

Charles K. Ross, **OUTSIDE THE LINES: AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE INTEGRATION OF THE NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE**, New York and London: New York University Press, 1999.

C. L. R. James prefaces his magisterial autobiographical work on cricket, *Beyond a Boundary* (1994 [1963]), with a provocative and paradoxical query. 'What do they know of cricket,' he asks, 'who only cricket know?' The question is essentially rhetorical for every page of James's seminal text is predicated on the proposition that West Indian cricket cannot be properly understood unless seen as part and parcel of British culture and colonialism. The implications for the study of ethnic and racial relations are considerable. Looking beyond the usual boundaries of sporting practices – or, as Charles K. Ross might put it, 'outside the lines' – reveals not only the racialized structure of sport but also sport's vastly under-appreciated impact on racial formations in general.

It was not just the parallels between the titles that put me in mind of James's work when I began reading Ross's history of the integration of American professional football. It was also the fact that Ross wants to argue, much like James before him, that sport did not just reproduce the dominant racial order but, in fact, served as a cultural site in and through which that order was contested and transformed. 'Sport,' according to Ross, 'was the first postwar battleground for blacks in their fight against racial discrimination' (p. 119). That Ross's book fails to live up to James's masterpiece in defending this thesis is not surprising. What is surprising, however, is how little Ross seems to realize the territory he is in.

*Outside the Lines* is not without its merits. The book provides a useful compendium of key incidents, organizations, and the individuals in the NFL's early racial history. Colourful personalities, anecdotes and quotations are also peppered throughout. Ross tells, for example (p. 88), of how the great Los Angeles end Woody Strode refused to stay at the Stevens Hotel in Chicago in the 1940s, not so much because he had initially been turned away for being black but because he didn't want to return the tidy sum of \$100 that the Rams had given him to find different accommodation, and because jazz legend Count Bassey was playing at the African American hotel where he ended up. Ross also reminds us that black football stars, Willie Galimore of the Chicago Bears and Baltimore's Gene 'Big Daddy' Lipscombe among them, stumped for John F. Kennedy during his successful 1960 Presidential campaign. Such vignettes capture both the prominence of African American athletes and the ironies of racial segregation. Most of all, Ross's book demonstrates that the desegregation of American sport was never inevitable or certain but resulted only from a great deal of struggle and self-sacrifice. A quote from Strode underscores the point: 'If I have to integrate heaven,' he reflected near the end of his life, 'I don't want to go' (p. 104).

Unfortunately such tidbits are too few and far between. More problematically, the analytical points that underlie them are rarely even articulated. To the extent that Ross offers an argument about the broader racial significance of sport, it is mainly by trying to place his football story in the context of the larger history of American race relations. But 'context' here tends to be primarily a page or two at the start of a section and sits disconnected from the details of sport desegregation. The question of what accounts for NFL integration is never really resolved either. Ross mentions many contributing factors: the activism of black sports writers, economic demands (black players helped to win games, but black fans also turned out to be among the most prolific NFL patrons), governmental pressures, and sport's own colour-blind ideals. But these are introduced only in scattered, ad hoc fashion. Such shortcomings would not have been so noticeable if the book had more original research to offer, but as it is essentially a synthesis of existing literature one expects much more in terms of argument and analysis.

My reading of *Outside the Lines* may reflect, ultimately, less on it than on the state of academic publishing on sport and of sport scholarship itself. Too often, it seems to me, James's famous question about what it means to 'know sport' reads as an indictment against current scholarly work in the area rather than as a clarion call whose challenge has

been taken up and answered. There are, to be sure, notable exceptions. In American race and sport history, for example, I think of the work of scholars like David Wiggins, Gerald Early and Jeffrey Sammons; Jules Tygiel's study of Jackie Robinson and the integration of Major League Baseball (published in 1983) sets a standard that remains unmatched. (Indeed, it is unfortunate that Ross did not draw more from these works). Nevertheless, these works are still mainly about the role of race *within* the world of sport not the relationships *between* sport and race broadly conceived. And until a compelling, systematic argument about these relationships and the racial significance of sport is made, I am afraid even the best scholarly work in the area will remain marginal to serious academic consideration. Those who do not know or care about sport will continue to ignore it, thus missing all that broader, critical treatment of it can reveal about the depth of racism and the complexity of struggles against racism in the contemporary world.

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Jared N. Day, **URBAN CASTLES: TENEMENT HOUSING AND LANDLORD ACTIVISM IN NEW YORK CITY, 1890-1943**, New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, xii + 262 pp., £30.50 and £12.00 (paper).

In *Urban Castles*, Jared N. Day sheds new light upon the familiar subject of New York City's early twentieth-century tenement districts. Mostly inhabited by immigrants and their children, Manhattan's tenement neighbourhoods (particularly those which, like the predominantly Jewish Lower East Side, formed distinctive ethnic enclaves) have long been a source of academic interest. Scholars researching in the field of race and ethnicity, for instance, have produced countless works on this topic. Day makes a valuable contribution to this body of research by providing a detailed examination of an important, but previously neglected group – tenement landlords. Challenging conventional images of New York's real estate market, which depict it as the exclusive reserve of the city's native-born elite, Day argues that ethnic entrepreneurs played a major and at times even dominant role in the businesses of tenement construction and management.

The book is structured chronologically and charts the gradual transformation of landlord-tenant relations between the late nineteenth century and World War II. In 1890 tenants had few recognized legal rights and landlords, whose influence was at a peak, generally enjoyed the sympathies of both the authorities and the public. By 1943 the situation was almost totally reversed. Not only had tenants' rights gained public respectability, but they were much better codified and enforced. Although it is essentially only a subsidiary theme of this unfolding story, ethnicity figures prominently in *Urban Castles* and Day specifically emphasizes the importance of ethnic entrepreneurship, intra-ethnic relations and inter-ethnic relations.

Day's exploration of the first of these issues, ethnic entrepreneurship, is particularly illuminating. Focusing upon tenement ownership in the Lower East Side, he provides a clear insight into the dynamics of ethnic business enterprise. In late nineteenth-century New York, a number of factors contributed to making tenement construction and management attractive fields of economic activity. First, the constant and ever-increasing flow of immigrants into the city guaranteed a buoyant market for rented housing. Second, in the absence of official regulation, tenement builders and owners could maximize their profits through a combination of poor construction, overcrowding and property neglect. '[T]he city's tenements', observes Day, 'beckoned as business opportunities to lower-middle-class, and even working-class immigrants anxiously seeking a fast route out of urban squalor and up to the secure and independent living which was . . . at the core of their "American Dream"' (p. 31). Consequently, Jewish ownership of property in the Lower East Side rose