**Proceedings of the**

**SPORT LITERATURE ASSOCIATION**

**40th Annual Conference**

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**June 21-24, 2023**

**Host**: **Fred Mason**

**Program Chair**: **Adrian Markle**

**DAY ONE**

**Wednesday, June 21, 2023**

Welcome

Host: Fred Mason

President: Angie Abdou

Technical Facilitator: Cory Willard

**Session One: On the Ice - Panel Chair: Adrian Markle**

The Fighting Soul of Hockey in Ralph Connor's *Glengarry School Days*

Jamie Dopp, University of Victoria, [jdopp@uvic.ca](mailto:jdopp@uvic.ca)

"Can't understand a man," said the master, "who goes into a game and then quits it to fight.  If it's fighting, why fight, but if it's shinny, play the game."

John Craven in Ralph Connor, *Glengarry School Days* (301)

The earliest extended description of a hockey game is in Ralph Connor’s 1901 novel *Glengarry School Days*. Like its novelistic namesake, *Tom Brown's School Days* (1857), *Glengarry School Days* is a coming-of-age tale featuring a boy's boy. The novel’s protagonist, Hughie Murray, has a series of experiences that help to shape his natural boyishness into the muscular Christian ideal of manhood that the novel promotes. The key lessons for Hughie occur during a climactic hockey game. During this game, Hughie has his ankle broken by a goon on the other team but plays heroically on, sacrificing himself to ensure the victory of his team. Afterwards, his mother tells him that she is proud, but then, with "sudden tears," says "I fear the game cost too much." Hughie, now a real man as well as a real hockey player, replies, "Oh, pshaw, mother … [It's] only one leg bone, and I tell you that final round was worth a leg" (330).  The hockey match in *Glengarry School Days* illustrates how well-trained hockey players can become muscular Christian men, and how muscular Christianity and hockey both contain the elements of an ideal Canadian manhood from Connor's point of view. Such a man is intelligent but not an intellectual, is physically strong, and is someone who thrives in the outdoors -- especially the cold snowy outdoors of winter. He is not afraid of violence and will deploy it if necessary to defend himself or to right a wrong against someone weaker than him. In deploying violence, however, he will maintain an appropriate self-control. And, finally, his personal manner will be governed by something like Christian humility: he will neither complain about his suffering nor boast about his achievements. Don Cherry could not have been prouder.

Fredrik Backman’s Trilogy About the Hockey Town Bjørneby

Preben Kærsgaard Philipson, Espergærde Gymnasium, [prephi65@gmail.com](mailto:prephi65@gmail.com)

Swedish Fredrik Backman’s trilogy of novels about hockey, *Bjørneby,* *Them and Us* and *The Winners*, seems to have become a key work in contemporary Nordic sport literature. This presentation focuses on themes like macho culture, play versus discipline in the game, and denying of criminal actions in the hockey environment. The analyses also include supporter culture, socioeconomic differences, friendships among young people, dysfunctional families, etc. In the strictly literary analysis, there is a major focus of the role of the narrator. Backman’s narrator plays a very active part of the story and uses an element of play and teasing in the use of suspense. The narrator also contributes with several interpretations of hockey and sport in general, on a philosophical level as well as in the context of a small town (politics), in families, etc. In the analysis of the issue of play versus discipline, Jason Blake’s essay on Wayne Johnston’s *The Divine Ryans* and *Sport and the Spirit of Play in Contemporary American Fiction* by Christian K. Messenger will be included. The presentation is part of a comparative literary project on Nordic and North American literature about winter sports and traditional sports, national and cultural identity.

Breaking Away: A Critical Introduction to Women’s Hockey Literature

Jamie Ryan, Queens University, [jamieson.ryan@queensu.ca](mailto:jamieson.ryan@queensu.ca)

There have been two critical books on hockey literature -- Jason Blake’s *Canadian Hockey Literature: A Thematic Study* and Michael Buma’s *Refereeing Identity: The Cultural Work of Canadian Hockey Novels --* but both books focus on men’s hockey literature. My paper will attend to the silence inherent in the very term “hockey” (and “hockey literature”) that always presumes “men’s hockey” by presenting a critical introduction to the understudied field of women’s hockey literature. My paper will offer a brief overview of Blake and Buma’s excellent hockey literature books and outline ways women’s hockey literature challenges both those books’ principal premises. Blake and Buma identify nostalgia, violence, hypermasculinity, and nationalism as key themes in (men’s) hockey literature, whereas I propose futurity, romance, and sexuality as key concerns in women’s hockey literature. I argue that women’s hockey novels challenge not only the critical field of hockey literature but also hockey novels in general by offering an alternative vision of what hockey fiction could look like. Women’s hockey literature’s emphasis on romance, vulnerability, and queerness challenges the centrality of hypermasculinity and heteropatriarchy in men’s hockey literature, and, in so doing, challenges the established definitions of what hockey literature is and the cultural work that hockey novels are expected to do. This paper is drawn from the introduction of my PhD dissertation on women’s hockey literature.

Demythologizing the Newfoundland Folk and “Canada is Hockey” in Jamie Fitpatrick's *You Could Believe in Nothing*

Fred Mason, University of New Brunswick, [fmason@unb.ca](mailto:fmason@unb.ca)

*Abstract not available.*

**Session Two: On Your Bike - Panel Chair: Joyce Duncan**

Tim Moore Rides AGAIN!

Duncan Jamieson, Ashland University, [djamieso@ashland.edu](mailto:djamieso@ashland.edu)

Tim Moore (1964) is an English travel writer, humorist and sometime bicyclist.  His ninth book, the third with a bicycling theme, is *Gironimo: Riding the very terrible Tour of Italy*.  Founded in 1908, five years after the Tour de France, the Giro d’Italia though not as famous as France’s stage race, is the toughest. The 1914 edition began in Milan on May 24 with an opening stage of 420 kilometers (261 miles), returning to Milan June 6 after covering 3,162 kilometers (1965 miles) in eight stages.  The Italian winner averaged over 23 kilometers an hour (14 mph).  Eighty-one riders started, but only eight finished due to exceptionally bad weather.  Moore had ridden the route of the Tour de France, and now with the scandal surrounding “Horrid” Lance Armstrong, Moore felt the need to restore the glory (and add some humor) to the European stage races.  Over a century earlier, another English humorist and bicyclist, Jerome K. Jerome, opined in *Three Men on the Bummel*,that one could either ride a bicycle or repair one, but not both.  Moore went on to prove Jerome wrong, not only repairing a vintage 1910s bicycle but completing the d’Italia route.  For authenticity, he created a vintage cycling costume, riding up and over the Alps and then down to the Adriatic, “an adventure” described on the flyleaf “that is by turns recklessly incompetent, bold, beautiful, and madly inspiring.”

Follow the Handlebars: *The Man Who Loved Bicycles* Turns 50

Dave Buchanan, MacEwan University, [BuchananD@macewan.ca](mailto:BuchananD@macewan.ca)

This year, 2023, marks the 50th anniversary of the publication of an underappreciated gem in the canon of cycling literature: *The Man Who Loved Bicycles: Memoirs of an Autophobe* by American writer Daniel Behrman. This little-known book, published in 1973 by *Harper’s Magazine* Press, is an eccentric but compelling work of nonfiction– part scathing polemic, part cosmopolitan cycle-travelog, part affecting memoir. Behrman writes extensively of his experiences with both automobiles and bicycles (his experiences with the former being mostly negative, and those with the latter entirely positive) in New York City and Paris, with other stops along the way (in Los Angeles, Copenhagen, Brittany, and Washington, DC), driving home his simple argument: automobiles take away life and bicycles give it. I argue that on its 50th birthday, this book deserves, and rewards, reading and/or revisiting. *The Man Who Loved Bicycles* is both a devastating and irreverent takedown of car culture and what it’s done to urban life and an elegant love letter to the joys of a particular kind of (mostly urban) cycling. But perhaps what’s most striking about the book now, looking back through five decades, is how remarkably prescient Behrman was. While some parts of the book are very much of its time, his critical assessment of the car-centric city, his evocative accounts of the myriad pleasures of being a kind of sporting cycling flaneur, and his vision of the future of urban transportation all feel like something that could have been written in 2023, rather than 1973.

**Session Three: Are You Ready for Some Football(s)? - Panel Chair: Matt Tettleton**

Fitba Makars: Poets-in-Residence at Scottish Football Clubs

David Kilpatrick, Mercy College, [DKilpatrick@mercy.edu](mailto:DKilpatrick@mercy.edu)

Scotland has a rich tradition in association football with an even greater tradition in literature – especially the writing of verse. Both the sporting and literary traditions in Scotland are constructed in relation to English and British identities. As the emergence of a “soccerati” was a feature of the Cool Britannia movement of the 1990s, so too a Tartan Trend was identified that brought critical attention to new Scottish writing that represented popular and subaltern cultures north of the remnants of Hadrian’s Wall. One common element was an obsession with the nation’s favorite sport: audience, authors, and their characters all “so inta fitba,” as one says in Welsh’s *Trainspotting*. In the past decade, Scottish poets have played an increasingly prominent role in shaping the sporting culture, with some accepting the institutionalized role as “Poet-in-Residence” at football clubs and related entities, such as Hamish MacDonald of Clydebank, Jim Mackintosh of St. Johnstone, Julie McNeill of St. Mirren, and Stephen Watt of Dumbarton. This discussion will identify influential fitba makars (soccer poets) and examine poems published and/or performed for football clubs, in a classificatory effort to determine the types of poems composed for such a purpose, evaluate their literary merit, and better understand the role of soccer and poetry in contemporary Scottish culture.

Investigating the Growing Genre of Queer Sports Romance Novels Centring the Australian Women’s National Football League (AFLW) and Connections to Fandom of Women’s Sport

Kasey Symons, Swinburne University, [ksymons@swin.edu.au](mailto:ksymons@swin.edu.au)

Lee McGowan, University of the Sunshine Coast, [lmcgowa1@usc.edu.au](mailto:lmcgowa1@usc.edu.au)

The production of self-published sports fiction romance novels has grown significantly since developments in technology have allowed affordable access to self-publishing platforms, and social media has enabled authors to connect with wider audiences. While many sports are presented, increasingly representations of women’s sports are finding a place within this landscape, including those depicting diverse and queer romantic narratives. This paper examines the growth of self-published sports fiction that centres women’s sports and queer romance narratives. It considers the ways the form might: drive fandom of women’s sport; connect with new fans who may not fit “traditional” sports fan models; and offer insight on the diverse nature of fan bases of women’s sports. The paper focuses on one emerging semi-professional women’s sporting code, Australian rules football – the national competition began in 2017. We map production of sports romance novels that have accompanied the development of the league and the ways the trend echoes that of previous sports receiving attention from authors of self-published sports fiction. In doing so the paper demonstrates a need for more research focus to understand the connection of women’s sports fans to fiction and need for more diverse representations of their lived experiences in texts.

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and the Arsenal: Addiction and Recovery in Premier League Autobiography

Anthony Tomkins, University of York, [anthony.tomkins@york.ac.uk](mailto:anthony.tomkins@york.ac.uk)

This paper examines the autobiographies of two professional football (soccer) players whose careers in the English Premier League were famously pegged to addiction. Tony Adams and Paul Merson both played for Arsenal FC during the neoliberalisation of English football, and both were attached to the club’s older image as a working-class home for London “lads.” Adams, a central defender and club captain, was known to be an alcoholic during his playing days, and his two books *Addicted* and *Sober* mark out his recovery trajectory. Merson, a creative midfielder, had multiple addictions during and after his playing career, and his book *Hooked* explores their hold on him. More specifically, this paper details the way these autobiographies are invested in their experiences of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), and their production of what I term “AA speak.” With links to Lutheran faith and standing between organised religion and an individualised sense of spirituality, AA and its twelve-step model for sobriety offers digestible, pseudo-religious messaging on recovery that has been carried over into the sporting-addict autobiographies I have identified. Reading Adams’ *Sober* and Merson’s *Hooked*, I will establish how their descriptions of AA as a recuperative tool in their sobriety produces a self-help narrative style that absorbs and reproduces the pseudo religious-spiritual maxims that characterise AA. I argue that this “AA-speak” defines their sober lives, producing narratives that fruitfully juxtapose the vehemently financialised sporting environment of the Premier League with spiritualist morsels that sit alongside the concurrent bodily damage inflicted by alcohol addiction and the demands of elite sport.

**DAY TWO**

**Thursday, June 22, 2023**

**Session Four: Young Scholars - Panel Chair: Mark Noe**

Ecofeminism in an Unlikely Genre: Sports Literature

Aurora Blanchard, University of Missouri–St. Louis, [abb79@mail.umsl.edu](mailto:abb79@mail.umsl.edu)

Building on the theories of ecofeminism, the matrix of domination and oppression, and modernism, this essay outlines how and why Mother Nature aligns with female characters in Bernard Malamud’s novel *The Natural* and Robert Wallace’s short story “So I Turn My Face Away From the Sun.” The supernatural elements in these works are pastoral and deliver divine justice on behalf of the female characters. When female characters in these works encounter oppression from patriarchal forces, there is a cause-and-effect relationship. Nature becomes its own character and rebalances the natural order, delivering difficult circumstances to the male characters who demonstrate patriarchal power. In “So I Turn My Face Away From the Sun,” Flynn represents a force of casual patriarchal violence toward his wife. Mother Nature steps in as an ally to offer Flynn’s wife some dignity. However, some male characters are adjacent to nature which complicates this cause-and-effect relationship. For example, Roy Hobbs, the busher in *The Natural*, comes from humble beginnings in a pastoral setting. When he aligns himself with women and the natural world, he is rewarded. When he seeks to dominate women, Mother Nature jinxes his ability to play baseball. The clash of Hobbs’s role in the patriarchy and the supernatural forces aligned with nature represent the spasmodic, a modernist element described by Virginia Woolf. Women have been on the periphery of sports since the twentieth century. In modern stories, that’s beginning to change, as women are becoming more central figures in sports literature. Ecofeminism can illuminate society’s violence and triumphs through the inner lives of sports literature characters.

Identity and the Body: The Duality of Physical and Spiritual Identity in Richard Wagamese’s *Indian Horse*

Ian Crawford, Athabasca University, [icrawford2@learn.athabascau.ca](mailto:icrawford2@learn.athabascau.ca)

The stipulation of a duality between mind and body or spirit and body is central to the cultural practices and beliefs of many peoples. If this stipulation is accepted, then there could also be a divide between the physical and spiritual identities of an individual. For Richard Wagamese’s character Saul Indian Horse, this duality becomes discordant as the two forms of identity are forced into disagreement by the various abuses inflicted upon him by the residential school system and his encounters with racial oppression, subjugation, and segregation. Saul experiences a frustration of identity as he finds escape from spiritual torment in the physical “abandon” (Wagamese 199) with which he plays hockey but is never able to realize his potential for individual athletic greatness due to a deep rage fostered by the institutional racism intrenched within the game he loves. For Wagamese, the link between the physical body and identity is based upon physical appearances, the sociocultural expectations created thereby, and the physical agency that allows an individual to forge self-identity via the manner in which their actions reinforce or subvert those expectations. The spiritual identity, on the other hand, though also intertwined with the physical, is manufactured by the individual and the narratives that they choose to consciously accept and process; such as those cultural stories that are handed down through generations or the experiences and traumas that develop the essence of one’s own character. The theme of healing presents itself in *Indian Horse* as Saul begins to reconcile this discordance and frustration of physical and spiritual identity, truly recollecting the entire extent of his childhood abuse thereby reframing his relationship with the game that sheltered him from it. Thus begins the realignment of the identity his physical talents created with the spiritual identity that was both handed down to him in the fragments of culture that survived colonization, and that he forged through his own life experiences and his participation within a community. Wagamese creates this divide of identity within Saul so that he might weave a story about healing and the recovery of identity to a people from whom it has been stripped.

The discrepancy…between sports movies and sports lives: Fictional Examinations of Sports-Heroes, Underdogs, and Developmental Athletes

Hannah Anderson, University of Calgary, [hannah.anderson@ucalgary.ca](mailto:hannah.anderson@ucalgary.ca)

**WINNER: 2023 LYLE OLSEN GRADUATE STUDENT ESSAY CONTEST**

“the discrepancy…between sports movies and sports lives:” Fictional Examinations of Sports-Heroes, Underdogs, and Developmental Athletes

In Canadian literary canon, the majority of sports novels “are exceptional in their attempts to foster a monolithic national identity and safeguard traditional masculinity,” transforming male athletes into figures of legend that all athletes must measure up to (Buma 20). Yet, female identified athletes lack their own representation and role models. When women appear in sports stories, authors frequently limit their participation to “playing the male star’s girlfriend, mother, or temptress” (Vincentelli 2018). Writing back to this absence, my creative writing dissertation – a novel entitled *Bilateral* – opposes the domination of men in sports literature by tracking protagonist Camille Richard’s fledgling career in competitive swimming. Examining systemic and cultural issues hindering young female athletes from long term pursuit of competitive sport, *Bilateral* attempts to articulate the continued “discrepancy…between sports movies and sports lives,” dissecting the prevalence of the Olympic Sports-Hero and its implications (Abdou, *Writing the Body* 7). By acknowledging this disconnect in sports stories, I examine representations of female identified athletes in Canadian sport, while pushing beyond these critical conversations to assert the necessity of making space for female authors and athletes to develop their own sports narratives: not to delegitimize Olympic achievements, but to recognize that podium victories are not the only worthy narratives that exist.

**Session Five: From the *Not Hockey* Anthology - Panel Chair: Angie Abdou**

Getting Away from It All, or Breathing It All In: Decolonizing Wilderness Adventure Stories

Gyllian Phillips, Nipissing University, [gyllianp@nipissingu.ca](mailto:gyllianp@nipissingu.ca)

In this chapter, I think about the ways in which wilderness adventure stories by and about settlers, such as Jon Krakauer’s *Into the Wild* (1996) and Cheryl Strayed’s *Wild* (2012), express the motivation and the appeal of outdoor recreation. Reading these expressions through a postcolonial lens reveals the absences and displacements of Indigenous Peoples and histories in these works. In contrast, *Medicine Walk*, a 2015 novel by Richard Wagamese (Ojibwe), revises the adventure narrative to reposition Indigenous characters and history into colonized landscapes, and in the process encourages a reconsideration of the relationship between human and land. In both types of stories, the activity of wilderness walking is a means of claiming or reclaiming land just as the narrative of that walking is a reframing of land in human terms. As Tim Ingold describes it in “Footprints Through the Weather World,” when we hike the “ground is perceived kinesthetically in movement” (Ingold S125). In this model, walking is a kind of mark making, “an act of inscription” (S127). In my analysis of settler wilderness adventure writing that act of (or active) inscription is a physical reassertion of the right to occupy. Conversely, a novel like *Medicine Walk* counters that claim with a different one, walking in so-called wilderness reestablishes a prior relationship between human and nonhuman which challenges the claims of colonial occupation.

“Maggie’s Own Sphere”: Fly Fishing and Ecofeminism in Ethel Wilson’s *Swamp Angel*

Cory Willard, Mount Royal University, [cwillard@mtroyal.ca](mailto:cwillard@mtroyal.ca)

While fly fishing is often thought of as a very masculine pursuit, a 2019 report from the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation notes that in 2018, in recreational angling overall, “female participation numbers reached an all-time high at 17.7 million” (2). Female participation in angling is on the rise, and fly fishing is the fastest growing form of angling. Currently, roughly 1.4 million women fly fish in the United States, which makes up 13% of all female anglers (48, 28). The increase in female anglers is part of a larger demographic shift in recreational fishing and points to a potential watershed moment in how fly fishing -- and fly fishers -- can be culturally understood. Utilizing an ecofeminist framework centered on the importance of embodiment, as well as Canadian literary notions of the pseudo-wilderness, this presentation uncovers the ways in which Ethel Wilson’s 1954 novel *Swamp Angel* provides a valuable illustration of how the “masculine” sport of fly fishing can be a productive site of personal change and fulfillment for women. In *Swamp Angel*, we watch as fly fishing transforms Maggie Vardoe, allowing her to communicate with her own body and with the world around her in new, meaningful, and less prescriptive ways than were possible in Vancouver, where she begins. This type of communication is what Sandilands might call a “mutant language” -- an interaction that fills the “space between human and nonhuman animal sociality” (184). Fly fishing, I argue, is one such language.

Still with a Boxer’s Body: Torrins and the Aged Fighter in Steven Heighton’s *The Shadow Boxer*

Adrian Markle, Falmouth University, [adrian.markle@falmouth.ac.uk](mailto:adrian.markle@falmouth.ac.uk)

*Abstract not available.*

**Session Six: On the Screen - Panel Chair: Kasey Symons**

The View from Ringside: Fictions and Films of the Sportswriters in the Long 1950s

Josh Sopiarz, Governors State University, [jsopiarz@govst.edu](mailto:jsopiarz@govst.edu)

Boxing films noir remained popular between the first HUAC investigations (1947) and the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962). While these major events bookend the “Long 1950s,” two events involving fatalities in the boxing ring, from the same years, more specifically define the era for this paper. The first is the untelevised death of Jimmy Doyle in his fight against Sugar Ray Robinson. The second is the televised death of Benny Paret during his fight with Emile Griffith. Before television, sportswriters who attended hundreds of fights in person were far more likely to witness deaths in the ring than others. Because of this firsthand experience, these characters frequently anchor boxing stories and films in which deaths are depicted. In these films, sportswriters function much like war correspondents do, in that they report back to civilians the tragedies they witness, both humanizing sporting combatants and capitalizing on their tragic deaths, at a time when the country was uncomfortably familiar with news of atrocity and mass death. The primary texts for this chapter, including the films *Killer McCoy* (1947), and two filmic adaptations of fictional works*, Champion* (1949), and *The Harder They Fall* (1956), are exemplary for their various treatments of the sportswriter-as-author, sportswriter-as-character, and sportswriter-as-first-person-witness to ring deaths after the Second World War.

*Le Grand Bain* by Gilles Lellouche (2018): The Decline of Masculinity?

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Considered as “a comedy celebrating human flaws and weaknesses,” “a societal film that honors collectivity,” and “a human truth that speaks with infinite tenderness to the battered conditions of masculinity – and femininity too,” *Le Grand Bain*, a feature film directed by Gilles Lellouche and released in 2008, was highly praised in the French press for its attempt to challenge traditional hegemonic masculinity. Its story follows eight middle-aged men in professional or emotional crisis who set themselves a challenge: to win the male synchronized swimming world championship. Through the humorous contrast between the male characters and a sport culturally reserved for girls, this film offers an opportunity to study the current trend of redefining masculinity, especially in a sports domain that is often accused of having an essentialist understanding of the differences between the sexes. The analysis of this comedy will thus be a counterpoint to the predominantly feminist research in gender studies and will shed light on the “decline of masculinity” lamented by some. After a contextual study, we will examine the attempts of the director to deconstruct traditional masculinity, before analyzing the metaphorical meanings of water in the transmission of certain human values.

The Catcher Was Awry: Demythologizing Morris “Moe” Berg

Andrew Hazucha, Ottawa University, [andy.hazucha@ottawa.edu](mailto:andy.hazucha@ottawa.edu)

In his 1994 biography entitled *The Catcher Was a Spy: The Mysterious Life of Moe Berg*, Nicholas Dawidoff describes a scene during the 1967 World Series between the Boston Red Sox and the St. Louis Cardinals in which Moe Berg was seated in the press box in Fenway Park, having been offered a prime location by his former team to watch the game. Seated to his left was a Boston pediatric surgeon named Hardy Hendron, who had performed surgery on the son of a journalist who had gifted Hendron his ticket to the game. Berg introduced himself, asking what newspaper Hendron wrote for, and when Hendron answered that he wasn’t a journalist and then explained how he had obtained his seat, Berg replied with a characteristically cryptic response. “I’m a phony too,” Berg said (Dawidoff 301). Dawidoff’s anecdote may stand as a synecdoche for Berg’s life, which has been romanticized twice in film, first in Ben Lewin’s 2018 film *The Catcher Was a Spy*, and the next year in Aviva Kempner’s documentary entitled *The Spy Behind Home Plate*. Although both films depict Berg as a mysterious genius and a heroic American patriot, each one misses this crucial point: the persona he so carefully crafted only served, as Dawidoff argues, to “reinforce Berg’s conviction that he was nothing but a fake” (332).

Smoky Joe Wood in Literature and Film

Gerald Wood, Carson-Newman University, [geraldcwood@charter.net](mailto:geraldcwood@charter.net)

Smoky Joe Wood is well known among baseball historians as a great pitcher at the end of Cy Young’s career and the height of Walter Johnson’s. He was on the field with Joe Jackson, Ty Cobb, and Babe Ruth. In 1912 he famously won 34 games (16 in a row) while losing just 5. He won three more games in that season’s dramatic World Series. Joe Wood is prime example of a young fastballer whose career was shortened by injury (sometimes called The Smoky Joe Wood Syndrome), though he was unusual in remaking his career as an outfielder with Cleveland, where he won another World Series in 1920. Far less known is Wood’s history in literature and film. I would like to present a discussion of Wood’s fame in literature in such classics as Ring Lardner’s *You Know Me Al*, Roger Angell’s “The Web of the Game,” and Eric Rolfe Greenberg’s *The Celebrant*, as well as popular writings by Bugs Baer, James T. Farrell, and Troy Soos. Smoky Joe is celebrated in poetry by Elizabeth Bishop and Donald Hall. Attentive viewers saw him appear briefly in the film *Field of Dreams*. But I will also show that he influenced the 30s baseball films starring Joe E. Brown (a friend of Wood for many years), especially in *Fireman, Save My Child* and named as a great in the HBO baseball film *Long Gone*.

**Session Seven: Special Panel - Panel Chair: Joyce Duncan**

**Panelists: Don Johnson, Jamie Dopp, Adrian Markle**

**Evening Poetry Salon - Emcee: Kyle Belanger**

**Featuring:** Bruce Pratt, Dale Ritterbusch, Don Johnson, Jamie Dopp, Mark Noe, and . . . you?

**DAY THREE**

**Friday, June 23, 2022**

**Session Eight: Virtual Panel - Panel Chair: Cory Willard**

“Who among us does not want to win?” Steve Hayward, “Strava” and the Literature Classroom

Jason Blake, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, [JasonFrederick.Blake@ff.uni-lj.si](mailto:JasonFrederick.Blake@ff.uni-lj.si)

This paper examines Steve Hayward’s story “Strava” and considers what happens when a sports story is read by students who are strangers to football, baseball, or, in this case, weekend warrior cycling. Like many a sports story, “Strava” is about competition, athletic prowess, and surveillance. However, Hayward places his story far from the bright lights of big-league stadiums and fans who track athletes’ every move. In this story, the trio of middle-aged cyclists do not grace the sports pages. Rather, they are weekend warrior athletes who follow, track, and stalk each other through a social media app. Hayward raises the question of at what point healthy competition tips over into something nefarious, into what my students quickly dubbed “toxic competition.” With an eye to the classroom and to teaching sports literature, I trace the borders of what readers will consider a natural or understandable desire to win, while attempting to win over a new audience to the joys of sport literature.

“You’re saying that football is not about football?”: The multiple meanings of foot-the-ball in Terry Pratchett’s *Unseen Academicals (2009).*

Rebecca Lloyd, Falmouth University, UK

Pratchett’s fantasy novel has as its central premise a game of football (soccer) held in the urban sprawl of Ankh-Morpork between a team of street roughs and one formed from a disparate group of untrained and unenthusiastic wizards. As the title indicates, being a pun combining the real Scottish team of Hamilton Academical with the Unseen University of the fantasy Discworld, the novel is situated in a space that for Pratchett is “curiously familiar to the reader” even if Discworld is “largely imaginary” (1999). The novel, therefore, is evidence of how Pratchett uses the fictional mode in conversation with Roundworld (our world) concerns to consider how football is viewed by players and spectators for whom it represents the pleasures and pains of commitment to place and identity. Noting the old “folk” version of the game (figured as “foot-the-ball” or Poore boys’ Funne in the novel) in which anyone might be involved, Pratchett also gestures to mythical and mystical sources as he explores questions of masculinity, class, violence, and fandom. Combining a literary and cultural studies perspective (drawing on Bourdieu’s notion of physical capital and Huizinga’s claim that sport is play in atrophy), this paper unpacks how Pratchett produces a simultaneously humorous and serious critique of the intersecting meanings and sociocultural economies of “the people’s game,” as well as the eating of pies.

Ski Film and the Anthropocene: Reflections on a Contested Sport

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As a capital-driven industry with devastating effects, skiing has received extensive criticism for the ecological and epistemological violence it exercises. It is rarely considered as an athletic practice that fosters relationships with mountain environments, but as a destructive force of the Anthropocene. This paper reads the violent history of the sport against recent contemporary ski films in order to unpack the role of skiing in changing landscapes and to analyze alternative projections of the contested sport. Skiing precipitates cascades of violence, both direct and indirect, on water, air, and life quality, on biodiversity and forest health, and on human and non-human relations. Research in ecocritical film studies allows us to draw parallels between the severe ecological impacts of the ski and film industries (Ivakhiv 2011; Rust and Monani 2013; Parikka 2011). The forms of violence exercised through skiing over the past one hundred years may be gleaned as much from alpine environments as from cinematic representations of the sport, with ski film productions being a particularly destructive form of filmmaking. If cinema has served as an aesthetic model for a world in environmental crisis, as Jennifer Fay argues in *Inhospitable Worlds* (2018), then skiing might serve as the athletic practice of the Anthropocene in that it irrevocably changes landscapes to meet human interests. In contrast to ecological violence implicated in skiing and filmmaking, this paper argues that contemporary ski films, especially those produced in the past ten years, offer glimpses of what Christof Mauch calls “slow hope” (2019). Based on the conviction that positive change needs multiple stories, this paper offers a wide reading of a number of recent ski films such as Jessie Pitt’s *Connection* (2023), Jordan Manley’s *The Curve of Time* (2018), and *Steps* (2013). These films position themselves against the ski industry’s aggressive tendencies, to raise awareness for the sport’s impact on the climate crisis while exploring innovative approaches to skiing and filming at the end of the world. They address questions of representation, care, and communality. By showing that skiing can and must be different, these films help us imagine alternative practices and representations of a sport dominated by technical, economic, and environmental constraints.

NBA 2K – How Video Game Storytelling Became Part of a Sport’s Culture

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The NBA 2K series has, for 20 years, been the dominant force in video game representations of the NBA. It has become so ingrained in the culture of the sport that stars such as Kobe Bryant and LeBron James have been involved in creating the game’s “My Career” storylines, and players such as Kevin Durant regularly complain about their virtual ratings. This paper will discuss the impact of the 2K series on basketball, including how new on-court stars claim to have learned the game using the series. It will look at the symbiotic relationship between the virtual and real worlds, and both the advantages and disadvantages of the relationship, including its tie-ins with sponsors. Finally, it will consider the impact of the 2K series’ My Career mode has influenced other sports’ attempts to connect with fans through immersive storylines, such as in the FIFA, Madden, F1 and The Show series for soccer, American football, motorsport and baseball.

**DAY FOUR**

**Saturday, June 24, 2022**

**Session Nine: Sports and Politics - Panel Chair: Thomas Bauer**

Sixty Years Beyond: How C.L.R. James’ *Beyond a Boundary* Informs Sport’s Political Contestations Decades After its Publication

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This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of the publication of C.L.R. James’ *Beyond a Boundary* – part memoir of the author’s life in Trinidad and beyond, and part social, political and historical exploration of his beloved cricket. Called by some the greatest book on cricket ever written, and certainly placed by many in the sport-literature canon, B*eyond a Boundary* is also filled with the politics of resistance. For those familiar with James’ life, this comes as no surprise. While on its surface *Beyond a Boundary* addresses a very different subject than James’ most famous work, *The Black Jacobins*, the former text consistently reminds us that there is considerable overlap regarding this colonizer’s game, and the anticolonial, anti-imperial, antiracist, and revolutionary struggles to which James (and the Black Jacobins) dedicated their lives. Throughout the text, James wrestles with cricket as both a site of imposition and control, of ideological inculcation, and yet also potentially as a site of equality, dignity, and even an avenue toward liberation. A tool for the oppressor, until it’s wielded as one for the oppressed. Of Trinidadian cricket’s political contradictions, James writes: “The British tradition soaked deep into me was that when you entered the sporting arena you left behind you the sordid compromises of everyday existence. Yet for us to do that we would have had to divest ourselves of our skins.” As political forces prowled beyond the boundaries of the pitch, neither James nor any other cricket player of color could – to put it in modern terms – *shut up and bowl*. Three scores after the book’s publication, the world of sports remains a site of struggle against oppression – an arena in which dehumanization both gains legitimacy and becomes contested. Creating a throughline between James’ political era and our own, this paper considers the lessons we can learn from *Beyond a Boundary* today.

Province against Capital in *La eliminatoria* (*The Playoff*), by Ramón Solís

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Spanish author Ramón Solís won the 1970 “Miguel de Cervantes” National Literature Prize for his novel *La eliminatoria* (*The Playoff*), which tells of the buildup to a promotion/relegation match between a provincial second-division football (soccer) team and a struggling first-division team from the capital. Through a series of vignettes, Solís creates a network of characters that embody the clash between local and visitor that is preparing to take place on the pitch, including a celebrated poet that has come to the town for a recital. Critics have placed this novel within the currents of social realism that was present in Spanish literature of the second half of the Franco dictatorship, a literature through which authors questioned the values of society by defending the working classes and criticizing the ruling bourgeoisie. In this paper, I will explore how the narrative presents the psychological, social, and emotional relationships among its collective cast of characters in a way that is reflective of the tactical conflicts that occur before and during a match. A “winner-takes-all” attitude dominates both locals and outsiders as they cope with seduction, corruption, betrayal, blackmail, love, and death. Though the novel is critical of a culture of evasion that prizes sport and fame over intellectual pursuit, its form and theme reflect the extent to which competition and a desire to win permeate everyday life.

Post-American Baseball and the Dystopian Surveillance Novel: Gish Jen’s *The Resisters*

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Gish Jen’s 2020 novel *The Resisters* updates the twentieth-century dystopian surveillance novel for an era marked by different social threats and cultural anxieties. Jen builds a world whose architecture alludes to elements of Orwell’s *1984* and Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*. Like other dystopias, surveillance tools and techniques signal the text’s investments in political, social, and cultural power. The surveillance gaze is the driving narrative force in these novels, and the gaps in their panopticons facilitate resistance. At the heart of these novels is a paradox in which the more complete a surveillance system the author imagines, the fewer avenues to freedom remain for their characters. In a fascinating turn, *The Resisters* finds its hope for resisting surveillant power in the hypervisible space of the baseball diamond. Where Orwell’s Winston Smith and Atwood’s anonymous protagonist seek out blind spots and dark corners to gain a moment’s advantage, Jen’s protagonist Gwen inspires a resistance movement under the bright lights of the sporting spectacle. *The Resisters* is effectively read through the lens of “surveillant spectatorship,” a concept I theorize in my dissertation work. Through “surveillant spectatorship,” I develop a reading of *The Resisters* that responds to both the political exigencies that inspire dystopian literature and the cultural nostalgia typified by the baseball novel. Constellating theories from surveillance studies and sport literature, this paper asks questions about the relationship between symbolic and material power and the relevance of sport literature to reading tales of dystopian surveillance.

**Session Ten: Potpourri - Panel Chair: Lee McGowan**

Diamond Mines: Amplifying Baseball’s Silenced Voices

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It can be argued that it is impossible to fully understand American culture without a basic understanding of baseball’s history. From the predominantly-white male working class pastime of the turn of the 20th century, through two world wars, racial and religious integration, into the 1960s drug culture, and through the steroid eras of excess, baseball history is often understood to be a proper proxy for American history, and the literature reflects such an assertion. As part of their “If These Halls Could Talk” multimedia series, Maeve Bolin and Kyle Belanger have written and produced a trio of baseball-related episodes, which tell three stories that have been obscured (and, in some cases, erased) from the modern baseball zeitgeist.

1. The tale of Jackie Mitchell, 17-year-old lefthander who struck out Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig, only to have her contract voided and to be relegated to circus-sideshow level performer

2. The 1925 game between the Wichita Monrovians and the Ku Klux Klan

3. Kansas City Monarchs owner JL Wilkinson, the only white owner invited to participate by Negro Leagues pioneer and originator Rube Foster.

“Diamond Mines” is a multimedia presentation that will discuss these stories and their episodes, debuting original elements, sharing written observations from field research trips, and including readings from the show scripts. “If These Halls Could Talk,” Season 1, is currently in production. Bolin and Belanger are traveling to museums and halls of fame, alike, seeking out lesser-told stories from artifacts on display and hidden away in archives and literature in their libraries. They use these narratives to help reframe public memory and to create a more complete and inclusive understanding of our national culture and identity.

From the Pool to the Page: What Coaching Swimming Taught Me about Teaching Creative Writing

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I have been a university professor of English and Creative Writing for nearly thirty years. I have been a swim coach for two. I stepped into the coaching role right as the world shutdown in response to the Covid-19 virus, and I expected my time on deck to be temporary, to help a club in crisis. Quickly, my involvement with the team became a way of life. I now expect I will continue to coach swimming long after I’ve retired from my full-time job teaching creative writing. I’ve always been passionate about these two seemingly unrelated activities: writing and swimming. A long-time lover of swimming, I’m not surprised at how intensely and quickly I fell in love with coaching the sport. What does surprise me is what coaching swimming taught me about teaching creative writing. I did not expect the new job to change my relationship with the old, yet it did: rekindling my enthusiasm, increasing my commitment, and changing the way I found meaning in the process, for myself and for my students. After decades as a professor, I had succumbed to cynicism. I worried that we mislead students, granting them creative writing degrees and encouraging dreams of publishing when we know the challenges. None of my former students make a living as a writer. About a dozen have published books. Most – maybe all – were in some way disappointed by that experience, especially if they had expectations of wealth and fame. None of my swimmers has ever made the Olympics. Quite possibly, none ever will. Yet I don’t feel the same cynicism and disappointment. I don’t have the same worry that I’m misleading the swimmers by helping them pursue a dream or by asking them to devote hours every day to an activity that will most likely never make them wealthy or famous or even provide a livable income. In this paper, I reframe the role of the creative writing professor in the context of my epiphanies as a nationally certified swim coach, with an emphasis on the relationship between goals and happiness, the role of human connection in coaching/teaching, and the importance of individualized approach to each athlete/artist.

The Sports Stories of A. Conan Doyle

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The theft of a prized racehorse favored to win the “Wessex Cup” (Doyle, Complete SH 336); the disappearance of a rugby star before the annual Oxford-Cambridge match; the potential exam-cheating of a university track star; the dogged pursuit of a solitary woman cyclist—these are a sampling of the sports-related mysteries Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson must solve in their short stories. Of course, hunting metaphors regarding Holmes’s sleuthing abilities or the pursuit of clues/perpetrators abound in Doyle’s fiction, as when Holmes exclaims to Watson, “The game is afoot” in “The Adventure of the Abbey Grange” (1904) (Doyle, Complete SH 636). But his most fully developed hunting sports stories are not in the Holmes canon and involve elaborate, though far-fetched fox-hunting tales, while, despite Holmes’s own superior boxing skills, Doyle’s best sports story is a about a young amateur sportsman pitted against a veteran professional boxer, “The Croxley Master” (1899). Douglas Kerr, in his essay “The Straight Left: Sport and the Nation in Arthur Conan Doyle” argues that “The Croxley Master” helps Doyle establish “boxing’s proper meaning as a ritual of the true national ethos” (Kerr 198), but his essay only mentions briefly one Holmes story. A further examination of all A. Conan Doyle’s sports stories reveals a more varied picture of the value of sport in British culture than Kerr’s examination suggests.

**Session Eleven: Creative Panel - Panel Chair: Jamie Dopp**

*A Nation Plays Chopsticks*

Special Guest Mark Anthony Jarman, University of New Brunswick, [mjarman@unb.ca](mailto:mjarman@unb.ca)

Drive the night, driving out to old-timer hockey in January in New Brunswick, new fallen snow and a full moon on Acadian and Loyalist fields, fields beautiful and ice-smooth and curved like old bathtubs. In this blue light Baptist churches and ordinary farms become

cathode, hallucinatory. Old Indian islands in the wide river and trees up like

fingers and the strange shape of the snow-banks. It’s not my country, but it is my country now; I’m a traveler in a foreign land and I relish that. The universe above my head may boast vast dragon-red galaxies and shimmering ribbons of green, and the merciless sun may be shining this moment somewhere in Asia, but tonight along the frozen moonlit St. John River the country is a lunatic lunar blue and the arena air smells like fried onions and chicken. We park by the door, play two 25-minute periods, shake hands, pay the refs, knock back a few in dressing room #5, and drift back from hockey pleasantly tired, silent as integers. And I am along for the ride.

*The Gift*

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This personal essay foregrounds an athletic girl denied access to sports due to family priorities and cultural prejudices (“boys do sports, not girls”). One hopes it reflects a time long past, but that’s far from the truth. Research by *Sport England* (2019) reveals ongoing inequality between girls’ and boys’ sports participation: only 8% of girls meet chief medical officers’ recommended daily hours of activity and sadly young girls are routinely ostracized from certain sports (https://www.playfinder.com/blog/gender-gap-sport). Meghan Duggan, three-time Olympic medalist with the U.S. Women’s Hockey Team has said, “When girls don’t get access to sport, it means they don’t get access to the countless benefits sports provide, from higher levels of self-esteem and lower levels of depression to critical workplace skills such as teamwork, goal-setting and the pursuit of excellence. Sports are a microcosm of our society at large, so if girls and women are denied opportunities in sport, they are inherently being denied opportunities elsewhere.” (https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/press\_release/as-title-ix-turns-50-research-shows-girls-have-yet-to-receive-same-number-of-athletic-opportunities-as-boys-did-in-1972/). The Gift was literally a tennis racquet and carry bag. It was also a gift of hope, a renewed sense of self-worth. All girls deserve this.

Untitled Boxing Story

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*All-Star Break*, short fiction

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The all-star break was upon the Geneva Knights, the upstate New York summer college baseball team, in a season so disappointing that only *not* playing could stop the losing. But instead of a brief respite from suffering, the players faced a different kind of anguish in the form of the Geneva Knights Baseball Camp, the young men sentenced to baseball indentured servitude, forced, in a merciless three-day heat wave, to teach the fundamentals of the game to Little Leaguers, most of whom were unequipped to learn them. This story, one of a series of collected short stories, *The Last Baseball Summer*, narrates these long hours of boredom and toil, amidst the Knights’ precious last summer season, that brings with it an unexpected moment of glory for the camper’s worst player.