

prove effective in undergraduate classes. Moreover, the author has provided a valuable appendix, which lists each black player from 1904 to 1962. Unfortunately Ross's writing style is somewhat pedestrian in places, and he failed to include any personal interviews with former players, coaches, or journalists. Nonetheless, this is a useful survey of an important topic.

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MILLER, JON, WITH MARK HYMAN. *Confessions of a Baseball Purist: What's Right—and Wrong—with Baseball, as Seen From the Best Seat in the House*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998. Pp. 269. Indexed. \$24.00 cb.

This is not an academic work, though it is a ready text for scholarly analysis. In Miller's career as a baseball broadcaster one detects an evolutionary pattern of the development of the baseball broadcast medium. His protodevelopmental steps mimic the evolution of the species.

Many of the earliest broadcasters crafted their narrative from data supplied by telegraph wire. They were nowhere near the playing field, but created the narrative sight unseen. An early creator of these word pictures was one Ronald "Dutch" Reagan, who made up narrative of the Cubs games in his first job out of college in 1932 (and later changed careers). Boy Jon began creating narrative in his bedroom, not the ballpark. He used the 20th Century *Strat-o-matic* baseball board game, a game still popular in its original board format, and now found on various Internet web sites as well. Thus, substance of his narrative-formation was provided by the popular baseball board game, rather than cues from the telegraph or telephone as in earlier "real" broadcasts. His sound effects, at this juncture, were not pre-recorded as they were in the created narratives of the early 1930s, but self-generated. He attests that the noises escaping the boundaries of a ten-year-old boy's bedroom sounded horrific to his parents, but at least they knew where he was.

Farther up broadcasting's evolutionary ladder, Jon Miller continued to develop. He graduated to audiotaping his improving narrative skills while watching basketball on television and by taking his tape recorder into the highest bleachers in Oakland's Coliseum, where he could record not only his narrative, but the ballpark sounds as well. At high school in Hayward, California, he taped play by play of the boy's basketball team, using his tapes to enliven a recap over the school's room-to-room intercom the next day.

At the College of San Mateo, he finally left simulations behind and threw himself into broadcasting on the college UHF television station, and finally into professional sports as broadcaster for the San Jose Earthquakes soccer team. The help from others in broadcasting and his lucky, rather than natural selection, completed the evolution of this man into a major league baseball broadcaster, at various times for the Padres, Orioles, Rangers, and Oakland A's, and nationally for *Sunday Night Baseball*.

It was television baseball, the author contends, which brought baseball broadcasting to its present position as truthsayer. In the early 1950s, very few games were on television, and next to none on network TV. When an outfielder threw to the wrong base, who

knew? Today that mistake would be shown on local TV at least and with taped replays, plus cable sports networks, Miller says that “Now, if you make an error, you’re infamous in Samoa” (57).

Parenthetically, his stint as broadcaster with the Oakland A’s I found ironic, in that he had created narrative in his early audiotaping of live games of the Oakland team. When he returned as a “real” broadcaster he was coming back to the franchise that pioneered network baseball broadcasting, for it was the A’s which used the very first-ever baseball broadcast system. In 1933 the Steinman brothers of Lancaster, Pennsylvania networked their four family-owned radio stations to put Connie Mack’s Philadelphia A’s on the air.

Young Jon also played a phylogenetic role as a fan. Born in 1952 and raised near Oakland, baby-boomer Jon Miller was far beyond the geographic borders of a major league baseball in North America at that time, for in that part of the last century, live Major League Baseball stopped roughly at an invisible boundary near meridians between Chicago and St. Louis. This invisible boundary remained until the National League Brooklyn Dodgers and New York Giants migrated to the West Coast in 1958. These moves made the National League actually national for the first time in other than name.

Though long removed from his earliest broadcast beginnings begun through gaming, Jon Miller still sees what he calls the “purity” of the game. This origin is apt, I suspect, for in gaming one can reside in the purity of the game. Statistics cards, strategy, and a roll of the dice decide contests. That was pure baseball indeed without personalities, salaries, agents, strikes, contrarian owners, but with proper playing surfaces. No player ever had a bad day.

Miller maintains that purity must be sustained. In the simplest sense, this is accomplished through objectivity, encouraging belief in the veracity of his narrative, and an attempt to bring “the game” to the listener, sometimes warts and all. Citing the late Hurray Caray, Miller contends that the most important duty is to gain the trust of the fans listening to the narrative. Yet pure baseball gaming, Jon Miller maintains, cannot entail crafting a narrative from a totally isolated viewpoint, unsullied by salary considerations, personality (his own and the players’), temperaments, club house politics, or the demands of franchise owners. In other words, Jon Miller works (and is compensated) as part of the total baseball package marketed to the fans today far removed from a “simple” ball game—if it ever existed.

This book shows how the corporate owners of franchises expect the broadcaster to be a part of what the marketing departments call “the total baseball experience.” Sometimes, even, the broadcast narrative effects on-field intervention by owners and Miller cites examples including crowd manipulation by absentee owner Charles O. Finley, telephoning the stadium in Oakland from his regular restaurant table in Chicago.

Noteworthy in Miller’s text is his departure from Baltimore after thirteen happy and successful years as the voice of the Orioles. In this discourse, the Oriole ownership’s use of euphemism in Miller’s “non-firing” reads like a set-piece example of the baleful use of that term by George Orwell in his 1944 essay, “Politics and the English Language”: pleasant-sounding language carefully chosen to obscure an unpleasant reality.

By this time Jon Miller himself moved from the role of baseball “purist-as-narrator” to “total-baseball-broadcaster-as-media celebrity.” He became a popular after-dinner speaker, an outstanding raconteur who mimiced other broadcasters, actual and imaginary, with

great verve and skill. His verbal image of a fictitious Scottish football announcer providing color commentary for a Boston Red Sox baseball game is hilarious.

Miller devotes several pages to Bud Selig's labelling of him as a baseball "purist" during a live broadcast in 1993. Then Selig was the owner of the Milwaukee Brewers franchise and at that time just about one year into playing the dubious role of Acting Commissioner of Baseball. Selig is now in the dubious position of Commissioner of Baseball. The author neither welcomes nor dismisses the sobriquet "purist" but explains how the term is understood, and misunderstood, depending upon one's specific role in bringing baseball to the broader public. His resolute answer to his own guilt or innocence as a baseball purist is a firm and unequivocal "Yes" and... then again... "No."

The reader will make his or her own judgment on the definition of a baseball "purist," and whether the term as defined applies to current broadcasting celebrities. In this century, a baseball broadcaster may not make up a narrative from board games or telegraphic shorthand; the broadcaster may be the medium for defining and presenting the baseball team as part of a modern mythic community as well. But the status of Jon Miller's career at this juncture shows that the once simple creator of narrative plays a multiplicity of roles, which form an important dynamic in the modern-day baseball experience as marketed by the club owners. Jon Miller would surely attest it was simpler when it was a just a game.

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SMITH, RED. *Red Smith on Baseball: The Game's Greatest Writer on the Game's Greatest Years*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000. Pp. xi + 363. Illustrated. Index. \$24.95 cb.

Because sportswriting has always been treated as the bastard child of literature, those who enjoy it always want to anthologize and collect it in definitive volumes. This practice gives the work an air of scholarship and weightiness that no newspaper sports page ever could attain otherwise. The sports page, in its best form, is something we glance at—finding the box scores, skimming through the pertinent articles, and only going into deeper involvement with those one or two columns that grab our attention or mention the home team in some detail. A good sports column is a blend of journalism's objectivity with a touch of the poet's pen: a watercolor done in black and white, yet offering all the color and flavor of an event that is, by its very nature, ephemeral. A sports article is short. It is read in one quick sitting between stops on the commuter train or over a coffee during a break in a busy afternoon. It is not meant to be weighty, but effervescent; a recap of an arbitrary action, as all sport is, given a momentary purpose in the familiarity of print. The sports page is a context of the day's events, a history folded and refolded in on itself until the reader gains a sense of what took place in broad, general terms.

So, by its very nature, collections like *Red Smith on Baseball* can be aesthetic failures. At their best, they have to be read piecemeal, two maybe three articles at a time, to capture that newspaper flavor and the spirit of the transient. The trick in reading Red Smith is wanting to stop, since Smith was an exceptional sportswriter. But to try and plow through the book from beginning to end is to miss the charm of Red Smith's work. Sportswriting,