A Month of Game Days

Scott S. Peterson

Main Street Rag Press.

Reviewed by Bruce Pratt, University of Maine, Orono

During my two decade plus career as a singer/songwriter, I was often asked for my definition of folk music, a common a litmus test whose answer would be interpreted in various ways depending on the biases of the questioner. Some clung to the idea, often attributed to the late Pete Seeger, that “Ain’t never heard no cow write no folk songs.” Pete told me that was not exactly what he said, but numerous versions of his alleged remarks still circulate in the acoustic music community. I am reminded of that whenever I hear a debate or spirited discussion on what exactly constitutes Sport Literature. I cannot offer a definitive definition, but can state with surety that Scott D. Peterson’s, *A Month of Game Days* is indeed a fine literary work and deeply rooted in sport.

The book, available for pre-order from *Main Street Rag Press,* a highly regarded, North Carolina based, publisher of poetry and fiction, is set in the Bangor/Orono region of central Maine though it transcends place. Those familiar with Peterson’s non-fiction work, such as *Reporting Baseball’s Sensational Season of 1890: The Brotherhood War and the Rise of Modern Sports,* (McFarland & Company 2015) know him as both an excellent baseball scholar and devoted fan of the game. Here he shows off his fiction skills with the same aplomb.

*A Month of Game Days* consists of eight linked short stories and a novella—more on the novella later.

It is commonly held that no sport lends itself to fiction as well as baseball.  *A Month of Game Days* is a fabulous addition to that body of oeuvre—a stunning and creative saga grounded in one family’s complicated relationship with baseball. Wonderfully unpredictable, the book is populated with compelling, often flawed, but ever human characters. Funny, heart-breaking, at times erotic, Peterson conjures both W.P. Kinsella and James Joyce—a remarkable achievement that will stay with you long after you turn the last page.

The Mallett family’s lives revolve around, or are perhaps mired in, youth baseball and church league softball, intersecting and colliding with a host of compelling and nuanced characters—every one important to the narrative, none a prop or shortcut. As these various characters interact, Peterson offers a wise and intriguing look at the positive and the negative impact of youth sport, with a keen focus on the role of parents and coaches. To his great credit, he never allows the narrative to become a screed, instead expertly allows the reader to discover the many ways in which spot can has both bound and sundered the family. At times dramatic, at others riotously funny, these short stories evoke a deep sense of verisimilitude, and I felt as if I knew or had met each character.

While the linked stories set up the narrative, the concluding novella is a finish with a flourish that conjures sections of James Joyce’s masterpiece *Ulysses* in arresting and original ways. Peterson creatively explores the hallucinatory dramatic style Joyce employed in The Circe Episode of *Ulysses*. This is done with finesse. In the final section of the novella, he riffs on the conclusion of *Ulysses*—Molly Bloom’s Soliloquy, as famous a passage in Joyce as any. This is a risky if not daring undertaking, which Peterson imbues with an evocative and contemporary dimension to the most erotic of all of Joyce’s work. That is no small feat.

As I have done with all of Joyce’s works, I intend to reread *A Month of Game Days* several times, as I suspect each reading will deepen my respect for this book.

You can get more information on Scott’s Author Page. <https://mainstreetragbookstore.com/product/a-month-of-game-days-scott-d-peterson/>