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The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize Fighting in America

Elliott J. Gorn

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"It didn't occur to me until fairly late in the work that I was writing a book about the beginnings of a national celebrity culture. By 1860, a few boxers had become heroes to working-class men, and big fights drew considerable newspaper coverage, most of it quite negative since the whole enterprise was illegal. But a generation later, toward the end of the century, the great John L. Sullivan of Boston had become the nation's first true sports celebrity, an American icon. The likes of poet Vachel Lindsay and novelist Theodore Dreiser lionized him?Dreiser called him 'a sort of prize fighting J. P. Morgan'?and Ernest Thompson Seton, founder of the Boy Scouts, noted approvingly that he never met a lad who would not rather be Sullivan than Leo Tolstoy."?from the Afterword to the Updated Edition

Elliott J. Gorn's *The Manly Art* tells the story of boxing's origins and the sport's place in American culture. When first published in 1986, the book helped shape the ways historians write about American sport and culture, expanding scholarly boundaries by exploring masculinity as an historical subject and by suggesting that social categories like gender, class, and ethnicity can be understood only in relation to each other.

This updated edition of Gorn's highly influential history of the early prize rings features a new afterword, the author's meditation on the ways in which studies of sport, gender, and popular culture have changed in the quarter century since the book was first published. An up-to-date bibliography ensures that *The Manly Art* will remain a vital resource for a new generation.

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Catherine Browning:

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