***PROCEEDINGS OF***

**SPORT LITERATURE ASSOCIATION**

**38th Annual Conference**

**Virtual Edition**

***Compiled by Charmayne Mulligan***



 **June 23-26, 2021**

**Host: Fred Mason**

**Program Chair: Kasey Symons**

**ZOOM Facilitator: Jeremy Larance**

**Wednesday, June 23, 2021**

Welcome

Host: Fred Mason

President: Bruce Pratt

Housekeeping and Zoom: Jeremy Larance

**Session One: Fantasy and Fiction – Panel Chair: Angie Abdou**

***Non-player Performances: An Examination of the Roles Non-male Characters are Allocated in Australian Sports Fiction Related to Two Codes of Football***

Lee McGowan, University of the Sunshine Coast, lmcgowa1@usc.edu.au

 & Kasey Symons, Swinburne University of Technology, ksymons@swin.edu.au

Women have been playing two versions of football – soccer and football by Australian rules – in Australia, almost continually, for over a century (see Syson, Hay and Downes 2015, Hess 2013, Williams 2007). In contrast, their inclusion and representation in fictional narratives related to these sports is relatively recent and limited (See Symons 2018 and McGowan 2019, McGowan and Downes 2018). Where female characters are foregrounded, they are rarely ever players. As participants in the landscape of their respective games, female characters are most often “relegated,” through gendered performances (Butler 1993, 1990), to the role of fan, player partner, or organisational facilitator, such as catering, kit-cleaning and player transportation. Through the use of textual (McKee 2003) and comparative analysis, this paper considers tensions and divergences in the portrayal of female characters in exemplars across the two sports and the ways their under-representations are informed, and arguably defined, by their relationship to the similar roles occupied by their male counterparts in narratives focused on these respective codes of football.

***The Silent Return of Football: Don DeLillo’s The Silence***

Tristan Ireson-Howells, Canterbury Christ Church University, tristan.ireson-howells@canterbury.ac.uk

In Don DeLillo’s latest novel, *The Silence* (2020), a middle-aged married couple named Diane and Max are waiting for their friends to arrive for a Super Bowl party. They are joined by Diane’s student Martin and, just as the game begins, the TV goes blank, and all phones and computers die. The group are confronted not by the theatrics of sporting spectacle, but by a disconcerting silence. The world is seemingly left without technology and Max is left to stare in bemusement at the blank TV screen and invent his own game as he narrates not only the on-field action, but the commercials that no one is watching. Themes of oblivion and technological disaster echo DeLillo’s earlier football novel *End Zone* (1972) and, although *The Silence* is centred on the absence of the game, the relationship between the two works shows an author returning to themes of his early career namely technological apocalypse, violence and ascetism. I explore some of the similarities in these works a­nd reflect more broadly on DeLillo’s fascination with American sport. More than anything else, *The Silence* is an alarmingly resonant book because of its parallels to our current pandemic. Once more, DeLillo’s work has a prophetic feel. It pre-empts a new version of spectatorship, to which we have become accustomed, with athletes competing in empty stadiums and the surreal silence of absent fandom.

***Ireland of Sports and Scholars: Sporting Sites in Irish literature***

Gráinne Daly, University College Dublin, grainne.daly1@ucdconnect.ie

This paper interrogates the geography of sporting sites in Irish literature. Taking sporting spaces as those in which collective memory is reproduced and contested, it seeks to examine the ways in which Ireland’s sporting spaces are implicated in the politics of memory, and how they serve as literary embodiments of memorial consciousness. Building on Pierre Nora’s research into ‘lieux de mémoire,’ this paper will consider Ireland’s sportscape as a repository of collective social, cultural and political memory. It will examine the literary elision of cultural remembrance and sporting space in works by Irish writers and will include analysis of my current novel in progress, *The Game*. As sport and literature align to allow the Irish imagination pursue its quest for identity on the pitch and the page, a selection of works ranging from the nineteenth century to contemporary works will also be considered. Key literary players from Katherine Tynan through Joyce, O’Casey and more recent works by Dermot Bolger, Paul Howard and Roddy Doyle will be explored.

***Strange Visitations: Fantasy and Memory in Meagan Cass’s ActivAmerica***

Mark D. Baumgartner, East Tennessee State University, baumgartnerm@mail.etsu.edu

The proposed conference presentation will focus on the confluence of sports and fiction in Meagan Cass’s recent collection of short stories, *ActivAmerica* (2017). *ActivAmerica* won the Katherine Anne Porter Prize in 2017, and Meagan Cass’s work has been featured in *Puerto del Sol*, *PANK*, *Mojo*, and *Aethlon*. UNT Press describes the collection as follows: “Drawing from fairy tales, ghost stories, and science fiction, the stories in *ActivAmerica* explore how we confront (and exert) power and re-imagine ourselves through sports and athletic activities.” I’m particularly interested in the confluence of memory and fantasy, and how contemporary sport fiction might differ from a now-classic story such as Stuart Dybek’s “Death of the Right Fielder.” Special attention will be paid to my experiences teaching short fiction in a sport literature course. This paper will continue some of the ideas I discussed regarding sports and magical realism in my 2020 SLA paper, “Blood, Bone and Fairy Tales: Sports and Magical Realism in Tessa Mellas’ ‘Mariposa Girls.’”

**Session Two: Creative Session I – Panel Chair: Emily Ruth Rutter**

***Alex The Amazing***

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

***The Crazy Coyote Chase***

Scott Palmieri, Johnson & Wales University, scott.palmieri@jwu.edu

On all days but this one, a middle-aged man wearing a coyote mask, pedaling his bicycle near a school, would raise concern. But not here, at the Crazy Coyote Chase, the annual fundraiser for my daughter’s middle school. The 5K is over, but it will never be forgotten, its runners gnawing orange slices, tracing names on results lists, tossing numbered tickets in baskets. There are still mutterings over the chaos, what will surely go down in the annals of PTO infamy. “The Crazy Coyote Chase” narrates the strangely funny circumstances of a middle school fundraiser gone awry, a race with committed adult runners competing for their best time clashing with the very amateur Parent-Teacher-Organization race coordinators and their amateur racing children, all led astray by the failings of a disoriented school mascot. Amidst the quotidian chaos of the race day scandal, a recent tragic death overshadows the event, with one middle school racer absent due to her immeasurable loss. This piece of creative non-fiction demonstrates the ridiculous and redeemable nature of the local common sports experience, how every athletic event, every inconspicuous run, is a celebration of life and a reminder of those we have lost between start lines.

***Excerpt from “SPORTOPIA” a YA novel-in-progress***

Scott D. Peterson, University of Missouri—St. Louis, sdpeterson1890@gmail.com & Shelly Sanders, Abilene Christian University, shelly.sanders@acu.edu

“SPORTOPIA” tells the stories of a young woman and a young man navigating a near-future world where mind-and time-travelling may be possible, and the Sports Media Commercial Complex serves as the basis for 95% of the nation’s economy. Before their tenth birthday, young athletes are bracketed into competitive roles (Comps) and support roles (non-Comps). Fan technology has progressed to the point that ATH-SIM software allows audiences to have a fully-immersive experience of the competition from the point-of-view of the athlete on the field or the court: “Don’t just be like Mike—Become Mike.” But all is not well in SPORTOPIA: a certain percentage of the top athletes are getting sick with a mysterious illness and dying young. Our reading from this SF novel focuses on the stories of Aly Ross, a top Comp beginning her career in 2060, and Trace Jones, a non-Comp working within the press corps of Coach Kronkite, the de facto leader of the society, in 2036.

***Fantasy Baseball***

William Bonfiglio, University of New Brunswick, wbonfig@gmail.com

**Thursday, June 24, 2021**

**Session Three: Baseball and Basketball - Panel Chair: Phil Wedge**

***Baseball and Beloved Community in the Poetry of E. Ethelbert Miller***

Emily Ruth Rutter, Ball State University, errutter@bsu.edu

In his recent poetry collections, *If God Invented Baseball* (2018) and the forthcoming *When Your Wife Has Tommy John Surgery* (2021), E. Ethelbert Miller offers an aspirational vision for both baseball and America while enjoining readers to contemplate the yawning gap between the ideals we espouse and the inequities that structure our sociopolitical and economic landscape. In the proposed paper, I examine Miller’s lyric use of baseball as a worldview, with its codes, rituals, and history providing a framework for understanding the particular struggles and joys of being Black in America. Congruent with Martin Luther King, Jr.’s, June Jordan’s, and bell hooks’s conceptions of beloved community, Miller invokes baseball as a way of knowing in order to both subvert hegemonic narratives and nurture an appreciation for human complexity and difference. For Miller, the proposed paper concludes, baseball is not a diversion from the sociopolitical work at hand but instead a key site for both reckoning with America’s rampant racial injustices and for realizing his vision of the equitable, affirmative community that could govern both the sport and the nation.

***(Pas)time Travel: Cinematic Baseball and Its Time-Traveling Function in Frequency (2001) and Charlie St. Cloud (2010)***

Will Bishop, Baker University, williambishop@fac.bakeru.edu

The sub-genre of baseball fiction is certainly no stranger to cross-pollination with the fantasy genre. Magic, miracles, ghosts, the fantastic, portals to alternate worlds—such fare is not exactly a rare find among the pages of baseball-focused literature nor in baseball film. One fantasy device, time travel, curiously seems to be particularly common and prominent. The print fiction of Canadian-American author W.P. Kinsella and perhaps especially the popular film *Field of Dreams* (1989), based on one of Kinsella’s novels, may have been particularly important in establishing the paradigms of baseball time travel and the meanings it takes on. This influence is evident in two mainstream films from the past twenty years that are ostensibly not about baseball, but nevertheless feature a conjunction of the game and some form of time travel as a key element in their plots. The baseball details and imagery that color the time travel plots in *Frequency* (2001) and *Charlie St. Cloud* (2010) suggest a specific cultural meaning and usefulness of baseball to Americans, one consistent with the portrayal of the game in *Field of Dreams*. The ability of baseball to help connect protagonists with deceased family members in all three films speaks to the idea—one perhaps especially prominent in the collective imagination of popular cinema—that baseball has the unique ability to connect Americans with their past and to link families across generations.

***The Camera Lens Over the Plate Ump’s Eyes— ‘It’s not personal. It strictly business.’***

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

As Michael Corleone’s famous line from *The Godfather* suggests, Major League Baseball, as much as it may deny it, through its 2019 experiment with the Atlantic League to use cameras to track balls and strikes in those minor league games, could signal the beginning of the end of the home plate umpire. The paper reports the agreement between Major League Baseball and the Atlantic League where, among other experiments MLB hired the Atlantic League to perform, that league set up a camera recording system and outfitted plate umpires with hearing devices to assist them in calling balls and strikes. This paper proposes that, though just an experiment designed only to see how camera technology could assist umpires in calling balls and strikes, Major League Baseball could actually be considering changes to umpiring personnel that ultimately would eliminate the plate umpire altogether. Viewpoints from Commissioner Rob Manfred, the Umpire’s Union, and a number of MLB Players are considered.

***One Last Drop: The Process of Creating a Memoir – The Ripple Effects of Alcohol, Athletics, and Love***

Ryan Stock, Independent Scholar, ryan@mymindsport.com

The author will present the process of writing the non-fiction memoir *One Last Drop*, a powerful non-fiction work that began as a simple journaling exercise while recovering from a dependence on alcohol. What Stock discovered in the journaling process was alcohol wasn’t the problem, it wasn’t his checkered relationship past, and it wasn’t his successful athletic and coaching career that he was yet to accept and move on from—Stock lacked self-love. After 90 days, 60,000 words, a lot of yoga and meditation, and then an eventual acceptance and release of his past life, the book was finished. The uniquely structed memoir-style book addresses the culmination of Stock’s struggles with alcohol, athletics, and love in a Forrest Gump-like tale of past athletic and personal events that catch the reader up to the current day. Each chapter, or day, within the book is written in letter form to his 4-year-old son looking back in time at the highs and lows of these powerful areas of Stock’s life. These letters give the reader incredible insight to the first 30 days of recovery, and the roller coaster of emotions that entails, as the reader learns about the author’s past and the early process of recovery.

**Session Four: Special Session - Panel Chair: Mark Noe**

Dick Crepeau

Phil Wedge

Duncan Jamieson

Shelley Sanders

**Session Five: Representation of Women in Sporting Narratives: Angie Abdou**

***Minority Sportswomen in Chinese films: Social Integration Facing Gender Stereotypes and Ethnic Identities***

Siyao Lin, University of Limoges, siyao.lin@etu.unilim.fr & Thomas Bauer, University of Limoges, thomas.bauer@unilim.fr

Sociologists usually compare the relationship between the ethnic majority and minorities to the gender hierarchy, for women and minorities are both objectified identities. This argument is proved by numerous stereotypes shared by these two groups (passive, fragile, in need of help, etc.) in the cinema, especially in sports films where male domination can be powerful. If there are prolific film studies in gender and ethnic issues respectively, the cross-analysis of these two groups remains largely overlooked. Through an analysis of four Chinese sports films in the 21st century — *Maimaiti’s 2008* by Xirzat Yahup (2008), *A Girl of Archery Village* of Guang Chunlan (2013), *40 000 Kilometers* by Keke (2017), and *Running like Wind* by Zhong Hai (2017), this paper attempts to present the images of Chinese minority sportswomen stuck between gender stereotypes and ethnic identities. After an introduction of Chinese minorities’ situation and their representation in media, we show how some common features of the four chosen films, such as plentiful dancing scenes, indicate popular stereotypes about minority people and obstruct their social integration, a process particularly hard for minority women because of gender inequality. We conclude that modern sport can contribute to the social integration of minority women, but its efficiency is largely exaggerated by excessive media coverage of the few successful cases.

***Lesley Visser as told by Lesley Visser: A Review and Close Reading of Her 2017 Memoir Sometimes You Have to Cross When It Says Don’t Walk***

Kyle Belanger, Springfield College, kbelanger2@springfieldcollege.edu

While issues of inclusion in sports have just recently entered the discussion in popular culture, trailblazers like broadcasting and journalistic titan Lesley Visser have been clearing the path for decades. As the only woman enshrined in the Pro Football Hall of Fame, and to present the Vince Lombardi Trophy at the Super Bowl, her half-century sports career has survived and outlasted countless media trends—and is still motoring forward today. Visser’s 2017 “Memoir of Breaking Barriers” puts the spotlight on her place in the modern American sports pantheon, offering an honest glimpse into the glamourous and not-so-savory moments of the journey. This presentation will provide a full review of the book, as well as attempting to contextualize Visser’s overall impact on the continued quest for authentic gender inclusion in the sports and sports media space.

***Stuck in a Rut: The Arrested Development of Girl Hockey Goaltenders in Film***

Jamie Ryan, Queen's University, jamieson.ryan@queensu.ca

The “weird goalie” stereotype is arguably one of the dominant myths within hockey culture, and the hockey film genre is partially responsible for the promotion and maintenance of this stereotype. However, adult and children’s hockey films signal their goaltenders’ deviation in drastically different ways: goalies in adult-oriented hockey films are marked as different through their strange behaviour while in children’s hockey films goalies are often marked as different through their gender; for instance, in the common trope of the girl goaltender on a boys’ team. My paper will discuss notable girl goaltenders like Julie “The Cat” Gaffney from *The Mighty Ducks* (1992-1996) and Lisa Simpson from *The Simpsons* episode “Lisa on Ice” (1994). Sports films, especially those aimed at children, tend to be extremely pedagogical with the hero, and team, learning a lesson to become better players and people. However, in these works, the girl goaltenders fail the central themes of their respective movie/television episode while the rest of the team fulfills them, and so these films suggest girl goaltenders cannot properly grow or have a future in hockey; they are stuck in their biological sex, which in hockey films is often depicted as a site of arrested development. I argue that girl goaltenders are often subtly excluded from the happy endings of their respective films (and television episode), and in turn from the happy futures that sports endings so often imply.

***Fooooore-ward into Suffrage: How Women Used Golf Poetry & Prose to Win the Vote***

Liz Wilkinson, University of St. Thomas, wilk9056@stthomas.edu

In a 20-minute talk, this paper investigates sports and suffrage. Rarely do scholars of either feminism or sport discuss the intertwining of sports with the women’s rights movement, despite the fact that women athletes have been integral to championing the movement since the 1870s. The fight for rights emerges in part from the “founding fathers’” decision to disenfranchise women, as well as the narratives concocted to justify that disenfranchisement. One narrative, continually disproved by female athletes, was that women were too weak to defend their vote (voting being much more physically taxing in the early days of the U.S. democratic experiment). Similarly, women were discouraged from competitive athletics because of their perceived frailty and because to show exertion was simply (for white, middle and upper classes) improper. Additionally, suffrage opponents argued that both voting and sports would distract women from domestic duties. In response, publications as diverse as *Outing Magazine* and *The Women’s Journal and Suffrage News* included interesting poetry and prose about female athletes, and specifically about female golfers, who successfully combined sport and voting with domesticity. Two such examples, “Golf Lullaby” and “Even Golf Fails to Ruin Home” use humor, the proverbial spoonful of sugar, to make the point that women were capable of being athletes and enfranchised voters while still fulfilling their prescribed duties as wives and mothers. It wasn’t perfect and arguably resembles a 19th Century version of Sandberg’s “leaning in,” but for its time this heady combination of sport and feminist activism was revolutionary.

***“This is how it always ends” (Abdou 227): Fictionally Examining Inadequacies in Developmental Systems for Female Canadian Athletes***

Hannah Anderson, University of Calgary, hannah.anderson@ucalgary.ca

In an athletic system founded upon and constructed around Pierre De Coubertin’s assertion of the Olympic Games as “the solemn and periodic exaltation of male athleticism… with the applause of women as a reward,” female athletes are not only displaced, but set at an immediate and irrevocable disadvantage (qtd. in Schweinbnez 655). Though female athletes’ participation in Canadian sport has grown in recognition since the founding of the Games, popular culture rarely produces or acknowledges female athletics outside of a visually performative context – in disciplines such as ballet, figure skating, and gymnastics – and seldom within a Canadian context (Sandoz 1999). Exploring the intricacies of Canadian varsity rowing, my novel *Spatial* examines individual performance, team dynamic, pressures placed on developing athletes and their coaches, and the methods in which athletic institutions hinder female athletes’ ability to remain engaged in Canadian sport. The genre of sports literature is still limited, not only by the variety of sports disciplines shown, but also in the way authors and creators approach these stories. Female protagonists in such works are presented as not only purveyors of a societally curated aesthetic, but as outliers as well; in their limited representation, the athletes are the chosen few deemed worthy of attention and success in high performance sport. The only way to combat this perception is to inject more female sports narratives into the literary canon, making “[sport] more than just a background, [and rather] a dramatic engine for exploring socialization and self-image, femininity and power,” thereby legitimizing the experiences of female competitors, including those who are not Olympians (Vincentelli 2018).

**Friday, June 25, 2021**

**Session Six: Wickets, Wrestling and Wolves – Panel Chair: Cory Willard**

***England, Their England by A.G Macdonell***

Andy Harvey, Swansea University, a.n.harvey@swansea.ac.uk

*England, Their England* (1933) by Scottish novelist, A. G. Macdonell, has been variously described as a gentle satire comparable to Jerome K. Jerome’s *Three Men in a Boat*, but also as a love letter to his southern compatriots. The novel depicts the quaint and idiosyncratic ‘customs and society, with memorable characters and hilarious set-pieces that capture the essence of quintessential Englishness’ (8). *England, Their England* is often acknowledged as a roman-a-clef, and a certain amount of fun can be had in identifying the historical figures, including Nancy Astor and Noel Coward, that lay behind the book’s characters. Set between the two world wars of the twentieth century, the novel can also be read as a counterpoint to D.H Lawrence’s, *England, My England* which explored English society from the standpoint of a cultural insider, whereas Macdonell shines his light from the position of a curious, often bemused, but friendly outsider. Sports of all kinds abound in the novel, indicating an irrational national obsession with games of all sorts, such as golf and rugby. However, the book’s most famous chapter is its representation of a village cricket match and the St John’s Cricket Club – the Invalids – that still play today. The paper will discuss the place of sport in English society between the wars, and will use the novel as an entry point to explore the sporting life of Noel Coward and how it might question normative notions of sporting masculinity that persisted in the 1920s and 30s.

***From the Wrong Side of the Tracks: The Boxer and Society in Steven Heighton's The Shadow Boxer***

Adrian Markle, adrian.markle@falmouth.ac.uk

Raised in thoroughly working-class Sault Ste Marie, the protagonist of Steven Heighton’s contemporary Can Lit classic *The Shadow Boxer*, Sevigne, aspires to embody the Hemingway-esque boxer-writer archetype, and he fights and writes as much as he is able. Yet these two callings, fighting and writing, are not complementary. In fact, as this paper will show, the lower-class activity of boxing and the higher-class activity of creative practice are mutually exclusive; at a universal level, engagement with fighting precludes success with writing. Sevigne is ultimately only able to begin to find the success he desires in the realm of higher-class pursuits after the symbolic destruction of the lower-class self.

***Coaching The Wolves: Movement Dramaturgy and the Great Sport Myth***

David Kilpatrick, Mercy College, dkilpatrick@mercy.edu

During the summer of 2019, in the early stages of planning for an Advanced Acting class production of Sarah DeLappe’s *The Wolves* at New York City’s Repertory Company High School for Theatre Arts, teacher-director Rob McIntosh posted a call for help on Facebook. How can he prepare his student-actors to play like soccer players by the time they perform the play, late January 2020? A high school friend of his suggested me. This presentation will explore the unique challenges posed with a staging of *The Wolves*: the process utilized to train actors to play their roles as soccer players. Although no match play occurs on stage during the play, much of the dialogue occurs as players are warming up. If the actors do not have the technical foundation to execute fundamental player actions appropriate for elite athletes, any production of the play will fail for lack of verisimilitude – a mimetic problem for any staging or screening of sport-related fiction. The presentation will also examine the engagement with the play as a work of dramatic literature and its theatrical staging, as the play was studied concurrently with a section of Honors English students at Mercy College, who read and discussed the script before and after attending the live production. The concept of the Great Sport Myth, elaborated by Jay Coakley as a foundational principle of sport sociology, which assumes the inherent goodness in sport participation, provided a valuable perspective to allow students to consider major themes at stake in the play. The play itself offers an unflinching look into the world of adolescent sport. The presentation will explore how staging and studying the play provides a unique case study that reveals core thematic concerns at the intersections of sport, literature, pedagogy, and performance.

***Staging Soccer: Sport Actualization in Sarah DeLappe’s Play The Wolves***

Philip Wedge , University of Kansas, pwedge@ku.edu

In her preface to *The Wolves* (2018), while explicitly asserting the play is not about her own personal experience — “I did not play soccer in high school” —Sarah DeLappe claims, as writers of sport literature sometimes claim of their own works, that her play “is not really about soccer” (DeLappe 9). DeLappe does develop themes which reach beyond the sports field, about teens being forced to see the reality of a harsh world outside “the bubble” of sheltered lives; as DeLappe puts it, “they are desperate to understand themselves and the world around them, but they can only see so far” (DeLappe 9). After reading the play and seeing it performed at the University of Kansas in December 2019 (DeLappe, *The Wolves*), however, I must say, this is an outstanding play because it manages to bring sport onto the stage more effectively than any sports play I’m familiar with has done before. In fact, from the moment the play opens until it ends with the players chanting “We are the Wolves” (DeLappe, *The Wolves* 175), the characters and the play’s audience always connect on the playing field itself.

**Session Seven: Virtual Business Meeting**

**Session Eight: Creative Session II – Panel Chair: Adrian Markle**

***In Praise of Boring: Reflections of a Lost Hiker***

Angie Abdou, Athabasca University, aabdou@athabascau.ca

Disillusioned with overly competitive organized sport and concerned about my daughter's growing shyness, I suggested a summer mother-daughter challenge: hiking a peak a week together. I imagined we'd bond in nature and discover together the glories of unstructured outdoor activities, nature family time. What could go wrong? Well among other things, it turned out that I love hiking, but Katie does not. I tell the story of these adventures in my forthcoming book *This One Wild Life*. I'd like to read an excerpt that comes from late in the book, after Katie has abandoned the challenge, and I have developed great confidence after a full summer of hikes. I've followed the typical arch of outdoor adventure (Cautious, Comfortable, Confident, Cocky, Crash) and bring my friend, Jowita Bydlowska, along for the crash. This 15-minute excerpt extracts the lessons from a casual hike that ended in a longline helicopter rescue.

***Reading from Driving Lessons***

Jamie Dopp, University of Victoria, jdopp@uvic.ca

***Baseball, Briefly: A Reading of Short Fiction***

Holly Wendt, Lebanon Valley College, wendt@lvc.edu

Baseball, with its reflective pauses, storied personalities, and affinity for metaphor, lends itself well to literary pursuits, amassing a canon of much-celebrated prose and poetry alike. In this reading, I propose to share three pieces of flash fiction. Each piece explores the potentialities in baseball for meaning-making, from the ivy-clad imaginative depths of Wrigley Field to the overlap of beginnings and endings in Spring Training to the way the firm clarities of umpiring might be blurred, softened, or queered. My fiction has previously appeared in *Sport Literate*, *Gray’s Sporting Journal*, *The Prairie Schooner Anthology of Contemporary Sports Writing*, *Gulf Stream*, *Hobart*, *Memorious*, and elsewhere.

***Take Your Mark: Excerpt from a Novel-in-Progress***

Anne Greenawalt, Independent Scholar, greenawalt.a@gmail.com

When members of an elite age group swimming girls medley relay team reconvene as adults at a fundraiser for their club team, their old coach challenges them to train for and compete in a master’s swim meet. Each woman has a different relationship with herself, her body, and her swimming history, and this challenge reopens childhood wounds that never fully healed. Their return to swimming forces the women to revisit and reflect on the highs and lows of their elite childhood swimming careers. Through scrapbook items like photos, newspaper articles, notes passed in class, training logs, journal entries, art projects, and other bricolage, in addition to good old-fashioned storytelling, this story follows the girls through age group national victories, a break up in high school when two girls are recruited to top-tier boarding schools, to college where only two of them are still competing, and into adulthood where they thought they had moved on with their lives but are still products of their early swimming careers. This novel is an exploration of the adult lives of former swimmers and how that early sports career shaped the rest of their lives in ways they could have never anticipated. For this creative presentation, I share the fragments of the women’s stories as they are contemplating whether or not to accept their coach’s challenge.

**Session Nine: Guest speaker, poetry and cocktail hour - Panel Chair: Fred Mason**

**Writing Myself into History: Author Subjectivity in Reclaiming Tom Longboat**

Special guest speaker - Janice Forsyth, Western University. Introduced by Fred Mason

Janice Forsyth, member of the Fisher River Cree First Nation, is an Associate Professor in Sociology and Director of Indigenous Studies at Western University in London, Ontario. Her research focuses on Indigenous-settler relations in Canada told through the lens of sport. In 2019, she was elected to the College of the Royal Society of Canada for her research and advocacy on sport and reconciliation. She is currently the vice-president for the Aboriginal Sport Circle, a national not-for-profit that provides advocacy and support for Indigenous-led sport development in Canada. Her 2020 monograph, *Reclaiming Tom Longboat: Indigenous Self-Determination in Canadian Sport* won the 2021 North American Society for Sport History Monographs Book Award.

**Poetry Readings and Cocktail Hour**

**Mysticism and Sport**: Cal Poly students poetry reading

Moderator: Jafra Thomas, Cal Poly, jthoma84@calpoly.edu

**Readers:**

Coby Barbar, Cal Poly, cobybarbar@gmail.com

Mia Napolitano, Cal Poly, mia@napolitanofamily.com

Jenner Sapienza, Cal Poly, jennerbob2000@msn.com

**Poetry Reading,** Ron Smith, St. Christopher’s School, smithjron@aol.com

**Saturday, June 26, 2021**

**Session Ten: Lyle Olsen Graduate Essayists – Panel Chair: Jeremy Larance/Joyce Duncan**

**F*rom Personal to Collective: The Loneliness of Running as a Means to Coming of Age in The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner***

Rebecca Lee Curry (runner up), Middle Tennessee State University, rlc4j@mtmail.mtsu.edu

Alan Sillitoe’s film *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* is a powerful coming-of-age story of criminal turned long-distance runner Colin Smith, a teen who, by way of the sport of running, proves that determination and resolve can lead to monumental moments. In this paper, I attempt to demonstrate that running allows Smith a space to process his thoughts, specifically about his personal life, and come to an understanding of the man he wants to be, which is one concerned with collective matters who takes a stand for more than just himself. With the time running gives Smith to think, he evolves from that of a criminal to a social class advocate. Initially, Smith’s personal and child-like concerns consume his thoughts, but as his running practices and successes increase while he trains for his school’s cross-country race, he begins to pivot from thinking of only personal matters to those of collective concerns, the most prominent of which being the social class Smith associates the governor as representing: the upper class, the social class of which he is not a part of and is, essentially, repressed by. Ultimately, Smith intentionally throws the race, sacrificing his own individual recognition and taking a stand against the governor’s control. Though an individual sport, Smith’s act in throwing the race makes running a collective act, one in which the burdens of standing for one’s beliefs is felt by many – both in victory and defeat.

***Fighting Female: The Portrayal of Femininity in Fighting with My Family***

Morgan Riedl (winner), Ohio University, riedlmm@gmail.com

With professional wrestling’s rise in popularity, the World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) has sought to become more mainstream, entering new media markets, including film, and broadening its representation to both include more women and feature them more prominently. Since wrestling’s hallmark is its performativity, this recent rise of women in the promotion invites questions about gender performativity also. Building on existing scholarship in sports and media studies that examines masculinity in wrestling and utilizing feminist critical theory, this paper explores the representation of femininity in the ring through a close and critical reading of the 2019 WWE film *Fighting with My Family*. While the movie’s representation of femininity only marginally challenges normative gender expression, this paper ultimately concludes that the film improves upon the progress seen in professional wrestling’s portrayal of women, in line with popular culture, by celebrating female ambition and strength and rejecting, often through humor, the more obvious gender stereotypes.

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*Additional Reading:*

***Buttocks and Bumpkins: Representation of West Country Wrestling in British Literature***

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While the British Isles have a long history and tradition of regional wrestling, this is not heavily represented in British literature. Unlike American literature, which has a small but established canon of works depicting wrestling protagonists (such as works by John Irving or Terry Davis), when traditional wrestling is depicted in British literature it is often as an aspect of the rural and local flavor of the novel’s setting and rarely examines the main protagonist’s relation to the sport in great detail. Despite this general omission, a small number of writers have managed to tap into the rich history of wrestling, including inter-county championships and the numerous ballads of famous matches. This presentation will explore some of the representation of traditional wrestling from the English West Country (mainly Cornwall and Devon) in nineteenth century novels of writers such as R.D. Blackmore and Thomas Hardy and examine how the language and terminology of wrestling is used to provide local flavoring as well as how an knowledge of the regional wrestling culture, technique and history brings deeper meanings to some of the classic scenes in works such as Blackmore’s *Lorna Doone* and Hardy’s *The Mayor of Casterbridge*.

**Session Eleven: The Wide World of Sport Literature – Panel Chair: Fred Mason**

***“One H\_ll of a Runner: Jack Kerouac and Sport”***

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While growing up in Lowell, MA, Jack Kerouac was a two-sport athlete, playing football and baseball, although he admitted to being “not much of a hitter.” Kerouac later focused on playing football in high school and college, earning a scholarship to Columbia. Kerouac’s athletic career was complicated by his French-Canadian background and the fact that he was not much of a student, despite being a voracious reader. Throughout his high school and interrupted college years (he took time off to join the Merchant Marines during World War II), Kerouac was drafting stories and novels and playing a fantasy baseball game, a practice he continued throughout much of his life. Although Kerouac’s background was somewhat steeped in sport, he published only one baseball short story, “Ronnie on the Mound” (which appeared in *Esquire* in 1958) and one novel that approaches the level of sport literature, *Vanity of Duluoz* (1968). Our paper will examine Kerouac’s fantasy baseball game and the references to sport found in several of his novels, including *The Town and the City* (1950), *On the Road* (1957), and *The Vanity of Duluoz* (1968). We will seek to answer the following research questions: 1) What evidence of Kerouac’s future work is present in the writing he produced in connection to his fantasy baseball game? 2) Why did Kerouac publish only one baseball story associated with the fantasy baseball game? and 3) What short fiction conventions, including the Big Game and the Bildungs narrative did Kerouac employ in the selected novels (listed above)?

***Out of the Ordinary: W. O. Mitchell's The Black Bonspiel of Willie MacCrimmon and The Faustian Bargain***

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W. O. Mitchell's *The Black Bonspiel* of Willie MacCrimmon is the most well-known Canadian text about curling. This 1983 novella is a comic retelling of the Faust legend, in which the eponymous main character makes a bargain with the Devil for a chance to win The Brier—the Canadian curling championship. The bargain sets off a series of jokey comparisons between the ordinariness of curling and the extraordinariness of betting one's soul for the chance at sporting success. The jokes exploit the high culture / low culture coupling often found in sports comedy. Such couplings play on the assumption that sport is, by definition, a low culture activity, so any high culture references in relation to it will be comic. In *The Black Bonspiel*, for example, the Devil's Third—the player whom Willie is slated to replace if he loses the challenge match—is MacBeth. MacBeth's speeches are quotes from Shakespeare with curling references inserted, thus creating an ironic contrast between the seriousness of Shakespeare and the apparent triviality of curling. But is curling really trivial compared to Shakespeare? The ending of The Black Bonspiel suggests that the answer to this question is anything but ordinary.

***Beneath the Surface: Roderick Haig-Brown, River Snorkeling, and the Evolution of the Fly Fisher***

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There’s an old angling adage that goes something like this: in the beginning, you just want to catch a fish. Any fish will do. Then, you want to catch a lot of fish. Eventually, you want to catch certain species of fish. At this stage, or maybe slightly later, you also want to catch big fish. Small fish simply won’t do. Eventually, after catching enough big fish, you enter a place where you’re just happy to be fishing. It’s no longer about catching, though your experience probably means you still do plenty of it. But catching ceases to be the primary concern. Fly fishers add another layer of complexity to this angling evolution. For starters, in choosing to fly fish, you’ve already made the choice that you want to catch fish in a certain way. You’ve entered the realm of aesthetics rather than of purely utilitarian effectiveness. In the short film *Fisherman’s Fall*, made for the National Film Board of Canada, Roderick Haig-Brown invites viewers into the world of fish and fishing on his beloved Campbell River in British Columbia. Three minutes into the film things take a turn, Haig-Brown dons a snorkel and wetsuit, and introduces viewers directly into the fish’s world. For Haig-Brown, river snorkeling provides another way of learning and immersing oneself into the riverine world. Writing of Haig-Brown, Jason L. Rolfe adds yet another dimension to the adage of the angler’s evolution. Beyond catching many fish or big fish or only native fish on a dry fly, Rolfe wonders “if we might add to that the angler who no longer needs or wants to fish, who no longer requires a line and rod and fly in order to have his moment with the world beneath the water. I wonder if we might add to that the angler who simply wants to dive, to see life at water level, to swim with the fishes.”