



Chapter One

Proem

Robert E. Rinehart and Synthia Sydnor

Sports labeled “alternative,” “extreme,” “X,” “gravity,” “lifestyle,” and “adventure” proliferate postcontemporary transnational times. Motifs associated with these sports are ubiquitous in everyday life—they decorate our backyards, street wear, language, lunch boxes, the Worldwide Web, MTV, ESPN, and advertising of every sort. In the summer of 1999, the US Postal Service issued 150 million stamps featuring extreme sports, and today over 10,000 Internet sites in English are dedicated to extreme sports.

This book centers on a few of the “extreme” sports: in-line skating, windsurfing, sky-dancing/surfing, BMX dirt-bike racing, mountain biking, Eco-challenge, whitewater kayaking, climbing, surfing, skateboarding, extreme skiing, and snowboarding. In order to interrogate a realm of alternative sport activities situated at various historical moments of invention, development, popularization, transglobal appropriation, reinvention, and perhaps even

Robert E. Rinehart is an adjunct professor in the Department of Kinesiology at California State University, San Bernardino. He has published a book, titled *Players All: Performances in Contemporary Sport*, and several research articles. His major research focus is in examining alternative sports forms, particularly forms that are on the cusp between popular culture and mainstream sports.

Synthia Sydnor is an associate professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where she holds appointments in kinesiology, criticism and interpretive theory, the interdisciplinary concentration in cultural studies and interpretive research, and the John Henry Newman Institute of Catholic Thought. Her research has appeared in a range of journals and books including *Quest*, *Journal of Sport History*, *Sport and Postmodern Times*, and *Games, Sports and Cultures*.

demise, we incorporated “older” extreme sports like surfing into this volume, as well as the newer extreme sports. Jake Burton, known as the prime creator of snowboarding, has written a chapter (“Snowboarding: The Essence is Fun”) which sorts out an intricate historical foregrounding of snowboarding. Simon Eassom, in “Mountain Biking Madness,” details the elaborate historical and technological lines which converge to continuously recreate and redefine forms of biking.

This book offers an interpretation of extreme sports from the standpoints of both the academic and the practitioner/extreme athlete. The scholars, who hail from cultural studies, anthropology, sociology, history, literary criticism, and other related interdisciplinary fields, are fascinated with some aspect of extreme sport in their research—their projects represent a range of methodologies and theoretical stances. The practitioners are all expert/elite athletes in their sport; some—such as Arlo Eisenberg—are renowned as the “Michael Jordans” of their sports, others are quiet grassroots participants. Some self-promote, some promote their sport, some try to warn the masses against their sport.

Our selection of particular sports and author-experts for inclusion in the book had to do with our quest to publish significant works of quality concerning the culture of extreme sports, and not a desire to forge a canon of particular sports or experts. The book is comprised of both “insider” and “outsider” information: juxtaposed with the athlete who bemoans frozen toes is the academic who categorizes risk-taking; intersecting with the daredevil, public scholar is the athlete who writes of his own cherished family. Beyond such binaries, readers can engage with the book at many levels—its contents evoke debates concerning theories of representation, authorship, dialogic narration, fieldwork, the avant-garde, “folk” sport, subculture, “whiteness,” gender, danger/excitement, alternative and oppositional stances, and universalism.

There are surprises: the athletes-as-authors are eloquent writers, the academics are visceral performers. And the classic questions about sport are again confronted: What is sport? What is its origin? What is its use, value, function? Like the scholars, athletes, journalists, and poets who have long asked these questions, we also contemplate the essence of sport with a special eye toward understanding the “extreme” rejoinder to sport.

The labels “extreme” or “X” are everywhere these days. If someone wishes to convey radical, extraordinary, unusual properties to nearly any product, activity, individual, or lifestyle, these

terms crop up. "Extreme" is linked today to soft drinks, health food, celebrity behavior, fashion and makeup, sexual technique, athletic shoes, cars, music, and of course, for the purposes of this book, to a relatively new (in the scope of human history of sport) form of sport. ESPN's Kevin Brooker characterizes it as "a combination of extraordinary individual achievement and unmatched personal enjoyment."¹ In Kyle Kusz's chapter, "BMX, Extreme Sports, and the White Male Backlash," the extreme discourse serves as exclusionary rhetoric for the dominantly-white "Generation X."

Though the cultural pop of a term like "extreme," when linked to sports, gives those sport forms a certain faddish panache, many participants are in for the long haul. They see these activities as lifestyle choices, with style, fashion, and aesthetics being just as important markers of participation as, for example, sponsorship and physical prowess. But Doug Booth's "Expression Sessions: Surfing, Style, and Prestige" shows how distinct lifestyles and tastes of surfers have evolved and remained authentic over the past 100 years.

The grassroots communities of surfers, in-line skaters, skateboarders, windsurfers, snowboarders, bicycle stunt riders, whitewater kayakers, extreme skiers, and orienteers is certainly thriving and vibrant today. Proof positive: in a midwestern university town, Mosa Extreme Sports, a maker of protective gear and apparel for in-line skating, skateboarding, snowboarding, BMX bicycling, whitewater rafting, and air sports, went from \$1 million sales in 1996, to over \$6 million in 1998.² This is phenomenal growth, to say the least. *Street & Smith's Sportsbusiness Journal* highlighted this X sports boom with a series of articles titled in such ways as "An Extremely Profitable Niche" and "Cashing in on the Waves of the Future." Over 89 million US participants are registered in national associations, such as the National Off-Road Bicycle Association, American Sport Climbers Federation, and Aggressive Skaters Association.³

There are many ways that we can envision and study such athletes and their sports. As exemplified in some of this volume's writings, there are athletes who seek back regions, privacy, health and/or healing from their alternative sport ventures, who might not be included as 'registered' participants. Some athletes may practice their sports as regimens of asceticism, or outrightly decry the promotion of their activity into the mainstream. We might trace some of these philosophies back to New Games movements in the 1960s, American women's physical education philosophies of the early 1900s, or even prior to that, to the gymnastic systems and societies of nineteenth-century Germany and Sweden. Residual

connections to New Age, Earth Day, and Green movements exist for some sports; others may embody urban sprawl and decay.

Whatever the venue or purpose, the fundamentally individual nature of these present-day alternative sports/activities remains. What are changing, however, as corporations and sponsors encroach upon and delve into the lucrative aspects of these cultural sport forms, are the twin aspects of money and control. Peter Donnelly, in "The Great Divide: Sport Climbing vs. Adventure Climbing," shows how the controversial balances between risk and difficulty in climbing may both resist and embrace institutionalization and commercialization.

The Disney Corporation, ESPN, ESPN2, ABC, MTV, the Discovery Channel, and large corporations such as Pepsi, Coke, and Nike have essentially appropriated and determined much of the electronic imaging of extreme sports to the world. Grassroots athletes are acknowledged by these imaging giants, but rarely privileged. Bob Rinehart's chapter examines some of the multinational strategies within in-line skating. Even the very word "extreme" in this context was engineered by these media corporations: "Extreme" was shortened to "X" by ESPN in 1996. *USA Today* reports that Ron Semaio, creator of the ESPN Extreme Games, changed the name of the sports festival to the "X Games" for fear that "some-day 'extreme' would be . . . outdated. . ."⁴ Now, of course, the 'X' also prefixes other nouns and products' names so as to signify newness, shock appeal, or speed.⁵

The extreme athletes themselves recognize the inherent tangling of the media with the very nature of their sports and their sports as cultural commodities. In *Sick*, Susanna Howe has pointed out how "filmmakers" and photographers "create the dream that is snowboarding. It sells the lifestyle."⁶ For much of snowboarding's existence, part of being a snowboarder meant to seek fame through rebel status at ski resorts and associations with "hardcore hip-hop and gangster style"⁷ communities. This celebrity was pronounced to the world (or the athlete's small sub-culture of peers) visually, to eventually be used in advertising sports equipment, clothing or music. Belinda Wheaton, in her chapter "Windsurfing: A Subculture of Commitment," discusses insider/outsider statuses of participants. And Joanne Kay and Suzanne Laberge's "Imperialistic Construction of Freedom in Warren Miller's *Freeriders*" is valuable in providing an exemplar of critical analysis/interpretation of filmic narration of the rhetoric of class-related "freedom" as it is attached to images of extreme skiing.

Indeed, in addition to such commercial imaging, many extreme sports' growth is dependent on videography, for novice and experienced athletes alike watch videos of themselves, of others, and of experts repeatedly to learn basic skills and new tricks. There is also the subterranean world of sporting "zines," dilettante magazines in which creators seek to better control messages. Extreme sport 'zines are attempts to prevent the commercial mainstream from co-opting alternative culture.⁸ Such films and 'zines are an archival gold mine for students interested in tracing the birth and techniques of postmodern folk games, for athletes today are particularly self-conscious of the history they are making.

The phenomenon of collecting and documenting "firsts," "landmark performances," or "records" of all facets of extreme sports is similar to what has occurred in mainstream sports such as baseball and basketball in the past century. In his classic work, *From Ritual to Record*,⁹ Allen Guttman points to this record-keeping as that which most sets modern sport apart from ancient and premodern sport. Bill Brown elaborates, commenting on the "fetishism for numbering" in American sports,¹⁰ that baseball's enduring appeal resides in the "game's ability to orchestrate not individual and group, but scientific and narrative knowledge."¹¹ We see that this obsession with the record, with scientific and narrative knowledge, continues to mark many alternative sports; competing to be the best or to set speed, distance and/or performance records has many historical antecedents. But it is largely due to media influence that these activities have become "sport."

Likewise, broadcasts, advertising, and the mediatization of extreme sports echo post-millennial record-keeping, consumptive, and marketing strategies, and drive societal attitudes toward extreme sports. We might read of the birth of amalgamated "sports" such as skyrunning ("racing on terrain as high as 17,000 ft—forcing participants to brave dusty, rocky, and even snowy trails"¹²); of skyjumping from a plane while riding a water heater, wagon, golf cart, or automobile through the air at 120 mph;¹³ of fifty-plus-mile swim races; or of lawn mower racing, toe skiing, or low-altitude parachuting. Participation ranges from the casual to the obsessed, from leisure/recreational enthusiasts to hard-core professionals, and from samplers to experts. One begins to realize that some of these athletes are simultaneously engaging in serious sport and making fun of canonical sport from this alternative sport vantage point.¹⁴ In addition to these ranges of participant attitudes is the observation, as briefly noted above, that the units for most extreme sports

are either individuals or dyads. Rarely—at least currently—are these extreme sports done as teams. This, of course, is in large contrast to the team-oriented sports of mainstream America. Football, basketball, volleyball, and so on—all are team sports, whereas most mediated extreme sports—such as street luge, in-line skating, skateboarding—are fundamentally individual sports.

Many extreme sports explode the 'canon' of mainstream sport in several ways. Grassroots extreme sports participants are not institutionalized with governing bodies; they have no eligible team roster, established practice times/locales, or coaches. Their activity is closely aligned with the precepts of 'play.' Alternative athletes in some X sports wear unique street apparel, uniforms by group consensus, not imposed from outside. There are no coaches. Sometimes the apparel references urban streetwear, hip-hop, "gansta rap," or grunge fashion. Drug-taking, alternative music, guns, and violence have been linked stereotypically to alternative sports participation. Of course, these caricatures of alternative sports are fraught with problems, much as mainstream American sports are unfairly typified as patriotic, clean-cut, and character building.¹⁵ Yet, through various strategies and powers within culture, for the most part the history of alternative sports of the past twenty years show them to be eventually traditionalized to echo some of the stereotypical characteristics of mainstream sport.

The history of snowboarding's contested emergence into international Olympic competition is a case in point. Duncan Humphreys' "Selling Out Snowboarding: The Alternative Response to Commercial Co-Optation" sorts out strange juxtapositions of capitalism, punk, international federations, and the media as they decorate the culture of snowboarding.

Not only International Olympic Committee procurement or nationalism, but a corporate insistence on 'mainstreaming' these sports has encroached on them: in 1999, for example, contrary to the ethos of the single athlete (the "rugged individual"), the X Games contained "team" events where three in-line aggressive skaters performed routines simultaneously. Both formal and informal choreography for individuals is part of the everyday practices of these athletes, but working out routines with others is an attempt to capitalize on American-driven ideologies which privilege teamwork, interdependence, and trust.

There has also been a significant shift in the way sport is presented electronically. Filmic work in modernist sport work holds fast to centered wide-angle panning, with a large part of the field

in sight of the television audience. Additionally, the whole contest is often broadcast. Extreme sports are, in contrast, intentionally conveyed as cutting-edge. Thus, an "MTV" approach—discontinuous shots, short (time duration) events, quick off-centered collage-type shots, blurred frames, super slo-motion cinematography, jolts of musical accompaniment, voyeuristic body shots, neon and holographic colors, and shocking up-close scenarios of sport-induced injury, illness, or 'crashes'—tend to predominate in extreme sports. In this way, such filmic stances and technologies have pushed sport closer to the realm of art. It has become highly "produced" sport—it is not in real time, but rather, taped and 'produced.'

Sport has always contained genuine artistic elements, but as C. L. R. James pointed out some forty years ago, "our enjoyment of it can never be quite artistic: we are prevented from completely realizing it not only by our dramatic interest in the game, but also . . . by the succession of movements being too rapid for us to realize each completely, and too fatiguing, even if realizable."¹⁶ Now, our amazing technologies (and perhaps the insatiable energy of new times) enable us to bypass James's obstacles ("too fast," "too fatiguing") to realize sport as art.¹⁷

When the extreme sport event is shown to its conclusion on television or video, it is usually less than a minute in duration. X-athletes are as often interviewed by sports journalists concerning lifestyle choices¹⁸ as about their athletic techniques or training. While ESPN and MTV Sports are forging a marriage between extreme sports and their presentations, they are also working to re-educate a whole new generation of sports viewers, to school them into new ways of looking at sports while borrowing heavily from successful strategies of mainstream sports.

The idea for this book—a collection of essays by both scholars and sport practitioners—stemmed from several sources. We were fascinated that new sports were being birthed before our eyes, and wanted as historians to document some of these alternative sports' origin stories. Too, we both are keenly involved in debates in qualitative work in sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies (to mention only a few areas) regarding "voice" of the "researched." Many strategies have been applied to this apparent dilemma, ranging from the old anthropological tropes of the emic and etic; participant observation; clandestine group membership; autobiography and biography; straight reportage; recording and transcribing; case studies; ethnographic performance work; and co-writing.¹⁹ The list is seemingly endless. These are attempts to resolve an apparently

unresolvable crisis: that of knowing the 'other,' while simultaneously remaining the 'self.' Many scholars of sport have ignored debates concerning power, authorship, and the other, and have been quick to project expert hegemonic analysis upon the athlete, the sport subculture, but slower to problematize and criticize their own authorial stances. As editors, we considered that the best we can do, perhaps, is *approach* the other (or others), brush up next to her/him, and seek to better understand his/her experience(s).

Thus, we felt that readers might gain from a 'dialogue' between practitioners and academics. Our charge to contributors was that they determine what they felt was germane to each sport and to them, at this moment of their sport's evolution. With a few authors, we discussed possible directions they might wish to pursue. But, largely, the impetus for topics was generated by individual authors. In some cases, practitioners and scholars discussed their work: thus the constructed dialogue we editors had envisioned might evolve from the book and be illuminated within it or upon publication found a reality prior to publication.

We worked to avoid a coffee-table type of book, yet sought easy accessibility for readers. One might ask why we feel this, a scholarly/popular culture book on alternative sport, matters, given the current spate of books on extreme sports generally and each sport form particularly. Of course, there is the standard, and very sincere, reason given by all academics for the worthiness of their topics: knowledge matters. To know more about our intricate, mysterious lives on this planet enriches us. One of our authors, windsurfer Bob Galvan, makes us privy not only to the matters of his sport, but to the everyday ventures—finding fuel in Mexico, trailer repair, the ordinariness of life—that come to make windsurfing *per se* so beautiful to him. Such knowledge matters because it tells us what it is to be human: how wondrous, yet frightening; how universal, yet particular. As sport sociologist George Sage writes,

... critical analysis implies a concern for identifying, scrutinizing, and clarifying, and in this way helping overcome the obstacles to a complete understanding of the object of study. The purpose is to understand what is, and not present a detailed plan for what ought to be.²⁰

This book is an attempt to identify *what is*, so that equitable "control, production, and distribution of economic and cultural

power"²¹ eventually may be effected, or at the least, noticed and discussed mindfully.²² As well, to study extreme sports—inside and out—is to notice and discuss the achievements and problems of today's complex world.

This book also contributes to an ongoing scholarly discussion of authenticity within cultural studies, sociology, anthropology, history, and literary criticism. We believe there are continuum ranges, rather than binaries, of so-called authentic experiences. For example, to what degree is a young girl originary or derivative of actual experienced skateboarding culture (or cultures) when she imitates and rehearses a move she's seen performed on television? There may be, simultaneously, both completely authentic and no purely authentic conceptions of these sport forms. Anthropologist Ed Bruner amplifies this critique of authenticity in a way that we deem crucial for this collection's reckonings of alternative sport. He poses the questions:

How is authenticity constructed? What is the process by which any item of culture or practice achieves an aura of being authentic? What are the processes of production of authenticity? . . . authenticity is something sought, fought over and reinvented.²³

Jeff Howe's chapter queries these cultural processes in relation to power relationships of naming skateboarding; of naming self (one's biography most certainly helps shape one's interests); of labeling, and by labeling, of owning. In a world often bereft of continuity and stability, where on-line personalities play with the fluidity of their roles, where the thirty-some-year-old Super Bowl seems like an ancient tradition, the task of sorting out authenticity in anything is nearly impossible. Yet, the practitioner-athletes of this book actually participate in their chosen sport, and give their individual takes on that participation. Armed with the theories of cultural studies or not, they are 'authentic insiders.' As well, the 'invented' nature of these sports (like all culturally-laden artifacts) and the quickly evolving, emergent nature of them makes a discussion of 'authenticity' in these new sports by 'outsider' academics a valid and vital topic. In a sense, then, within this volume is a fluid museum of authentic alternative sports artifacts. For example, Tamara Koyin interweaves her poetic "Free Dimensional Skydiving" with authentic moments from her discipline, providing a postmodern pastiche of imaginaries and concrete experience.

There is an irony to extreme sports: that 'authentic,' alternative, 'pure,' avant-garde, forms quickly become mainstream and 'corrupted.' Consequently, associated alternative cultures also contribute to the growth and homogenizing of specific tastes of unique cultures into society. Many extreme athletes desire to be unique outsiders and nonconformists, yet, as Becky Beal and Lisa Weidman reveal, this too becomes an invented, 'conformist' rhetoric. As many note, the entrepreneurial business quickly elides into a multimillion dollar consumptive activity.

Extreme sports are sometimes connected to a new world order, a transnational village, the peaceful brotherhood of our planet. The beautiful choreography of X-sport scenes may evince an otherworldly utopia. And extreme sports are truly international. But extreme sports are also mostly 'white,' 'wealthy,' and exclusionary. Enthusiasts of many of the newer extreme sports must have funds, leisure time and access to specialized environments in order to participate for any length of time. Scholars—like Kay and Laberge, and Kusz—are beginning to investigate more deeply the extreme sport forms of the subaltern.

The paradigms used by scholars who treat the whole of culture and the things humans do in culture as 'travel' are useful for translating alternative X-sports into sites whose boundaries are queried in critical terms:²⁴ for example, we 'travel' within our lives from mundane work to extreme sport. Kristen Kremer, the extreme skier and author of "May 27, 1998" details such traveling between the real and imaginary realms of poverty, God's kingdom, an Irish pub, a world championship, paragliding, skiing, rafting, work, and play. In such 'travels' we may be equipped with unaccustomed power, freedom, or escape from existing social roles and obligations.²⁵

Travel itself may characterize the postmodern condition and is certainly a form of conspicuous consumption. Like many tourists, the X-sport traveler seeks the exotic. Like many tourists, the X-athlete quests in his/her travels for signs (or markers) that they have found the authentic, the back region, or the perfect move.²⁶ "The tourist is interested in everything as a sign of itself. . . . To be a tourist is to dislike other tourists."²⁷ Certainly, for many participants, part of being an extreme athlete is to be less common than others, to privilege "insiders' expertise" and disdain mere "tourists" of extreme sport.

We know from classic studies in sport psychology, anthropology, and sociology that sport is universal in societies which are safe, peaceful, secure, and have capital and some divisions of la-

bor.²⁸ Thus, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, alternative sports are not much practiced in diasporic or warring nations. And it is not only wealth or peace that complicates the practice of sport: today, people with new wealth have little time for leisure; conversely, the urban poor have much time, but little access to the equipment and spaces of most extreme sports.

Alternative sports are often articulated by their originators and media as moving beyond the old-world sport order. However, they occasionally reproduce the old typecastings. For instance, statements that belittle the female X-athlete such as “Awww, did you hurt your bottom?” or “Your hair got messed up on that one!” abound in extreme sports television.²⁹ One may counter that in extreme sports, anything goes, so that categories of difference may be magnified, altered, or blurred, and that stilted political correctness is unabashedly thrown out. Often, in alternative sport, the macho male athlete is exalted; Nazi and neo-Nazi iconography tattoos much of extreme sports equipment: clearly, in presenting an image of opposition, producers and entrepreneurs cater to an imagined adolescent audience.

In extreme sport, New Zealand is abundantly represented. Queenstown, New Zealand calls itself the “Adventure Sports Capital of the World,” and many of our authors claim some tie to New Zealand. New Zealand boasts itself as the originary of bungee jumping; further, New Zealand’s pioneering ideology insists that events like “adventure racing and expedition epics” have become a popularly-represented part of the histories that Martha Bell relates in her chapter.

“Board” sports (surfing, skysurfing, kayaking, skiing, windsurfing, snowboarding, et al.) are basic to extreme sports. Sydnor uses philosopher Gilles Deleuze’s new cultural-aesthetic of sport—“the basic thing is how to get taken up in the movement of a big wave, a column of rising air, to ‘come between’ rather than to be the origin of an effort”³⁰—to theoretically grasp the new sport of skysurfing.

Speed, time, and temporal issues are central to the ontology of alternative sport. Virilio states, “Speed is not a phenomenon but a relationship between phenomena.”³¹ In contemporary culture, there is increased speed of transmissions (that is, how fast we are witness to seeing, learning, and reading about alternative sports), increased speed of actions and exchanges (many alternative sports are performed at full speed, “fast”); increased “megalopolitan hyperconcentration”³² (for example, our rapidly expanding cityscapes as venues for alternative

sports, such as skateboarding or B.A.S.E. jumping). How, for example, does the Gravity Boarding Company's Hyper-Carve—a skateboard with a digital readout on the nose that indicates the current and maximum speed³³—serve as an exemplar for theorizing new sports vis a vis “speed” at the beginning of the twenty-first century?

There is a moral and ethical discussion threaded within this anthology. All extreme sports are thrill-seeking activities to which psychologies of danger and excitement, and traditions of Judeo-Christian and Eastern theological and philosophical interpretation, may be applied. Do these sports put one's life in danger? Mounet and Chifflet's chapter examines the danger of white water sports, showing how a “standardized” sport paradoxically elides danger with the illusions of freedom and “extreme” for its “clients.”

Is one of the main points of extreme sports to risk one's life?³⁴ And if so, is risking one's own life inherently wrong? In most cases, risking life might be a side effect of some extreme sports, and not the point of all extreme sports. To be courageous can be a vice or a virtue: rational and responsible training and performance in extreme sports, attempting to do a thing well, using talents to the fullest capacity of one's ability, entertaining others, fulfilling promoters' and fans' expectations, and even asceticism and self-mortification may characterize righteous and honorable dimensions of extreme sports for some participants. In many of the chapters of this book, authors are quick to point out that extreme athletes are not lunatics or daredevils, but meticulous performers, giving themselves to some lofty art form. Example: Brett Downs, in “Small Bikes, Big Men,” writes, “we are just another group of athletes . . . we don't call ourselves Extreme. We are just riders.”

Indeed, David Sansone's definition of sport includes “the ritual sacrifice of human physical energy”; the athlete is both sacrificer and victim.³⁵ Such a definition helps us to understand the universal essence of sport as it manifests itself today in versions extreme—and as it did in much earlier times, in mystic ways that connect the athlete and audience with ineffable meanings of life and universe. David Dornian evokes such noble associations when he writes of “climbers swimming against a universal current.”

Self-exultation, self-centeredness, showing off, bragging and hedonism may frame the being of some extreme athletes and the ontology of the sport forms themselves. How do these attributes correspond to the virtues—such as humility, prudence, and preservation of life—central to the beliefs of many human groups today? For example, Tony Hawk, the infamous extreme skateboarder, has

been positively featured in the Christian youth magazine *You!*³⁶ Is Hawk a sinner or a saint, or just a public figure in a private pose? Or note Arlo Eisenberg's "Psychotic Rant." His opening paragraph describes speaking of himself in the third person, and asks his family and friends to call him "god." Lee Bridgers' chapter, "Out of the Gene Pool and into the Food Chain," uses religious metaphors—"God of Extreme," "Church of Bike," "faith in Bike"—to speak of Bridgers' passionate devotion to risky sport.

X-athletes also describe the excitement of danger, the adrenaline rushes they get from their sports. Ron Watters relates the stories of three deaths on rivers, while simultaneously discussing the commercially-promoted oxymoron of "safe danger."

Within our proem and within this book, we've contemplated alternative sports, inside and out. But there is so much more in the cultural and physical spaces between the inside and out. Writing in 1908, philosopher Henri Bergson reflected upon these spaces of body, motion, mind, and spirit. He wrote of ideas and dreams:

If the idea is to live, it must touch reality on some side; that is to say, it must be able, from step to step, and by progressive diminutions or contractions of itself, to be more or less acted by the body at the same time as it is thought by the mind. Our body, with the sensations which it receives on the one hand and the movements which it is capable of executing on the other, is then, that which fixes our mind, and gives it ballast and poise.³⁷

Similarly, Jim Cotter takes the reader in and out of what he calls "A disturbing mix of hallucinations and *deja-vu*" as he describes his team's grueling 300 mile Eco-challenge.

What about virtual alternative sport, the cyberworlds of sport? There are already countless video and arcade games/experiences in which the participant's body is interfaced (through keyboard, cathode screen, dataglove, or datasuit) to an extreme sport contest/performance. Similarly, the philosopher Paul Virilio calls the body the last urban frontier:

Having been first *mobile*, then *motorized*, man will thus become *motile*, deliberately limiting his body's area of influence to a few gestures, a few impulses, like channel-surfing.³⁸

Real space *is* giving way to virtual space. How will the glory of the physicality of sport of this past century be perfected in such space? In *Beyond a Boundary*, C. L. R. James anticipates this question. James writes:

I believe that the examination of the stroke, the brilliant piece of fielding, will take us through mysticism to far more fundamental considerations than mere life-enhancing. We respond to physical action or vivid representation of it, dead or alive, because we are made that way.³⁹

Other examinations—including studies of the physical inventions, evolution, materials, and technologies of alternative sports and sports equipment of recent decades—are likely to bear on the sports themselves. For example, in his account of his life-long surfing sojourn, Greg Page observes how telephones, faxes, pages, live videofeeds and knowledge of the world's surf and weather patterns make the odds of scoring big waves much better now than in the 1960s.⁴⁰

The technologies are cutting edge. Just as running shoes revolutionized track and cross-country, kayaks constructed of the new material hypalon⁴¹ and snowboard cores made of piezoelectrics instead of synthetic rubber are the stuff of the sport of our new times.⁴²

Very soon, the above descriptions of cybersport, surf forecasts, new-age sports equipment and piezoelectrics will be dated and inconsequential (one time the bicycle was considered a revolutionary fusion of human and machine⁴³). But for now, we can simply wonder at this fascinating thing, this dilemma called sport, this human spectacle-art-performance-contest-poetic that for countless centuries manifests itself on our Earth, and now also in our waters, skies, and virtual screens, in ways different, radical, and invigorating, afresh yet somehow also the same.

Notes

1. Kevin Brooker, ESPN. *Way Inside ESPN'S X Games* (New York: Hyperion/ESPN Books, 1998, p. 23). See also Dick Wimer (ed.), *The Extreme Game: An Extreme Sports Anthology* (Short Hills, NJ: Burford Books, 2001).

2. Debra Pressey, "Extreme Sports is New Name of Game: Firm Based in Champaign Supplies Protective Gear for Thrills and Spills Crowd," *The News Gazette*, Sunday January 25, 1998, pp. C-1, 3.

3. John Rofe, "An Extremely Profitable Niche: 'X' Sports Boom has Companies Eager to Ride on the Wild Side," *Street @ Smith's Sportsbusiness Journal*, November 9-15, 1998, pp. 20-31.

4. Sal Ruibal, "X-tremely Overexposed? Burnout Likely Without Changes," *USA Today*, June 23, 1999, pp. C 1–2.
5. In summer 1999, the Disney Channel introduced "Z Games," a show that highlights crazy sports invented by kids.
6. Susanna Howe, *Sick: A Cultural History of Snowboarding* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1998), p. 107.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
8. Stephen Duncombe, *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Popular Culture* (New York and London: Verso, 1998).
9. Allen Guttman, *From Ritual to Record* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978). Of record-keeping, Guttman writes that it is "the marvelous abstraction that permits competition not only among those gathered together on the field of sport but also among them and others distant in time and space" (p. 51).
10. Bill Brown, "The Meaning of Baseball in 1992 (with Notes on the Post American)," *Public Culture*, vol. 4, no. 1, Fall 1991, p. 55.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
12. "Peak Performance," *Vogue*, March 1998, p. 95.
13. AXN, Fox Network, "The Sky is My Canvas," Nov. 28, 1998. For a larger list of alternative sport forms, see Robert E. Rinehart, "Emerging Arriving Sport: Alternatives to Formal Sports," in Jay Coakley and Eric Dunning (eds.), *Handbook of Sports Studies* (London: Sage, 2000), pp. 504–519).
14. Recall the recent beer commercials that featured outlandish amalgamated imaginary sports such as sumo-diving and ski-jumping from a lazy-chair.
15. Andrew W. Miracle, Jr., and C. Roger Rees, *Lessons of the Locker Room: The Myth of School Sports* (Amherst NY: Prometheus Books), pp. 11–56, 221–229.
16. C. L. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963), p. 197.
17. See Walter Benjamin's essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 1969 [1936]), for an earlier examination of how technology impinges upon audience perception and production of life activities.
18. Example: "What music is going through your mind as you perform?" (answer: "Limp Bizkit"): 1999 live telecast interview of skateboarder at Summer X-Games. This technique, of humanizing the athletes, of course parallels NBC's strategy for Olympic broadcasts to show more human-interest stories.
19. For example, Carolyn Ellis and Arthur P. Bochner (eds.), *Composing Ethnography: Alternative Forms of Qualitative Writing* (Walnut Creek, Calif. and London: Alta Mira Press, 1996); Harry F. Wolcott, *The Art of Fieldwork* (Walnut Creek, Calif. and London: Alta Mira Press, 1995); Dennis Tedlock and Bruce Mannheim, *The Dialogic Emergence of Culture* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995); Norman K. Denzin,

Interpretive Ethnography: Ethnographic Practices for the 21st Century (Thousand Oaks, Calif. and London: Sage Publications, 1997); Hélène Cixous, *Coming to Writing and Other Essays* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1991); Genéviève Rail and Jean Harvey (eds.), *Sport and Postmodern Times* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).

20. George H. Sage, *Power and Ideology in American Sport: A Critical Perspective* (Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics Books, 1990), p. 11.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

22. See Ellen J. Langer, *Mindfulness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Perseus Books, 1989).

23. Edward Bruner, "Tourism, Creativity, and Authenticity," *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*, 1989, vol. 10, p. 13.

24. Robert E. Rinehart, *Players All: Performances in Contemporary Sport* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998); Malcolm Crick, "Representations of International Tourism in the Social Sciences: Sun, Sex, Sights, Savings and Servility," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 1989, vol. 18, pp. 307–344; John Bale, *Landscapes of Modern Sport* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); Judith Adler, "Origins of Sightseeing," *Annals of Tourism Research*, 1989, vol. 16, pp. 7–29; Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986).

25. See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (H. Iswolsky, trans.) (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1984), for an especially penetrating examination of role reversal as a culturally historical trope.

26. See John Dorst, *The Written Suburb: An American Site, An Ethnographic Dilemma* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989). Dorst looks at the mundane as a site of potential discovery.

27. Jonathan Culler, "The Semiotics of Tourism," in Culler, *Framing the Sign* (Normal and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), pp. 155, 158.

28. For example, Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1950); Bernard Suits, *The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia* (Boston: David R. Godine Publisher, 1990; first published in 1978 by University of Toronto Press); Jack M. Roberts, Malcolm J. Arth, and Robert R. Bush, "Games in Culture," *American Anthropologist*, 1959, vol. 61, 597–605.

29. Such clearly sexist statements abound in merchandising like MTV Sports or ESPN X-Games highlights videos.

30. Gilles Deleuze, "Mediators," in Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter (eds.), *Incorporations* (New York: Urzone Inc., 1992), p. 281. See also Ian Borden, *Skateboarding, Space and the City: Architecture and the Body* (Oxford: Berg, 2001).

31. Paul Virilio, *Open Sky* (Julie Rose, trans.) (London and New York: Verso, 1997), p. 12.

32. *Ibid.*

33. Bob Parks, "Fetish: Transition," *Wired*, April 1998, p. 51.

34. See "Cheating Death," segment on "Goin' Deep," Fox Sports Network, produced by Alex Flanagan, March 5, 2000.

35. David Sansone, *Greek Athletics and the Genesis of Sport* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988).

36. "Hawk Man: Tony Hawk Doesn't Need Wings, He's Got Wheels," *You!* Nov./Dec. 1998, p. 14. The cover of this magazine declares: "Skateboarding's Not a Crime: We Asked the Expert Why." At the end of the one-page article, there was an editor's note:

Tony's publicist informed us that he had a faith life; so of course we bit the hook. We were all surprised by his hesitation to answer faith questions . . . What about preparing for events physically, emotionally and spiritually, I asked. Well, he skipped the spiritual part.

37. Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory* (New York: Zone books, 1991 [originally published 1901]), p. 173.

38. Virilio, *Open Sky*, p. 17.

39. C. L. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963), p. 203. Interestingly, one of James' chapters contemplates Tolstoy's famous question "What is art?" in light of sport performance.

40. Obviously, tow-in surfing, where jet skis tow a surfer to and rescue him/her from, gigantic waves, owes much of its existence to this technological leap for sport.

41. "Fetish," *Wired*, Nov. 1997, p. 80.

42. "Piezoelectrics absorb and dissipate vibrations that cause the snowboard to chatter and lose contact with the snow by converting vibrations into electricity that is dissipated through the board's core as heat and light; amazingly, the units are smart to selectively distinguish between harmful vibrations and good vibrations, such as subtle commands from the snowboarder's feet." Sean Wagstaff, "Street Cred: Smooth in the Crud," *Wired*, April 1998, p. 129.

43. Vernon Chadwik, Institute for the Living South, Memphis, Tenn., posted on April 28, 1999, to the cultstud-l@nosferatu.cas.usf.edu list.