

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

make him into a household name, and Dempsey's absence from the military in World War I. Kahn subsequently examines in comparable detail Dempsey's life with his second wife, the actress Estelle Taylor. Kahn devotes around thirty pages to the slacker issue. Dempsey had filed for 4-A status, claiming his parents, a widowed sister, her three children, and his new wife Maxine, as his dependents as his justification for the requested exemption. Kahn also pointed out that Dempsey tried in October 1918 to get into the Navy. Dempsey encountered a lot of adverse publicity for his apparent draft dodging which manager Doc Kearns tried to obviate by claiming Dempsey was doing shipyard work between fights. Kearns had a photo distributed with Dempsey wearing a leather apron but forgot to get Dempsey to take off his patent leather shoes he was wearing, a dead giveaway. The issue heated up in 1920 when his newly divorced wife claimed she had many letters showing how Kearns and Dempsey had plotted to avoid the draft. This encouraged an assistant U.S. Attorney to indict Dempsey. In addition, most observers expected that Dempsey would go to jail. Their fight to stay out of jail took them to the White House and Joe Tumulty who got him a powerful, well connected San Francisco defense attorney, Gavin McNab, who charged them \$75,000. Dempsey's promoters, John Ringling and Tex Rickard, paid for the defense costs of \$150,000. Kahn subsequently examines in similar depth the legal predicament of Rickard who was accused of taking sexual liberties with underage girls. Incidentally, Kahn blames Rickard for Dempsey's failure to fight African American Harry Wills, the number one contender.

Kahn also examines the glory days of Dempsey in the ring when the Manassa Mauler was a "flame of pure fire." Kahn mentions or reports on thirty-eight fights, but an appendix of Dempsey's career would have been useful. Particular attention is given to the heavy-weight fights, notably Dempsey's triumph over champion Jess Willard and his defenses against Carpentier, Gibbons, Firpo, and Tunney. Kahn admits Dempsey should have been disqualified in the Firpo bout after he was knocked out of the ring semiconscious and was helped back into the ring. On the Tunney-Dempsey rematch in Chicago, Kahn argues that referee Dave Barry was a crooked referee (the choice of Jewish gangsters backing Tunney). Barry gave Tunney a long count in round seven, but in the eighth, when Dempsey was knocked down, the referee began counting immediately without forcing Tunney to a neutral corner. Dempsey arose before the count reached two.

This book was not written for sports fans and lacks scholarly apparatus. Kahn's narrative is very old fashioned biography—a life and times approach with a great deal of color about the era in which the subject lived that includes a lot of irrelevant background material. Modern biographers employ background to enhance the reader's understanding of the subject. However, in this book, it is merely space filler. We learn, for instance, the number of people killed in World War I, about the World War I exploits of Mata Hari and of Edith Cavell, a nurse who was executed for helping imprisoned British soldiers escape. Because Dempsey was born in Colorado, Kahn expounds on the Louisiana Purchase and Zebulon Pike's western explorations.

The text is very disorganized and hard to follow. Events occur out of chronological order. Dempsey's childhood, for instance is not discussed until almost the middle of the book (p. 175). There is considerable repetition, especially Kahn's fascination with Dempsey's maternal presumably Jewish grandmother. Kahn seems to feel that he alone understood

Dempsey and the boxing world of the 1920s and is not very gracious in his evaluation of the scholarship of Randy Roberts who, he argues, had “little feel for the scenes and stirring beat of boxing.” Maybe if Kahn had read *Papa Jack*, he might have had a different assessment. Kahn himself has numerous factual errors, including his misunderstanding of New York State boxing laws at the turn of the century (p. 55). He incorrectly states that Johnson was convicted of violating the Mann Act on the charges (p. 41) of Lucy Cameron, who later became his wife. Rather it was Belle Schreiber, a different scorned lover, who caused his indictment. Jackson did not flee the country with a “traveling Negro League baseball team called Foster’s Giants.” They were the Chicago American Giants, and the Negro League did not yet exist. A particularly egregious error was a quotation attributed to a Mr. A.V. Dalrymple, identified as a Chicago mayor in the early years of Prohibition (p. 141). I presume Kahn meant William Thompson, longtime mayor of Chicago (1915-1923, 1927-1931), who was recently voted the worst in American history. In sum, this is not the last word on Dempsey.

While Kahn deals with the world of boxing in the distant past, sportswriter Ralph Wiley reported on the boxing scene in the 1980s. *Serenity: A Boxing Memoir* was first published in 1989, yet despite its fine reviews, I had never heard of it. Editor Dan Ross of the University of Nebraska Press deserves our gratitude for putting the 1989 edition book back into print. Wiley is the author or co-author of several books, most recently *Born to Play: The Eric Davis Story*. He is a prominent sports journalist who has worked for the *Oakland Tribune* and *Sports Illustrated*. Wiley’s book is about the hard lives of inner city African American young men who are struggling to escape the tough life of the ghetto by being tougher than anyone else is. That environment offered a few a route to fame and fortune through pugilism. The book consists of several discrete essays that center on particular notable, and less notable, boxers. The book begins with an autobiographical chapter, in part to establish Wiley’s bona fide credentials as a boxing expert. Wiley was born in Memphis but grew up in Los Angeles, where his uncle, a former prizefighter, taught him the rudiments.

The book consists of eight chapters of Wiley’s reportage. There is a colorful description of the Las Vegas boxing scene in the early 1980s where Wiley covered the Muhammad Ali-Larry Holmes bout. Holmes was then WBC champion at thirty years old, while Ali was trying to regain the heavyweight crown at the advanced age of 38. Ali was Holmes’s hero, and the latter demonstrated his respect for the former champion by backing off in the seventh round when Ali was wide open for a knockout. Holmes retained his WBC crown before the 12th round on a TKO. Among the men Holmes had bested in his long winning streak was former champion Ken Norton two years earlier. Norton, unlike many other fighters, had gotten out of the ring with his faculties but ironically also ended up brain damaged because of an auto accident.

Refreshingly, Wiley did not devote most of his attention to the heavyweights but to the more interesting lighter weight fighters, particularly the welterweight division (147 lbs.), which in the 1980s was the strongest division in the fight game. Wiley reported on the champions and also the journeyman. In a chapter entitled “Pandora’s Box,” Wiley examined the mortality of the prize ring, focusing on the unfortunate Duk Koo Kim-Ray “Boom Boom” Mancini lightweight championship in 1982. Each of them landed an incredible number of blows on the other. In the fourteenth round Kim collapsed and later

died. It was at Caesar's Palace and nationally televised. Wiley found that Kim had trained hard and was well prepared and had intended to fight to the last breath if necessary. Wiley also reviewed several other fights that ended in fatalities like the Griffith-Paret championship fight that was also televised.

Most of the coverage was devoted to the charismatic Sugar Ray Leonard, the 1976 Olympic lightweight champion. Leonard was not a physically imposing man but had great skill, speed and outstanding ring generalship. He met his match with Robert Duran, a renowned finisher with accurate "hands of stone." He was a well-balanced fighter who punched with either hand and was at the same time a great defensive fighter with an iron will. At the time of the match Duran had not lost in eight years and had a record of 69-1. Duran decisioned Leonard in fifteen rounds in Montreal and took the welterweight championship. Wiley further examined the rematch six months later in New Orleans, in which Duran shockingly quit, blurting out "no mas, no mas," giving Leonard a sixth round TKO. The man who was considered the toughest man in the ring, pound for pound, who gave no quarter and asked for none, had given up. This was a huge shock to the boxing world. Wiley explains Duran's perspective. In the post-fight interview, Duran's words were interpreted to mean he had a stomachache, but Wiley feels Duran meant that his stomach was hurting from Leonard's blows. The body attack had slowed down Duran's fighting power. Duran was unable to counter and defend himself and was looking foolish. He was beaten, and there was no point going on. Duran was being professionally prudent and saw no glory in getting battered. He would come back another day.

In one stretch, Leonard defeated four fighters in a row who had a combined record of 177-1-1. The most outstanding of these fights may have been the Leonard-Hearns fight of September 17, 1981, which Wiley regarded as the best he had ever personally attended. He does a very good job describing their different physiques and comparing their skills. They were considered equal in punching speed, with Hearns having the much greater reach but less tactical skills. In the beginning of the fight, Hearns took the initiative using his superior punching skills against the superior boxer. Then in the sixth round, both fighters switched tactics, and Hearns became the master boxer, and Leonard the puncher. As the fight entered the fourteenth round, Hearns was ahead on points, and Leonard knew that he could only win with a knockout. He could barely see what he was doing; Leonard had to get a KO to win. In what was likely Leonard's greatest moment, he pulled out the victory with a knockout. Wiley spends considerable time in the book analyzing Hearns and his original trainer, Emmanuel Steward of the noted Kronk Boxing Club in Detroit. Wiley had a lot of empathy for Steward who suffered many slights in the press and from U.S. Olympic boxing officials in 1984, which the author blamed on racism.

Wiley examined the career of Sugar Ray Robinson, based on interviews with Robinson's mother, son, and second wife. He also provided a fascinating portrait of the young Mike Tyson. The nineteen-year-old Tyson was a powerful man, but Wiley pointed out, no more so than Sonny Liston, George Foreman, or Joe Louis. Wiley analyzed Tyson's personal life and problems, such as his street fight with Michael Green and his difficult marriage with Robin Givens. He argued that Tyson was a troubled young man but concluded he was not suffering from manic depression.

Wiley did an excellent job of getting up close and personal, always perceptive and sensitive. However, he did not merely report what he saw but carefully analyzed the

significance of what he observed. I never really figured out the title of the book, which might be an ounce too cute. I did not find serenity inside the ring. I would have liked the afterward in the new edition to have returned to some of the themes in the text and reanalyzed the boxers and their world that he had reported on. This is a terrific book, and I strongly recommend it to anyone interested in boxing.

These two books on boxing are about as different as they could possibly be. One lesson to readers of this journal might be that journalists should leave history to the historians, and we historians should leave journalism to the journalists. Writing is a sufficiently difficult task when one is in one's milieu. Stepping outside one's domain is a daunting venture and should be approached with caution.

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THOMAS, HENRY W. *Walter Johnson: Baseball's Big Train*. With a foreword by Shirley Povich. 1995. Reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, Bison Books, 1998. Pp. xiii + 496. Illustrations, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. \$22.50 pb.

HIGBE, KIRBY WITH MARTIN QUIGLEY. *The High Hard One*. 1967. Reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, Bison Books, 1998. Pp. 189. Afterward by co-author Martin Quigley. No illustrations, appendices, notes, bibliography or index. \$11.00 pb.

Over the past decade and a half, university presses such as Illinois, Nebraska, and Oxford, among others, have seemingly *discovered* sport history and have created series to encourage publication in this area. These three, in particular, have been primary leaders in this genre, and sport scholars have every reason to be grateful for such support. With highly qualified scholar/editors shepherding the respective series, each house has added immeasurably to the literature. While focusing primarily on original work, Nebraska and Illinois have also chosen to produce reprint editions of previously published books deemed to be of merit and of interest for both scholars and the general reading public.

Serious, scholarly biography has become something of a cottage industry within sport history in recent years. Carefully crafted, well-documented studies of major figures within a range of sports include Susan Cayleff's *Babe: The Life and Legend of Babe Didrikson Zabarias* (1995), Charles Fountain's *Sportswriter: The Life and Times of Grantland Rice* (1993), Peter Levine's *A. G. Spalding and the Rise of Baseball: The Promise of American Sport* (1985), and David Zang's *Fleet Walker's Divided Heart: The Life of Baseball's First Black Major Leaguer* (1995). Commercial houses, while traditionally publishing works by professional writers and journalists and eschewing footnotes, endnotes, extensive bibliography and other such *distractions* for the general reader, have recently begun releasing higher quality biographies with varying degrees of documentation. These include Mark Ribowsky, *The Power and the Darkness: The Life of Josh Gibson in the Shadows of the Game* (1996); Charles Alexander, *John McGraw* (1988); Dennis and Jeanne DeValeria, *Honus Wagner: A Biography* (1996); David Pietrusza, *Judge and Jury: The Life and Times of Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis* (1998); and Bryan Di Salvatore, *A Clever Base-Ballist: The Life and Times of John Montgomery Ward* (1999).