



Book Review: Fair Territory

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May 14, 2005

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Poems by Jilly Dybka
Published by Bear Shirt Press
p. 22

This isn't the typical kind of book that we have reviewed here at At Home Plate but I have to admit that I rather enjoyed reading Jilly's take on baseball. When watching the game few of us tends to think of poetry, except perhaps the phrase "poetry in motion" when regarding a sweet swing or an outstanding play - and even that may be a bit of a reach.

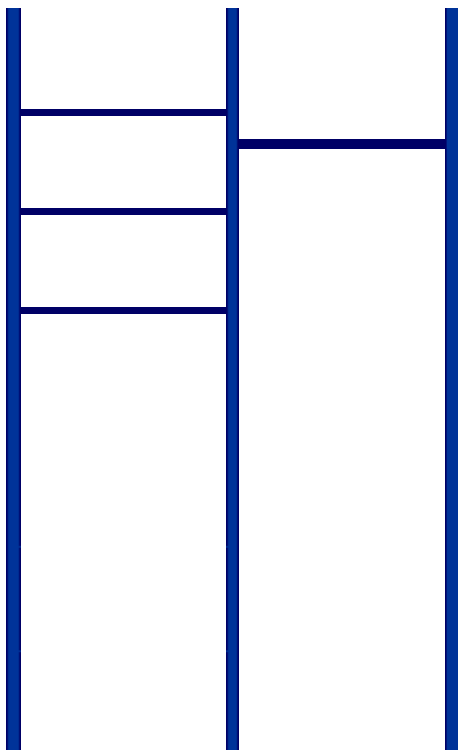
Yet baseball and poetry have gone hand in hand for a long time, highlighted by what might be the most famous baseball poem of all time Ernest Lawrence Thayer's *Casey at the Bat*. Wisely, Ms. Dykba doesn't try to walk in Thayer's shoes by creating an epic poem but instead she gives us snapshots of the game that highlight both players and actions with which we are all familiar.

Inside the booklet you'll find odes to the mud that is used to rub down baseballs (clay from the Delaware River), Ed Delahanty, George Brett and the pine tar bat, Kirk Gibson's Grand Slam, Dock Ellis and his no-no, brush back pitches, opening day, the Beatles playing Shea Stadium, extra innings, tied games, and the make believe World Series victory by the Cubs.

But there really is more to it than that. Jilly's poems are more than just tributes to the game - they are also her personal stories of loss; a lost friend who took his own life, and the memories that they shared over the game as well as their common love of the Detroit Tigers.

It's a little more erudite than the typical work on baseball and at times a little more personal too. But it's a worthwhile read and it can be a lightweight read or a very heavy one depending on your take and thoughts about poetry and if you like Jilly's style (I did).

Jilly's work has appeared in a number of literary



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magazines including Elysian Fields Quarterly, Spitball: the Literary Baseball Magazine, and the Michigan Quarterly Review. We certainly hope to see some of her work here at AHP.

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Give this one a **solid three balls** for those looking to find a little more inside the game than the typical baseball work has to offer.

*The pigs in Hades have to dodge the new
icicles when flying in that prison,
The Devil's in for one cold snowy snafu-
hell has frozen over 'il next season.
Hellfire has gone out until the umpire
dusts down home plate on Spring's opening day.
The Cubs have made the goat curse expire.
The flying pigs and holy cows lay
down together like the lion and lamb.*

-Excerpt from the Cubs win the World Series.

Our Rating System is based on a four ball system as follows:

One Ball: Average. It has something to say but is nothing special.

Two Balls: Something men usually have - also means its a cut above average, and worth reading/owning.

Three balls: Stands out from its peers and is highly recommended.

Four Balls: More than just what two men have when hanging out together, it means it is an exceptional book that truly earns a walk - straight to the local book store to get a copy.

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