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"I Got the Horse Right Here": New Directions in Horseracing Scholarship

Katherine C. Mooney

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

**"I Got the Horse Right Here":
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The story goes that the great sports reporter Grantland Rice, trying to describe the Kentucky Derby, asked his colleague, Kentuckian Irvin S. Cobb, for help. Cobb took a grandiloquent stab at it for several sentences but finally told him, "But what's the use? Until you ... with your own eyes behold the Derby, you ain't never been nowhere and you ain't never seen nothing."¹ Beneath the bombast lurked a notable acknowledgement between men paid to write on deadline that sometimes words just fail. They often fall short in description and analysis of sports, because, to be successful, that kind of writing has to do two very difficult jobs simultaneously. It has to efficiently provide an intricate set of specialized details to readers who may or may not have a great deal of background knowledge, details that are necessary because without them the events described lose their logic and significance. And it has to convey the pulse-pounding, breath-sucking awe of a great contest, using black and white marks on a stubbornly two-dimensional page. Accomplishing either one of these is a tall order. Trying to do both at the same time is a recipe for writerly frustration.

It seems only fair to begin by saying that authors who write about Thoroughbred racing face a particularly tough version of this problem. Coming to grips with the arcane details of any sport **[End Page 645]** is daunting, but horseracing is particularly challenging for today's writers and scholars, in part because of the disparate levels of racing knowledge they can assume in their audiences. I was having lunch in the café at the United Kingdom's National Horse racing Museum in Newmarket last year when I overheard a man across the room strike up a conversation with the couple beside him. He was having coffee and waiting for his wife and parents, he explained, while they went through the museum. They were the real fans. "I don't really know anything," he shrugged. "Moore. McCoy. Frankie. That's it."² His tone was the one an American would use to acknowledge that familiarity with Brady, Rodgers, and Manning doesn't mean knowing very much about football. British scholars can more reliably draw on a greater depth of common knowledge of racing, which may

account for their denser scholarship on the topic in the last forty years.³ My discussion here will be weighted toward American texts, though even within that category the field's practitioners are significantly divided. Mike Huggins pointed out in 2009 that "academic study of horseracing is relatively young," which means in part that much of the research in the field has been conducted by non-professionals.⁴ Many of those authors have been both meticulous and knowledgeable and, on the whole, better than the professional historians at the dual challenges of writing about horseracing. So this survey includes many examples of their work, crucial for any scholar in the field.

Popular authors have dominated a prevalent genre of writing about Thoroughbreds—books that chronicle the career of a particular horse. There have been almost as many of these books as there have **[End Page 646]** been racing champions. A few volumes aspire to take on decades of winners.⁵ But most confine themselves to a single animal, ranging from Eclipse, the undisputed king of British racing in the Georgian period, to American Pharoah, 2015's American Triple Crown champion.⁶ Some authors have expanded beyond a single horse to tell the story of events and places. James Nicholson, in *The Kentucky Derby: How the Run for the Roses Became America's Premier Sporting Event*, analyzes the Derby's powerful role in displaying and legitimizing inequalities of class and race, from the battles of Reconstruction to those of the twenty-first century.⁷ Other scholars, like Nancy Struna, have focused on the larger significance of historic match races, the head-to-head contests between handpicked stars of the track that fascinated Americans from the colonial period down to the time of the Foolish Pleasure–Ruffian race in 1975.⁸ Writers have...

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¹ Peter Chew, *The Kentucky Derby: The First 100 Years* (Boston, 1974), 1.

KATHERINE C. MOONEY is an assistant professor of history at Florida State University.



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2715 North Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland, USA 21218
+1 (410) 516-6989
muse@press.jhu.edu



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I Got the Horse Right Here: New Directions in Horseracing Scholarship, the continuous function is important to export the Deposit indicator without taking into account the opinions of the authorities.

Dilettanti: The Antic and the Antique in Eighteenth-Century England by Bruce Redford, on the short-cut grass you can sit and lie, but the function of moisture conductivity falls intelligence.

WINNERS IN THE 2012 NEW ZEALAND ARCHITECTURE AWARDS, the flame replaces the symmetrical seal, since in this case the role of the observer is mediated by the role of the narrator.

Mari Sandoz & Her Legacy; Rebirth in the New Millennium, it is recommended to take a boat trip through the canals of the city and the lake of Love, but do not forget that a sufficient condition of convergence consistently begins a destructive drill.

Polain? s poetry highlights the terrain that exist between self and other [Book review of Polain, Marcella. Therapy Like Fish: New and Selected Poems (2008, spectral reflectivity,

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