***PROCEEDINGS OF***

**SPORT LITERATURE ASSOCIATION**

**37th Annual Conference**

**Virtual Edition**

***Compiled by Bruce Pratt***



**June 18-20, 2020**

**Host: Scott Peterson**

**Program Chair: Bruce Pratt**

**ZOOM Facilitator: Jeremy Larance**

**Thursday, June 18, 2020**

Welcome

Host Scott Peterson, University of Missouri St. Louis.

SLA President Fred Mason, University of New Brunswick.

**Session One: Across the Ponds 1**

*In not being ‘One of the Lads: An examination of the role of the female fan in “Fever Pitch.”*

Kasey Symonds, Swinburne University of Technology (ksymons@swin.edu.au), and Lee McGowan, Queensland University of Technology (lmcgowa1@usc.edu.au)

The critical and commercial success of *Fever Pitch* (1992), Nick Hornby’s dramatised memoir of a football (soccer) fan’s fixation led to a 1997 film adaptation, which was then redrafted for a 2005 film. The book dissects the social, economic and cultural elevation of ‘the working man’s game’ into English Premier League affluence in the early 1990s. The 1997 film takes one of a number of narrative threads of the book, Hornby’s relationship with his partner who is also a fan of the same club, and repositions it as the central premise of a romantic comedy. The American version of *Fever Pitch* (2005) adopts baseball as its focus and distils and reshapes the obsessive fan behaviour into the third point in a love triangle in a romantic comedy. While each iteration offers a variant representations of female fans in romantic relationships, the works each significantly diminish the woman’s role in privileging the male protagonist’s love for his team and fan status. This paper will examine the relationship these women have with their ‘team’ in *Fever Pitch* and the ways heteronormative masculine values perpetuate and frame the idealised female participant in the sport’s fan space.

*Drawing of an effort, line as link between arts and sports.*

Julien Feyt, PhD Candidate, Universite Jean Monnet (julien.feyt@univ-st-etienne.fr)

This presentation focuses on drawing as a possible interaction between art and sports. We will develop our argument through three postures adopted by both artists and athletes to create, analyze or read their actions and movements. Sketches, paintings and drawings depicting an action, a race or a fight are the first and maybe the most common interaction possible between these disciplines. We consider horse races painted by Gericault in the 19th century or sketches or caricatures executed live on television or used as illustrations in newspapers. Maps and sketches made by artists, coaches, or choreographers are a second proposition. This topic focuses on the way that artists represent their own movements in space after an action (Kendridge, 2008) as a runner producing a GPS track of his or her run. It also includes sketches made by coaches during time out to call various systems on Basketball or Football. It also refers to cartography exposed on television to analyze and reveal tactical choices or areas used during actions. These methods also refer to sketches and dance notations executed before or after choreography to help dancers learn a sequence. This Point of view exposes an artist as an athlete. The line could be a hypertrophy representation (Barney, 1988) or the result of a physical or programmed effort. This will include drawings executed by Tom Marionni who made several *Athletic Drawings.*

**Session 2: Across the Ponds 2 and The Bay of Fundy**

*Reconsidering Native American sporting lore and cinema (1951-2018).*

Thomas Bauer, The University of Limoges (thomas.bauer@unilim.fr)**,** and Dr. Maxence Leconte, University of Texas at Austin (mpl642@utexas.edu)

This presentation unveils, describes, and reconsiders the role and the representation of Native American sports and their athletes as portrayed in North American cinema between 1951 and 2018. Whether under the form of Hollywood blockbusters or independent productions, these pictures remain relatively understudied by film and sport scholarships alike, thus presenting a visible gap in both fields. This research seeks to fill that gap, and contends that the cinematic representation of Native American athletes – real or fictional – deserves to be reappraised in order to create a new account of *sporting Indianness,* which can be defined as a paradigm putting forth the unique condition of Native American athletes pictured in films.

The traditional, reductive portrayals of Indigenous American people in popular cinema are often characterized by clichés and taboos marked by simplistic antagonism or heroism. By contrast, the notion of *sporting Indianness* allows us to read Native American sportsmen and women as able to transcend stereotypes by virtue of their double subjectivity, concurrently ethnic and athletic, as elicited by their particular occupations. By drawing on films such as Michael Curtiz’ *Jim Thorpe – All American* (1951), Larry Landsburgh’s *Run, Appaloosa, Run!* (1966), Rick Schroder’s *Black Cloud* (2004), and Chloe Zhao’s *The Rider* (2017), among others, this presentation engenders a distinctive, complex and protean definition of what *sporting Indianness* can achieve, not only over time, but also in different cinematic genres such as documentary, action, children or indie films. Exploring these different films and their respective facets is imperative in order to reach an adequate view of *sporting Indianness* and its possibilities, which are first and foremost to generate a more elaborate, refined and critical understanding of the Native American ethos made possible by sporting practices.

*American Poverty and Social Rejection in Craig Gillespie’s “I, Tonya”*

Paulina Korzeniewska-Nowakowska, Academic, poet, translator, and independent scholar (paulinakorzeniewska@gmail.com)

This paper’s contribution is to present the image of American poverty, rejection and social engagement as portrayed in Craig Gillespie’s *I, Tonya* (2017) – a biopic telling the story of infamous skater, Tonya Harding. Combing the terrains of social struggles, film and sports gives a rich and complex image of the American realm. I would like to draw research data from current poverty studies to determine the scope of the issue and give attention to its cultural and social implications in the United States. Secondly, I would like to briefly outline the presence and significance of sports in American cinematic expression, and to analyze Gillespie’s movie in the light of the aforementioned optics. *I, Tonya* epitomizes these aspects – through exposing an equivocal heroine, the film presents a social and economic background for her sporting endeavors, this background being a crucial element for the audience to grasp the nature of the sporting and social realms in which she exists. Gillespie creates the figure of Tonya as a reflection of her dysfunctional family, malevolent skating community, and her controversial media image. He does, most emphatically, focus on the athlete’s identity and characteristics, conditioning them solely by her familial and social background and presenting her as vulgar, loud, demanding, and boorish. The film constantly poses a question of fitting in – physically, economically, socially, and most importantly, in terms of keeping up appearances.

*The Fiction of Ultrarunning.*

Fred Mason, The University of New Brunswick (fmason@unb.ca)

Ultrarunning experienced exponential growth in the number of races and participants in the first decade of the 2000s. This growth was reflected in, and partly driven by, the publication of dozens of personal memoirs of ultrarunners, and the appearance of several ultra-specific training manuals. Recently, a handful of book-length fictional works can be added to that list. David Carroll’s young adult novel *Ultra* (2013) traces the experience of running a 100-mile race from the teenaged narrator’s perspective with highs, lows, social connections, and hallucinations. Near the end, a freak storm throws his finish and safety into question. Dave Essinger’s small press novel *Running Out* (2017) starts with a plane crash in the Canadian North. The protagonist runs to seek help for his wife and daughter, taking several days. As in much training and racing for ultras, the main character spends much time in his own head, while the novel also deeply plumbs the physiology and psychology of break-down. Adrian J. Walker’s *The End of the World Running Club* (2014), an international bestseller, is about 75% post-apocalyptic fiction and 25% running novel. After societal destruction from a meteorite shower, the main character runs across the country to meet his family. All these novels have a central theme of survival with things being learned in or during running coming into play to keep the characters moving. They take the idea of staying in “constant forward momentum” from the sport, and the focus on simply finishing, and extend it into fictional possibilities.

**Session 3: Fiction and Poetry**

*Sports Page: Excerpts from a New Poetry Collection.*

Ken Waldman, independent poet and musician (ken@kenwaldman.com)

*From a novel in progress about the 1922 World Series.*

Scott Peterson, University of Missouri St. Louis (sdpeterson1890@gmail.com)

*Short fiction reading,* *“My Mother Met John Lennon.”*

Robert Wallace, Creative Writer (bwallace@nc.rr.com)

*Poetry Reading*

Ron Smith, St. Christopher’s School (SMITHJRON@aol.com)

**Friday, June 19, 2020**

**Session Four: Baseball**

*The Celluloid Economics of John Sayle’s* “*Eight Men Out”*

Richard Black, Northwestern Missouri State University (RBLACK@nwmissouri.edu)

Based on the 1963 book by Eliot Asinof, John Sayles’ *Eight Men Out* was released on September 2, 1988 to mixed reviews. Roger Ebert called it “an oddly unfocused movie made of earth tones, sidelong glances and elliptic conversations” that is largely unintelligible to an audience not already familiar with the story of the 1919 Chicago Black Sox. In a much more sympathetic treatment, Janet Maslin of the *New York Times* reads the film as an unstinting story of “unwitting losers caught by forces far more powerful than their own winning spirit. Some of the team members are depicted as more eager to take a tumble than others, but all are seen by Mr. Sayles as pawns in a losing game.”

*Eight Men Out* possessed the highest budget of any of Sayles’ films to date, yet retained the same signature socio-political aesthetic that defined both his cinematic and literary work. Mark Bould, in *The Cinema of John Sayles*, characterizes Sayles’ oeuvre as being “engaged upon a mapping of American life, creating small-scale models which, through their social range and presentation of economic, social, and cultural determinants, become intensive totalities . . . Events are always connected to each other through networks of social and economic relationships, or, more accurately, are part of the same socio-economic fabric”. This paper provides a formalistic close reading of the *mise-en-scène* of *Eight Men Out* and how its filmic grammar visually maps a complex of deterministic socio-economic networks in dramatizing the story of the corrupted 1919 World’s Series.

*Percival Leary and Roy Hobbs: A Couple of Naturals*

Jaime Dopp, The University of Victoria(jdopp@uvic.ca)

Paul Quarrington's 1989 novel, *King Leary*, is perhaps the key text in Canada for the boom in hockey literature that has occurred in the last thirty years. Quite a lot of criticism has already been produced about *King Leary*, but one context that has yet to be explored is the way it echoes Bernard Malamud's *The Natural*—the 1952 novel that is perhaps the ur-text of modern sports fiction in the United States. What distinguishes *The Natural*, according to Michael Oriard, is not that its vision of baseball is necessarily “more penetrating” than previous writing, but that Malamud “deals with baseball [and by implication sport more generally] in a consciously mythic way” (Oriard 212). Malamud does this by combining in the story of his protagonist, Roy Hobbs, a remarkable number of events in baseball history that have been elevated to the status of myth. Hobbs himself has an "infantile obsession with the acquisition of fame” that suggests “the juvenility of the athlete-hero” as portrayed in popular sports literature (214). Quarrington's Percival Leary, the protagonist of *King Leary*, contains significant echoes of Roy Hobbs. Not only is Leary also a “natural” and also driven by an “infantile obsession” with fame, but many of the events attributed to him are hockey equivalents of the mythic events in baseball attributed by Malamud to Hobbs. Awareness of the parallels in technique and theme between *King Leary* and *The Natural,* then, might add significantly to the appreciation of Quarrington's novel, while also throwing some retrospective light back on Malamud.

*Fifty Years of Dazzling, Dizzying Threads: Anniversary of Pittsburgh Pirates Debuting Double Knits*

Ken Moon, Iowa Western Community College (kmoon@iwcc.edu)

When the Pittsburgh Pirates debuted in Three Rivers Stadium on July 16, 1970, they also made a fashion statement in new uniforms that would change the look of the game as much as the multi-purpose stadiums and artificial surface fields on which they and other teams played. Their white double-knit uniforms would spark a revolution in uniform design soon to be adopted by all twenty-four Major League teams within a couple years after that evening. The glitz and glamour of the “Swingin’ A’s” and “The Big Red Machine” started the night Roberto Clemente, Willie Stargell, and the other “Battlin’ Bucs” donned their stretch-tight synthetic threads.

**Session Five: Potpourri 1**

*The Wrong Jimenez*: Baseball Fiction

Scott Palmieri, Johnson and Wales University (spalmieri@jwu.edu)

*“(A)ngling, which I am learning through my senses, charges me with new life and purpose”: Embodiment, Empowerment, and Social Media in Women’s Fly Fishing*

Cory Willard, PhD Candidate University of Nebraska (coryglenwillard@gmail.com)

The classic image one has of a fly fisher is a middle-to upper-class white male with a tweed jacket or vest covered in pockets—maybe even smoking a cigar or pipe. In the North American consciousness, hypermasculine literary figures like Ernest Hemingway contributed a great deal to solidifying this image in the cultural imaginary. Almost a century after Hemingway published his classic short story “Big Two-Hearted River” and more than forty years after Norman Maclean published the Pulitzer Prize nominated *A River Runs Through It*, the white male fly fisher archetype endures. Statistically, this assumption might not be that far from the truth considering, according to the 2019 *Special Report on Fishing* prepared by the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation and the Outdoor Foundation, 73.5% of fly fishers are white and 70.4% of them are male (20.6% identifying as female) (28). While it is clear that sport fishing—and fly fishing, in particular—are often very white and male, this is beginning to change as new people enter the sport and various aspects of the fly fishing industry, such as guiding services, schools, and gear manufacturers, begin more actively to welcome women into the sport. Regardless of what the broader culture might tell us, however, women in fly fishing is not a new phenomenon. For instance, Joan Salvato Wulff is responsible for numerous innovations in the art of fly casting and fly fishing instruction. More recently, teenaged Maxine McCormick, dubbed “The Mozart of Fly Casting” in a 2018 *New York Times* article, had captured back-to-back world titles by the age of 14, outscoring 61-year-old Steve Rajeff, widely “considered the best fly caster of all time” (Pope). The simple truth is, while underacknowledged, the influence of women is all over the history and development of fly fishing in North America. Utilizing a reading of the 1954 Canadian novel *Swamp Angel* by Ethel Williams, the nonfiction book *Northern Waters* by Jan Zita Grover, and the current landscape of social media, this essay shall explore the contributions of women to fly fishing and the contributions of fly fishing to women’s lives.

*Abducting the Past: Sport History in Samantha Warwick’s “Sage Island” and Carrie Snyder’s “Girl Runner”*

Angie Abdou, Athabasca University (aabdou@athabascau.ca)

Why read historical fiction about sports? In “Why Read?” Rowland McMaster, the long-time editor of *English Studies in Canada*, draws on great thinkers across the centuries, most closely echoing Matthew Arnold, to argue that the benefit of literary study is in “the satisfaction of a scientific desire to see things as they really are and, by knowing others, to know ourselves.” Traditional approaches to sport history also accomplish both the seeing and the knowing that McMaster ascribes to the literary arts. What do novelists add to the discussion of historical sporting events and figures? In this paper, I consider two novels about 1920’s female athletes: Samantha Warwick’s *Sage Island* about marathon swimmers and Carrie Snyder’s *Girl Runner* about Olympic runners. Both novels include actual historical events and figures within the context of a fictionalized plot and protagonist. With the aim of being specific about what the lens of fiction brings to the study of sports, this paper will offer an exploration of the mutually beneficial relationship these two texts have with traditional approaches to sport history. It will ultimately put forth an argument about what fiction can add to sport history, particularly in terms of the emotive, empathetic, and immersive capacity of the literary arts.

**Session Six: Potpourri 2**

*Gilbert Patten and the Development of Juvenile Baseball Fiction: Lefty Locke and the Legacy of Frank Merriwell*

Ed Edmonds, Professor Emeritus, Notre Dame Law School (edmonds.7@nd.edu)

Gilbert Patten, writing under the pseudonym Burt L. Standish, wrote sixteen different juvenile baseball novels between 1914 and 1928, focusing on protagonist Lefty Locke in his “The Big League Series.” Patten was best known for his many Frank Merriwell stories, the dime novel hero of Street & Smith’s “Tip Top Weekly.” Beginning in 1896, Patten launched a prolific career that ultimately produced 200 Merriwell novels described by Ryan K. Anderson as “the Progressive era’s most popular fictional schoolboy athlete, [who] demonstrated that a manly boy was moral, but no mollycoddle.” The values of sportsmanship, honesty, and upright moral behavior became a staple of juvenile baseball fiction for the better part of the twentieth century. “The Big League Series” as well as the similar works of Howard R. Garis and Harold M. Sherman created the foundation that Clair Bee, Matt Christopher, Duane Decker, Wilfred McCormick, and John Tunis would carry through the rest of the century. Patten’s sixteen novels on Lefty Locke were very popular for boys as well as parents and school teachers trying to build reading skills and nurture values in the first half of last century. The presentation will focus on the Lefty Locke character and discuss the themes established in “The Big League Series.” While the 1920s are well-known for the Jazz Era and The Golden Age of Sports, they are less often associated with the development of an important form of juvenile literature.

*How the NFL Narrates the Violent Power of its most Iconic Piece of Equipment to Children.*

Noah Cohan, Washington University (ncohan@wustl.edu)

“If you want to prevent concussions,” said former NFL All-Pro wide receiver Hines Ward in 2012, “take the helmet off: Play old-school football with the leather helmets, no facemask. When you put a helmet on you’re going to use it as a weapon.” Ward shares this idea with others—in the face of insurmountable evidence that traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) are endemic to modern American football, many believe a relative lack of head and face coverings would spur a return to rugby-style tackling that would, in turn, make the sport safer. But whether Ward and company are correct in this belief, what *is* football without helmets?

This paper examines the cultural significance of football’s most iconic piece of equipment via the way it is explained to children, paying particular attention to words and images from three DK Eyewitness books: *Football*, *Sports,* and *Super Bowl.* Part of the larger Dorling Kindersley Eyewitness series, the books bear its hallmarks, presenting large photographs and illustrations on a white background with small explanatory text boxes providing context. I examine the ways the books detail the safety features of the helmet, as well as its symbolic value as a marker of masculinity and toughness therein, and explore the ramifications of that presentation for children beginning their relationship with the sport—as fans, players, or both. In the course of doing so, I will, of course, grapple with the concussion crisis and the ways in which new knowledge about CTEs and other TBIs is changing the cultural role of the game. But I will also consider the aesthetics of the football helmet as a material object, and the way in which this particular form has become so synonymous with the game that it is difficult to imagine the sport without it.

L*ucky Charms and Pro Stars: Saturday Mornings with Gretzky, Jordan, and Bo*

Kyle Belanger, Springfield College (kbelanger2@springfieldcollege.edu)

The late-1980s and early-1990s provided a crossroads into the modern era of popular American sports. Specifically, it was during this time that the marketplace for sports culture began to skew much more directly towards children than ever before. The explosion of the sports card industry, combined with the boom of the Saturday morning cartoon landscape, as well as the home video-game revolution, to create the perfect environment for the animated series “Pro Stars” to launch. For 13 Saturdays at the end of 1991, “Pro Stars” allowed animated versions of Wayne Gretzky, Michael Jordan, and Bo Jackson to lurch their way into the living rooms of kids nationwide, awkwardly using their athletic superpowers to teach kids about topics like bullying, inclusion, fear of ghosts, and the impending robot takeover of humankind.

Created by Andy Heyward and Douglas Booth, “Pro Stars” acted as a pre-YouTube era conduit for young sports fans to “get to know” their sports icons. However, in the animated pre-social media environment, these cultural icons were hardly ready to be speaking directly to children. The result was a painful series of pre-recorded soundstage “lectures,” followed by 7-minute force-fed animated allegories.

**Session Seven: Remembering**

*The Quietude of Contemporary African American Sports Poetry*

Emily Rutter, Ball State University (ERRUTTER@BSU.EDU)

If American sports history is understood through its spectacular flashpoints, African American sports history is often characterized by tales of racial marginalization and exceptional triumph. Moreover, because of the tendency to focus on the public rather than the private realm, sports enthusiasts rarely pay attention to athletes’ interiority. When African American players’ emotional and psychological experiences are attended to, they are typically viewed through the lens of what W.E.B. Du Bois conceives of as double consciousness, or the constant awareness of the white-supremacist gaze. Drawing on Kevin Quashie’s theorization of *quiet*, the proposed essay will instead shed light on dynamic interiority that remains shielded from concerns with public reception. As Quashie argues, when we focus on “the full range of one’s inner life—one’s desires, ambitions, hungers, vulnerabilities, fears,” we can begin to debunk the assumption that blackness is always “engaged with how it is imagined publicly.” Turning to recent lyric poetry—perhaps the genre most valued for its distillation of feeling—the essay will explore representations of the *quiet* lives of past and present African American athletes. Specifically, I will examine two collections—Kevin Young’s *Brown* (2018) and E. Ethelbert Miller’s *If God Invented Baseball* (2018)—and their attention to the wide-ranging feelings that do not often get reported or recorded but nonetheless testify to the interiority of figures the public knows more as athletic machines than as complex human beings.

*Here is Where We Live: Creative Non-fiction*

Shelly Sanders, Abilene Christian University (mrw95v@acu.edu)

*Remembering Dennis Gildea*

Kyle Belanger

*Tracking Tanzania’s Greatest Runner: Filbert Bayi as a Case Study in Writing About African Distance Athletes in the Post-Colonial Era*

Myles Schrag, Northern Arizona University (mylesschrag@yahoo.com)

This paper traces the racing and post-racing legacy of Tanzania’s greatest runner, Filbert Bayi. Special attention is paid to accounts of Bayi through the years by Western journalists, a case study in how writers unfamiliar with a culture divine meaning in the absence of certainty. Bayi burst onto the running scene in the mid-1970s, becoming the first black man to set world records in the 1500 meters and the mile run, doing so with a revolutionary run-from-the-front approach. At the time, the east African domination of distance events was still in its infancy. Kip Keino of Kenya had shown the world a glimpse of the future in 1968 with his multi-event performance at the Mexico City Olympics. Fans and media in the Western world didn’t know what to make of the increasing number of Kenyans, Ethiopians, and other Africans who were beginning to compete internationally. Looking back on those articles is to see writers acknowledging their ignorance, out of full disclosure or convenience.

This practice is not unlike centuries of colonial-era writers who used their access to tell a compelling story about unknown people with little regard for the truth. At times this was done with the purpose of exploiting subjugated peoples. No such condemnation is made during this post-colonial era, though the larger question—what these more recent writers’ motives are—is always appropriate when analyzing literary work and will be addressed here. An engaging personal story that extends from a stellar career on the track through a retirement spent in philanthropic efforts and as a leader in his country’s national athletic administration, Bayi is the subject of a current book project in cooperation with the paper’s author. The final product will, I hope, express an appreciation for Bayi’s groundbreaking but occasionally overlooked body of work and a life lived with integrity, thereby continuing a 21st century trend toward ensuring global voices are able to be heard

**Saturday, June 20, 2020**

**Session Eight: The Final Lap**

*Blood Bone and Fairy Tales: Sports and Magical Realism in the Short Fiction of Tessa Mellas and Meagan Cass*

Mark Baumgartner, East Tennessee State University (baumgartnerm@etsu.edu)

The presentation will focus on the confluence of sports and magical realism in two recent collections of short stories. Tessa Mellas’ collection *Lungs Full of Noise* won the 2013 Iowa Fiction Award, and her work has been featured in *StoryQuarterly*, *Fugue*, *Phoebe* and *Crazyhorse*. Meagan Cass’ collection *ActivAmerica* won the Katherine Anne Porter Prize in 2017, and her work has been featured in *Puerto del Sol*, *PANK* and *Aethlon*. I’m particularly interested in speculative imaginings of the human body, and how these writers’ work might differ from now-classic stories by someone like Stuart Dybek. Special attention will be paid to my experiences teaching short fiction and magical realism in a sport literature course.

10:35 *Fiction Reading from “Sugarloaf Triptych”*

Bruce Pratt, University of Maine (obdriveway@aol.com)

“What Binds Us To This Place.”

Joel Sronce (joel.sronce@gmail.com)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Faom4UIoGkA&fbclid=IwAR314AswFrWrC1g5QJQ-d80JM8JmMVQ5N7gnX4CXARskYwzg7mnhlM-efnY>

Though the film itself doesn’t intersect with sports, the broader context certainly does. During the cafeteria workers' strike in 1969, the workers received essential support from UNC's Black Student Movement organization on campus, which included the voices of Charlie Scott and Bill Chamberlain, the first two Black male scholarship basketball players at UNC. What's more, I've done research that illuminates how three of the most prominent campus-worker actions at UNC over the past 50 years received important solidarity from Black student athletes. This includes a housekeepers' movement in the 1990s, during which four Black football players began something called the Black Awareness Council, which led rallies and marches on campus. Then, in December 2018, when graduate workers, mainly teaching assistants, such as myself, began collectively to withhold our grades due to the university's proposal to re-erect a Confederate statue on campus, something called the Black Athlete Statement was released. Signed by household names such as Vince Carter, Jerry Stackhouse, Harrison Barnes, and more, its powerful language and solidarity with campus activists helped to push the university's Board of Governors to refuse the university's proposal. A history of such solidarity provides important considerations for the future of both campus workers and student athletes, as calls for change grow louder once again.”

*Social, Cultural, and Political Issues found in Football Poetry*

“Complex Masculinity as Performed in Football Poetry,” Gabrielle Hines (University of Missouri—St. Louis) gh6df@umsl.edu

By close reading and analyzing “Perfect Hit” by Ron Smith, “Mercy” by Temple Cone, and “Prison Chaplain” by Timothy Murphy (concentrating on the latter), I evaluated the football players’ performances of masculinity in football poetry. I discovered that the speakers were most empowered, not when they embodied only traditionally masculine traits such as strength and competition, but when they fused them with traditionally feminine qualities like peace and compassion. I examined these qualities through the lens of a behavioral study by Jesse Steinfeldt and his colleagues, “Bullying Among Adolescent Football Players: Role of Masculinity and Moral Atmosphere.” To simplify, the study found that the young football players sampled were more likely to condone bullying if they felt that their friends and male role models also condoned it. I found the narrative described in football poetry to be counter to the one that the results of Steinfeld’s study described. For this reason, it is important that more writers and artists voice their truths and experiences with regards to embodying qualities beside the tough exterior expected of football players in order to craft constructive media role models that can inspire young athletes.

“Nostalgia, Destruction, and Youth Football,” Emily Pott (University of Missouri—St. Louis)pott.emily@wgmail.org

“Nostalgia, Destruction, and Football” examines why communities honor the tradition of high school football, and even encourage young athletes to participate, given the known risks of the sport. To answer these questions, I considered football poetry, such as “Fall, Nebraska” by Don Welch, “The Freshman Football Game” by Michael Bettencourt, and “American Football” by Richard Katrovas. I also studied work from Don Johnson, Noah Cohen, and Ronald A. Smith, as well as footage of football concussions.

The findings indicated that despite the physical and mental trauma that young football players can experience, they are temporarily regarded as heroes by their participation in the sport. Furthermore, communities use football and young players to preserve their own positive memories of the past. This is significant because most of the young athletes are looking for guidance at this time in their lives, and it is important for their communities to recognize them beyond their performance in a football game. Positive change can come from an understanding of the reasons for continuing traditions, and young athletes will benefit.

“What do Stadiums Say”? Malaya Siy (St. Louis University) malayasiy@gmail.com

This paper analyzes gender stratification as represented in the stadium experience. Stadiums are a place of change and a platform for unheard voices. Looking at documentaries, poetry, and real-life athletes, it becomes obvious that there are double standards when it comes to women and other minorities entering the sports stadium. It is important to recognize people, regardless of sex and gender, as equals in the stadium and beyond.