



Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The Urban Geography of Boxing: Race, Class, and Gender in the Ring*
by Benita Heiskanen

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women have less legal recourse than do men, although Syrian law has improved somewhat on this issue (p. 151). Marriage in Damascus revolves around the desires of the husband, regardless of class. Gallagher captures Khadija's complaints that she constantly has to alter her plans dependent on her husband's changing schedule. If she intends to visit someone in the morning he might call and demand lunch, and she would then have to drop everything to prepare it. Women in Syria worry that their husbands will divorce them or take a second wife—in Damascus the divorce rate is 23.3 percent, and "divorce law strongly favors men" (pp. 162–3). The author bluntly notes that violence against women is a reality in around one fourth of households in Syria (p. 195), and that women tolerate it because they are vulnerable by being told it is all their fault, or to avoid dishonoring their families (pp. 195–6).

Gallagher posits that Syrian women display self-determination even while characterizing their paid labor. Women from all classes describe it as not really work for wages, to prevent shaming their husbands whose status as providers might be diminished. Women from the lower classes described it as "just crafts" (p. 214), middle-class women spoke of working to avoid "going crazy at home" (p. 219), and wealthier women of "contributions to Syrian culture and society" (p. 214). The author highlights women whose lives were controlled through threats of male violence, but also points out that male kinfolk can also "act together as protectors and providers," even protecting their female relatives from domestic violence (p. 234). Gallagher returns to her thesis: women are actors even while vulnerable, in that they are able to rally "gender dependency schema to mobilize male kin to act on their behalf" (p. 235).

Overall, this book is excellent for those studying gender and the Middle East, and contemporary Syria. While highlighting agency, she does not shy away from discussing positionality, vulnerability, and violence. Undergraduates would especially love the chapters on engagement and marriage, and graduate students would benefit from Gallagher's theoretical contributions. It is entertaining to read, in part because

one can readily identify and sympathize with many of the informant's stories in this manuscript—juggling motherhood and career is difficult for all women and yes, men hog the remote. Chapter Seven is her weakest section; she does not offer much theoretically in terms of the intersection of gender and new forms of media and technology. There are two spelling errors in this book: it should read "borders" instead of "boarders" (pp. 47–48). Gallagher identifies Damascenes as inhabiting a world which is much less individualistic than the West. Yet, it all feels very familiar.

The Urban Geography of Boxing: Race, Class, and Gender in the Ring, by **Benita Heiskanen**. London, UK: Routledge, 2012. 192pp. \$133.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780415502269.

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In his landmark "Programme for a Sociology of Sport," Pierre Bourdieu (1988/1982) famously described sport scholars as trapped in a "golden ghetto." This ghetto was defined by the fact that, on the one hand, sport was not taken seriously by the scholars and researchers best trained to dissect it and, on the other hand, how those most likely to take sport seriously as a social force tend to lack the skills and critical orientation necessary to analyze it properly. For several generations of sport specialists, Bourdieu's now famous metaphor has been a touchstone and a stumbling block. It's even been a call to arms. Yet, in recent years, I have begun to think that Bourdieu's depiction and image is no longer accurate—at best, it is now a half-truth. This is because we now have several generations of scholars—both cultural critics and more conventional social scientists—who have produced a wide-ranging, substantial, and sophisticated scholarly literature on sport.

With the publication of *The Urban Geography of Boxing*, Benita Heiskanen establishes herself among the newest cohort of sport specialists. She knows the literature well, employs a wide range of analytic strategies, and has spent extensive time in the field

utilizing a range of data and methods that includes several years of extended ethnographic observations and involvement; extensive life history interviews with journeymen boxers, young up-and-comers, and elite athletes; local history and archival work; and examinations of mass media representation and cultural critique.

The book itself features seven substantive chapters. The first two use fieldwork and life history interviews to take us inside the local boxing scene in Austin, Texas, paying special attention to gender and class. The third chapter looks at the business aspects of contemporary boxing, and a fourth provides a sense of the fight experience of a professional boxer in this arena. The fifth and sixth chapters step back to examine and critique the media conventions that define the coverage of boxing as well as the dominant cultural constructions of race, gender, class, and national identity that permeate and pervade the pugilistic world (what Heiskanen calls, following current scholarly convention, the "politics" of boxing). The final chapter, then, is a relatively brief reflection on the connections between academic research and "everyday practices" of boxing, essentially on method. This ambitious project charts and channels many of the main foci of the field.

Yet, with everything going for it, *The Urban Geography of Boxing* is not as satisfying as anticipated. Part of the problem is that the book is just too short, only about 125 pages of text. Shoehorning all of this material and analysis into so little space means that no single aspect can be fully developed. We learn enough about the fieldwork to be impressed by Heiskanen's access, intimacy, and commitment, but not enough to really gauge the value or larger intellectual payoff of the ethnography. There are titillating insights about constructions of gender, race, and class in the media, but none are sustained enough to really evaluate the claims on their own terms, much less figure out how they contribute to larger debates in the field.

A larger and more fundamental challenge is that the overarching contribution and intended audience of the book is not clear. In some places, the book appears oriented to readers who otherwise know or care little about sport. There are, for example, extended

descriptions of matches written for those who have never seen a fight as well as the usual assertions about the (underappreciated) importance of sport in social life. But other sections seem targeted more to sport researchers or even boxing aficionados. Who else but the latter would be interested in pages of detail about boxing contracts and legalese?

Ultimately, in my reading, Heiskanen's book reflects the current predicament of sport studies, especially as it pertains to book publishing. We have scholars out there doing high-end scholarly work, but we do not know who our audience is or what our contribution is supposed to be. We do not know whether to pitch our work to general, lay audiences who need to think more critically about sport, or to scholars who do not even realize that sport is a powerful social force and that a substantial body of research is in place. And it is no longer satisfactory to continue to do sport scholarship just for ourselves. In boxing parlance, we aren't clear where the fight is, what to fight for, or who to fight with. Amid all these questions, *The Urban Geography of Boxing* has convinced me that Heiskanen is one to watch in the ongoing evolution and development of the study of this under-analyzed and -appreciated form of popular culture.

Reference

- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1988 [1982]. "Programme for a Sociology of Sport." *Sociology of Sport Journal* 5:153–161.

Good Green Jobs in a Global Economy: Making and Keeping New Industries in the United States, by David J. Hess. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014. 293pp. \$20.00 paper. ISBN: 9780262525923.

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On October 25, 2013, Massachusetts Senator and congressional leader on energy and climate change Ed Markey gave the keynote address at a Boston College symposium titled "Energy: From the Last to the Next