Baseball Literature's Complex Pastoralism.

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Baseball literature's complex pastoralism

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BASEBALL LITERATURE'S COMPLEX PASTORALISM

by

Richard Gaughran

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Presented to the Graduate Committee

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"Let's cut the bullshit and talk about baseball."

Frederick Exley, A Fan's Notes

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Abstract

Because it evokes images of America's rural past, a simpler time, and clear, ordered existence, baseball has been called a pastoral sport. In turn, much baseball literature draws upon some consistent pastoral themes and values, treating some of them in remarkably specific ways.

However, many examples of baseball fiction, though presenting idealistic characters and utopian ideas, avoid sentimentality by achieving what Leo Marx (The Machine in the Garden) calls complex pastoralism. Such baseball fiction tends to question the very ideals it ostensibly espouses, typically ending in tension or paradox rather than in pat resolutions.

Often the main character discovers this tension within himself. Bernard Malamud's Roy Hobbs (The Natural), for example, fails to defeat time; instead, he learns that suffering, a result of time's passage, is a necessary part of the human condition and that pastoral values can be realized only for a time. Jerome Charyn's Babe Ragland, on the other hand, removes himself from time, but The Seventh Babe is not soft on baseball: the organized game in this and other novels is brutal and corrupt.

The narrators of Eric Rolfe Greenberg's The Celebrant,

Christopher Lehmann-Haupt's Me and DiMaggio, and W. P. Kinsella's The Iowa Baseball Confederacy are passionate baseball fans. However, like Roy Hobbs and Babe Ragland, they each must struggle to find a middle ground between naive, unrealistic embrace of pastoral ideals and cynical rejection of them.

Much baseball fiction criticizes the institution of baseball itself. Harry Stein's Hoopla! and Kinsella's Shoeless Joe both present characters affected by institutional corruption, particularly that which resulted in the "Black Sox" scandal of 1919. These and other works imply that baseball's pastoral ideals can truly reside only in the imagination. This theme gives birth to a considerable body of self-apparent baseball fiction, that which is about the writing of fiction or the operations of language. Robert Coover's The Universal Baseball Association, Inc., Philip Roth's The Great American Novel, and Jerry Klinkowitz's Short Season belong in this category. These works, rather than expressing simple pastoralism, provide complex examinations of language and literature.

Baseball literature, therefore, is a rich genre. It derives from a boy's game, perhaps, but one that is profoundly evocative. Many examples avoid sentimentality at the same time that they express qualified American pastoral values.

I

Farmers, Orphans, and Cultists: Pastoral Characters and Themes in Baseball Fiction

Undoubtedly many thoughtful individuals regard the sport of baseball the way Christopher Lehmann-Haupt's father did, as a "'silly game they play in little boys' knickers, with the man on the hill who acts like a dog at a hydrant'"(Me and DiMaggio 17). Mr. Lehmann-Haupt's remark recalls F.S. Fitzgerald's comment on what he considered Ring Lardner's limitation:

> During those years when most men of promise achieve an adult education, if only in the school of war, Ring moved in the company of a few dozen illiterates playing a boy's game. A boy's game with no more possibilities in it than a boy could master, a game bounded by walls which kept out novelty or danger, change or adventure. (The Crack-up 36)

Many American writers, however, beginning at least with Lardner, have chosen to disregard such fatherly injunctions, some because they see possibilities for literary expression in the game's structure and traditions.[1] Cordelia Candelaria recently estimated that there have been "over 2,000 books and well over twice as many other titles" written about baseball. These, she continues, have covered "all aspects of the game and its history, chronicled every significant

participant in the sport, and examined its relation to myriad other phenomena from agrarianism to Zen" (1). There have been so many examples of the use of baseball in fiction, non-fiction, and even poetry, especially in recent years, that baseball literature is distinguishable as a literary genre.

Baseball literature should not be confused with the hundreds of books--surely many of Candelaria's 2,000--"written" by former or current baseball players, almost always with an assist by a journalist/ghostwriter. These "as-told-to" books often appear around the time of a player's greatest accomplishments in the game and are obviously intended to capitalize on his success. Some may be interesting or humorous, but the prose tends to be dull and clichéd, as Donald Hall says of what may be the first of these books, Pitching in a Pinch by Christy Mathewson (1912, ghostwritten by John Wheeler): "[It] supplies the anecdote while it withholds sentence, image and metaphor" (Fathers 114).

Some reviewers of books about baseball, sharing one of Fitzgerald's misgivings, express skepticism concerning baseball's compatibility with good prose. John Gregory Dunne, for one, says,

> I think one reason baseball is so difficult to write about is that the natural language of its practitioners is cliché. The major-league ballplayer lives at the frontier of instinct and

> reflex, where the difference between success and failure can be measured incrementally in microseconds; he will never again do anything in his life as well as what he does at the age of twenty-five. Hand-to-eye coordination is developed more than the vocabulary to explain it. (54)

So most ballplayers are not good writers. Sometimes, evidently, neither are the writers they hire.[2]

But it is not richness of prose, as desirable as that may be, that identifies baseball literature or distinguishes it from the popular biographies and autobiographies. We will have to look at the qualities of baseball that are exclusively its own in order to define baseball literature. Michael Oriard's definition of a broader category, the sports novel, is a place to start. The sports novel, he says, is "one in which sport plays a dominant role or in which the sport milieu is the dominant setting" (Dreaming 6). To paraphrase Oriard, then, we could say that a work of baseball fiction is one in which baseball plays a dominant role or provides the dominant setting.

Oriard speaks of only fiction. Though most baseball non-fiction is merely reportorial, some cuts deeper, exposing the effects of baseball on characters and societies or suggesting states of mind, approaches to reality, or attempts to withdraw from reality. I am thinking of the works of Roger Kahn, Roger Angell, and some passages in Donald Hall's baseball prose. And many other works fictionalize actual

personages. In baseball literature, as I will suggest in more detail below, the boundary between fiction and non-fiction is often, like the back line of the batter's box, hardly visible after a while.

I would add one further point to Oriard's definition: that baseball literature is essentially different from other sports literature. One cannot substitute one sport for another in sports literature. For example, if Bernard Malamud's Roy Hobbs were a football player, The Natural would be a very different novel. Underlying this observation is my assumption that each sport evokes a particular set of values, or, to use Murray Ross's words, each sport contains "a fundamental myth which it elaborates for its fans" (716).

What then are the values that are unique and essential to baseball and thus fundamental to baseball literature? Those who have analyzed the game--and there are many who regard it as more than "a silly boy's game"--consistently refer to certain features: the game's peculiar relationship to nature, its bucolic associations; the nostalgic qualities of baseball and the game's profound implications regarding time and timelessness; and the game's clarity and articulation, which make it appear ritualistic. Murray Ross, George Grella, Frederick Karl, and others have noted that such features provide the game's mythic foundation. In short, baseball is a pastoral sport.

A baseball field is organized in such a way that it elicits the image of a garden, of man as a tender of nature, of man controlling and ordering nature. Each player has a patch of ground for which he is responsible, and when each fielder does his job well, working with his neighbor, the team usually wins. The game, unlike football, is not based on territorial conquest but on this special relationship with nature. As Ross says, "[T]he game often seems to be as much a dialogue between the field and the fielders as it is a contest between the players themselves: will that ball get through the hole? Can that outfielder run under that fly?" (717).

Followers of other sports who find fault with baseball usually do so because of its bucolic slowness; for them, not enough <u>happens</u>. For Roger Angell, however, this plodding, methodical spectacle, evoking images of farmers' tending their fields, is essential to baseball and part of its charm:

> I don't think anyone can watch many baseball games without becoming aware of the fact that the ball, for all its immense energy and unpredictability, very rarely escapes the control of the players. It is released again and again--pitched and caught, struck along the ground or sent high in the air--but almost always, almost instantly, it is recaptured and returned to control and safety and harmlessness. Nothing is altered, nothing has been allowed to happen. This orderliness and constraint are among the prime attractions of the sport; a handful of men, we discover, can police a great green country, forestalling unimaginable disasters. (<u>Five Seasons</u> 19-20)

It is no secret that the American ethos includes the belief that the New World is, or can become, a garden and that the highest calling is one that puts man in his proper place as a tender and shaper of nature. There are many examples of the nation's founders' expressing such beliefs. Here, for one, is Thomas Jefferson in 1811, on the desirability of life in a garden:

> I have often thought that if heaven had given me choice of my position and calling, it should have been on a rich spot of earth, well watered, and near a good market for the productions of the garden. No occupation is so delightful to me as the culture of the earth, and no culture comparable to that of the garden. (Marx 138)

Ralph Waldo Emerson expresses similar views, perhaps more unabashedly than Jefferson. The following is from a 1844 lecture "The Young American":

> The land is the appointed remedy for whatever is false and fantastic in our culture. The continent we inhabit is to be physic and food for our mind, as well as our body. The land, with its tranquilizing, sanative influences, is to repair the errors of a scholastic and traditional education, and bring us into just relations with men and things. (Marx 236-237)

Emerson, in the same lecture, decries urban values and encourages renunciation of commercial concerns: "How much better when the whole land is a garden, and the people have grown up in the bowers of a paradise" (Marx 239).[3]

Rarely, if ever, do baseball fans consciously connect their sport to the ideals of Jefferson and Emerson, but

ardent followers of the sport often believe, or are exposed to the belief, that baseball displays man in his proper relationship with nature. Baseball's newly appointed commissioner, A. Barlett Giamatti, has spoken of the game as "'not paradise . . . but . . . as close as you're going to get to it in America'" (Siebert 48). And he explains what he means by "paradise," in effect updating Jefferson's ideas:

> "The word 'paradise' is originally an old Persian word meaning an enclosed park or green. Anything that's closed is fundamentally artificial. Nature doesn't enclose things perfectly. You fly over a great city at night and you look down and you see lit up this green in the middle of the city and you realize that the reason they're in the middle of the cities is that there is in us a fundamental, vestigial memory of an enclosed green space as the place of freedom or play." (Siebert 36)

Others, notably those who recently opposed the installation of lights in Chicago's Wrigley Field, are less enthusiastic about baseball at night. Nevertheless, they demonstrated, like Giamatti, that pastoral ideals persist. Baseball, they argued, should be played <u>naturally</u>. To be sure, many who opposed artificial lighting reside in the neighborhood of the ballpark and feared the disturbance of hundreds of honking horns and revving engines just as they were drifting off to sleep--perhaps nothing more than a practical and self-serving concern. But in numerous conversations and interviews--on television and radio--one heard that baseball <u>was meant</u> to be played in the sunshine,

that baseball is a "day game." The Solon who decreed this inviolable connection between the sun and the game cannot be identified. The purists seem to refer to a law in their hearts, a feeling about nature that is common to American psychological awareness. They seem to exclaim with Melville's Ishmael, "the glorious, golden, glad sun, the only true lamp--all others but liars!" (542). Or, akin to this impulse, they understand that there is a baseball esthetic, that their garden must be tended with respect, that a baseball diamond resolves "the conflict between the opposed worlds of nature and art" (Marx 22) and thus should not succumb to commercial, urban values.

For many, the installation of lights at Wrigley Field went too far.[4] It represented an erosion of ideals, a further washing away of the symbolic landscape's topsoil. As long as the Cubs continued to play all their home games in the sunlight, the baseball purist could maintain--in his imagination at least--the vision of baseball as it is supposed to be, no matter what concessions to business and urban sensibility took place in other stadia in other cities. For a baseball purist in Houston, Wrigley Field could represent an ideal the way his Astro Dome cannot. He could attend games in an air-conditioned dome, with artificial grass, but he could know that Wrigley Field interceded, so to speak, for his own fallen garden. The patron of the Astro

Dome could guiltlessly attend a game imagining that he sees baseball as it is meant to be played, because he carries the ivy-covered walls of unlighted Wrigley Field in his soul. He could be like Emerson's poet, "who re-attaches things to nature and the Whole,--re-attaching even artificial things and violations of nature, to nature, by a deeper insight,--[disposing] very easily of the most disagreeable facts" (Marx 241).

Baseball purists are also troubled by the use of artificial grass, now providing the playing surface for ten of the twenty-six major-league parks. Roger Angell, for example, refers to Montreal's Olympic Stadium as a "circular strip mine" and approvingly quotes former player Dick Allen: "'If a horse can't eat it, I don't want to play on it'" (Season Ticket 191).

There is a correspondence, then, between playing on a baseball field and tending the soil--with all that that implies in terms of supposed virtue and harmony with the world. The correspondence provides part of the foundation of baseball fiction. According to the American ethos, the man who is close to the land is spiritually enriched in a way that the man from the city is not. In baseball literature there is often a simple substitution of a baseball player for the tender of the land. This transferral accounts in part for the portrayal of players as "country bumpkins" or

"rubes," the most notable examples being Ring Lardner's Jack Keefe in You Know Me Al (1914) and Danny Warner in Lose With a Smile (1933), Bernard Malamud's Roy Hobbs in The Natural (1952), and Harry Stein's Joe Jackson in Hoopla! (1982).

Often baseball literature makes the connection clear by overt references to farming or gardening. Again, there is a close association between farming and baseball; the two are often presented as interchangeable. In Bernard Malamud's The Natural, for example, Herman Youngberry, the pitcher who strikes out Roy Hobbs at the end of the novel, nurses agrarian dreams: "He didn't say so but he had it in mind to earn enough money to buy a three hundred acre farm and then quit baseball forever. Sometimes when he pitched, he saw fields of golden wheat gleaming in the sun" (212). Also, Malamud's Pop Fisher, the manager of the New York Knights, on a day when the ineptitude of his players has become particularly trying, comically wonders why he did not follow his impulse to farm:

> "I shoulda been a farmer. . . . I shoulda farmed since the day I was born. I like cows, sheep, and those hornless goats--I am partial to nanny goats, my daddy wore a beard--I like to feed animals and milk 'em. I like fixing things, weeding poison oak out of the pasture, and seeing to the watering of the crops. I like to be by myself on a farm. I like to stand out in the fields, tending the vegetables, the corn, the winter wheat--greenest looking stuff you ever saw. When Ma was alive she kept urging me to leave baseball and take up farming, and I always meant to but after she died I had no heart for it. . . . I have that green thumb . . ., and I shoulda farmed

> instead of playing wet nurse to a last place, dead-to-the-neck ball team." (37)

The narrator of W.P. Kinsella's Shoeless Joe (1982) lives in an Iowa farmhouse, fifty yards from a cornfield that he converts into a baseball field. He came to Iowa to study but, after marrying Annie, decides not to leave:

> I chose willingly, lovingly, to stay in Iowa. Eventually I rented this farm, then bought it, operating it one inch from bankruptcy. I don't seem meant to farm, but I want to be close to this precious land, for Annie and me to be able to say, "This is ours." (5)

It is noteworthy that in both this passage and Pop Fisher's soliloquy the speaker implies that farming is somehow passé or unapproachable because of changing times or personal temperament. The baseball field suits these would-be farmers more than the actual cornfield does (Pop Fisher does not mean what he is saying, of course). There is an implication that the Jeffersonian ideal of the farmer is no longer realizable, that because this is the twentieth century, the values imputed to farming must be transferred to another activity, baseball. And so Kinsella's narrator, whose name is Ray Kinsella, speaks of the careful husbandry and meticulous observation of others that he brings to his landscaping efforts:

> My intuition told me that it was the grass that was most important. It took three seasons to hone that grass to its proper texture, to its proper color.

> I made trips to Minneapolis and one or two other cities where the stadiums still have natural-grass infields and outfields. I would arrive hours before a game and watch the groundskeepers groom the field like a prize animal, then stay after the game when in the cool of the night the same groundsmen appeared with hoses, hoes, and rakes, and patched the grasses like medics attending to wounded soldiers. (7)

The completion of the job brings Ray a sense of spiritual satisfaction, of inner fulfillment:

> Three seasons I've spent seeding, watering, fussing, praying, coddling that field like a sick child. Now it glows parrot-green, cool as mint, soft as moss, lying there like a cashmere blanket. I've begun watching it in the evenings, sitting on the rickety bleacher just beyond the fence. (7-8)

In Kinsella's second baseball novel, The Iowa Baseball Confederacy (1986), the magic of Gideon Clarke's baseball dreams is associated with the magic of cultivation. On several occasions flowers sing to him. And his friend Stan, who travels through time to participate in a forgotten, magical baseball game in 1908, assumes a suggestive name when he enters the playing-field: The Left-handed Farmhand (114). The narrator also celebrates the accomplishments of the groundskeeper, Frank Hall, who somehow manages to keep the field playable in spite of forty consecutive days of rain:

> Cutting the grass. Frank Hall, in a yellow slicker, lurks like an expectant father, wary, hand-wringing, suffering with his field, as the rain softens it day by day and the players with Clydesdale-like intensity bruise the grass and desecrate the infield. There would be no game if it weren't for Frank Hall. Any other baseball

> field would be nothing but a quagmire by now. He has contoured the field. "Intuitive Drainage" is how Frank Chance, in one of his rare good moods, described it. "A corps of engineers couldn't have done better." (199)

The assumed wholesomeness of farming and its association with baseball are obvious in Donald Hays's The Dixie Association (1984). The man who manages the Arkansas Reds, Lefty Marks, also runs a cooperative farm, sells vegetables to baseball fans in the parking lot of the ballpark, and helps people buy their own farms. His socialism notwithstanding, he sounds conservative and expressive of American pastoralism:

> "I believe in damn near every simple old cliché you can think of. Having kids and setting a good example for them. Doing right by your neighbor. Opening your door to strangers. Refusing to take more than your share. I prefer mules to tractors, farms to factories, talk to television, singing to listening to the stereo.
>
> "I've missed most of that. . . . But I've taken some pleasure in watching other people find themselves a place and a reason. Young people, sometimes, who might otherwise have come here to Little Rock or gone to Dallas and started working for Timex or Texas Instruments--or mugging those that did." (375-376)

One of these young people is Hog Durham, the narrator. Though an ex-convict who robbed liquor stores and a bank, he was raised on a farm and evidently returns to this calling when his homerun-hitting, first base-playing days are over. To be sure, he knows that farming is not easy and remembers the restlessness that drove him from farming when he was

younger:

> I knew that there was a damn site [sic] more work than magic in coaxing a livelihood from the soil. The last thing I wanted back then was a life filled with plows and cultivators, discs and harrows, hoes and hay bailers [sic], drought and flood. I'd milked cows, butchered hogs, gathered eggs, spread manure, hoed corn, bailed [sic] hay, cut cabbage, staked tomatoes, broke land, and sowed lespedeza, and I, by God, wanted off the land. It didn't seem a fit place for a smart young hotblood like myself. I wanted to buy tomcat nights with rainbow dollars. (232)

Nevertheless, he gradually moves back towards his origins, considering that farming, after baseball, is the only pursuit that can keep him out of jail: "I did begin to think that farming was the only decent choice I had left" (233). Later he sounds surer about his pastoral calling: "'[A] man's a fool not to play while he can. Ball game in the sunshine, good woman at night, maybe a little garden spot and a collie dog. Shit, they can have the rest of it'" (371).

Other characters in Hays's novel reinforce the bond between baseball and farming. For example, Ernesto Guerrero, one of the Cubans who comes to play for the Arkansas Reds, mentions life in Cuba during the time of sugar cane harvests: "'When we did not play ball, we worked in the fields'" (371). Guerrero is not fond of sugar cane, but he expresses a personal preference, not a rejection of pastoralism. He says, "'My family grew coffee and fruit in the mountains. . . My heart was there and in pitching baseball'" (371).

Baseball, then, is pastoral in the way it evokes a particular relationship with nature. Baseball literature, in turn, draws upon this basic pastoral value.

Baseball's unique relationship to the passage of time is also decidedly pastoral. Unlike other team sports, it is not governed by a clock. The linear progress of a game is measured by outs, not by minutes. And because games do not end in ties, extra innings are sometimes required. If no team breaks the tie, or if each team scores the same number of runs in the same extra innings, a game can, theoretically, last forever. Or, if one team does not make three outs in a given inning, if it keeps getting men on base and scoring runs, the game cannot end. Thus, baseball presents us with the attractive notion that time can be defeated:

> Within the ballpark, time moves differently, marked by no clock except the events of the game. This is the unique, unchangeable feature of baseball, and perhaps explains why this sport, for all the enormous changes it has undergone in the past decade or two, remains somehow rustic, unviolent, and introspective. Baseball's time is seamless and invisible, a bubble within which players move at exactly the same pace and rhythms as all their predecessors. This is the way the game was played in our youth and in our fathers' youth, and even back then--back in the country days--there must have been the same feeling that time could be stopped. Since baseball time is measured only in outs, all you have to do is succeed utterly; keep hitting, keep the rally alive, and you have defeated time. You remain forever young.[5] (Angell, Summer Game 303)

In Walden Henry David Thoreau speaks of his days in the

woods, spent "rapt in a revery, amidst the pines and . . . sumachs, in undisturbed solitude and stillness." Unlike his Concord days, these are not "minced unto hours and fretted by the ticking of a clock" (Marx 249). To be sure, the clock is the great enemy of pastoral values. It is significant that when a baseball team succeeds by getting men on base and scoring runs, its members proceed around the bases counter-clockwise, figuratively turning back the hands of a clock.

Besides having a structure that suggests the attempt to overcome time, baseball has a pace, already mentioned for its bucolic slowness, that renounces the bustle of twentieth-century urban life. Donald Hall describes "baseball-time":

> While nothing happens at all, in the static hush between pitches, outfielders stare at the sun's position (truest baseball is a daytime game) and commit it to memory; they arch their necks like horses, pull at their underwear like kindergartners, carefully count men on base, note the number of outs and the ball-strike count. Then these statisticians of vacancy lean forward, hands on their slightly-bent knees. . . . The first baseman, if he holds a runner on, leans over with his mitt poised in front of the bag--mitt as gross as a tenor saxophone, mitt as distended as an amaryllis. The second baseman and the shortstop have exchanged confidences (about which bases they will cover) like gradeschool girlfriends planning a telephone call. The third baseman, heroic and solitary, tells over his options as a monk tells his beads; as a result of these meditations he creeps closer to the bag, preventing an extra-base hit late in the game. ("Baseball-Time" 224)

Hall points out that his paragraph (there is a bit more) takes two minutes to read but describes 1.5 seconds of clock-time. In "baseball-time," he says, "we have left the clock behind us. Nothing is over, nothing is ongoing. By entering baseball-time, we have walked into the great day where successiveness is cancelled. Now is always; now is forever; now is Wrigley Field and Yankee Stadium" (224).

One of Harry Stein's narrators in Hoopla! calls baseball "the most stubbornly backward-looking of games" (62). As noted, it looks backward in its evocations of a time before life was governed by a clock. It also, in official records and in personal memories, nostalgically recalls former great players and managers, forming as George Grella says, "an organic and unbroken continuum back to those days when men played the game on the Elysian Fields" (271). It is possible, for example, to demonstrate a line of managerial succession: Ned Hanlon managed John McGraw in the 1890s, McGraw managed Casey Stengel in the 1920s, Stengel managed Billy Martin in the 1950s.[6] So there is a successiveness in baseball-time after all, but in baseball these lines of succession always look backwards. And if players of today are healthier, faster, stronger, and smarter than players of the past, the more recent players are somehow not as good, or so it seems.

The desire for eternal youth; the wish to stop the

clock; the belief that one can cancel successiveness; the insistence on living the moment, the eternal now, without reference to temporal moorings--these are familiar themes in American thought and literature. In 1782 J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur described the settlers of this country as attempting to recreate themselves, to start over, to negate their pasts:

> Urged by a variety of motives, here they came. Everything has tended to regenerate them: new laws, a new mode of living, a new social system; here they are become men: in Europe they were as so many useless plants, wanting vegetative mould and refreshing showers; they withered, and were mowed down by want, hunger, and war; but now, by the power of transplantation, like all other plants they have taken root and flourished! (68-69)

Americans are regenerated, Crèvecoeur maintains. They start fresh; they are born again. The European who comes to this land "begins to feel the effects of a sort of resurrection" (82).

F. Scott Fitzgerald's Jay Gatsby is perhaps the quintessential fictional embodiment of this American pastoral wish. He is fundamentally "backward-looking," believing that the past is easily relived, that the passage of time is inconsequential. His oft-quoted proclamation to Nick Carraway-- "'Can't repeat the past? . . . Why of course you can!'" (111)--expresses not only his credo but also that of countless American characters, fictional and otherwise.

Not surprisingly, this American belief that one can

defeat time, which the sport of baseball seems to express, informs baseball literature. Sometimes the reference to the defeat of time is overt. In The Natural, for example, Hobbs hits a dramatic homerun that smashes the stadium clock: "The clock spattered minutes all over the place, and after that the Dodgers never knew what time it was" (162).

Malamud's narrator makes it clear that Hobbs's desire is to regain his youth, to remain forever young: "[H]e remembered how satisfied he had been as a youngster, and that with the little he had had--a dog, a stick, an aloneness he loved (which did not bleed him like his later loneliness), and he wished he could have lived longer in his boyhood. This was an old thought with him" (105).

Hobbs hopes that his prowess in baseball will keep him from death, grant him a kind of immortality: "'[I]f you leave all those records that nobody else can beat--they'll always remember you. You sorta never die'" (142). He is vague about his past--"'My past life is nobody's business'" (108)--, believing that he can recreate himself through baseball. Here he is in conversation with Memo Paris, sounding vague about both past and future, but believing in the possibility of rebirth:

> "There were times I thought I would never get anywhere and it made me eat my guts, but all that is gone now. I know I have the stuff and will get there."
>
> "Get where?"
>
> "Where I am going. Where I will be the champ

and have what goes with it." (109)

The motif of the orphan, which runs through much baseball literature, further expresses the attempt to escape time. An orphan is a person without normal connections to the past. Therefore, he is figuratively one without a past, a person who arrives from a place outside of time. Unlike characters with known parentage, he is not bound by the past. He can create himself as he wishes. Roy Hobbs is one such character. Another is Donald Hays's Hog Durham in The Dixie Association, who at age three was abandoned by his parents. Trying to escape the past and not believing in the future, he sees baseball as a timeless paradise: "'The game takes over. It's outside of time'" (54). Elsewhere he tells Pansy Puckett, "'You know what, love? The simple, shameful, God's truth of it is that all I want to do is hit .400 forever'" (161). Another "orphan" is Eversole, who was raised in the San Antonio Methodist Home for Boys. At forty-six he is the best pitcher on Hog Durham's team, and in the entire league.

Because of the unusualness of Robert Coover's The Universal Baseball Association, Inc. (1968), the presentation of the orphan-player reaches the point of absurdity in this novel. The players have no material existence. They abide in the mind of J. Henry Waugh and are represented by pieces of paper on a kitchen table. In the novel's final chapter the point of view shifts so that we no longer see and hear

these "players" through the filter of Henry's consciousness. The narrator here presents them as having consciousness apart from Henry. They speculate philosophically about many things, including their lack of parentage. One "player" says, "'We have no mothers. . . . The ripening of their wombs is nothing more than a ceremonious parable. We are mere ideas, hatched whole and helpless, here to enact old rituals of resistance and rot.'" The narrator then sums up their condition, calling the "players" "reluctant participants in a classic plot, too wise to fable a future fortune, too distressed ever to invent their childhoods, left with nothing but the spiky imprint of their cleats upon the turf and the passage from envelope to maddening envelope of inscrutable space" (230).

But the orphan motif is particularly emphasized in Jerome Charyn's The Seventh Babe (1979). Babe "Rags" Ragland is not really an orphan, and his real name is Cedric Tannehill, the son of a man who made millions from copper mines. Rags deliberately forsakes his connections, recreating himself according to the pastoral myth:

> He could have been a bullrider, or a copper engineer, like his pa, with Amherst, Tucson, and Abilene behind him. He'd have chatted with lawyers, had his own Mr. Griffey [the family lawyer] to watch over his affairs. Then he'd have taken a wife. Not a girl who'd sleep with the Red Sox. But a bride from Old Tucson, in a marriage that Griffey would have arranged. His pa would have come to the wedding, given Cedric a copper mine or two. The kid would have been safe among

the Tannehills.

I don't want that.

He was leather, air, and horsehide on a ball. He was knickers and dirty brown grass, the first twist of a double play. He couldn't live apart from a baseball diamond. He was married to a fifty-cent glove.

Copper wasn't his birthright. No. He hadn't slept in any cradle in his father's house. He was born in a pile of mud near the pitcher's box. A baseball baby. Orphan Rags. (219-220)

Rags embellishes the story of his invented past, which is to say no past at all, with the appropriate details. When Miz Marylou remarks on the oddity of having "Babe" as a Christian name and then apologizes for being impolite, he tells her of his, and Babe Ruth's, orphanage:

"You don't have to be sorry. The brothers at St. Mary's always said 'Babe' to me. 'Come here, Babe.' 'Go to sleep, Babe.' Things like that. Maybe there's a different name on my birth certificate. But it's hard to tell. Because nobody knows where that certificate is. I'm a foundling, ma'am. The brothers picked me right off the front step. I was two and a half." (47-48)

And naturally, others within baseball collude with him in this fabrication. During the game right after the newspapers break the story about his actual past, the stadium crowd becomes defiant:

A peculiar bedlam broke out in "Duffy's Cliff." You could see the snaky rhythm of six thousand shoulders, as the men and women on that hill began to scream like demented cats. "We got an orphan here." The whole stadium picked it up.

"Orphan, orphan, we got an orphan here." (112)

All of the Yankees, playing Rags's Red Sox during this game, try to upset the "orphan" by taunting him with information from the papers--all of them, that is, except Babe Ruth, who, standing on third after hitting a triple, comforts his rival: "'Kid, . . . Fuck the newspapers. They're out to get orphans like us'" (112).

The name "Babe" is important to Charyn's novel, since it suggests eternal youth. And it is also important to baseball history and legends, chiefly because of Babe Ruth. Charyn fictionalizes Ruth, but turning Babe Ruth into a fictional character is not much of a fabrication. The popular perception of George Herman Ruth is that he was "greater than life," a hero from beyond time:

> A lovable grotesque, a comic giant, he was America's eternal child. . . . His name was right--he was always the Babe. His presence still lives in the game because he was its most extraordinary personality, its most completely heroic figure, entering almost immediately into the realm of myth. The greatest wonder of Ruth's life may be that he really lived: it still seems hard to believe that he wasn't evolved from the brave hopes of the nation. (Grella 275)

The characters of Charyn's novel use baseball, aided by voodoo, to escape the passage of time. Babe Ragland gets outside of time to such an extent, in fact, that while playing for the Cincinnati Colored Giants he needs constant reminders of what year it is. About thirty years pass without his noticing:

> Nigger baseball took Rags out of any specific order of time. Seasons didn't count. Winter and summer meant the same thing: baseball diamonds in the hinterland, Carl and his hawkers scrambling for games. February looked no different from July. The Cincinnatis searched out warm, leafy spots, away from sheriffs' offices, and near a village or two. . . . It was 1929. Or did he have the wrong year? (253-254)

Elsewhere the narrator says, "[N]o amount of magic could thrust a calendar into the kid's head" (289), and on several occasions Rags is referred to as Rip Van Winkle (255; 318-319). Towards the end of the novel, a seventy-nine-year-old Garland James, a teammate of Ragland's from more than fifty years earlier, meets Rags and Miz Iva and wonders, "Shouldn't the girl have had some gray specks in her hair? She had to be seventy, or sixty-nine? Did you kick old age in the pants when you traveled with the Giants?" (343).

The attempt to defeat time is central to the baseball fiction of W.P. Kinsella. In The Thrill of the Grass (1984), for example, the narrator of the story "The Night Manny Mota Tied the Record" is offered a chance to undo Thurman Munson's death. The mysterious Mr. Revere, an emissary from beyond time, says, "'Death . . . need not be as final as many of us are used to believing'" (94). Approaching the suggestion that the narrator might want to change places with Munson, he says, "'What would you say . . . if I told you that it might just be possible to move time back, like a newsreel being

played in reverse, and undo what has been done?'" (94-95).

In Kinsella's Shoeless Joe players of the past travel to the present to play a baseball game. These include the title character, who, as one of eight players banned from baseball for life as a result of the 1919 "Black Sox Scandal," is, in fiction, given a second chance; he is "born again" in the pages of a baseball novel. In the same novel the fictional J.D. Salinger describes baseball's backward-looking nature and constancy: "'I don't have to tell you that the one constant through all the years has been baseball. . . . It constantly reminds us of what once was, like an Indian-head penny in a handful of new coins'" (213).

In Kinsella's The Iowa Baseball Confederacy characters travel to the past to participate in what seems to be a never-ending game. Gideon Clarke, the narrator of the later novel, marvels at his seeming good fortune: "I am adrift in the past, roughly thirty-five years before I will be born. And I can be anybody I want to be" (132). Later he seriously contemplates the impossible, saying, "Perhaps there does not have to be any more death. Perhaps time can be defeated" (275).

Besides its central plotting device of time travel, The Iowa Baseball Confederacy has innumerable minor references to the pastoral wish to conquer time. A few examples will suffice. There is the "Backwards Plague," an odd ailment

said to have afflicted many in the early 1900s, whereby fully grown men and women regressed mentally and physically until they hit their birth weight, when they started to grow again (64-66). There is the "Twelve-Hour Church of Time Immemorial," the name itself suggesting, albeit confusingly, an altered view of time. And the Church's favorite hymn, "I Shall Not be Moved," further testifies to the belief that time's passage can be halted. Moreover, the flood that destroys Big Inning, Iowa, resulting from a forty-day rain, obviously refers to the Genesis Flood, the destruction said to be necessary so that a second creation could take place. After the floods, the one in Genesis and the one in the novel, the past no longer counts; life starts over again. In Kinsella's novel, the antediluvian world is forgotten, as Big Inning becomes Onamata. Of the town's residents, the narrator says, "'They think Onamata just appeared there in 1909, that it was dropped from heaven, that there was never a flood, never another town--'" (83).

Besides its pastoral presentations of space and time, baseball has an accompanying characteristic, which Roland Garrett calls its clarity and articulation, that makes its mark in baseball literature. Stated simply, baseball's space and time are meticulously measured. The distance from the pitcher's rubber to home plate is sixty feet, six inches; the distance between bases is ninety feet; and so on. And

baseball measures its progress in units of threes: three strikes; three outs; nine innings (three times three); nine batters in a line-up. Garrett, concentrating on the batting-order as an example, explains the "metaphysics of baseball":

> Baseball is carefully articulated in space and time. In space the action is spread out over distant but definite and easily recognizable positions of significance. The entire field is, in a sense, a simple geometry of lines and points, the clear lines formed by the paths of balls, runners, and fielders, and the fixed points where these paths can be seen or estimated to converge. In time the game is meticulously divided and subdivided, the game into innings, the innings into half-innings, the half-innings into outs, the outs into strikes. Now, just as the fielding team locates itself in and takes shape around a fixed pattern of space, so the batting team orders itself in relation to this fixed pattern of time. It is the institution of the batting order that achieves this. The players on the batting team are arranged in a certain numerical order governing individual appearances at bat. Here the team is broken down into its elements, each unit of the team (that is, each player) corresponding to the possibility of an out. Thus time is articulated not only by formal divisions and subdivisions, but by a distinction between this formal structure and a second time-like structure, the batting order, which overlaps it, connects its elements, and gives it substance and direction. (650-651)

Baseball is also statistically precise and complete, further providing a realm of intelligibility and clarity (Garrett 661). Even casual fans can recite lists of records and statistics: Ted Williams is the last man to hit over .400 in a season, which he did in 1941, the same year Joe DiMaggio hit safely in fifty-six consecutive games; Lou Gehrig played in 2130 consecutive games, a record; Ty Cobb's

.367 lifetime batting average is higher than anyone else's; in 1961 Roger Maris hit sixty-one home runs, which is one more than Babe Ruth hit in 1927, but Ruth's season was eight games shorter than Maris's; and so on (see The Baseball Encyclopedia). Seemingly everything in baseball is statistically recorded. Besides the familiar batting averages, runs scored, runs batted in, home runs, etc., listed in The Baseball Encyclopedia (and for the current season regularly updated in newspapers), baseball statisticians, calling themselves sabermetricians, have devised many new categories. Many of these sound esoteric. Bill James, perhaps the guru of sabermetricians, refers to defensive efficiency records, range factors, runs created, the Brock2 system, etc.[7] Thomas Boswell refers to Total Average (137-144), and the Elias Sports Bureau breaks down each player's performance in minute detail. A fan can learn how his favorite player does on grass compared to how he fares on artificial turf, how well he hits at night compared to how well in daylight; he can see how a given player performs in a certain month, in a particular ballpark, after a particular inning, against certain batters or pitchers, and so on.

The desire for order undoubtedly nourishes this obsession with numbers. Life cannot be measured so precisely, as much as we might wish otherwise. However,

baseball creates the pastoral illusion that everything is contained and accounted for, that there is no threatening chaos, no disturbing disorder of any kind. Donald Hall expresses this attraction of the game:

> [B]aseball sets off the meaning of life precisely because it is pure of meaning. As the ripples in the sand (in the Kyoto garden) organize and formalize the dust which is dust, so the diamonds and rituals of baseball create an elegant, trivial, enchanted grid on which our suffering, shapeless, sinful day leans for the momentary grace of order. (Fathers 51)

The attraction to the clarity and articulation of baseball's rules, records, and other statistics finds its way into baseball literature, further defining the genre. J. Henry Waugh, the protagonist of Robert Coover's The Universal Baseball Association, Inc., is obsessed by the richness of baseball's arithmetic:

> American baseball, by luck, trial and error, and since the famous playing rules council of 1889, had struck on an almost perfect balance between offense and defense, and it was that balance, in fact, that and the accountability--the beauty of the records system which found a place to keep forever each least action--that had led Henry to baseball as his final great project. (19)

Henry invents his own baseball game, played on his kitchen table with dice and charts of statistics, forsaking not only real life but also real baseball, so that he can accentuate this aspect of the game:

> Nothing like it really. Not the actual game so much--to tell the truth, real baseball bored

> him--but rather the records, the statistics, the peculiar balances between individual and team, offense and defense, strategy and luck, accident and pattern, power and intelligence. And no other activity in the world had so precise and comprehensive a history, so specific an ethic, and at the same time, strange as it seemed, so much ultimate mystery. (45)

In Eric Rolfe Greenberg's The Celebrant (1983) the narrator's father-in-law, Mr. Sonnheim, engages New York Giants pitcher Christy Mathewson in a conversation about the nature of baseball. They emphasize the game's mathematical precision. Sonnheim refers to Alexander Cartwright, one of the reputed founders of the game: "'He once defined his endeavor as an attempt to balance the arithmetic of the game against its geometry. That was his phrase: to balance the arithmetic against the geometry'" (84). The fictional Mathewson continues the theme: "'All those balances--so exact, so demanding and tantalizing. Nothing in the game is easy, yet nothing is impossible. It's a game of intricate simplicity'" (84). When the narrator alludes to the belief that baseball is like life, Mathewson disagrees, again emphasizing the game's orderliness:

> "In truth, nothing appealed to me as much as [baseball's] unreality. Baseball is all clean lines and clear decisions. Wouldn't life be far easier if it consisted of a series of definitive calls: safe or out, fair or foul, strike or ball. Oh, for a life like that, where every day produces a clear winner and an equally clear loser, and back to it the next day with the slate wiped clean and the teams starting out equal." (86-87)

Aware of the precision and clarity of the game, some baseball enthusiasts debate the question of the sport's origins, looking for that one genius to praise, whether he be Alexander Cartwright or Abner Doubleday. Kinsella dismisses the question in The Iowa Baseball Confederacy by bringing to life Leonardo Da Vinci, who owns up: "'It took me years of calculations to get the dimensions just right. I'm pleased that it works in practical application as well as on paper'" (240). Drifting Away, the mystical American Indian of Kinsella's novel, remarks, "'Baseball is the one single thing the white man has done right,'" and the Indian emphasizes not the game's straight lines but its circularity: "'Think of the circles instead of the lines--the ball, the circumference of the bat, the outfield running to the horizon, the batter running around the bases. Baseball is as close to the circle of perfection as white men are allowed to approach'" (166-167).

In the same novel the narrator recalls his father's paean to baseball perfection:

> "Name me a more perfect game! Name me a game with more possibilities for magic, wizardry, voodoo, hoodoo, enchantment, obsession, possession. . . . I bet there isn't a magician anywhere who doesn't love baseball. Take the layout. No mere mortal could have dreamed up the dimensions of a baseball field. No man could be that perfect. Abner Doubleday, if he did indeed invent the game, must have received divine guidance.
>
> "And the field runs to infinity. . . . There's no limit to how far a man might possibly hit a ball, and there's no limit to how far a fleet

> outfielder might run to receive it. The foul lines run on forever, forever diverging. There's no place in America that's not part of a major-league ballfield: the meanest ghetto, the highest point of land, the Great Lakes, the Colorado River. Hell, there's no place in the world that's not part of a baseball field." (41)

Because of this sense that baseball is perfectly articulated, whether in its lines or its circles, in much literature the game becomes a sacred ritual, often displacing religion.[8] Those "touched" by the game's sacredness are regenerated spiritually and sometimes healed physically. In Charyn's The Seventh Babe the symbiotic interaction of voodoo and the magic of baseball enables players to perform magnificently, even into their old age. A Roy Hobbs home run miraculously heals a boy in Malamud's The Natural (134). The sacred power of a baseball game delivers a man and a woman from death and injury in Nancy Willard's Things Invisible to See (1985), a novel bulging with allegorical religious references.

No doubt the most exuberant example of evangelical fervor in baseball fiction is the speech delivered by Eddie Scissons in Kinsella's Shoeless Joe. He works up his audience, those seated in the bleachers, by having them chant the word "baseball," then launches into a sermon full of New Testament allusions and the cadences of a Bible-belt revivalist:

"Can you imagine walking around with the very word

> of baseball enshrined inside you? Because the word of salvation is baseball. It gets inside you. Inside me. And the words that I speak are spirit, and <u>are</u> baseball.
> . . . .
> "We have to have the word within us. I say you must get the word of baseball within you, and let it dwell within you richly. So that when you walk out in the world and meet a man or woman, you can speak the word of baseball, not because you've heard someone else speak it but because it is alive within you." (192)

After more chanting of "the word," he concludes,

> "Praise the name of baseball. The word will set captives free. The word will open the eyes of the blind. The word will raise the dead. Have you the word of baseball living inside you? Do you live it, play it, digest it, forever? Let an old man tell you to make the word of baseball your life. Walk into the world and speak of baseball. Let the word flow through you like water, so that it may quicken the thirst of your fellow man." (193)

Baseball literature, then, in its presentation of bucolic space, of timeless existence, and of precise order, conveys American pastoral ideals. Leo Marx summarizes the American pastoral myth:

> In its simplest, archetypal form, the myth affirms that Europeans experience a regeneration in the New World. They become new, better, happier men--they are reborn. In most versions the regenerative power is located in the natural terrain: access to undefiled, bountiful, sublime Nature is what accounts for the virtue and special good fortune of Americans. It enables them to design a community in the image of a garden, an ideal fusion of nature with art. The landscape thus becomes the symbolic repository of value of all kinds--economic, political, aesthetic, religious. (228)

However, though baseball literature draws upon and is

defined by the pastoral myth, its best examples do not simply affirm these pastoral values. If they did, we would be right to dismiss them as sentimental and escapist. Furthermore, if these works did make such easy affirmations, the genre would not conform to the trend of American literature in general, at least as Richard Chase identifies it. According to Chase, the best American fiction "has been shaped by the contradictions and not by the unities and harmonies of our culture." The American novel, he says, "tends to rest in contradictions and among extreme ranges of experience. When it attempts to resolve contradictions, it does so in oblique, morally equivocal ways" (1). The purpose of this study of baseball literature is to show how the best examples of the genre equivocate.

Earlier I quoted Thomas Jefferson, who, as a founder of the nation, was also a progenitor of American pastoral values. Jefferson was not a simple man, however, and recognized that many forces attenuated his pastoral dreams:

> Jefferson . . . could not give full credence to the myth. Although he never entirely repudiated it, he knew perfectly well that it did not encompass all of the essential truth about American experience. In detached moods, he recognized the restless striving of his countrymen, their get-ahead, get-rich, rise-in-the-world ambitions. Whatever it was that they wanted, or, rather, that they <u>thought</u> they wanted, it was not the domestic peace and joy of the self-sufficient farm. Hence Jefferson's attitude is not to be confused with a naive trust in the fulfillment of the pastoral hope. (Marx 143)

To be sure, much baseball literature skirts the edges of sentimentality. If, for example, we were to mistake Eddie Scissons as the voice of all moral value in Kinsella's fiction, we would have to view the works as superficial, utopian, and sentimental. Let us be thankful that Eddie Scissons is one voice, not the voice. Careful readings of most examples of baseball literature reveal that these works often express skepticism regarding the values they ostensibly advocate. At the very least, the expression of pastoralism becomes ambiguous. The literature frequently seeks a middle ground between utter rejection of pastoral values and unrealistic, sentimental embrace of them.

Complete repudiation of pastoral beliefs may be as foolish and simplistic as uncritical acceptance of them. Sometimes, certainly, a protagonist who attempts to live outside of time, which is to say outside of life itself, must reject his idealism if he is to live; he must awaken from his dreams. However, much baseball literature seems to suggest that the dreamer does not necessarily renounce his dream. The dream is an expression of beauty and an experience of pleasure. Rather, the dreamer must call his dream a dream, distinguishing between it and a fact of history or human nature.

Of course there are many facts of history or human nature that disturb baseball dreams, besides the immediate

and obvious ones briefly referred to: plastic grass, domed stadiums, designated hitters. There are also facts of institutional power and corruption; corporate and individual greed; racism; egomaniacal owners, managers, and players.

A review of Leo Marx's distinction between sentimental and complex pastoralism is helpful. "Complex pastoralism," he says, "acknowledges the reality of history. . . . In the characteristic pattern of complex pastoralism, the fantasy of pleasure is checked by the facts of history." Sentimental pastoralism, on the other hand, allows "faith [to] oust fact." Marx offers, among others, Melville's Starbuck and, especially, Fitzgerald's Gatsby as examples of such sentimentalists. These characters are blind to modern civilization's complexities, unlike Nick Carraway, who "is drawn to images of pastoral felicity, but . . . learns how destructive they are when cherished in lieu of reality" (363).

Before moving to a consideration of various baseball novels, I will examine a baseball short story as a way of introducing baseball fiction's complex pastoralism. Because W. P. Kinsella's "The Thrill of the Grass" (in a collection of the same name, 1984) may seem to be a nostalgic and sentimental work of fiction, I use it as an example of the kinds of tension that appear in baseball literature. It is not an ironic story. Indeed, it ostensibly moves away from

complex awareness toward a simplistic embrace of sentimental pastoralism. However, even "The Thrill of the Grass" does not ignore historical realities, nor is sentimentalism at its center.

The narrative is simple: during the baseball players' strike of 1981, the narrator, a locksmith, organizes a group of baseball fans who, at night, enter the local baseball stadium, temporarily empty and unused, in order to replace the artificial turf with sods of real grass. The fans, after a few nights, have completely returned their ballpark to its natural, idyllic state, evidently reversing the intrusions on baseball's pastoral purity represented by the artificial playing surface.

Though the story's movement seems to be toward simplicity, it begins and ends in tension. The narrator presents certain facts at the outset, none of which are changed by his actions. First, players are striking. Baseball in 1981 does not evoke images of a timeless garden; it is a business. Second, the narrator, we learn, is "a failed shortstop" who once saw himself making spectacular fielding plays, "like a cat leaping for butterflies," and leading the American League in hitting. Instead, he had had to accept the reality that he hit .217 in his last year of high school while making 1.3 errors per game (188). Third, the narrator speaks of the game and the stadium in some

decidedly anti-pastoral ways. Besides the strike and the artificial turf, he describes the debris in the parking lot: "Faded bottle caps, rusted bits of chrome, an occasional paper clip, recede into the earth" (188). And he refers to the traffic on the freeway that passes the stadium.

Tugging on these realities are the narrator's dreams. He is disturbed by the strike because even compromised baseball is meaningful to him: "Summer without baseball: a disruption to the psyche" (187). Though he cannot participate in the sport physically, as a player, he does so mentally, as a fan. And with the disturbing images of the city and its debris he mixes pastoral descriptions. He is aware that "outside the city the corn rustles and ripens in the sun" (187). He also describes the parking lot as it appears to him before games. He sees a community in relative harmony: "I like to watch young families beside their campers, the mothers in shorts, grilling hamburgers, their men drinking beer. I enjoy seeing little boys dressed in the home team uniform, barely toddling, clutching hotdogs in upraised hands" (187).

The narrator is not the only pastoral visionary. When he asks a fellow fan what he thinks of artificial turf, the man answers, "'That's what the strike should be about. Baseball is meant to be played on summer evenings and Sunday afternoons, on grass just cut by a horse-drawn mower'" (190).

These two, along with their sod-carrying recruits, attempt to turn back the clock by their actions. But they recognize that they are dreamers (190-191), and all their outlaw gardening occurs at night, the time of dreaming. When the work is completed, the narrator anticipates the surprise of the players and others when the nighttime activities appear in the light of day, saying, "I feel like a magician who has gestured hypnotically and produced an elephant from thin air" (195).

It is significant that the story ends before anyone, except the pastoral conspirators, sees this handiwork. Because we do not see the reactions of those who attend the first game after the strike, we, like the narrator, must imagine them. The pastoral vision, therefore, though it has been materialized in this removal and replacement of artificial turf, remains a dream--something imagined, not something realized. The narrator, moreover, imagines that the grass will activate the memories of the older players: "[A]s they dress, they'll recall sprawling in the lush outfields of childhood, the grass as cool as a mother's hand on a forehead" (196). In other words, they will not experience the grass of the stadium as itself and for its own sake; they will think instead of other grass. Pastoralism remains a vision or a memory, not a reality. Youth is not restored or relived in this story. It is remembered. The

pastoral practical joke does not defeat time. Instead, it, like the story itself, spurs imagination and memory.

The baseball literature I am examining attempts to resolve the tension between simplistic acceptance of pastoralism and complete rejection of it. Though many resolutions of this tension are uncertain or ambiguous, with varying degrees of success the works show that the pastoral landscape, specifically the baseball diamond, is useful as a temporary resting place, as what Robert Frost might call "a momentary stay against confusion" (Marx 30). These works often settle for a circumscribed social vision, a less idealistic model that emerges from the clash between the dream and the reality. The most obvious examples are those written in the tradition of realism--Eric Rolfe Greenberg's The Celebrant and Harry Stein's Hoopla!, for example. Some novelists, however, employ magical realism as a vehicle for expressing pastoral values, without claiming that simple pastoralism belongs in the real world. These and other works imply that baseball's pastoralism can only be realized in art, not in life. Thus, the subject of much baseball literature is not only baseball but also literature itself. Robert Coover's The Universal Baseball Association, Inc. and Philip Roth's The Great American Novel (1973) are clear examples of baseball fiction that causes us to consider the

uses of fiction itself.

Juvenile baseball novels--those written by Lester Chadwick, John R. Tunis, and others--emphasize the heroes of the baseball diamond. This study proceeds in Chapter II with an examimation of more complex portrayals of heroes, those of Bernard Malamud and Jerome Charyn. In some baseball literature the fan is the protagonist. Chapter III considers three works--Eric Rolfe Greenberg's The Celebrant, Christopher Lehmann-Haupt's Me and DiMaggio, and W.P. Kinsella's The Iowa Baseball Confederacy--in which a fan is the chief character and narrator. Harry Stein's Hoopla! examines the business of baseball and the way it acts as a counterforce to pastoral dreams. It and W.P. Kinsella's Shoeless Joe, both examined in Chapter IV, especially draw upon the infamous "Black Sox Scandal" of 1919. I consider the works of Philip Roth, Robert Coover, and Jerome Klinkowitz in Chapter V. These are examples of baseball fiction that has a dual subject, the playing of baseball and the writing of fiction itself.

Notes

[1] Harry Stein, in a 1986 New York Times Book Review essay, provides numerous examples of serious writers who have been disparaged for writing about baseball. For example, he quotes Mark Harris's paraphrase of typical objections: "'If you want to get ahead in a literary career, you have to tackle a literary subject.'" And W.P. Kinsella's sardonic rejoinder to such snobbery is worth noting: "'What I like to do, . . . by way of solution, is throw stuff into my work to give the lit-crit people a cheap thrill every once in a while'" ("Baseball on Their Minds" 9).

[2] Good prose is, of course, a relative value. Speaking of newspaper sportswriting, Donald Hall points out that though it is mostly dreadful, "it is usually the best writing in the paper." He continues, "the sports section is the only place in the paper where we are likely to find an image more complex than an adjective accompanied by a noun, or a metaphor neither inadvertent nor trite nor mixed" (Fathers 129-130). The clichés and deadness of sportswriting are nothing compared to the verbiage spewed forth in the political world, not to mention academic dissertations.

[3] I am indebted to Leo Marx's The Machine in the Garden for my understanding of American pastoralism--and for these excerpts from Jefferson and Emerson.

[4] Wrigley Field's first night game took place on August 8, 1988. It was rained-out before reaching the five innings that would have made it an official game, however. Wrigley's first complete night game occurred on the following night.

[5] Golf, also a pastoral sport, is different in this regard. Ultimate success in golf would consist of eighteen holes-in-one. Instead of perpetuating the game, such success would end the game very quickly (Garrett 658). One might see an analogy here to a pitcher who throws twenty-seven pitches and records twenty-seven outs (three in each of the nine innings); but if his own team does not score a run, the game continues.

[6] Like the installation of lights at Wrigley Field, the increasing use of artificial grass, and the "Designated Hitter" rule, the fact that Billy Martin has no apparent successor, perhaps because of his paranoia or pride, seems to indicate that the American pastoral sport has become increasingly susceptible to the disorderliness of contemporary life.

[7] James does define his terms, of course. Anyone wishing precise definitions can consult his The Bill James Historical Baseball Abstract or the annual Bill James Baseball Abstract.

[8] This use of baseball has also entered baseball films. In Ron Shelton's Bull Durham (1988), for instance, Susan

Sarandon's character opens the movie with the words "I believe in the Church of Baseball."

II

Rubes, Naturals, and Mavericks: The Baseball Heroes of Lardner, Malamud, and Charyn

The foundational character of baseball fiction is, no doubt, the baseball player himself. The clichés are all too familiar: with his team behind, our hero steps up to the plate in the bottom of the ninth inning to deliver the hit that wins the game. He astonishes the world, and he probably has a smiling, wholesome beauty waiting for him outside the locker room. Often the player is a "natural," a gifted individual for whom hitting and throwing come easy. The "natural" is a common figure, even in more complex baseball fiction.

This kind of player is generally naive, believing that he automatically, naturally, embodies baseball's pastoral values. Or, if he has not yet quite "made it," he will do so shortly. He seems to believe either that he is on the verge of greatness--like Malamud's Roy Hobbs--, that he need make only a minor adjustment in order to fully realize his dream, or else that what is holding him back is not his own deficiency but that of someone or something else. This latter tendency is one of the secrets of Lardner's fiction, the "heroes" of which come up with some hilarious excuses for

their failures.

A second type of hero has stepped beyond this kind of naivete or innocence because of his inability to overcome an obstacle, possibly within himself but more typically in some outside force. He is the maverick, the outsider. Jerome Charyn's The Seventh Babe is perhaps the purest expression of this kind of baseball hero.

Some critics who have analyzed Malamud's The Natural have rightly commented on the novel's depiction of institutional corruption and societal decay as forces that intrude upon the pastoral dreams of Roy Hobbs.[1] Those studies that emphasize Hobbs as a hero, however, tend to over-emphasize the mythic parallels of the novel, making much of Hobbs's resemblance to Achilles or the novel's echoes of Arthurian legend.[2] These tracings of the mythic correspondences in the work are often convincing, to be sure, but they too frequently end with the identification of the parallels, stopping short of interpretation.

The similarities of Malamud's hero to the "heroes" of Lardner's fiction are rarely, if ever, commented upon.[3] Of course, there are considerable differences. The mythic correspondences mentioned above are absent in Lardner. Moreover, and more importantly, the styles are different. You Know Me Al (1914) and Lose With a Smile (1933) are supposed collections of letters written by ballplayers--or,

in the case of the later novel, a ballplayer and his girlfriend. The first-person narration is the source of the humor of Lardner's work, not only because of the obvious problems these heroes have with spelling and grammar but also because of their inflated views of themselves, their superior posing, their pseudo-sophistication, and their hilarious seriousness. The humorlessness of Lardner's protagonists creates humor. The Natural has comic elements and can even be read as a comic novel, but its humor is incidental, not intrinsic, as is the case in Lardner's fiction.

But the similarities are noteworthy. As noted above, Lardner's protagonists--not only Jack Keefe of You Know Me Al and Danny Warner of Lose With a Smile but also Frank X. Farrell (Ike) of "Alibi Ike" (1915)--are, like Malamud's Roy Hobbs, naifs. They come from rural environments to play big-league baseball in big cities, completely unprepared to make the transition, each being what Frederick W. Turner III calls "the prototypical goon athlete" (114). Ironically, with its supposed affinities with farming and agricultural values, baseball is, in both Lardner and Malamud, an urban sport. Teams are associated with cities, and we sense in reading these works that the values of the cities have enveloped the baseball diamonds. Lardner, in particular, has great fun debunking baseball's supposed pastoralism. You Know Me Al is subtitled A Busher's Letters, and it is

possible to see this and Lardner's later epistolary baseball novel as parodies of Crèvecoeur's Letters From an American Farmer. And in Lose With a Smile with one biting anecdote Lardner wipes out the notion that baseball players are Jeffersonian farmers. Danny Warner relates a story he heard about a pitcher, Clyde Day, and his nickname:

> [T]hey call him Pea ridge Day because he come from a town name Pea ridge and he was the champion hog caller of Arkansaw and when he use to pitch in Brooklyn last yr he use to give a hog call after every ball he throwed but the club made him cut it out because the fans come down on the field every time he give a call and the club had to hire the champion of iowa to set up in the stand and call them back. (2)

As noted, Malamud's novel is usually in a different style, but this kind of humor, possibly consciously derived from Lardner, is sometimes evident. Noting that a reporter wrote of Roy Hobbs, "'He can catch everything in creation'" (75), the narrator provides proof of the observation's truth:

> It happened that a woman who lived on the sixth floor of an apartment house overlooking the stadium was cleaning out her bird cage, near the end of the game, which the Knights took handily, when her canary flew out of the window and darted down across the field. Roy, who was waiting for the last out, saw something coming at him in the low rays of the sun, and leaping high, bagged it in his glove. (75)

The debunking occurs in the next sentence: "He got rid of the bloody mess in the clubhouse can" (75).

There are other examples in which Malamud's hero seems

to be one of Lardner's creations, such as when Hobbs takes his manager literally when Pop Fisher enjoins his player to "'Knock the cover of of it [the ball]'" (70). After Hobbs connects, the pitcher fields the cover of the ball as the core unravels thread on its way to the outfield.

> In the locker room Pop asked Roy to explain why he thought the cover had come off the ball.
> "That's what you said to do, wasn't it?"
> "That's right," said Pop, scratching his bean. (71)

Lardner's baseball players express this same humorless literalness.

Hobbs also shares with Lardner's creations the belief in self-reliance. When the lowly New York Knights employ a team psychologist to help instill confidence in the players, Hobbs objects: "'Nix on that . . . I don't need a shyster quack to shoot me full of confidence juice. I want to go through on my own steam'" (64). Similarly, Lardner's Jack Keefe habitually insists that there is nothing anyone can teach him. For example, when a teammate suggests that he can teach the pitcher to better disguise (cover) his pitches when he is delivering the ball, Keefe stubbornly turns down the coaching, explaining, "I guess Al I know how to cover it up all right without Walsh learning me" (29). There are numerous statements like this in You Know Me Al. And in Lose With a Smile Danny Warner objects to his manager's suggestion that he learn to switch-hit: "I guess I could hit them good

enough 1 way" (9). Warner's refusal to be coached in this and other skills contributes to his being cut from the team. Being a "natural" does not guarantee success.

Lardner's and Malamud's ballplayers provide examples of something Thomas Jefferson warned against: the removal of a young man from the benign influences of American soil to the corrupting complexities of civilization. Jefferson refers to the young American who goes to Europe, but his remarks are applicable to what happens to Jack Keefe, Danny Warner, and Roy Hobbs:

> He acquires a fondness for European luxury and dissipation and a contempt for the simplicity of his own country; he is fascinated with the privileges of the European aristocrats, and sees with abhorrence the lovely equality which the poor enjoy with the rich in his own country: . . . he forms friendships with those who will never be useful to him . . . he is led by the strongest of all the human passions into a spirit for female intrigue destructive of his health, and in both cases learns to consider fidelity to the marriage bed as an ungentlemanly practice and inconsistent with happiness: he recollects the voluptuary dress and arts of the European women, and pities and despises the chaste affections and simplicity of those of his own country. . . . (Marx 131)

Lardner's and Malamud's baseball players frequently fall into the traps Jefferson mentions. They <u>think</u> they are in complete control; they are, after all, pastoral heroes pursuing pastoral dreams. What could there be to learn? They are "naturals" who need only step into the greatness that is rightfully theirs. Jack Keefe comically expresses

this cockiness: "Well Al it will seem funny to be up there in the big show when I never was really in a city before. But I guess I seen enough of life not to be scared of the high buildings eh Al? (22). But Keefe, Warner, and Hobbs all fall prey to wily women, bootleg booze, confidence men or gamblers--or those just as unscrupulous team owners. In Lose With a Smile, Jessie, Warner's girlfriend and correspondent, writing from the safety of Centralia, Illinois, notices a change in Danny's vocabulary and worries that he may be degenerating: "Danny you never used to say words like H___ though I suppose the ball men say it all the time though I hope they dont talk like that to girls" (44).

The players in question also overindulge in eating, no doubt as a way of compensating for their frustrations. They are would-be baseball heroes thwarted by unexpected obstacles. If they cannot fill the newspaper headlines with their names, nothing will stand in the way of their filling their bellies with food. Jack Keefe frequently refers to his appetite, as usual revealing more about himself than he intends. Writing from the site of his first spring training, he says,

> The hotel here is a great big place and got good eats. We got in at breakfast time and I made a B line for the dining room. Kid Gleason who is a kind of asst. manager to Callahan come in and sat down with me. He says Leave something for the rest of the boys because they will be just as hungry as you. He says Ain't you afraid you will cut your throat with that knife. He says You shouldn't

> ought to eat so much because you're overweight now. I says You may think I am fat, but it's all solid bone and muscle. He says Yes I suppose it's all solid bone from the neck up. (26)

Keefe is so overweight when he reports for his second season that Gleason must follow him around to keep him from overeating. Keefe longs to be free of his coach's watchful eye:

> The 1st thing I am going to do when we get to Chi is I am going to a resturunt somewheres and get a good meal where Gleason or no one else can't get at me. I know allready what I am going to eat and that is a big stake and a apple pie and that is not all. (136)

Danny Warner of Lose With a Smile is almost as bad, though he does regret his overindulgences, if for no other reason than that he makes himself sick: "I eat some schrimps that set up my stomach with ptomanes posen and still sick from it yet" (117). Casey Stengel, performing a function similar to Gleason's in the earlier novel, comically remarks, according to Warner, "[Y]our the champion master mind of the century as you wouldent look at sea food in Brooklyn or Boston but you wait till you get to St Louis witch is as far a way from the ocean as they could hide it" (117).

In The Natural Roy Hobbs's overeating puts him in the hospital. Clearly, Hobbs displaces his desire for pastoral fulfillment with the desire for food, which is at least plentiful and available. But he is not satisfied by food:

"He was gobbling it down and it gave him a feeling of both having something and wanting it the same minute he was having it" (168).

That Hobbs's baseball Eden, it so happens, is in a fallen state before he even arrives is why the player seeks gratification off the field. The team owner, Judge Goodwill Banner, is interested in money and power--not in baseball's affinities with a garden, its timelessness, or its beauty. Nor does he care about winning or all those records Hobbs intends to break. Gus Sands, the gambler, has infected the sport, assisted by Max Mercy, the sportswriter, and Memo Paris, the woman Hobbs falls for. But because Hobbs has staked his entire life on his dream of greatness, his frustrated desires consume him. In the hospital, in fact, he has a dream that illuminates the connection of his baseball frustrations to his overeating:

> He hungered in nightmare for quantities of exotic food--wondrous fowl stuffed with fruit, and the multitudinous roe of tropical fish. When he bent his toothy head to devour, every last morsel vanished. So they served him a prime hunk of beef and he found it enormously delicious only to discover it was himself he was chewing. (175)

Lardner's heroes also consume themselves, paradoxically keeping themselves from success in baseball by gratifying their desires in other ways. Since they do not instantly succeed on the diamond, they eat, drink, and stay out late with women. But the more they compensate in these ways, the

more they postpone any realization of their pastoral dreams. Of course, they could not realize their visions in any case. Organized baseball is not a paradise by any means. But there are suggestions that if Lardner's and Malamud's protagonists could achieve greater self-awareness, they could find some satisfaction; they would not be driven to consume themselves.

Lardner's characters never gain self-knowledge. Their circumstances change, but they do not. Lardner's debunking of the pastoral myth is thorough, in fact, and it would be forcing the point to see his works as expressions of complex pastoralism in the manner of Kinsella, for example. However, Lardner's work consists of more than simple debunking, not because it shows the value of the dream but because it implies that the dreamers have value in spite of their foolishness. Some characters, Kid Gleason and Casey Stengel, for example, come off as witty, funny, and likable. And even the "bushers" are likable because they are recognizably human. As Donald Elder says of Jack Keefe, he is "not unlikeable. He is not very much worse than anyone else; he is real. He is not quite like yourself, but he bears a fatal resemblance to your friends" (114). Michael Oriard expands on this point:

> [Keefe] understands a few ideas, occasionally performs the socially proper action, periodically makes a witty comeback to one of his tormentors, and proves himself a well-meaning, loving father. Jack gains our sympathy most of all by his utter helplessness; his wife Florrie is such an

> unscrupulous, exploitative shrew that Jack cannot help but look noble in comparison. He is simply a hick uncomfortably placed in the big city. He has lost his small-town values as he has lost his taste for beer, but he is left with nothing to sustain himself beyond the self-delusions that feed his ego. (Dreaming 92)

But however endearing they may be, Jack Keefe and Danny Warner do not learn much, if anything, about themselves. Roy Hobbs has greater possibilities for self-awareness.

In its portrayal of unsavory characters and institutions and in its ironic characterization of Hobbs, The Natural rejects simple pastoralism. This fact was evidently not appreciated by those who adapted the novel for Barry Levinson's film (1984), or else they chose to ignore it. The novel ends with Hobbs's striking out; in the film he hits a home run and then, evidently, marries Iris Lemon. The final scene of the film depicts Hobbs some years removed from his final game, playing catch with his son in a wheatfield, as Glenn Close's Iris looks on with her cloying smile. Furthermore, the film's Iris, in a telling diversion from the novel, is Hobbs's childhood sweetheart, whom he had to leave in order to play in the big leagues. They are blissfully reunited, the film implying that Hobbs regains his youth, that he defeats time.

Iris is an important figure in The Natural, not because she represents--as in the film version--a fulfillment of the pastoral dream but rather because she presents Hobbs with a

choice. She does not believe that Hobbs's vision of himself as a pastoral hero is valueless, saying, "'Without heroes we're all plain people and don't know how far we can go . . . it's their function to be the best and for the rest of us to understand what they represent and guide ourselves accordingly'" (140). However, she implies that Hobbs's vision cannot be maintained, that he will eventually have to re-enter time. In the following conversation Hobbs is frustrated, while Iris wonders why he cannot accept limitations:

> "I had a lot to give to this game."
> "Life?"
> "Baseball. If I had started out fifteen years ago like I tried to, I'da been the king of them all by now."
> "The king of what?"
> "The best in the game," he said impatiently.
> She sighed deeply. "You're so good now."
> "I'da been better. I'da broke most every record there was."
> "Does that mean so much to you?"
> "Sure," he answered. "It's like what you said before. You break the records and everybody else tries to catch up with you if they can."
> "Couldn't you be satisfied with just breaking a few?"
> Her pinpricking was beginning to annoy him. "Not if I could break most of them," he insisted.
> "But I don't understand why you should make so much of that. Are your values so--" (141)

She does not finish her question, but perhaps she means to say "so static" or "so unalterably fixed in an unrealizable pastoral myth."

Hobbs is attracted to Iris but is repulsed when he

discovers that she is a grandmother, even though she is only thirty-three, having been the teen-aged mother of a girl who became a teen-aged mother. For him to be attached to a grandmother would mean that he would be constantly reminded of time's passage, that the clock would be ticking on him: "It was simple enough to him: if he got serious with her it could only lead to one thing--him being a grandfather. God save him from that for he personally felt as young and frisky as a colt" (149-150).

In an earlier scene the novel makes it clear that Hobbs's great fear is that he will never regain his youth, that eventually he, like all mortals, will grow old and die. There is even a suggestion that he knows that this is the case but will not admit it to himself. Memo Paris is driving a car at night. As Hobbs sits beside her, he hallucinates: "He found himself wishing he could go back somewhere, go home, wherever that was. As he was thinking this, he looked up and saw in the moonlight a boy coming out of the woods, followed by his dog" (110). He is then almost certain that they hit the boy with the car. Later, at his hotel, he imagines that he leans over the boy's body: "[T]he boy lay brokenhearted and bleeding in a puddle of light, with no one to care for him or whisper a benediction upon his lost youth" (116). He then realizes that he has imagined the whole thing: "[I]t did not appear there ever was any kid in those

woods, except in his mind" (116). Obviously, he is the boy he conjures up. His youth is gone, whether he is consciously aware of the fact or not.

To accept time's passage is to embrace life, but life involves suffering, aging, and eventual death. Playing Sonia to Hobbs's Raskolnikov, Iris tries to explain that the suffering is worth it: "'We have two lives, Roy, the life we learn with and the life we live with after that. Suffering is what brings us toward happiness'" (143). Hobbs is a "natural," however, and he resents her lesson: "'All [suffering] ever taught me is to stay away from it. I am sick of all I have suffered'" (143). He yearns to escape time, preferring to reside in a timeless baseball paradise.

Hobbs is thwarted, of course. Lusting after Memo Paris, he allows himself to be drawn into the conspiracy to throw the game that would give his team the pennant--so that he and Memo can realize her fantasy. After he imagines someday owning a restaurant, she says, "'I would like you to buy into a company where you could have an executive job and won't have to go poking your nose into the stew in a smelly restaurant'" (183). And his own body fails him. A doctor informs him that another year of playing could result in his dropping dead.

Finally, rising out of his hospital bed to play in the game he has been bribed to throw, Hobbs decides to defy the

gambling conspirators, but his natural ability betrays him. He strikes out in spite of his efforts. Ironically, though he tries to succeed in his final appearance at bat, he is accused of deliberately striking out. There is surely plenty of evidence against him, and the following statement by the baseball commissioner, which Hobbs reads in a newspaper, is the final blow: "'If the alleged report is true, that is the last of Roy Hobbs in organized baseball. He will be excluded from the game and all his records forever destroyed'" (217).

The novel ends with Malamud's adaptation of a story about Shoeless Joe Jackson's meeting with a young fan after the boy hears of the "Black Sox Scandal" of 1919, wherein eight members of the Chicago White Sox were accused of throwing the World Series. In the novel a boy approaches Hobbs, pleading, "'Say it ain't true, Roy.'" But Hobbs cannot tell the boy what he wants to hear: "[H]e wanted to say it wasn't but couldn't, and he lifted his hands to his face and wept many bitter tears" (217). The dream is over. Hobbs's narcissism has turned to self-hatred, but he does at least draw the right conclusion, recalling Iris Lemon's earlier words: "He thought, I never did learn anything out of my past life, now I have to suffer again" (217). Wiley Lee Umphlett is no doubt correct in his summary of The Natural:

> In Malamud's version of the sporting myth the American Dream can never be realized, but the

> suffering one undergoes in its pursuit can result in self-knowledge, a far greater accomplishment in Malamud's vision than material gain or fame. (130)

The efforts of screenwriters notwithstanding, Malamud's novel does not put forth a simplistic utopian vision.[4] Hobbs, with his graceful fielding, his powerful swing, and his incomparable greatness, has no choice but to re-enter time. He must pass from innocence to experience, changing from Jay Gatsby into Nick Carraway, as it were.

Malamud, then, like Lardner before him, presents an innocent pastoral hero who is defeated by the realities of life. His devotion to baseball's pastoral myth proves to be self-destructive because he is unable to accept a limited, temporary version of the myth, one articulated by Iris Lemon.

If in The Natural the hero begins in innocence and is confronted with the facts of history, Jerome Charyn's The Seventh Babe reverses the pattern. In this work the hero is overwhelmed with experience and tries to assume innocence in order to counter it. Rather than entering the world of time, which he knows too well, Babe "Rags" Ragland, formerly Cedric Tannehill, attempts to find redemption by escaping time. He tries to realize some version of baseball's pastoral myth. Ragland's quest eventually causes him to become an outlaw from organized baseball but still a hero to those "who loved

baseball but despised its American commissioner and his despotic ways" (245).

Donald Hall, in his non-fictional Dock Ellis in the Country of Baseball (1976), identifies the outlaw as a type: "[T]here have always been the others--the mavericks, the eccentrics, the citizens of independent mind. They thrive in the country of baseball. Some of them display with Lucifer the motto, 'I will not serve'" (10). Hall's examination of the maverick-hero focuses on Dock Ellis, who pitched in the major leagues from 1968 to 1979--"bad Dock Ellis, black, famous for his big mouth, suspended in 1975 for a month without pay, the suspension rescinded and pay restored, Dock, famous for his Bad Attitude, maverick citizen in the country of baseball" (14-15).

Babe Ragland is a fictional maverick who also "will not serve." He snubs the baseball establishment, including the legendary Kennesaw Mountain Landis, who bans Ragland from baseball for accepting money from a gambler. Ragland is framed by Hollis McKee, the owner of the Boston Red Sox, but since the self-righteous Landis cannot bear the slightest appearance of impropriety, he does not look very closely at the evidence. Ragland joins the Cincinnati Colored Giants, an outlaw team, "the only team in baseball that had defied the emperor and won" (235-236), the best team in baseball in spite of Landis's efforts to have it boycotted.

As noted in the previous chapter, Ragland enters the American League in the guise of an orphan, forsaking his identity as Cedric Tannehill in order to step into a timeless realm, in order to achieve mythic status. In The Natural such an effort would be irresponsible, but the history that the hero of The Seventh Babe tries to escape is a nightmare. He is haunted, for example, by images of cruelty from his childhood:

> His mother had died of pneumonia when he was six. He'd had nurses, aunts and tutors to watch over him. And his own servant, a colored boy named Charles. Charles ran away once, and he was whipped for it. His father's handymen whipped him in front of Cedric. Then they held his mouth open, took a razor, and slashed his gums. That was a lesson for runaways. Colored boys didn't disappear after their gums were slashed. Rags couldn't forget that long zip of blood where the razor had gone into Charles' mouth. But Charles did run away again. They found him dead. A few miles from his father's properties, outside Abilene. He didn't have a mark on him. Do colored boys die of fright? (128)

So Cedric Tannehill proclaims, Lucifer-like perhaps, "I don't want that" (219). Rejecting his identity as a millionaire's son, he reinvents himself: "Rags defined himself against the territory of an infield and the smack of horsehide on wood like a prairie animal" (145-146).

He soon learns that the sport presided over by the likes of Hollis McKee and Kennesaw Mountain Landis is far from idyllic. For one thing, the Red Sox of 1923 are "the laughing boys of the American League" (6) because McKee

habitually sells or trades his good players, caring about money much more than about baseball: "Hollis dreamed of turnstiles" (105). And the Red Sox are a divided team. There are "college men" and "country boys," the former favored by McKee (9). Ragland can surmount these problems, perhaps, but not some others.

Racism, evidently so horrible to Ragland as a child, is an accepted fact in organized ball. No blacks are allowed to play in the major leagues. They play instead in the "Negro Leagues" or become part of a barnstorming team like the Cincinnati Colored Giants. Moreover, racist attitudes are common among the white players, as demonstrated by Chicken Stallings, a teammate of Ragland's on the Red Sox. When he describes his and Babe Ruth's appearance in an exhibition game in Cuba, he flaunts his racism:

> "Me and the Babe socked hell out of them coons in Havana. The Babe won't bat against a colored boy until he crosses himself. They're devils on the mound. All you can see is them nigger eyes. The Babe asked for an extra thousand in Havana, and he got it. I didn't have trouble swinging against the coons. I hit three triples one day, off the blackest man on this earth. I figured how to get to him. I just didn't look at his eyes." (95)

In addition, the various baseball heroes Ragland encounters are hardly innocent, nothing like the bucolic husbandmen they are supposed to resemble. Babe Ruth, the greatest hero of all, is far from exemplary, as shown in his encounter with Ragland in a game between the Red Sox and the

Yankees. Ruth runs toward third, yelling at Ragland, "'Look out, you're in my cocksucking way.'" He then decks Ragland and stands on third, soaking in the crowd's cheers:

> The Babe was jovial once he got to third. He stood on that base with his belly rumbling under the stripes of his Yankee blouse. "Sorry, I decked you, kid. But this ain't a traffic circle. It's fucking third base." Then he danced on the bag and took off his hat to the crowd. (27)

Garland James, the centerfielder and slugger on Ragland's Red Sox, is also a bully (10), at least when Ragland first meets him.

Furthermore, and most troublesome for Ragland, Boston has Marylou and Iva Cottonmouth, the mother and daughter serpents who infest what is supposed to be a baseball Eden. They excite him, confuse him, and anger him. This is not the pastoral refuge he envisioned when he recreated himself as Babe Ragland:

> It was a dog's life.
> A bride who'd been punctured by another man [the butler did it]; a mother-in-law who lay down with boys in the swamp because she loved Garland James and couldn't have him; a roommate [Scarborough] who lived in a rat's hole two floors under Rags. And all the kid ever wanted to do was play ball. (145)

Ragland had hoped for a fresh start, for pastoral simplicity, and for a clear identity. Playing for a major league team but confused by institutional corruption, racism, a greedy owner, a self-righteous commissioner, flawed heroes,

and especially bewitching but unfathomable women, he becomes lost. In the Cottonmouths' house, he is unsure who he is:

> He was a ballplayer, not a husband with two redheaded wives. . . . The kid had too many selves in that house. Ragland, Cedric, Harvard Jack [his role when seduced by his mother-in-law]. Everybody and nobody all at once. Would someone tell the kid who he was? He could catch a baseball in either fist. That's as much as he knew. (168)

Ragland would have appreciated some lines by Ring Lardner:

> Of all the big league cities one
> Is easy to get lost in.
> I hardly need to tell you that
> The one I mean is Boston. (Asinof 6)

The novel's hero, once he settles the question of whether he is Cedric or Babe, exhibits a cyclical pattern of role-playing. This is the pattern: he assumes a role, facts from the outside intrude, so he alters his role or adopts a new one. This new role is then challenged, and the pattern continues. He is the Seventh Babe, but he becomes "the bad boy of baseball" (190) when frustrations with the Cottonmouths and McKee build up. He is then a "Refugee of the White American League" (225), then a "Fixture at Third Base for the Cincinnati Giants" (225). When Carl Raines, the owner of the Giants, becomes incapacitated, Ragland becomes "Bossman," and when the team magician departs he becomes "magician Rags" (276). When the team has nowhere to go, he temporarily becomes Cedric Tannehill so that he can bring his Giants to his father's ranch (276-277). After purchasing the

team he becomes "entrepreneur of a wandering baseball club" (281).

Those with whom Ragland associates also demonstrate these protean tendencies. Scarborough, the hunchback who rooms with Ragland, is by turns a mascot, a bat boy, a good-luck charm, a sign-stealer, a first baseman. He, like Ragland, invents a past for himself, saying he was a lumberjack at age eleven (28), and when he fights he becomes someone else: "This wasn't Scarborough, their own private brute, the middle-aged boy with undeveloped legs who delivered bats and rosin bags to them" (38). After a fight he "retreat[s] into his torn shirt. He [becomes] a bat boy again . . ." (38). Even after his death Scarborough assumes a role: he becomes the "monster of Sackville Forest," who frightens people out of town, explaining, "'That's my job'" (331). Ragland tries to comprehend this last manifestation: "Rags was confused. Did the demon count as Scarborough? Or was it a dumb masquerade? But the kid would rather have this Scarborough, than no Scarborough at all" (330).

Ragland first encounters the Cincinnati Giants while he is playing for the Red Sox. The Giants send scouts to study him. As Scarborough explains to his roommate, the Giants see value in role-playing:

> "The Colored Giants have heard of you, and they're aiming to copy your style. They do that with everybody in the big leagues who's more than a little good. They got a man who plays like

> Hornsby, a man who plays like Heilmann, and a man who plays like Garl. It's an act with them. They stop a game after five innings and pretend they're Heilmann and Cobb. There's a nigger on the Giants that you'd swear was Babe Ruth." (101)

Not yet making a connection to his own role-playing, Ragland sees these practices as peculiar: "'Well, if they're imitating people, they must be clowns'" (101). Scarborough's salient reply provides justification for all those characters whose identities change and shift: "'They have to clown to stay alive'" (102). Later, of course, Ragland becomes one of them and adopts their posture. Once, after years of playing with the Giants, he visits his wife, who is working in a hash house. She fails to recognize him at first. The narrator explains the way he appears to her and provides additional insight regarding the hero as outlaw:

> She thought he was a Negro from the way he had shuffled in; it was only the standard crouch of the Cincinnati Colored Giants, a gesture of suspicion and a pattern of flight that were necessary for a team that lived on the run. (301)

In a world in which the only constants are brutality and corruption, one must stay loose and keep moving.

Ragland finds life in his role as an outlaw. When he is first banished from the major leagues, he considers himself a victim and the Cincinnati Giants an inferior team: "[S]omebody had stolen his birthright from him. Now he'd have to go and hide in the nigger leagues" (220). But after

a few years he sees that the officially sanctioned game of Landis and McKee is too limiting. When Landis sends an emissary to begin the process of reinstating the framed player, Ragland says, "'You tell the Judge I don't need redemption from him'" (298). Later, Landis is dying, "puny and dry" (305), and wants redemption from Ragland. Ragland has asked Landis why he is crying:

> "It's seeing you in that colored boy's suit, and knowing that I'm the cause . . ."
> "Well, don't let that bother you, Judge. I like the Cincinnati Giants."
> ". . . I was hasty. I didn't stop to think it could be Hollis trying to ruin a player of his. Cedric, can you forgive this crackpot . . . I'm a pompous, self-righteous ass."
> "Nothing to forgive, Judge. I would have been miserable if I had to stay with the Sox." (305)

In an ironic reversal, the Judge looks up to the Outlaw.

Garland James, once Ragland's teammate on the Red Sox, also finds redemption in defiance. He "fell" off a flagpole when with McKee's team, and many years later, in a nursing home, he remembers why:

> What could he declare about his own folly? . . . . That he wanted his center-field without the rigmarole and politics of a major-league club? He hadn't fallen off any pole. He'd jumped. To cripple himself and shout "fuck you" to Hollis. (346)

In a sense, Charyn's novel, a story of the maverick-hero, is itself a maverick work of fiction. Like the Cincinnati Giants, it does some clowning to keep alive. It begins in a realistic mode but increasingly moves into

magical realism. As its hero moves further from the world of Cedric Tannehill, the novel forsakes our normal expectations about realism, depicting shamanistic groundskeeping, resurrection from the dead, "root-work" that enables crippled men to play baseball, and voodoo that keeps Ragland and others playing into their seventies.

In the novel's final scene, Ragland and his teammates convince the seventy-nine-year old Garland James to leave the nursing home in Holyoke, Massachusetts, in order to play center field. Ragland says, "'I'd rather have Garland James on one leg than any sockamayock . . .'" (347). The orderlies who futilely try to prevent the "kidnapping" wonder how they will explain the absence of James to their superiors. The novel's final paragraph describes the predicament of the orderlies, but it also provides an indirect comment on Ragland's quest and on The Seventh Babe itself:

> They argued, pushed each other on the road. A furor was upon them to think up a story. How do you tell a nurse that you lost one old man? Vanished. That's the word. The old man had vanished on a walk in the fields. They could afford to whistle. Who cared about a nurse? They had their story now. (347)

Ragland, in his various guises, wanderings, and barnstorming, seeks a word, a story, that will redeem him from his past and give him meaning. Eventually, he too can afford to whistle. Likewise, The Seventh Babe, a raucous, madcap work of fiction, finds a way of acknowledging the

existence of two realities: the hard, brutal world of experience and the lyrical, timeless world of dream, what Donald Hall calls "the country of baseball," where "time is the air we breathe, and the wind swirls us backward and forward, until we seem so reckoned in time and seasons that all time and all seasons become the same" (Dock Ellis 15).

The Seventh Babe, therefore, like other works in this study, negates the pastoral vision and affirms it at the same time. In its satire on the established baseball world and its portrayal of the underside of baseball mythology, the novel has the power to startle the reader out of a sentimental acceptance of baseball pastoralism. As Christopher Lehmann-Haupt says in his review of The Seventh Babe, "[the novel is] the American dream of baseball re-enacted as nightmare . . . . Anyone brought up on the traditional myths is bound to find the novel irritating and disturbing" ("Two on Baseball" 288).

However, the novel also manages to celebrate the pastoral dream in its sympathetic treatment of the baseball maverick and in its movement away from realism. Some reviewers have noted that Charyn is influenced by Latin American writers, in particular Gabriel García-Márquez. In its appropriation of magical realism the novel suggests that pastoral awareness has value, even if the realization of the vision occurs only in the realm of imagination. William

Plummer, in his review, attributes the novel's success to Charyn's drawing upon García-Márquez and the latter's "peculiar flair for the comic sublime" ("A Left-Handed Third Baseman" 19).

To summarize, then, the treatment of the baseball hero in fiction is not necessarily simplistic. Malamud's novel suggests that the pastoral hero cannot realize his desire for release from the world of time. At the same time, however, it affirms that the pastoral vision has value, that it can be experienced in a limited, temporary way. The hero must content himself, however, with an attenuated version of the pastoral myth.

In its treatment of a different kind of hero from Malamud's, The Seventh Babe also presents a different, perhaps darker view of reality. Charyn's novel suggests that the suffering can become too much, that the appropriate response may be for the hero to adopt ever-changing roles as a way of surviving. Moreover, the novel itself has a protean nature, demonstrating in its evolution that baseball's pastoralism has literary value.

These works, and to a lesser extent Lardner's baseball fiction, attempt to define a middle ground that recognizes two worlds at once: the world of fact and the world of dream. The heroes try to find their places in this middle ground.

Literature that has as its center the baseball fan--the worshipper of baseball heroes--also imagines, however ambiguously, ways of acknowledging two realities at once. Eric Rolfe Greenberg's The Celebrant (1983), Christopher Lehmann-Haupt's Me and DiMaggio (1986), and W.P. Kinsella's The Iowa Baseball Confederacy (1986) are representative works in this category. The narrator of each work is a fervent baseball fan; yet each of the three examples draws from a different novelistic tradition, from historical fiction to the non-fiction novel to magical realism. This study now turns to an examination of these examples.

Notes

[1] See, in particular, Iska Alter's "The Good Man's Dilemma: The Natural, The Assistant, and American Materialism."

[2] See, for example, Norman Podhoretz's "Achilles in Left Field"; Marcus Klein's discussion of The Natural in his After Alienation: American Novels in Mid-Century; James M. Mellard's "Malamud's Novels: Four Versions of Pastoral." Earl Wasserman emphasizes mythic parallels and Jungian archetypes in "The Natural: Malamud's World Ceres."

[3] In their studies of The Natural Earl Wasserman, Frederick W. Turner III, and Sidney Richman mention Lardner's influence but only in passing.

[4] Frederick Karl sees it otherwise: "What is of interest . . . is not the sequence of defeats, but how Malamud identifies the natural with pastoral values" (20). Karl's judgment, it seems to me, is subjective. He makes little of the theme of suffering so evident in the novel.

III

The Cult's Ardent Followers: The Celebrant, Me and DiMaggio, and The Iowa Baseball Confederacy

Major-league baseball uses a slogan in its television advertisements: "Baseball Fever--Catch It!" The slogan acknowledges and capitalizes on what many fans have always known, that baseball has a way of getting in the blood. But for some fans the game and its players are more than the occasions for sweating palms. Indeed, some of the obsessed become so fixated on one team, one player, or the sport itself, that they lose their sense of proportion. A particular player can do nothing wrong. When he does, as he always does, being human, the fan refuses to acknowledge the failure or makes unreasonable demands of his hero. Sometimes fans will even become violent in defense of their static, sentimental positions.

Eric Rolfe Greenberg's The Celebrant, Christopher Lehmann-Haupt's Me and DiMaggio, and W. P. Kinsella's The Iowa Baseball Confederacy have fans for narrators. Greenberg's narrator finds himself caught between his simplistic but hopeful worship of pitcher Christy Mathewson on the one hand and the cynical, unfeeling forces of capitalism on the other. He never achieves a comfortable

compromise between the two. However, the novel, in its expression of complex pastoralism, suggests that neither sentimentality nor cynicism is a proper way of seeing: the visionary fan must always struggle with the tension between these extremes.

Lehmann-Haupt's narrator is less apt to be sentimental than is Greenberg's. If anything, he must keep himself from resorting to a cynical dismissal of what he felt as a boy. Eventually he relocates the pastoral myth in his imagination, that is, in his writing. Likewise, Kinsella celebrates baseball's pastoralism in literature itself. The Iowa Baseball Confederacy, like Charyn's The Seventh Babe and other examples of Kinsella's fiction, finds possibilities in magical realism. Kinsella's narrator, for his part, comes to the painful realization that pastoral values can be realized only temporarily.

These three works--The Celebrant, Me and DiMaggio, and The Iowa Baseball Confederacy--explore the fan's relationship to the pastoral sport; and they examine, with varying emphases, the individual fan's psychological dependency on a particular player, or on the game itself.

In one sense, Greenberg's The Celebrant is a treatment of a baseball hero. The novel is ostensibly about the career of Christy Mathewson, who pitched for the New York Giants from 1900 to 1916 and managed the Cincinnati Reds from 1916

to 1918. The novel, evidently, presents the details of Mathewson's life and career accurately. Because he pitched better than almost anyone ever has and because he carried himself with dignity when off the field, Mathewson comes across as a player worthy of praise and a human being deserving of respect. The Celebrant, unlike The Natural or The Seventh Babe, lets its hero be a hero.

However, the novel's real subject is its narrator, Yakov Kapinski, known outside his Jewish immigrant family as Jackie Kapp, who sees Mathewson as more than a great player; once an amateur pitcher himself, he vicariously pitches through Mathewson. And the pitching is of utmost importance, because it signifies eternal youth. The narrator remembers the first time he saw Mathewson pitch, in 1901, on the occasion of the pitcher's first no-hitter:

> I watched Mathewson, and he became my youth; it was my fastball burning by Burkett, it was my curve that little Jess lifted to the outfield, and after the ball came back and around the infield I felt it was my glove closing around it, my arm that launched the fastball at Donovan's knees and the next that cut the black of the plate on the outside. My youth made him chase a breaking ball in the dirt, and there were two outs; here was Old Pop, and I had the game and the no-hitter in my hand. (26)

Four years later he feels the same way when his hero pitches in the World Series: "Once more my focus narrowed until I seemed to live within him, to bend and sway and drive with him and to finish with my hands at the ready to field the

ball" (94).

The narrator, however, does more than fantasize through Mathewson about his own unrealized pitching prowess: he worships the pitcher. This spiritual dimension to Kapp's appreciation first becomes evident after the no-hitter in 1901, when the narrator and the New York Giants coincidentally take the same train to Chicago. As he looks on from an adjoining car, the narrator sees his hero and others as they revel in the parlor car, but he feels inadequate before such greatness:

> I watched him through my own mirrored image in the glass and sensed an immense distance from him. He was everything I was not. I couldn't approach him; what might I say? . . . . There was a gulf between us that I felt I must not cross. I had nothing to offer him. (29)

Later Kapp tells his brother Eli that it is a "miracle" (37) that the well-educated, relatively sophisticated Mathewson pitches for the Giants, a mere baseball team. And when the outgoing Eli offers to introduce Kapp to Mathewson, the narrator reveals that he does not seek the pitcher's friendship, because the relationship is more solemn than that:

> "I don't want to be his friend at all."
> "A secret admirer?"
> "No secret to it."
> "What, then? A worshipper from afar?"
> "Isn't that the proper distance for worship? You don't crawl into the ark to worship <u>torah</u>." (42)

Mathewson, then, has become more than a ballplayer, even more than a human being, to Kapp. The narrator invests the pitcher with divine qualities and, being the designer for the family jewelry business, fashions a ring commemorating the no-hitter, which he presents to his idol, using Eli as an intermediary. He insists on keeping his distance. Yet, when John McGraw, the manager of the Giants, gets the notion to have a set of rings made for the team, McGraw and Eli rush to Mathewson's room to inspect his ring, forcing the narrator to accompany them. The narrator's first meeting with the great pitcher is memorable. Kapp describes not a man but a god:

> Mathewson emerged from an interior hall. He was naked, save for a white towel draped about his shoulders; his hair was wet, and droplets of water gleamed on his pearl-pink skin. Momentarily surprised at seeing the two of us with McGraw, he drew his muscles taut, and his whole body rippled with power, water sparkling in the rays of the sun. Then he relaxed, his weight falling on his right leg while the left bent slightly, and he smiled. (71)

The proper distance for worship may be from afar, and propriety is surely one reason for the narrator's reserve and timorousness. But there is also evidence that Kapp fears, even knows, that if he becomes acquainted with Mathewson he will be let down. In time he will discover that the pitcher is a mere mortal. When Mathewson pitches a second no-hitter, on July 13, 1905, Kapp produces another ring and thinks about delivering it in person. He reconsiders, however, and his

reasoning reveals that he himself knows that Mathewson cannot bear the weight of his ardor: "Fearing that a close association would tarnish the figure that seemed so prodigious from a distance, I found it enough to be, in Eli's phrase of long ago, a worshipper from afar" (82).

Of course, Christy Mathewson is mortal, and this mortality is sometimes signified by slight deviations from Kapp's abstract conceptualization of his idol. The narrator is startled and disbelieving, for example, when his brother reveals that the pitcher spends his Saturday nights playing poker (44). Moreover, when he learns that the vulgar John McGraw has been hired to manage the Giants, Kapp insists that Mathewson will never lower himself to McGraw's methods. He predicts that Mathewson will find another team, but Eli "knows" the pitcher:

> "Managing Mathewson. How do you feature that? The gentleman and the ruffian in the same uniform. I can't see it, Eli. Mathewson will jump."
> "Don't bet on it, sport."
> "I can't see it any other way."
> "You don't know Mathewson, sport. He loves to win, and McGraw's a winner."
> "He'd rather win fair and square than McGraw's way."
> "Don't be silly, Jackie. I know the man, I've watched him play poker." (44)

Actually, neither brother has Mathewson right. Kapp is naive, but his brother is too cynical if he's hinting that the pitcher might cheat. But, to be sure, there is more of McGraw's coarseness in Mathewson than the narrator can

acknowledge. He insists, "I had to think that [McGraw's] advent meant Mathewson's departure; these opposites could not attract" (50). But the pitcher does not depart, and he even follows McGraw's lead in on-the-field behavior. In one game, after McGraw has been ejected for delivering a "shower of glorious invective" against an opposing pitcher and threatening to fight the opposing manager, Mathewson takes up his manager's cause, getting himself ejected an inning later for charging onto the field "to instigate a new imbroglio." The narrator says, "it was not a happy occasion to witness," but he forestalls disillusionment by blaming it all on McGraw (80). Kapp also reads of McGraw's leading the team onto a field in Philadelphia to fight opposing players and some spectators who join the fracas. The report mentions that "a lemonade boy" suffered a bleeding lip and some loosened teeth, alleging that Mathewson was responsible. The context suggests that the writers may be blaming Mathewson without sufficient proof, but Kapp is shaken: "I didn't know what to make of the story . . ." (81).

Later in his career Mathewson does have some serious disagreements with McGraw, but he is not prejudiced against McGraw because of the manager's crudeness. In fact, when Kapp and Mathewson finally have their first extended conversation, the pitcher, to his worshipper's puzzlement, expresses admiration for McGraw. When Kapp says, "'I can't

imagine how you put up with him,'" Mathewson replies, "'he's the most compelling personality I've ever encountered'" (90). He later adds, "'When I learned that he was to manage the club I felt I'd found salvation'" (91).

However, none of these indications that Mathewson is capable of human emotion serves to awaken the narrator from his simplistic vision. For him, Mathewson is still an aloof, reserved deity. The novel indicates, however, that others, though they admire the pitcher, do see him realistically. The above conversation concerning McGraw takes place in the presence of Mr. Sonnheim, Kapp's father-in-law. Years later, he speaks to the narrator about his impression of Mathewson, very different from Kapp's:

> "[H]e was such a vigorous lad. I only met him the once, you know. At the club. What an excitable chap he was! I had to calm him twice. There were heads turning, that sort of thing. Surprising in a boy of his family. There was a bit of the ruffian in him, don't you agree? A bit of his manager, McGraw." (230)

Kapp glimpses other manifestations of his idol's human imperfections that add to his confusion. For example, on October 16, 1912, during the tenth inning of the deciding game of the World Series, Mathewson loses his composure, allowing his anger at a teammate's error to distract him from being in position on a throw from the outfield: "I looked for Mathewson behind third, the pitcher's place on such a play, but I couldn't find him there. To my astonishment he

was still on the mound, staring at Snodgrass with the same angry mien" (208). Ironically, it is a similar lack of attention to positioning on the part of White Sox pitcher Ed Cicotte that, seven years later, causes both Kapp and Mathewson to suspect, rightly, that Cicotte has been paid to lose the 1919 World Series (260).

The narrator eventually moderates his ardor, because he becomes aware that he has, intentionally or not, exploited Mathewson. There is, first, a material exploitation: Kapp's overly ambitious brother Arthur cheapens the ring tributes by paying Mathewson to sponsor a line of jewelry. Soon the family business routinely provides rings for teams that win the World Series, and the company changes its name to Collegiate Jewelers, further capitalizing on the Mathewson connection, as the pitcher is widely known as one of the few players with a college education. Kapp becomes disgusted at the following words, said to be Mathewson's for the purposes of advertisement but actually Arthur's:

> "I've been wearing Collegiate Jewelry since my own college years! Collegiate covers the field like a ballhawk, from the most formal fashions to the snappiest designs for the real sport. You'll never strike out with Collegiate Jewelry, for yourself or your sweetheart!" (167)

Equally insidious, though more subtle, is Kapp's psychological exploitation of his idol. Kapp is "the celebrant of his works" (195), but he also deeply needs

Mathewson.

John Timberman Newcomb, writing in 1986 about the publicity surrounding the use of drugs in sports and the reactions of fans to the scandal, generalizes concerning the relationship of fans to their heroes. His words can also apply to Kapp's view of Mathewson:

> I term players "representations," not "representatives," because for the fans, they function not as the few elected from a large pool to serve the many, but as the embodiments of the fans' own displaced hopes, fears, hates, and joys, who function in a realm of mythological nostalgia, where everyone plays by the rules, and where there's always next year, an innocent realm called "sports". . . . In the minds of fans, especially those many who would like to be playing themselves, the players, like ancient gods, fill certain elemental mythological roles--hero, villain, scapegoat, showboat. (297-298)

Fans react angrily when they hear of players' involvement with drugs, argues Newcomb, because they refuse to allow their heroes to be human beings, insisting that they perform the mythological functions assigned to them. The call for random drug testing of players, he continues, "is a mythologically motivated attempt to cleanse our own imaginations, to make us once again blissfully unable to conceive of such badness going on near the sanctified space of the diamond" (299). Because fans place such demands upon athletes, Newcomb says, they turn them into "washed-out gods living fearfully in the knowledge that their human creators can destroy them . . ." (299).

Hugh Fullerton, a reporter for Chicago's Herald and Examiner and a friend to Mathewson, is fictionalized by Greenberg in The Celebrant. He, like the narrator, sees himself as a "celebrant" of Mathewson's achievements. However, Fullerton sees that there is a dark side to the worship, that a celebrant in reality exploits as much as he celebrates. He asks Kapp to imagine himself as Mathewson:

> "You know perhaps five hundred people by name, but fifty million know you. You make no more than ordinary demands upon people . . . , yet the sandwich-maker and the bootblack and millions like them expect the superhuman from you, and finally they'll accept nothing less. Expectation becomes demand, and it extends to everyone and everything. You hear the crowd groan if you give up a single hit; they expect a no-hit game. Give up a run and people say you're off your game. . . . The world makes you a god and hates you for being human, and if you plead for understanding it hates you all the more. Heroes are never forgiven their success, still less their failure." (196)

To this Kapp responds, sounding a bit like the Apostle Peter, "'Not me. Never me'" (196). But Fullerton insists that, being celebrants, both he and the narrator are parasites:

> "All the celebrants of his works. We make the greatest demands. Every time he pitches I find myself hoping for the most extraordinary achievement, for my immortality lies in his. . . . I want him to throw a no-hit game tomorrow, not for his sake but for mine. And don't you want the same, so you can cover him in glory? We're the worms that eat at the bodies of the great." (196)

For Kapp the role of celebrant becomes increasingly complicated. The hints at Mathewson's mortality, the

misgivings raised by Fullerton and others, and his own family's mercantile intrusions on the game of baseball cause him to question his faith, as it were. In that first extended conversation at Sonnheim's club Mathewson maintains that baseball is not like life, that the game is "all clean lines and clear decisions" (86), and the pitcher is pleased that such is the case. Baseball is, for him, a refuge, a realm of simplicity, a temporary haven from the untidiness of life. Kapp gradually sees, however, that, though baseball is not like life, life has a nasty way of intruding on the game. After witnessing the abuse suffered by player Fred "Bonehead" Merkle after the rookie fails to touch second base in an important game, he concludes, "Now I knew that the field of play was not exempt from life's injustices, a lesson nowhere heard in after-dinner speeches" (150). And his description of the atmosphere surrounding the 1908 play-off game between the Giants and the Cubs is particularly grim, revealing the dark side of the pastoral cult:

> There was an ugliness emerging from the city's heart, born of three months of anxiety over the daily battles. I saw it first on the train to the Polo Grounds: two youths were scrawling obscenities about the Cubs on the walls of the car, and when the conductor confronted them they pitched paint in his face and escaped, laughing meanly. More astonishing was the laughter of the passengers and their cheer for the roughs. The Polo Grounds station looked like the aftermath of a New Year's revel; broken bottles, chucks of ribs and chicken bones, swirls of wind-swept newspaper, and a dozen foul drunken survivors coated with piss and puke. (160)

Inside the stadium the scene is just as ugly, as two opposing players fight before the game, and one of them, Frank Chance, is hit by a beer bottle thrown from the stands. Also, thousands of spectators storm the field and are forced away with fire hoses. Finally, as the game is about to begin, two men drop seventy feet from the grandstand roof, to their deaths. Kapp concludes, "Never did an umpire's call of 'Play Ball!' sound so dreadful and empty" (161).

As an adherent to a faith concerning which he is having doubts, Kapp can respond by becoming nostalgic. He can imagine that both baseball and life were once uncontaminated. He does stay away from the game, especially after Mathewson retires from baseball and enlists in the U.S. Army as a response to the Hal Chase scandal. Kapp lives in his memories, not only baseball memories but also memories of when his jewelry designing and his family relationships seemed simpler. As his brother Arthur continues to dehumanize the family business, Kapp looks on disapprovingly but does nothing. As a member of the company's board, he votes neither for nor against Arthur's proposals to restructure the business, saying, "'I've no intention of getting in the middle of all this'" (226). Arthur rightly dubs him "'the Great Abstainer'" (228).

An exchange between Kapp and his father-in-law points out the illusory nature of nostalgia. It is September, 1919,

and Sonnheim suggests that Kapp take his son to Cincinnati to see the World Series. But Kapp has no enthusiasm, since the game, as he sees it, has deteriorated: "'I prefer the memory. . . . Everything was simpler then.'" His father-in-law answers, "'Illusion. . . . It's our capacity to see complexity that increases, not complexity itself. We have a name for that capacity. We call it 'wisdom'" (230).

Cynicism is an alternative to nostalgia, but it is also a simplistic response. It is the way of Kapp's brother Arthur, who continually reminds the narrator how much he could gain by forgetting his scruples. He bluntly tells his brother, for example, "'You're so blind! You don't see what's out there waiting to be grabbed'" (227). The narrator could never be so crass, but being a member of a family that runs a jewelry business, he is in a bind. Because he is Arthur's brother, he does not vote against him, even though he disagrees with him. But since the business directly exploits baseball and baseball players, Kapp is a reluctant accomplice in what he sees as the destruction of the game.

The tension between his allegiance to his vision and his familial bonds culminates in 1919 when brother Eli, a compulsive gambler, places a bet of forty thousand dollars on the White Sox but then discovers that the Series has been fixed. As Kapp is about to place a bet that would counteract his brother's unfortunate wager, thereby making himself, the

"celebrant-in-chief," an accomplice in the fixing of the World Series, Mathewson points out that Kapp's choice will be crucial: "'It isn't Eli who stands on the precipice. . . . It's you, you, who sways there. It's you that risks damnation'" (261). By refusing to rescue his brother, the narrator refuses to relinquish the values he has always associated with Mathewson's pitching performance and the baseball diamond in general. He affirms his pastoral vision. This affirmation comes at a cost, however, as Eli commits suicide. But in the context of the novel compliance with Eli's wishes to counter the bet would be both a spiritual compromise and another kind of sentimentality. For to countenance any behavior by a brother, simply arguing "But he's my brother," is sentimental.

The Celebrant does not present a case for simple pastoralism by having its protagonist, the narrator, find bliss through his allegiance to Mathewson and all that he represents. Nor does the novel offer cynicism as a way of responding to disillusionment. The narrator struggles for a more complex awareness, one that acknowledges the truth of the pastoral vision--its glimpse into an ideal world--without denying life, or death. Kapp's struggle is a costly one. Not only does Eli kill himself, but Mathewson himself also dies at the relatively young age of forty-five, the victim of mustard gas poisoning. The commemorative rings are buried

with the pitcher, but they are replaced, we could say, by the novel itself, which is both a tribute to a legendary pitcher and a record of a narrator's attaining a complex pastoral vision. The dual awareness is exemplified in the ambiguity of the novel's last lines:

> The greatest pitcher I ever saw was Christy Mathewson, on a terribly hot day in St. Louis, young as an April morning in that sweltering July, the perfect pitcher. It was my happiness to celebrate that perfection; in his age and suffering he would accept the vision of my youth, entwine it with his own hard faith, and end in madness. Eli, Eli! (269)

Like The Celebrant, Christopher Lehmann-Haupt's Me and DiMaggio is the story of a hero-worshipper's closing of the gap between himself and his idol. Ostensibly a non-fictional memoir, the work is better placed in the genre called "the non-fiction novel," which, as Frederick Karl says, "transforms fact into fiction without using the full dimension of a novelistic sensibility" (560). Much baseball fiction draws upon the record books or the author's personal knowledge of actual players, of course, as we have seen in The Celebrant and in Lardner's fiction. But Me and DiMaggio stresses "the self of the author intruding into the work that is factual" (Karl 561). Being a non-fiction novel it features what Karl identifies as paramount to the genre, "that individual voice of the writer, the 'self' intruding

everywhere as witness" (562).[1]

The non-fiction novel is associated with Truman Capote, Norman Mailer, John Hersey, Tom Wolfe, Paul Theroux, and others. Lehmann-Haupt acknowledges, in an ironic exchange with Joe DiMaggio on the occasion of their first meeting, that Mailer is his model. He responds to his idol's question about what sort of book he is writing:

> "Well, so far the book is about a typical fan who suddenly finds himself having to be a reporter. Obviously, the fan is me."
> "I see. Good idea."
> "I think it's going to have to be one of those books in which the author is the hero, or antihero. Sort of like Norman Mailer writes."
> "I haven't read Norman Mailer."
> "He's a good man."
> "I'm sure he is." (152)

DiMaggio, of course, is the former husband of Marilyn Monroe, of whom Mailer has written a biography. Lehmann-Haupt later chides himself for his clumsiness and wonders whether DiMaggio actually said, "'I <u>don't</u> read Mailer'" (152).

Like Jackie Kapp in <u>The Celebrant</u>, Lehmann-Haupt was inspired in his youth by a particular game in which one man shone brightly. On a Sunday afternoon in Cleveland, May 24, 1948, Joe DiMaggio hit three home runs in one game. The young Lehmann-Haupt heard the game on the radio and was transformed into "a fan" (21). He moderates his worship, however. His father, after all, has tried to teach him that baseball is foolish, and he seems to expect disillusionment:

> I was a baseball fan despite my subliminal awareness that the movers and shakers of history would never squander on the game of baseball the time and energy that I was now more than happy to sacrifice to the "silly game." (21)

With his radio, Lehmann-Haupt, as a boy, listens to his team win night games and falls asleep into a "dream of perfection." He soon comes to understand, however, that it is the dream he prefers, not baseball itself:

> I'd turned professional baseball into a figment of my imagination. It was voices over the airwaves that had first brought the game to me, and it was as voices from some unreal kingdom that the game continued to hold me. Baseball was a collection of images I carried around inside my head. And, in many ways, I liked those images better than reality. (23)

He most vividly realizes that his heroes are more alive inside his head than on the playing field when he attends his first game. From where Lehmann-Haupt is sitting, Joe DiMaggio appears as a speck in center field, and when Ted Williams hits a home run the event does not register: "[I]t wasn't a home run as I understood that supreme baseball event" (24). Lacking is radio announcer Mel Allen's voice "to give it substance": "Though a home run had been hit in real time and space, it hadn't happened inside my head" (24). The actual game means nothing to him until he reads about it in the newspaper the following morning.

Lehmann-Haupt's enthusiasm fluctuates as the years pass, but when a publisher suggests that he write "a baseball

book," he is compelled to play two roles. The book's subtitle mentions one of them: "A Baseball Fan Goes in Search of His Gods." The other is that of the professional writer. Me and DiMaggio, then, is two stories--the account of a fan who, often with trembling knees, meets and talks with real baseball players, and the account of a book reviewer for The New York Times who now must produce his own book. The epigraph to the book, from Marianne Moore's "Baseball and Writing," reinforces the connection of these two roles.

The two stories often interconnect and parallel each other, Me and DiMaggio consequently acquiring a layered effect. The chapter called "Losing" is, on one level, about the New York Yankees' falling out of contention in the pennant race of 1979. On another it is about "losing" in terms of writing. Lehmann-Haupt does not know how to proceed as a writer, and the publishing house he is writing for is in disarray, with editors and publishers resigning. He says, "It was beginning to look as if the book were in trouble" (162). On the next page, after he absorbs the shock of Yankee catcher Thurman Munson's death, he says, "[T]he Yankees really stood little chance of winning the pennant now" (163). Likewise, the chapter called "Winning" chronicles the rise of the Pittsburgh Pirates to the championship and the author's regaining some direction for his book.

Lehmann-Haupt's two roles interact most importantly, and paradoxically, in connection with DiMaggio. In getting to know his boyhood hero, he discovers, not surprisingly, that DiMaggio is "human after all" (299). Just as Jackie Kapp witnesses Mathewson's normal frustrations and human failings, Lehmann-Haupt discovers that DiMaggio is susceptible to egotism and capable of embarrassment. He also finds out that on the evening before DiMaggio hit three home runs in Cleveland, he had been in the Mounds Club, in the company of "unsavory characters" (296). So in his playing out of one role, that of an author, Lehmann-Haupt puts in jeopardy his role as a worshipper at the shrine of Joe DiMaggio. His hero may even dislike his fan because he has persisted in digging up details that can only hurt the star's image. But then again, the "author" finally may have arrived:

> [I]t nettled me to be thought ill of by the man who had been my childhood hero. . . . DiMaggio would always blame me for bringing him the news that his image had been sullied. As time went by and the 1979 season receded into the past, it was one of the things I would think about late at night, and it would make me unhappy.
>
> But I felt a measure of satisfaction too. After all, I had gotten the story--I was a reporter. (299)

In his role as a baseball fan in search of his gods, Lehmann-Haupt encounters disillusionment after disillusionment. In his role as a writer, he shapes the accounts of these encounters to give them dramatic quality.

A notable example is his anticipation of hearing former shortstop Tony Kubek's answer to a considered, profound question. In the seventh game of the 1960 World Series, Kubek, playing on a grass-and-dirt infield, was hit in the throat by a groundball that took a horrendously bad bounce, causing the shortstop to miss getting a double play and helping the Pirates score five runs, allowing Bill Mazeroski to cap the proceedings with a Series-winning home run in the ninth inning. Now, in 1979, Lehmann-Haupt, seated next to Kubek in view of an artificial playing surface, on which the ball takes predictable bounces, asks the retired shortstop, "'What if you had been playing on this stuff?'" (72). But Lehmann-Haupt postpones giving us Kubek's answer until he analyzes the question from various perspectives and guesses possible responses:

> It seemed a reasonable question, even a moderately tactful one. It propelled us into the middle of things. It avoided the introduction "Er, Tony . . . ," which I disliked for its uninvited intimacy even though it was accepted practice among sportswriters to call athletes by their first names. It also steered me clear of my more habitual "Ah, Mr. Kubek . . . ," which I was beginning to find uncomfortably stiff.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> From his point of view, the question offered unlimited possibilities: a sad shake of the head and a muttered, "Yeah, if only . . . ," should he want to sidestep the whole can of worms; or a brief discourse, given his knowledge of the game and his ability to talk about it, "on the advantages and drawbacks of artificial grass . . . ." (73)

After much more of this kind of speculation, Lehmann-Haupt

the writer delivers the punchline, in which Lehmann-Haupt the fan once again observes a baseball hero being less than heroic:

> [I]nstead of taking advantage of the many openings I had offered when I asked, "What if you had played on this stuff?" Kubek looked at me and shouted, "WHO THE FUCK KNOWS! AND WHAT KIND OF QUESTION IS THAT!?" And then walked away. (73)

At the time the aborted interview seems to be a setback to Lehmann-Haupt in his role as a writer, but the book itself redeems the situation through its manner of presenting it. Moreover, as in his pursuit of the DiMaggio story, Lehmann-Haupt finds that involvement with baseball heroes makes hero-worship impossible. The dream of perfection can be only a dream; reality will not support it.

Myth-busting, then, becomes the theme of Me and DiMaggio. Baseball heroes become mere mortals. For example, the great Reggie Jackson's first words to Lehmann-Haupt are "Fuck you." Lehmann-Haupt thinks, "'Gee, Reggie said 'Fuck you' to me. . . . We've certainly come a ways since he refused to talk to me'" (132). More debunking takes place in the recounting of an exhibition game in Portland, Oregon, in which numerous stars of the past participate, including DiMaggio, Willie Mays, Bob Feller, and Hank Aaron. Lehmann-Haupt and others wonder why so many "big names" would go out of their way to appear in Portland. Ernie Banks, clapping his hands and singing, provides the

myth-perpetuating answer: "'Hey, yes. Baseball is great! Baseball is fun! Fuuuuuuuuun! Hey, yeah! Baseball is good for you. Baseball is fun'" (155). However, Dave Hersh, the owner of Portland's minor-league team, has a different reason: "'Mucho dinero is what brought them!'" (155).

Lehmann-Haupt also unmasks Willie Stargell, voted the most valuable player of the 1979 World Series. There is "a nearly pious attitude" as Stargell, "the hero of the game, the hero of the series, the hero of the entire season" (222), approaches a microphone. When he speaks, however, he delivers "a squid spray of clichés, which [make] him sound like nothing so much as a sales manager or an infantry basic-training instructor" (227-228). Lehmann-Haupt's transcription of parts of the press conference convincingly supports his observation. Stargell says, for example, "And we just feel good about the Pirates in so many ways, and whatever contribution I can make to this outstanding unit, I'm only pleased to put forth the effort . . . " (229). And as he weeps, he says, "This game will continue to roll on long after I'm gone and I think each moment should be cherished. And to be a part of this, gentlemen, I guess the good Man above has given us the right to shed tears in moments like this" (230). At one point Lehmann-Haupt observes, "There were probably very few dry eyes in the room" (230).[2]

Since baseball mythology is not upheld by Lehmann-Haupt's observation of baseball reality, he eventually relocates the myth in his imagination, where it fits neatly. When he isolates himself to turn his notes into a book, he becomes nostalgic. And he says, "Even to this day, I'll occasionally project some pleasant image onto the screen of my memory and let it play like a film until I drift off to sleep" (303). In his mind the myth can thrive, and in the final chapter, appropriately called "Dreaming," he recalls taking batting practice off Rich "Goose" Gossage. In the presence of Yankee hitting instructor Charle Lau and manager Billy Martin he connects on a Gossage pitch: "The crack of the bat feels sweet. The ball is rising on a line in the night sky. Lau is whistling. Martin is stepping onto the field. Somebody is even cheering" (315). Me and DiMaggio ends with the fulfillment of a fan's dream: he bats against one of his heroes. However, the dream is realized in the mind, Lehmann-Haupt reminding us of this point in the beginning of the story: "[T]he best part of that memory-film begins with me sitting in the Yankee dugout, waiting for Charlie Lau. Often when I run it through my mind, I embroider it with fantasy" (308).

Me and DiMaggio, therefore, ostensibly a factual memoir, presents the double awareness we see in purely fictional works. The work presents baseball reality: the greed, the

hypocrisy, the drugs, the over-blown egos, and the rest. It also presents the myth of baseball: a world exists in which even an out-of-shape book-reviewer stays forever young; he faces the best and sends a line drive out of sight. It is the world of imagination.

The narrator of Kinsella's The Iowa Baseball Confederacy is also a baseball fan with an obsession, but Gideon Clarke's fanaticism is such that his separation from the average person is far more drastic than that experienced by either Jackie Kapp or Christopher Lehmann-Haupt. Rather than concentrating on a single player and his accomplishments, Clarke is fixated on a baseball league that, according to official records, never existed. Yet, for reasons he cannot fully explain, he knows that the Iowa Baseball Confederacy operated from 1902 until the summer of 1908, when all records were erased and the league "ceased to exist" (34).

Clarke's convictions, it seems, have been inherited. His father, before he was killed by a foul ball, fought the baseball establishment and university history departments, "those craven bureaucracies" (46), trying to find someone to acknowledge the existence of the league. Clarke says of his father, "He possessed a brainful of information, bright and beautiful as diamonds swaddled in midnight-blue velvet, yet it was information no one else would validate" (31). The

narrator automatically takes up the cause: "It never occurred to me not to pursue legitimizing the Confederacy" (47). Clarke's cause is a lonely one, since he is the only person with this "knowledge"--with the exception of John Baron, his neighbor and former friend of his father. Baron, however, prefers to keep quiet (109).

Clarke's father had a theory about "cracks in time," a theory offered to explain the origin of this private revelation:

> Briefly stated, here is what my father believed: through those cracks in time, little snippets of the past, like small, historical mice, gnaw holes in the lath and plaster and wallpaper of what used to be, then scamper madly across the present, causing eyes to shift and ears to perk to their tiny footfalls. To most people they are only a gray blur and a miniature tattoo of sound quickly gone and forgotten. There are, however, some of us who see and hear more than they were ever meant to. My father was one of these, as am I. (7)

Kinsella's narrator, accompanied by his friend Stan Rogalski, evidently slips through one of these cracks in time. He and his friend, a frustrated ballplayer, travel from 1978 to 1908, becoming witnesses and participants in the game that marked the end of the Confederacy. The Chicago Cubs come to play a double-header against the Iowa Baseball Confederacy All-Stars. The second game must be cancelled, however, since the first lasts for forty days, for a total of 2,614 innings.

The Iowa Baseball Confederacy makes use of the

theoretical possibility of an endless baseball game and in doing so confronts the pastoral wish to stop the clock. The game that begins on July 4, 1908, is tied after nine innings. Each time the visiting Cubs score in the top of an extra inning, the Confederacy All-Stars respond with the exact number of runs in the bottom of that inning. As reviewer Ken Kalfus has said, "It's sort of like Sisyphus in pinstripes." Heedless of time, the players ignore all outside responsibilities. The Cubs, in fact, forsake their commitment to the National League schedule.

In this magical game, and in this novel, anything can happen. The starting pitchers, Mordecai Peter Centennial "Three Finger" Brown for the Cubs and Arsenic O'Reilly for the All-Stars, pitch every inning. A statue of the Angel of Death leaves its place in the cemetery in order to play right field. Leonardo Da Vinci drops by in a balloon to check on the game's progress. A three-hundred-year-old, fifteen-foot Indian, Drifting Away, ends the game by hefting a root and hitting a home run. Kinsella has expressed disdain for realism, telling an interviewer, "Sport realism is boring; the good authors of sport literature realize that and rise above it, often way above it" (Horvath 191). Obviously, Kinsella's own work moves beyond realism. And in the departure from realism, the narrator temporarily realizes the familiar pastoral hope; he glimpses what his father wanted:

"a moment when each of us wants to be frozen forever in time" (291). A magical baseball game provides that eternal moment.

It is also fitting that the game takes place in 1908, a time when American life and baseball were supposedly purer, simpler, and more ordered. Clarke's friend Stan expresses this nostalgia:

> "Now, 1908 was when baseball really meant something. It really was America. Saturday and Sunday afternoons, and weekday games starting at six P.M. in order to get through by dark. Feeling the dew starting to fall in the late evening, the grass getting frog-cool. The last batter like a ghost way up there at the plate--" (237)

Clarke, then, witnesses the game of his dreams; he also finds the woman of his dreams. Sarah Swan is, of course, perfect--a farmer's daughter, "a beautiful girl in 1908" (191). She becomes another obsession for Clarke, one that rivals in importance his obsession with the Iowa Baseball Confederacy (232). The narrator, it seems, has realized his dream: he is witnessing a seemingly endless game, one that proves the existence of the league he and his father spent long hours researching, a game that also displays the talents of one of the great teams in baseball history (these are the Cubs of Joe Tinker, Johnny Evers, Frank Chance, Three Finger Brown); he has been sent back in time, to an era before World Wars and other horrors of the twentieth century; he has the perfect woman by his side. Sarah sharply contrasts with Sunny, Clarke's wife back in 1978, who is independent and

unpredictable. Sunny frequently wanders away without notice, sometimes vanishing for months at a time. Not Sarah.

There are problems with all this pastoral bliss, of course. Kinsella does not undercut sentimentality with irony. The novel even celebrates the game of baseball and the pastoral simplicity associated with it. However, The Iowa Baseball Confederacy portrays the narrator's utopia as something artificial. The novel shows the unrealizable nature of the pastoral vision in its departure from the conventions of realism. More importantly, the magical occurrences of the novel, including the mythical baseball game, are imposed from outside. The narrator learns that there are supernatural forces--Drifting Away and other Indian spirits--that control events. The game does not unfold freely. It is no coincidence that each team scores the same number of runs in the same extra innings. The players are not free agents, so to speak; they do not, for the most part, realize the fact, but their actions are determined for them.

The narrator, because he has periodic conversations with Drifting Away, does learn the truth about the game. He has difficulties accepting that truth, but when he speaks to Stan he articulates the problems with the unreal nature of the game. Because he is finally realizing his dream of playing against great players (he is hitting .308 against Three Finger Brown), Stan is ecstatic. He imagines that when the

game finally ends he will get to play in "the Bigs." The narrator, however, tries to wake him up: "'Stan, this isn't real'" (236). He reminds his friend that the game does not really take place in time:

> "Stan . . . . Where are your brains? . . . . You've pored over almost as many baseball records as I have. You know passages from The Baseball Encyclopedia like some people know scripture. Can you find any trace of the Confederacy? When we lived in 1978, were you listed in The Baseball Encyclopedia? Did you play for the Cubs, or any other major-league team, in 1908 or any other year? Quote me the record of that all-star big-league left-fielder, Stan Rogalski, born June 12, 1944, Onamata, Iowa. When were you born, Stan? If you played in the Bigs in 1908, or 1909, or 1910, when were you born?" (236)

If they never happen in real time, and if they are merely the workings of outside forces, not the fruits of free will and effort, then Stan's accomplishments have no value. Nevertheless, he and the narrator, living inside a dream as they do, have little desire to wake up. Though he sounds more realistic when he admonishes his friend, Clarke is sometimes giddy with optimism, saying at one point, "I have hope on my side. Perhaps there does not have to be any more death. Perhaps time can be defeated" (275).

The narrator admits, however, that terror lies beneath his hopefulness: "'Do I look like I'm having a good time? I'm living in terror that the game will end; that, when it does, everything, including Sarah, will disappear'" (238). So there is constant tension within this pastoral dreamer.

He has what he wants, but he knows that it cannot last, that time eventually will assert itself. As he says, "'there's this matter of time . . . '" (204).

Its own playfulness notwithstanding, The Iowa Baseball Confederacy points to a serious problem with pastoral longing. Even when the values of the pastoral dream seem to manifest themselves, they cannot last, for the profoundly simple reason that nothing lasts. Everything on earth is governed by time, by change. Simple pastoralism wants it otherwise, of course. Its visionaries attempt to identify certain values and nail them in place. The narrator is one such dreamer, sometimes even admitting that he is defying reality. At one point he tells his friend, "'Stan, I feel as terrible about this as you do, but I don't think either of us can stay here. I'm gonna fight it. I may even die trying to stay here with Sarah'" (244). These pastoral dreamers can be stubborn.

Kinsella's novel expresses this simplistic and ultimately futile effort to manipulate reality most particularly in the oft-repeated refrain "I shall not be moved." It is the title of a hymn that the members of The Twelve-Hour Church of Time Immemorial sing almost incessantly. These words and its variations also become the expression of stubborn resolve for various participants in the mythic baseball game. In the 2149th inning Bad News

Galloway goes mad and dives into the river, drowning himself. After his funeral he seemingly refuses to be buried. His coffin remains suspended between two chairs; the pallbearers cannot move it. The narrator says, "Bad News Galloway, it seems, will not be moved" (252). Similarly, when the statue of the Black Angel leaves the cemetery, several townspeople unsuccessfully implore it to return. Again the narrator comments: "[B]ut the Angel would not be moved" (241). Clarke also comments concerning the Confederacy All-Stars and their refusal to be beaten, "[T]he Confederacy hangs in tenaciously. Like everyone else in and around Big Inning, they will not be moved" (255).

"I shall not be moved" expresses a denial of reality. Time passes. The world and the people in it should and do move. The attitude can also often deny the right of others to move. The person who says, "I shall not be moved," also implies, "You had better not move either." Drifting Away refers to this unfortunate consequence of simple pastoralism in a conversation with the narrator. Clarke asks, "'Is it so bad not to be moved? To stand by what you believe, no matter what? To have an obsession?'" The Indian replies, "'It is when obsession overrides love, takes precedence over brotherhood'" (255).

The central conflict of the novel, then, takes place within the narrator. All his life he has said, "I shall not

be moved." He has insisted on the existence of the Confederacy. The obsession is the center of his life. And his wife, Sunny, disappoints him. In sharp contrast to him--and all those associated with the game in 1908--she is always on the move. Clarke wants a woman to share his obsession with him, ultimately desiring a wife who is under the control of his fantasies, which is to say under his control. Sunny prefers not to stand still long enough. She is like other women in his life: his mother left his father; his sister is a fugitive from the law. In 1908 he sees these three women as one and contrasts them with the static Sarah Swan: "'My mother, my sister, my wife, were all dark spirits; Sarah is light. I won't give her up. I won't be moved'" (209).

In spite of his resolve, Clarke cannot shape life to fit his vision. Eventually, because both the game and Sarah's life end, Clarke realizes that he must accept change. He reenters 1978 with a new resolve:

> "I can be moved . . . . I can move. I can change. I <u>will</u> change. I'll find Sunny. I'll save Sunny. I'll show her I can be moved. I'll destroy all my material on the Confederacy. I'll burn it while Sunny watches me. We'll get on with our lives." (281)

Even in this new attitude Clarke expects that Sunny will want to be "saved" and that reality will submit to a revised vision, even if it is a more malleable one. After returning

to 1978, he finds that such is not the case--his wife is gone permanently. Only after he has lost everything does the narrator fully see that life cannot be contained. He sees the absurdity of the declaration "I shall not be moved." Hearing his neighbor singing the hymn, he ponders its significance, calling it "the anthem of all of us who have in any way been involved in the mystery of the Iowa Baseball Confederacy" (289). He says further,

> I shall not be moved. It sounds like a virtue. The words of the hymn certainly imply that it is. But my obsession with the Confederacy has cost me both Sunny and Sarah. (290)

A scene follows that dramatizes a different approach to reality, one that accepts change and imperfection, unlike the stubborn and static attitude expressed in the hymn. Clarke dances with a retarded girl, Missie, hardly the perfect woman of his dreams. Significantly, they are in the middle of a road, and the song they sing is a celebration not of doggedness but of movement:

> One, two, three--hop,
> One, two, three--hop,
> And now we turn around. (291)

The Iowa Baseball Confederacy, therefore, demonstrates the futility, and even more the destructiveness, of the wish to defeat time. Such wishes cannot be realized. People and things change; time passes, in spite of nostalgic denial. At the point of the novel at which Clarke is transported back in

time there is a suggestive passage, one that points to both the release from time and the ultimate impossibility of experiencing that release. The narrator's watch is gone, but he is nevertheless conscious of time. Moreover, he figuratively feels its pressure upon his flesh:

> For some reason the first thing I want to do is to look at my wrist watch. I move my right hand across my left wrist with the intention of pushing the tiny button that will illuminate deep red numbers on the face of the watch and tell me the time, which I estimate to be twelve-thirty A.M. What I find is my naked wrist, though I can still feel the patterns of the watchband on my skin. (123)

Although The Iowa Baseball Confederacy shows that pastoral ideals cannot be imposed upon reality, it does not suggest that the pastoral vision is valueless or without beauty. As suggested earlier, the novel celebrates its own playfulness and inventiveness. Moreover, the narrator, even after understanding the futility of his quest, says, "I'm going to miss the magic." Leo Marx notes that Thoreau, after finding pastoralism impossible to realize in the world of experience, came to understand that pastoral values reside in consciousness:

> In Walden Thoreau is clear . . . about the location of meaning and value. He is saying that it does not reside in the natural facts or in social institutions or in anything "out there," but in consciousness. It is a product of imaginative perception, of the analogy-perceiving, metaphor-making, mythopoeic power of the human mind. (264)

This understanding is what Kinsella's narrator evidently arrives at. He concludes, "I will, I think, have to make my own magic from now on" (291).

These examples of baseball literature that has the obsessive fan at its center draw upon distinctly different fictional traditions. Nevertheless, each expresses a similar tension. The narrator of each work is drawn toward the object of his worship, only to find the world of fact at odds with the realm of dream. Reality does not bend to pastoral wishes.

Furthermore, The Celebrant, Me and DiMaggio, and The Iowa Baseball Confederacy demonstrate that the pastoral dream does have value, but only when it is located in consciousness or in literature, not in history (Marx 265). As Frederick Exley's protagonist says in A Fan's Notes, "[R]eally, what good are dreams if they come true?" (155).

Notes

[1] Karl leaves the identity of this "self" in some confusion. It would be presumptuous to maintain that the intruding self is actually the author merely because he bears the author's name. In The Armies of the Night, for example, Norman Mailer refers to "himself" in the third person. Moreover, "Mailer" keeps changing roles throughout the work. He calls himself "the Novelist" (38) and "the Historian" (245). Elsewhere he is "The Existentialist" (53) and "a comic hero" (67). Lehmann-Haupt's is a first-person narrative, but it employs various personae. As I note, Me and DiMaggio is modeled after Mailer's work. In fact, it specifically mentions The Armies of the Night as a model (213).

[2] Roger Angell is usually a critical observer of the game. However, in his "Wilver's Way," which also refers to the 1979 World Series, he seems overly impressed with Stargell, saying, "Willie won . . . something like a permanent place in our national sporting regard--and there is a special pleasure in all that, a thump of the heart, because of his way of doing things, because of the kind of man he is" (Late Innings 224). Angell does seem aware of Stargell's

manner of speaking, however, referring to it as "unhurried and buttery" (217). And, to be fair, Angell praises mostly Stargell's baseball accomplishments. There is no dispute about them.

IV

More Than the Usual Applesauce: Hoopla! and Shoeless Joe

For obvious reasons, baseball players and fans are attracted to the sport as it is played on the major-league level. In the National and American leagues one will presumably find the most talented and accomplished players in the world. (Before 1947, however, when the major leagues finally admitted blacks, this may not always have been true.) Players, naturally, dream of playing in "the bigs."

While examining the various examples of baseball literature in previous chapters, I have emphasized the ways that the heroes of baseball or their fans cope--or fail to cope--with the inevitable clash between the world of time and the realm of dream. In the consideration of these works I have tended to isolate the main character, showing how the individual pastoral visionary reacts to the realities that disturb his dream. The baseball player or fan who specifically identifies the pastoral values of baseball with the major-league version of the sport often finds that the institutionalized game is itself the origin of facts that attenuate the pastoral vision.

Major-league baseball does, of course, advertise itself

as the expression of pastoral value. In its theory and practice baseball supposedly embodies various aspects of the American Dream. Speaking of baseball's "Americanness," George Grella says, "[baseball occupies] a unique place in our national heritage" and "speaks as few other human activities can to our country's sense of itself" (267-268). Or, as Harry Stein's fictionalized Ban Johnson says, "'Baseball . . . is the sinew and gut of the American spirit'" (Hoopla! 85). Because of assumptions and observations such as these, those who preside over major-league baseball--and, indeed, the public as well--have insisted that it always appear as a perfect, unsullied, sacred institution.

In reality, the magnates of the sport--the team owners, the league presidents, the commissioners--the guardians of this "sacred" institution, have often been self-serving in their stewardship of the National Pastime. Baseball fiction often represents the lords of baseball as greedy, power-hungry men who, no matter what the truth, care that the sport be thought of as an embodiment of pastoral values. A good image is essential for profits.

Many works of baseball literature include an awareness of this institutional corruption and hypocrisy. As noted, in The Natural the organized game is controlled by power-hungry, avaricious team owners and gamblers. Judge Goodwill Banner,

whose name alone suggests self-righteousness, argues against granting Roy Hobbs's request for a raise by maintaining that he cares for Hobbs's highest interests. Hobbs might be corrupted by money, and the Judge would not want such an outcome on his conscience. The niggardly owner launches a fleet of platitudes that easily defeat whatever arguments Hobbs may have: "'The love of money is the root of all evil'" (88); "'He that maketh wise to be rich shall not be innocent'" (90); "'Put a knife to thy throat if thou be a man given to appetite'" (90). Above all, it is the soul of the player that concerns him, surely not the money: "'What I am saying is that emphasis upon money will pervert your values. One cannot imagine how one's life may alter for the worse under the impetus of wealth-seeking'" (89). Pop Fisher, Hobbs's manager and titular partner to Banner, having been cheated many times by the unctuous owner, says, "'When triple talk is invented. . . [Banner] will own the copyright'" (87).

Banner, like many executives portrayed in baseball literature, is sanctimonious in every circumstance. Even when he is bribing Hobbs to throw a game, he insists that he is doing so with the ultimate purity of the sport in mind. By making a profit at the expense of the many gamblers who have bet on his team to win, Banner will rid the sport of evildoers once and for all. He says, "'I have reason to believe that . . . certain gambling interests have been

betting on the Knights to win. Now it is my purpose, via the uncontested--so to speak--game, to teach these parasites a lesson they will never forget. After that they will not dare to infest our stands again'" (187).

As noted in Chapter II, The Seventh Babe's Hollis McKee has much in common with Banner. He exploits his players and then, when they no longer serve his interests, gets rid of them or attempts to ruin them. In the pages of fiction these controllers of baseball's pastoral myth are transparent caricatures; yet they do, evidently, successfully manipulate the opinions of fans. In the quasi-fictional Me and DiMaggio even a discerning fan such as Lehmann-Haupt finds virtue in team owner George Steinbrenner when the Yankees begin to win: "Suddenly it mattered not in the least that [the Yankees'] team owner was a felon convicted for making illegal contributions to Richard Nixon's campaign funds. As one grateful fan put it, 'George has restored my childhood and made my kid's a better one'" (29).

The commissioners of baseball, who are hired by the owners and therefore traditionally serve their interests, are also depicted in much baseball literature as self-righteous and hypocritical. The prototype for fictional commissioners is Judge Kennesaw Mountain Landis, the first commissioner. Landis, appointed in the wake of the "Black Sox Scandal" in order to restore dignity to organized baseball, was noted for

his solemn, righteous bearing. He also knew how to intimidate rivals and underlings through ostentation and careful grooming of his image. Eliot Asinof relates a story about Landis in his youth as a bicycle racer, suggesting that the future commissioner used similar methods later in life:

> What he lacked in speed, he made up for with psychology. Once, before an important race in a strange town, he bought twenty medals, pinned them ostentatiously on his racing uniform, and appeared looking like a champion. He completely intimidated his rivals and won. (223)

Landis appears in much baseball fiction. He is in The Seventh Babe, on his deathbed calling himself a "'pompous, self-righteous ass'" (305). He is clearly the model for the figure who threatens Hobbs with expulsion from baseball in The Natural (217). Landis is briefly referred to in The Celebrant as the commissioner who not only bans eight players but also cancels the contract between organized baseball and Collegiate Jewelers (267).

In fiction the alliance of baseball executives perpetuates baseball's pastoral myth for a single reason: to keep the money rolling in. The fiction, needless to say, depends on fact on this point. Asinof notes that long before the infamous scandal in 1919 players were involved in fixing games. Team owners and league executives knew about these occurrences but did nothing:

> [M]ostly, the cloak of secrecy was maintained by the power of the owners themselves. They knew, as

> all baseball men came to know. They knew, but pretended they didn't. . . . Whenever there was talk of some fresh incident, they would combine to hush it up. The probing sportswriter would be instructed--or paid off--to stop his digging. Ballplayers would be thanked for their information--and disregarded. Always, the owners claimed, for the good of baseball. Their greatest fear was that the American fan might suspect there was something crooked about the National Pastime. Who, then, would pay good money to see a game? (14)

The exposure resulting from the conspiracy to fix the 1919 World Series, however, was evidently more than baseball's magnates could subdue. The belief in baseball as a sacred institution was in danger of becoming completely untenable. The lords of baseball were forced to find new ways to protect their domain. As Hoopla!'s Buck Weaver says, "[B]efore too long, the owners saw that they had to come across with more than the usual applesauce. Otherwise, there was a chance that the public would put their feet down, and drop baseball like a potato" (341). The coronation of Landis and the commissioner's subsequent actions against the eight implicated members of the Chicago White Sox were the keys to restoring baseball's image. The strategy seems to have succeeded marvelously. Major-league baseball continues to provide the illusion that it is untouched by forces that intrude upon seemingly all other institutions in American life. Its proprietors continue to present the institution as a pastoral refuge, an orderly garden where all parts exist in

harmony.[1]

Joseph Epstein finds himself able to write about sports in 1976 in a way that would have been laughable in 1920. Sports, including baseball, he says, present

> something rare in contemporary life, the spectacle of which gives enormous satisfaction. To define this satisfaction negatively, it is the absence of fraudulence and fakery. No small item, this, when one stops to think that in nearly every realm of contemporary life fraud and fakery have an established--some would say a preponderant--place. Advertising, politics, business, and journalism are only the most obvious examples. Fraud seems similarly pervasive in modern art: in painters whose reputations rest on press agentry; in writers who write one way and live quite another; in composers who are taken seriously but whose work cannot be seriously listened to. At a time when image is one of the most frequently used words in American speech and writing, one does not too often come upon the real thing. (115)

The Black Sox scandal is an important event in the history of baseball, and in the history of the United States, because it shows professional baseball, supposedly the expression of a nation's character, to be as crooked as any other institution. If baseball is the sinew and gut of the American spirit and if baseball turns out to be fraudulent, then what is the American spirit? Asinof relates an incident that occurred after news of the fix became widespread. The occurrence exemplifies the depth of feeling generated by the scandal and also the way some fans make an easy transition from sentimentality to violence once they consider themselves betrayed. The Chicago Cubs had played an exhibition game in

Joliet, Illinois. Some players, riding back to their hotel in a car, were mistaken for White Sox players by some fans, one of whom jumped on the car's running board, shouting, "'Here are some of those crooked ballplayers from Chicago. Let's get 'em.'" A fight ensued, in which player Buck Herzog was stabbed several times in the hand (206).

The Black Sox scandal is also an important reference point for baseball literature. In most of the works examined in previous chapters there is either a reference to the event or a fictional echo of it. The scandal is the culmination of the narrator's disillusionment in The Celebrant. Landis appears in The Seventh Babe to ban Ragland from the major leagues; The Natural draws heavily on the events of 1919. In two works in particular, however, the event or its results are central. Stein's Hoopla! and Kinsella's Shoeless Joe, very different kinds of novels, provide fictional treatments of the scandal and its damage to baseball's pastoral image. Hoopla! is a historical novel, drawing upon Asinof's Eight Men Out, various historical studies of the period, and biographies of players and journalists.[2] Shoeless Joe, Kinsella's first baseball novel, like The Iowa Baseball Confederacy, employs magical realism. Among other questions, it asks, "What if Shoeless Joe Jackson, the greatest of the eight banned White Sox players, could be brought back to life to play again?" Both Hoopla! and Shoeless Joe provide a

complex pastoral awareness, particularly since they posit the existence of both a visible "baseball" and an invisible "baseball." In Stein's novel the tangible institution of baseball defeats the ideal game; Kinsella's novel attempts to reverse the damage.

Hoopla! features two alternating narrators, one a cynical journalist, Luther Pond, and the other a bewildered, banned player, George "Buck" Weaver. Each looks back to the Black Sox scandal and surrounding events from some distance. Pond narrates from a nursing home in 1974, Weaver from his Chicago home in 1944. Pond's declared purpose is to chronicle his success as a journalist, which, as he admits, can be credited to unflinching attention to his own advancement, no matter what the damage to either the truth or the lives of others.

Weaver declares, in "Why I Am Writing This," that he merely wants to set the record straight. One of the eight banned players, he never received any money from gamblers, nor did he participate in the throwing of any games. Weaver knew of the fix, to be sure, and he attended the meetings at which it was planned. But that, he claims, was the extent of his involvement. Asinof describes the actual Buck Weaver. The profile also aptly summarizes Stein's fictional player:

> There was no bitterness, no hatred, no frustration powerful enough to corrupt his love for baseball. He played ball with the purity and dedication of a child. And though he had fully understood the

> motivations for the scheme, even allowed himself to participate in the evolution of it, he could not perform accordingly when he put on spikes. (63)[3]

In his narrative Weaver, defeated but still relatively innocent, merely wants to tell his side of the story:

> I'm not saying it's going to do any good, but maybe it's time some individual set down the actual truth for a change, instead of the other way, just in case somebody may be interested. And that's how come I went out and found a candy store that was open, with pencils and paper, and it was not easy, this being the evening before Thanksgiving, and I wrote up what you see here. (48)

Both Pond and Weaver consider the Black Sox scandal the most important event in their lives. For Pond, who, in the novel, is responsible for revealing the names of the eight players and for coining the term "Black Sox" (286), the scandal brought fame and security. Speaking of the banned players, Pond says, "I myself would be forever associated, on the record, with their undoing." Declaring himself to be one who guards and perpetuates the myth of baseball's sanctity (for self-serving reasons), he says further, "I have never ceased to regard that association with pride" (286). Pond also speaks of the effect the scandal had on his career: "In the aftermath of the Black Sox story, my place in the world was secure; I would not relinquish it--would, indeed, continue to see my influence grow--throughout much of the five decades to follow" (356).

Weaver, of course, thinks less fondly of the scandal.

Because of it, he is forever separated from doing what he loved, playing major-league baseball, and his name is forever linked with those depraved souls who conspired to destroy a supposedly sacred American institution:

> [N]obody ever forgets the "Black Sox," and that's the truth. Mention 1919 and it's the first thing that pops up in their skulls, the fix of the World Series, before the bolsheviki, or the League of Nations, or even Babe Ruth, who had a hell of a season that year. Every time new people find out my name, whether it be at the racetrack where I work or even amongst the company of friends, I see the same old look in their eyes. It's like I'm a devil or something. I seen that look a thousand times, and I don't care if I never see it again. (45)

With its distinctly different narrative voices, Hoopla! provides an intricate account of the Black Sox scandal and a complex view of the institution of baseball. It would be too simple to conclude that one narrator is "right" and the other "wrong." The novel implies, rather, that each narrator has an incomplete vision, that each could learn from the other. Pond, though thoroughly unscrupulous and self-promoting, has a hard-nosed understanding of power and the way it operates. He has no illusions about the nature of American institutions. Weaver, on the other hand, lacks Pond's understanding and wiles; however, he is capable of sympathy for others, and he possesses a devotion to baseball for its own sake. Pond is devoted to himself, not necessarily to his craft. As a journalist he would write anything if doing so

could advance his reputation. Pond is flashy, stylish; Weaver is plain, direct, and therefore vulnerable.

The titles the two narrators give their chapters indicate these differing approaches, not only to writing but to life. Pond's chapter about former boxer John L. Sullivan is called "John L. and the Golden Smile." His chapter chronicling his career advancement while employed by William Randolph Hearst is entitled "Onward, Upward with the Yellow Kid." Weaver, on the other hand, except for "Why I Am Writing This," the straightforward title for his introduction, merely uses years for chapter titles, since his narrative is organized chronologically. And after each title he adds, like a student submitting a theme, "by George D. Weaver."

Hoopla!, with its dual narration, revises the usual assumptions concerning the Black Sox scandal. A journalist doggedly pursues the story until he uncovers the truth. In so doing he nobly serves the National Pastime and the nation itself. Crooked players are exposed and punished for their wrongdoing. The corrupting serpents are driven from paradise. But Hoopla! reveals that the very structure of organized baseball is corrupt, that in the banning of eight players there was a vaster, more pervasive conspiracy. The commissioner, the team-owners, journalists, other players, and the American public conspired to maintain the lie around

which baseball and other institutions are organized.

Pond's chapters are, more than anything, the confessions of a confidence man. He reveals that his professional success is based on his projection of an image, on hype, on "hoopla." He becomes "Luther Pond, . . . America's most tireless reporter"; "Luther Pond, journalism's bloodhound"; "Luther Pond, Jack Public's favorite snoop in high places" (3). He learns very quickly that the nation has "storybook expectations" (24) and that if a journalist can convince the public that these are being fulfilled, the reliability (or existence) of sources and the truth itself are irrelevant concerns. He approvingly quotes H. L. Mencken--"'The chief business of the nation, as a nation . . . is the setting up of heroes, mainly bogus'"--adding, "Hell, why shouldn't that be me?" (3). Pond himself is a bogus hero, and he sets up some others.

Pond says he was not always so cynical, having been brought up by a father who "held an exceedingly optimistic opinion of humankind" (4). Pond continues, "Having been raised to believe in the homilies, it came as a genuine shock to discover that the world is full of quietly unscrupulous men and, more important, that their shortcomings rarely lead to their ruination" (4). But Pond learns that hard work, honesty, fairness, loyalty, and commitment do nothing for a man so much as make him a chump. These virtues sound good,

and one must appear to have them, but it is more important to have connections, to pursue self-interest, to have "pluck and a keen sense of opportunism" (5)--above all, to cultivate an image.

Pond's Machiavellianism originates in his view of societal institutions, a view derived from experience and observation. He speaks, for example, of The New York Times as a newspaper that has succeeded in selling itself as an unbiased, highly respectable organization: "The managers of the Times have, for almost a century now, themselves been able to dictate the inheritance of future generations, and they have always been careful to keep the record clean" (190). Pond knows that the Times' management has been careful about image, that the organization "succeeded in projecting the impression that the paper was above commerce--in itself, a remarkable commercial achievement" (190). He says that he and others who work for Hearst's Evening Journal and other less "respectable" papers are not hypocrites, unlike the self-righteous individuals at the Times:

> Whatever else may be said of us, my colleagues and I never, at least, were dishonest with ourselves. We operated on a quite elementary assumption: that since the world does not work as described in the civic textbooks, there is no reason to pretend that it does. Flexible men--not necessarily evil, but rigorously self-serving--are everywhere around us, dominating the institutions that shape daily existence, and it was hardly our function to tamper with so intransigent a given.

> To the contrary, newspapers, like nations, are themselves often obliged to behave cynically as a practical matter. (191)

Other supposedly reliable, upstanding institutions are just as self-serving, just as image-conscious, as the journalistic establishment. Pond refers, for example, to the Rosenthal-Becker case, in which New York police lieutenant Charles Becker was convicted and executed for the murder of gambler Herman Rosenthal. If Becker was not innocent, he surely was not alone among police officers in being on the payroll of criminals. Yet, as Pond sees it, the police department, the District Attorney, and the Mayor conspire to make Becker the scapegoat, and thus disguise the depth of the corruption:

> District Attorney Charles Whitman seized upon the case with a vengeance, declaring his intention to make of Becker so memorable an example that none of his brethren would ever again dare to stray so wantonly. Whitman quickly found lining up behind him a host of formidable allies, including all of those--municipal leaders, police officials, leading members of the East Side criminal fraternity--who most fervently wanted to distance themselves from the mushrooming scandal. (197-198)

Likewise, Pond has no illusions about American politics. He covers the Republican convention in 1920 and quotes Harry Daugherty, Warren Harding's campaign manager, on the method of choosing a candidate. The nominee is chosen "'in seclusion around a big table, by fifteen men, perspiring profusely and bleary-eyed with loss of sleep. Just a nice

bunch of fellows cutting a deal'" (291). The delegates who fill the convention hall are merely a pretense. Pond sees the convention, like the 1919 World Series, as profoundly American, indicative of an era:

> I would . . . eventually come to see that 1920 Republican Convention, as much as the fixed World Series itself, as a harbinger of the approaching age, not only in the manner its business was conducted--noisy fun making audacious sleight-of-hand--but in the kinds of men, determined yet flexible, self-interested yet endlessly engaging, who gave it its character . . . Warren Harding [in contrast to Woodrow Wilson] compromised reflexively, by instinct; he was, in fact, as the world was to shortly discover, prepared to dicker away anything. (292)

The institution of baseball, however, is the novel's focal point. The playing of baseball is supposed to be one human endeavor that is free from audacious sleight-of-hand. Recalling his reading of an early Ring Lardner column, Pond remembers that, at the time, it expressed his own feelings about the National Pastime:

> I vividly recall, on a visit to Chicago, running across a Lardner column describing, in most personal terms, his depthless affection for the national game; it resided, he wrote, in the fact that it was the only institution on this woebegotten continent in which a man rose or fell strictly on his own merits. The piece gave me goosebumps. That was precisely as I felt! (311)

More than being an honest activity, the playing of baseball, according to its most ardent salesmen, also builds strength of character. Buck Weaver notes that Charles

Comiskey ("The Old Roman"), while on a 1913 tour of the world with an All-Star team, pointed to baseball as the pursuit that distinguishes Americans from other nationalities, particularly the English:

> The Old Roman had come right out and said that we Americans made much better soldiers than the English, and the reason for it was baseball. He said that the national game was good for both the mind as well as the body, and then added that if England knew what was good for them, they would take a tip and start playing it too. (109)

A few years later, with the United States in World War I, many baseball publications argue that the influence of baseball will eventually make the difference in the war, that Germans are deficient in that respect if in nothing else. Weaver quotes from "Baseball Will Win the War," an article published in The Baseball Magazine:

> "One of the leading faults of the Teutonic mind . . . has been its absolute lack of good sportsmanship. As a race the German peoples have not taken kindly to Athletic sport. This failure has narrowed them, made them unfair in business and ruthless in war. But we Americans are blessed with baseball." (243)

With such claims being made for baseball, it is no wonder that after the 1919 scandal the game's proprietors become desperate to restore the lost luster as quickly as possible. In Hoopla!'s revised account of the scandal, the team owners conspire with Landis, the journalistic establishment, and the public to re-establish baseball's image. Eight players are banned, while the forces that drove

the players to "drop" a World Series for money are ignored. Furthermore, by making scapegoats of eight players the baseball establishment is able to sweep aside allegations against other players, some of them national heroes. One of these, Ty Cobb, has an important place in Pond's narrative.

Pond describes Cobb not as a pastoral husbandman but as a violent, driven, perhaps insane man, consumed by a "primitive objective: to annihilate the egos of other men" (63). Pond relates various violent episodes: Cobb's fights with teammates, his physical attacks on fans, his knifing of a night watchman in a Cleveland hotel. None of these incidents become public knowledge, however: "As political writers would later know to ignore the indiscretions of Warren Harding and Franklin Roosevelt, so it was understood in sporting circles of that day that the more unsettling specifics of Tyrus Raymond Cobb's makeup were not to see print" (64). According to Pond, Cobb's proclivity for violence is always favorably interpreted by the press, the members of which are adept at maintaining a hero's stature. So Cobb's sharpening of his spikes with a file is called "aggressiveness"; "his habit of maiming second basemen" is labeled "old fashioned, hard-nosed play" (64).

As Pond becomes acquainted with Cobb, the two develop a symbiotic relationship. Cobb provides good journalistic copy while Pond tacitly agrees to use language to get the hero out

of difficulties. The relationship, clearly, has less to do with friendship than with the mutual benefit each derives from the other. And though Pond acquires information about Cobb that no one else has, he is cautious about using it, saying, "I seriously doubted whether I could, in fact, risk accusing baseball's greatest star of even the most minor transgression" (310).

Pond, therefore, nurtures the myth of Ty Cobb, sometimes to humorous effect. When he visits Cobb in Georgia, while the player is holding out for a higher salary from the Detroit Tigers, Cobb is depressed and drunk, living alone in a three-story white mansion. The player offers the journalist salt crackers and a fifth of bourbon for dinner, and Pond's bed is in a storage room. Pond particularly wants a pillow and, noticing several on Cobb's bed, asks for one. Cobb, however, needs all six or eight, saying, "'I'm a ballplayer, goddammit, I need my rest. You're jus' a fuckin' pencil pusher'" (142). Furthermore, Pond must write by candlelight, since the electric company has cut service to Cobb because of a dispute over four dollars. Cobb says, "'The sonsobitches'll rot in hell before they get a nickel out of me. . . . And if they try'n come near here, I'll blow their fuckin' brains out'" (141).

Pond's column, however, contains none of these revelations about Cobb's character. Instead, the writer

gives the public, and Cobb, what they want. Pond describes the house's furnishings, the plaques and trophies, a large photograph of Cobb with Woodrow Wilson, framed musical compositions, figurines collected on playing tours, and history books, "objects . . . that indicate the fuller dimension of the man" (141). When Pond "quotes" Cobb, there is no resemblance between this language and that actually used by the player. He supposedly quotes Cobb on his "love of history," for example: "'I am a bug on Napoleon. . . . I have all the books on his life I have ever heard of. I made a resolve to read two hours a day.'" Pond writes at one point, ". . . in spite of his Dixie origins, Cobb is a man of culture, and, unlike many a diamond slave, he is kept plenty occupied by those other aspects of life" (141).

Pond sees that Cobb is driven by "a hunger for affirmation" (90), and he does his part to satisfy the hero. Pond has the same hunger, of course. Speaking of Cobb, he says, "I saw in him, indeed, a kindred spirit" (90).

Pond derives the most benefit from this symbiotic relationship as rumors are spreading that certain unnamed members of the White Sox conspired to lose the World Series. At the same time there are rumors that Cobb has placed bets on games in which he has played. Pond questions the player, hinting that he could expose him if he so desired. Cobb then purchases Pond's silence on this matter by providing the

names of the eight White Sox players who were involved in the 1919 fix. Cobb merely pronounces eight names--Cicotte, Gandil, Felsch, Williams, Jackson, Risberg, Weaver, and McMullin--and says to Pond, "'Just don't you ever bother me again, you sonovabitch!'" (316). Pond concludes, "In truth, my role in the unraveling of the Black Sox case would result almost entirely from that brief conversation" (316).

The columnist has no evidence, of course; but he knows how to "suggest elements of the story" (317). He deftly uses his column to flush out various White Sox players, who gradually fill in the details with their confessions. As for Cobb, allegations concerning him are forgotten until 1926, when Hubert "Dutch" Leonard, a former teammate of Cobb's, hands Landis some information suggesting that Cobb, Tris Speaker, Joe Wood, and Leonard himself "arranged the outcome of a game in 1919" (358). As Landis investigates further, Pond comes to Cobb's aid with a column, obviously intended as repayment for Cobb's tip of some years earlier. It consists of an ad hominem attack on Leonard and some irrelevant but nevertheless effective "suggestions" concerning Cobb's character. (In the 1980s this is called putting "a spin" on a story.) More than anything else, it is Pond's style, giving the illusion of substance, that makes his column effective:

> As for Tyrus the Great, we hear he might have a quirk or two himself. Mrs. Tyrus hears the same

> thing. But once you've had an eyeful of the bird in action, on the diamond or anywhere you please, you don't need to know a thing about a little item called character . . . .
>
> A personal note. We happen to know of a certain incident, twenty or so years back, that touched Ty deeply. His beloved father was involved, and his mother, and a revolver. But we'll spare you details. Suffice to say that Cobb triumphed over that terrible adversity, as he is on his way to overcoming over this one.[4] The author of these words is proud to know him.
>
> By the by, only one statement by the Peach in this whole business fails to check out like a whistle, ten thousand percent. Never bet on a ballgame, Ty? Tsk tsk. We have it that you bet, all right, and in 1919, too--on the White Sox to win the World Series!!! (365)

Cobb's protestations, his and Speaker's status as heroes, and the influence of Pond's column do their work. Finally, Landis issues a statement: "'These players . . . have not been, nor are they now, found guilty of fixing a ballgame. By no decent system of justice could such a finding be made'" (365).[5] Pond contemplates sending Cobb a note that reads, "'Looks like we both come out smelling like roses'" (366).

If success is measured by the extent of one's reputation, influence, and image, then Pond, Cobb, and the institution of baseball "come out smelling like roses." When the fictional Ring Lardner encounters Pond, however, he smells something else. He walks into a men's room and finds Pond seated in an open stall, with his pants down, scribbling on a pad. Lardner finds the image appropriate and takes the

occasion to question Pond's journalistic standards: "'Is there anything at all that embarrasses you? Is there anything you could do that you couldn't justify to yourself?'" (319). Pond gets defensive, but Lardner pursues the point:

> "You don't know the first thing about me," I [Pond] replied.
> "Sure I do. It's men like you that run the world."
> "I am only doing my job," I snapped, "same as you."
> "So I see . . . . Be sure to flush when you finish doing it." (319)

Though Pond sees through men in power--politicians, newspaper publishers, district attorneys, league commissioners, team owners--he is, as Lardner says, one of them. He repeatedly claims that, unlike most men of the world, he is not a hypocrite. In his "Introduction" he says, "I stand as eager as I was fifty years ago to take on the world's self-righteous, those infuriating souls who believe they've got a corner on conscience and integrity and every other quality that might conceivably get a man into heaven" (6). However, Pond, who understands the secrets of power and is immune to the self-righteous posing of others, serves the purposes of the very forces he purportedly despises. The baseball establishment, in particular, is served well by Pond. No gamblers are indicted for their activities in 1919; no owners are made to answer for the policies that instigated

the World Series fix. Pond has knowledge, but by using it to promote himself he merely sustains the staus quo.

Most of all, it is the institutionalized abuse of players that is responsible for the Black Sox scandal. Pond himself knows of these abuses and summarizes the players' resentment of them:

> For years, indeed, since the dawn of organized baseball, players had complained about a system that left them subject to the whims of management. They resented the provision in all of their contracts that enabled owners to release players, in the event of injury, on ten days' notice, without further compensation; and the fact that . . . athletes could be indefinitely suspended without even the benefit of a hearing; and, most of all, that they were bound to their teams by the reserve clause, to be sold, traded, released--and paid as much or as little--as their employers saw fit. (72)

Hoopla!, especially in Weaver's sections, details numerous incidents in which the owners, especially White Sox owner Charles Comiskey, treat the players like chattel. Comiskey is amazingly penurious: he keeps salaries as low as possible, often promising players one figure while paying much less; alone among owners he insists that his players clean their own uniforms (231).[6] In the 1917 season he makes a grandiloquent announcement: if his team wins the World Series, each player will receive a bonus. The White Sox win, and Comiskey enters the locker room to distribute the bonus, a case of champagne--"And not even champagne from Over There, but champagne from somewheres in New York state. Finger

Lakes was the name on it" (238). Weaver recalls the players' reactions:

> [A]fter he was gone we all just looked at each other in wonder. This was the bonus? A case of champagne that tasted like stale dog piss? Even the boys that knew him best of all, such as me, would never have guessed such a thing. (238)

Some of Comiskey's dealings with his players have a direct bearing on their motivation to throw the World Series. Ed Cicotte, the team's best pitcher, asks the owner for a raise before the 1919 season and instead is talked into agreeing to a special provision in his contract: if he wins thirty games, he will receive a ten-thousand-dollar bonus. In September, when it seems certain that Cicotte will earn the extra money, Comiskey orders manager Kid Gleason to bench Cicotte. The pitcher ends the year with twenty-nine wins (265-266). Fittingly, Cicotte receives ten thousand dollars for his part in the 1919 Series.

Comiskey may be the worst of owners, but the others treat players in a similar manner. Weaver notes, for example, that since 1918 was a war year, organized baseball was losing money. To cut their losses, the owners agree to end the season a month early, and then to take a further money-saving measure, summarized by Weaver:

> Then, being like they were, they pulled something else, and it was as crooked as a dog's hind leg. Since our contracts had it that they had to pay us for the whole season, they went and released every one of us. That's right, every man

> in the big show got canned, just like that. Only, of course, they had agreed between themselves that each magnate would hire back his same players the next year, if it looked like there was to be a season.
>
> And was there a single thing for us to do about it? Of course not, especially since the magnates made like they were pulling it all for the war effort. So we all just went back to our homes, meek as kids. (255)

Once the war is over, the owners rehire their players and enter the 1919 season with renewed interest in their turnstiles. And the fans return, forgetting that just a few months earlier they had jeered players who did not enlist in active military service (255). The players, Weaver says, have better memories:

> But, of course, it was not really the same as before, not at all. For though it is true that most things blow past, some things do not. The magnates might have thought so, for that is the way you think when everything always goes your way, and also the scribes. Who could blame them? But some of us ballplayers could not forget such things so fast, let alone forgive.
>
> Who knew it at the time, but maybe by then the dice had already been thrown. (256)

To make matters worse for White Sox players, a biography of Comiskey is released in 1919. For the players its portrayal of the owner is particularly frustrating:

> [T]he thing was loaded with gas about him being a big spender. All the other magnates turned up in there saying how generous he was, and how he was in the game for sport and not bucks. Naturally, us slaves were supposed to adore him. "Comiskey has less trouble with his players than any other owner in the game," is how it put it. "The player depends on him for a square deal. If he delivers,

> he knows that he is going to get everything that is coming to him." And the Old Roman adored us right back. (263-264)

Later that year, when Arnold "Chick" Gandil approaches some fellow players with his plan to throw the World Series, they hardly need convincing. Weaver says, "Believe me, he did not have to pull any theatrics to get fellows that worked for the Old Roman interested" (268).

Without a union, the players are powerless.[7] Although some White Sox players (including Gandil) contemplate going on strike, they decide against it, knowing how they would fare: "[W]e would all be out of the game on our ears" (264). Hoopla! obliquely suggests that the fix of the World Series becomes, for eight players, the substitute for a strike. The players can get the money they think they deserve by altering the one thing over which they do have power: the level of their play on the diamond.

The players cannot look to "the scribes" to voice their concerns, because the journalistic establishment is in the business of nurturing the myth of baseball's sanctity. And the owners see to it that the newspapers remain sympathetic to them. Speaking of the initial willingness of the papers to downplay rumors of the World Series fix, Weaver says,

> This is the way things are in the business of baseball, with everybody looking after his own skin by scratching backs. No one wanted to kill the national game, and that is what a big scandal might do. Besides being rooters themselves, without

> baseball a lot of Americans would stop buying newspapers, and those writers would be out on the dole. Plus there was the matter of friendship. The big pokes that owned these papers was all pals with the magnates. They were always cooking up business deals, and going out on the town, and their wives was always tossing bashes for each other. (283)

According to Asinof, Comiskey always took special care of sportswriters, a practice that further irritated the players:

> The obvious outlet for their complaints was cut off from them, for newspapermen were Comiskey's boys. Their bread was buttered on the other side. They rode in the Pullmans as guests of the owner, all expenses paid and then some. Officially they were on the staff of their respective papers, but Comiskey always made them feel as if they were working for him. And in the process, he made the ballplayers feel like dirt. (22)

Once the story of the 1919 World Series breaks and "John Public is out for blood" (Hoopla! 340), the journalistic establishment continues to serve Comiskey well. Weaver says, "As soon as events started to bust open, the articles started in the press about what a fine old gent Comiskey was, and how excellent he had always been to his players, and that it was a tragedy that a gang of dirty ballplayers would do such a thing to him" (340). And with the appointment of Landis, the perfect move in terms of public relations, the newspapers keep in step: "This was all the scribes needed to start hollering that baseball was fixing up its own house and the crisis was over" (342). Understandably, Weaver has little

respect for the press: "Most of these ink wasters do not care for nothing at all except to get ahead themselves, and it is all the same to them if what they write is truth or falsehood. I know this from my own life" (160).

Weaver generalizes, of course, and he may in fact be blinded by his resentment. He lumps all reporters together, failing to distinguish writers such as Ring Lardner or Hugh Fullerton from the average self-serving reporter. He reads You Know Me Al about the way Jack Keefe would (161), and he wrongly imagines that Fullerton is in league with gamblers and the baseball establishment (282).[8] However, because he is the victim of meretricious reporting, Weaver resents "the scribes," particularly Pond, who, knowing the nature of organized baseball, puts self-promotion above any higher concern. And Pond, of course, prints Weaver's name in connection with the scandal. Weaver writes of Hoopla!'s other narrator, "I despise him like poison" (173).

Weaver, being a victim, naturally elicits more sympathy than Pond does in his narrative. Moreover, the player, though he presents a player's view, does not necessarily give a one-sided story of the scandal. He admits, for example, that the conspirators' jealousy of other players on their team--Eddie Collins and Dickie Kerr, for example ("Lily White Sox")--is part of the motivation behind the fix. The 1919 White Sox are a divided team: "It was ballplayer against

ballplayer on that club, not to mention ballplayer against nabob" (261).

The source of Weaver's difficulties, however, is his lack of circumspection. Like many players, he is so eager to play in baseball's Eden, the major leagues, that he fails to notice who is tending the garden. Being essentially "a rube" (defined by gambler Arnold Rothstein as "a talented guy who consented to work for peanuts" [Asinof 112]), he is exploited by his owner, by the press, by teammates, gamblers, and the commissioner. Writing in 1944, however, he seems to have more self-knowledge, gained through painful experience. He looks back on the pranks played on him when he was a rookie, for example, and recalls the words of wisdom offered by a teammate: "'Anybody who trusts a ballplayer is a fathead'" (61). But in retrospect he sees that the maxim should be stretched a bit further:

> It certainly was good advice, and I would have been a lot better off if I had always kept it in mind, that's for sure. But, then, I have also found that it is not fair to limit it just to ballplayers. (61)

One person he certainly should not have trusted, Weaver realizes, is Luther Pond. He recalls being softened to Pond in 1915, on a rare occasion when the columnist wrote what Weaver considers the truth about players' relationships with Comiskey. And Weaver admits that he was, then and later, as witless as a Lardner character:

> [M]aybe that is what caused the troubles with Pond afterward, for after that I trusted the fellow too much. But, then again, that was an old habit of mine, trusting fellows too much.
> You know me Al. (173)

In 1944, then, Weaver has more wisdom than he did as a major-league ballplayer, but he has no more power. On the other hand, Pond, throughout his career, has had power, along with an understanding of how it works and a knowledge of its abuses. For self-serving reasons, however, he chooses to remain a part of the system.

It is in the interest of these systems of power--politics, business, journalism, baseball--to maintain the illusion that the world is a place without shades of gray. A world without paradox or complexity is an easier one to manipulate. So the Germans or the Russians--or whoever are the enemies of the time--are barbaric and evil, while Americans are sophisticated and pure. A player is either a goat or a hero, the Sox either Black or White.

Although Luther Pond knows that the world is a place of complexity and compromise, what he presents in his column is an illusory, simple world. He calls Ty Cobb "an enigma," but he carefully keeps the complex truth out of print. He also knows that the power structure of baseball is responsible for driving players towards the fix of 1919, but he assists in making scapegoats of eight members of the White Sox. Although he is not like those reporters for The New York

Times who sincerely believe they are "laboring in a nobler cause than their fellows" (191), he nurtures a similarly simplistic view of reality.

For a long time Weaver does not understand the way the powerful use hoopla to retain and advance their power. He sincerely believes that truth will eventually triumph over pretense, that if Landis really knows his circumstances and the minor degree of his involvement in the Black Sox scandal, he will reinstate him. He spends years getting petitions signed, and he personally visits Landis. The commissioner jokes with the player and gives Weaver the impression that he will give the subject of reinstatement deep thought. He promises to call the hopeful player but does not. Instead, Weaver reads in the papers of Landis's refusal to grant his request (352-353). Weaver says, "As some scribe put it, Kenesaw Mountain Landis showed how far dramatic talent can carry a man in this land, if only he has the sense not to go on the stage. And I kept getting took in" (352).

Weaver is prompted to write when he hears of Landis's death in 1944. His first two paragraphs demonstrate that he is finally beginning to understand the way the powerful depend on image. Furthermore, he shows that the reliance on hype by seemingly all American institutions was not an aberration of the late 1910s and early 1920s:[9]

> Well, guess what, I just found out that old Judge Landis kicked the bucket. Heart attack. The

> man on the radio says the old gent worked so hard on his Victory Garden, growing cabbages for the boys overseas and all, that his old ticker just gave up on him.
>
> Personally, I believe this information to be propaganda. The way I dope out the situation, they just thought it would sound good, for the war effort and all, to put it in those particular terms. After all, it wouldn't impress hardly no one to say that Kenesaw Mountain Landis, commissioner of baseball of the world, just dropped off in his own bed, even though he was old. Everyone knows how he sent all those Wobblies off to jail for obstructing the war effort during the First War. What the hell better way could he do his bit this time except by dying. (43)

And Weaver anticipates that various writers and Pond, evidently with a radio show in 1944, will be playing the story for whatever it is worth:

> [I]n about an hour that bum Luther Pond is going to pop up on that radio show of his, and me and Helen [Mrs. Weaver] is just waiting for him to give tributes to the guy at our expense. That's how Pond likes to be, always the first to add heat to the fire. And in tomorrow's papers, there it'll be in the headlines, probably even pushing the war to the side, "Landis the first Commissioner, who saved Baseball from crooked ballplayers, Dies of Patriotism." (46)

Furthermore, Weaver occasionally indicates that he sees a paradox in the way those who report about baseball do their work. The writers are supposedly knowledgeable and circumspect, the players ignorant and simple-minded. Weaver, being a player, knows that players are human beings with normal human failings and qualities. He even suggests that baseball heroism is the invention of journalists, saying that

players "did not ask to be heroes in the first place, but only got that way on account of the scribes themselves" (161). And he wonders if perhaps reporters may not be the real rubes:

> [The reporters] were the ones that were really simple-minded, not us. If you were going good, you were the berries in their eyes, and if you were going bad, even despite the fact that you might have a busted finger or something, you were a bum. It was cut and dry. They did not know about moods or anything else that was complicated. For instance, if a fellow had a comical side, they just could not get it that he might be comical and serious all at the same time, which is how a lot of us were. (161-162)

To be sure, Hoopla!'s unveiling of baseball's power structure challenges the belief in baseball pastoralism. One of the novel's central paradoxes is that those entrusted with guarding the pastoral vision are its greatest threat. The powerful use the beauty of baseball as a sales pitch or a weapon. And for those who play the supposedly enriching game, the dream becomes a nightmare. Weaver remembers his feeling as he watched Cicotte intentionally hit a batter in order to signal to the gamblers that the fix was on: "I just closed my eyes and wished I had never heard of this game of baseball in the first place" (281). Even Weaver often sounds as if he thinks of baseball as mere business, not as an expression of beauty, timelessness, and order. And, so, he rationalizes his early interest in the fix: "The national game was full of sell-outers, just like any other business.

It is a thing of life" (269).

However, Hoopla!, particularly through Weaver's voice, does express pastoral value, albeit as something that can be apprehended only fleetingly. The pastoral dream world exists in Weaver's imagination and in the language that embodies it. The word "baseball" denotes two things in Weaver's mind: it refers to a corrupt institution, full of greed and betrayal; it also refers to the idealized game that expresses pastoral values. Immediately after he identifies the institutionalized game as "a thing of life," he alludes to this second "baseball": "But over the next few days, I admit that I started to have a few other feelings. It is an odd thing, but baseball could do that to you sometimes" (269). The first "baseball" is "a thing of life"; the second is "an odd thing."

For brief periods of time, the two worlds--the "baseball" of Comiskey and the "baseball" of dream--seem to merge. For Weaver and other White Sox players, 1917 was idyllic:

> Baseball was fun in '17, there is no other term for it. Sometimes that summer I would stand there at my spot at third, and look at the fellows around me, and then over at those happy bugs in the stands, and then maybe up at the blue sky and the clouds, and I would feel as warm in my heart as toast. It was like a pretty dream playing ball in 1917. (226)

That season ends with a World Series victory--and Comiskey's

bonus of flat champagne. But Weaver refuses to become bitter because of Comiskey. The spirit of baseball consumes him. He remembers the elation he felt when five thousand fans greeted the team at the train station, saying that the communal joy "makes all the slights in the world seem worthwhile." He then says, "I know that may sound odd to you, for it does to most, but I do not care. Do you know, can you even guess in your dreams, how it feels to win the World Series?" (239).

During the conspiracy trial, Weaver's chief frustration is that no one takes the stand on behalf of the other "baseball." Although he, true to the cult of baseball, seats his wife in "row number three (in honor of third base)" (348), he is surrounded by legal posturing on all sides. Since he wishes someone would mention the quality of his play during the 1919 World Series, he pleads with his lawyer:

> "I thought we was going to get experts to say how great I played."
> "It's immaterial. This is a conspiracy trial."
> "How could it be? It's the most important thing." (349)

Throughout Weaver's life, playing baseball continues to be "the most important thing." At first he concludes his narrative by brushing aside the game: "As for baseball, like I told Shoeless on the telephone, it is no longer my concern." But this is the <u>institution</u> he is referring to,

not the idealized game. He ends his narrative with an allusion to the fact that he has become a girls' softball coach. Clearly, Weaver still hopes he will play again in the major leagues, still clings to the pastoral vision, still believes in baseball's promise of eternal youth:[10]

> Indeed, you would probably be stunned if you could get a peek at me, that is, the sort of shape I am still in. Here I am fifty-four years old, and people think I am no more than thirty-eight. It is not just my baby face, neither, which I have always had. See, I still have amazing skills. I can still keep my legs stiff as a stake and touch the floor with my mitts fifty times. And I can still do seventy-five pushups. I do so every night, before I hit the slats. And, when I want to, I can still pick up a ground ball as slick and easy as any man in the big show.
>
> Maybe you think I am bluffing about this, but I am not. Come over to the softball diamonds at Grant Park any Saturday afternoon. That is when I am there with my girls. Any old time you want, I will show you. (355)

In Hoopla!--indeed, throughout much baseball literature--"baseball" is one word, but it refers to two vastly different entities. One is the baseball of history, the baseball that betrays Weaver and others. With this baseball in mind Weaver becomes nonchalant when he considers purposely losing games for money. After all, it is only a business. This is also the baseball that concerns Pond. However, "baseball" refers also to the baseball of the imagination. This is the "odd thing" that Weaver refers to (269), the game he cannot betray, the baseball he adores.

Only occasionally does "baseball" refer to both entities

at once. Weaver briefly witnesses the coalescence in 1917. But these rare alignments can cause confusion. Weaver consistently confuses the two "baseballs," thinking that because there is one word it must refer to one thing. His failure to distinguish between the two meanings of the one word causes him to annually grovel, begging Landis for reinstatement in the baseball of history. To be sure, the power structure of professional baseball depends on the confusion. The language of baseball pastoralism is good for business.

Shoeless Joe Jackson, the most famous of the banned White Sox, also fails, in Hoopla!, to discriminate between the two meanings of "baseball." After Landis's death he speaks to Weaver on the telephone, trying to convince his former teammate to join him in petitioning the new commissioner to clear their names. Jackson, with the third-highest career-batting average in history (.356), has good reason to want an official reconsideration of his status. As he says to Weaver, "'Buck, . . . I wanna get in the Hall of Fame'" (47).

At least since Jackson's death in 1951, there have been petition-drives to have him considered for admission into the Hall of Fame, major-league baseball's shrine to the game's greatest players. The debate continues. Bill James, for example, is firmly against such a move:

> [W]hen every coach, writer, umpire and organist who has helped to make baseball the wonderful game that it is rather than trying to destroy it with the poison of deceit, when each has been given his due, then I think we should hold our noses and make room for Joe Jackson to join the Hall of Fame. (376)

Stephen Jay Gould expresses the opposite view: "Joseph Jefferson Jackson is the first man out whom I would put in the Hall of Fame. His sin is so old, the beauty of his play so enduring" (xvii).

W.P. Kinsella's Shoeless Joe side-steps this debate by presenting a fictional world in which Jackson and the other banned White Sox players come back to life to play again. They reappear, young again, running, throwing, and hitting on the baseball diamond hewn out of an Iowa cornfield by narrator Ray Kinsella.

Shoeless Joe, like much of Kinsella's fiction, is often whimsical in nature. (William Plummer calls it "wonderfully hokey.") Underlying the whimsy, however, is the desire to make visible the second "baseball," the baseball of the imagination that Hoopla!'s Buck Weaver confuses with the institutionalized version. Whereas Hoopla! primarily exposes the institution, showing how it uses and threatens the pastoral wish, Shoeless Joe glories in the baseball of imagination, making it visible, at least for those with eyes to see. The novel presents baseball as a religion, as a ritual of faith that eases pain, being "stable and permanent,

steady as a grandfather dozing in a wicker chair on a verandah" (72). The narrator pays homage to "the great god Baseball"; his birthstone is (what else?) a diamond; his father recited baseball statistics to his mother's belly while waiting for him to be born (6).

The narrator has visions and hears voices, one of which instructs him to build a baseball field so that disappointed devotees of baseball can find fulfillment. "'If you build it, he will come,'" the narrator hears. "He" is Shoeless Joe Jackson, but other outcasts from institutionalized baseball eventually appear: the rest of the eight banned players; J.D. Salinger, evidently a disappointed follower of the faith, particularly since "'They tore down the Polo Grounds in 1964'" (31); Moonlight Graham, whose entire major-league career consisted of standing in right field for half an inning in 1905; Eddie Scissons, a ninety-one-year-old, life-long Chicago Cubs' fan who tells everyone that he once played for the team (since that is what he wishes he had done); and Ray Kinsella's father, from whom the narrator inherited his faith.

The novel implicitly acknowledges that there are two "baseballs" and that one is often the enemy of the other. The narrator recalls what his father taught him about Jackson: that he was "innocent, a victim of big business and crooked gamblers" (6). Kinsella continues, "Shoeless Joe

became the symbol of the tyranny of the powerful over the powerless. The name Kennesaw Mountain Landis became synonymous with the Devil" (7). The narrator, like his father, clearly sympathizes with Jackson, seeing him as the victim of the callous baseball establishment:

> I remember the story of how Shoeless Joe, after he had been paid off, tried to return the money and, failing that, tried to take it to White Sox owner Charles Comiskey. He got only as far as an accountant, who slammed down a shutter, ending the conversation and leaving Joe alone in a darkened hallway. I think about how the sound of that slamming shutter must have haunted Joe for the rest of his life. (154)

Shoeless Joe, to be sure, is soft on history and sometimes sentimental about the White Sox. It is hard to imagine any player on the White Sox referring fondly to first baseman Arnold "Chick" Gandil as "old Chick," which Jackson does here (22).[12] This is not a historical novel, however, but rather a fanciful enactment of redemption for those left behind by the institutionalized game. The narrator acknowledges that the world is often ugly and that an individual's dreams often end in "snarls, frustrations, and disillusionment" (184). The narrator is not so naive that he thinks he can shape reality to fit his dream. His magical baseball diamond is not of the world, nor does Kinsella have illusions that he can transform the baseball establishment or permanently rewrite history.[13]

As in Hoopla!, various societal forces and institutions

are shown to be unfeeling systems of power, serious threats to the individual visionary. Ray Kinsella owns a small family farm threatened by real-estate and banking interests represented by his brother-in-law and the accountant Bluestein. They want Kinsella's land, since it is the missing piece in their "sinister master plan" (164) to turn a large area of Iowa into a "Computer Farm." Kinsella, with more Jeffersonian notions of farming, imagines that a computer will run the farm "from one concrete bunker the size of an electrical-transformer station" (163). With the push of a button "battalions of combines can be unleashed to gobble up the crops and spew them into trucks to be wheeled to market--all neat and clean and sterile" (163). Kinsella, having different values, has a sacramental view of the land:

> "But you owe the land something . . . . It's not just a product. Not plastic and foam and bright paint imported from Taiwan or Korea, meant to be used once and discarded . . . .
> "You have to be touched by the land . . . . Once you've been touched by the land, the wind never blows so cold again, because your love files the edges of it. And when the land suffers from flood or drought or endless winter, you feel for <u>it</u> more than for yourself, and you do what you can to ease its pain." (163)

Besides having an aversion to the banking establishment, ambitious realtors, and corporate farmers, the narrator is repulsed by religious authority. His mother-in-law imagines herself to be one such authority, disapproving of him, "sneering a little in her perfection" (23), reading her

Bible, soaking in gossip. One of her favorite words, the narrator says, is "catheter" (164). All of these authorities for which Kinsella has contempt try to control the life of the individual. More to the point, they are the enemies of the pastoral vision.

The officially recognized game of baseball is also incompatible with pastoral values, even those values expressed by baseball itself. As Kinsella travels East to find J.D. Salinger, he visits the major-league ballparks on his route. He attends a game in Comiskey Park (or White Sox Stadium), thinking nostalgically of Jackson, but finds the atmosphere unfriendly, the ballpark "bleak and raw" (40). He also visits Cleveland, which is no improvement. The fans, he notices, carry radios, "as if hoping the crowd noise will somehow be amplified and the game will be more interesting secondhand than in person" (41). At Yankee Stadium he manages to get a good seat; but he is disturbed by the man next to him, who paid a scalper thirty dollars per ticket for him and his family but, caring little for the game, "spends the game trekking back and forth to the concessions" (45). Kinsella moves on to Boston's Fenway Park, but his memories of his first visit there are of the winos who accost him outside the stadium (46).

Kinsella's home ballpark, the one he fashions out of a cornfield, is far preferable. Even as he sits in Comiskey

Park, he imagines his field. And he thinks of the baseball he carries in his suitcase. It was hit by Jackson, and the narrator is planning to present it to Salinger as a gift. It is significant, however, that the ball was not struck in a major-league park but in a field of dreams in an Iowa cornfield. As he sits before a game in Chicago, Kinsella thinks of that ball:

> [T]he ball was hit over the left-field fence of my stadium, clubbed by Shoeless Joe Jackson off a ghostly relief pitcher during an extra-inning game, a blue darter of a line drive that thudded into the stands . . . . (41)

The contrast is clear: the actual major-league park in which Jackson played has no room for him, memories of him, or relics of his career. The sacredness and beauty of his playing must be celebrated elsewhere, in the realm of an alternative "baseball," made visible through Ray Kinsella's imagination. Only this field has a place for outcasts from the crass, official world of organized baseball. Only this field produces sacred objects such as that ball.

On Kinsella's magical field an individual can realize his "baseball wish" (127). Moonlight Graham describes himself as being in 1905 "'a minor leaguer in a major-league park--. . . one step too slow on the bases and a split second too slow with the bat'" (124). In his comically brief career with the Giants, Graham never came to bat. His baseball wish, he says, is "'to hold a bat in a major-league game . .

. . to stare down a pitcher'" (128). On this field he plays right field and bats .300 for the resurrected 1919 White Sox. As Jackson says, "'this is the kind of place where anything can happen . . . '" (128). Baseball wishes come true for others in the novel--Scissons, Kinsella's father, and the eight banned White Sox players. Jackson says, "'Some of us waited a long time for this chance'" (188).

Only those who "'stretch the skin back from [their] eyes'" (70) can witness these revisions of history, however. Those with eyes for only the visible world, the official world of banks, computer farms, churches, and even major-league baseball see nothing. The accountant Bluestein is one such person, and he rages against the visionaries: "'You're all crazy. You build baseball fields in the middle of nowhere. You...you dress funny...and you sit around with your weird friends and stare at...nothing'" (206). Bluestein, of course, can see only the first "baseball," the tangible business, the game as operated by Comiskey and others.

Because the world operates according to the standards of the visible "baseball" rather than the values of the invisible "baseball," "dreams rarely work out as happy as planned"--as Weaver puts it in Hoopla! (52). Yet in another world, the realm of imagination, the machinations of Comiskey, Rothstein, or Bluestein have no force, the rulings

of Kennesaw Mountain Landis have no authority. And the players themselves are without greed, corruption, or jealousy: "It is as if in another, fairer climate the Black Sox Scandal never happened, and the Unlucky Eight play on, several of them earning baseball immortality" (Shoeless Joe 26).

Notes

[1] Occasionally some hard fact pokes through the soft cover of image, of course. Recently, the issue of recreational drug use among players has caused much hypocritical consternation among baseball executives, sports journalists, and fans. John Timberman Newcomb's "Say It Ain't Snow, Joe" is an excellent analysis of this issue. Newcomb shows that the furor is a result of an unrealistic, sentimental expectation, particularly on the part of fans. With his title he also implies that the disillusionment of some fans today is comparable to that suffered by many after the Black Sox scandal. (I quote Newcomb in Chapter 3.)

[2] Stein has a complete list in his "Acknowledgments."

[3] The Baseball Encyclopedia reveals that Weaver had a .324 batting average in the 1919 World Series. He hit four doubles and one triple. His eleven hits were second to Jackson's twelve for the most by a player on either team. He also played errorlessly in the field.

[4] Amanda Cobb killed W. H. Cobb with a double-barreled shotgun when their son was nineteen, about three weeks before he first played for the Detroit Tigers. Cobb's mother was acquitted on the charge of voluntary manslaughter, the

defense arguing that she mistook her husband for a burglar. In his authoritative biography of Cobb, Charles C. Alexander suggests that the prosecution did not press its case as vigorously as it might have: there was tension in the marriage, as the young and attractive Amanda was involved with another man. Also, W. H. Cobb was carrying a revolver in his pocket as he entered the bedroom window (20-21; 40-41). Hoopla! intimates that Amanda Cobb knew whom she was shooting and subsequently used her influence to gain an acquittal (149-153).

[5] Not all baseball historians agree that Cobb was involved in fixing games and was exonerated because of his stature. Bill James, for example, summarizes the matter as follows: "There has always been speculation that the Cobb/Speaker matter was settled with a secret agreement, that Cobb and Speaker could stay in the game, but that neither would manage again. The record as it appears at the time is simpler, makes more sense, and is much more fair to all involved: They were acquitted" (138). James is also among the many admirers of Landis, expressing gratitude that the commissioner "saved" baseball. Referring to the "Cobb/Speaker matter," James says, "In straightening out the scandals of the time, Landis 'looked past' the shady dealings of absolutely nobody" (139). However, on one individual James does agree with Asinof, John Sayles, the fictional Buck

Weaver, and others: "[T]he arch-villain of this villainous era was Charles Albert Comiskey" (111).

Charles C. Alexander, Cobb's biographer, concludes that Cobb and Speaker did not fix games as they were accused of doing, that "Dutch" Leonard was attempting to take revenge on the pair because he considered both responsible for his failure to continue pitching in the major leagues (186-187).

[6] Asinof summarizes the salaries of White Sox players in 1919, concluding, "No players of comparable talent on other teams were paid as little . . . . Many second-rate ballplayers on second-division ball clubs made more than the White Sox. It had been that way for years" (20-21). Asinof also says that Comiskey's three-dollar-a-day meal allowance for players while on the road was the lowest in the major leagues at the time and was considered a joke among other clubs (21).

[7] The Major League Players Association was formed in 1966.

[8] Asinof indicates that Fullerton was eager for the truth to come out regarding the 1919 World Series. He was repeatedly vilified for his efforts, particularly in the Baseball Magazine:

> The concept that baseball could be corrupt was absolutely alien to the magazine . . . . Fullerton, therefore, became the enemy. Throughout the winter of 1919-1920, as the rumors persisted, this widely read magazine poured constant abuse on Fullerton's reputation, charged him with devious,

dishonest motives, impugned his patriotism, distorted his emphasis, and ridiculed [him]. (135)

[9] It is probably conventional to consider the 1910s and, more so, the 1920s as particularly unscrupulous eras, controlled by professional dissemblers. However, numerous examples suggest that the relationship of power and image is permanently fixed in American life. After the September 25, 1988, Bush/Dukakis "debate," CBS correspondent Leslie Stahl, observing the partisan propagandists at work trying to shape public opinion concerning which candidate "won," judiciously remarked, "The spin doctors are now an institution."

[10] In John Sayles' film version (1988) of Asinof's Eight Men Out, Weaver (John Cusack) is clearly the spokesman for the pastoral vision. At one point he longingly remembers those moments when the bat squarely connects with a pitched ball, saying, "Damn, if you don't feel like you're gonna live forever."

[11] James is at least consistent in his judgment of those responsible for the 1919 scandal. He also argues that Comiskey should be "kicked out" of the Hall of Fame (112). (The former player, manager, and owner entered the Hall of Fame in 1939.)

[12] Gandil was the players' liaison with the gamblers. Evidently, he collected $80,000 from them but distributed only $45,000 to his teammates, keeping $35,000 for himself.

(Weaver received nothing, Jackson $5,000.) Gandil, caring little for the beauty of baseball, left the major leagues immediately after the 1919 Series--before the scandal broke. Asinof says of him,

> [H]e had learned how it all worked. There were essentially two kinds of people: those who worked for money, and those who simply took it. There was something about the system that allowed smarter men to make a real bundle by being in the know, by bribery, by special favor. That was all right with Gandil. It was merely a problem of finding a way to be one of them. (125)

13 As Neil Randall points out, the novel shows that attempts on the part of the novel's characters to pass from "the Secondary World" (that of fantasy) into "the Primary World" result in a breaking of the spell. Those who try to cross from one world to the other destroy the magic (Randall 179).

V

Finding Something Hard and White and Alive in the Sun: The Self-Apparent Baseball Fiction of Roth, Coover, and Klinkowitz

Numerous works of baseball fiction, as noted in previous chapters, attenuate or altogether reject the pastoral vision as it pertains to playing baseball or living life. Often these same works, however, suggest that literature itself provides a means for both writer and reader to celebrate pastoral values--spatial order, timelessness, clarity, and articulation--without sentimentally insisting that organized baseball remains untainted or that it is possible to live one's life according to the pastoral values expressed by the sport.

Baseball as an ideal retains its values, but when the ideal game puts on flesh it soon embodies the very corrupting influences to which it is supposedly an alternative. But in writing, it is suggested, there is a way, if not to put flesh on "baseball," then at least to put language on it, to give some substance to an invisible, sacred entity. Even within the fiction itself, players and fans share a fundamental dependence on language, needing it to verify their experiences and solidify their memories. A player or fan can remember a dramatic home run, but if he can produce the

newspaper column that records and comments upon the event, his memory is surer. Furthermore, without such verification the transcendent home run would become swallowed by time, the great enemy of pastoralism.

To be sure, the rage for statistics among baseball aficionados is also motivated, at least in part, by this need to verify and solidify the memories of events. Through the numerical representation of an event baseball's followers attempt to defeat time, to permit past achievements to happen again in the mind. Roger Angell hails the box score, the foundation of baseball record-keeping, as an artistic representation of the game:

> To the baseball-bitten, [the box score] is not only informative, pictorial, and gossipy but lovely in aesthetic structure. It represents happenstance and physical flight exactly translated into figures and history. Its totals--batters' credit and pitchers' debit--balance as exactly as those in an accountant's ledger. And a box score is more than a capsule archive. It is a precisely etched miniature of the sport itself, for baseball, in spite of its grassy spaciousness and apparent unpredictability, is the most intensely and satisfyingly mathematical of all our outdoor sports. Every player in every game is subjected to a cold and ceaseless accounting; no ball is thrown and no base is gained without an instant responding judgment--ball or strike, hit or error, yea or nay--and an ensuing statistic. This encompassing neatness permits the baseball fan, aided by experience and memory, to extract from a box score the same joy, the same hallucinatory reality, that prickles the scalp of a musician when he glances at a page of his score of Don Giovanni and actually hears bassos and sopranos, woodwinds and violins. (Summer Game 4)

Nevertheless, cold numbers do not tell us everything about an event. Roberto Clemente may have said, "'Look at my statisticos. They are pure number, out of time'" (Clark), but pure number tells us only that Clemente threw out a base-runner at home plate to end a game. It does not tell us how far he ran to get to the ball, how quickly he spun around to throw, how he cocked his arm, followed through on the throw, and so on. Numbers do not convey gracefulness. Of course, the numbers are indispensable. As Robert Coover's J. Henry Waugh says in The Universal Baseball Association Inc., "'without numbers or measurements, there probably wouldn't be any history'" (49). But Henry also knows that more is needed--language. Therefore, he carefully chooses names for his players:

> Henry was always careful about names, for they were what gave the league its sense of fulfillment and failure, its emotion. The dice and charts and other paraphernalia were only the mechanics of the drama, not the drama itself. Names had to be chosen, therefore, that would bear the whole weight of perpetuity. (46-47)[1]

The cult of baseball, then, requires its statisticians and its poets, its Bill James and its Roger Angell, its Book of Numbers and its Psalms. In much baseball fiction, as we have seen, language in fact replaces the actual game. Because of the human failings of its participants and the various imperfections and corruptions of the National Pastime, baseball's pastoralism is more likely to be realized

within language than within an actual stadium. Many protagonists of baseball literature, in fact, come to prefer representations of the game to the game itself. Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, for example, comes to "rely on airwaves and newsprint for . . . nourishment" (Me and DiMaggio 24), preferring the images within his mind to the game itself (23). In Donald Hays's The Dixie Association the players habitually read about themselves in the newspapers, seeming to require the printed word to put their accomplishments into the proper pastoral context (73; 369). At one point Hays's protagonist, speaking of reading in general, says, "'sometimes it beats living'" (323). In The Seventh Babe owner Hollis McKee ignores his team when he becomes the producer of Eveline, a musical about baseball players and their wives. A written (and in this case performed) adaptation of baseball becomes more important than the actual sport: "It didn't matter . . . that Hollis' team was moving towards the cellar. The critics adored Eveline. Hollis had himself a hit" (62). As for J. Henry Waugh, "real baseball bored him" (Coover 45). He invents his own league, played with dice, and then records the results in "the Book." The keeping of the Book is the job he most enjoys (55). In it he records and comments upon everything about the Universal Baseball Association--"everything from statistics to journalistic dispatches, from seasonal analyses to general

baseball theory. Everything, in short, worth keeping" (55).

Many protagonists of baseball fiction are conscious of what is written--or not written--about the game. In Hoopla! both narrators are motivated by the need to have their versions of the truth in print. In The Iowa Baseball Confederacy Gideon Clarke says of his father what is also true of himself: "He possessed a brainful of information . . . yet it was information no one else would validate" (31). So Clarke's father, driven by the need to transcend time through language, writes A Short History of the Iowa Baseball Confederacy as a graduate thesis in a history department, insisting that his account is historically accurate. The supervisor of the thesis suggests that the account would make great fiction; as a novel it would be publishable (43). This is another way of expressing the preference for literary representation over raw fact.

It seems to follow that baseball fiction, since it attempts to realize pastoral values in language--that is, in itself--would be to some degree self-aware. Sometimes this self-awareness is expressed in the form of literary allusions. Several novels allude to other fiction, seemingly in order to remind the reader that there are at least two games being played, one on a baseball diamond, the other on the fields of fiction. Donald Hays, for example, adapts the names of Faulkner's characters and places when he has his

fictional team travel to Mississippi. Hays gives us Flemson for Flem Snopes; Jason Commerce for Jason Compson; an idiot named Colonel Sanders Commerce, presumably a combination of Colonel Sartoris and Benjy Compson; Candy Commerce; a Major French from Spaniard's Bend instead of Major DeSpain from Frenchman's Bend (110). The naming of the star pitcher for the Oxford Fury is particularly audacious: he is Popeye Cobb (106). Lena Grove becomes a place in Hays, Lena's Grove (110).[2] The novel indulges in amusing parody at this point, but the parody does more than amuse. It also draws attention to literature, saying, in effect, "This is a literary game we are playing."[3]

Similarly, The Iowa Baseball Confederacy describes the founding of the league, employing an allusion that encourages the reader to substitute the craft of writing for the game of baseball. The Iowa Baseball Confederacy was founded, according to the novel, in 1902 by Frank Luther Mott and Clarke Fisher Ansley (67). In fact, Mott and Ansley were the co-founders of the famed Iowa Writers' Workshop, in 1902 (McCoy). Kinsella's other baseball novel, Shoeless Joe, frequently refers to a correspondence between baseball-playing and fiction-writing. J. D. Salinger is a character in the novel. Narrator Ray Kinsella reminds Salinger that Richard Kinsella, who in Shoeless Joe is Ray's twin brother, is the character in The Catcher in the Rye who

in class "'gave rambling speeches, and everybody yelled 'digression' at him'" (Shoeless Joe 53; Salinger 183). Furthermore, Salinger used the name Ray Kinsella in his story "A Young Girl in 1941 with No Waist At All." Ray Kinsella wonders whether the fact that Salinger used both him and his brother in fiction is "a sign, an omen, a revelation" (33). He also ponders his own fictional existence, saying, "it is J. D. Salinger who has created the fictional me" (33). Shoeless Joe, then, interweaves itself with the work of Salinger and also fiction with fact, demonstrating that "reality" has various layers, as Richard Alan Schwartz points out:

> The levels of reality . . . are several. Character Salinger seems somehow "realer" than character Salinger's character, Ray Kinsella; though W. P. Kinsella's character, Ray Kinsella, exists at the same level of reality as character Salinger. Moreover, novelist Kinsella is realer than character Salinger; novelist Salinger is realer than character Kinsella; and novelists Kinsella and Salinger share the same level of reality--or they would if novelist Salinger were not such a mysterious recluse. (144)

Most immediately, however, the interweaving draws attention to the novel itself. The novel is self-aware.

Shoeless Joe, aided by the fictional Salinger's presence, refers in various ways to similarities between baseball-playing and fiction-writing. Ray Kinsella refers, for example, to what he sees as the goal of each, telling Salinger, "'I've thought about you and baseball. . . . What

does he have in common with a baseball player? I ask myself. He dispenses joy, I answer'" (72). Kinsella also refers to both pursuits as rituals (72). Salinger, protesting at one point that he never writes autobiography, that he "'creates everything out of [his] imagination,'" reminds Kinsella that he has done the same with his baseball field: "'You should know about imagination. . . . You imagine you own a baseball field where strange and wonderful things happen'" (75). Salinger later comments on the unlikely events he witnesses on this field (and, we could say, on his presence in such an unlikely novel), "'And I thought I had a good imagination. . . . I could never dream up a plot as bizarre as this'" (168).

Other baseball literature presents similar parallels between baseball and literature. I have previously noted the dual subjects of Christopher Lehmann-Haupt's narrative. The narrator is both a hero-worshipper who meets his heroes and a book-reviewer who becomes an author. In Charyn's The Seventh Babe the main character's penchant for role-playing becomes a device of the novel itself. Much baseball fiction, in fact, tends to be self-aware, or, to use Jerome Klinkowitz's term, self-apparent. In such fiction there is a gap between that which is being described (a baseball league, for example) and the manner of describing it. As a result, Klinkowitz says, "the reader pays more attention to the writer's daring act

than to the qualified object" (The Self-Apparent Word 64).

Various works of baseball fiction, even those that reject the possibilities of fully realizing pastoral values outside the pages of literature, do invite the reader to retreat within the covers of a novel. The fiction of W. P. Kinsella, for example, is certainly responsible in that it sees pastoral goals as ultimately unattainable. We cannot escape time. And the world being what it is, Shoeless Joe Jackson may never be exonerated. But Kinsella toys with the possibilities; drawing on baseball's form and traditions, he plays the game of fiction with enthusiasm, suggesting that language provides a freedom found nowhere else, that in fiction all things are possible. Indeed, such works dispense joy. This looking to art rather than to experience for the expression of pastoral values constitutes what Leo Marx calls complex and imaginative pastoralism rather than that which is popular and sentimental (5).

However, baseball fiction that is even more self-aware than the still relatively traditional works of, say, Malamud, Greenberg, or Kinsella raises an important question: Is it possible for literature to embody those values of order, timelessness, and clarity that are suggested by baseball's structure and mythology? Or, to put it another way, if we cannot have a Great American Pastime, can we instead produce the Great American Novel? Philip Roth's The Great American

Novel answers, "No, but the attempt is a lot of fun." Robert Coover's The Universal Baseball Association, Inc. seems to join Roth's novel in replying, "No, but we have no choice but to make the attempt."

Roth is not usually considered a writer of self-apparent fiction. Indeed, Klinkowitz cites him as a novelist unaffected by the discoveries of modern physics and their consequent implications for philosophy. Referring to Goodbye, Columbus as an example of the persistence of traditional approaches in contemporary fiction, Klinkowitz says,

> The fact that its depiction of the social world would be discernible to readers of Charles Dickens' day yet also remains pertinent and entertaining to contemporary audiences suggests that, as far as any common man or woman cares, the great revolutions of physics and philosophy need not have taken place. (The Self-Apparent Word 19)

The Great American Novel, however, Roth's baseball novel, is more experimental than Goodbye, Columbus. Drawing on the forms and traditions of baseball, it comments on the uses and abuses of language, including fictional language. Roth himself, in his essay "My Baseball Years," speaks of a correspondence between baseball and literature. Though baseball was the love of his childhood and literature has become that of his adulthood, they have, he says, " a comparable emotional atmosphere and aesthetic appeal" (Reading Myself 182). He continues,

> [B]aseball--with its love and legends, its cultural power, its seasonal associations, its native authenticity, its simple rules and transparent strategies, its longueurs and thrills, its spaciousness, its suspensefulness, its heroics, its nuances, its lingo, its "characters," its peculiarly hypnotic tedium, its mythic transformation of the immediate--was the literature of my boyhood.
>
> Baseball, as played in the big leagues, was something completely outside my own life that could nonetheless move me to ecstasy and to tears; like fiction it could excite the imagination and hold the attention as much with minutiae as with high drama. (182-183)

To be sure, The Great American Novel can be read in a conventional manner. As a "history" of a forgotten baseball league, the Patriot League, and one of its particularly inept teams, the Ruppert Mundys, it manages to satirize probably every major American institution. In fact, Harry Stein's Hoopla!, published ten years after Roth's novel, can be seen as a more modest and controlled version of The Great American Novel. Both works satirize institutions of power for the way they pervert language. Hermione Lee summarizes this dimension of Roth's novel:

> The Great American Novel is . . . concerned with the corrupting power of rhetoric and the loss of national innocence. The mythic words on which Roth's generation was brought up--winning, patriotism, gamesmanship--are desanctified; greed, fear, racism and political ambition are disclosed as the motive forces behind the "all-American ideals," his story is rewritten by the authorities, as in 1984, and the victims of these conspiracies find themselves (like the American novelist) to be exiles in their own land. . . . (58)

Those in power, according to Roth's narrator, obliterate all records of the Patriot League. And the Ruppert Mundys, in particular, are "willfully erased from the national memory" (17) because, Word Smith says, the powerful care nothing for "truth":

> "[T]he truth to them has no meaning! The real human past has no importance! They distort and falsify to suit themselves! They feed the American public fairy tales and lies! Out of arrogance! Out of shame! Out of their terrible guilty conscience!" (20)

The "truth" about the Ruppert Mundys is that they are "THE OFFICIAL SCAPEGOATS OF THE U.S.A" (362). Word Smith writes his novel to set the record straight, saying in his "Epilogue" (in a letter to Mao Tse-tung!), "I have written a historical novel that does not accord with the American history with which they brainwash our little children in the schools" (399).

The theme of the outcast player, team, or league that has become an embarrassment to the officially sanctioned game of baseball is, of course, common in baseball fiction: Roy Hobbs's records are destroyed; Babe Ragland is banned and must play with the Cincinnati Colored Giants; the records of the Iowa Baseball Confederacy are swept out of existence; Joe Jackson, Buck Weaver, and others become untouchables. Roth's novel seems to be part of a tradition in baseball fiction. Rather than simplistically celebrating the pastoral sport,

The Great American Novel seems to, as Ben Siegel says,

> [expose] the disparity in American life between appearance and reality, between professed idealism or good will and an underlying self-seeking grossness or vulgarity. In short, Roth's fiction derives from the hypocrisy embodied in this society's maskings of its true behavior and urges by its moral, high-minded pretensions. (175-176)

The Great American Novel, however, cannot be so neatly categorized. For one thing, Roth himself has said that his novel is not satiric but thoroughly comic, or "satyric":

> [T]he book [does not] try to justify whatever is reckless about it by claiming some redeeming social or political value. It follows its own comic logic--if one can speak of the "logic" of farce, burlesque, and slapstick--rather than the logic of a political satire or a personal monologue. (Reading Myself 76)

Siegel, however, rightly suspicious of any author's pronouncements about his own work, prefers to disregard what Roth says here (Siegel 187-188). Roth, in fact, does seem to contradict himself in "On The Great American Novel," noting at one point that the novel does fit thematically with other of his works: "[I]t seems to me now that the question of who or what shall have influence and jurisdiction over one's life has been a concern in much of my work" (Reading Myself 84).

Aside from Roth's own comments on The Great American Novel, the novel's narrative voice is unsettling, accounting for several reviewers' misgivings. If the Prologue and Epilogue were missing and we were thus spared narrator Word

Smith's obtrusiveness, it would be easier to read the work as pure political satire. We would know less about the paranoid crackpot "Smitty" and would be more accepting of the novel's political and moral stance. And perhaps a reviewer such as John Leonard, who appreciates Roth's accomplishment, would be less critical of the work's diffuseness and digressions. Roth, Leonard says, overloads his novel, especially when he employs "the energy of paranoia" to explode not only national myths but also conspiracy theories that themselves unmask those who perpetuate these myths. Leonard wishes the novel were less ambiguous: "If Roth had left well enough alone--let the season of the Ruppert Mundys stand for the season of America--his novel would have had the precision his critics are always saying he lacks" (115).

Frederick Karl also seems to appreciate The Great American Novel as a "fine fictional experience" (68), especially in its use of baseball: "The game is contaminated. The game is, also, a shadow game, a mirror of the culture at large, baseball as America" (67). But Karl is dismayed by Word Smith, whose "presentation is mind boggling in the early pages--a barrage of words like a Shakespearean prologue in a foreign language" (68). Karl continues, "Smith's story can knock you out with his prologue, his display of verbal ingenuity that almost deadens all" (68).

Roth himself has addressed this problem that his

narrator poses. He says he does not want his novel to proclaim "'This is what America is really like' but, rather, 'This is what a farce written in America is really like'" (Reading Myself 90). By using Word Smith's voice, Roth says, he wants "to call into question the novel's 'truthfulness'--to mock any claim the book might appear to make to be delivering up the answer--though in no way is this meant to discredit the book itself" (Reading Myself 91).

The book itself and more generally language in its many uses are what we must ultimately see as the subjects of The Great American Novel. The book's title and Word Smith's disturbing Prologue, with its opening parody of Melville, immediately thrust us into an awareness of language and literature. "Smitty" begins, "Call me Smitty. That is what everybody else called me--the ballplayers, the bankers, the bareback riders, the baritones . . . "; and he continues the alliterative farce for a relatively long paragraph, concluding, "And that's only the letter B, fans, only one of the Big Twenty-Six! (1). The "fans," not only of baseball but also of language and literature, are then treated to many more lists, featuring others of the Big Twenty-Six. Finally, Smitty, after much more farce and parody, concludes his Prologue and begins his novel, narrated in a voice less self-conscious, less intrusive, less apt to distract the reader from the subject at hand--the forgotten Patriot League

and the scapegoat Ruppert Mundys.

Or so it seems. Even if a reader were to skip the Prologue he would be forced to see this as an oddly self-conscious novel. Smitty even makes an appearance within his own work. In the last chapter (before the Epilogue) he appears before the House Un-American Activities Committee and immediately launches a barrage of alliteration. He is held in contempt of the hearings. Committee Chairman Dies tells him, "You won't have to get to the end of the alphabet to go to jail, you know" (391).

However, the emphasis on language is evident even when Smitty is an ostensibly dignified, distant, anonymous narrator. The mayor of Port Ruppert bears the name Boss Stuvwxyz (50), which draws attention to Smitty's beloved alphabet in the same way that Kakoola'a mayor's name does: Boss Efghi (140). And there are relentless and dismal puns on Billy Graham's name. Ulysses S. Fairsmith, the weary manager of the Ruppert Mundys, tries to break the team's losing ways by resorting to prayer. He prays "in Tri-City with the Reverend Billy Tollhouse, in Aceldama with the Reverend Billy Biscuit, in Independence with the Reverend Billy Popover, in Terra Incognita with the Reverend Billy Scone, in Asylum with the Reverend Billy Zwieback, in Kakoola with the Reverend Billy Bun" (324). And the reader is treated to ample portions of alliteration. When the Mundys

play in Aceldama, for example, the local newspaper always features just one of the Big Twenty-Six in its headlines. The narrator provides more than twenty examples, including "MUNDYS MAULED; MUNDYS MALLETTED; MUNDYS MUZZLED" (166-167). Other adolescent plays on language include the use of an acronym for Moscow's "International Lenin School of Subversion, Hatred, Infiltration, and Terror," which, one character deadpans, is "'known popularly as SHIT'" (343).

Smitty's novel is also rife with literary allusions, many of which lack subtlety. Gil Gamesh, the banned player with the name that is both allusive and alliterative,[4] wanders the United States, coincidentally finding himself in places from the works of Cather, Lewis, Hemingway, Faulkner, Dreiser, Thoreau: "Black Hawk, Nebraska; Zenith, Minnesota; up in Michigan; Jefferson, Mississippi; Lycurgus, New York; Walden, Massachusetts" (358). When Fairsmith attempts to transplant baseball to Africa, villagers who watch their compatriots enacting a strange mixture of American baseball and native rituals chant titles from Melville: "'Omoo! Omoo! Omoo!'" and "'Typee! Typee! Typee!'" (315-317).

The novel does not allude only to American writers and their works. Dostoyevsky's Smerdyakov (The Brothers Karamazov) is a tank officer in the Red Army (348), and Raskolnikov (Crime and Punishment) is a Colonel in the Russian Secret Police (349). The scene describing

Fairsmith's "missionary" activities in Africa parodies Conrad's Heart of Darkness. Fairsmith, like Kurtz, is an emissary of a "civilized" culture and autocratically transports that culture to Africa. Fairsmith's African pupils initially play within the rules of American baseball but according to their own style. Specifically, they insist on sliding into every base, whether a slide is necessary or not. Fairsmith, the uncomprehending intruder whose sense of baseball decorum is offended, decrees that such slides are illegal. There are unwritten laws, customs, that must be observed. Since the players insist on playing African rather than American baseball, Fairsmith dictatorially makes an unwritten "rule" a written one. The natives, however, rebel. They respond by playing some real African baseball, using the balls to prepare a kind of sacred horsehide soup and the bats to deflower virgins ceremonially. The sacred rite culiminates in the natives' feasting on boiled baseball mitts. Meanwhile Fairsmith hangs from a post in the third-base coaching box; before collapsing he cries, "'The horror! The horror!'" (320). In the morning a village boy sees the collapsed Fairsmith and assumes that he is dead, reporting, "'Mistah Baseball--he dead'" (321). Fairsmith does in fact survive; he drops dead in 1943 after a player is thrown out trying to stretch a double into a triple with his team behind by thirty-one runs in the ninth inning (330).

The allusion to Conrad should help the novel in its indictment of American arrogance and imperialism. But when satire becomes farce, it loses its force. This is what happens throughout The Great American Novel. Satire is continually undercut by the novel's self-consciousness, and such is the case even when we try to ignore Smitty's intrusive frame. The novel is ostensibly corrective. An entire baseball league was obliterated from the national memory. The novel exists to set the record straight, to restore that memory, to once again make the Patriot League and its Ruppert Mundys part of the nation's mythology. But everything, including baseball, is reduced "to the level of farce in an attempt to laugh its meanings out of existence" (Blues 74-75). The novel is not what Smitty says it is--a definitive treatment of the theme of the American outcast and thus a candidate, with The Scarlet Letter, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, and Moby Dick, for the designation "The Great American Novel." The Great American Novel is about itself and, therefore, more generally about the impossibility of imagining in fiction what cannot be realized in fact. Complex pastoralism, then, would appear to be unrealized here. Not even literature, it seems, is capable of conveying meaning and value.

What we are left with is an elaborate literary game. Smitty's Epilogue goes so far as to include letters of

rejection from publishers. One of them denounces the work as "sick"; another refers to its "facile satiric comment [that simplifies] the complex realities of American political and cultural life" (396) Roth's own comments do not clarify as much as they further the confusion. Speaking of both novels, Smitty's and his, he says, "Smitty's book, like those of his illustrious forebears [Melville, Hawthorne, Twain], attempts to imagine a myth about an ailing America; my own is to some extent an attempt to imagine a book about imagining that American myth" (Reading Myself 92). Roth, in his comments about The Great American Novel, sends the novel's game into extra innings. His essay "On The Great American Novel" is, in fact, an "interview" that Roth conducts with himself. And his explanation for why he wrote about baseball--"'Because whaling has been used'" (Siegel 175)--is characteristically coy and self-effacing.

Various critics and reviewers have noted that Roth's novel satirizes the typically American tendency to identify something called the Great American Novel. Siegel says that Roth "takes . . . aim at the American habit of ranking and labeling artists as we do athletes . . ." (174). William Gass similarly notes that the novel insists that American fiction "should not be written and regarded as if it were a prize fight or a fish, a match of machismos like Neapolitans on motor bikes" ("The Sporting News" 8).[5] We can reasonably

wonder, however, why, if we cannot have the Great American Novel, we have The Great American Novel. Merely to point out that all American myths--including those concerning the national pastime and the nation's literature--are empty? On the contrary, The Great American Novel paradoxically affirms certain myths at the same time that it rejects them.

Roth's parodies cut both ways. Schwartz notes that parody is a "double-edged sword." Including Roth among them, Schwartz speaks of postmodernists who are fond of parody for its inherently paradoxical nature: "[T]hese authors offer hope but raise doubts; they expose the emptiness of certain of their societies' values but undercut their own exposes; and they establish order only to rob us of certainty" (139). Roth, indeed, draws heavily on baseball lore and language in his parody. His Hothead Ptah is a one-legged catcher, reminding us that Monty Stratton attempted a comeback after losing a leg. His Bud Parusha, a one-armed outfielder, reminds us of Pete Grey; Bob Yamm recalls Eddie Gaedel. No matter how much the novel exaggerates or ridicules, it cannot help celebrating these stories, which are obviously rich enough to be parodied. Also, the novel celebrates language and literature, particularly for their comic possibilities.

Furthermore, Thomas Blues, in his discussion of the novel, points out that debunking or demythologizing results in a falling back on the very myths that have been exposed.

He quotes Ernest Becker's The Denial of Death, noting that only the insane (Smitty?) can tolerate "reality." The rest of us rely on "'the power of an all-absorbing activity, a passion, a dedication to a game, a way of life, that like a comfortable web keeps a person buoyed up and ignorant of himself'" (Blues 79). So, Blues says, "whenever 'demonic reality' destroys a myth, the destruction goes unnoticed, and life goes on as if nothing had changed" (76). Human beings get their meaning where they can find it, whether in the game of baseball or in the game of literature.

The Great American Novel makes unusual demands on its readers. In order to derive "truth" from the novel, a reader must willfully ignore other "facts" that intrude upon that "truth." For example, the hearings of the House Un-American Activities Committee, which result in the exposure of numerous "Communists" in the Patriot League, are impossible to sort out. Is Gil Gamesh an agent of Moscow? Or does he manage the Mundys as a double-agent? Or is he a triple-agent? That is, does he manage the team posing as a former defector to Moscow who has since repented, when in fact he still works for Moscow? He proclaims that he was sent from Moscow to destroy the Patriot League (342). He testifies as one who has no intention of fulfilling this mission; yet his testimony results in the league's destruction. The "facts" are not clear. And Smitty's

appearance before HUAC, in which he "expresses his opinion in no uncertain terms" (337), merely creates more uncertainty. He proclaims, "'this Committee and its investigation is a farce'" (390), and the reader is surely inclined to agree with him. But Smitty's testimony before the Committee is also a farce. So the reader makes a judgment against one voice in the novel--the Committee's--by siding with a "paranoid fantasist" (Roth, Reading Myself 90).

As if the reader's footing were not unsure enough, Roth himself steps forth to call the entire novel a farce, then adding what is presumably meant as a reassuring qualification: "though in no way is this meant to discredit the book itself" (Reading Myself 91). At some point the reader who sits in judgment of these proceedings must pound his gavel and decide--in defiance of the words of an author, of those of a narrator and various characters, of uncertainties and ambiguities in language itself--"I believe this." The alternative is to live without meaning.

As he is being carried off to jail for contempt, Smitty says, "'Truth is stranger than fiction, but stranger still are lies'" (392). The Great American Novel seems to suggest that lies are all we have and that they are very strange indeed. Some lies are stranger than others, however. We must choose among them. As Thomas Blues says, "If, in Word Smith's mind, fake mythologies will not do, Philip Roth knows

they will have to do . . . " (80).

No one better knows that fiction is a necessary means of ordering life than does J. Henry Waugh, Robert Coover's protagonist in The Universal Baseball Association, who creates his own baseball league, plays out its schedule with dice, and records the results in "the Book." Eventually, the fictional world consumes him; he prefers it to life. In particular, the novel suggests that though the individual must order experience through fictional creation, the ordering consciousness must also maintain distance from that which it creates. Life and fiction are distinct, even if it is impossible adequately to define or talk about "life" without resorting to a fictional construction. Without such distance the one who orders and explains experience in such a way is unable to revise or replace wornout fictions or myths when they no longer serve life.

By "fictions" or "myths" I mean those necessary imaginative constructions through which we make meaning out of otherwise unordered, incomprehensible experience. So in a narrow sense, The Universal Baseball Association is fiction, and it comments upon itself. It also addresses the broader question of whether we can realize pastoral values in language and literature. Are fictional constructions adequate? Do they provide the harmony, the timelessness, the significance that the pastoral dreamer longs for?

It is no doubt possible to view The Universal Baseball Association in a conventional sense, that is, as something other than self-apparent fiction. Frederick Karl, for example, says that Coover uses baseball as a metaphor, as a means of taking the reader "deeply into American dream and reality, Eden and doom, choice and destiny." Karl reads the novel as "not only a gloss on America in general but on America in the sixties in particular" (65). For Karl, Henry's ideal creation parallels various utopian experiments of the sixties. These dreams, like Henry's, eventually went awry: "Pastoral dreams cannot take hold" (66). Viewed this way, the novel is a critique of American society and of pastoral alternatives to that society.

Judith Wood Angelius presents a similarly conventional reading, but one that emphasizes not the sixties in America but Henry's character. Angelius sympathizes with the novel's protagonist: urban society is unfeeling, chaotic, violent. "Within this environment, Henry feels helpless, lonely, and insignificant" (165). Henry compensates by creating a fantasy world over which he has complete control: "No longer a lonely, insignificant, and anonymous cipher in a throwaway society, he belongs to a permanent community where the least actions are recorded in indelible ink on durable rag paper" (166). Henry is a victim, then, not only of society but also of the world he creates, since it cannot adequately meet his

needs. He becomes trapped within "a vicious and solipsistic circle" (172), imprisoned by his own creation.

Such readings, however, do not emphasize the self-aware nature of The Universal Baseball Association. Most critics of the novel have rightly noted that it is fiction on fiction, that the work draws attention to itself at the same time that it points to both the necessity and peril of living with fictions.

At one point Henry says, "'What we want in this Association is participation--not in real time--but in significant time!'" (217). The distinction helps us understand what drives Henry and all pastoral visionaries. Events occur in "real time" but are undistinguished. They merely happen. They are not enriching or rewarding. But events in "significant time" are those deemed worth something. A double off the wall that drives in the winning run means more than the foul ball the batter hit on the previous pitch. Bobby Thompson's home run in 1951 was an event in significant time. It repeats itself, in fact, whenever the videotape is run, or the announcer's call of the hit is replayed, or it is written about or read about. The event transcends real time.

Henry's work at the offices of "Dinkelmann, Zauber & Zifferblatt, Licensed Tax and General Accountants, Specializing in Small Firms, Bookkeeping Services & Systems,

Payrolls & Payroll Taxes, Monthly, Quarterly & Annual Audits" (35), provides no transcendent moments. Horace Zifferblatt, Henry's boss, is "a militant clockwatcher" (35). His name, in fact, means "clock face" in German (Andersen 59-60). The meaningless ticking of the clock governs life in the accounting offices; there is no significance to the work. Henry's Association, however, is rich with meaning, with "stories," and he longs to return to his dice and table-top after each workday:

> Once in the elevator, going down, he was able to forget about work altogether. He was headed for home, returning to his league and all its players, to the Book and tonight's big story, and there weren't any Horace Zifferblatts there. (44)

The Association reckons time differently than the outside world does. Henry's league plays out its seasons, but there is never need for an "off-season." Henry merely rolls his dice, and the new season begins. Henry, it seems, has found perpetual summer, a place where the grass is always green. He reminds himself of this fact whenever the outside world becomes oppressive. There is always the game:

> It was autumn, but Henry felt plunged into the deepest of winters. But no, it was the middle of a baseball season, remember? Green fields and hot suns and shirtsleeved fanatics out on the bleaching boards, last to give it up and go home: he turned back to the table. (129)

Henry does not find fulfillment in the mere rolling of dice, however. The mystery of his creation is what

particularly thrills him. He has tried many games--basketball, card games, war games, horseracing, football--"all on paper of course" (44). He even once created a variation on Monopoly, "Intermonop," "using twelve, sixteen, or twenty-four boards at once . . . " (44). But baseball is his game. It has the records, the statistics, and, most important to Henry, an ineffable richness: "[N]o other activity in the world had so precise and comprehensive a history, so specific an ethic, and at the same time, strange as it seemed, so much ultimate mystery" (45).

Henry wants drama, then, not pure statistics: "The dice and charts and other paraphernalia were only the mechanics of the drama, not the drama itself" (47). For this reason he is particularly careful about naming: "[Names] gave the league its sense of fulfillment and failure, its emotion" (47). As Arlen J. Hansen says,

> Although the numbers generate pattern, in themselves numbers are somehow incomplete. Names create and shape things not covered by number: the player's physical, psychological, and social character. . . . Thus, for Henry naming is a valuable, form-giving enrichment of number; the names allow him to see and appreciate what otherwise would slip by unnoticed. (55-56)

Stéphane Mallarmé has said, "to name is to create" (Gordon 41). Henry is indeed a creator; his own name, in fact, makes him such. As various commentators have noted, his initials and the last letter of his name spell out the

Tetragrammaton.[6] Henry is aware of his power. He thinks, "name a man and you make him what he is. . . . The basic stuff is already there. In the name. Or rather: in the naming" (48). In his naming Henry becomes a myth-maker. He turns "formulaic number into mythic formulae" (Cope 46).

Henry loyally records his players' statistics, but this he considers "the most wearying part of his game" (55). What he most enjoys is "writing it up in the Book" (55), wherein he supplements his statistics with language:

> Style varied from the extreme economy of factual data to the overblown idiom of the sportswriter, from the scientific objectivity of the theoretician to the literary speculations of essayists and anecdotalists. There were tape-recorded dialogues, player contributions, election coverage, obituaries, satires, prophecies, scandals. . . . His own shifting moods, often affected by events in the league, also colored the reports, oscillating between notions of grandeur and irony, exultation and despair, enthusiasm and indifference, amusement and weariness. (55-56)

In his naming of his players and in his "writing it up in the Book," Henry engages in the essential human activity of myth-making. He defines himself and his world through his creation. He really has no choice, as Coover himself notes: "I doubt we could function at all without fictionalizing in some way, without making up something about the world, falsifying it with a name, or names, that allow us to operate in it" (Bigsby 86). Our fictions or myths may be mere illusions of order, Coover says, but we have no choice but to

live by them:

> In part because individual human existence is so brief, in part because each single instant of the world is so impossibly complex, we cannot accumulate all the data needed for a complete, objective statement. To hope to behave as though this were possible is to invite paralysis through crushing despair. And so we fabricate; we invent constellations that permit an illusion of order to enable us to get from here to there. And we devise short cuts--ways of thinking without thinking through: code words that are in themselves a form of mythopoeia. (Gado 152)

There are dangers, however, as The Universal Baseball Association demonstrates. For one thing, fictional orderings of the world possess power that can cause the fiction-maker to relinquish control over his creation. The creation, then, becomes master of the creator. William Gass, commenting on Coover's Pricksongs and Descants, uses the image of a person who plays solitaire to describe this phenomenon: "There [on a table] these thin and definite narrative slices play us, though of course we say that we are playing them" (Fiction 104). Henry's Association does indeed play him. He stakes much on one of his players, one of his "names," Damon Rutherford--especially when the pitcher tosses a perfect game. Damon becomes "different" (32) for Henry. The player has, after all, achieved baseball perfection, against incredible odds, seemingly in defiance of the "mindless and unpredictable--one might even say, irresponsible dice" (40). Henry expresses his enthusiasm to Hettie Irden: "'Listen,

Hettie, think what a wonderful rare thing it is to do something, no matter how small a thing, with absolute unqualified utterly unsurpassable perfection!'" (23).

Henry in effect becomes Damon Rutherford. He goes to bed with Hettie, asking her, "'how would you like to sleep with...Damon Rutherford?'" (26). Later he says, recalling Ishmael and Smitty, "'Call me...Damon'" (29). At first Henry senses a potential danger in this attraction to his player: "One thing was troubling him, and he realized he had to face up to it: Damon Rutherford meant more to him than any player should" (38). He seems aware of a problem that Hansen describes: "Although a name can create dramatic and vivid excitement, it can prove fatal as well, for it may cause objectivity and distance to crumble" (55). But when the next significant action of the mindless dice occurs, when with the roll of three ones Jock Casey kills Damon Rutherford with a high, inside fastball, Henry is devastated. His reaction demonstrates that he is indeed deeply committed to this creation: "The Proprietor of the Universal Baseball Association, utterly brought down, brought utterly to grief, buried his face in the heap of papers on his kitchen table and cried for a long bad time" (76).

To be sure, Henry feels a deep loss, but it is not Damon he misses so much as the vitality and meaning the player has brought to his mythic world. It is, as Henry imagines

through one of his characters, "Like the soul had gone out of it or something . . ." (148). As he adopts different roles, becomes different characters in the Association, Henry's paramount concern is how to restore meaning, how to proceed:

> Henry stared woozily down upon those three ones on the kitchen table, trying to put all that scene back together again, get some order in this damn operation, men, and he was Old Fennimore McCaffree in his black suit giving orders and Barney Bancroft urging the boys how they had to win this game and all the old Elders sitting like a panel of enraged titans up on the Elders Bench and the catcher Chauncey O'Shea blubbering there behind the plate all broken up by this thing and he was the umpire Frosty Young hollering out to play ball no matter what and thinking how hard it was going to be to call them straight though he had to. . . . (124)

However, Henry still has some distance, enough to question whether his pursuit is still worthwhile. The passage continues:

> [B]ut mostly he was only J. Henry Waugh, pooped and plastered Prop., thinking that this was sure a helluva thing for a grown man to be doing at dawn on a working day, and how was he going to face up to old Zifferblatt two hours from now? (125)

Furthermore, as he later sits at his desk, Henry admits that he has been losing interest in the Association for some time, that Damon has been what has kept him from giving up the game, just as he had quit other games:

> [I]t was the kid who'd brought new interest, new value, a sense of profit, to the game. You mean, things were sort of running down before...? Yea, that was probably true: he'd already been slowly buckling under to a kind of long-run market vulnerability, the kind that had killed off complex

> games of his in the past. What had happened the last four or five league years? Not much. And then Damon had come along to light things up again. (136)

Clearly, Henry contemplates quitting the Association, dismissing it as foolishness. He wonders if the game in which Damon has been killed "might be the last game in the UBA" (125), and he knows that his creation could eventually defeat its purpose: "[H]e knew that total one-sided participation in the league would soon grow even more oppressive than his job at Dinkelmann, Zauber & Zifferblatt" (141). He considers that burning the game is one of his options (142), and he begins to think in terms of a new myth to replace this one: "[I]t might be best, after all, to close down the Association, maybe invent some new game, or in fact go join some club or other" (143). He even buys a newspaper on the way to work, unconsciously reaching for a new ordering of the world to live by: "[Henry] bought a newspaper at a stand on the corner there, obeying some old impulse which, he realized, he'd nearly forgotten, the giving of the coin, the snapping up of the paper, taking the world to heart and mind, or some world anyway" (130). On the way home from work he buys another paper, now almost aware of what he is doing. He is increasing his number of options: "What am I buying all these damn papers for? he asked himself. Different paper, different headlines, different

stories, even different horoscopes. Must be some other world" (142).

Henry reaches a crucial point in his myth-making. The mythical world he has created no longer serves his life; it has reached its culmination. The novel's attention to the number fifty-six emphasizes the point. The three dice of the game provide fifty-six possible combinations (20). Brock Rutherford, one of the league's early stars and Damon's father, is fifty-six years old on Brock Rutherford Day, the day of Damon's death (65). Henry himself is fifty-six years old, and the league is in its fifty-sixth season. The dice have no life left in them. They cannot go beyond their fifty-six possible combinations. The Association has reached its "vital moment," as Henry almost realizes even before Damon is killed. Henry, however, dismisses the thought:

> [W]hy, he wondered, at such an inherently joyful moment, was he feeling so melancholy? Was it the rain? or maybe the unspoken recognition that Damon Rutherford, wonderful as he was, would someday have to hang up his cleats like all the rest? Maybe it was only because this was Year LVI: he and the Association were the same age, though of course their "years" were reckoned differently. He saw two time lines crossing in space at a point marked "56." Was it the vital moment? Silly idea. It would probably get better next season. (49-50)

Coover says that the fictions by which we live eventually no longer serve our lives. When this happens, we must make some change: we must "break them up and perhaps change their force" (Gado 152). Henry clearly illustrates

the point. There should be no "next season" for the Universal Baseball Association. It is time to create a new fiction with which to order life. Coover further explains his point, speaking of the leaders of political systems (that is, kinds of fictional constructs):

> Whatever form they set up is necessarily entropic: eventually it runs down and is unable to propel itself past a certain point. When it does that, it becomes necessary to do everything that has been taboo: wear women's clothes, kill the sacred animal and eat it, screw your mother, etc. A big blast reduces everything to rubble; then something new is built. Primitive societies, wiser than we, actually set aside a time to do this on a cyclical basis. (Gado 157)

Because Henry is fixated on Jock Casey, however, and on the need to avenge Damon's death, he finds it impossible to quit the Association. He comes close. He hosts Lou Engle for pizza and beer, hoping that a companion will either infuse the game with new life or help him forget it completely: "He was afraid, but he was glad, too. Lou could save it. Or him from the game" (171). When Lou spills beer on the Association papers, Henry gathers up the mess and prepares to throw it all away (after expelling Lucifer the Angel from his paradise, calling him a "clumsy goddamn idiot"). But he stops himself when he "sees" Casey on the mound and imagines how fitting it would be for Royce Ingram, the next batter and Damon Rutherford's former catcher, to hit a line drive that fatally strikes the pitcher. Indeed, Henry

"fixes" the game, carefully placing three sixes on the table at the appropriate moment. The Proprietor thus violates his "deistic ethic" (Klinkowitz, Literary Disruptions 16). The intrusion is punctuated with a rainbow that ironically recalls the one given Noah as a sign of a covenant: Henry vomits "a red-and-golden rainbow arc of half-curdled pizza over his Association" (202).

It may be that Henry vows, like Yahweh before him, never to so interfere with his creation again (Hansen 55). But he is now forever bound to the Association. For this act of redemption to mean anything, it must have its effect over a world that continues to exist. Henry contemplates this fact just before he places the dice on the table: "Yes, if you killed that boy out there, then you couldn't quit, could you? No, that's a real commitment, you'd be hung up for good, they wouldn't let you go" (201).

Broadly speaking, then, The Universal Baseball Association comments on the need for sustaining mythologies and the corollary need for the periodic replacement of these mythologies. The act of writing is one important way that these mythologies come into being, and the novel addresses itself to fiction-making in this stricter sense. Coover, in fact, has said that the novel is about writing and for writers. If the fiction-maker's task is to "furnish better fictions with which we can re-form our notions of things"

(Gado 150), Henry is a fiction-maker. But his story illustrates the hazards the writer faces, as Coover has suggested: "In order to accomplish his ends, the writer, by the nature of his profession, must himself withdraw entirely. You could say I wrote the baseball book not for baseball buffs or even for theologians but for other writers" (Gado 150).

Writing takes place on several levels within the novel. Henry writes, but so do his characters. One of these, Sandy Shaw, is a songwriter who writes ballads in which he turns events like the death of Damon Rutherford into folklore (102). Fenn McCaffree, for whom the narrator here speaks, considers Sandy's fictionalizing process and its relationship to "truth":

> In a way, Sandy did them a disservice, provided them with drama and legends that blocked off their perception of the truth. But what was the truth? Men needed these rituals, after all, that was part of the truth, too, and certainly the Association benefited by them. (103)

McCaffree himself apprehends "truth" through representational filters. The UBA Chancellor observes the doings of the Association from his office, as the events are shown on his many television sets. He has an elaborate system:

> In adjoining rooms, machinery, looking like big eyeless monsters conjured up from the depths, hummed and clicked, sucking up information being fed to them from scorekeepers, scouts, official

> monitors, and even a set of special camera devices that McCaffree had invented to time runners, spy out jittery fielders, register variations between what the catchers called for and what the pitchers really threw, million different things. (148-149)

McCaffree, presiding over all as he does, is an avatar of Henry, but there are others. Barney Bancroft is writing a book about the events of Year LVI. He decides to call it The UBA in the Balance (212), and we readers understand that the Association was indeed in a precarious position in LVI, as the whole beer-soaked mess was almost thrown out with the trash. The Association has numerous other writers: journalists, record-keepers; even players who merely sign autographs are engaged in writing.

After Henry's recommitment to the Association, he turns to writing in earnest: "the Book" has been neglected for too long. He returns, therefore, to "a concentrated meditative concern with history, development, and equilibria" (205). His withdrawal into the Association becomes so thorough, in fact, that he writes himself out of existence (Cope 57-58). In the novel's final chapter Henry is absent. Over one hundred Association years have passed, and we no longer understand that the Association's players are within Henry's mind. Instead, the players have absorbed their creator. There is even one occultist, Raspberry Schultz, "who has turned . . . to the folklore of game theory, and plays himself some device with dice" (234). Others speculate, with

much skepticism, whether they have a creator. One says, "'I got the idea suddenly that maybe this whole goddamn Association has got some kind of screw loose . . .'" (227). Another character says, "'[I] have come to the conclusion that God exists and he is a nut'" (233).

One player, Paul Trench, eschews the factions--the Damonites, the Caseyites, the Bogglers, the Legalists, the Guildsmen--that have grown out of the Association's legendary past and tries to deal honestly with the meaning of his existence. He considers himself "simply a willing accomplice to all heresies, but ultimately a partisan of none . . ." (240). Trench's attitude indicates that he sees life as distinct from those fictions human beings construct in order to comprehend life. When these fictions become institutionalized, their adherents demand allegiance and twist life to fit the fiction rather than the other way around. As Brenda Wineapple says in "Robert Coover's Playing Fields," "The world of experience exists despite our fictions, and it is a world to which we must always return, even if it is fundamentally incomprehensible" (66). Trench seeks a fiction that gives meaning to his life, not a life that serves a fiction. It is ironic that a character who has come into being through various levels of fiction-making should point us back out to life, but such is the case. He wonders, therefore, whether his playing has any meaning:

> Beyond each game, he sees another, and yet another, in endless and hopeless succession. He hits a ground ball to third, is thrown out. Or he beats the throw. What difference, in the terror of eternity, does it make? He stares at the sky, beyond which is more sky, overwhelming in its enormity. He, Paul Trench, is utterly absorbed in it, entirely disappears, is Paul Trench no longer, is nothing at all: so why does he even walk up there? Why does he swing? Why does he run? Why does he suffer when out and rejoice when safe? Why is it better to win than to lose? Each day: the dread. And when, after being distracted by the excitement of a game, he returns at night to the dread, it is worse than ever, compounded with shame and regret. He wants to quit--but what does he mean, "quit"? The game? Life? Could you separate them? (238)

The questions Trench asks are those that readers are likely to ask about the playing of baseball and also about the writing and reading of baseball fiction. If inscrutable reality continually sweeps aside our dreams of order and timeless values, why should we bother? Trench decides to bother, as he dons his catcher's mask to participate in the ritualistic reenactment of the deaths of Damon Rutherford and Jock Casey. Trench, playing the role of Royce Ingram, walks out to the mound to Damon Rutherford, played by Hardy Ingram, who enters the ritual after much soul-searching of his own. Both rookies are about to be sacrificed in this "baseballmass" (Andersen 71), yet they find a way to participate. "Damon" asks "Royce" (Trench) a question, which leads the apprehensive catcher to accept the game for "its own inscrutable sake" (239):

> "[Y]ou love this game, don't you?"
> "Sure, but..."
> Damon grins. Lights up the whole goddamn world. "Then don't be afraid, Royce," he says.
> And the black clouds break up, and dew springs again to the green grass, and the stands hang on, and his own oppressed heart leaps alive to give it one last try. (242)

The novel's final paragraphs seem to affirm the various processes of fiction-making. As Wineapple says, "Home plate is a fiction, and knowing this, the Coover character and the Coover reader can replace the mask of necessary illusion" (74). But the passage presents characters who, though honestly searching for truth, have no idea how many masks they are wearing. Royce, for example, is being played by Trench, because the Association has fictionalized an event of the past, an event that is a fiction within a fictionalized version of real baseball, which is itself a fictional expression of life. And all of this originates with Henry, who is a fictional character in The Universal Baseball Association, a fiction by Coover. No wonder Trench has an identity crisis:

> And he doesn't know any more whether he's a Damonite or a Caseyite or something else again, a New Heretic or an unregenerate Golden Ager, doesn't even know if he's Paul Trench or Royce Ingram or Pappy Rooney or Long Lew Lydell. . . . (242)

Trench and Damon/Hardy decide, it seems, that their participation is meaningful because the game involves reality itself, something "hard and white and alive in the sun":

> [I]t's all irrelevant, it doesn't even matter that he's [Trench] going to die, all that counts is that he is here and here's The Man and here's the boys and there's the crowd, the sun, the noise.
>
> "It's not a trial," says Damon, glove tucked in his armpit, hands working the new ball. Behind him, he knows, Scot Batkin, the batter, is moving toward the plate. "It's not even a lesson. It's just what it is." Damon holds the baseball up between them. It is hard and white and alive in the sun.
>
> He laughs. It's beautiful, that ball. He punches Damon lightly in the ribs with his mitt. "Hang loose," he says, and pulling down his mask, trots back behind home plate. (242)

These characters are, of course, deceived--at least from our perspective. That sun is not the sun that we know; if anything it is the 100-watt lightbulb in Henry's kitchen. And what kind of ball is that? Existing under layers of fiction as it does, it can hardly be made of horsehide (or cowhide). Coover's novel does not permit easy answers or pat resolutions. That ball and that sun are, of course, adequate for Paul Trench and Hardy Ingram; but the reader is left to work out his own fictions and, as Coover says, "constantly test them against the experience of life" (Gado 152). It may be, as various critics have remarked, that the reader must supply a ninth chapter for the novel, a ninth inning that completes the game.[8]

The baseball novels of Roth and Coover, then, demonstrate that, though fictional orderings of reality are incomplete, artificial, and sometimes untrustworthy, they are necessary. Some of the difficulties with these fictions

derive from language itself. Language is also a convention, though an inescapable, essentially human means of ordering experience. Several of the self-apparent stories of Jerry [sic] Klinkowitz examine both the danger and necessity of using language. They also explore the medium's inherent comic possibilities. Two of Klinkowitz's stories, "Ball Two" and "Cheap Seats," provide succinct examples. Baseball is not necessarily a metaphor in these stories. Rather, the game has a relatively controlled environment, as well as peculiar signs and signals, specialized jargon, and, now that the sport is open to talented people of various races and nationalities, a sometimes awkward cultural and linguistic diversity. Klinkowitz draws on these elements in order to explore the way human beings use language.

The "action" of "Ball Two" takes place between two pitches thrown by Costy Pedraza, a pitcher for the Mason City Royals. And this "action" is the workings of language. The story suggests that language gives events a context and a meaning but that language, being a convention, and people, being human, can combine to create conflict--and comedy.

The story contains three major language situations. The first is a system of gestures and signs: those between the catcher and the pitcher, those between the second baseman and the shortstop, those between the manager and his players and coaches.[9] Each group must interpret the signs of the others

and respond accordingly. The first pitch of the game has been wildly low and outside, and catcher Jim Smith gestures back to the pitcher, pumping his mitt, "urging Costy to keep the slider from breaking too soon" (Short Season 29).[10] Second baseman Billy Harmon then wonders what pitch Pedraza will throw next, since he and shortstop Eddie Sanmarda must know to which side of the diamond a ground ball is likely to be hit. Harmon sees Pedraza shrug his left shoulder to Sanmarda, "which means he'll wait until the catcher calls for a fastball" (29). The catcher then begins flashing signs to the pitcher, who continues to "shake them off." The catcher must interpret what Pedraza's shaking of his head means:

> The catcher goes back to one finger--fastball--and this time Costy nods okay. What's this, he can't read numbers? The catcher's flashed it to him twice before, but now he gets the message--this shrewd Dominican is confusing the batter, making him think all sorts of exotic pitches and locations, when in fact it's going to be the straight one down Main, okay! (31)

The second baseman, meanwhile, interprets the shaking off signs as an indication that it will be a long game (30) and then notices that shortstop Sanmarda is staring into the dugout, awaiting a signal from the manager, who is also being watched by the pitching coach. The pitching coach "spots the delay from the bull pen and leans out from the bench to see if the manager wants his help" (30). The manager, however, is not yet flashing signs, and Harmon wonders why Sanmarda is

looking towards the dugout. He senses a problem: "'Hey man, trouble,' Billy wants to yell, but he doesn't have the words and what a can of worms, what a crazy Latin mess to get into" (31). Finally, the manager, seeing Pedraza step off the pitching rubber--a sure sign of confusion--gestures to the shortstop, wanting him to walk over and talk to the pitcher. This gesture gives rise to the confusion of the story's second language situation.

Pedraza, a Dominican, speaks no English; Sanmarda, a Panamanian, speaks a little--just enough so that he becomes, by default, the translator of messages to the pitcher from the bench or other players. Unfortunately, since Panamanian Spanish is not the same as Dominican Spanish, "their Spanish can get mixed up, meaning utterly different things" (29). The narrator tells us that when Sanmarda once suggested that they should take raincoats to the park Pedraza thought he was referring to rubber diapers. And once Sanmarda wanted to compliment Pedraza's female companion, referring to her hairdo as pelo, a word that got an angry reaction out of the Dominican, for whom it meant something else (29).

When Sanmarda approaches the mound he is full of good will towards the pitcher, but his language gets him into difficulties. He addresses Pedraza "with the words Costy would use to summon a waiter or correct a servant. . . ." Pedraza ignores the insult, however, merely replying with a

question, "'What's the problem?'" Sanmarda misunderstands, thinking that the pitcher is referring to a specific problem that the shortstop might have. A mild argument ensues about which player is not doing his job, and Sanmarda says, "'I can't catch what they don't hit what you don't throw, baby!'" He uses the word niño here, "meaning it friendly, doing his best to put the funny words his teammates use into Spanish slang." Pedraza answers by shoving Sanmarda to the ground and kicking him. Both benches empty (the traditional response to the "sign" of a fight on the mound), and the Royals' manager succeeds in breaking up the fight. The opposing team's batter explains the situation to the umpire: "'Shortstop called him a kid. . . . Down in the Dominican you'd say that to your own child, but for any other kid, not related, you know, it means a brat, a dirty kid in the streets, you know'" (32).

Before this attempt at communication backfired, while various signals were being flashed, a third language situation was beginning to develop in the dugout. Those players not starting in the game spend this time telling stories. Water is the theme of the day, first because the clubhouse showers are malfunctioning, evidently emitting water that is either all hot or all cold, and second because a "pet obsession" of the second-string outfielders is their supposed discovery of the headwaters of the Mississippi River

(30). One of these benchwarmers, Lynn Parsons, has begun this tale many times, but he has never finished it. Parsons, indeed, speaks another language, that of black American jive. Buddy Knox is getting impatient, and today he wants to know what the headwaters of the great river are really like. He is curious, having heard that the river is so small at one point that a man can easily hop over it. He begs the rambling, digressing Parsons to answer his question: "'Yeah, but what about the river? . . . . How far up did you guys get, did you ever see it get, like, real small?'" (31). Parsons still does not answer, and then the fight interrupts them anyway.

The fight, a result of miscommunication, does give rise to other opportunities for communication through language. The umpire speaks to the batter, then to the Royals' manager. Manager Carl Peterson finally speaks three words to his pitcher as he levies a fine on him: "'Pedraza--hundred dollars'" (33). And Andy Thompson, the first baseman, who has studied Spanish in college, translates the manager's words "in clear, grammar-book language" (33). And as the players on both teams are milling around in the middle of the field, Lynn Parsons engages in conversation with the third baseman for the other team, who has heard about the chronic problems with the clubhouse showers. Parsons explains that after much searching, the problem was discovered. Buddy

Knox, still curious about the Mississippi, passes by and hears this conversation:

> "We looked for it all last year, figured there had to be an absolute source, something real small-like, you know. . . ."
> "So where'd you find it?" . . . .
> "In the hot-water tap for the sink, you never would believe it!" (33)

Naturally, the words "absolute source" and "something real small-like" have a certain resonance for Knox. He rushes back to the dugout, where he initiates another attempt at communication:

> Buddy is transfixed by wonder and disbelief. "Hey Skip," he calls as he approaches Carl, "Parsons finally told us where's the source!"
> "The source?" Carl asks, not following and not caring.
> "Of the Mississippi, of the river!" Buddy exclaims. "It's in some kitchen sink, some leaky faucet!"
> Carl just stares, writing off this senseless line to the general lunacy that has prevailed since Costy's first pitch. (33-34)

Pedraza finally throws the second pitch of the game, and the story ends. But the reader is left to wonder what new comedy will arise from the language that the second pitch will initiate, especially since "it comes in high, a mile out of the strike zone" (34).

Indeed, there are reasons to ask, "Why bother?" This is the question Paul Trench asks in The Universal Baseball Association, the same readers of baseball literature ask. It is also the question Jeff, the Mason City Royals' General

Manager, asks in "Cheap Seats."

The story is simple: Jeff has good reasons to keep the stadium's second set of bleachers along each foul line closed. The strategy makes good business sense, since there is less space to clean up after games and because the sports-page photos look better when they are not shot against thinly spaced spectators. But more important, Jeff needs to control the crowd. The distant seats attract "ball-park punks," and he is "tired of all the fire-crackers and underage drinking down there . . . " (16). Furthermore, the left-field corner is "a world away from where Jeff and his cop and ushers can control things in the stands . . ." (17). The GM also fears that these bleachers are "a breeding ground for sexual delinquents" (17). He has seen evidence:

> He remembers cute little eleven-year-olds from his first year in Mason City, running from the box seats with popcorn money from their parents, now strutting like hookers past the better seats on their way to the second set of bleachers, loaded with eye make-up and poured into downsized jeans. (17)

Jeff recognizes, then, that chaos threatens his vision of order. He combats this threat of disorder with language, using a "Section Closed" sign. This seems to be a feeble way to bring order to chaos. Indeed, the sign is evidently destroyed regularly. We are told that Jeff "must remake [it] for every set of home-stand games" (17). However, he has no choice. He remakes the sign because there is more order with

it than without it. He has asked Paul Trench's question--"What difference, in the terror of eternity, does it make?" (Coover 238)--and has answered in a similar manner, continuing to play the game, continuing to realize his dream of order in language.

Roth, Coover, and Klinkowitz, in their self-apparent baseball fiction, directly examine the questions that indirectly arise in other baseball fiction, that which is written within the conventions of realism, the non-fiction novel, or magical realism. And like the works of Greenberg, Lehmann-Haupt, Kinsella, and others, these fictions do not end in pat resolutions but in paradox, the earmark of complex pastoralism.

In Coover's novel Raspberry Schultz makes a statement to Paul Trench that applies to all the baseball literature examined in this study. He says, "I don't know if there's really a record-keeper up there or not. . . . But even if there weren't, I think we'd have to play the game as though there were" (239). Baseball literature, whether it is speaking of playing baseball or of using language, recognizes that meaning and order are elusive but that we have no choice but to continue fielding ground balls and digging in at the plate, continue erecting our signs and fictions.

Notes

[1] Roger Angell also knows about the magic of names, of course. He continues his discussion of the box score by pointing out that it is "cognominal as well as mathematical." He then gives a list of names that have appeared in box scores through the years, names that he has seen and with which he "began peopling the lively landscape of baseball in [his] mind": "Ossee Schreckengost, Smead Jolley, Slim Sallee, Elan Hogsett, Urban Shocker, Burleigh Grimes, Hazen Shirley Cuyler, Heinie Manush, Cletus Elwood Poffenberger, Virgil Trucks, Enos Slaughter, Luscious Easter, and Eli Grba" (Summer Game 4).

[2] Charles Chappell has uncovered many more allusions in The Dixie Association, not only to Faulkner but to the Fugitive poets, Thomas Wolfe, and Flannery O'Connor (there is a team called the Milledgeville Peacocks). Chappell has, in fact, made a literature quiz out of his discoveries. See Southern Magazine, June 1987 or the reprint in SLA, Winter 1988.

[3] Robert Atwan's "Great Moments in Literary Baseball" has much fun with combinations of baseball and literary figures. He quotes Willie Yeats, for example: "The

centrefielder cannot hold. . . ." And he tells of pitcher Frank Kafka, who was permanently suspended from organized baseball without being told why. Also, Johnny P. Sartre was "the first major-leaguer to refuse the Most Valuable Player Award." Evidently there were also players named Henry James, Tommy Wolfe, Ernie Hemingway, "Lucky" Sam Beckett, and Harry Pinter.

[4] Frank R. Ardolino presents a thorough examination of the names of the players on the Ruppert Mundys, explaining the mythic allusions. See his "The Americanization of the Gods: Onomastics, Myth, and History in Philip Roth's The Great American Novel."

[5] Gass, it should be pointed out, is less than friendly towards Roth's novel. The novel's "fine sentiments," he says, are "too long in the wrong mouth." He continues, "As for Moby Dick...if you make fun of the Gods you had better be one. And as for the great American novel itself...too much American fiction has already been written by small boys" ("The Sporting News" 8).

[6] Neil Berman (211), Lois Gordon (40-41), Kevin Kerrane (440), Richard Andersen (60), and no doubt many others make this point.

[7] Who is "The Man" that Trench sees? I can only guess. Is he merely the umpire? Or is he Damon, God, Henry, or Coover? I suspect that Trench is referring to Jock Casey,

who is elsewhere referred to as "the Man in the Mound" (236) and who is the subject of a book, The Man Who Stood Alone (237).

[8] Gordon (42; 50), Berman (222), and Cope (53) all make this point. Coover, however, explains his eight chapters differently: "It . . . occurred to me to use Genesis I.1 to II.3--seven chapters corresponding to the seven days of creation--and this in turn naturally implied an eighth, the apocalyptic day" (Gado 149). Baseball numerologists, however, will not be deterred. Roth's novel, incidentally, if we count the Prologue and Epilogue, does have nine chapters. This dissertation, on the other hand, like a Little League game, has six innings. It does, however, examine nine novels.

[9] Here and elsewhere in this chapter I assume, following various schools of linguistics, that such non-linguistic systems of signs are in fact based on language. As Frederic Jameson says, "[In] a non-linguistic sign-system, the priority of the language model is maintained . . . " (112).

[10] "Ball Two" and "Cheap Seats" are contained in Klinkowitz's Short Season (1988). Subsequent page references are to this collection.

VI

Conclusion

Historian Jacques Barzun has said, "Whoever wants to know the heart and mind of America had better learn baseball . . ." (159). There may be other ways to know America's heart and mind, but baseball, clearly, is essentially American. Numerous observers have made the point: the game seems a microcosm of American life and a figurative expression of the American ethos. As Murray Ross says, the game provides "a sentimental mirror of older America" (717) and "dissolves time and urgency in a green expanse . . ." (720). Indeed, baseball seems to give us what is otherwise unattainable: a serene, pastoral enclosure free from the anxieties of twentieth-century life; a means of escaping time, of regaining youth; a rich and enduring system of ritual, something in which to believe.

There are some, no doubt, who keep the faith, who actually believe that the untidiness of life does not intrude upon the baseball diamond. Even Barzun contends that a true baseball fan, one "within the meaning of the act" (162), does not drink alcohol: "He wants all his senses sharp and clear, his eyesight above all. He gulps down soda pop, which is a harmless way of replenishing his energy by the ingestion of

sugar diluted in water and colored pink" (162). Barzun, evidently, has spent little time in a dentist's chair. To be sure, there is also much soda-pop baseball fiction, much of it written for boys under the legal drinking age. The works of Lester Chadwick, John R. Tunis, and others (Harris 2-5) suggest that the baseball diamond provides a place where a young man can achieve great things, where he can build his character and prepare himself for the prosperity that is his American birthright.

Let us be grateful that not all baseball literature is so banal. Some works demonstrate a more complex view of human nature, of human institutions, and of literature itself. In varying degrees, the works examined in this study question the pastoral ideals that baseball seems to express. These works often depict characters who feel tension within themselves or between themselves and the world they inhabit. Or these works, acknowledging that organized baseball does indeed reveal the heart and mind of America, suggest that corruption, racism, and brutality are as American as the love of a rural retreat or the longing to defeat time. Leo Marx does not speak of baseball or baseball literature, but his description of other works designated "pastorals" certainly fits the genre of baseball literature:

> Most literary works called pastorals--at least those substantial enough to retain our interest--do not finally permit us to come away with anything like the simple, affirmative attitude we adopt

> toward pleasing rural scenery. In one way or another, if only by virtue of the unmistakable sophistication with which they are composed, these works manage to qualify, or call into question, or bring irony to bear against the illusion of peace and harmony in a green pasture. And it is this fact that will enable us, finally, to get at the difference between the complex and sentimental kinds of pastoralism. (25)

Within baseball fiction's complex pastoralism the individual "hero" is often caught between two forces: the pressure to affirm the pastoral myth and the knowledge that life involves change, suffering, and eventual death. Bernard Malamud's Roy Hobbs, therefore, initially expects reality to accommodate his narcissistic wishes: "'You have to have the right stuff to play good ball and I have it'" (26). But he finally must struggle with the truth that he himself expresses: "'My goddamn life didn't turn out like I wanted it to'" (141). Other baseball heroes realize similar truths. Harry Stein's Buck Weaver, for example, wiser as a writer than he was as a player, concludes, "dreams rarely work out as happy as planned" (Hoopla! 52).

Fans of the game, those who participate from a distance in the pastoral game, also face disillusionment, especially when that distance closes. Eric Rolfe Greenberg's Jackie Kapp (The Celebrant) is at first a "worshipper from afar" (42), half-realizing that close contact with Christy Mathewson and major-league baseball will dispel his ardor. Indeed, his involvement does cause him pain. Similarly,

Christopher Lehmann-Haupt in Me and DiMaggio is a "fan in search of his gods." He finds, however, that the gods are mere mortals: players too are egocentric, petty, greedy. And W. P. Kinsella's protagonists are typically fans with fantastic dreams. Ray Kinsella (Shoeless Joe) and Gideon Clarke (The Iowa Baseball Confederacy) realize their dreams, but not for long and not within the space of actual ballparks. W. P. Kinsella provides fictional representations of pastoral wishes but nowhere suggests that the wishes can be realized in the real world. His protagonists must learn to live without magic. They, like other fictional fans and players, must be content with the game within their minds, because the game that takes place in real time cannot support the pastoral vision.

One force that continually thwarts baseball fiction's pastoral dreamers is the institution itself. The game is big business, and for its overseers baseball's supposed pastoralism makes sense only in terms of public relations. They say all the right words. The fictionalized Ban Johnson in Hoopla! says, "'Baseball . . . is the sinew and gut of the American spirit'" (85). He merely utters the party line, however. He, like The Natural's Goodwill Banner, The Seventh Babe's Hollis McKee, and Hoopla!'s Charles Comiskey, is a professional salesman. Baseball fiction frequently demonstrates that no matter how much purity and exuberance

the individual player or fan brings to the game, the lords of baseball, abetted by a self-serving journalistic establishment or a self-righteous commissioner, find ways to turn a profit. They do so with kind smiles, the proper platitudes, and grandiose gestures, however.

Many fictional players, therefore, come away from their beloved game beaten and confused. Roy Hobbs has unrealizable expectations, but his fall is made worse by the powerful people who find him easy to exploit. Babe Ragland (The Seventh Babe), who "define[s] himself against the territory of an infield" (145-146), quickly finds that major-league baseball has no room for him. He becomes an outcast, like Shoeless Joe Jackson in Shoeless Joe, like Jackson, Buck Weaver, and the other banned players in Hoopla!. For most of these players the dream becomes a nightmare. Buck Weaver remembers his reaction as he watched his teammates, having been pressured by the baseball establishment, deliberately lose the World Series: "I just closed my eyes and wished I had never heard of this game of baseball in the first place" (281).

However, the beauty of baseball is not so easily destroyed. Weaver and other fictional characters continue to remember the dream. Some fictions, like The Seventh Babe and much of Kinsella's work, employ magical realism as a means of expressing this abiding dream. So, baseball's complex

pastoralism insists that pastoral values cannot be realized on an actual baseball diamond, at least not for long; but the fiction finds ways to acknowledge the beauty of another "baseball," the game of the imagination.

Even the most irreverent works affirm, if only by implication, the beauty of the game. In Philip Roth's The Great American Novel, for example, the slugger Roland Agni, wanting a trade to a team with a chance of winning, breaks into the bedroom of owner Angela Trust, not to attack her but to convince her to trade for him. As the narrator says, Agni "delivers a monologue on his batting prowess that approaches the condition of poetry" (251). He also poses for the amazed owner with his bat, and the scene, like Roth's novel, is absurdly funny. But it is also touching. As Agni demonstrates his batting form, the narrator expresses Mrs. Trust's reaction: "As though there is nothing in this world so beautiful to behold as the stride and the swing and the follow-through of a man who can hit .370 in the big leagues. And is there?" (257). The rhetorical question at the end of the passage, whether it comes from Mrs. Trust, Word Smith, or Philip Roth, has implications that are not disputed. The novel, no matter how much it mocks baseball's claims, acknowledges the tension that exists in much baseball fiction. There are, indeed, two "baseballs": the visible one is an unfeeling, often hypocritical, corrupt business;

the invisible one is a timeless thing of beauty.

Baseball is featured in the fiction of numerous American writers--Ernest Hemingway, F.S. Fitzgerald, James T. Farrell, John Dos Passos, to name a few. William Kennedy's Ironweed (1983) is a recent example of an American novel that, though not strictly a "baseball novel," draws upon the sport's traditions and meanings. Francis Phelan, a former major-leaguer, is caught between the past and the future, despair and hope, damnation and redemption. As he examines mementoes from his playing days, he finds a photograph of a baseball being tossed from a bare right hand to a gloved left hand. The image aptly illustrates the tension inherent in baseball fiction's complex pastoralism. Because of the slow shutter speed of the camera, the baseball appears to be in more than one place at the same time:

> The flight of the ball had always made this photo mysterious to Francis, for the camera had caught the ball clutched in one hand and also in flight, arcing in a blur toward the glove. What the camera had caught was two instants in one: time separated and unified, the ball in two places at once, an eventuation as inexplicable as the Trinity itself. (169)

The art of photography makes Francis Phelan's illusion possible. It enables him to see in a way that would be impossible otherwise. The photo becomes for him "a Trinitarian talisman (a hand, a glove, a ball) for achieving the impossible" (169). Similarly, the art of fiction makes

complex pastoralism possible. "Baseball," as portrayed in the works in this study, expresses two entities at once. It is an unfeeling institution and an expression of beauty, a place of business and a timeless garden, a nightmare of disappointment and a dream of perfection.

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