

leagues; the 1930s attempt by “a small coterie of young black sports-writers and the American Communist Party” to push integration into the minor and major leagues; a careful survey of early black players such as John Wright and Roy Partlow; the role of Bill Veeck and his signing of Larry Doby; the incipient near-rebellion of some white major-league ballplayers in 1947; the callous treatment of early black major-league ballplayers, and the more than twelve years it took to establish full integration, for the Red Sox held out until 1959 before promoting “Pumpsie” Green to Fenway.

Even to a lifelong Brooklyn Dodger fan who now teaches a college course called “Sports in American Life,” which features a segment on racism in sports and who saw, sitting in the fifty-five cents bleacher seats in Ebbets Field, Robinson play magnificently in the late forties and early fifties with the other boys of summer, this volume offered new material and brought new insights. Tygiel stresses, for example, Jackie’s change when in 1949 after two years of bearing insults, intimidations, and injuries with patience and restraint, he was allowed to become “proud, defiant and combative,” a figure to foreshadow the militant stance of the burgeoning civil-rights movement.

For the richness of factual information, for the clear and direct style, and for the sensible, closely reasoned and cogently sustained thesis, this is an indispensable volume. Its final paragraph which illustrates Tygiel’s sensitivity and intelligence, can serve as a coda to this review:

In the three and a half decades since Robinson and Rickey eliminated baseball’s color line, the elements that contributed to the desegregation of baseball—direct confrontation and personal courage, economic pressures, and moral persuasion by the mass media—have been re-created in many other areas of American life. The concept of a Negro League or an all-white team has become alien; black drinking fountains and seating sections have become obsolete. Legislated segregation has disappeared not merely in fact, but from the national consciousness. And if the vision of an integrated and equal society, free from racism and discrimination, which impelled Rickey and Robinson to launch their “great experiment,” remains unfulfilled, their efforts have brought it closer to reality.

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**Anna Lee Walters. *The Sun Is Not Merciful.* (Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books, 1985) 133 pp., \$13.95; \$6.95 paper.**

Anna Lee Walters’ first collection of short stories has already won two awards, the Virginia McCormick Scully Literary Award for “the best published work during 1985 reflecting the life, history or heritage of the Western Indians” and the 1985 American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation.

The awards attest to the power of Walters' storytelling. The eight stories collected here display a range of approach and technique: first-person narration in "The Warriors," in which a woman recalls her poignant youthful encounters with a beloved uncle, and omniscient narration and hard realism in the tragic "Going Home." In the title story Walters experiments with time and verb tense, revealing through a gradual unfolding process the courage and dignity of Lydia and Bertha, to whom neither the sun nor the process of law has been merciful. "Apparitions" is related through the point of view of five-year-old Wanda, while "The Laws" and "The Resurrection of John Stink" and "The Devil and Sister Lena" combine traditional omniscient storytelling approaches with occasional subjective point of view. "The Laws" is a powerful fable about power and community, while "The Devil and Sister Lena" ventures into the realm of the supernatural. "Mythomania" represents a complete departure, an excursion into pure allegory, and is the least successful venture in the collection.

Walters is a fabulist, and from her fables emerge clearly recognizable positions. In this respect, she resembles early modern populist and consciousness-raising writers in America, authors like Hamlin Garland and Charles Chesnutt. In general, the stories convey a pessimism about the possibilities of communication across racial/ethnic boundaries, whether the circumstances are a little Navajo girl being molested by a salesman or a mature woman trying to deal with a bigoted Christian preacher, or whether the story concerns two sisters hoping to save their family home from an irrigation project or a community confronted with alien laws and law enforcement officers. Conservation of tradition and community independence and cohesiveness within a larger, usually hostile, society are high values.

The stories are sparsely written, clearly focusing conflicts on several levels. As a classroom text, the book is appropriate to secondary as well as college students, and would prove useful in courses focusing on "issues" as well as in literature courses. Walters can construct an excellent plot and has a sure grasp of character. Her prose, however, is astonishingly monotonous; it could be compared to Gertrude Stein's, except that Walters is clearly not attempting to render the minutiae of perceived reality as Stein apparently was. The style can be effective, as in the presentation of a five-year-old's point of view, but the overall effect, especially in stories like "The Sun Is Not Merciful" or "The Resurrection of John Stink," in which subtle and complex issues are to be distinguished, tends to produce irritation and even a sense that the subject is receiving less mature treatment than it is due.

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