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Richard Hofstadter: An Intellectual Biography (review)

Regina Morantz-Sanchez

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RACE AND SPORT: The Struggle for Equality On and Off the Field. Edited by Charles K. Ross. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi. 2004.

Race and Sport is a collection of essays. All relate to the topic, but because the area is so extensive, the essays do not form a cohesive body of work. Topics, approaches, and quality vary from one essay to the next. Together, the essays constitute a collection that will provide useful reference and starting points for whomever would understand the subject.

Perhaps the most useful essay of the collection (at any rate, useful to me as I am interested in the long-term integration of professional baseball) is "Major League Baseball's Separate and Unequal Doctrine" by Michael Lomax. Lomax traces the action by some major league teams to cope with racial discrimination in Southern spring training settings in the early 1960s, long after the original integration of baseball. It is one thing to say the teams "did something" about the segregation practices that nettled black and Latino players. It is another to depict the action by powerful (read good) players to pressure teams to refuse to allow discrimination against spring training players. One wonders whether segregated housing, dining, and entertainment would have ever been corrected had certain players and, consequently, clubs taken decisive action.

Three essays take up subjects of which most of us are blissfully unaware: the important role of Fritz Pollard in the early development of professional football, the existence, and impact, of women's basketball in small black colleges during the first half of the twentieth century, and the socially conscious business practices of the great boxer, Sugar Ray Robinson, and a few contemporary, wealthy athletes as well. Patrick Miller discusses the forlorn efforts of black commentators to change white attitudes about black people by pointing to the virtues of black sportsmen.

Gerald Gems attempts to connect the expansion of American sports to the expansion of American power and influence in the Pacific region, along with cultural resistance to such influence. A quotation illustrates the vulnerability of broad claims about culture: "Cerefino Garcia developed his famed 'bolo punch' to symbolize his Filipino sentiments" (112). Whatever Garcia may have said, he used the bolo punch to win matches, not to make cultural statements for future historians!

The remaining two essays are about a current issue, the student-athlete. Earl Smith presents some realities about black students in "white" colleges. Most of them are athletes and many have been handicapped by a variety of serious social problems. Institutions must heed reality if they are to provide a good education to this population. Keith Harrison and Alicia Valdez provide an idea on how colleges might improve the academic performance of black athletes. The "scholar-baller" model takes these young men and women where they are at and attempts to inculcate an academic side to the "athlete role" which is ordinarily seen as involving little beyond "staying eligible."

Any scholar who is serious about the subject of race and sport will find this volume useful.

University of the Pacific

John Phillips

RICHARD HOFSTADTER: An Intellectual Biography. By David S. Brown. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2006.

In 1963, the year British historian E. P. Thompson published *The Making of the English Working Class*, Richard Hofstadter, whom biographer David S. Brown ranks in intellectual significance in the United States with Charles Beard, won a second Pulitzer

Prize for his iconoclastic *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*. Both men had a profound impact on the writing of history. Each struggled to move beyond the deterministic frameworks of orthodox Marxism by exploring the relationship of socio-economic factors to culture. Both turned to social science for new theoretical perspectives: Thompson to anthropology, Hofstadter to sociology and psychology. Thompson's work remained a "must read," passing from hand to hand among a generation of New Left historians in the United States. But many of Hofstadter's best writings were lumped together rather unfairly by the 1970s generation with the "consensus school," a self-congratulatory genre of historical cheerleading associated most notably with Daniel Boorstin, who celebrated the "genius" of American politics those younger scholars dismissed.

Thompson and Hofstadter were both drawn to history by what the latter described as a "sense of engagement with contemporary problems" (1). Thompson, a member of the Communist Party Historians' Group between 1946–1956, left the party in 1956, but retained his passionate commitment to expanding Marxist analysis. A teacher of adult education in Leeds when he completed *Making* and founder of the Center for the Study of Social History at the University of Warwick in 1965, he inspired generations of social historians.

In contrast, Hofstadter's time on the American Left was brief. Born and educated in Buffalo, he joined the Young Communist League at the University of Buffalo during the Depression and hung out with left-wing students, drawn partly by the charismatic influence of his fellow philosophy student and first wife, Felice Swados (the sister of novelist, poet, and social critic Harvey Swados), whose Jewish-inflected radicalism not only encouraged his activism, but also offered an entrée into the energetic Jewish secularism of this decade.

But by the 1960s writing history in the United States meant immersion in a socio-political milieu quite different from Britain, whose intellectual and political landscape was shaped by a labor movement with strong socialist and Communist traditions. If Brown does not explore this comparison, his meticulous "extended conversation" with Hofstadter's writings delivers the tools to do so. Hofstadter well understood the link between his milieu and the history he wrote. Of the 1930s, he noted, the "events of those years no doubt . . . influenced my views on the past." "I know it is risky," he confessed in 1960, but writing history came "out of my engagement with the present."

Prosperity and anti-unionism meant the postwar United States lacked a political context affected by the institutions and social structures of an assertive working class. Initially a critic of FDR—Hofstadter's master's thesis on southern sharecropping indicted his unwillingness to confront southern Democrats over cheap black labor—he lasted only four months in the Communist Party, rapidly discouraged by its dogmatism. McCarthyism proved more disillusioning still. Its irrationalism led him toward non-materialist explanations for political behavior, just like the British Marxists. But while Thompson unearthed a revolutionary tradition embedded in the small acts of working class life, Hofstadter's wariness of mass movements grew. He turned to psychology and notions of status anxiety, gravitating to Horkheimer and Adorno's "authoritarian personality" to explain how ideas functioned in history. Learning much from social science in a collegial relationship with C. Wright Mills at the University of Maryland, his return to Columbia three years after his PhD in 1946 proved critical. "Columbia did not make Hofstadter," Brown notes, "but it stimulated his intellect in a way that no other university in any other city could" (167).

Hofstadter once remarked, "I spent a lot of years acquiring a Jewish identity, which is more cultural than religious" (53). Only half-Jewish, he lacked the ethnic "habitus" that might have enabled his more discerning Jewish graduate students to recognize him

as a fellow Jew. Yet it was among Columbia's liberal Jewish intellectuals that this son of an immigrant intermarriage between an Eastern European Jewish furrier and a German Lutheran mother found a home. Hofstadter was invited into what Daniel Bell called "the West Side Kibbutz," a group that included Bell, Seymour Martin Lipset, Lionel Trilling, Fritz Stern, Peter Gay, and Walter Metzger. Hofstadter's debt to Morningside Heights was molded by these friends and colleagues.

A sharp critic of capitalism and deeply suspicious of rightwing anti-Communists, Hofstadter also mistrusted "the people" as too easily manipulated. The university became his refuge, where he believed the free exchange of ideas remained crucial to democracy. Beleaguered and confused by the student rebellions of the 1960s, he reserved his sharpest criticism for white students, whose self-indulgent bating of the police he felt threatened academic freedom.

What is missing from Brown's treatment of this period and from much of the biography, however, is an analysis of Hofstadter's views on race. Brown notes his sympathy for black sharecroppers in his master's thesis, his support for the civil rights movement, and his willingness to defend the rights of certain prominent individuals—Angela Davis and Eldridge Cleaver, for example—who were threatened by the security state. But he barely mentions that Columbia students protested not only the Vietnam War, but the university's plan for a new gymnasium in an African-American neighborhood, displacing black residents and denying them access to the new facility. These students believed the university to be a microcosm of U.S. inequalities. Nor does Brown discuss the debate over racial preferences in the mid-1960s between black intellectuals and liberal, primarily Jewish academics. Here Brown's methodology, which utilizes Hofstadter's published writings to frame his narrative, does not serve him well. In 1964, Columbia graduate Norman Podhoretz, freshly installed editor of *Commentary Magazine*, launched a roundtable on "Liberalism and the Negro" which, in retrospect, laid bare pluralism's inadequacies, especially with regard to how race worked to block social mobility for African Americans. Several members of the "Upper West Side Kibbutz" eventually joined in a heated conversation with black intellectuals, including James Baldwin and City University psychologist Kenneth B. Clark, which continued into the 1970s. Jewish social scientists including Nathan Glazer, Bell, Lipset, and others brandished immigrant Jewish success as proof of pluralism and opportunity in U.S. society, even for oppressed minorities. They considered African Americans as any other ethnic group, eventually faulting, not the larger society, but the inadequacies of black community institutions. There are hints in Brown's analysis of Hofstadter's last published work, *America at 1750*, that he took his cues on the emerging racial crisis from his pluralist colleagues in the Upper West Side Kibbutz, but what else did he think about these divisive issues?

Despite these omissions, Brown has captured Hofstadter's intellectual complexity, his brilliance as a writer, thinker, mentor, colleague, and friend, with considerable skill and sensitivity.

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Regina Morantz-Sanchez

DARK SIDE OF THE MOON: The Magnificent Madness of the American Lunar Quest.
By Gerard DeGroot. New York: New York University Press. 2006.

Gerard A. DeGroot's survey summarizes other volumes about the first 25 years of the U.S. human spaceflight program. On top of works by William E. Burrows, Paul Dickson, Howard McCurdy, Walter McDougall, Tom Wolfe, and others, DeGroot then stacks an upper stage of unconventional analysis. Though not included in his bibliography or notes,