

King, C. Richard. *Redskins: Insult and Brand*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016. 226 pp. \$24.95.

"Redskin is a problem."

That's the first line of C. Richard King's insightful and pointed investigation into the decades-long controversy surrounding this word and its use in popular culture and sports. "Redskins," King argues, is an outdated and offensive racial slur on par with other denigrating labels—gooks, spics, wetbacks and the like—now banished from common use. Yet the term is celebrated in Washington, D.C., as a football sports brand despite the team's dubious links to actual Native Americans and the word's "deep connections to the history of anti-Indian violence, marked by ethnic cleansing, dispossession, and displacement."

For King, a professor of comparative ethnic studies at Washington State University, the word is "very much a living slur." As recently as 2013, King notes, a Missouri drive-in posted this sign: "KC Chiefs Will Scalp the Redskins; Feed Them Whiskey; Send 2 Reservation." King unpacks this language: "Here the slur anchors a chain of racist invectives, including genocide, trauma, alcoholism, and dispossession; dehumanization as the ultimate rallying cry for team spirit."

As this passage makes clear, King confronts the history and use of "redskins" in the context of colonialism, conquest and Manifest Destiny, highlighting the significance of the word from the Native American perspective. To make his case, King draws on linguists, anthropologists, journalists, and sports commentators, including Dave Zirin. In a 2013 column in *The Nation*, Zirin blasted the use of Redskins as a moniker that honors Native Americans: "[I]f your team name exists only because there was a genocide, then you need a new team name."

King is particularly effective in deconstructing the origins and shifting justifications for the use of "Redskins" in Washing-

ton. Although the name dates to the 1930s, King found no serious ties to Native American individuals or communities. Team owner George Preston Marshall, always a showman, exploited the power of Indian imagery, trading for years on "romanticized indigenous masculinity," including halftime shows featuring a tepee spewing smoke and a war-whooping 150-piece band in Indian dress playing "Hail to the Redskins."

King also notes that Marshall was the last NFL owner to integrate his team, earning a reputation as the NFL's leading bigot. In fact, his resistance to black players was celebrated in 1961 by American Nazi Party members who dressed as Indians and carried signs urging Marshall to—irony of ironies—"Keep the Redskins White."

King also reminds us that meanings attached to the word "always resonate with other popular narratives and representatives of Indianness." Thus the invented Indians in newspapers, dime novels and Western movies contribute to the powerful emotional ties some fans have for the team's name. These fans, King argues, "have long enjoyed a sense of entitlement to Indianness." Meanwhile, living Indians have been so marginalized in American society—"erased" is the word King uses—that it's no wonder most Americans (and some Indians) prefer the imaginary versions.

King acknowledges that the fight against the word is often ridiculed as trivial and downright silly. He answers by noting that words have power: "redskin" reinforces old stereotypes and perpetuates the notion that Indians mean what the dominant society wants them to mean. As a tiny minority of the U.S. population, Indians are routinely overlooked in the black/white paradigm of most U.S. racial discourse. For King, then, the battle is larger than the word itself—it's part of the struggle for a

society where indigenous people are acknowledged, incorporated and empowered.

Ever so slowly, King shows, "redskin" critics may be winning. Attempts to shore up support for the name in recent years have been awkward and ineffective. He points out that several recent supporters of the name have been "pretendians," individuals with fake or highly questionable Indian identities. Even current team owner Dan Snyder's Original Americans Foundation, set up to placate critics, has floundered. After the foundation was launched with great fanfare in 2014, King reports that it has had limited success in tribal communities and curtailed its activities within a year.

To his credit, King outlines a number of solutions—or "interventions," as he puts it—as part of "ongoing efforts to rethink and refashion sport and society." On the linguistic level, King argues for a new semiotic economy, or "rhetorical sovereignty," which recognizes the right of peoples to decide for themselves on the goals, modes, and styles of public discourse tied to their own representations. "Ultimately," King writes, "a new semiotic economy holds the promise of altering creation, consumption, and control of Indianness, which could be the greatest end to come from the end of a racial slur posing as a sports brand."

Armchair quarterbacks and activists from across the political spectrum are not likely to agree about the meaning and significance of "redskins" anytime soon, but all of them are likely to learn something new from King's research and arguments, which treat language, imagery, history, power, and identity seriously and offer useful perspectives on an issue that's more significant than many Americans—Indians and non-Indians alike—want to admit.

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Porter, Jeffrey L. *Lost Sound: The Forgotten Art of Radio Storytelling*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016. 296 pp. \$29.95.

At its core, Jeff Porter's *Lost Sound* applies the world of literature to radio history. The job of looking at how literature has affected the world of radio journalism and drama is a big task, and Porter presents his case by using some of the legends of the medium. Orson Welles, Edward R. Murrow, and NPR's Susan Stamberg all play a part in Porter's work, but perhaps lesser-known radio artists such as Glenn Gould also get the reader's mind thinking about

the relationship between sound and story.

The battle between a word-dominated story or program and a sound-shaped one is described by Porter in many ways—most notably the idea of "acoustic drift." Porter says this is when "sound is unmoored from the anchor of language." The rivalry between a story driven by words and a story driven by sound is first encountered in the differences between soap operas such as *Ma Perkins* and the modernist dramas of *The Columbia Workshop*. With Perkins giving

credence to the power of words over sound and *The Mercury Theater of the Air*'s rendition of *Dracula* supporting the importance of sound telling a story, Porter illustrates for the reader the patchwork quilt of cultures making up twentieth-century American radio. But he also asks several important questions. Is it more about creating a narrative to get people to buy products and trust homespun wisdom? Or, is it more about challenging the mind of the listener and questioning the narrator (in the sense

of *War of the Worlds*)? Thanks to Porter's research into the motives of William Paley of CBS and into potential government pressure over program "quality," we know there were a multitude of reasons the linear storytelling soap operas written by Frank and Anne Hummert and the more complex narratives delivered by Welles and his contemporaries both received airtime. The "extremely sonorous" *Under Milk Wood* by British poet Dylan Thomas and the blurred lines of character and ability present in Samuel Beckett's *All the Fall* are analyzed and praised by the author, with Thomas and Welles being heralded by Porter as being most influential to the literary movement on the air. Porter also argues a dichotomy emerged in the 1940s between

"the speaking woman" and "the screaming woman." In short, he asserts women were primarily used in radio to signal danger in drama instead of as journalists.

For the most part, Porter takes us straight to the transcripts of Paley, Morrow, and other big players of the day. He also presents excerpts of scripts from plays such as Archibald MacLeish's *Fall of the City* and uses the work of radio historians Michelle Hilmes and Susan Douglas to orient his work toward this literary approach. Readers should understand this is a book that takes a 30,000-foot-view of the relationship between radio and literature and is not a specific analysis—which Porter rightly discusses in his introduction. While the book is not a comprehensive look at

how literature influenced radio's past and affects its present, Porter gets the reader thinking about radio as a creative act based on words and sound instead of radio just being background noise for a car trip. *Lost Sound* gives the journalist the philosophical origins of how sound and words are used in audio's many forms. *Lost Sound* also provides a treasure map for historians of broadcast journalism, literature, and drama to further investigate both this relationship and the works that challenge our senses and our notions of the world around us—just as programs such as *The Moth Radio Hour*, *This American Life*, and many others do today.

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Raboy, Marc. *Marconi: The Man Who Networked the World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. 863 pp. \$39.95.

Guglielmo Marconi, the man most widely recognized as the inventor of radio, was an international celebrity in the early twentieth century. Countless newspaper and magazine articles profiled and championed him, and the persistent press coverage helped affirm his claim to be the technology's principle inventor. Others had transmitted signals without wires before Marconi, and he was not the most expert scientist working in the emerging field of wireless telegraphy. He had an undeniable entrepreneurial flair, though, and was the first to put forth an entire system for communication and establish a successful company to exploit the technology.

As part of his campaign of self-promotion, Marconi often co-opted work done by employees of his company. The scientist James Ambrose Fleming, for example, played a central role in the transmission of trans-Atlantic wireless signals in 1901. This feat, more than any other, established Marconi's international reputation, though Fleming had agreed to a salary contract which specified that credit must be given to Marconi. Years later, Charles Franklin helped create a new method for communicating via shortwave radio. The technology was eventually adopted by Britain's imperial wireless chain, and known as the Marconi beam system.

Despite the voluminous press coverage that Marconi was able to generate during the height of his fame, he has not been the subject of a solid biography until now. Previous works have all been limited in some way, with Marconi himself exerting editorial influence over the earliest bi-



Marconi and the invention that made him famous. Public domain.

ographies. More than simply filling a gap in scholarship, you could say this 863-page tome obliterates it. Marc Raboy, a professor in the department of art history and communication studies at McGill University, plumbed archives in multiple countries to produce this meticulously researched biography. The Bodleian Library in Oxford contains the Marconi Archives, which holds many of his personal papers and some records of the original Marconi Wireless Telegraph & Signal Company, though the author also tracked down relevant material in numerous other archives; in fact, the preface to the 140 pages of endnotes devotes more than two pages to simply list-

ing the archives.

Original research findings are mixed with summaries and critiques of previous studies, and Raboy is not shy about alerting readers to information that had not been discussed before. Ostensibly, the focus is on Marconi, the man, though in telling his story in such detail, Raboy also provides a rich chronology of how wireless communication was used, commercialized, and regulated during the first decades of the twentieth century. Many media historians will find this material of particular interest, along with descriptions of how various countries tried to establish dominance over this new form of commu-

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