture* and organising seminars on important contemporary topics concerning sporting and cultural issues. *All Part of the Game: Violence and Australian Sport* is the first of, according to Dennis Hemphill's Foreword, 'a planned series of thematic and multi-disciplinary sport and culture anthologies highlighting Australian issues and authorship'. The intention seems to be to produce a range of modest but timely contributions to scholarly sports discourse at a time when sport is probably receiving unprecedented attention, both official and public, in areas such as ethics, law, economics and politics. Given the low density and dispersion of sports scholars in Australia, and the difficulty of travelling interstate to seminars and conferences, books like these are very useful resources for research, teaching and public debate.

Questions of violence are especially relevant in an era when the old 'what happens on the field, stays on the field' ethic of stoic, 'matey' masculinity is being challenged by a new bureaucratically and legally motivated regime of sporting rights and responsibilities. Various tensions are evident over the association of violence and sport — for example, between sporting associations increasingly concerned with projecting a modern, healthy image, and television's drive for more spectacular action and highly dramatised controversy; or between governments' and parents' requirements of protection for sporting participants and the more

ruthlessly instrumentalist 'whatever it takes' attitudes of many players, coaches and fans. This book probes several of the pressure points where issues of defining legitimate and illegitimate violence have threatened to force substantial changes in many of sport's most entrenched and revered structures and practices.

The first chapter to be discussed in this review is, paradoxically, the penultimate one — Dennis Hemphill's commentary on violence and sport. This chapter would have been much better placed as an introduction to the other essays, instead of reviewing them after the reader has already encountered the various contributions. Hemphill does a fair job of teasing out the implications of the various approaches and analyses presented in the book, but the reader would have been better 'briefed' by some introductory theorising and conceptualising of violence prior to embarking on a journey in which specific accounts of instances of sport and violence mark out a twisting and often diverting (in the non-pejorative sense) path.

Martin Crotty's chapter on sport and violence in turn-of-the-century Australian public (that is, what we call today private) schools provides a good historical account of the close discursive alliance between militarism and sport. He demonstrates well how various acts which can be placed broadly under the rubric 'violent' were interpreted and sanctioned (positively or negatively) according to where they took place, the social standing of those involved, and the overall motives imputed and long-term benefits or costs ascribed to them. Brett Hutchins broadly develops this line of argument in applying to sport in general and rugby league in particular the theoretical insights and methodological techniques of figurational sociology. While by no means a card-carrying figurationist, Hutchins commends the explanatory analytical value of Norbet Elias's conception of the 'civilising process', seeing in the increasing regulation of violent conduct in rugby league both an exemplification of that process and its capacity to articulate changes in sport and society at large.

Roy Hay's following chapter takes us off the field and onto the terraces in addressing soccer's long-standing reputation as the prime site of sports spectator violence. He questions mono-causal models of this phenomenon, although concluding with a strong suggestion that the media's reflex association of soccer and crowd disorder has made it all but impossible to assess just how much soccer-related violence occurs and who or what is responsible for it. Chapters by Hay (again) with Ian

Warren, and Warren (solo), look at order and disorder at sporting venues (predominantly for soccer), in this assistance showing how the legal system, the police, private security services, event organisers and venue managers are all implicated in the production of sports crowd violence. Michael Burke's 'Is Boxing Violent? Let's Ask Some Boxers' and Baydon Beddoe's "'In the Fight': Phenomenology of a Pugilist' depart from the focus on the 'unlicensed' combat of sports crowds to the 'licensed' but widely condemned practices within the boxing ring. Both seek to undermine the proposition that boxing is immutably and transcendently violent as viewed from the inside of boxing's phenomenologically constituted 'practice communities', while Margaret Lindley performs an analogous *apologia* for Australian Rules football from the speaking position of the deeply enamoured spectator. Finally, Rob Hess compiles a select bibliography on violence and sport out of 'the reference material used by the authors in this anthology'. The 'canon' that results is useful for follow-up work on the contributions to this book, but should not be mistaken for a comprehensive 'logging' of the key works on sport and violence.

In general terms, and a little simplistically, the book can be divided into contributions that worry away at the issue of the institutionalised location and variation of sporting violence, and those that defend specific sports against what they see as unwarranted, unsympathetic critique. While Hemphill is critical of the streak of romanticism manifest in the latter, he is more sharply sceptical of a certain ambiguity in the work of the former. His pivotal concern is with questions of contextualisation and relativisation — is violence a stable conceptual entity that can be assessed, measured and tracked over space and time, or is it an almost infinitely mutable 'signifier', elusively meaning whatever it is judged to mean by whoever 'bespeaks' it? Of course, this anti-essentialist point can be made about any term in academic, official or popular discourse, and its corollary is that such a book as *All Part of the Game: Violence and Australian Sport* could consist entirely of proto-Foucauldian genealogies (or 'Rortyan' analytic contingencies) of discourses of 'the game', 'violence', 'Australian' and 'sport' — not to mention, logically, 'all', 'part' and even 'and!' Hemphill is, nonetheless, right to challenge the assumptions on which the classification, analysis and judgement of violence occurs, and to urge a re-examination of various blithely accepted *nostra*.

In summary, this is a consistent, reflective and provocative

interdisciplinary anthology, bringing sports historians, legal scholars, philosophers and sociologists into dialogue in a much more productive and enterprising manner than that suggested by the mildly amusing but ultimately distracting and regressive 'sports history versus sociology debate' played out over the last few years (not least in the *Bulletin of Sport and Culture*). The 1999 Sporting Traditions Conference in Queenstown, New Zealand, provocatively entitled 'The End of Sport History?', comprehensively revealed that sports scholars in Australasia and elsewhere have much more important and pressing work to do than engage in disciplinary turf wars. This modestly-produced book shows how academic debates on sport can be, in the Australian sporting vernacular, 'pretty willing', but they don't have to be 'blood baths'—which suggests another theme for a multi-disciplinary anthology in this series - the body. 'The Game' has a lot of life left in it yet ...

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