

Gordon, Peter H., ed., with Sydney Waller and Paul Weinman, *Diamonds Are Forever: Artists and Writers on Baseball*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1987. Pp. 168. \$18.95 (paper).

This book is a paean to baseball, a celebration of the game. It concerns itself not with a social and economic analysis of baseball but with the reasons baseball fascinates and touches Americans so deeply. It accomplishes this objective by integrating, although not always successfully, the work of a variety of artists with that of a group of writers.

The text, following some front matter, is organized into five parts: The Place, The Equipment, The Players, The Action, and "Something Else." Among commentators in the various sections are some well-known writers. Their work includes personal memories of fans and players about games played and watched, about summers filled with baseball, and about the warm beauty of the scene and joyful memories of baseball days. Roger Angell gives a straightforward description of the baseball, its ingredients, its manufacture, and the way when picked up, it instantly suggests its purpose—to be "thrown hard and with precision." Thomas Boswell dates the evolution of the bat from the time a cave-man might have picked up his first cudgel, and from Robin Hood's quarterstaff to Paul Bunyan's ax. Bob Green recalls his greatest thrill: receiving a personalized Louisville Slugger.

In an excellent brief piece from his "Fathers Playing Catch with Sons" Donald Hall demonstrates the passage of baseball from generation to generation, "for baseball is continuous." Another excerpt from the same article concludes with a touching family memoir: a boy cheers vociferously when a player of his generation, Pee Wee Reese, wins a game with a homer off oldtimer Carl Hubbell, but his father, who had seen Hubbell strike out Ruth, Gehrig, Foxx, Simmons, and Cronin in the 1934 All Star game, has tears in his eyes, realizing Hubbell-like himself is a fading veteran. I saw that '34 game, too, and was stunned at Hubbell's performance.

Wilfred Sheed traces a different diamond progression, from Pony League through the various baseball levels and finally to the "brass ring itself, the major leagues." Garrison Keillor offers a lengthy piece on the importance of creating a good attitude by knowing how to act like a player—the mannerisms to observe when going into the batter's box, and other actions to be taken on the field, like "talk," "take your time," "pick up dirt," and "spit frequently." In Thomas Wolfe's well-known passage from *You Can't Go Home Again*, an aging ten-year veteran, realizing his condition, expresses gratitude for the past and his hope to hold on for another year or two. An Israeli immigrant boy poignantly describes

his first visit to Yankee Stadium, made easier by his having already learned some baseball lingo at home. The most sensitive piece is the one by A. Bartlett Giamatti from his "The Green Fields of the Mind."

The centerpiece of the section on the players, one that has all the earmarks of a classic, is the lengthy account by John Updike of Ted Williams' career with the Red Sox, concluded by his home run in his last time at bat at Fenway Park. Other recognized writers represented here include Hemingway, Sandburg, Malamud, Roger Kahn, Stephen King, and William Carlos Williams.

Although some of the art appears to be commercial, other work is fine art done by well-known painters like Robert Rauschenberg, Claes Oldenberg, Raoul Dufy, and Andy Warhol. Some who specialize in sports art, like Ralph Fasanello, are represented as well. Photographers are included. I had also hoped to see the famous Currier and Ives print, "The American National Game of Baseball," a copy of which hangs in my study, and the Thomas Eakins watercolor, "Baseball Players Practicing," which is in the Museum of Art at the Rhode Island School of Design.

The artists use many approaches to the subject, including fantasy, impressionism, and representationalism, and they have created the art with a variety of media, including wool on burlap, clay with paper and paint, bronze with red vinyl, cardboard, lacquer on wood, even paint on a saw blade. Reproduction of these works is excellent.

Some of the art and text fit together like a baseball glove on a player's hand, such as the oil by Basil King of a pitcher winding up juxtaposed with the poem "Pitcher" by Robert Francis, and the gouache and ink by James Daugherty called "Three Base Hit" with a description of movement by Zane Grey from *The Redheaded Outfield*.

Personally, I like best the painting by Harvey Dinnerstein of Joe DiMaggio entitled "The Wide Swing," but no doubt others will have their own favorites. Those who have no coffee table would do well to buy one expressly for this book.

Of the three editors who selected the material for the book, one, Paul Weinman, is a museum education supervisor, and another, Peter Gordon, is with the New York State Museum, which, in association with the Smithsonian Institution, prepared the traveling exhibition upon which this book is based.

Keene, New Hampshire

Harold Seymour, Ph.D