

Methodologically, *Mother's Taxi* is thorough and solid. The appendices clearly illuminate key elements of the research findings, as well as discussions about research assumptions, limitations and delimitations. Thompson also provides a brief, albeit informative, overview of tennis in Australia that helps the reader contextualize the research. While focusing on women, Thompson interviewed the fathers thus giving a more complete and complex account. Finally, brief descriptions of each woman help the reader understand their lives and experiences in more detail.

The immediate significance of *Mother's Taxi* to sport history is not clear as this is a sociological study. However, Thompson's methodology provides useful considerations for exploring women's hidden sporting lives. The use of interviews can shed invaluable light on the backstage aspects of sports while giving women a voice in their experiences. *Mother's Taxi* provides scholars with alternative perspectives on the gendered relations between socio-economic issues, such as divisions of labor, and social institutions, like marriage and compulsory heterosexuality that are played out in the arena of sport. Finally, Thompson gives the historian alternative avenues of exploration/explanations of "doing" sport.

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EARLY, GERALD, ED. *The Muhammad Ali Reader*. Hopewell N.J.: The Ecco Press, 1998. Pp. xx + 300. Introduction, illustrations, copyright acknowledgments. \$26.00 cb.
MARQUEE, MIKE. *Redemption Song: Muhammad Ali and the Spirit of the Sixties*. London: Verso Books, 1999. Pp. 310. Illustrations, note on sources. \$22.00 cb.

Since Muhammad Ali's torch lighting appearance at the 1996 Olympic Games, the boxer and his chronicled life have enjoyed somewhat of a popular culture renaissance—appearing in a documentary film, the subject of several books and even starring in a Super Bowl Sunday advertisement. Moreover, at the turn of the century, sports fans were inundated with what could be coined "century" awards—athlete of the century, boxer of the century, coach of the century, big play of the century and so on. The selection of "Athlete of the Century" was left to sport scribes and fans across the country and each selection initiated lengthy debates about who had been the choice and why, as well as who should have been selected. Muhammad Ali was always near the top of the lists, cited as one of the seven most significant athletes of all-time by Sports Illustrated and finishing third in ESPN's exhausting Top 100 of the century. Finishing one vote behind Babe Ruth, both Ali and Ruth finished behind Michael Jordan by a significant margin. Mike Marqusee and Gerald Early provide compelling evidence that confirms and supports Ali's placement at the top of these lists, and perhaps even why Ali has more accurately been the most significant sport figure in American history.

Mike Marqusee's *Redemption Song: Muhammad Ali and The Spirit of the Sixties* looks at one decade of Ali's life, the turbulent sixties. During this period, Ali wrested the heavyweight title from Sonny Liston, changed his name from Cassius Clay to Muhammad Ali, converted to the Nation of Islam, defended his title, traveled to Africa, defended his title

again and again, refused to be drafted into the Vietnam War, was stripped of his title and exiled from the ring, and in the end, emerged into the new decade to enter the ring and reclaim his title. Marqusee spends relatively little time on Ali as a boxer and his in-the-ring skills and abilities and instead focuses on Ali as a cultural icon. The title comes from a Bob Marley song, with each chapter title coming from song lyrics by Bob Dylan, Sam Cooke, and even the writings of William Shakespeare. He uses quotes from a variety of individuals, including Jerry Seinfeld, Langston Hughes, and Homer. Marqusee compares Ali and Bob Dylan throughout, which proves to be an interesting interpretation of both celebrities.

Marqusee uses an Ali quote, "I don't have to be what you want me to be," throughout as a reminder of Ali's independence and rejection of mainstream white America, both society and the sport establishment. The author returns to the quotation on more than one occasion, almost in an effort to lend some connectedness to his lengthy chapters. Two of the more interesting sections, and ones which merit further exploration and analysis, are the relationship of Muhammad Ali with Malcolm X, and Ali's trips to Africa, both after his initial winning of the title and for the Rumble in the Jungle fight in Zaire against George Foreman. Ali's relationship with Malcolm X was one that ultimately resulted in Ali remaining loyal to Elijah Muhammad after Malcolm X was expelled from the Nation of Islam. Marqusee recounts the relationship between the suspended leader and the young boxer prior to his victory over Liston. He also details an encounter Ali had with Malcolm X in Africa after his exile from the sect. Oddly, Marqusee wonders why Ali was absent in Spike Lee's film version of Malcolm X's life, and Malcolm X was absent from the film, *When We Were Kings*. In his autobiography, Malcolm X spends only a few pages on his interactions and assessments of Ali. Malcolm X had been dead for ten years when Ali met Foreman in Zaire. Ironically, it is a photo of Ali with Malcolm X gracing the book cover. Marqusee's account of Don King's emergence on the boxing scene is also interesting in light of King's dominance and manipulation of the contemporary boxing scene. Marqusee is an excellent storyteller, and his writing is rich with detail.

The five chapters are exhaustingly long and include some topics which might be better served had they been broken into shorter chapters. This would also eliminate some of the uneasy transitions between such segments of the book. The absence of footnotes or any reliance on outside sources is glaringly evident and frustrating. It is obvious that Marqusee read black newspapers, popular magazines, and other references, but he refuses to document his efforts and his "Notes on Sources" section is brief and hardly reflective of his efforts. Including such evidence would not only substantiate his arguments, it would lend him some credibility in the analysis of some of his original themes, such as his attempts to compare Ali with Bob Dylan and Sam Cooke, or the impact of Ali on other celebrities, as well as his international impact. The inclusion of such footnotes would not detract from the reading nor would it intimidate the popular reader.

A few errors only reinforce the need for footnotes. On page 30, Marqusee states that blacks were disallowed from football in 1934 and that the NFL allowed blacks back in the league during the fifties. Actually, according to Thomas G. Smith, blacks were allowed back into professional football during the same year as Jackie Robinson's 1946 entrance with the Montreal Royals. (See Thomas G. Smith's article "Outside the Pale: The Exclusion of Blacks From the National Football League, 1934-1946," *Journal of Sport History*

15 [winter 1988]: 255-289). He also overstates Paul Robeson's involvement in the campaign to break the color barrier in baseball. Robeson did attend a meeting, along with Wendell Smith and other black newspaper writers, with Commissioner Kenesaw Landis. But Robeson's one-day effort could hardly merit involvement considering the decade long campaign Smith and his colleagues had waged against organized baseball. (See David K. Wiggins, "Wendell Smith, the *Pittsburgh Courier* and the Campaign to Include Blacks in Organized Baseball, 1933-1945," *Journal of Sport History* 10 [summer 1983]: 5-29).

At other points, Marqusee introduces an idea but fails to follow up on it, or he makes a statement which leads the reader to want more, only to be disappointed. Some examples of this follow. The reader might be curious to know which other black newspapers, besides the *Philadelphia Afro-American*, portrayed Jackie Robinson as a white man's stooge after his HUAC testimony (p. 35). After Ali's victory over Liston, Marqusee tells a story about Ali talking on the phone with football player Jim Brown. The fighter was explaining to Brown that he would have to choose between Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X (p. 79). End of story?! At the bottom of page 68, Marqusee includes a note at the bottom of the page to spell out SNCC and the pronunciation of the acronym, almost as an explanation for someone who has no personal recollection of the sixties. Such a note is odd considering the absence of any other footnote throughout the entire book.

There is a brief section regarding the Black Power movement and the machismo attitudes that plagued the movement. However, Marqusee never challenges the machismo, instead he rationalizes it because the movement served as a model for other movements in the subsequent years. Moreover, he fails to mention Black Power and the 1968 Olympic protest of Tommie Smith and John Carlos—significant in part because it was one sporting event where sports and politics intersected and Ali was not directly involved.

Marqusee claims that Ali was a "principal public role model for conscientious objectors and draft resisters, [and that] he gave courage to thousands of young men" to resist the draft (p. 234). The reader is forced to imagine what young men were inspired, as no evidence, even anecdotal, is offered to substantiate his claims. Surely Ali's stance inspired others, but he faced an equally vocal group of opponents, both black and white. Moreover, can the resistance to the draft for young American men be attributed to Ali or a number of other factors related to politics and the war?

Marqusee credits Ali's presence on college campuses in the late 1960s as part of his speaking tour, as an impetus for the wave of black student activism on such campuses. He goes so far as to state that an Ali comment in the newspaper sparked the San Francisco State conflict in 1968. He fails to introduce Ali's comment nor the other reasons San Francisco State students might have for increased activism. In commenting on the change of the Students for a Democratic Society organization shifting from protest to resistance, Marqusee suggests that this was an evolution Ali was undergoing, although unwillingly. Readers may question this assumption, as the author provides no evidence to suggest that Ali was unwilling in his resistance. Marqusee notes that Elijah Muhammad had evaded the draft and was imprisoned. His son, Wallace, also evaded the draft. His follower, Malcolm X, was declared psychologically unfit for military service twice, as well as filing conscientious objector status. Is it really any surprise that Muhammad Ali would refuse to serve in the military, especially in light of the previous stances taken by those he admired and sought to imitate in a spiritual sense?

Marqusee is acutely accurate when he states that "Ali's entire boxing career was shaped by his intimate interaction with political and social change" (p. 6). Near the end of the book, the author states that Ali's fight in Zaire was a "most triumphal verse in Ali's own redemption song" (p. 265). One is forced to consider that though Ali may have experienced moments of redemption, specifically earning the title after his exile, the transition of Ali from an outspoken, braggadocious black man to his humbled and forever physically scarred American icon status is wrought with irony. Marqusee's book is another verse in the continuing ode to Ali, and he introduces several moments of the fighter's life which have not been examined nearly closely enough.

Gerald Early's collection of timeless essays and valuable primary documents comes from a variety of publications including *Playboy*, *The Black Scholar*, *The New Yorker*, *Life*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Black Sports*, *Pittsburgh Courier*, *Chicago Defender*, *Esquire*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *The Nation*, *Sport*, *The Southern Review*, and *The Washington Post*. Moreover, the pieces are authored by a lineup of famed boxing scribes, sport scribes, authors, and athletes, including A.J. Liebling, George Plimpton, Jimmy Cannon, Robert Lipsyte, Norman Mailer, Roger Kahn, Ira Berkow, Gordon Parks, Mark Kram, Pete Hamill, Tom Wolfe, Gay Talese, Joyce Carol Oates, LeRoi Jones, Floyd Patterson, José Torres, and Jackie Robinson. The book is divided into sections: writings from the sixties, seventies, eighties, and nineties, which allows the reader to engage in a time travel adventure through the Ali galaxy—some of the best and most insightful accounts written about Muhammad Ali the boxer and incredible individual.

Early warms up the reader with his introductory three-part essay, "Tales of the Wonderboy." He begins by stating his fear that Ali "may become absolutely overesteemed by the society in which he lives" and that this "would put him in danger of not only having his considerable significance misunderstood, but also, ironically, of being diminished as both a public figure and a black man of some illustrious complexity" (p. vii). The subsequent essays illustrate the complexity to which Early alludes. He, too, has noticed the recent adulation of Ali following his Olympic torch performance and the American public's overwhelmingly sympathetic response to the fighter's debilitating Parkinson's disease. Early asserts that the public "wants to drown him in a bathos of sainthood and atone for its guilt" (p. viii). Early cites the significance of Muhammad Ali's decision to remain loyal to the deracialized sect of the Muslim religion after Elijah Muhammad's death. Had Ali chosen to follow the new leader of the Nation of Islam, Louis Farrakhan, Early asserts that Ali would not have fared so well in public opinion and in the redemption of the fighter as a true American.

Some of the more interesting essays were three that chronicled Ali's brief relationship with Malcolm X. George Plimpton, George S. Schuyler and Jackie Robinson each authored an article which examined, among other things, the young fighter's new alliance with the Nation of Islam, a religion feared and loathed by mainstream America.

Fellow boxer and victim to Ali's fistic prowess, Floyd Patterson contributes an essay, "In Defense of Clay." The reader should be warned—do not be fooled by Patterson's patronizing "defense" of Clay. Readers familiar with Patterson will recognize the insecure fighter's need to be appreciated and viewed as a "good guy." Had Early selected another article authored by Patterson, the reader would read of Ali's misguided religion, as well as

Floyd's great white hope aspirations and his intentions to win back the title for America. In this sense, it is apparent that Early was forced to choose among thousands of pieces to accurately reflect the Ali as seen by the American public and press.

One of the most valuable things about each article is that it is a product of the time it was written—it is not reflecting back twenty years looking at Ali's life. It is, in a very real way, an opportunity to read about Ali's career through a variety of perspectives, though most of the authors seem to be quite taken with the boxer, even in the sixties.

In light of Ali's current fight with Parkinson's disease, several articles shed an ironic shadow on Ali's career and subsequent illness. In Robert Lipsyte's "I Don't Have To Be What You Want Me To Be," the author recalls a conversation he had with Ali prior to Ali's 1970 fight with Oscar Bonavena. The two were talking about ice hockey and the violent nature of the sport. After Lipsyte explained to Ali how players routinely get stitched up during a game and resume play, Ali wondered why "people let themselves get done like that" (p. 91). Lipsyte explained that most hockey players had come from poor families with little chance, besides hockey, for money and fame. Ali shook his head in disbelief and said, "Games is just for a little while, your face and teeth is all your life" (p. 91).

Davis Miller's "My Dinner With Ali," reads like a dream sequence. Miller spent an entire day with Ali and then an evening with the champ at his mother's Louisville home. He engaged in a conversation with Ali that addressed some of the more bitter ironies of Ali's career. Once a gifted speaker, Ali is often silent, ". . . he used to talk more easily . . . than anybody in the world. . . but it takes serious effort for him to communicate even with the people closest to him" (p. 242). A quick-footed fighter, Ali now stumbles.

Mark Kram, once a regular for *Sports Illustrated* in the sixties and now a contributing writer for *Esquire*, in "Great Men Die Twice," writes of Ali's efforts to age gracefully. "Getting old is the last display for the bread-and-circuses culture. Legends must suffer for all the gifts and luck and privilege given to them. Great men, it's been noted, die twice—once as great and once as men. With grace, preferably, which adds an uplifting, stirring Homeric touch. If the fall is too messy, the national psyche will rush toward it, then recoil; there is no suspense, no example in the mundane" (p. 249).

Ali's *Playboy* interview from 1975 is reminiscent of the old Ali, and the boxer speaks from what Mike Marqusee refers to as the "Malcolm X playbook." He describes Africa like he had never been there, when in fact he had made some of the very same comments about the continent after his first trip in 1964. The interview reveals some of Ali's sexist thinking, more so than any other essay in the collection. Ali also predicted that the money he was getting in the ring, over five million dollars a fight, would never be there for future champions.

Other articles speak to Ali as a popular culture icon and his celebrity status, as well as Ali's gifted ability to communicate in his own language to so many people. Hunter S. Thompson writes that Ali "would get rid of words altogether and live his own movie" (p. 198). Ishmael Reed attributed Ali's stardom and appeal to his ability to speak to the people in a way that they understood: "He is more effective because he speaks to Americans in American images, images mostly derived from comic books, television, and folklore" (p. 200). Marqusee, in *Redemption Song*, went so far as to compare Ali to cartoon star Bart Simpson. Still, others see Ali's reign as waning, or at least compromised by his retirement and illness. Garry Wills writes, "Ali will be a celebrity as long as he lives like the Duke

of Windsor. But he only rules from the ring. He has nothing, really to say, except with his fists" (p. 167). Wole Soyinka stated it more eloquently in his prose:

Polysyllables have failed to tease a rhyme

From the once nimble Louisville lips (p. 230).

Ultimately, after three decades of life in the spotlight, Ali has undergone tremendous change. He is a myth, a legend, a man. In the closing essay, "Ali's Amazing Grace: Still Preaching, Teaching, Now He Contemplates His 'House in Heaven,'" David Maraniss aptly states that Ali's "popularity transcends politics, race, country, and religion. He is universally accepted as a man who stood up for what he believed in and paid the price and prevailed" (p. 293).

Both Marqusee and Early contribute to the growing literature related to the worlds most famous athlete whose story is far from told. Ali is undoubtedly a man of great complexities, humorous, engaging, insecure, sincere, committed. Read together, the Early collection compliments the Marqusee version, providing some of the evidence Marqusee might have included. In closing his introductory essay, Early guesses that one of the reasons Ali is so embraced in contemporary society is that he, "like all great heroes . . . showed us the enormous possibility of the true meaning, the incendiary poetics, of actual self-determination" (p. xiv). It seems suitable to close with an Ali quote—"I don't have to be what you want me to be."

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KAHN, ROGER. *A Flame of Pure Fire: Jack Dempsey and the Roaring '20s*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1999. Pp. xv + 474. No notes; illustrations, acknowledgments, bibliography, index. \$28.00 cb.

WILEY, RALPH. *Serenity: A Boxing Memoir*. 1989. Reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, Bison Books, 2000. Pp. 242. No notes; index. \$13.95 pb.

Roger Kahn has been an outstanding sports journalist and has written sixteen books, most memorably *The Boys of Summer*. In this loving biography of his friend and hero, Jack Dempsey, Kahn proposes to write a life and times volume that gives particular emphasis to the 1920s when Dempsey was one of the shining heroes of the era. Kahn traces the entire life of Dempsey, from his days as hobo to club fighter, heavyweight champion, national icon, "and finally a gentleman of rare generosity and sincerity" who could do no wrong. This is not a critical biographer. No one would argue that Dempsey was an outstanding figure and one of the key sporting icons of the 1920s. However, Kahn goes further to assert, "More than any other individual, Jack Dempsey created big-time sports in America," (p. xi) a position he does not justify in his book.

Kahn devotes considerable attention to Dempsey's early boxing career, and his personal life before he became a national figure, most notably his life with first wife Maxine Cates, a prostitute whom he married when she was thirty-five and Dempsey had not yet turned twenty. Kahn examines Dempsey's years with his manager Doc Kearns, who helped