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Introduction: Boxing Going Global

This book presents a critique of the sport of boxing in order to demonstrate the synergies between boxing as a sport and social and cultural forces in the context of globalization. Boxing shows the processes of globalization and the myriad connections between the global and the local and between the personal and the social. This book uses boxing as a vehicle for exploring aspects of social, cultural and political life in order to show how power operates to create inequalities and provide opportunities as part of globalized and globalizing social forces. Boxing is subject to the influences of different sources of power, but boxing, as a particular example of sport in the contemporary world, also contributes to the making of social relations. *Globalizing Boxing* presents a cultural and social critique of the intersecting axes of power which make the culture of boxing. *Globalizing Boxing* has a wider remit than many of the books written about boxing, for example, as ethnographies of particular boxing gyms. This book draws upon the data of such studies but is more concerned with how boxing and boxing culture can be understood in the contemporary world and with what boxing has to offer to a study of social and cultural change.

Boxing takes different forms around the globe, but there are embodied cultures and cultural practices which connect these different types and traditions of boxing and their diverse cultures. Although my main focus is upon what can be called western or traditional boxing, I also recognize how boxing travels and include discussion on Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) and Thai Boxing (Muay Thai) to demonstrate the transforming properties of the embodied practices and culture of boxing in different forms. This book offers some new ways of thinking about boxing within the wider social and cultural terrain and of exploring the dynamics of cultural change to which a sport like boxing contributes as well as responds.

My framing question concerns the relationship between boxing and a transforming world, especially in the context of the fluidities and mobilities of globalization. The world is changing, but how is a sport like boxing implicated in

global transformations? Does the sport contribute to changes or mainly respond to them? What can a sport as traditional, long lasting and, some might say, primitive as boxing contribute to an understanding of the fast pace of change in the contemporary globalized and globalizing world? There is some irony in the contradictory relationship between boxing and globalization; men's boxing is marked by the participation of the migrant people who make up global flows and networks but patriarchal practices and networks of traditional masculinity are firmly embedded in boxing in ways that seem more resistant to social and cultural change than other social and cultural fields, especially outside sport. Boxing is a traditional sport in many ways, which is characterized by endurances and continuities, for example in its legends, body practices and regulations and in its associations with class-based hegemonic masculinity and with racialized, ethnicized social inclusions and exclusions. Boxing is changing, however, and boxing contributes to social and cultural transformations as well as reflecting and reproducing them.

There is something about boxing. Of all sports, it is the one that generates controversy about its very existence and gets the most extreme reactions, especially negative ones. It also provokes enormous excitement and considerable interest. Boxing is distinctive in the field of sport. The phenomenon of one-on-one combat, in which the prime and explicit purpose is to render one's opponent unconscious, seems to be an anomaly in the twenty-first century, a primordial practice and primitive source of entertainment. The more complex and ambiguous other fields of experience and inquiry become in late modernity, the more characterized by excess, polarities and binary logic boxing appears. Even among academic colleagues, who are not inclined to follow the sport, or even any sport and are certainly not fight fans, there is enormous interest when I mention my research in this field. People are fascinated by the endurance of the sport and by its practices, which are such a mix of highly disciplined, enflashed and combative engagement and the contradictions and the strong feelings boxing provokes.

What makes boxing so contradictory is also what generates its passions and promise. Boxing has capacities to create sensation and intense feelings whether of excitement, enthusiasm, admiration or incredulity, antipathy, horror and disgust. Boxing is itself, in all its many manifestations, created by social and cultural constructions and diverse affects which are emotional and material. The more cultural practices stress the refinement of the body and body projects through which people can shape their own bodies and achieve desirable, perfect outcomes through a range of technologies and interventions (Rose, 1996, Shilling, 2008),

the more boxing reminds us that ultimately bodies are fragile and can be broken as well as beautiful. Kevin Mitchell describes the sport in these terms: 'the fight game is an unkillable beast' (Mitchell, 2001:1). In this striking phrase Mitchell brings together the dangers and fears that boxing inspires and the sport's enduring qualities, thanks to which it still survives. Mitchell's claims also suggest the sport's dark side and its implications of 'dark trade' to quote the title of Donald McRae's book on boxing (McRae, 1996). Most sports, in their histories, have connections to gambling and illegal practices and many such associations persist into the twenty-first century, but boxing has its own historical links, for example to the betting and quasi-corrupt practices of the network of sporting followers known as the Fancy, for whom this source of amusement was their favourite, to paraphrase Pierce Egan, in the eighteenth century (Egan, 1812, 1905, 2011) and into the nineteenth century (Boddy, 2008). More recently the Mafia and the mob have been strongly associated with boxing (Mitchell, 2009). Boxing has the capacity for danger in the ring which is given expression by the practices which are permitted and those which are not. Outside the ring the risks associated with the sport are manifest in its wider culture.

Boxing, in the twenty-first century, is also for many of its adherents and aficionados (most of whom are men but, increasingly, women are participating in the sport too) a way of feeling better about themselves. Boxing also involves taking control and 'looking after yourself', with all the nuances and implications of that phrase. 'Looking after yourself' can entail keeping healthy and fit, and raising self-esteem; it might also involve being able to defend yourself if threatened or attacked and maybe, even pre-empting such attacks through aggressive as well as assertive deportments and dispositions.

The ambiguities and contradictions along with the intense feelings which make up the sport are reflected in the inspiration boxing has provided for a range of cultural texts and artworks. Boxing has generated not only debate but also large numbers of writings, literary texts, artworks and films. These creative works offer a diversity that ranges from William Hazlitt, Norman Mailer and Joyce Carol Oates to Jean-Michel Basquiat and from Gerald Early to Francis Bacon (Chandler et al., 1996). Contemporary visual representations of boxing draw upon the symbolic significance of events, objects and individual protagonists. Particular fights have specific and powerful resonance, impact and affects. Kasia Boddy, in her comprehensive historical account of the culture of boxing, refers to the ways in which these strong feelings can only be invoked and understood by saying 'I was there' (Boddy, 2008:381) or possibly by knowing someone who was and remembering where you were when it happened, which emphasizes

the sharp distinction between 'the thing itself and its mechanical reproduction' (Benjamin, 1970:225). These distinctions are particularly powerful in boxing as Joyce Carol Oates argues: boxing is real and not drama (Oates, 1987).

Such moments matter enormously in sport and have particular resonance in boxing because of the specific enfleshed dimensions of the sport and its legacies of the authenticity of the physical presence of spectators as well as participants in the fight (Oates, 1987). Events of political importance similarly get mixed up with emotive affects such as the death of President Kennedy or that of Diana, the princess of Wales. All fight fans can name the special event of a big fight which achieved iconic status, with the Rumble in the Jungle, in Kinshasa, Zaire, in 1974 between George Foreman and Muhammad Ali; the Fight of the Century in Madison Square Garden in 1971 between Joe Frazier and Muhammad Ali; and the Thrilla in Manila, the third and final fight between Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier in Manila in 1975, being among the most famous iconic moments in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Boxing is a field in which different texts and spaces merge in the making of legends. Joe Louis versus Max Schmeling in 1938 also became known as the 'fight of the century' (Erenberg, 2006) and although few people alive can now lay claim to having actually been there, the actuality and significance of the fight have become established and embedded in memory and in legend through its rehearsal on YouTube and especially through its literary forms, for example in Don de Lillo's work *White Noise*, where 'fighters and rock concerts become the makers of history and biographies' (de Lillo, 1986:67).

In his novel *Underworld*, de Lillo describes how sporting events are 'measures of the awesome' using the example of the famous 1951 baseball game when the San Francisco Giants beat the Los Angeles Dodgers. In the novel, Russ Hodges, 'the voice of the Giants', recalls the time when his father took him to see Jack Dempsey fight Jess Willard in Toledo and 'what a thing that was and what a measure of the awesome' (de Lillo, 1997:15–16).

Boxing is a discursive and representational space which extends beyond simplistic binary moralities of condemnation on the one hand and uncritical celebration on the other. The art associated with boxing, itself called the Noble Art, is rarely, if ever, just about boxing. For example, sculpture or painting based upon the body of the boxer may be more concerned with the capacities for achievement and for failure of flesh. So-called boxing films are often about triumph over adversity and the possibilities of resisting oppression by taking boxing as the route out of poverty, rather than being simply about the fight game (Woodward, 2012b). Sometimes these are expressed in the narratives

of popular culture as in the *Rocky* film series. At other times, boxing is the inspiration for more complex artistic expressions, for example in the sculpture of the Terme boxer (Smith, 1991) of the Hellenistic period in the classical times to contemporary works like that of Ben Dearnley (Dearnley, 2012). Boxing has the capacities to inspire and both to attract and to repel, sometimes at the same time, so it is hardly surprising that boxing is powerfully represented in a number of artistic and creative fields.

Boxing is also closely imbricated with the social divisions and social relations which are part of global change and the dynamic of globalization, as well as the endurance of social inequalities. Sport carries the distinction of taste and is thus a key field in which social class is marked and made through investments of capital – notably for the practitioners of boxing, physical capital (Bourdieu, 1984). Boxing is largely the sport of those who have little but their bodies to invest. They may dream of financial rewards but have nothing but their bodies and themselves to bring to the enterprise. The interrelationship between the personal, physical capital invested and the returns of economic and financial capital which global boxing offers shows how the sport is located within the processes of globalization.

Globalizing forces

It is a sport which is distinctive, not only in its practice and traditions but also spatially; boxing belongs to particular locations around the world, for spectators and followers and for boxers. There are different cultures of boxing in different parts of the world and boxing is a good, if sometimes unusual, example of the globalization of sport. This book uses boxing to explore some of the ways in which the social and cultural dimensions of globalization can be understood through sport, rather than seeing sport as another field upon which globalization impacts. The globalization of sport and the elements of what can be seen as global and transnational have a long and uneven history which is instructive, especially in the case of a sport like boxing which generates so many contradictions and ambivalences.

There have been several instances of what might be classified as globalization in human history, especially in periods of imperialism and colonization but contemporary debates, especially those located within the field of sport, focus upon the flows of people, money, technologies and knowledge systems between different places across the globe, which characterize late modernity

(Giddens, 2002). Although it is only relatively recently that the word 'globalization' has been so frequently cited and assumed, the processes it encompasses have a long history. Rail travel, telegraph and telephone were also greeted with comments about the speed of communication and the enhanced promise of technological change for human interactions across political and spatial boundaries (Harvey, 1989, 1996). Globalization in the twentieth century was marked by particular characteristics, notably the scale and extent of migration, technological developments and the speed of communication links.

Globalization is marked by speed and mobilities and the crossing of boundaries, especially those of nation states. Speed of transmission and communication flows occupy a particular place in the media-sport-commerce nexus which characterizes contemporary sport and boxing is no exception, although boxing has its own global specificities, for example in terms of where the sport is most popular and where it lacks a presence. In the genealogies of boxing, especially what is called western boxing, the sport's dominance has shifted from Britain, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to the USA, from the start of the twentieth century. These shifts are reflected and reproduced in twentieth-century media coverage of sport (Horne and Whannel, 2011, Horne et al., 2012, Houlihan, 2008, Sugden and Tomlinson, 2011, 1998). For example, the BBC World Service, from its inception in 1932, covered very little sport in the USA with the exception of boxing (Woodward et al., 2011).

Globalization involves the growing reach and scope of institutions and regulatory bodies, which are not only features of the organization of sport but are also indicative of changing power geometries in global politics, for example from the global north to the global south (Harvey, 2003, Held et al., 1999) or from the west to the east (Turner and Khondler, 2010). The BRIC economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC, 2012, 2013) and the vast expansion of Chinese markets open up new opportunities for sport too. Because of the diverse forms of the sport, boxing is a multi-way conversation between east and west. However global inequalities are classified, the genealogy of globalization as manifest in contemporary social life is marked by post-industrial, sometimes western, highly developed, neoliberal countries on the one hand and those categorized as developing or underdeveloped countries with largely less-sophisticated democratic systems of neoliberal governance, on the other. The intersection of power axes implicated in such classificatory systems is, however, changing very fast in ways which have in some cases been led by sport. One example is the shift in power in cricket from the 'game of empire' firmly located in Britain as a western imperial power to the Indian

Premier League (IPL) in the Indian subcontinent. The globalization of boxing takes different forms. Mobilities operate in different directions. The ethnographic assumptions of western sport are challenged by the movement of forms of boxing associated with different parts of the world into the west and back again. Sport is diasporic, too.

In boxing, there has been movement, for example in the increased popularity of forms of the sport in different places; MMA and Thai boxing have been enthusiastically taken up in the USA and in parts of Europe besides retaining popularity in their places of origin. These mobilities involve the crossing of boundaries of nation states and the adaptation and modification of the sport, as well as a reworking of the body practices of the sport.

The mechanisms through which sport is organized and managed, for example through its transnational and international governing bodies, are also part of the dynamics of globalization. Boxing has a particularly diverse set of regulatory bodies, which include the International Boxing Federation (IBF, 2013), International Boxing Organization (IBO, 2013), World Boxing Association (WBA, 2013), World Boxing Council (WBO, 2013), World Boxing Organization (WBO) and for the amateur sport the Amateur International Boxing Association (AIBA, 2013). This range of organizations makes boxing distinctive because it means that there is a plurality of international bodies which can award titles in the sport. There are more titles in boxing than in most sports. There has also been more plasticity and flexibility in the application of the rules, perhaps because of the range and diversity of regulatory bodies.

Globalization has been particularly characterized by fluidities, movements and flows of information and people, which, from various, often competing perspectives, can be seen as reducing the impact of local specificities (Lemert et al., 2011). Boxing has always been in conversation with migration because it has so often been migrant young men who have taken up boxing as a means of escaping poverty and social exclusion (Berkowitz and Ungar, 2008, Marqusee, 2000, 2005, O'Connor, 2002, Sugden, 1996, Sammons, 1988). However, boxing is also a sport with strong local allegiances and localized ways of being and of participating in the sport (Heiskanen, 2012). Boxing is also a sport with powerful allegiances to tradition and a binary logic, especially in relation to gender, which seem to disrupt the fluidities of contemporary theoretical understandings of the breakdown of boundaries and the fluidity of globalizing forces. Globalization in boxing and the sport's part in globalizing processes are marked by tensions between exploitation and the possibilities of liberation, and between entrenched traditional attitudes and the promise of change.

G/local forces

The overarching focus of studies of globalization has been on the crossing of boundaries and international exchanges and encounters which are facilitated by speed and the annihilation of distance, which could be enabling, offering democratic possibilities and productive efficiencies on the one hand and offering terrifying threats of global warfare and global terrorism on the other. Globalization has been characterized by interconnectedness, whereby global forces impact upon local and regional practices and endeavours (Tomlinson, 1999) so that what has been called deterritorialization (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, Scholte, 1996, 2000) permits activities, which would include those involved in sport, to take place regardless of where the participants are located spatially. Deterritorialization involves a weakening of the ties between culture and place and thus of traditional spatially located affiliations, all of which are massively facilitated by satellite technologies in sports, of course.

The concept of the g/local retains some purchase in demonstrating that one of the boundaries crossed through the forces of globalization, with particular resonance in sport, is that between global, transnational networks and more local and personal, community-based affiliations. This concept draws upon post-colonial studies and theories of diaspora which aim to provide explanations of aspects of migration and the ways in which the local relates to the global through processes of mobility. Local cultures travel and are reinterpreted, especially in the lives and practices, often within literature and the arts, of diasporic peoples (Braidotti, 2002, Pearce, 2012). The concept of the g/local also has particular resonance within sport, where the relationship between personal and collective identifications and practices routinely intersects with globalized forces (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2007, 2009). In many ways the identifications that are made at the local level are inseparable from the forces in play at the transnational, global level. Identifications in sport, especially in boxing, do not operate in a one-way relationship which prioritizes and privileges the global and transnational over the local, but rather incorporates and accommodates more local investments and relationships. The downtown gym retains enormous importance in boxing whether in the legends of the sport as in the 5th Street Gym, Miami (Pacheco, 2010), or in its everyday routines for regular boxers (Wacquant, 1995a, 2004). Local customs and practices in the gym are constitutive of change (Heiskanen, 2012, Woodward, 2006, 2008).

The media-sport-commerce nexus (Cashmore, 2010, Horne, 2006, Houlihan, 2008, Rowe, 2004, Sugden and Tomlinson, 2011, Tomlinson, 2006), which is so

strongly constitutive of the globalizing forces manifest in the field of sport and within the wider social terrain of global politics, operates in particular ways in boxing as well as being typical of sport. This book engages with the specificities of boxing, different practices, different types of boxing and how the sport is and has been experienced, presented and represented across the global arena and at the local sites at which boxing is lived, routinely practised and watched. Boxing culture is made up of stories, representations, legends and traditions in which local boxers make personal, embodied investments, as well as being subject to and part of global, political and economic forces.

Boxing, like much contemporary sport, has been subjected to and is constitutive of processes of globalization, not least in relation to the role the media play in promoting representation of the sport. Whilst theorists of globalization, whether they promote and celebrate its properties or are more sceptical about its outcomes, all emphasize the power of speed and velocity in the communications systems such as those of the media which characterize globalization, in boxing it is neither a simple nor a one-way story. Boxing has generated new ways of using the media as well as responding to its technologies and interventions. The advent of satellite broadcasting has had a significant impact on boxing. Boxing is a sport which has created as well as fulfilled some of the possibilities the satellite and the internet, following television, have developed. Big fights are transmitted through satellite channels like HBO's pay-per-view in the USA and Sky's pay-for-view and subsequently the mechanisms of BoxNation, the first channel devoted entirely to the sport (BoxNation, 2012), for which fans require a subscription to Sky and to BoxNation.

However, the more all-embracing the global transmission of boxing's big moments, albeit moments which are often accompanied by warm-up acts that might be seen as boxing's not so great moments, the more access there is to boxing culture for followers and participants at a more local level. Those who engage in the sport at the local, everyday level through routine practice at the gym, for example, are drawn into its possibilities. For example, the double whammy of two subscriptions to watch fights on the television, one to Sky television and one to the boxing channel, BoxNation, in the UK, may be less democratic, but the more boxing is visible on the public stage, the more the sport is able to endure through the local engagements that make it g/local.

Boxing is an excellent example of the ways in which contemporary sport is g/local. It is part of everyday life, going to the gym, supporting local boxers within kinship groups and a local community and also part of the global economy with worldwide media coverage and celebrity superstars. Boxers at local gyms often cite one of these

superstars as the heroic figure who inspired them to take up the sport: sometimes the hero is more local such as a brother or father (Woodward, 2004, 2006, 2008) and maybe soon there will be more mother and daughter identifications (Woodward, 2008, Woodward and Woodward, 2009).

Boxing also exemplifies particularly well the relationship between representations and symbolic systems and body practices and the materiality of social life. All are part of the assemblages of power which are made, re-produced and circulated through sport within globalized economies. By examining the diversity of boxing routines, representations, sensations, embodied practices and discursive regimes, I seek to embrace the range of what is encompassed by boxing and offer some explanations of why the sport attracts such powerful emotions and feelings of commitment as well as those of censure and disapproval, and how boxing is transforming, adapting as well as enduring in the contemporary world, which is characterized by globalization. Boxing is also part of and a motor for global social transformations.

Boxing occupies a wide social and cultural terrain and has distinctive histories and features, sometimes of inequality, most notably in relation to gender, class, race and ethnicity. There is not just a simple dichotomy between the alternatives of the downtown gym and of the global mega spectacles of big fights with the massive purses on pay-for-view television. There are dilemmas in boxing and the sport's status is contentious in many contemporary societies for a range of complex reasons, not all of which relate to medical and ethical discourses in which anxieties about the sport's embodied, physical dangers are expressed. These dilemmas are lived and experienced at personal, community and local levels, as well as occupying the more public arena of political debate, media exposure and the worldwide operating sphere of international regulatory bodies.

Sex gender and boxing

Boxing, like all sports, is strongly marked by gendered categories. Competitions in almost all sports on the vast majority of occasions are divided into women's and men's competitions. Usually, it is only the women's competition which is so named; the heavyweight champion of the world is male. The World Cup in football is the men's competition. The binary logic of the system permits two bounded categories of sex based upon genetic, anatomical criteria which suggest scientific certainty. More recently, the nomenclature has shifted from

sex to gender, but even so this focus on gender does not allow either for the complexity of the classifications or for the cultural, political, social and ethical divisions in the process of categorization. Most significantly, gender might suggest an overemphasis upon social forces and influences and either a limited understanding of physical, enfleshed capacities or the use of gender to mean sex. The Olympics require gender verification in order to confirm the anatomical sex of participants in an increasingly complex set of procedures which is based on the fear that men might try to pass as women in order to win. In boxing, mixed fights are highly contentious, although they are becoming more popular. Mixed fights demand new regimes of classification and challenge traditional ones, such as those made according to body weight.

Sex is a necessary category to include empirical, enfleshed and anatomical properties and gender has been used to embrace social and cultural capacities and expressions. I argue for the use of sex gender as a conceptualization that can combine these elements and acknowledge the interconnections between bodies and social forces, which, especially in a sport like boxing, are even crucial to an understanding of social divisions and of enfleshed selves (Woodward, 2012a). Flesh and the concept of enfleshed selves permit a focus on the shared characteristics, for example of sex, with less emphasis on the body as individualized as has been understood in the idea of embodiment.

The empirical classification of gender is useful in providing data on the extent of participation of women and men in sport and informs the theoretical framework within which sexual politics and the operation of power in the making of inequalities can be understood. A conceptualization of sex gender, as well as the use of sex and gender to describe the empirical context of boxing, is central to this book in providing a means of making sense of the material enfleshed experience of boxing and of how the sport is represented and what cultural meanings it carries.

Changing times

Boxing is changing, however, in ways generated by the sport itself, such as women's boxing, which was included in the 2012 Olympic Games, and the popularity of Mixed Martial Arts (MMA, 2012), which are also aspects of changing social worlds. Boxing, like other sports, is made up of everyday routines of physical fitness as well as public displays and the heroes, stars and legends and spectacles transmitted across the globe. Boxing heroes have often carried more political

weight than the celebrity stars of other sports, which is well illustrated by Mike Marqusee's discussion of Muhammad Ali in relation to basketball megastar Michael Jordan (Marqusee, 2005). Boxing is also characterized by contradictions and may sit uneasily in the arena of global social changes. *Globalizing Boxing* explores the interconnections between social change and the sport of boxing to provide ways of thinking critically about everyday assumptions and social worlds. Sport, including boxing, does not just reflect social change; sport also creates change and is constitutive of social and cultural transformations as well as continuities.

Boxing is a vehicle for exploring how cultural changes take place through shifting networks and mobilities across time and space. For example, boxing offers an excellent example of shifting popularities and new configurations, whilst holding on to consistencies of traditional, gendered, racialized and ethnicized identifications and economic power geometries. Boxing keeps trying to reinvent itself in contradictory, but engaging ways. As a result, boxing occupies an uncomfortable place in the contemporary world.

A particular focus of this book is the interrelationship between sport and social change in the context of the impact of assemblages of commerce, the media and the regulatory bodies of boxing and athletes who engage in the sport locally and globally. Boxing, like all contemporary global sports, is caught up in the intersection of different axes of power, notably those of commerce and sponsorship and media systems of representation and communication and the synergies between popular culture and global capital investment. Boxing also has its own distinctive features and affiliations. For example, boxing is marked by strong local identifications and attachments within familial, kinship and community networks. These affiliations apply to other sports of course, but more often in the big sports with mass appeal like football, in relation to supporters' rather than practitioner networks. Boxing also has a wide range of governing bodies, which have developed through the particularities of the sport's history.

This book addresses questions of how far and in what ways a sport like boxing can be an instrument for change and how far such a sport can respond to wider social, cultural and economic changes. *Global Boxing* presents a critical discussion of the place of boxing in the contemporary world rather than a comprehensive history of boxing. Boxing also offers a particularly productive and useful site for the understanding of social, cultural, political and economic transformations of the forces of globalization.

The following chapters explore some of the different dimensions of globalization which have been raised in this introductory chapter and the

operation of global and transnational forces that are played out in particular ways in boxing. This book shows how the sport has achieved its current place in the world – one that is diminished from the golden age of ‘when we were kings’ but which remains nonetheless an important sport and one which retains considerable popularity albeit in diverse forms. Boxing has had several ‘golden ages’, for example, when heavyweight boxers were well-known figures and popular cultural heroes in the narratives through which boxing histories and cultures are made (Boddy, 2008, Kimball, 2008, McRae, 2005, Mitchell, 2009, Powley, 2011, Sammons, 1988, Sugar, 2006) and there are points of connection between these different areas of greatness (Boddy, 2008). How these golden ages are defined tells us something about the power of boxing to grip the popular imagination and what is particular and special about boxing.

Chapter 2, ‘Traditions and Histories: Connections and Disconnections’, maps out some of the pivotal moments in boxing history and looks at how boxing as a sport and the specificities of boxing culture have evolved in making and remaking the sport. The chapter picks out some of the big moments in boxing history, including some of those that have been classified as part of a golden age, as well as highlighting the key elements which make boxing distinctive and particular. Boxing involves a specific set of body practices and skills which have a long history, during which there has been increased regulation which has transformed the free-for-all ancient Greek Pankration (which some commentators (Semaan, 2012) suggest is the forerunner of modern MMA), to heavily controlled forms of contemporary professional and amateur boxing with all their attention to carefully prescribed and detailed disciplinary practices and regimes. Modern boxing as practised in the public arena and controlled by regulatory bodies specifies precise body weights of boxers, of the gloves they use, the punches they use and how they are targeted, the timing of rounds, head protection in amateur boxing and health checks including brain scans, to name but a few of the areas of regulations. The idea of golden ages offers a route into understanding the relationship between space and the crossing of spatial as well as temporal boundaries within boxing. These so-called golden ages both create and define themselves within the language of the sport through being so named, but the currency of the golden age is not the only route which boxing has travelled, and the history of the sport demonstrates other aspects of its dialogue with global forces which are manifest in the part played by mobilities and diasporic communities in the development and making of the sport.

Chapter 3, ‘Movements and Mobilities’, picks out some of the key features of boxing that are explored through the book in relation to the culture of boxing

and its links to migration and diaspora, which establish the sport as one that has particular global dimensions through its association with migrant and mobile peoples and the movement of people from particular groups in and out of boxing. Boxing has the capacities to make it a sport which is particularly relevant to migrating people, especially those with only physical capital to invest. What have been called the mobile lives of transatlantic late modernity (Elliott and Urry, 2010) are lived and experienced in particular ways in boxing, sometimes connecting to the media commerce flows and sometimes being very disconnected from the fluidity of affluent mobilities. Indeed, in boxing such mobilities are more often associated with push factors which compel people to migrate than the pull factors which might be more attractive and draw them to their new home. Boxing mobilities are less often marked by choice and agency than some of the desirable mobilities of the twenty-first century. Boxing has a long history of engagement with migration and the movement of peoples and of providing a route out of poverty and disadvantage for displaced or migrant people, especially young men. Boxing has different histories in different places through which boxing cultures have been reproduced and reconfigured which are not part of a linear narrative in spite of the similarities between some of the stories, for example of the opportunities offered by boxing to enhance self-esteem and self-respect, especially for disadvantaged young men within the frameworks of traditional masculinities.

These stories raise questions about where boxing is most popular, who boxes and where and about how boxing practices and boxing cultures are made and remade in different places. Boxing involves relationships between different kinds of boxing; the evermore popular MMA with its own set of regulatory embodied practices (Penn and Krauss, 2007), which draws upon martial arts and diverse interpretations and translations of boxing across the globe, as well as different forms of MMA such as extreme fighting, Thai boxing and amateur and professional western boxing. Boxing appeals to diasporic people but the sport itself is also mobile and is interpreted and practised differently as it crosses continents.

Chapter 4, 'Cultural Economies of Scale', explores some of the complex relationships between financial incentives to box professionally on the part of the individuals who take up the sport and the economics of the global fight game, with its massive, profit-motivated infrastructure. Social class and its articulations with race, ethnicity and gender underpin much engagement with boxing. This chapter looks at what is g/local about boxing not only for many migrant young men but also as a global business that is dominated by often

exploitative promoters, as well as the relationship between the sport and the media upon which boxing is dependent for its more spectacular promotion. Boxing remains a massively profitable business as well as being a popular, more local means of keeping fit and of feeling good about yourself and maintaining self-esteem for large numbers of people, mostly men, but increasingly women are participating too, for the same reasons as men, for example using boxing as a means of working out in the gym to feel good about their bodies and thus themselves. This chapter looks at the economics of boxing in light of the different experiences of practitioners and followers – where the sport is practised and where it is watched and how boxing is part of the global sport-media nexus. Contemporary fields of globalized sport are marked by the attractions of superstars who are configured in particular ways in boxing, which has its own distinctive narratives of celebrities and especially heroes who bring together the local and the global. Boxing creates possibilities for transgression as well as conformity, inspired by its economic and financial systems as well as its cultural and social capacities. The economics of boxing include a history of illegal and quasi-legal activities and a long tradition of gambling and betting, which is a trend that is accelerating in the contemporary world. Boxing worlds also relate to other aspects of sporting worlds which are framed by quasi-legal and even illegal parameters. Some of the activities of the Fancy in the early nineteenth century persist into the twenty-first: bare-knuckle fighting, dog fighting, gambling, throwing fights and so on.

Chapter 5, 'Boxing Bodies and Everyday Routines,' explores some of the more routine and local practices of boxing through focusing on embodied practices and especially the physical qualities of a sport to which bodies are central. This chapter explores different approaches to bodies and embodiment and argues for the idea of enfleshed selves. Enfleshed selves are material but are also regulated by the apparatuses of governance and bureaucratic systems which are features of globalization which pervade sport and thus bring together the actualities of bodies and how they are classified and, importantly, experienced. The phenomenological idea of embodiment has had considerable currency in social studies of boxing, especially because this theoretical approach engages with the lived experience of boxing and immersion in its everyday routines. The ideas of Merleau-Ponty have been particularly productive in exploring some of the puzzles posed by boxing as a sport which cannot be explained solely by structural social forces. Neither, however, are bodies restricted to individualized embodied selves. Flesh and the capacities of the flesh, for achievement and success or for pain, defeat and damage, are shared in the common culture of

boxing in particular ways. The exigencies of economic and social disadvantage may offer an insufficiently persuasive explanation of the attractions of boxing. What is the lived experience of boxing? In the ring, why do boxers keep going even when they are clearly injured? This chapter also looks at the limitations of phenomenological accounts which appear more descriptive than explanatory. Boxing is about routine embodied practices, working out in the gym, as well as competing, but it is also a particularly spectacular sport which has global events that attract huge media coverage as well as the interventions of governance. Boxing has inspired a proliferation of literary, artistic and cinematic texts as well as public interventions in the promotion of social inclusion and cohesion. The next chapter brings boxing bodies and boxing images and culture together.

Chapter 6, 'Inside and Outside the Ring', develops an analysis of the relationship between the embodied practices of boxing, which were addressed in Chapter 5, and the wider social, political and cultural arena as a productive means of explaining the relationship between flesh, bodies and representation which is so significant in the sport. Legends and stories are a powerful part of boxing but are the myths, heroes and legends enough? How are representation and enfleshed practices linked? Boxing is all about bodies but is being there at an actual fight more real than viewing at a distance? Representations include changing media moments which are the subject of global shifts in the media-sport nexus as well as artistic representations of boxing using the example of cinema, which has generated a large number of 'boxing films'. This chapter takes up Chapter 5's discussion of bodies, especially gendered bodies, and focuses upon sensation and the relationship between images and representation promoted by the media and the enfleshed experience of boxing. Does boxing offer a particular take on sensation and sentient experiences of spectatorship? This means that what makes the culture of boxing, especially outside the ring, visible with visual representations and manifestations in the public arena is always in dialogue with its more routine and embodied practices in the gym and local communities. Boxing has attracted and generated a number of literary, artistic and cinematic versions of its intensities, which this chapter explores primarily through the relationship between boxing's enfleshed activities and some of the films which can be classified as boxing films.

Chapter 7, 'Transforming the Fight Game', focuses on the transformations within the sport, for example in relation to how the rules and regulations have been remade and developed. This chapter explores the extent to which regulatory bodies and the mechanisms of governance can facilitate the promotion of diversity and greater equality and whether a sport as marked by

traditional binaries and the persistence of enfleshed masculinities, in particular, can accommodate and even motivate or facilitate change. A particular illustration which demonstrates change is women's boxing and the inclusion of women's boxing in the Olympic Games again in 2012, as well as considering what the women's sport both within the sport itself and outside can contribute to an understanding of the social, cultural and political importance of boxing. Change is uneven and has not followed a linear path into modernity and many transformations have been incremental. The legacy of 2012 so far is culturally significant if limited in quantifiable terms. For example, evidence of women's greater participation and any enduring legacy cannot be measured yet, but, as I argue in this chapter, it is now possible to think that women's competitive boxing is fast moving, skilled, entertaining and attractive to spectators. Such social and cultural transformations are effected through an iterative and relational process. It is not only the case that boxing as a sport has to react to wider social forces, the sport is also implicated in any changes that are taking place. Many changes which involve more everyday popular engagements with boxing have reconfigured what is democratic and egalitarian about the sport. Boxing presents a social and cultural puzzle; what seems to be an aggressive and violent sport appears to be an anomaly in the twenty-first century in postmodern societies. As has been shown throughout the book, not only are bodies central to boxing, but the flesh also presents material limitations. This informs the discussion of change in this chapter. A critical approach based on the conceptualization of sex gender offers a means of making sense of not only the endurances of boxing but also how the sport is transforming in what is always a two-way process of responding to and generating social change.

Chapter 8, 'The Conclusion: G/local Boxing,' brings together the arguments for the persistence and endurance of boxing as a sport and as the site of social, economic and cultural practices and the relationship between what is happening in the sport and how this responds to and impacts upon the wider social world in different practices across the globe. Boxing remains a globalized and globalizing sport like most sports in the contemporary world, especially sports which are part of the transnational sport-media-commerce nexus, but it is also a g/local sport that feeds g/local imaginaries, which is why, although it seems to embody an anomalous set of practices in the contemporary world, it persists.