

The Memory of a Baseball Fan

by J. J. Steinfeld

When my closest friend's grandfather went crazy
during the 1960 Fall Classic, third game,
for the next game's pre-game show
my closest friend invited all his friends to visit
and listen to the small man's outpourings;
there on the sofa he lay
closed eyes to the ceiling, thoughts to the past,
a Yiddish-accented commentator
his voice soft as clouds above a forgotten stadium
his breath pushing away memory's displeasure:
he named all the 1950 Brooklyn Dodgers
every significant stat and score, standings from that year,
and like a Biblical scholar gone rapturous
described Robinson sliding into second
Reese scooping up a grounder
and flipping the ball to Hodges
Snider hitting a home run
Newcombe striking out another batter
Furillo making a dazzling catch
Campanella throwing out a runner
highlights from a life
God listening to the game with one ear
like an ordinary baseball fan
caught up in the beauty and excitement
of a world less defective than the ordinary.

My closest friend's grandfather
fearsome in his smallness
and shouts for retrieval
born in a baseball-less *shtetl* in Poland
he had leapt from a painting by Chagall
if he could still leap
except with his words
like fly balls to all fields
and he could bunt
throw knuckleballs
knuckleballs that gyrated
defied gravity
danced through time.

When my closest friend's grandfather went crazy
I first glimpsed the gracefulness of memory and madness.