

Rosenzweig, Roy. *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983).

Roy Rosenzweig's *Eight Hours for What We Will* is not a sports history book. Hints about baseball games, boxing matches and cockfights do appear, but anyone seeking definitive sports chronicles will be disappointed. Nevertheless, this is a very fine historical study, and exactly the sort of work sports historians should read.

Rosenzweig's subject is leisure during the critical half-century of industrialization, 1870-1920. His setting is the middle-sized city of Worcester, Massachusetts. The questions he asks are not the usual ones of sports history—who defeated whom, how were events promoted, who became champion, what business and government mechanisms allowed leagues to organize. Rather, Rosenzweig is primarily interested in ideology, or more precisely, how competing ideologies, grounded in diverse social experiences, affected the history of recreations. Which activities were disreputable, even illegal? Why did particular classes play certain games? What pushed some sports beyond the pale of respectability? How did reformers attempt to use leisure for purposes of social control, and were they successful? In other words, *Eight Hours for What We Will* places leisure studies squarely in the camp of social history.

Rosenzweig begins with the details of labor and economic life in postbellum Worcester. Originally a center of the boot, shoe and textile trades, by the twentieth century the town's leading industries were machinery and metal working. Over the decades, however, a stable elite remained in control of the city's wealth and social life. Moreover, despite the destruction of old crafts and the periodic hard times caused by the business cycle, workers in Worcester were relatively quiescent during this half century, engaging in important union organizing and political activities, but never really threatening the power structure through militant action. Ethnic diversity was the key to this apparent lassitude of the working class. Worcester's laborers shared a devotion to church, neighborhood, family and fraternal lodge, but were divided in their opposition to Yankee industrialists by their allegiances to native, French-Canadian, Irish, Swedish and later Polish, Lithuanian, Italian, and Jewish heritages.

Ethnic divisions therefore blunted labor solidarity. Seeking a sense of autonomy outside of workshops now controlled by others, workers turned to recreations within their separate communities. Leisure was where labor took its stand, where plain people resisted efforts by the town elite to "reform" behavior. Working class men and women refused to knuckle under to those who would make parks into bucolic retreats rather than venues for picnics and ball games.

Worcester laborers insisted that the saloons remain a place for men to gather and share the rituals of mutuality, in opposition to the calculating ways of the bourgeois marketplace. They refused to alter their Fourth of July celebrations from exuberant pageants, filled with wild sports and high times, into tame patriotic affairs. For Rosenzweig, Worcester laborers carried on the class war by other means. If we can not have autonomy at the workplace, they seemed to say, we will have "eight hours for what we will." In their leisure time, the working class found the sense of independence, wholeness and fulfillment lacking in the workaday world. As Rosenzweig puts it, they created an "alternative culture," if not political opposition to bourgeois hegemony. Only in the early twentieth century, with the onslaught of the consumer society and the mass media, was there serious erosion in workers' ability to control their recreational time and space.

Rosenzweig writes well, uses sources imaginatively, and produces a convincing argument. His focus on a single community makes us hope for similar studies which will help confirm his thesis or demonstrate its peculiarity to Worcester. Certainly Steven Hardy's evidence for Boston is compatible with Rosenzweig's, though the two cities were very different.

Still, there are serious problems. Rosenzweig never adequately comes to terms with leisure's potentially conservative, accommodationist impact. Were workers content with their hours to themselves and therefore less inclined to organize along political and economic lines? Did ethnic divisions in leisure discourage larger class solidarities? Were sports a safety valve as Frederick Paxson suggested decades ago, or an opiate of the masses as some Marxists have claimed? While recent working class history shows that labor radicalism does not necessarily preclude involvement with popular recreations, it also reveals a powerful strain of puritanism among many organizers.

More fundamentally, *Eight Hours for What We Will* fails to capture the full flavor of Worcester sports, and this is not merely a problem of antiquarian detail. Rosenzweig is so eager to reveal workers' alternatives to middle class culture, so delighted when he finds them, that he often fails to examine the full content of the oppositional culture. Working class recreations in the nineteenth century often were characterized by a fascination with violence, masculine bravado, and self-destructive levels of drinking and gambling. They arose in male peer groups, rigidly segregated by sex. Many laboring men fancied themselves patriarchs, free to come and go as they pleased, with little interference from their wives. Mutuality among males there was, but sometimes also sexism, brutality, racism and an almost mindless machismo.

Radical historians like Rosenzweig—who have done so much to advance our understanding of working class leisure by grounding the subject firmly in the evolving capitalist social structure—must come to terms with this darker side of working class culture, lest they distort beyond recognition the consciousness of those people they wish to save from historical oblivion. I suspect that if Rosenzweig devoted more space to sheer descriptions of important working class recreations—cock fights, boxing matches, and street brawls, for example,

in all of their competitive bloodiness-then his analysis would lose its tendency to romanticize working class life.

Despite these shortcomings, *Eight Hours for What We Will* is a valuable book. Rosenzweig asks questions about social change, class culture, ethnic divisiveness, and worker autonomy which every historian of sports and leisure should ponder. He places the history of recreations squarely amidst the transformation to industrial capitalism which engendered such intense conflict over work discipline, personal morality, and the new imperative of delayed gratification. In a word, *Eight Hours for What We Will* helps show us how sport and recreation studies-previously relegated to the toy department of academia-can be central to our understanding of culture and society.

Miami University

Elliott J. Gorn