



PROJECT MUSE®

---

*Drawing Card: A Baseball Novel* by Dorothy Seymour Mills  
(review)

Tim Morris

NINE: A Journal of Baseball History and Culture, Volume 21, Number 2,  
Spring 2013, pp. 176-177 (Review)

Published by University of Nebraska Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/nin.2013.0011>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/520273>

basement of his home. The past, crossed and forgotten, comes back into view, and Yates tries to accomplish for his players what he never could accomplish himself—even if only on the minor-league scale. The story of what could have been, what might have been, is compelling. In the realm of novels that use baseball as a metaphor for life, *The Might Have Been* ranks high, with familiar images woven together with the agony of watching something so precious slip away from a character who, but for the grace of God, could have been *me*. Schuster knows his audience.

Though the novel may recall many themes familiar to the seasoned baseball fiction audience, Schuster breathes new life into the genre through his use of sound. From the familiar organ sounds of the ballpark to the “slap of the ball into leather at perhaps the instant his foot [meets] the bag” (11), Schuster transports the audience into the ballpark and into Yates’s life. The more Yates learns to see things differently, the sounds that surround him are the sounds that ground him in the reality that Schuster has carefully crafted. Where the familiar sights of a ballpark become the unfamiliar world of the professional, the sounds remain the same, both to Yates and to anyone who has ever spent a summer day playing catch. To appreciate *The Might Have Been* is to appreciate the little details about life and baseball: the sights and sounds that escape if you don’t pay attention. With enough detail for a casual fan to appreciate the action on the field, yet with enough nuance for a seasoned fan of the game, Schuster’s novel is one of those rare gems that reaches out to all fans. Schuster’s novel is, ultimately, a moving testament to choice: the decisions we make, on the field as in life, can change the way things play out. The sights and sounds encountered along the way, like the people that weave in and out of our lives, become the backdrop upon which life plays out.



**Dorothy Seymour Mills. *Drawing Card: A Baseball Novel*. Jefferson NC: McFarland, 2012. 261 pp. Paper, \$25.00.**

*Tim Morris*

*Drawing Card: A Baseball Novel* is a historical novel that asks a question for the sake of argument: if a woman signed a contract to play professional baseball, and then found her opportunity denied by a baseball commissioner solely on the grounds of her sex, how might she react? The question isn’t entirely a “what if”; two such contracts were annulled in real life, in 1931 and 1952. “I

have often wondered how these two women felt about being prevented from playing baseball because of their gender,” Dorothy Seymour Mills says in her “Note on Sources” (259), and she wrote this novel to explore that wonder.

*Drawing Card* is incident-packed, written in a utilitarian style that tells more than it shows. Every scene is fully explained and worked into the overall rhetorical purpose of the novel. All the characters sound exactly the same, speaking in decorous, full sentences that reveal much background information and give a clear account of their actions and motives (even their deceptions are carefully explained and clear, at least to the reader). Copious research is on display: this is a book where you trust the baseball details (given the author’s considerable ethos as a sport historian) and also trust the descriptions of places as far-flung as Ohio and Sicily, in the present, recent past, and deep past.

And as the book’s cover foreshadows, the novel’s incidents are nicely unrestrained, often sinister in a way that borders on black comedy. To quote that cover (so that I’m not spoiling the plot very much), “Annie plots her revenge—murder. A deft blend of sports history and thriller, *Drawing Card* demonstrates the danger of a woman scorned, especially one with a mean curve ball.” Annie Cardello is believable as the “Drawing Card” of the title, pitching local baseball in Cleveland, exemplifying her Sicilian roots. And she’s at least consistent, in a far-fetched way, when she turns avenging angel. This is a woman whose answer to a mildly disappointing marriage is a quickie divorce, Italian style. One is prepared for her to wreak havoc on Organized Baseball.

The accumulation of incidents, time frames, characters, and allusions in *Drawing Card* may bewilder some readers. It’s not a book for those with ruminative tastes or Proustian attention spans. But as a contribution to the re-imagining of the twentieth century from once-elided perspectives, the novel has something to offer readers who like their fiction brisk, lucid, and vividly imaginary.



**Joel S. Franks. *The Barnstorming Hawaiian Travelers: A Multiethnic Baseball Team Tours the Mainland, 1912–1916*. Jefferson NC: McFarland, 2012. 254 pp. Paper, \$29.95.**

*John Harney*

Barnstorming has an intriguing history beyond the borders of the American mainland, particularly across the Pacific Ocean. Babe Ruth and his fellow All-