

by developing a postmodern ethnography predicated on dialogical performances with subaltern communities.

Early in her study, Batiste claims that each chapter will illuminate “the way black people have engaged with and produced notions of identity and power” (p. 23). This language suggests an emphasis on artist intention, however Batiste does not always showcase the people making choices and seizing representational power. During a discussion of the legendary 1936 production of *Macbeth* by the Negro unit of the Federal Theatre Project (FTP). Batiste explains why her analysis occasionally neglects artists. As a scholar, she identifies a complex cultural agenda at work in the FTP’s heyday, an agenda that combined modernist and proletarian traditions. Yet, Batiste intentionally stops short of ascribing this self-conscious agenda to FTP artists. On the final page of her epilogue, Batiste writes, “radical recognition across national and cultural differences takes conscious effort and a looking characterized by intention” (p. 259). This statement also suggests genuine interest in conscious artistic effort, but Batiste’s dazzling observations often overshadow the culture producers.

For example, in a marvelous analysis of the 1927 silent promotional film *A Pictorial View of Idlewild, Michigan*, Batiste reveals how the film combines city and frontier and disrupts the process of overcivilization with natural views, but she never mentions the director who decided what to shoot. Amid an excellent dissection of the producer and director Oscar Micheaux’s obsession with black bodies playing white characters, we never hear from Micheaux on this subject. The artistic teams that created *Two-Gun Man from Harlem* (1938) and *The Devil’s Daughter* (1939) are applauded for breaking imperialist expectations, but the films’ directors and writers are never fully integrated into the conversation.

Fortunately, in her chapter on the film *Stormy Weather* (1943) Batiste does highlight artist contributions. In a truly revelatory reading of the film’s existentialist urban ballet she treats this modern dance piece as a stylistic break from an otherwise realistic Hollywood studio picture. According to Batiste, Dunham’s choreography re-created seven different black spaces to embody communal and idiosyncratic notions

of belonging and alterity. During this final interpretive crescendo, Batiste achieves an impressive balance, as she weaves her intentional search for modernism, national power, alienation, and inclusion with Dunham’s conscious artistic choices.

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“If You Were Only White”: The Life of Leroy “Satchel” Paige. By Donald Spivey. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2012. xxviii, 347 pp. \$29.95.)

Donald Spivey’s *“If You Were Only White”* claims that its greatest concern is restoring the contributions of Leroy “Satchel” Paige to the public mind. It argues that the life and legacy of Paige was the foundation upon which the careers of players such as Jackie Robinson were built. Since, however, those initially drawn to this book will already understand those realities prior to opening it, Spivey’s ability to move beyond the bar established by his own modesty is the core of the work’s success. The great triumph of *“If You Were Only White”* is that it manages to provide considered insight and new biographical information to history’s most discussed, most researched, most celebrated Negro leagues player.

Equally significant, though Spivey is rightly impressed with Paige—the historical actor as well as the ballplayer—this is not a work of celebration. The study of black baseball can, at times, drift into hagiographic reverence for its subject. Along with other historical niches—the Civil War is another—Negro leagues historiography often falls victim to what I will call “Star Trek syndrome,” wherein researchers become fans and the pure joy of the subject overtakes a scholar’s objectivity and affects the possibility of critical appraisal. For the Civil War, the syndrome leads to battle reenactments and the like. For Negro leagues historiography, the syndrome causes a sympathy with and uncritical celebration of black ballplayers. It causes an emphasis on games, records, and statistics over a broad contextual narrative that concerns itself far more with the place of black baseball in sport, in popular culture, in the press, and in

the civil rights narrative. Spivey—despite twelve years of research, twelve years of exposure—does not fall victim to Star Trek syndrome.

Spivey's Paige is that most quintessential of Americans: a pragmatist. He carved a middle ground between the submissiveness of Joe Louis and the more overt showmanship of, say, Jack Johnson, to take examples from boxing. He always maintained a healthy interest in his public persona, and he understood the racial significance of his reputation and actions. To that end, he cultivated relationships with white promoters such as J. L. Wilkinson and Abraham Saperstein, as well as with the columnists and reporters of the black press. The strategy was smart, if not necessary, because, as Spivey reminds us, though talk of Paige often devolves into laments about his career in the shadows of the major leagues, never to see the light of the Cleveland Indians until 1948, Paige was a legitimate superstar throughout most of his professional career.

The prescience of Spivey's analysis, however, is matched by the breadth of his research. Though Paige is probably the most documented Negro leagues player, Spivey managed to unearth new documents. He also interviewed the Paige family closely, all of which combines to create the fullest ever portrait of the pitcher—from his often-misunderstood early years to the international controversy over his play for the Rafael Trujillo-led Dominican Republic. And so Spivey has not written a baseball book in the tradition of Star Trek syndrome. He has created a nuanced, complete portrait of one of the most important black cultural icons of the twentieth century.

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Conspiracy of Silence: Sportswriters and the Long Campaign to Desegregate Baseball. By Chris Lamb. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012. xvi, 397 pp. \$39.95.)

For many years, as Chris Lamb notes in *Conspiracy of Silence*, the narrative of baseball's integration was focused on Branch Rickey, the Brooklyn Dodgers executive who in 1945 broke baseball's sixty-year unwritten ban on

hiring African American players into the major or minor leagues. Jules Tygiel's *Baseball's Great Experiment* (1983) and Arnold Rampersad's *Jackie Robinson* (1997) began to shift the narrative focus from Rickey to the heroism and sacrifices of the player he selected, Jackie Robinson. While Lamb does not intend to detract from that powerful and mythic story, his work provides a thorough and definitive examination of the context in which Rickey's decision to move forward with integration unfolded. Lamb does not question the importance of what Robinson and Rickey did, but he does provide convincing evidence that the integration of baseball did not take place only as the result of one baseball executive's independent actions.

Lamb focuses on the role the press did (and did not) play in the decade leading up to Robinson's entry. He thoroughly examines the efforts of two cohorts of sportswriters, one for the black press (primarily the papers in New York City, Chicago, and Pittsburgh) and one for the Communist party newspaper, the *Daily Worker*. He shows how these writers consistently and urgently pointed out the hypocrisy of segregated baseball for an entire decade before Rickey and Robinson. They documented the willingness of many owners, managers, and players to have blacks on their teams. They pursued baseball's commissioner, Kenesaw Mountain Landis, forcing him to make public assertions that there was, in fact, no ban—at least not in writing. They engineered tryouts with team owners to showcase the talents of Negro League players, and they engaged trade unions and progressive politicians in the fight.

By contrasting their efforts to encourage baseball's integration with what he terms the mainstream dailies' "conspiracy of silence," Lamb makes a persuasive argument that had white sportswriters joined the black and communist writers in their efforts (or even permitted black sportswriters membership in the Baseball Writers Association) "the baseball establishment would have had to listen" (p. 333). As a result, integration might have involved more players or even whole teams from the segregated world of the Negro League and more of the major and minor league teams would have integrated black players sooner and more effectively.

Lamb indicts the mainstream press on two counts. They failed to tell the story of race relations,

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