

history) as a coherent entity. Holding that the past simply has no plot, no coherence, no inherent rationality might be claiming to know too much. Why risk it? Or, can be we now be absolutely certain that “historical reality is non-narrative and non-verbal in nature” (42)?

What generally took place in history seminar rooms after White’s famous linguistic turn was probably a good deal less than philosophers tend to expect. One would hope that Kuukkanen’s book will be used for studying methodological issues in those very seminar rooms, given that, among other things, he maps the latest philosophical quarrels about historiography with admirable clarity.

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**Raanan Rein and David M. K. Sheinin (eds.), *Muscling in on New Worlds. Jews, Sport and the Making of the Americas*. Leiden: Brill, 2014. 203 pages. ISBN: 9789004284487.**

The introduction to this collection states that the nine articles “advance the common theme of sport as an avenue by which Jews threaded the needle of asserting a Jewish identity while ... integrating a range of identities that dovetailed with their Jewishness in myriad forms.” The individual chapters consider subjects as varied as traditional sports like soccer, baseball and boxing as well Jewish yoga, cinema and Jewish Latin American fiction and soccer. They seek to refute the common stereotype of the bookish, effeminate Jewish male and at the same time demonstrate how Jewish men and women have participated in athletic activities on the national and international stage.

The initial article “What Ray Arcell Saw in the Shower” by David Sheinin describes what he sees as the end of Jewish boxing. However, more significantly, the text involves performing Jewishness. The reference is to Jewish heavyweight champion Max Baer’s trainer claiming Baer was uncircumcised, thus precluding his Jewishness despite his boxing trunks being adorned with a Jewish star. Sheinin further discusses Mike Rossman, a light-heavyweight champ in the 1970s, who also wore the star on his trunks. Rossman’s real name was Michael DiPiano. This clearly questions their perceived identities.

Raanan Rein’s “My Bobeh was Praying and Suffering for Atlanta” details the connection between Jewish Argentines and the ability of soccer as

a sport and a specific local team to facilitate the assimilation of a minority group into mainstream society. Like baseball in the United States and hockey in Canada, the ability to comprehend, talk about soccer and be a spectator (or baseball in the case of Abraham Cahan's *Yekl*) provides an understanding of new surroundings. The labeling of Atlanta fans as *russos* [Jews; be they Jewish or not] could be seen as both anti-Semitic and as ethnic pride in much the same manner as Spurs supporters in London.

Probably the most interesting and illuminating article concerns novels about soccer and Jews in Argentina and Peru. Alejandro Meter's "Jewishness in Sport" discusses the difficulties of Jewish assimilation in strongly hierarchic and Catholic societies in general and, like Rein's, the vehicle of soccer assisting the assimilation process; it also reveals that there is a Jewish literary tradition in Latin America, which for most Americanists will come as a bolt from the blue. Both the Peruvian Isaac Goldemberg's *Play by Play* and the Argentinean Ricardo Feierstein's *Mestizo* have been translated and detail the way soccer unites minority Jews, often clearly perceived as Other, with their mainstream national cultures. *Mestizo*, or hybridity, demonstrates how a Jewish father and son can experience both their Jewishness and *argentinidad* through the victory of the team they support. Acceptance in *Play by Play* appears even more difficult as the protagonist is only half Jewish and must first accept his Jewish identity before attempting to be received as a hybrid Peruvian.

"The Clothes They Wear and the Time They Keep," by Jeffrey S. Gurock, raises issues not commonly considered by Americanists and/or sports scholars: religious constraints placed on Jewish athletes, i.e. competing on the Sabbath and religious holidays, team uniforms and covering the body. This is probably because we commonly believe that Orthodox practitioners are not sports-minded. Internationally, we are aware of this in the case of Islamic women athletes. However, Yeshivah University and Stern College for Women compete intercollegiately and sports' governing bodies must permit men to play with yarmulkes attached with bobby pins to their head (thought to be dangerous) and women to play with much more of their bodies covered. Furthermore, concessions are made concerning scheduling games not to coincide with religious observance.

Gerald R. Gems's article "Jews, Sport and the Construction of an American Identity" is an overview of Jewish American participation in athletic activity from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century through the 1960s. Gems discusses the desire of Jews to assimilate into mainstream society and cites as early ex-

amples athletic programs of various Jewish organizations which sought to express Jewish manliness and thus their Americanness. He cites the boxer Barney Ross serving as a Marine, his heroism in the Pacific during World War II and his “iconic status as a true American.” The rampant anti-Semitism and exclusion athletes suffered prior to World War II is also noted, for example, the Olympic committee’s decision not to run two Jewish sprinters at the 1936 games in Berlin, or the abuse often encountered by baseball star Hank Greenberg, who played in a Detroit led by such anti-Semites as Henry Ford and Father Charles Coughlin.

Rebecca T. Alpert’s “The Macho-Mensch” also considers the significance of Greenberg, and Sandy Koufax, as examples of Jewish masculinity. Alpert uses not only the stardom of Greenberg and Koufax to explode the bookish stereotype, but creates the category of “macho-mensch,” which is reflected in the combination of strength and gentleness; this combination had arisen in the creation of the Superman comic book hero by two Jewish teenagers in the 1930s. Greenberg and Koufax embody this in three ways: they are outstanding athletes, ethical human beings, and connected to their Jewish identity through loyalty and bravery. Though neither was particularly observant, both refused to play on Yom Kippur, the highest Jewish holiday. Their ethical behavior is evidenced by Greenberg’s strong support and friendship with Jackie Robinson and Koufax, particularly in the 1950s, keeping company with his team’s black players, who incidentally protected him against the anti-Semitism of white players, and his advocacy of players’ rights and contract negotiations.

Published in a series entitled “Jewish Latin America” *Muscling in on New Worlds* is, however, heavily weighted towards the United States. This is a shortcoming of the collection. Americanists and Jewish Studies scholars are perhaps provincial in their neglect of the areas to the south, and the experiences of Argentine Jews are strikingly similar to those of their North American co-religionists. The articles on soccer and fiction confirm this notion, and considering the wealth of sources, more articles should have been provided on Latin American topics.

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