




2003

Book Review

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Publisher's Statement

[The New England Quarterly](#)

Original Citation

W. Dennis Keating, Book Review, 76 *New England Quarterly* 646 (2003)

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to his trainer Goldman, the Rock “didn’t do anything right,” not stand or punch or block. How did he come to succeed so magnificently? The answer is straightforward. If, as Emerson suggested, “work is victory,” then Marciano had already beaten those forty-nine opponents before ever landing that big, looping right-handed punch he called his “Suzy Q.” No one before or since, as Sullivan helps us to remember, outworked the Rock either inside or outside the ring. Even Joe Frazier, famous for his love of training, appears a slacker next to Marciano, the self-made son of the working class.

And it is precisely those qualities associated with the working class—determination, toughness, and hard work—that make Marciano, in my estimation, one of the three best heavyweights ever, behind only Joe Louis and Muhammad Ali (and about the latter I am not so sure). But, as is the fashion today, class gives way to race and ethnicity. In two hand-wringing chapters, the weakest in the book, Sullivan focuses on 1940s and 1950s sportswriters’ use of racial and ethnic epithets. He sighs, for instance, over A. J. Liebling’s having called Archie Moore a “light-colored pugilist” in his classic essay “Ahab and Nemesis”—surely an instance of pointing out that Mona Lisa has a pimple. Rocky Marciano deserves a biographer who will be his advocate against time and history, someone willing to stake a strong claim for the champion. But perhaps Marciano can get by without an advocate. Boxing is, after all, as the painter George Bellows sought to show us, “two men trying to kill each other,” and in such a rough-and-ready trade, the Rock will always be a good bet to survive.

Arthur D. Casciato *directs the Center for Undergraduate Research and Fellowships at the University of Pennsylvania, where he teaches a seminar on boxing and literature. He is currently writing an essay on novelist Nelson Algren and middleweight champion Stanley Ketchel for a volume on Chicago and sports history.*

Reclaiming Public Housing: A Half Century of Struggle in Three Public Neighborhoods. By Lawrence J. Vale. (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press. 2002. Pp. xiii, 482. \$39.95.)

Lawrence Vale’s history and critique of three Boston public housing projects that fell into decline and became the focus of redevelopment efforts is, in 2003, timely. Based upon the 1992 report of the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing, Con-

gress created the so-called HOPE VI program, which has financed the demolition and redevelopment of numerous "distressed" public housing projects in cities across the country. Distressed projects are those suffering from physical decay and social disorder surrounding the very poor residents. HOPE VI has aimed not only to provide better housing and amenities but also to introduce an income mix into public housing developments. The resulting net loss of low-income units has made HOPE VI controversial, but the program has also been praised as modeling a successful redevelopment strategy. Yet it is now threatened with elimination in the 2004 budget presented by the administration of President George W. Bush. *Reclaiming Public Housing* goes beyond the current debate over HOPE VI to offer valuable insights into the more far-reaching issue of whether and how to "save" deteriorated public housing.

Vale heads the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. This impressively researched and well-illustrated book, a companion volume to Vale's *From the Puritans to the Projects: Public Housing and Public Neighbors* (2000), was long in the making; a short version appeared as an article in a 1996 issue of the journal *Housing Policy Debate*. Vale analyzes his case-study projects as "public neighborhoods" rather than as housing projects only. His aim is to explore whether derelict public housing can be salvaged for low-income residents instead of simply being eliminated. He seeks, then, to understand the worlds of public housing tenants.

After reviewing the history of public housing and much of the literature concerning its problems, Vale zeroes in on his three Boston projects, all of which were built after World War II through state housing programs for veterans. The first, constructed in 1949, is West Broadway (D Street) in the Lower End of South Boston; the second is Franklin Field (1954); and the third (1951) is Commonwealth (Fidelis Way) in Allston/Brighton. Drawing on archival data, newspaper accounts, and more than three hundred interviews, Vale painstakingly details the origins, development, decline, and redevelopment of these three projects. Along the way, he delivers insights into Boston politics, the myriad problems occasioned by the buildings' physical decay, the increasing poverty of the projects' inhabitants, mismanagement by the Boston Housing Authority (BHA), burgeoning crime and violence, and the stigma attached to living in projects like these. Vale captures something of the lives of the tenants of these projects, from the early, happier days to the darkest times and on through the efforts at recla-

mation. In the context of the bitter battles over school desegregation and school busing and the 1975 court decision to have a receiver take over the BHA, a colorful cast of Boston characters appears, including BHA receiver Harry Spence and politicians like South Boston's Billy Bulger, Jim Kelly, and Ray Flynn. However, Vale mostly focuses on the public housing tenants and their neighbors.

Race plays a critical role throughout. West Broadway and Commonwealth have been predominantly white; Franklin Field began in a predominantly white, Jewish neighborhood (along Blue Hill Avenue) but became virtually all black almost overnight (1969–72) with the exodus of the area's Jewish population. The introduction of black tenants into South Boston's West Broadway occasioned violence and resistance, even when the neighborhood's own Ray Flynn became Boston's mayor in 1984.

Vale describes extensively the efforts to reclaim these three projects in the 1980s, highlighting issues such as tenant participation, the role of management, and financial, design, and construction problems. He concludes that the redevelopment of West Broadway, now in a gentrifying area near the waterfront, and, especially, that of Commonwealth have been the most successful. In contrast, his verdict on Franklin Field is mostly negative. Vale cites seven different kinds of success: smooth implementation, recognized design quality, improved tenant-organization capacity, enhanced maintenance and management performance, improved security, progress on socioeconomic development, and resident satisfaction. He contrasts the "communitarian" approach aimed at stabilizing the public neighborhood with the old idea of public housing as a temporary stopping place for the migrating poor.

Vale tackles head-on important issues like how to deal with crime in the projects—discussing, for example, the controversial "one strike and you're out" eviction policy for drug use on public-housing property upheld this year by the U.S. Supreme Court—and whether the mixed-income approach of HOPE VI is taking public housing in the right direction. In the end, Vale concludes that neighborhoods matter and that with good planning, design, development, and management, public housing can be reclaimed for its low-income tenants without re-creating, at considerable expense, ghettos of the poor. *Reclaiming Public Housing* is a compelling book, comparable to Herbert Gans's classic study of the destruction of Boston's Italian West End neighborhood through urban renewal (*The Urban Villagers*, 1962) and Lisa Belkin's recounting of the court-ordered desegregation of Yonkers's

public housing (*Show Me a Hero: A Tale of Murder, Suicide, Race, and Redemption*, 1999). Vale's message, ultimately, is a hopeful one; let those who make the policies and allocate the funds take note.

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Catharine Maria Sedgwick: Critical Perspectives. Edited by Lucinda L. Damon-Bach and Victoria Clements. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2003. Pp. xxxix, 328. \$40.00.)

In this fine collection of essays, readers who associate Catharine Maria Sedgwick predominantly with *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in the Massachusetts* (1827) will discover much more about one of the foremost American authors of the early nineteenth century. Assembled largely from papers given at two symposia, the essays provide useful and often foundational analyses of Sedgwick's oeuvre. These essays raise crucial issues that will surely help direct further inquiry into Sedgwick's published and unpublished writing, the conditions in which she wrote, her social activism, and her engagement with such hotly debated contemporary issues as urban poverty, slavery, and women's rights. Substantially augmented by a scholarly apparatus of contemporary reviews, a detailed chronology of Sedgwick's life, and a bibliography of her published works, this volume marks an important development in Sedgwick studies.

The overviews that frame the collection—Mary Kelley's foreword, the editors' introduction, Carolyn L. Karcher's "Catharine Maria Sedgwick in Literary History," and Dana Nelson's "Rediscovery"—chart the development of Sedgwick studies over time and suggest glimpses into its future. While these offerings sometimes overlap in their coverage, readers will benefit from discussions of the broad influence exercised by Sedgwick on her contemporaries and of her active engagement in public issues ranging from the national to the comparatively private and domestic. One theme that emerges is Sedgwick's familiarity with the urban environment, thus countering the conventional view that her concerns were limited to rural New England. Contextualizing Sedgwick's influence on American literature from the 1820s through the 1850s, the essays explore the richness of her life and work, especially the privileges and the challenges of her