



POETRY AT THE GAMES

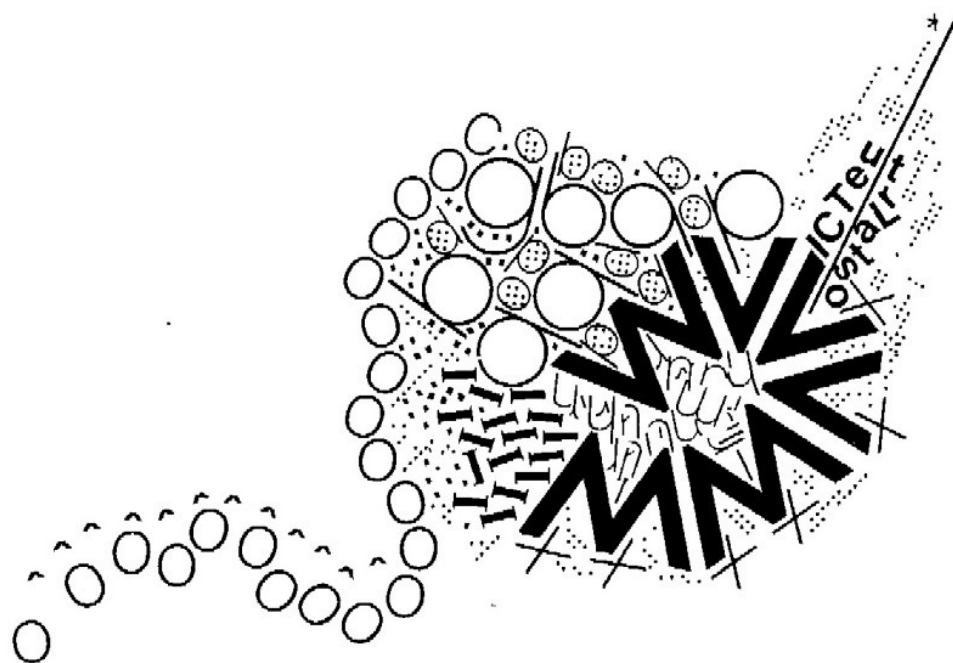


POST: A REVIEW OF POETRY STUDIES
THE IRISH CENTRE FOR POETRY STUDIES

POST III

POETRY AT THE GAMES

Derek Beaulieu's poem-conundrums will appear throughout POSTIII.



DEREK BEAULIEU 1: "winnipeg"

POST III

In the Paddock

5. MICHAEL HINDS editorial

11. KATELYN FERGUSON on kennelly on and off the blocks

23. JONATHAN SILVERMAN trackside vigilance

61. CHRISTODOULOS MAKRIS sets his watch by jules rimet

71. STEPHEN WILSON's swimwear issue

81. NIALL MURPHY knocking over the king

98. ROY GOLDBLATT's motivational speech

114. ALEXANDRA TAUVRy maggots

117. IAN LEASK and sweet science

125. CHRISTINE MURRAY from tendulkarland

DEREK BEAULIEU is everywhere

FOUND MATERIALS libero

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS bringing up the rear



POETRY AT THE GAMES



editorial

It was striking, and not altogether surprising, in putting together *Poetry at the Games*, that it took longer to gather in proposals and contributions than previous issues; many scholars who currently might define themselves as operating within the field of Poetry Studies are not necessarily that comfortable with the domains of sports and gaming (verbal gymnastics and bedroom athleticism aside). This unease accords thoroughly with the perceptible division in academic and popular culture between the embattled, empty-pocketed Humanities and the late-capitalist sportsworld of millionaires in shorts and billionaires in boardrooms. All sorts of intellectuals (Eco and Chomsky for a start) have lamented the ability of the contemporary western male to talk intelligently and knowledgeably about team games only to revert to an unthinking and unreflective inertia in terms of their politics, voting inevitably to minimize their tax liabilities (in emulation of the sportsmen they adore).

Adorno identified sport's particular ambiguity in "Education after Auschwitz":¹

Sport is ambiguous. On the one hand, it can have an anti-barbaric and anti-sadistic effect by means of *fair play*, a spirit of chivalry, and consideration for the weak. On the other hand, in many of its varieties and practices it can promote aggression, brutality, and sadism, above all in people who do not expose themselves to the exertion and discipline required by sports but instead merely watch: that is, those who regularly shout from the sidelines.

Team games identify the deadlock of contemporary life; whatever opportunities they offered in the past for desirable expressions of commonality, solidarity and justice, they also provide the very shape and form that tyranny takes. In this context, however, we might see where poetry can intervene, interfering with the increasingly totalizing banality of the 21st century stadium (with notable exceptions in Marseilles and Istanbul). What the classic

¹ Theodor W. Adorno, "Education After Auschwitz" in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords* (Columbia UP, 1998, tr. Pickford, pp. 196-197

terrace odes of the 1970s and 1980s did with particular eloquence, for example, was to speak directly of the violence and menace that corporatism has subsequently sought to control; “You’re going home in a fucking ambulance” is a beautifully-measured line. Apart from inflating football’s economy to a planet-sized bubble, television and media companies have also sought to civilize the game’s idiolects, rendering terrace songs inaudible in match coverage by turning up the volume on generic ground noise, as if a football ground was a moany orgasmatron.



Of course, football stadiums can be terrifying places, but they are also articulate and literate spaces, where people gather to speak and sing. In Glasgow, they might do so to endorse political attitudes that were last relevant in the seventeenth century, but the lyrical *braggadocio* and cock-of-the-walking of a Rangers song such as “Would you like another sandwich, Bobby Sands?” (to the tune of “She’ll be Coming Around the Mountain”) is no more seriously offensive than the verbal abuse Monty Python’s French knights heaped on King Arthur. In Roberto Bolano’s hilarious taxonomy, *Nazi Literature in the Americas*, he imagines a group of neo-fascist Boca Juniors’ fans who divide their time between fighting and editing literary magazines, composing chants and lyrics in between. What Bolano understands very well is the sheer pretentiousness of the hooligan, a pretentiousness that finds an apt voice in verse. In terrace song, political delinquency finds its necessary expression, and you can adopt a particular, nuanced response to it; what television wants are the undifferentiated roars and murmurs of an illiterate mass. It is not easy to know which to prefer, but the poetry is with the thugs.



The poetry of sport is thoroughly apparent, both in terms of composed and found materials; the problem is that it is often not that interesting. Sometimes this very glum nullity and blankness turns to a poet’s advantage, as in *V*, when Tony Harrison’s glowering elegiacs record the Leeds United graffiti in the cemetery where his parents are buried:

The language of this graveyard ranges from
a bit of Latin for a former Mayor
or those who laid their lives down at the Somme,
the hymnal fragments and the gilded prayer,

how people ‘fell asleep in the Good Lord’,
brief chisellable bits from the good book
and rhymes whatever length they could afford,
to CUNT, PISS, SHIT and (mostly) FUCK!

Or, more expansively, there’s LEEDS v.
the opponent of last week, this week, or next,
and a repertoire of blunt four-letter curses
on the team or race that makes the sprayer vexed.

POETRY AT THE GAMES

Then, pushed for time, or fleeing some observer,
dodging between tall family vaults and trees
like his team's best ever winger, dribbler, swerver,
fills every space he finds with versus Vs.

Despite his rage, Harrison does recognize a fellow poet (or anti-poet) in the anonymous graffitist, one who licenses an imagining of the oppositions that define everybody's reality:

These Vs are all the verses of life
From LEEDS v. DERBY, Black/White
and (as I've known to my cost) man v. wife,
Communist v. Fascist, Left v. Right,

Class v. class as bitter as before,
the unending violence of US and THEM,
personified in 1984
by Coal Board MacGregor and the NUM,

Hindu/Sikh, soul/body, heart v. mind,
East/West, male/female, and the ground
these fixtures are fought on's Man, resigned
to hope from his future what his past never found.

Whatever your side, we're all in the game, an awareness that gives Harrison's wounded song such generosity and moral authority. Harrison *needs* his moronic opposition, it enables his own civility to exist. You have to know your enemy, but maybe love him too. Similarly, Heaney's "Casualty" famously records another traumatic encounter between an elegiac temperament and the laconic violence of sportspeak:

We would be on our own
And always politic
And shy of condescension
I would manage by some trick
To switch the talk to eels
Or lore of the horse and cart
Or the Provisionals.
But my tentative art
His turned back watches too:
He was blown to bits
Out drinking in a curfew
Others obeyed three nights
After they shot dead
The thirteen men in Derry.
PARAS THIRTEEN the walls said
BOGSIDE NIL. That Wednesday
Everyone held
His breath and trembled.

The graffito reads like a banal little epigram, but its very aggression also demands our respect; it is an infinitely provocative and meaningfully violent statement that contrasts vividly with the equally vicious blandness of the rugby "anthem", "Ireland's Call", the neutered call to tolerance of the *Pax Hibernica*, a song that turns green to beige. Rugby occupies a relatively small place in the literary imaginary, perhaps reflecting the way in which it has only become

a regularized mass-spectator sport since it went professional. Its roots in posh schooling and the military have added to a sense of the game's irrelevance to everyday life but its allure of self-referential moral authority; in this way, rugby relates not to the poetry of the oral culture of the football ground, but to the world of latin primers and naughty schoolboys fixing dirty words to tunes from the standard repertoire, songs written for singing in the bar or the shower, not the grandstand. Rugby is not like football, it is often now proclaimed, at the very moment in culture when it is finally beginning to resemble it; and yet, on the other hand, the newly quiescent football fans of the Premier League who have no songs to sing are in fact identical to the deeply bourgeois rugby supporters who attend matches featuring Leinster (all you might hear is a wan "Molly Malone" or a parasitic "Allez les bleus"), Munster (violent self-righteous shushing of supporters out of "respect" for place kickers, and the ersatz drone of "The Fields of Athenry" or Ulster (sporadic outbursts of the monotonous "Stand Up for the Ulsterman"). If the crowd does not sing, then the PA will compensate (as with the generic trumpet track that greets tries in France). Rugby's deep poetry lies in the game itself, its intensities of structure and physicality, the impenetrability of its rules. James Simmons's "A Man of Principle" uses the name of the game to create an immediate menace, the sense that those who play it cannot be reckoned with: ""Last night the wife was fucked into the ground/ by a fat rugby player ". I heard Simmons read this in 1986 at the National Gallery of Ireland, and in those relatively genteel surroundings, Simmons felt compelled to apologize for the line before he read it, not to the sensibilities of his audience but to rugby. As I recall, he said "I do not want you to think I have anything against rugby, it is a game that I enjoy immensely." As a product of the Northern Irish Grammar school system, what else could he say?



Both poetry and sport have followed the breakdown of civic society in late capitalist culture by becoming fetishized as individualistic leisure activities centering on self-improvement or self-expression; so just as team games have lost the aura of social loyalty and communal resilience that they once had, so poetry struggles to connect beyond the hermetic compound of the person writing it. On the other hand, a useful convergence between the world of poets and that of sportspeople is also evident in this regard; George Steiner once said in an address at University College Dublin that in order to read Dante, you had to be as instinctively quick and knowledgeable as Ayrton Senna at Monaco, and the helmeted enclosure of a racing driver certainly is hyper-monologic. The Monty Python "Yangste Kiang" sketch, when Britain's top goalies read their verse tributes to the Yellow River and Brian Clough and Bill Shankly provide critical glosses, is an apt continuation of the figure of the goalkeeper as hyper-sensitive isolate (hear it at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N379USpNp5c>). The foundation of this skit in anthropological truth found perfect expression two years ago, when a Sky Sports feature on the West Ham goalkeeper Robert Green merged fiction with reality; sitting in a room with ten year olds from Newham, he read in a soft murmur the opening to Homer's *The Iliad* in Richmond Lattimore's translation. This image attaches itself perfectly to Green's catastrophe and ordeal during

POETRY AT THE GAMES

the World Cup, where he made a Parisian error but then comported himself with the resignation and resolve of Hector.



In Ovid's *Amores*, on the other hand, sports is part of a wider matrix where you plug in to the libidinal economy; and so, a day at the races is not worthy of special comment or tribute in itself, but is nevertheless vital as part of the ongoing work of *amor*. The rise and fall of his girl's sentiments as she watches the races represent his opportunity for seduction; if she goes for horses and jockeys, surely she might go for our poet. Ovid does not write out of fandom, rather he finds in the race an apt correlative for the ebb and flow of his own ardour; but in this we have (for once) an inspirational statement of what both poetry and sport should do, that they should make you feel like you are touching rather than watching, desiring rather than moralizing, living rather than dying.

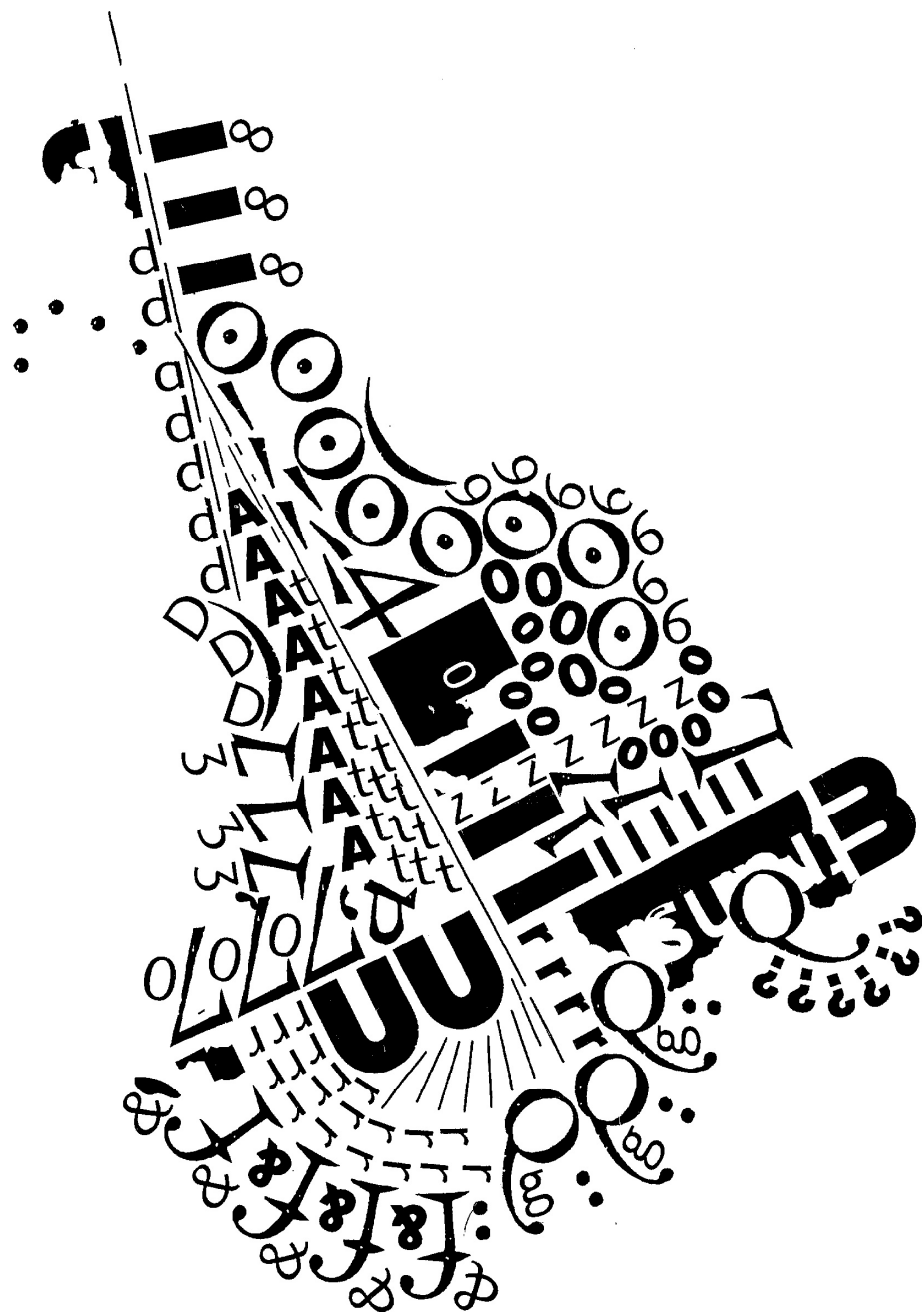


What you find finally assembled in *POSTIII* is hopefully an incitement to living: a study of one Irish poet-sportsman-poet (there are many), Brendan Kennelly; Ezra Pound's interest in ladies' swimwear receives attention for the first time in scholarship, and the racetrack's poetic network of signs receives apt attention; most unusually, we have a *sui generis* text by an American Professor based in Finland that is part jeremiad, part prose poem in Brooklynese, part fan-testimony. A Poetry Studies journal is a natural home for it, not least because of its movement between calling-to-arms and hopeless resignation on behalf of the Humanities, an irresolute politics that poetry has always inhabited. As well as an indispensable survey of poems inspired by chess, the first piece by a graduate of our Poetry Studies programme to be published in *POST*, there are startling visual-poem-games from Derek Beaulieu, complemented by Christodoulos Makris' sequence describing a personal history in World Cup-termed fragments. Reviews and found materials fill out the teamsheet. *POST IV* is on *Poetry in Process*, and will feature responses to the one-day conference held in Mater Dei on that theme last year. If you wish to propose an article on that theme, please email Kit Fryatt (kit.fryatt@materdei.dcu.ie). As ever, thank you for reading *POST*, and do tell your friends.

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Beaulieu 2: "3"

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**A MUSIC ALL ITS OWN:
SPORT IN THE POETRY OF BRENDAN KENNELLY**

In 1954, Brendan Kennelly played defence on the Kerry Gaelic football team that narrowly lost to Dublin in the All Ireland minor final. Gabriel Fitzmaurice remembers “He was a very good footballer— to have played minor, junior and senior football for Kerry as he did, is a distinction achieved by few. But Kennelly came from a family of footballers— all six boys ... played for their County at minor, junior or senior level, while one, Colm, now a North County Engineer, won senior All Ireland football medals with Kerry in 1953 and 1955. The Kennellys were robust footballers when football was a robust game” (28).

Throughout much of the 1980s and early 1990s Kennelly provided commentary for the *Irish Independent* and occasionally for the *Irish Times* on a whole range of sports. In his newspaper articles, sport is written about as a kind of epic performance; in a 1984 article on the rules of Gaelic football, for example, Kennelly’s invests his description of the game’s ebb and flow with all of the spectacular brutality and pacing of a heroic contest:

Injury can be a sign of glory. I once heard an old footballer say that unless you had a wound to show after a match, it was universally agreed that you haven’t played well. The spilling of blood was the sign of endeavour, and if blood was your own than nobody could deny that you had played your heart out ... The more highly developed a footballer’s sense of rhythm is, the more he will accept the challenge of the game. Opponents are only a part of that challenge. A bad game is a game of ragged, broken rhythms. A good game has a distinctively fluent rhythm, a manly music all its own. (“Rules Are There...” 18)

Kennelly’s observations about particular matches are interspersed with sporting anecdotes: of Jim Carraig, a shoemaker in his native Ballylongford who told colourful stories about the tribal origins of Gaelic football or of Paddy Fitzmaurice, who played in his stocking feet before emigrating to England, or of Johnny Walsh, a teacher in Kennelly’s school who led Kerry to several All Ireland football championships. These stories and the sporting events that inspire them become an invaluable locus of community, giving people something about which to speculate and hope, debate and complain. Sport separates heroes from villains and holds the key players and achievements of the present up to those of the past. In a 1988 article on the magic of the All-Ireland Gaelic Football Final, Kennelly writes:

... the Football Final is much more than the actual game. From the player's viewpoint, of course, the preceding weeks are a period of discipline and dedication. For supporters it is a time of speculation and prophesy, hope and apprehension, humour and hunger ... There is a genuine ritual of preparation ... One of the most valuable functions of football is to exercise the imaginations of men and women of young and old. It is wonderfully reassuring to see normally staid citizens of both sexes becoming very hot under the collar when discussing moments of the Final. Was he a good referee? He was lousy. Was it a free? Yes. No, it should have gone the other way. Why did our side elect to play against the wind? Why didn't we make mid-field switch half-an-hour earlier? And so on. How many millions of words, I ask myself, are inspired by that single game of football? ("Magic ..." 27)

One of the enduring preoccupations Kennelly's writing has been the relationship between symbols of all kinds and the evolution of social consciousness. The subject of his 1967 doctoral thesis *Modern Irish Poets and the Irish Epic* was the revival of Gaelic epic in English-language verse by poets like Samuel Ferguson, Mary A. Hutton and W.B. Yeats. In *Modern Irish Poets and the Irish Epic*, Kennelly professes his belief that "there can be little doubt that these poets, exploring an ancient barbaric and noble world, helped to create a modern heroic climate of struggle in thought and action. It would be foolish to assert that this epic literature was responsible for the 1916 rebellion but it is certain that the spirit of these poems, with their emphasis on the idea of a brief, magnificent period of self-assertion, is at the very core of Pearse's thought" (*Modern Irish Poets and the Irish Epic*, 327). Unsurprisingly, figures from Gaelic mythology feature prominently in Kennelly's own poetry, as do characters from history (Oliver Cromwell), popular culture (Marilyn Monroe) and religious narrative (Judas Iscariot). His interest in these figures is not only to explore their potential as means of expressing community and bringing about social change, but also to uncover how culture can function as an agent of tyranny and corruption. These two ends dominate Kennelly's work in unison, creating an environment where the heroes, stories and images that feed a people's sense of personal or local identity also have the undeniable potential to frustrate and destroy it. Kennelly's use of sport and sportsmen (sportswomen never feature) reflects this interest in the relationship between cultural forms and social consciousness.

In "The Swimmer", first published in the collection *Bread* in 1971, Kennelly conflates the Shannon river with the female body ("For him the / Shannon opens / Like a woman") and makes the swimmer's movement through the water into an act of sexual union:

... How easily
He mounts the waves, riding them
As though they

Whispered subtle invitations to his skin,
Conspiring with the sun
To offer him

A white, wet rhythm. (*Familiar Strangers*, 250)

Like the sovereignty goddess of Gaelic tradition, who represented the landscape and changed shape from young and beautiful to old and ugly according to the virility of the king who was her conquest, the Shannon meets the swimmer's athleticism with a positive response:

POETRY AT THE GAMES

... The deep beneath
Gives full support
To the marriage of wave and heart

The waves he breaks turn back to stare
At the repeated ceremony
And the hills of Clare

Witness the fluent weddings
The flawless congregation
The choring foam that sings

To limbs which must, once more,
Rising and falling in the sun,
Return to shore. (ibid.)

The interaction between the swimmer and the Shannon is represented here as a kind of ritual, which announces the interdependence of man and river and solidifies the former's claim on the latter. Old and new adaptations of the sovereignty goddess tradition often uphold misogynist constructions of the female body as a marginal territory that renders the Irish spirit vulnerable to coercion by non-Irish forces. In a colonial context the body as a representation of material prosperity or adversity becomes a powerful symbol of the forces that Irish people must rise above in order to preserve their culture. The *aisling* genre offers the *spéirbhean* (sky-woman) and her various modern and postmodern incarnations as the embodiment of a dream deferred, refusing to "set out the bed for any" so that she becomes the quest object of an intrepid male hero who suppresses his immediate physical needs in order to pursue or avenge her (Yeats, 138). Much of the nationalist discourse of the twentieth century requires the male hero to be even more resolute in his rejection of the body, shedding blood or refusing food in order to sanctify the national cause. Where the men in these narratives choose the ideal over the material, the female figures symbolize that complicated and compromise-forcing realm of existence in which body and soul are inseparable. Both of these formulations present physical needs and sensations as a locus of cultural instability. A danger of framing the relationship between a people and the land that they inhabit in such a way is that, by attaching such a loaded array of cultural meanings to the female form, adaptors of the sovereignty goddess tradition defer the individuality of actual women in favour of an archetype. Another is that, by couching the hero's journey towards mastery in sexual, religious or mythical terms, they often obscure the violence that their narratives implicitly advocate.

A third variation on the sovereignty goddess tradition presents the woman/landscape as the site of an ancient, authentic cultural knowledge, which she embodies but cannot articulate without the intervention of a third party. In this formulation the subject's mastery over the woman/landscape, although often dramatized in fairly explicit sexual terms, is ultimately achieved through language. Instead of acting as the record of material pressures that have frustrated the Irish spirit, the body becomes a symbol of the physical landscape's great sensory and psychic currency. It is this variation that Kennelly's "The Swimmer" comes closest to replicating. The ritual "Rising and falling" of the swimmer's limbs brings him into contact with a sensual, almost

supernatural realm where the limitations of the body are downplayed if not temporarily suspended (... this river dies not bleed for / Any man ... The deep beneath / Gives full support / To the marriage of wave and heart) (*Familiar Strangers*, 250). Immersed in this realm, the boundaries that separate the swimmer's embodied self break down and he is allowed to absorb something of the Shannon's presence in both the physical and the psychic sense. The imagery that Kennelly uses in the poem makes the scene into something like a cubist painting, with limbs, hills, plumes of water and the sex of the river/woman stacked on top of one another so that they blend and fuse. When the swimmer returns to shore he is described as having "... / A river in his bones / Flowing forever through his head" (ibid.). He has also consolidated his exchange with the Shannon into an artistic product, emerging from the water with "... / A new music in his heart" that is drawn implicitly from the non-verbal rhythms and "singing" of his conquest (ibid.). Although we never see the swimmer's "new music" find its way into language the implication is that it is out of such pre-verbal, sensuous stuff that poetry must be rendered. The swimmer is analogous with the poet insofar as his exertions "break" and give context to the river's movement, changing it from something that happens in a symbolic vacuum to an event that is stared at and witnessed. The distinction that Kennelly draws between the consciousness of the swimmer and the material, intuitive and pre-verbal presence of the Shannon is minimal. At the end of the poem the limitations of the swimmer's physical body come back into focus and he must "Return to shore" in contrast to the river, who we can assume will go on flowing in ecstasy forever. In this regard "The Swimmer" circumvents the trajectory of self-actualization through opposition (male poet as self-conscious and self-determining vs. feminized landscape as mute and reliant on the poet for expression) that taints similar adaptations of the sovereignty goddess tradition. Kennelly seems almost to prefer the private, pre-verbal realm of existence shared by the swimmer and the Shannon, associating it with a freedom and purity of being that is inevitably compromised by language.

In spite of this appreciation for the sensual, Kennelly's description of swimming as a sexual encounter in which the man dominates aggressively reinforces troubling gender stereotypes in a way that should not be downplayed. Feminist theorist Catharine MacKinnon maintains that the representation of sex as male dominance is so pervasive across cultures that the use of words like "cut" "riding" and "break" to describe a sexual encounter does not necessarily indicate anything other than the author's existence in a world where gender inequality is expressed through sexuality. "The male sexual role" she writes "... centres on aggressive intrusion on those with less power. Such acts of dominance are experienced as sexually arousing, as sex itself" (159). Kennelly's reproduction of a symbolic tradition that romanticizes force normalizes sexual violence by presenting it as something that the feminized landscape entices and enjoys. His attention to the role of violence in the creative process throughout his career makes Kennelly's description of sex in violent terms conspicuous, however, and belies a totally unconscious invocation of sexual force.

In *Modern Irish Poets and the Irish Epic*, Kennelly is critical of what he sees as the tendency of poets like Ferguson, Aubrey De Vere, and Æ to evade the

POETRY AT THE GAMES

more grotesque elements of the Gaelic tradition:

... one is impressed also by the fact that none of these poets captures the full violence and extravagant savagery of the ancient sagas. One might deduce from this that sophistication not only refines the imagination, it also tames it; civilization, as well as bringing technical finesse and expertise, involves also a lessening of imaginative vigour and daring. There is no gain without loss. (329)

In a more recent essay on the topic of poetry and violence he argues:

At the roots of good taste lies barbarism. In museums reposes evidence of murder and massacres; enthroned kinds and popes rule and advise, pronounce and pontificate, to a background of blood... Violence is the begetter of sweetness and gentleness. Murderous *disorder* is often the source of that beautiful, unruffled self-possession and order which are associated with style ("Poetry and Violence" 32).

Violence plays an important role in Kennelly's own work not just because of its dramatic value, but because he is interested in the various non-physical ways that violence is meted out in society. The "extravagant savagery" of his most memorable characters becomes, as often as not, a metaphor for the crippling effects of language, love, law or education. In "The Swimmer," Kennelly capitalizes on the sovereignty goddess tradition's gendered constructions of the body in order to advocate for a return to the sensual, vigorous realm of the ancient sagas. The swimmer's willingness to immerse himself in the marginal territory of the river demonstrates his refusal to respect boundaries (a heroic virtue) and ultimately allows him to absorb something of the Shannon's extraordinary presence. His show of force can be read, in light of tradition, as "the sign of endeavour" and the Shannon's positive response is legitimizing and affirmative. That the swimmer confronts the dangers presented by the river and lives to sing her song is what makes his actions exceptional and what, to adapt a phrase from another of Kennelly's newspaper articles, opens readers up "to the thrilling prospect of their own power" ("Take heart ..." 9). If we read swimming as a metaphor for poetry, then the swimmer's manhandling of the Shannon underscores those aspects of the poetic process that are chaotic, exploitative and unnatural.

Kennelly's 1983 poem sequence *Cromwell* addresses this ability of poetic language to empower from a slightly different angle. This time his association of poet with sportsman suggest somewhat more explicitly how language can be used for violent and destructive ends. Oliver Cromwell was the English political and military leader whose Irish Campaign of 1649-50 saw the slaughter and dispossession of thousands of Irish civilians. In an essay on *Cromwell*, Jonathan Allison quotes W.E.H. Lecky's assertion that "the name of Cromwell even now acts as a spell upon the Irish mind, and has a powerful and living influence in sustaining the hatred both of England and Protestantism" (66). Kennelly offers countless examples of the forms that this influence takes in his poem-sequence, from his invocation of the Irish epithet *Scrios Cromwell ort'* (the curse of Cromwell on you) (*Cromwell*, 122), to the character Buffún's confession that "I hate and fear you like the thought of hell. / The murderous syllables of your name / Are the foundation of my nightmare... / A fucked up Paddy is what I am. Right?" (ibid. 117), and his depiction of a school teacher's rage during a lesson on Cromwell's export of Irish Catholics to work as slaves in Barbados (ibid. 16). Without obscuring the very real horrors perpetrated by Cromwell and his armies, Kennelly attempts

to restore some complexity to a man that Irish history has made into a symbol of all that is evil. He also addresses Cromwell's absorption into cultural narrative of suffering that he sees as directly linked to some of Ireland's more recent political woes (*The Book of Judas*, 9).

In "Manager, Perhaps" and "Magic," Kennelly imagines Cromwell as the manager of the Drogheda United football team. The characterization works because the role of a sports manager is to lead and train men, something that Cromwell was wildly successful at as a military commander. In addition, the characteristics of fearlessness, ambition, and exhibitionism that fuel Irish hatred of Cromwell when remembered in the context of his Irish campaign would serve a contemporary football manager well. "Magic" shows Cromwell at the helm of a losing team, lobbying to maintain his leadership role:

Oliver Cromwell's first season as
 Manager of Drogheda United was not
 Impressive. A bit of a calamit-
 y, in fact. 'Get rid of Cromwell' howled
 The Drogheda fans, 'Send him to Home Farm'
 Athlone, St Pats, Bohemians, U.C.D.
 The bastard has brought nothing but harm
 To our side. Fling him to the sea!
 Oliver was hauled up before the Board
 And asked to account for his performance
 Or lack of it. Oliver kept his head.
 'We'll top the table yet, I give you my word,
 Deep winter approaches, keep your patience,
 I'll work magic under floodlights' Oliver said. (*Cromwell*, 28)

Kennelly does not advance the narrative of Oliver Cromwell as football manager further, and so we are left to imagine whether he is able to enact the dramatic turnaround that he promises. Cromwell's association with Drogheda here is notable. In the months approaching the winter of 1649 Cromwell and his men laid siege to the notoriously well-fortified town of Drogheda killing civilians and Catholic clergy in a move that has irrevocably marked their memory in Ireland. Kennelly's reference to this historical moment in "Magic" is funny and so indirect that it is difficult to determine what response he is trying to elicit from the reader. This playfulness is characteristic of Kennelly's treatment of historical events and figures in *Cromwell*. The poet Edmund Spenser, for example, appears in poems like "Dedication" and "A Position of Praise" perfecting his epic poem *The Faerie Queene* and lamenting his inability to escape from "fucking Cork" (ibid. 49). In spite of *Cromwell's* interest in the outcomes of linguistic colonization, famine and colonial violence no mention is made of Spenser's inflammatory pamphlet *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, which advocates the destruction (if necessary by violence) of the Irish language and portrays the Irish people as barbarians. Notorious in Ireland for his role in the Glorious Revolution and the Battle of the Boyne and as the symbolic progenitor of the Protestant Orange Order, William of Orange features as an imaginative tycoon concerned on more than one occasion with the potential of Irish industry. In "A Bit of a Swap" we find him convincing the Pope to trade Italian bulls for Irish horses in order to stimulate the Irish economy (ibid. 78), in "Plans" he envisions a factory for the manufacture of rosary beads (ibid. 83) and in "A Running Battle" Kennelly imagines him in contemporary Ireland "... / polishing pianos / In convents and other delicate

POETRY AT THE GAMES

territories, / His nose purple from sipping turpentine (ibid. 151). Although there are moments that hint at William of Orange's battles with Irish Catholic people (in "A Bit of a Swap" the Pope tells him that his sales in horses are about to soar) his role in *Cromwell* is more as a cartoonish vision of Protestant industriousness than as an embodiment of aggressive Protestant opposition to Irish Catholic ways of life (ibid. 78). Kennelly uses humour in all of these cases as a way to raise issues of historical context without necessarily invalidating any of the various interpretations that his readers might have of the characters in question.

The humorous anachronism that Kennelly employs by representing Oliver Cromwell as a contemporary football manager softens the effect of reducing Drogheda's quarrel with the Lord Protector from a merciless siege to a few football losses. It does not, however, provide many clues for what we are to make of this moment in the poem sequence. On the one hand Kennelly could be suggesting Cromwell's virtue by portraying him in an athletic context where furious passion and self-possession are valued. One of the symbolic functions of a football manager is to fall on his sword when his team has underperformed and in "Magic" we see Cromwell performing this function with characteristic, and some might say honourable, unwillingness to accept defeat. On the other hand Kennelly may be offering a caveat about the dangerous potential of cultural performances by casting such a notorious historical figure as a key player in the epic production that is football.

Where in "The Swimmer" the distinctively "fluent rhythm" of the title character's athleticism serves as a metaphor for the force that gives rise to poetry, Cromwell's use of language is literally fluent and impressive. In the poem "Oliver to the Catholic Bishops of Ireland", for example, Kennelly adapts text from some of Oliver Cromwell's actual correspondence in a way that highlights his subject's ability to turn a phrase to his advantage. When the Catholic clergy attack Cromwell for misleading their "flocks" in a preceding poem, "The Catholic Bishops to the People of Ireland", he fires back by suggesting that the Church has "fleeced" its constituents out of money and autonomy (ibid. 130). Cromwell's argument in the latter poem is particularly effective not just for its clever use of language but also because it plays off the Irish-Catholic Church's equation of piety with poverty. Statements like "You cannot feed them! Their hunger is true", which refer explicitly to the Irish people's spiritual constitution, implicitly promote Cromwell's religious ethos as a righteous and abundant answer to their lives of hard work and privation (ibid. 132). This suggestion is emphasized by Cromwell's liberal exploitation of the Catholic clergy's animal metaphor throughout the poem to suggest the abjection of the Irish people. Cromwell's manipulation of language also serves to mask the reality of his own economic and political interests in the mitigation of Irish Catholic support for the monarchy and to frame him as a friend to the people in their own terms. One doubts that he would have any trouble convincing the Board of Drogheda United to keep him on until the end of the season.

By choosing this particular piece of correspondence to adapt into poetry Kennelly also highlights the similarities between Cromwell's rhetoric and imagery employed by Spenser and John Milton to make similar attacks on the

Catholic clergy. Both Spenser and Milton adapt the Biblical trope of Christ as the Good Shepherd in the context of pastoral poems to enact their attacks. In *Lycidas* Milton interrupts his elegy with the voice of The Pilot of the Galilean Lake, a saintly figure who condemns the ignobility of the clergy by comparing them to wayward shepherds:

How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,
 Enow of such as for their bellies sake,
 Creep and intrude, and climb into the fold?
 Of other care they little reckoning make,
 Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,
 And shove away the worthy bidden guest.
 Blind mouths! That scarce themselves know how to hold
 A sheep-hook, or have learned ought else the least
 That to the faithful herdsman's art belongs!
 What recks it them? What need they? They are sped;
 And when they list, their lean and flashy songs
 Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw;
 The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,
 But swoln with wind, and the rank mist they draw,
 Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread:
 Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw
 Daily devours apace, and nothing said. (110-129)

I have already suggested how Kennelly makes Spenser a presence in *Cromwell* in a way that avoids making a direct connection between his poetry and his role as an agent of colonial force. The parallels between Cromwell's language and that of Spenser and Milton (who was, of course, a secretary of the Commonwealth) are significant because they locate the symbolism forged by the great English poets in the mind of a military leader/ football coach, suggesting poetry's effectiveness as a public relations tool.

Cromwell conveys the dangerous and exciting facilities of the English language symbolically as well as literally. His powers of persuasion remind us of the formative and emotional potential of a well-constructed narrative. The wrath that we see played out in several of *Cromwell's* constitutive poems symbolizes language's force as an implement of social regulation. Those aspects of his character that appeal to the sympathies of the reader demonstrate language's ability to nurture, instruct and enchant. The relative continuity of his characterization by Kennelly, even as he moves through disparate time periods, settings and circumstances, lends the poem sequence a degree of narrative unity in the same way that language itself unifies the present with the past and future, allowing history to exist in all of its complicated forms. One of the ways that Kennelly reacts against Cromwell's insidious command of language in *Cromwell* is through his interventions into various poetic forms. In "Magic" he experiments with the sonnet form, loosening the *abbaabbacdecde* rhyme scheme and iambic pentameter characteristic of the Petrarchan sonnet so that the frenetic pitch of the Drogheda fans' complaints contrast with Cromwell's composed defence of his performance as manager. Several critics have argued that Kennelly's use of the sonnet form in *Cromwell* associates the imposition of poetic form on language with the efforts of Cromwell, Spenser and others to impose English order on their (rebellious) Irish subjects. Kennelly's loosening of the formal conventions of the sonnet in "Magic" and elsewhere can be read, then, as

response to the social control disguised as dignity and discipline that Cromwell and Spenser exemplify in the poem.

It is important to take the larger narrative structure of *Cromwell* into account when reading "Magic." *Cromwell* is constructed as a sequence where the congruence between one poem and another in *Cromwell* is commonly signalled by the conspicuous recurrence of certain tones of voice, motifs, words or images (as is hinted at by Kennelly when he describes his method as "imagistic, not chronological" in the poem's introductory note) rather than through the progression of an argument, pattern of metre or chronological chain of events. The fluctuations of time period, narrative perspective and literary mode that characterize *Cromwell's* narrative, insofar as it can be seen to exist at all, suggest that Kennelly's interest in Cromwell lies not so much in the re-telling of his story but in the variety of responses that his historical legacy has inspired in Irish culture. In "Magic" Kennelly hints at one of the more dangerous of these responses: the crowd mentality of the Drogheda fans who call for Cromwell to be flung into the sea for his offences against football (ibid. 28). In "The Crowd" and "The Crowd and the Curse," the two poems that immediately follow "Magic" in the poem sequence, Kennelly develops the troubling implications of this mentality further, showing how the speakers in both poems get caught up in an alarming sequence of behaviours that seems to have no impetus or direction ("... I was drowning in a river of hate / I was a jockey on a serpent's back / I was a grub half-way down a sparrow's throat / I was the look Judas threw at the tree") (ibid. 29). If we are willing to read the frightening atmosphere of "The Crowd" and "The Crowd and the Curse" into "Magic", and I would suggest that the structure of *Cromwell* lends itself to such cross-inference, then Cromwell as football manager becomes a kind of front man for a larger cultural problem. The Drogheda fans project their anger and anxiety onto him so that they do not have to confront it in themselves.

In the preface *The Book of Judas*, first published in 1991, Kennelly professes his interest in capturing the voices of front-men of this very kind ("I wished to create the voice of the condemned man writing back to me, trained and educated to condemn him") but what really strikes about the poem sequence are the various ways that cultural anger and anxiety manifest and reproduce themselves in the absence of cultural bogeymen like Cromwell and Judas (*The Book of Judas*, 10). The poems "The Colour of Doubt," "A Religious Occasion," and "The Madness of Football" all involve sports matches, but it is not the players or the action on the field that takes precedence but the spectators' search for a means of expression. "The Colour of Doubt," for example, captures the moment at half time of the All-Ireland Final when "... / Sixty thousand men begin to piss" in Croke Park (ibid. 74). Kennelly's description of the piss "Drowning Dublin now, out / Into provincial town and cities, / Swamping every field, every waiting plain" calls to mind various uses of blood to represent the cleansing, sanctifying force of self-sacrifice in religious and Irish nationalist discourse (ibid.). Urine carries with it associations of waste and filth, however, and in the end it is the overwhelming force of the men's doubt that the piss washes to the four corners of the country so that "... All over Ireland sprout fresh uncertainties / While sixty thousand howl their ancient pain" (ibid.). As the title suggests, Kennelly

invests the football match in “A Religious Occasion” with all of the gravitas of a religious ceremony. In Croke Park, where the poem is set, there is music and the air is filled “... with the electric feeling / That turns a rigid stranger into an instant brother” before the focus of the congregants’ attention degenerates into gratuitous violence (ibid. 118). In both of these poems, sport fails to model humanity’s ability to challenge its own limitations and becomes an expression of cultural frustration. Rather than buzzing with the “millions of words” that Kennelly attributes to the All-Ireland Final in his newspaper article on the magic of that occasion, the spectators in “A Religious Occasion” are conspicuously silent. The howl at the end of “The Colour of Doubt” is a deeply rooted, but ultimately inarticulate, expression of anxiety. In “The Madness of Football” the spectators speak in curses (“Yakuntya, yahooha, yabollocksya,”); their language mimics the violence of the players’ encounters on the football field.

The atmosphere that Kennelly creates in *The Book of Judas* is one where traditional forms of social life have been devalued. His Judas is a character whose actual life has been eclipsed by his popular myth. He is lauded (“Beautification”), dressed down (“A Lambasting”), dissected (“Neck”) put on trial (“On a Stand”), given the evil eye (“That Smile”) and celebrated by the Judas Conservation Society (“Alive and Well”). But for all of the judgements cast at Judas by other of the poem sequence’s parties we get only a vague impression of his personality or role in the crucifixion. In “So Lost” he says of his fellow Apostles “I will sit here in the dark and name their names / To see if they ever lived in me, / These men I knew and travelled with, / Images in memory / So lost they lack even the power to accuse / Me of what I know I must accuse myself” (ibid. 131). In “I Meet Myself” we get a sense of him as a man far removed from his definitive bad act but still reckoning with its presence:

After twenty centuries of vigilant sleeplessness
I am alive and well
As your average unfortunate traveller who has
Sidled through hell.
I thought I’d put an end to me
When I dangled like a doll
In my agony-ecstasy.
Ach! Not at all!

I meet myself in Houses of Parliament,
Brothels, churches, pubs, igloos, bungalows,
Funeral parlours where old friends lie in state.
I am solving a teenager’s bewilderment
I am the first suggestion of an overdose
I am a whisper in bed to an opening mate. (ibid. 275-276)

Here Judas’s predicament mirrors that of Lazarus in the poem sequence, who is brought back to life amidst a media frenzy in “Photograph” and re-emerges in poems like “The Original Is Lost” and “A Table for Two” lamenting the lack of direction the loss of his death has visited upon his life. One of the concerns of the Lazarus poems in particular, but certainly of *The Book of Judas* as a whole, is the potential of media images and stories to create endless simulacra of individuals, to the degree that (as the title of one poem featuring Lazarus suggests) the original or authentic version is lost. Lazarus is

POETRY AT THE GAMES

endlessly photographed by the paparazzi following the miracle of his resurrection and so endlessly consumed and reincarnated in derivative forms. The frenzied exchange and careful preservation of these productions throughout the poem sequence serves to highlight the inaccessibility of the originals. In "My Production Notebook" detailed notes taken by Judas at the crucifixion are sold to the University of Texas "for an undisclosed sum" (ibid. 76). In "A World Record" his self-portrait fetches thirty-three million pounds at auction, more than any other painting in history. In "The Fundamental Question" he becomes the subject of the Judas Iscariot Summer School. The value attached to these miscellanea contrast with Judas' persistent loneliness across the poem sequence.

Kennelly's portrayals of sport in his more recent works are not entirely without hope. In *The Man Made of Rain* (1998) he describes a number of visions that he had following quadruple bypass heart surgery in 1996. In the preface he frames the problem at the heart of *The Man Made of Rain* as one of language: how will he capture the surreal experiences of his sickbed visions using language, that system of communication by which we actualize our thoughts and feelings so that we can share them with other people? The poem also tracks Kennelly's healing process, and as his bruises change from red to blue to yellow, as his wounds throb and swell and ooze, as the sounds of his heartbeat and hospital room resonate in his skull his healing body becomes a potent metaphor for the reintegration of Irish culture following the upheavals of the twentieth century. In poem 21 of the sequence Kennelly describes his leg:

Black yellow red brown and
A vaguely disgusting white
Are the colours of my left leg.
They hurtle into each other like dirty footballers,
You'd swear my colours wanted to knock each other out,
I was white once, or as white as the next Paddy,
The only thing to do when you're backward is
Let yourself fly, I'm blueredblackyellowbrown
And I don't mind at all
So don't give it a thought if you see me cry (51)

Here and throughout *The Man Made of Rain*, Kennelly's physical reactions to the trauma of his operation become manifestations of memory: each tells the story of an event in his life that formed his personality, opened, altered, or marked his body. By travelling the landscape of his bruises with the man made of rain as a guide, Kennelly allows himself to recover these events and make sense of them in terms of a body that is actively engaged in a process of healing. Conversely, by portraying his bruises as footballers he writes the virtues of perseverance and whole-heartedness that he associates with characters like Paddy Fitzmaurice, Johnny Walsh and the swimmer onto and into his body.

In a 1987 article on the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) Kennelly discusses the role that Gaelic football played in the culture of his native Kerry:

The origins of Gaelic football are tough and crude and primitive; but the game came out of the way that people lived their lives, did their work, settled disputes, debated political issues and, of course, enjoyed themselves on Sunday after the week's work ("Why the GAA ..." 7).

In his poetry sport is not just a locus of community. It also functions as a benchmark of social feeling that reflects the particular rhythms and patterns of life of Irish people in Kerry and Drogheda and Dublin. The poems that I have discussed in this article cover a range of sports, time periods and tones. In each of them sport constitutes a kind of alternative language that articulates the experiences of the characters in a way that is deeply rooted in the physical. It is possible to trace something of Kennelly's evolution as a poet in these poems about sport: from his interest in the heroism on display in the Gaelic sagas, which the swimmer displays in his encounter with the Shannon, through his desire to come to grips with the English language *Cromwell* and his attempt to represent the anomie of contemporary culture in *The Book of Judas*, to the beautiful process of self and cultural re-evaluation that he expresses through his healing body in *The Man Made of Rain*.

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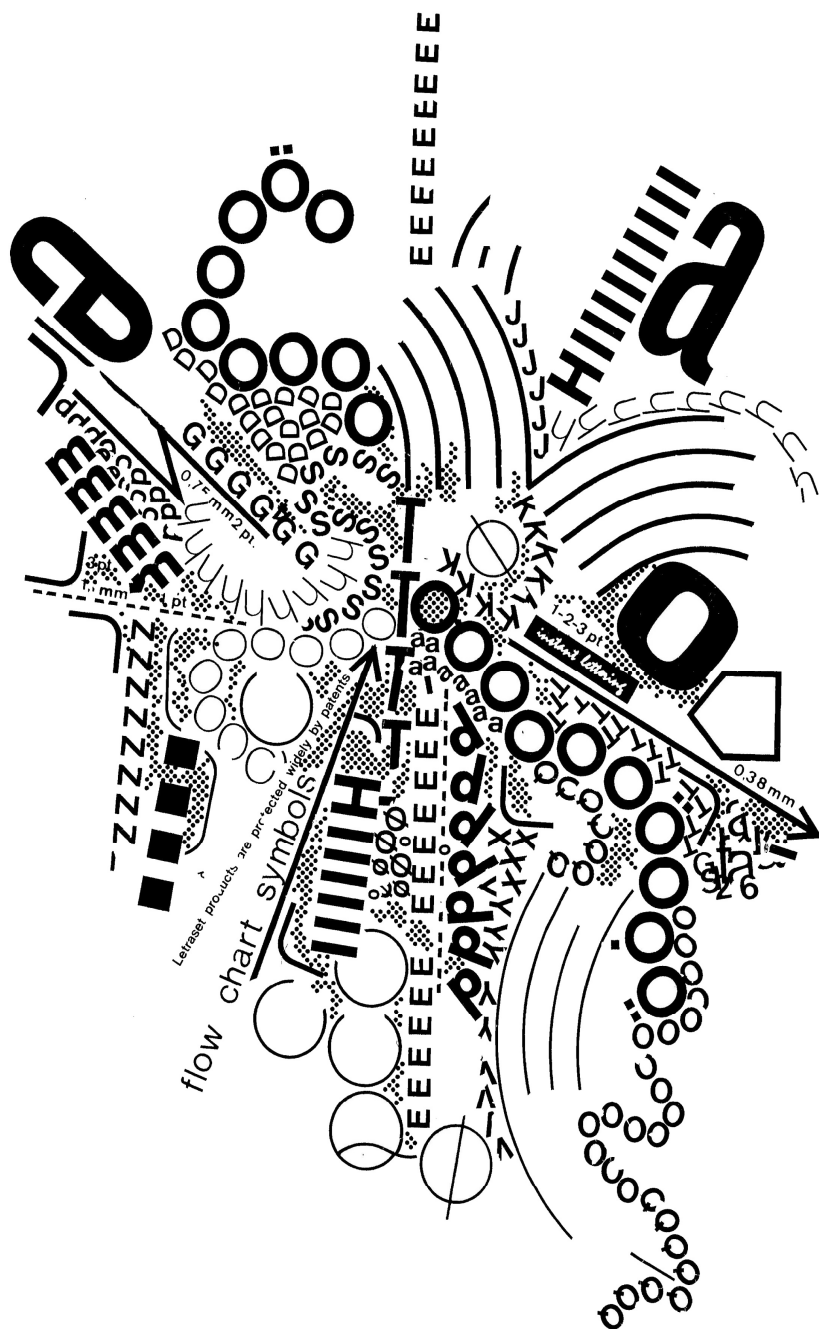
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BEAULIEU 3: "JUNE 8 '08"

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HORSE RACING: A POETICS.

To understand horse racing, you must resist the direct messages that it seems to be sending you: it's about gambling; it's about losing; it's about winning; it's about *Guys and Dolls*, *My Fair Lady*, and so on.

Horse racing operates through a much more subtle symbol set, though the ostentatiousness of those symbols belie their subtlety. The *poetics* of horse racing, its imaginative structure and conventions, rest on a combination of the architectural symbiosis of the racetrack, the beautiful numbers, the horse and the jockey--but also the orphan Buddha, the graffiti entrance, the hats, Seabiscuit.

The structure of horse racing rests on the races, but its dramas play out in ways both related and non-related to racing. Aristotle wrote his *Poetics* as a discourse primarily on Greek poetry and tragedy. Aristotle's subject permeates racetrack life, from the death of horses to the folly of the gambler. In that sense, a thousand tragedies (and comedies) enact themselves daily as bettors lose bets. Gambling involves the promise that luck or skill is with you, the promise of material gain, and the drama of the race itself (and the races within the race), and the result, which might bring success but often brings failure. As sports fans know, every contest contains the elements of tragedy, even if only in a microcosm.¹

Poetics has since transformed into a more general discussion about the structure, and often the associated emotions, attached to a phenomenon. For example, in Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*, he posits that space does and should carry meaning beyond function. His work is on the home, but the message that spatial relationships carry a type of unspoken effect is universal. As Christopher Wallace notes in *A Pattern Language*, architecture and space are made up of a type of visible grammar whose effects both are both universal and dependent; in this fashion, racetracks rely on an intimate knowledge of racing grammar, in the structure of the track, in the structure of racing, in the handicapping that accompanies it, its roots in popular culture, and so on.

¹ Aristotle, *Poetics*. The version I read was introduced by Malcolm Heath (Penguin, 1997).

The structure of the racetrack breeds a type of universal asynchronicity, a type of language that we recognize as universal and idiosyncratic at the same time. So far from being a history of or sociological examination of horse racing, the follow photos suggest a poetics of it, histories rather than history. As such, the photos are visual poems, presenting images that are simultaneously simple and complex, self-explanatory but also capable of bearing analysis and counter-explanation, modeled after Roland Barthes' seminal work, *Empire of Signs* (though it makes no claim to reaching the same level of analysis).²

² Roland Barthes, *Empire of Signs* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983).

POETRY AT THE GAMES



Buddha

This was taken at Gulfstream Park in Hallandale, located between Ft. Lauderdale and Miami in southern Florida. The track is the state's preeminent track and one of the most prominent in the country, especially in the winter season. The track has recently undergone a massive renovation, first adding a casino, and nightclubs and shopping have followed. The Buddha is interesting to them, exotic, and so, relevant.

This is taken from the upscale Asian restaurant above the grandstand. Its idiosyncratic nature is contextual within the restaurant itself but provides a strong contrast to the tropical theme that permeates the track. This artistic tension, however, does not need to be resolved, because the racetrack is organized not by theme but by the potential experience of the racegoers, who care more about being catered to rather than uplifted by design unity.

Traditional design unity *has* been a concern of racing, but racetracks today are more concerned with getting people to the track, a marked contrast to the indifferent attitude of the 1960s.

One must note here the actual Buddha itself, which may be standing in as a symbol of luck for the bettor. But....that meaning is hamstrung by the disrespect to religious piety such an interpretation would bring. Accordingly, the Buddha exists as an unstable, difficult symbol.



Women in Dresses.

Racetracks are social places, places that direct the gaze of trackgoers toward class concerns. Normally, a racetrack, a place that is often dirty and a concerned with gambling, might visibly show that focus, and in many places and in many times, it does. But many tracks also have found ways to make racetracks the site of romantic, class-aspirant fantasies, and women, especially in the spring and summer, at places like Keeneland, Churchill Downs, and Saratoga, “dress up,” toward a nostalgic notion of what racetracks once meant. So then, the racetracks encourage this type of Laura Mulvey-inspired gaze worthy performance. Unlike Mulvey’s focus on film and a strict power dynamic geared toward men’s gaze toward women, the direction of vision would seem to be that but a type of cross-gaze by both women and men toward women and away from the betting windows.¹

¹ Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”. Screen 16 (3): 6–18.



Hats.

These hats are rarely seen anywhere but at racetracks; some could double as Easter bonnets or hats for garden parties, but they are for the most part reserved for female attendees of racetracks. Their ornamentation, the architecture of flower and form, suggest a type of ambient shelter, one that enchants as it protects. Its idiosyncratic presence at *every* American racetrack of some note and respectability (a change over the last 25 years) suggest that American racetrack owners have finally become clued into the nature of their appeal outside of devout gamblers—the racetrack can be stage for class aspiration, and the hat one more prop in that setting.²

² Commentators on this piece from Europe noted that this phenomenon is more complicated there and a type of more Bakhtinian carnivalism might be in play, with lower class women attempting to dress like the upper class and vice versa; they also point out such hat wearing is not confined to the racetrack but only visible within a class structure. They also point out that in Europe, men's top hats, especially, at Ascot, serve as a type of phallic totem. While the visual components of class relations are unstable in the United States, the hat is a reliable sign of class aspiration (or performative class aspiration) at U.S. racetracks.



Entrance at Ørevoll.

This track speaks in symbols, the horseshoe, the grass track, the very Norwegian way of ornamentation, subtly mixed with acknowledgement of form. Every culture comes to its ideas about racing in its own way, and Norwegian symbol formation is particularly nuanced—a small country, Norway imports a lot of ideas and culture, but it finds ways to make, shape, alter, or modify those ideas to make it Norwegian. The type of minimalist lushness of Ørevoll is very Norwegian; the architecture of Norway is often modern and the landscape beautiful. And Norwegian architects often rely on natural materials as a type of ornament. The malleability of racetrack to region and nation is a crucial reason it survives.



Gents.

In many places, when tracks are male dominated, it is a sign that a track is not doing well, that it is only for gambling. But Thurles in Ireland did not feel that way on a chilly March day. A devoted fan base sat in weather-beaten seats located in an isolated Irish city on a weekday afternoon, gambling and drinking, and eventually as the afternoon wore on, inviting women and younger people to the party.



Hats/Umbrellas.

The parallel between people and their machines. The smooth juxtaposition of the two speaks to a type of unity of interest, in protection of what is most valuable—the brain as a generator of betting preferences and the machine that receives them.



Seabiscuit.

I first heard the name Seabiscuit when watching the animated show *The Flintstones*, which in retrospect was weird, given that Seabiscuit ran in the 1930s, while the *Flintstones* was a 1960s show. But racing lore was still very much part of the national culture in the 1960s in a way it is not now. Movies and books like *Seabiscuit* and the *Lord of Misrule* (American Jamey Gordon's National Book Award winning novel about racing) do suggest a renaissance, but now horse racing seems like curiously secretive, something many people have been exposed to, but that few experience.³

³ As one reviewer of this piece noted, so many animal movies by Hollywood, including ones about horse racing, are directed at children, but racetracks are not designed for children. Indeed, popular culture's treatment of animals is all child-related, and zoos and other animal-related places are also children oriented. So the seediness of some racetracks is in a sense a place of lost innocence, where animals are used for very grown up purposes. And the loss of innocence is a feeling that seems to occur again and again at a race track—when you think you have found some sort of conspiracy, when a horse dies or has to be put on, when you lose your money on a “sure thing,” and so on. And when the loss of innocence does not actually occur, there tends to be a cynical response by many gamblers to any track-related development that suggests there was a type of horse racing Eden—when the horses ran true, when they made the correct wagers, and so on, that is in line with the theme song of the working-class American drama, *All in the Family*, “Those Were the Days.”



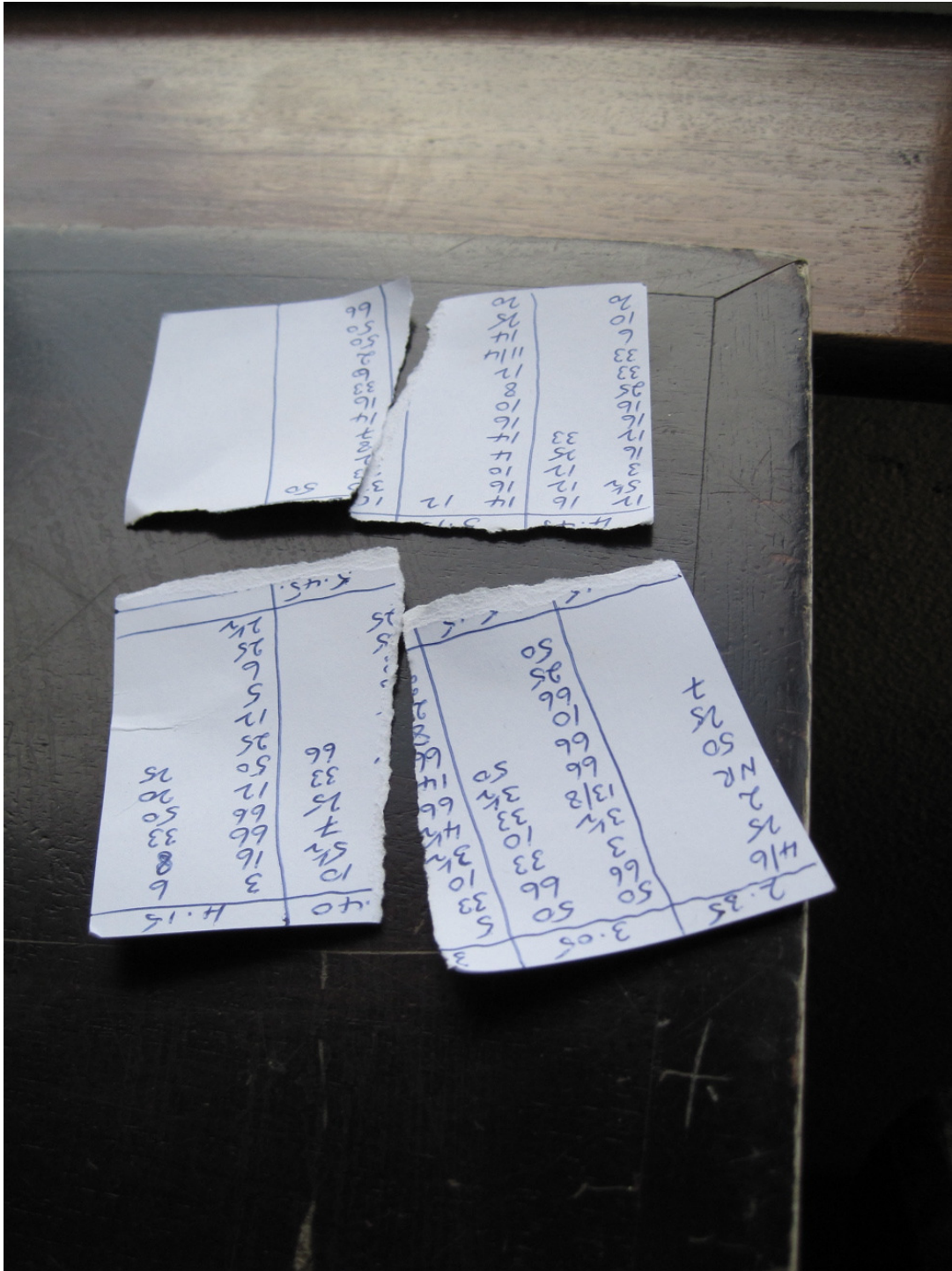
Graffiti.

Tracks are large places and their hold often reaches beyond the plant itself. In Saratoga Springs, Union Avenue is a wide, tree-lined street that also serves as an entrance to the racetrack. Here is our first impression of New York City's only racetrack—Belmont is nearby Long Island--a graffiti scrawled building shortly after exiting the subway. There is no presupposing—this is an urban racetrack.



Man Walking Across Keeneland.

This is taken in the morning before a stakes day at the beautiful grounds of Keeneland in the middle of horse country, Lexington, Kentucky. The man in a green sport works there. Behind him are a staid looking series of windows. If we didn't know better, we would think that we were at a bank. In a scene in *It's a Wonderful Life*, George Bailey explains how the savings and loan works; some people save, while others take out loans. At racetracks, betting is zero sum—bettors are betting against each other. The more people who have a horse, the less money they get. The trick is to be the house, in this case the racetrack, because it takes at least 18 percent off the top.



POETRY AT THE GAMES

Numbers.

These were found at Thurles Race Track in Ireland. A reviewer suggests these are the prices of runners in each race, perhaps used by a bookmaker, who may have left them in the bar before heading to his post in the betting ring. To the uninitiated they look like a failed system--there is no way to make sense of them. But they clearly were a system. Gamblers attract systems. They depend on them. Systems fail, because they are built on faulty assumptions, or they simply can't outrun the luck involved in horse racing.



Caballos.

Signs come from experience. Signs are generated from how people live or interact with the environment. Horse tracks are almost always international, even small tracks, even in isolated locales. This is taken at Saratoga Race Course in Saratoga Springs, New York. According to the 2010 census, 2.2 percent of Saratoga County residents are Hispanic. This is related to the people who work at the racetrack rather than local residents. Race has always been a complicated part of any racetrack—some of it racism aimed workers of historically disadvantaged groups, and other times demonstrating the way an often marginal activity like gambling unites disparate groups.



Racing.

In terms of time, racing only occupies 18 to 20 minutes of what is often six hours of a racing card. Handicappers use the time in between races to map out strategies for betting. Non-bettors may socialize more, but still often have ties to gambling. Still, the ratio of time spent racing vs. non-racing, if we take into account the paths of the horses to the race beginning is still remarkable.



Clubhouse

With a collar and five dollars, you can buy your way into the clubhouse, the cheapest way in the world to rise in class. The amenities in the clubhouse at Saratoga are minimal—the drinks are the same and gambling is too. Perhaps you like sitting with other people in collars and dresses (or a tad bit closer to the finish line). Then the clubhouse is for you. Otherwise, you might join the rest of us straining to watch the race on television.



Television

Horse racing has the worst television coverage of any sporting event. You can hardly see individual horses at the start. You cannot see much of the horses down the backstretch, but many television productions at least show the horse numbers in place order on the screen. Because the track views horses from the front down the stretch (and for some reason, those helpful numbers on the bottom of the screen disappear), you often have no idea who won. Imagine every football game decided by instant replay, every baseball game decided by videotape. It's maddening, and it symbolizes a cultural resistance to modernity. But modernity is upon us. We want to know who won. And we want to know now.



Flowers

The flowers stand in for dresses (which in the summer often have printed flowers). Here Saratoga Springs is dressing up for its visitors. Not everyone, however, has received the same invitation, so some people do not dress up. But for people to participate in the class spectacle, the racetrack has to dress up too, and while ornament is important, the living ornament—the ornament that takes ongoing care and attention—is especially significant when marking class ambitions.



The Great Unknown.

There is enormous space underneath the grandstands. It's dark. Most of the drinking and television watching happens here. It's the most democratic place in the track, the most chaotic, the most unsettling, especially to first time visitors. To many of us, it seems like wasted space. Why is there so much nothing here and when there is so much everything *there* and *everywhere*? But perhaps that's the ideal. To get people to keep moving, to enjoy the rest of the track's function.



Barber Shop

When I went to Belmont and Aqueduct on a regular basis, I saw this barber shop every time. I wondered what type of person would get their haircut—need to get their haircut—there. Then I was that type of person.

First, as I waited, the barber asked me to make a bet for him. I didn't know him or he me, but he suddenly accepted that I was trustworthy, which I was. I made the bets, and we chatted about racing, his job, and the change in New York Racing Association policies, which cancelled his summer barbering in Saratoga. Close to retirement, he was philosophical about it.

Then it was my turn. The haircut was terrible.



BEAULIEU 4: "For Helen 4"

POETRY AT THE GAMES

CHRISTODOULOS MAKRIS

Masculine Biography Vol. 1

I have measured out my life with coffee spoons

T.S. Eliot, *The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock*

West Germany 1974

 The dark figures in the box
 what colours were they?
A snake
 slid in
 displaced toddler him
 to 'auntie's' house.
Father dealt with it. Where was mother?
 By summer's end
 they were displaced
 by war.
They took to the fields.

Argentina 1978

Ticker tape on grass:
blue-and-white worlds of coups d'état.
 For the first time red was red.
He fell and scraped his elbow on the carpet
 again and again.
 It ballooned
 burst
 discharged purple puss.
In the back yard
 a hole in the ground swallowed
 plastic balls, rainwater, dead cats.

POETRY AT THE GAMES

Spain 1982

The aerial on the roof
 always leaned to the west:
it was turned eastwards just this once.
It was past his bedtime.
 At the barber's
talk was manly and feverish.
He finished primary school.
 Passed some exams.
He got to stay at his friend's grand hotel
 as reward.
There, a man explained how
you may be able to land a punch
 on a champion
but that doesn't necessarily make you
 a champion.

Mexico 1986

Sleep all morning.
Listen to rock (loud).
Go to training.
Get replenished with cake and coke.
At dusk
sit at your desk
and distract yourself
with pictures of topless girls.
Practise multiple choice questions.
Wait for the advent of
Nine O'clock.
At Eleven O'clock
proper cramming can be done:
spread your books all over the warm bed,
run through sticky pages
filled with facts and techniques.
When the clock strikes One
drop everything:
the second match of the day begins.

POETRY AT THE GAMES

Italy 1990

Not strictly a veteran –
though a year in khaki spent smeared with dust
gives you real standing among the old hands,
unachieved by stripes or stars.
You rouse your driver to start the jeep.
You head for the most forbidding outpost.
You sit with the inmates
to a meat-and-drink, men-only feast.
The following evening
you must join high-rank officers on plush armchairs
for light banter and snacks.

USA 1994

Your academic slide doesn't quite reach the pits:
a pass mark is negotiated against the odds.
You hang about idly in courtyards and abandoned halls
counting down afternoons to graduation.
Mother: this is the spot where I passed out
with a bottle of Jack Daniels
and a burnt-out spliff;
this is where I snogged that blonde girl
my mates called a dog.
And that's where I burrowed for so long
to emerge in the first person singular.

POETRY AT THE GAMES

France 1998

I engage with a polysexual metropolis,
 an assortment of stateless villages.
I renounce my nationality.
I offend old friends and alienate housemates.
I am sneered at by former protégés.
I fall in and out of jobs,
 repeatedly abandon stepping stones,
 get to within ten pounds of the streets.
I make outlandish vows that mobilise extended families.

Japan and Korea 2002

Sunday morning.

I step into a packed pub and bring about ungodly silence.

He is definitely Spanish, like.

Nevertheless, we hold hands.

We form a chain and pray for a favourable outcome.

We get drunk.

I am encouraged (or accused of aiming)
to sleep with two teenage sisters at once.

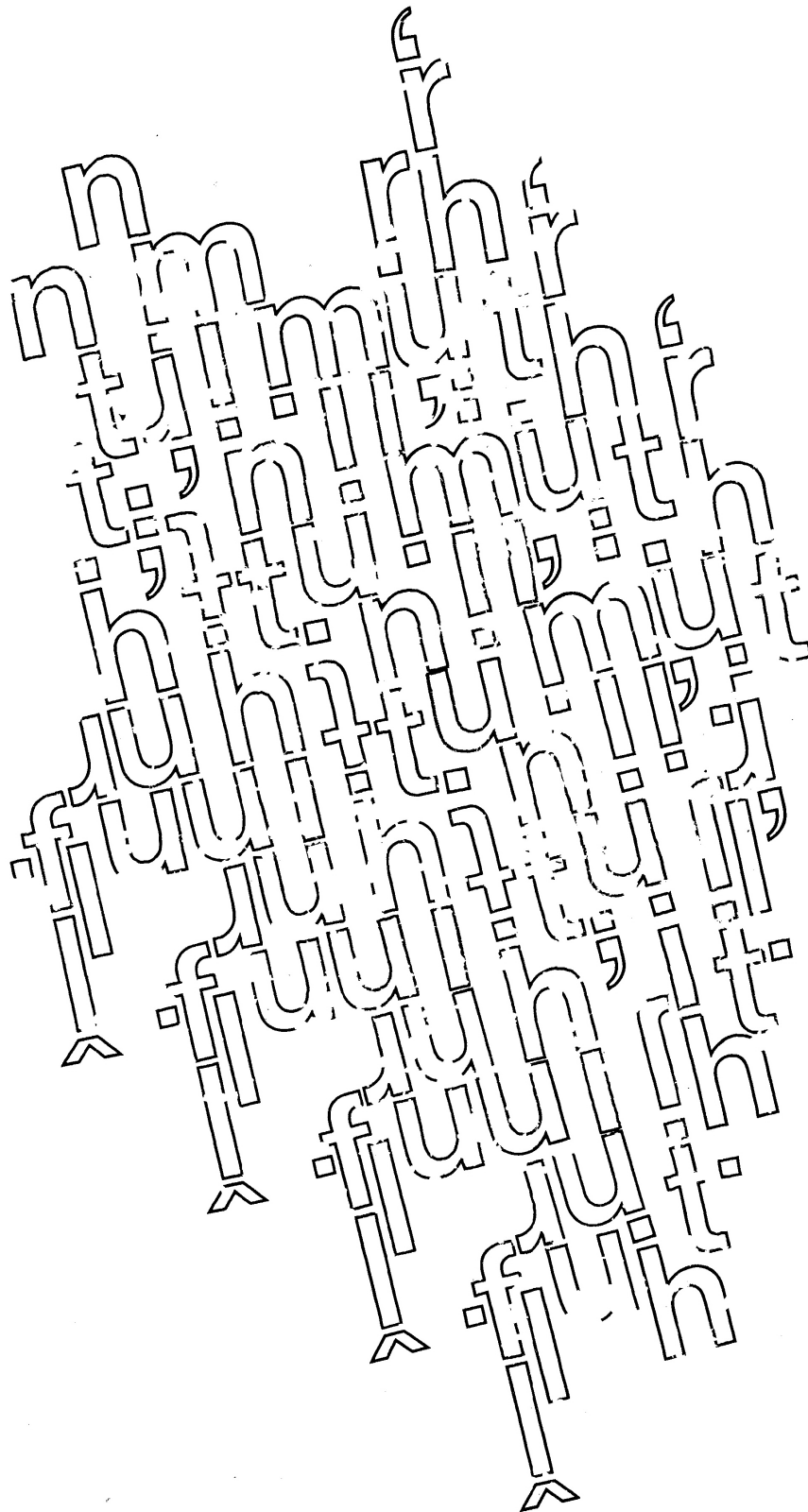
They're definitely out of his league, like.

I stagger around for months,
the implications hard to overcome.

POETRY AT THE GAMES

Germany 2006

Permanent. Pensionable. Full-time.
What, no chance of a reprieve,
no more spontaneous pleasures –
grapes, olives, cheese,
 cycling, swimming, sleeping,
 sex, drugs, rock 'n' roll –
while the body is up for it?
Hmmm...
A three-year old who looks like me
 confronts me
 dressed in full gear;
 he demands a kickabout
 in the park.
Oh dear,
is the whole rigmarole
about to re-start?



BEAULIEU 6: "JAN 30"

STEPHEN WILSON,
UNIVERSIDADE DE COIMBRA

**“MY BIKINI IS WORTH YR/ RAFT”:
AN EPISODE IN EZRA POUND’S ODYSSEY¹**

Given Pound’s decision to open his modern epic with an account of Odysseus’ descent into Hades, it is not surprising that the view that “*The Cantos* can best be read as a modern *Odyssey*”² has achieved a degree of currency in Pound criticism. Pound took that decision in the course of his 1923 revision of the early drafts of the poem and, like much else in Pound’s writing at the time, it bears witness to the impression made upon him by James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. However, the differences between Pound’s and Joyce’s use of the *Odyssey* are at least as significant as the similarities. The elaborate system of correspondences between the ancient text and its modern counterpart that permits Homer’s narrative to be viewed as providing a structural principle and an interpretative key for Joyce’s novel is simply not there in *The Cantos* (at any rate nobody has as yet succeeded in describing it). The first canto does establish an analogy or parallel between Pound’s poem and the *Odyssey* that allows the *Cantos* (and by extension the writing of the poem and the vicissitudes of Pound’s career during the forty years of its public elaboration) to be read and described as an ‘*Odyssey*,’ but that parallel is fragmented, discontinuous and at no point as consistent and detailed as correspondences between Homer’s *Odyssey* and Joyce’s *Ulysses*. Also Pound’s retelling of the tale is incomplete, in so far as his Odysseus does not succeed in getting back to Ithaca.

This, of course, is not to say that the parallels with the *Odyssey*, and what Walter Baumann has called “the Odysseus theme” in the *Cantos*, can be dismissed or disregarded. The Odysseus *motif* in all its aspects is important as both theme & trope, and in particular it is central to the figural economy of

¹THIS piece started out as a joint proposal, made with the distinguished Pound scholar, Dr Walter Baumann, for a paper on the Odysseus theme in the *Cantos* to be presented to the Ezra Pound International Conference. Unfortunately, that project did not come to fruition but my present endeavor owes much to it. I would further like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the wider debt that I and all others who work in this field owe to Walter for his work on Pound over the last fifty years.

² Forrest Read, Jr., “A Man of No Fortune” in Lewis Leary (ed), *Motive and Method in the Cantos of Ezra Pound* (1954; New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1961) 101.

Pound's poem. By "figural economy" I mean the mechanism by which the poem generates latent and spiritual senses, senses that may be described as allegorical if that term is returned to its root meaning of other. Erich Auerbach argues that the figural is distinguished "from most of the allegorical forms known to us," and from symbolic, archetypal and mythopoeic modes, "by the historicity both of the sign and what it signifies."³ The greater "historicity" of the figural makes Auerbach's concept particularly useful when for dealing with the *Cantos*, Pound's "poem including history." Precisely what this means and some of its implications for reading the *Cantos* as a whole will, I hope, emerge in the course of my account of Pound's extensive treatment, in the *Cantos* and elsewhere, of the of the Ino/Leucothea episode from Bk. 5 of the *Odyssey*. In this episode, the longest and most elaborated of the six set-piece storm scenes in the *Odyssey*⁴, Odysseus is shipwrecked by Poseidon and then rescued through the intervention of the sea goddess Ino/Leucothea who gives him her KREDEMNON (usually glossed as head-dress, veil or mantilla⁵) as a sort of magic lifebelt to save him from drowning and enable him to reach the Phaiacian land and safety.

Pound refers to the episode in *Guide to Kulchur* when he describes the *Odyssey* as a "high water mark for the adventure story" and cites as an example "Odysseus on the spar after shipwreck;" he goes on to comment: "Sam Smiles never got any further in preaching self-reliance. A world of irresponsible gods, a very high society without recognisable morals, the individual responsible to himself."⁶ (GK 38). This passage is sometimes seen as critical of the Homeric world in comparison with the ethical order of Confucian China. This may well be so but I would also stress Pound's affirmation of the traditional didactic function of epic and Odysseus' heroism, and in particular his steadfastness and fortitude in the face of adversity. Remembering that this was written at a time when Pound himself was sailing, I suspect less blindly than is sometimes supposed, into the eye of the storm, the possibility that in this passage there is a measure of identification on Pound's part must also be recognised. This is indisputably the case when the episode is evoked in Canto LXXX as a figure for the nadir

³ Erich Auerbach, "Figura" in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* "trans. Ralph Manheim in Erich Auerbach (1959; Manchester: Manchester UP, 1984) 54.

⁴ Irene J. F. de Jong, *A Narratological Commentary on the Odyssey* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001) 139 & Appendix D 594-5.

⁵ "Part of a woman's headdress. It seems to have been a sort of *veil* or *mantilla* with *lappets*, passing over the head and hanging down on each side, so that at pleasure it might be drawn quite over the face; of Andromache.... - mostly therefore worn by persons of rank, but in Od 6.100 by the waiting-women of Nausicaa: - in Od. 5. 346 the sea-goddess Ino gives her kredemnon to Ulysses to save him from drowning" (Liddell & Scott, 8th ed. 1897, first reprint 1901).

"woman's head-dress or veil, a kind of mantilla" (Liddell & Scott, New [ninth] edition completed 1940, reprinted 1976).

⁶ Ezra Pound, *Guide to Culture* (1938; London: Peter Owen, 1966) 38

POETRY AT THE GAMES

of Odysseus-Pound's fortunes (at the time of writing Pound was imprisoned in U.S. Army Detention Training Center at Pisa awaiting trial for treason):

when the raft broke and the waters went over me⁷

It should also be noted that of the salient elements of the storm scene in the *Odyssey* – Odysseus, Poseidon, the storm and Ino/ Leucothea – only two, Odysseus and the storm, are included in the passages cited above. However, when Pound returns to the episode in *Rock-Drill* Leucothea (and her “bikini”) are pushed very much into the foreground:

(having his own mind to stand by him)
As the sea-gull Κάδμου θυγάτηρ said to Odysseus
KADMOU THUGATER
“get rid of the paraphernalia”
TLEMOUSUNE (91/635)

“my bikini is worth your raft”
(91/636)

The “sea-gull” is a reference to Ino/ Leucothea, who is compared to a sea-bird by Homer. Carroll Terrell asserts that Leucothea was “metamorphosed into a sea-bird”⁸ but Irene J. F. de Jong in *A Narratological Commentary on the Odyssey* holds that “it seems more likely that we are dealing with a comparison than metamorphosis.”⁹ W. H.D. Rouse¹⁰ in his translation of the scene describes her as rising from the waves “like a great shearwater,”¹¹ thus supporting de Jong’s contention. Pound, who from his days as an Imagist onwards disliked similes, erased the “like” but the rhetorical figure remains essentially a simile. “KADMOU THUGATER” (Daughter of Cadmus) is another way of designating the goddess, another of her titles, and “get rid of paraphernalia” is Pound’s rendition of Leucothea’s advice to Odysseus to strip off the clothes (a gift from Calypso) that were weighing him down and threatening to drown him. “Bikini” is, of course, Pound’s translation, or better transformation, of the Greek word KREDEMNON. The “sea-gull” and “KADMOU THUGATER” recur in Cantos XCIII and XCV and the “bikini” is repeated in conjunction with the first explicit naming of Leucothea in the poem in XCV: “My bikini is worth yr/raft”. Said Leucothae (95/665)

⁷ Ezra Pound, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*, 13th ed., (NY: New Directions, 1999) 533. All subsequent references are to this addition and canto and page number are given parenthetically.

⁸ Carroll F. Terrell, *A Companion to the Cantos of Ezra Pound* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U. Of California Press, 1993) 587.

⁹ De Jong, 143.

¹⁰ William Henry Denham Rouse (1863 – 1950), eminent British classicist and educator, was a Fellow of Christ’s College, Cambridge, a founding editor of the Loeb Classical Library and, from 1902 to 1928, headmaster of the Perse School, Cambridge. He pioneered the “direct method” of teaching Latin and Greek and in his retirement produced a translation the *Odyssey* into colloquial English prose, about which he corresponded with Pound. That translation is still widely available and I have used it in this essay.

¹¹ Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. W.H.D. Rouse (New York: Mentor Classic/ The New American Library, 1937) 69.

The closing lines of *Rock-Drill* give Pound's most extended and elaborated treatment of the episode:

That the wave crashed, whirling the raft, then
Tearing the oar from his hand,
 broke mast and yard-arm
And he was drawn down under wave
 The wind tossing,
Notus, Boreas,
 as it were thistle-down.
Then Leucothea had pity,
 “mortal once
Who now is a sea-god:
 νόστου
γαίης Φαίρηχων, ...”
 (95/667)

The Greek fragment (glossed by Terrell as “to reach the land of the Phaeacians”¹²) suggests that Odysseus is about to reach his goal and the row of dots that ends the passage might signify an elision, something omitted or to be supplied later, and here also a refusal of formal syntactic or typographical closure, conveying a sense of a continuing action and even the possibility of an eventual fulfilment. Canto XCVI, the first of *Thrones*, returns to this episode opening with a reiteration of “KREDEMNON:”

Κρήδεμνον
κρήδεμνον
and the wave concealed her,
dark mass of great water.
(96/671)

Such narrative continuity between two cantos, let alone between two sections of the poem, is rare enough to be remarkable and is, as might be expected, a matter of significance. Ino/ Leucothea's role in the *Odyssey* is essentially that of a gatekeeper; she makes possible Odysseus' passage from the divine world (the fairyland of the Cyclops, Scylla and Charybdis, Circe and Calypso) back to the human world hence the emphasis on the goddess' former humanity ("once a mortal who spoke with human voice"¹³) and her insistence that Odysseus divest himself of all he has acquired in the realm of the gods (specifically the garments given to him by Calypso and her veil) and re-enter the human world naked and without a backward glance. Ronald Bush in his essay on the late cantos argues that Pound's version does in this aspect deliver a large measure of fulfilment; for Bush, Phaiacia is not merely a stage in Odysseus' journey but an end in itself, and more than that an end that offers the possibility of an ending, of bringing home Pound's entire epic enterprise:

¹² Terrell, 590.

¹³ Homer, trans. Rouse 68

POETRY AT THE GAMES

the Pheacian setting itself – the magically ordered and aesthetically brilliant kingdom against which Odysseus rediscovers his suffering humanity. In *Thrones*, Phaeacia stands as the first of a series of charmed societies whose archetype is Byzantium.¹⁴

This is a compelling reading and I would in large measure agree with what I take to be the general thrust of Bush's argument. Nonetheless, I continue to believe that the *nostos* (the homeward journey) of Pound's Odysseus' is, as Baumann has pointed out, incomplete, and that it repeatedly stalls at precisely at this point. Significantly, Pound does not in the *Cantos* present the reader with Odysseus in the land of the Phaeacians (in *Guide to Kulchur* there is an allusion to his meeting with Nausikaa¹⁵) nor does Pound refer to Leucothea's injunction that Odysseus return the garment she has given him to the sea. This, I would argue, suggests that Pound was unable to move beyond or to turn his back on Leucothea or let go of her veil/ bikini. The further allusions to the episode scattered throughout *Thrones* give further weight to this idea and the final echo of this aspect of the "Odysseus theme" in the poem, the typographically and semantically isolated Greek word "Καλλιαστράγαλος" [110:780] in Canto CX seems to me to confirm the reading. "Kalliastragalos" (beautiful or slender ankles) is one of Homer's epithet for Leucothea.¹⁶

For Leon Surette, "the Leucothea episode [is] the touchstone for his [Pound's] paradisal theme."¹⁷ Surette emphasises the agency of pity and the importance of divine intervention in Pound's reworking of the episode in *Rock-Drill* (he carefully notes that Pound's invocation of Odysseus' shipwreck as a figure for his own fate at Pisa "does not recall Leucothea"¹⁸) and links it to Pound's Neo-Platonism. Unsurprisingly, the story of Odysseus' shipwreck and rescue by a sea goddess is, for Surette, finally, a type of the Eleusinian mysteries. In this context, Surette's view can stand as the representative of a number of readings, all of them in the broadest sense religious or mystical, which stress the themes of resurrection and rebirth and the "paradisal" possibilities that such an emphasis opens up. I am happy to acknowledge the strengths of such readings but my concern here is with a different order of meaning.

In his essay "The Origin of Plot in the Light of Typology," Jurij M. Lotman distinguishes two "text-generating mechanisms" that he sees as "primordially

¹⁴ Ronald Bush, "Late Cantos LXXII – CXVII" in Ira B. Nadel, *The Cambridge Companion to Ezra Pound* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999) 121

¹⁵ "Weltmensch, with 'ruling caste' stamped all over him, so that a red, cracked skin and towsled hair as he came out of the underbrush left him 'never at loss'. He might as well have met Nausikaa in gibus and opera cloak." (*GK* 146)

¹⁶ For a more detailed account see Walter Bauman, "The Odysseus Theme in Ezra Pound's Cantos" in *Roses from the Steel Dust: Collected Essays on Ezra Pound* (Orono: The National Poetry Foundation, 2000) 95-97.

¹⁷ Leon Surette, *A Light from Eleusis: A Study of Ezra Pound's Cantos* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979) 247.

¹⁸ Surette 2456.

opposed.”¹⁹ The first of these, the “central text generating mechanism,” generates what Lotman calls myths; in such texts “human life is regarded not as a linear segment enclosed between birth and death, but as a constantly recurrent cycle” and there is a “tendency to make different characters unconditionally identical [. . .] characters and objects mentioned at different levels of the cyclical mythological mechanism are different proper names for the same thing.”²⁰ Myth is oriented “towards the establishment of iso- and homo-morphisms and the reduction of the diversity and variety of the world to invariant images” and to the reduction “the world of excesses and anomalies which surrounds man to norm and system.”²¹ The second “text generating mechanism” is “organized in accordance with linear temporal motion” and precisely oriented towards “the world of excesses and anomalies” and which generates “historical texts, chronicles and annals” – texts concerned with “the fixing of unique and chance events, crimes, calamities – anything considered the violation of a certain primordial order.” According to Lotman, this “was the historical kernel of plot-narration” and, he adds, “it is not fortuitous that the elementary basis of artistic narrative genres is called the ‘novella,’ that is to say the ‘piece of news.’”²² As a complex “modern plot text,” therefore, the *Cantos* “is the fruit of the interaction and reciprocal influence” of ‘myth’ and ‘news’.²³ It is not my present purpose to attempt to describe that reciprocation and interaction, but only to assert that “myth” and “news” co-exist in the *Cantos*. I suppose all accounts of the poem recognise this, if only implicitly, but most privilege the former. To grant a temporary privilege to one or the other is, of course, perfectly legitimate. This paper privileges “news” and so for me the important element in Pound’s re-telling of Homer’s story is not divine intervention, or pity and salvation or Neo-Platonism but Leucothea’s bikini.

At 9 am on 1 July 1946 the United States exploded a nuclear bomb above Bikini Atoll in the South Pacific sinking or damaging a number of target vessels (disarmed and decommissioned Japanese and American warships). The test, the first of a series at Bikini that continued until 1958, was intended to ascertain “what the atomic bomb was capable of when exploded over water,” and while it was visually spectacular (the resulting mushroom cloud has attained iconic status) it was not a success – the tally of ships sunk was disappointing and “the primary target vessel ... escaped damage altogether.”²⁴ The event did, however, have interesting and unexpected fall-out. A few days after the U.S. test, on 5 July, Louis Réard, a Parisian fashion designer who specialised in swimwear, revealed his latest creation – a two-piece costume he topically dubbed the ‘bikini.’ Two piece bathing costumes had, of course, been around for some time (indeed there is a mosaic dating from the 3rd or 4th century in Villa Romane del Casale in Sicily that shows a

¹⁹ Jurij M. Lotman, “The Origin of Plot in the Light of Typology,” trans. Julian Graffy, *Poetics Today* 1.1-2 (1979): 163.

²⁰ Lotman 161-162.

²¹ Lotman 162.

²² Lotman 163.

²³ Lotman 163.

²⁴ Patrik Alac, *The Bikini A Cultural History* (New York: Parkstone Press Ltd., 2002) 20-1.

POETRY AT THE GAMES

group of young ladies in bikini-like garments engaging in various forms of athletic activity). What distinguished Réard's two-piece was how little there was of it and the inspired opportunism of its naming. Swim- and beach-wear had been getting smaller for some time but the Réard two-piece was so scanty that the regular models refused to appear in public in it and a striptease dancer, Micheline Bernardini, was brought in to model it. The crucial factor seems to have been that the Réard bikini left the navel exposed. As is often the case, Réard's triumph owed at least as much to good publicity as it did to innovative design (perhaps in tacit recognition of this the fabric of the first bikini was patterned with a collage of newspaper headlines).

Réard's bikini created a sensation, or more accurately a minor scandal. Italy and Spain banned it in 1948 and many other countries followed. In 1949, *L'Osservatore Romano* declared that "the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse were alive and well and had taken the form of the bikini."²⁵ In the United States of the late 1940s and early 1950s even movie star pin-ups like Rita Hayworth were, on the Micheline Bernardini scale, modestly clad. The fashion magazines joined in the chorus of disapproval; in 1951 *Vogue* proclaimed (rather prematurely) the demise of "the infamous bikini, which turned some of the coastal shorelines into vaudeville sideshows ... and ... never looked nice on any woman."²⁶ Because, or possibly in spite, of all of this the bikini was not an immediate success and only perhaps in France did it achieve anything approaching wide appeal or acceptance.²⁷

Lena Lenček and Gideon Bosker, in *Making Waves: Swimsuits and the Undressing of America*, argue that by the mid-1950s "Americans were beginning to display an enthusiasm for the skin-baring two-piece suit they had rejected since its debut in 1946."²⁸ In 1959 the *New York Times* published an article headed "Bikini is in the Swim of things Again: Sudden Popularity Here Is a Mystery" – a rise in the number of private swimming pools and a dramatic increase in the number of passports issued were cited as possible explanations – and by this time "respectable department stores and boutiques along New York's Fifth Avenue may not have gone so far as to display the bikini in their windows, but they did stock it, in generous numbers, and to their great disbelief sold it."²⁹ The bikini had become acceptable, even respectable, in its way. The hit song of 1960, "Itsy Bitsy Teenie Weenie Yellow Polka Dot Bikini," the story of a girl who wearing a new bikini for the first time takes refuge in the sea and is too shy to come out with terrible consequences ("and the poor little girl's turnin' blue"), testifies both to the domestication of the bikini and its continuing power to offer mild titillation.³⁰ *Section Rock-Drill*

²⁵ Alac 54.

²⁶ Quoted in Alac 47.

²⁷ Mike Evans, *The Bikini Book* (London: Hamlyn, 1996) 18.

²⁸ Lena Lenček and Gideon Bosker, *Making Waves: Swimsuits and the Undressing of America* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1989) 110.

²⁹ Lenček and Bosker 112

³⁰ Paul Vance and Lee Pockriss' "Itsy Bitsy Teeny Weeny Yellow Polka Dot Bikini," recorded by Brian Hyland was released by Kapp Records in June 1960, and was a No 1 hit in the United States in August.

was first published in 1955, and so Pound's use of the word bikini dates not from the period when the bikini was naughty but respectable but from the period when it was "exotic, still suspect" (82/546). The reputation of the bikini in the U.S. in the early 1950s is well summed up by anonymous "American journalist" quoted by Patrik Alac in *The Bikini: A Cultural History*: "it's a costume that a guy would like to see somebody else's girlfriend or wife in, but not his own."³¹

The *OED* cites only three uses of the word bikini prior to 1955 and all of them are journalistic. The earliest, in French, appeared in 1947 in *Le Monde Illustré* and it linked the nuclear event and the garment and remarked on "*une minimisation extrême de la pudeur*." The first American occurrence came on 14 June 1948 when *Newsweek* reported a "countertrend against the skimpy 'Bikini' style which swept French beaches and beauty contests last year." In June 1950 the British Sunday newspaper the *News of the World* told its readers of "an unsuccessful attempt yesterday to swim in a Hampstead Heath pond in [a] home-made 'Bikini' costume." Indeed, Pound's reference to Leucothea's bikini in 1955 may well be the first literary (in the sense of non-journalistic) use of the word bikini in print. The earliest such example offered by the *OED* is culled from a 1967 detective novel, *Death at the Furlong Post* by Charles Drummond.

It is impossible to say with any degree of certainty or accuracy where and when Pound first came across the word bikini but my guess is that it happened in his early years at St Elizabeths, and it may even have been in the *Newsweek* article cited above. Stock tells us that "during his first few years in St Elizabeths Pound read newspapers and magazines and any books that came his way."³² At this point newspapers and magazines represented one of Pound's few links to the outside world and although he may not always have trusted them he seems to have read them avidly; in 1946, he wrote to Yeats's widow: "Shd like nooz of outer – get mind out of this, if not body ... glad to see even printed matter."³³ Famously, in his later years at the hospital an influx of visitors provided Pound with other channels of information (some of which were even less reliable than *Newsweek*). Carpenter also reports that during these early years in St Elizabeths "Pound read the newspapers each day" and, significantly in the present context, adds that he was particularly interested in the development of America's nuclear weapons programme.³⁴

Any account of Leucothea, and her bikini, in the *Cantos* must make some mention of Sherri Martinelli (1918-1996), a Beat and a Bohemian who painted and wrote and who, in 1952, became one of Pound's regular visitors. For a time she was the undisputed Queen Bee of Pound's circle of acolytes at St Elizabeth's and by some accounts (including her own) his lover. Large claims

³¹ Alac 54.

³² Noel Stock, *The Life of Ezra Pound* (2000; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974) 540.

³³ Quoted in Humphrey Carpenter, *A Serious Character: the Life of Ezra Pound*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1988) 762.

³⁴ Carpenter 761.

have also been made for her importance in the later cantos and particularly in *Rock-Drill* and among these is the claim that Sherri is Leucothea, the girl in the bikini. C. David Heymann writes that Pound “composed sections of *Rock-Drill* and all of Canto 90 with her in mind.”³⁵ I would assent to this, with the qualification that this is not the same thing as saying that he wrote them about her, but I am sceptical about the identification of Martinelli and Leucothea. In the first instance because I don’t believe that Pound’s poetry works in this way (and let me be clear here that that is not because, in terms of the distinction I made earlier, she is “news” but because those who read her in this way are using her in an attempt to construct a “myth”). One of the principal pieces of biographical evidence cited for equating Martinelli and Leucothea is a photograph of Martinelli in a bikini described by H.D. in her memoir of Pound:

She took the photograph herself (of herself), reflected in a mirror, in a “bikini,” Norman wrote. It is a graceful little body...³⁶

It is not clear to me whether or not Pound was sent a copy of this picture or indeed if he ever saw it. What does seem certain is that it was Pound’s reference to Leucothea’s bikini that inspired the photograph and not the photograph that inspired the reference. If this is the case then the photograph is proof of nothing other than Sherri’s desire to be Leucothea or to be thought to be so. H.D., it should perhaps be added, equated Martinelli with Unidine (another water goddess) and not with Leucothea. Incidentally, it is also worth remarking that in the passage quoted above H.D. places the word bikini in inverted commas presumably to fence off its impropriety or vulgarity.

I have it on the authority of Walter Baumann, that the distinguished Pound scholar and translator of the Cantos into German Eva Hesse sent Pound a photograph, a more conventional holiday snapshot, of herself in a bikini. It is, I suppose, possible that Sherri had seen this and was jealous. Eva also sent Pound a scarf into which she had woven or embroidered a Chinese ideogram. In his account of Pound’s final court appearance, which ended in the indictment against him being dismissed, Carpenter observes that outside court Pound put on “a long yellow scarf with Oriental characters on it.”³⁷ I presume that this is the one that Eva sent (there is a photograph of Pound wearing it in Carpenter’s biography). The point of this is not to set up Eva Hesse as a rival claimant to the mantle (or bikini) of Leucothea but simply to establish that the situation is a good deal more complex and ambiguous than it is sometimes thought to be. I have no doubt that there is much more to say on this matter but I will reassert my earlier point that I am more interested in the bikini than the person inside it and move to a conclusion.

I suppose that in the context of the *Cantos* “bikini” is usually read as an example of Pound’s innovative practice of translation, as an instance of the

³⁵ C. David Heymann, *Ezra Pound: the Last Rower (a Political Profile)* (London: Faber and Faber, 1976) 226.

³⁶ H.D. *End to Torment: A Memoir of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions, 1979) 52.

³⁷ Carpenter 844.

Poundian virtue of “making it new” and so indeed it is. Even by Pound’s standards it is a surprising and unorthodox (and remarkable) rendering. Carroll Terrell, who was normally the first to defend Pound and his work, disapproved of this rendering and considered it an inappropriate and cheap novelty.³⁸ I can see why – translating KREDEMNON as bikini adds nothing to our understanding of Homer or of Pound’s poem as a modern *Odyssey* – but I would strongly disagree. By putting Leucothea into a bikini Pound brings to his version of the episode a transgressive energy derived from the raw and interdicted sexuality that in 1955 the bikini represented. Without her bikini Leucothea would have been a pallid allegorical goddess or the Little Mermaid and Pound’s version of Odysseus’ shipwreck and rescue either a Neo-Platonist parable or a sentimental fable.

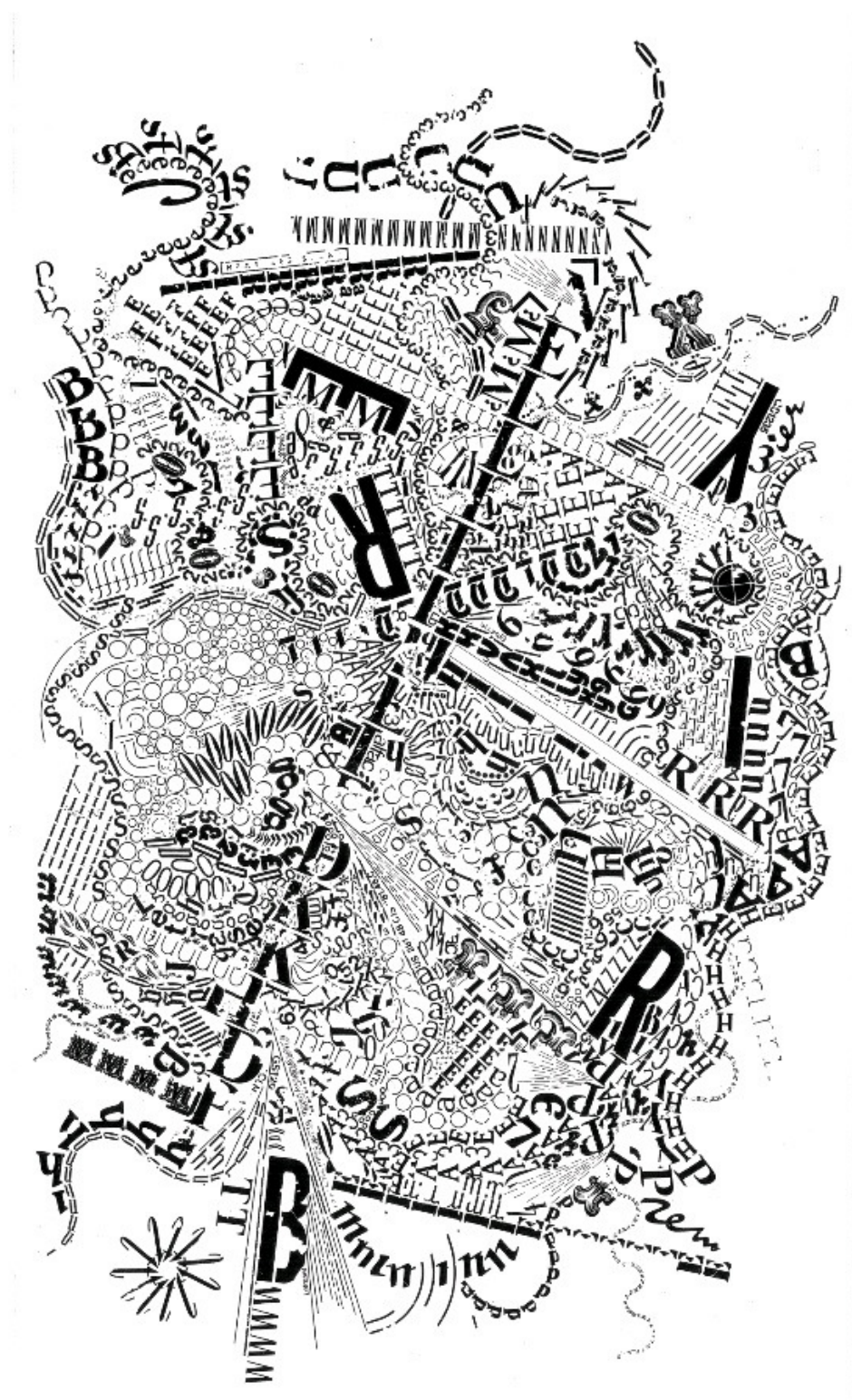
In “Spenser and the Allegorists” Frank Kermode writes of Edmund Spenser:

He does not convert event into myth, but myth into event ... he welcomes history, not seeking to lose his own time in some transhistorical pattern. Such patterns of course exist; but only the unique and present moment can validate them.³⁹

The power of “bikini” to disconcert is not limited to canons of decorum and propriety (either linguistic or sartorial) or to its transgression of social and ethical codes. Leucothea’s bikini, emblematic as it is of what Lotman calls “the world of excesses and anomalies,” can also disconcert totalising explanations of the *Cantos*, those readings that I would term mythical. That, I suspect, is why Carroll Terrell, who was deeply committed to the view that that the *Cantos* was a great religious poem, disliked the line “My bikini is worth yr/raft.” Leucothea’s topical two-piece reminded him, and should remind us, of how like Spenser, in this respect at least, Pound was and of how concerned with and enmeshed in the “unique and chance events, crimes, calamities” of their historical moment both Pound and his epic were, and that, I believe, is no bad thing.

³⁸ Terrell made this point in conversation with Walter Baumann.

³⁹ Frank Kermode, *Shakespeare, Spenser, Donne* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971) 22.



BEAULIEU 7: "ATOMINO"

NIALL MURPHY

PIECES ON A WET, BLACK BOARD—POETRY AND CHESS

Chess has been variously characterised as a game, a sport, a science, an art, and a way of life. Paradoxically, the key to its versatility has been its abstraction, its fundamental lack of human reference points, enabling different cultures and different times to make of it what they wished. Accordingly, it has been interpreted as a representation of war, as a rendition of formalised mating rituals, as a metaphor for the struggle against death or fortune, and as an idealised representation of a hierarchical society. Depending on the interpreter, it has also been seen as a noble phenomenon deriving from the moral right of kings to rule, an intellectual elitist activity powered by the mental willpower of the individual, and as the platform for the liberation of the proletariat, helping to usher in a new world of fairness and equal regard for the worker. Its canonical status was assured when it was added to school curricula,¹ and reified when attempts were subsequently made to have it banned on moral grounds. Chess is both personal and political, therefore, a source of creative conflict that might readily be discovered in the poetic.

As if to demonstrate this confluence of chess and poetry Sir Philip Sidney's "A Defence of Poesy" adopts the language of the game to prove the inevitability and desirability of the fictive:

We see we cannot play at chess but that we must give names to our chess-men; and yet, me thinks, he were a very partial champion of truth that would say we lied for giving a piece of wood the reverend title of a bishop.

In other words, the poet is bound to name, and the act of naming is a necessary response to the world, and to say that in all ways to call a piece of wood a bishop is a lie is to miss the point: we call things terms inspired by our imagination and the real world. The many ways in which we have read into chess are not lies, precisely – they have some other kind of truth value. We have a parallel here too: some of the many forking paths ahead of any

¹ One recent example being <<http://www.gmanews.tv/story/144048/Chess-to-be-included-in-school-curriculum>>.

particular position in a game of chess may lead to disaster and some to victory, but the rest of them vanish into a haze of uncomputability and “the full horror of the abysmal depths of chess.”² Far from all of this being the domain of the self-sufficient rational being, our impulse to play and our impulse to write are rooted in the same emotional, human grounds.

In a 1953 lecture, Eliot said that “the poet has something germinating in him for which he must find words; but he cannot know what words he wants until he has found the words; he cannot identify this embryo until it has been transformed into an arrangement of the right words in the right order.” Or to cast it another way, the right pieces in the right places. Chess and poetry, practised in great numbers by those uninterested in conventional social judgements of success, are in many ways a parallel search for a particular kind of beauty, and both are appreciated today by comparatively small elites;³ the remainder of this paper will chart the cultural negotiation of game and poem.

Although a large body of technical literature surrounds chess, in the main it is not of great literary merit, being useful primarily to communicate principles or tactical ephemera directly relevant to the playing of the game. In the peripheral literature, however, there is a good deal of thoughtful and well-executed fiction about chess: Nabokov’s *The Defence*,⁴ and even Hardy’s *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, where obsession with the game causes the downfall of the heroine (downfall being a common theme, as we shall see later.) In terms of non-fiction, many chess insiders and outsiders have written compelling books and articles on chess championships, including Arthur Koestler (Harry Golombek, 2007) and Jeremy Bernstein.⁵

Compared to the rich vein of prose writing about chess by writers acknowledged to be at the highest level, it is a little puzzling that there is a relative paucity of similar material in poetry. If we consider only what we might denote the “canonical” poets and material, a survey of poets reveals Eliot, Pound, Chaucer, Robert Lowell, Borges, Berryman, and MacNeice; but even then Eliot uses chess only sparsely in *The Waste Land*, primarily inspired by Middleton’s play *A Game At Chess*, from which Eliot adopts the framing device of chess used for a seduction. Lowell’s most famous chess poem, “The

² Vladimir Nabokov’s “The Defence” (see next section).

³ The technical requirements for appreciation in the case of chess are higher in the initial stages, since you have to learn the rules first, but there is no lack of inaccessibility in poetry later on, and to learn the rules for appreciating that takes longer.

⁴ Indeed, Dergatcheva has compared Nabokov’s novels to how a chess player “would design his world: multi-leveled structure, tricking the recipient with unexpected moves and elegant solutions of plot development” (Shenk, 2006).

⁵ See e.g. <<http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2010/apr/05/playing-chess-with-kubrick/>>.

Winner”, is composed of the utterances of someone else,⁶ and of MacNeice’s two efforts,⁷ one only peripherally references the game, and the other is not among his best.

There are many possible explanations for this disparity; Graeme Harwood advances the supposition in (Harwood, 1975) that as a game, chess cannot have been considered worthy enough to warrant a truly serious poem. There is another explanation, however, which fits the broad mass of the poetic works available to us, and that is that chess is, as an abstract game, essentially devoid of human reference points, except as we project them onto it.⁸ Rosenberg (Rosenberg, 1999) points out that chess has been used as a metaphor by physicists and mathematicians (Richard Feynman, Henri Poincaré, le Lionnais), linguists (Ferdinand de Saussure), information theorists (Claude Shannon), philosophers (Ludwig Wittgenstein; Walter Benjamin; Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari), artists (Duchamp, Beuys), literary figures (Pound, Eliot, Beckett, Borges, Nabokov, Pynchon) musicians (Cage) and many others, a staggering variety of uses which supports the idea of the *tabula rasa* just by itself.

Poets are also drawn to the analogies, metaphors and similes supported by chess. Indeed, not only is the chessboard a *tabula rasa*, it is also a palimpsest: it is written with the texts of one generation before being erased and replaced with the next, but the tablet is not perfectly erased each time – sometimes you can still discern records of the previous works between the lines of the current ones. To that end, I will examine the poetry and the historical context of a number of eras below.

The very first poetic references that we have to chess frame it as a war game, and most of the vocabulary that was passed to other nations originally had that characteristic too. What remains of them is fragmentary, or a small component of a much larger work, only a small portion of which might survive. Consider for example the poet Abul-Qasim Firdawsi⁹ whose 50,000-couplet epic poem “Shahnameh” is the “Iliad” of Greater Persia. Although this has survived into the present day, the section on chess concerns its arrival as a gift from an Indian king, forming the basis of an improbable legend: that the game’s rules were hidden from the Persian hosts by the Indian king Divsaram, and they were forced to derive the rules in order to escape having to pay tribute. Another fragmentary but more illustrative mention is from a Maqāma,¹⁰

⁶ In this case, ex-world-champion and paranoid anti-semitic, the late Robert James Fischer, of whom more later.

⁷ “Chess” and “Another Cold May”.

⁸ The French ambassador Paul de Foix in 1565: “Chess is an image of the works and deeds of men.” (Shenk, 2006).

⁹ It is supposed that this is a pen-name, since Firdawsi apparently translates as “paradise”.

¹⁰ Literally translated as “assembly,” as in addressing the same.

POETRY AT THE GAMES

a historical prose poetry form popular in 10th century Persia, with revivals in the 12th and 15th; the original versions of which involved a trickster figure who exerted an unhealthy compulsion on powerful listeners, notionally gathered together in an assembly. Often the oration is held to be worthy because of its ornate mastery of philosophy or other ancient texts. In the Maqāmat of “Badī’ al-Zamán al-Hamadhání”, a 9th-century Iranian writer sometimes said to have invented the form, we encounter the following:

Verily it is wealth – May God bless thee! – therefore be sure not to spend except from the profits. Thou shouldest eat bread and salt, and thou hast permission in regard to vinegar and onions, as long as thou feelest no repugnance towards them and dost not unite them. And flesh is as valuable as thine own flesh and methinks thou eatest it not. And sweetmeat is the food of him who cares not on which side he falls. And one meal a day is the fare of the pious. And eating, when hungry, is a protection against loss, but, when sated, it invites death. Then be with people like the chess player, take all they have and keep all thou hast. O my dear son, I have caused thee to hear and delivered the message, therefore, if thou accept it, God will be sufficient for thee, but, if thou reject it, God will be thy reckoner. God bless our Lord Muhammad, his family and his companions all.

Although it is impossible to convey the feeling of the semi-rhymed original Arabic without unacceptable sonic butchering, it is possible (through the efforts of the translator) to hear the hypnotic intonations in “And flesh is as valuable as thine own flesh”, the internal rhymes of “sweetmeat” and “chess [...] hast”, etc. While it is advisable to take the Old Testament feeling imparted to the translation with a pinch of salt, the central concern with right action, the mysterious pairing of sweetmeat with the morally ambiguous, and the description of God as being either broadly satisfied with your behaviour or set against it, all combine to locate the depiction of the chess-player as an acquisitive calculator firmly within the narrow world of proscriptive religious texts. Here the chess-player is a figure to be emulated, but only because the behaviour accords with the text’s interdictions: the chess-player as iconic tool.

The first fragment we will look at is known as *Ruodlieb*, a text written in leonine hexameters from circa 1030, most likely by a Bavarian monk. Leonine hexameters are an interesting poetic form; supposedly invented by a monk called Leonius (or potentially Leoninus), it is a non-classical Latin structure with considerable internal rhyme. Often it involves a rhyme in the centre via caesuras or tripartite division of the line. In the particular example below, the knight Ruodlieb himself has encountered a foreign king, and is persuaded to play chess in a game for stakes, and furthermore actually accept his winnings:

*Primo respueram, vitiosum namque putabam,
Sic me ditari vel eos per me tenuari.
Dixi: “non suevi quicquam ludendo lucrari.”
Dicunt: “inter nos dum sis, tu vive velut nos;*

*Quando domum venias, ibi vivere quis veluti vis.”
Cum sat lorifregi, que porrexere recepi,
Commoda cum laude mihi fortuna tribuente.*

The latin has some end-rhyme assonance in the couplets “tenuari/lucrari” and “nos/vis”, but the bulk of the sonic work is reserved for the non-end sections, where we have the wonderful “vivere/porrexere” pairing, the hard-C repetitions

of “Cum/Commoda cum”, and the “do-re-mi” flavour of “nos dum sis”. The short “Dixi...Dicunt” gives it (appropriately) the feeling of a recounted tale, perhaps even one delivered in a slightly gossipy tone, given the somewhat breathless babbling nature of the quick, hard syllables falling after each other.

Let us turn to the English translation:

*At first I refused, indeed I thought it unworthy
For me to make money like that, or for them to be fleeced by me.
I said ‘I am not accustomed to growing rich by gaming.’
They said ‘While you’re with us, live as we do;*

*When you get home, there you can live as you please.’
When I’d shown enough reluctance, I accepted –
Fortune gave me the advantage, honourably.*

Although a short excerpt, the fragment demonstrates some interesting characterisations of the chivalrous mind: the overwhelming concern with right action, but here limited only within the specific context of the knight’s personal code, since he is in fact engaging the enemy “in combat”; their appeal to cultural self-determination (albeit not with full knowledge of the circumstances of who their interlocutor was), and finally the knight yielding to their entreaties only once honour has been (superficially) satisfied. The whole interaction has something of the feeling of a pool shark hustling in a dive bar – and not without reason, for the knight goes on to win. Chess here serves as a mechanism through which the knight might show initiative and skill in combat, without actually getting involved in combat; yet although honour is a concern, valour is the more important virtue. The game allows the violence to be placed at a useful remove.

Fatalism and a certain sense of inexorable loss, whether to an opponent or a romantic rival or a romantic partner’s charms, is an allegorical theme present in Chaucer’s *Book of the Duchess*. Framing all of this is a very interesting characterisation of a relationship with Fortune, which is often portrayed in a similar light to a “god of the gaps” – to wit, things which cannot be adequately explained, or which might otherwise reflect poorly upon the individual in question, are placed firmly upon the wild forces of Fortune, who cannot be expected to be amenable to any sensible way of doing things. In our excerpt below, where Fortune plays a knight, it is not clear at first glance *why* one would use chess for this purpose, since your opponent is the personification of chance, and chess is a game of perfect information and deterministic moves – luck literally plays no part, and so it is one of the hardest games to play on a psychological level in that respect, because any failings must necessarily be your own. Yet this turns out to be a successful construction - Chaucer initially moves to characterise Fortune as fickle and without faith (and female, of course):

My boldness is turned to shame,
For false Fortune has played a game
Of chess with me, alas, the while!...]
Her highest honour and her flower is
To lie, for that is her nature,
Without faith, law, or measure.

POETRY AT THE GAMES

The Knight and Fortune are poorly matched:

Therewith Fortune said, 'Check, here!'
And 'Mate!' to me in mid-career
With an errant pawn, alas!

Now we see that in fact characterising Fortune as the opponent, and chess as the medium of humiliation, fully allows for the expression of remorse at not being inherently good enough:

I wish to God that once or twice
I'd studied, learnt the pitfalls thrice
Known to the Greek Pythagoras,
I'd have played the better at chess
Guarded my queen better thereby.

Of course, when the opponent is Fortune, representing life, the stakes of such a game are the highest possible – the course of your own life. And so the fatalism sets in – why bother improving or trying at all when your opponent is so good that she is less to blame for winning than you are for losing?

Had I been God and able to do
My will, when she the victor proved,
I would have made the same move,
For, as I hope God will give me rest,
I dare well swear she chose the best.
But through that move I am shorn
Of bliss; alas, that I was born!

In this case Chaucer has succeeded in creating an atmosphere of doomed resignation wherein chess acts as the medium of humiliation, because it *removes* the element of chance from the situation and frames it so that the failings of the individual are responsible for the outcome of the life, rather than more easily dismissable vicissitudes. In this way, chess supports the medieval worldview wherein we are born into the world crying, and live lives that are nasty, brutish and short. Chess is no consolation; it is the bishop's mitre, or the cat o' nine tails.

A minor but nonetheless very interesting confluence of religious and ludic medieval obsessions is Gautier de Coinci's (c. 1177-1236) "Miracles of Our Lady"¹¹ wherein Mary, mother of Jesus, is the star of a chess drama. In this verse, Mary is the most powerful piece on the board, representing the battlefield between God and the devil:

God planned a brilliant move long in advance
Which the devil in no way foresaw.

Mary, mother of God, able to move along both straight lines and diagonals, is clearly a match for anything the vile forces of the devil can conjure up:

¹¹ Yalom (See 2005, p111).

POST III

This Queen mates the devil head on,
[...] This Queen deprives him of his prey,
This Queen torments him every day.
This Queen goads him everywhere,
This Queen [drives him] square to square.

While chess has been used as a platform for many things, I am not familiar with any other lyrical approach to demonstrating proto-Marianist heresy via exultation of Our Lady's powers of horizontal movement. Sir William Jones's creation of "Caissa", was not an invention out of whole cloth: "Scacchia Ludus" by Marcus Vida, Bishop of Alba in c. 1513, had the initial central idea of a chess contest between god-like figures – in his case Apollo and Mercury – to decide the outcome of some supra-game concern, in this case – ultimately – the virtue of the "fair Scacchis". Most interesting from a theoretical point of view is the recasting of the chess "creation myth" in a classical framework – a harkening back reminiscent of the palimpsest theme. Oliver Goldsmith's translation picks up a section historically reminiscent of Hannibal's battles:

As if an army of the Gauls should go,
With their white standards, o'er the Alpine snow
To meet in rigid fight on scorching sands
The sun-burnt Moors and Memnon's swarthy bands
Then Father Ocean thus; you see them here,
Celestial Powers, what troops, what camps appear.

"Scacchia Ludus" was extremely influential, proving that the classical metaphors still held a decisive grip on the imaginations of mid-millennium Europeans, and inspired both a Polish poem, "Szachy", written by Jan Kochanowski around 1564/1565 CE, and "Caissa" itself. "Caissa" differs from "Scacchia Ludus" primarily in that the figure of Caissa herself is renamed – supposed, in this configuration, to be a Thracian dryad – and that she is a romantic target, won over by Mars' construction of the game of chess to win her approval. Interestingly, the same feeling of doomed action accompanies this romantic situation:

He hears, where'er he moves, the dreadful sound;
Check the deep vales, and Check the woods rebound.
No place remains: he sees the certain fate,
And yields his throne to ruin, and Checkmate.

Although "Scaccia Ludus" was more influential among poets, "Caissa" was essentially responsible for popularising the classical origin myth in English, and poetry can, in this case, genuinely be said to have had a long-lasting effect on the game: namely, changing its terminology (from rook to castle). In this case, chess itself is much more the subject of the work than in previous poems; the creation myth, the terminology change and so on all demonstrate that chess is not being used as a metaphorical tool to show or change something, but that a metaphorical tool is being used to change chess.

POETRY AT THE GAMES

Finally, in a poem again demonstrating deep concern with movement, the prototypical Jewish intellectual Abraham ibn Ezra, wrote an illuminating panegyric¹² to the game in the twelfth century, beginning:

I will sing a song of battle
Planned in days long passed and over.
Men of skill and science set it
On a plain of eight divisions,
And designed in squares all chequered.
Two camps face each one the other,
And the Kings stand by for battle,
And 'twixt these two is the fighting.
Bent on war the face of each is,
Ever moving or encamping,
Yet no swords are drawn in warfare,
For a war of thoughts their war is.

While being a relatively straight-forward assessment of the game, and making similar points to other writers about the ever-present-yet-not-present nature of represented conflict, there are a few points here illuminative of the medieval mindset worth pointing out. Firstly, the kings *do not themselves* partake in the fighting in this conception: the fighting is betwixt them and they are somehow aloof from it, very much at a royal remove. Secondly, the concern with the length of chess's history revealed at the start of the poem is interesting – the “song of battle” seems a motif which might itself be very old when ibn Ezra was writing, so using that as a framing device for the rest is explicitly lending credence to the game *because* “Men of skill and science” planned it long ago. Yet the weight of history for chess, while considerable, is not provably as long-standing as songs of battle are.¹³

The modern era is where we begin to see responses to chess that work at setting the militarism and conflict inherent in the topic at an ironic remove, in keeping with the cultural evolution over the period. John Berryman's “The Moon and the Night and the Men” uses chess as an analogy for warfare, a well-trodden path for chess poetry of course. Berryman concerns himself specifically with the Belgian surrender in 1940 during WWII, the year the poem was written, and the perceived treason of King Leopold in acquiescing to the Nazi invasion without serious resistance. (The poem may also have, at the back of its mind, an ironic reaction to Psalm 121:6¹⁴ as a framing device.)

Chess's presence here is wonderfully suggestive (and suggested). Firstly it appears as a device that simultaneously unites and divides; the board enables the players to stare at each other, as in old cartoons of personified European nations hostilely eyeing each other over barbed-wire borders – but,

¹² “Songs of Exile”, translated by Nina Davis, 1901.

¹³ It is also worth noting the emphasis on continual movement and encampment as the real source of military effectiveness, reminiscent of Sun Tzu's advice in *The Art of War* – advice now thousands of years old, but still practiced today by (e.g.) the U. S. Marine Corp.)

¹⁴ “The sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.”

paradoxically, they also must be close enough to each other in order to actually do the staring. This suggests the duality of latent conflict very effectively. Another area of chess which is examined here, uniquely as far as I can tell, is the use of chess to support metaphorically the profound engagement in the poem with the inarticulate. In this context, the anti-verbal nature of chess, visual or symbolic, comes to the fore, and the speechlessness of the protagonists (it is not unreasonable to attribute this to shock, or again that persistent sense of the inevitable) is linked to the speechlessness of the coming victims of military expansionism and aggression. As in previous poems, chess is characterised as a “fair” game, at odds with the treachery of politics, but the link between the anti-verbal and the treacherous is ambiguous; treachery derives from politics in the broadest sense, requiring words to be executed, but the response to treachery is without words, and history will end without them. Yet chess will not save the protagonists. Chess here is placed within the age-old military context, but there is also a new connection with articulation and powerlessness which would have been out of place in the medieval era.

Following on from this, MacNeice’s own most direct engagement with war – his diary in poetic form, *Autumn Journal* is similarly shot through with anxiety about WWII. In “Chess”, the game is again viewed in a military context, but the primary reaction is that of skepticism, and indeed an undertone of gender-related skepticism; like Carol Rumens’ “Chess Players” (“In here is a perfect celibacy/knights without favours, castles bare of maidens”), MacNeice’s world of chess is populated by men “working hard to prove what lads they were”; here war, and the exclusively male population that both produces and consumes it in various ways, is portrayed as a cycle – “a closed ambit” – which is doomed, despite varied tactics and gambits, to end the same way. Chess is a subdued minor note in a poem that concentrates upon the physicalities of recruiting stations with their music and tattered posters, but still provides the framework for the posing of the poem’s most memorable line – “What is the practice worth, so few being left to stand?”. The question and its implied answer continue to echo down the ensuing stanzas; what is the practice of chess or of war worth, if when the battle is won, the victims are forgotten – not even mentioned! – and the victor is a cypher, enslaved to enact it again and again? MacNeice’s chess here, while in the tradition of militarism, might instead be said to be nihilist: it is not the repudiation of militarism, for the poem does not proffer either any particular solutions or explicit in-poem rejections of it, but instead adopts a tone of melancholic, inevitable weariness and nihilism – a distinctly modern posture.

From a melancholic non-militarist to a merry pugilist, it is very much in the style of Ezra Pound to be dogmatic, as the title of his “DOGMATIC STATEMENT CONCERNING THE GAME OF CHESS” indicates. Pound’s obsession with the secret meaning of texts notoriously led him to reinterpret the Provençal love poems of the troubadours as coded messages between generals, carrying military significance (Connolly, 1956). Leaving aside the truth value of such a construction, it is unsurprising that Pound – one of the most militaristic of poets – chooses to find conflict in the chessboard. It is surprising that it is expressed in such earnest yet abstract terms; Pound is

often not afraid to include or base his poetry on material detail – indeed, the imagists, whom Pound was closely associated with, relied on just such a foundation as the basis of their literary philosophy. This poem, however, seems to anticipate the description of the thought processes of Grandmasters in De Groot's famous PhD thesis (and later book), *Thought and Choice in Chess* (De Groot, 1978), relying extensively on abstract visual impressions for its vortical impact.¹⁵ Colour and light dominate the poem: “colour” itself is the most common descriptive term, followed by “light(s)”, and “striking”, and the title of course is a “theme for a series of pictures”. Here the pieces and the board seem to co-operate in some kind of *son et lumière*, pressed by Pound into larger service “break[ing] and reform[ing] the pattern”. After all the audio effects substituting for the visual effects – alliteration in “brown bishops”, “falling [...] ‘L’s”, “looped [...] leaps”, “straight strips” and assonance in “luminous / looped”, “pieces / centripetal”, “alive / living” – a kind of in-poem ekphrasis – it is almost a disappointment when the second stanza ends with the abstract and far from punchy “Renewal of contest”, particularly when the last line begins with the wonderfully paranoid “Blocked lights working in.” The alphabetic assertions (L’s, X’s and Y’s all play a part) and the violent punctuation and indentation are also part of Pound’s toolkit for representing the visual domain in the aural domain, for the alphabet binds sounds together with shapes in a clear way. Here Pound is reading into chess some of his latent concern with secret meanings, by ascribing to the board things it clearly does not possess, while also positing a cycle of eternal conflict with “Renewal of contest”. Pound might not be imbuing chess with a particularly modern concern in this poem – although the notion of continual conflict is certainly a topical one – but he does it in a modern way, and in that way, chess as represented is absorbing a style as well as a conceptual framework.

Robert Lowell provides an interesting, albeit minor, example of innovation in the form, being “a found poem” composed solely of quotes from the late chess world champion Robert (Bobby) Fischer. Fischer himself was a fascinating character, as we shall see, whose fame at this stage had been crowned by his victory in the 1972 World Chess Championship, which was widely seen (and encouraged to be seen by the authorities) as a contest between the capitalist and communist ideologies.¹⁶ Chess is eminently suitable as a framework for representing political or broad public conflict: Lowell placed the Cold War significance of Fischer’s achievement centre-stage by ending with the pugnacious “leaders [...] fight[ing] it out hand to hand” and somehow locating the poem in or close to West Berlin, although the poem doesn’t have any particular location other than Fischer’s consciousness. Lowell is searching for terror in the words – seeking to bring out the conflict inherent in any chess game – by opposing the colours (black, then white), and responding to the

¹⁵ Marcel Duchamp: “In chess, there are some extremely beautiful things in the domain of movement, but not in the visual domain. It is the imagining of the movement or of the gesture that makes the beauty, in this case” (Cabanne, 1987). In this case, of course it is the domain of movement and the visual domain (i.e. static visual arrangements) which are being represented in the aural domain.

¹⁶ For an extended treatment of this theme, see Johnson (2008).

energy and cocksurety expressed by Fischer, who was perhaps something of a poet in the making, as well as a world champion. There are skillful word choices here – the verb “muled”, with its suggestion of extra-human stubbornness, reinforced by the ironic allusion to mating only oneself,¹⁷ and the rather plaintive assertion that “partying around [...] doesn’t go” (a nice conjoining of immobility and unacceptability). In fact, on a second pass, the title acquires a rather different ironic cast, and “the winner” is shown as a rather isolated figure: he has “a few peripheral friends”, he has tried to “broaden [him]self” by “read[ing] the racetrack”,¹⁸ and the narrative voice has a wistful tone as it speaks of “los[ing] touch with life...”. One is left with the impression that the winner has not won much, or if he did, that it cost him a tremendous amount. The poem has gained from our knowledge after the fact: Fischer himself experienced significant bouts of mental illness after the 1972 championship, which expressed itself in virulent anti-semitism, holocaust denial, public broadcasts approving of the September 11 attacks and so on. By writing the poem, Lowell is both performing as an approving Cold Warrior opportunist and critiquing such action.

That other great occupation of the modern world, terrorism, finds its expression in poetry and chess. In the autobiographical piece “Chess Pieces” by Joseph Campbell, militant Irish Republican of the early 20th century, he draws the by now somewhat tired analogy between chess-pieces and armed fighters – in this case, terrorists confined in the Curragh. More subtly worked, however, is the changing nature of that relationship: firstly, the prisoners are “so many pieces taken, / Swept from the board” but then become “Dogs of Fionn” who will “run the old grey Wolf to death at last”. Now the pieces have become “fat Kings / and painted Queens” clearly to be identified with the English power structure of the period, and it is the “Dogs of Fionn” who attack the “tame” ... “purple-cassocked Bishops”.¹⁹ The poem has a sharp awareness of the detonative possibilities of sounds – “Praxis”, “torn”, “purple-cassocked” and “balked escapes” – but rhythmically does little to communicate the frustration of being confined while larger projects are at work. The poem is also in free verse with the only end-rhyme being “again / again”. Free verse is a somewhat ironic choice of form, given that it was written when the author was interned in Mountjoy for various anti-Free State activities in the early 1920s. However, the poem does effectively exemplify art as propaganda: the true value of a human being lies in “being used again” for some higher struggle, which was a pre-eminent concern for that large proportion of the twentieth century involving armed conflict.

Andrew Waterman demands our attention as author of the most obviously relevant work in this area, *Poetry and Chess* (Waterman, 1981), which

¹⁷ Fischer was almost monastic in his early years.

¹⁸ This meets the basic criterion of not being chess, but it is not clear whether racetrack statistics in and of themselves would be considered broadening.

¹⁹ Interestingly, both Anglican and Catholic bishops are entitled to wear purple cassocks, although it seems clear that Campbell did not mean to impugn the latter.

POETRY AT THE GAMES

includes “Playing Through Old Games of Chess”. Despite the nod to nostalgia and the sense of old pleasures, not yet quite diminished, referenced in the title, this poem is bulging with contemporary references, concerns, and form. In free verse, the poem begins with a paradox: the crane-fly, an image of fragility and temporality, who “trembles in the windowpane / as it has since before there were windows”. It then pulls back to examine a larger fragility, that of the human race and its relationship with the environment – phrases which are to us now alternately hackneyed and terrifying – “hottest summer since records began”, “sky hazed with entropy”, “general liquidation” – are deployed here in a manner akin to Empson’s “Missing Dates”: the waste remains, the waste “accumulate[s] irreversibly”, bringing in a “grace note” of obsession from that famous villanelle.

Overall, the poem seems to exude a sense of tired resignation somewhat akin to MacNeice’s work discussed earlier, but the object of the resignation is slightly different – the folly of man resulting *indirectly* in the destruction of the world, rather than the direct, pugnacious, inhumanity of man to man. In this fashion chess is used to stand for a wish for the simplicity of olden times, when the ecological sword of Damocles did not hang over the human race and the pieces *could* be reset to start again; similarly, the beauty of chess is represented as the pleasure of old games with a definite and describable arc, ending in a predictable, decorous way (rather than the disorderly, upset ending that the poet fears lies in wait for the human race). One interesting dynamic here is the way chess simultaneously stands for progress (the “full orchestration” which is associated with “cablegrams under the sea”) and also for the orderly way they did things in the past (resulting in the kings being in safety “for a while”). The fleetingness and anxiety are thematic: chess is also used to illuminate the notion that we might buy some more time for “White”²⁰ with “a sacrificial manoeuvre”, the nature of which is left distressingly undefined.

As a response to so many of these chess-poems that can barely be described as playful, we can examine the unique work *Chess Pieces*, by David Solway. *Chess Pieces* is so unusual precisely because as distinct from the mass of material reviewed elsewhere in this paper, it is a sustained, mostly successful, attempt to write poetry entirely in the frame of chess metaphor. Every poem references or is otherwise about chess, something continued over 39 poems and 79 pages. He uses a wide variety of topics and allusions, from Wittgenstein’s use of chess in the *Philosophical Investigations* to a adroit re-working of “Jabberwocky”:

The Nimzovitch

’Twas Zugzwang, and the Ludus Boor
achoo’d and snuffled in its rag;
the Staunton slumped upon the moor
and the mad Morph cried, “Aghh!”

²⁰ Studies of catastrophic environmental disaster impacts generally show that poorer countries do substantially worse.

POST III

"Beware the hired pawns behind
the spiffy hitmen on the flank;
beware the Nimzovitch, and mind
the booming Zukertank."

Solway demonstrates impressive aural control here, beginning with the technical German term "Zugzwang",²¹ echoed with the nonsense term "Zukertank", and the alliteration is continued to humorous effect with the generally rather stately Staunton "slump[ing] on the moor" while the "mad Morph" cries.²² Sometimes the attempt to view the world through only this one lens is less successful and more fragmentary, however. For example, in "Bishop to King", the following passage has a bitter, sniping flavour:

You see what lack of faith will do?
The bishops, who preach and advise,
are in despair. It's modern times.

And even the bishops themselves
have been seen without their vestments
in impious communication with the pawns.

A more effective critique of the behaviour of clergy is possible, this one is undermined by its own arch distance via the use of the words "impious" and the head-shaking dismissal of "It's modern times". Overall, it comes across as a superficial, somewhat disconnected attempt to parse the modern experience through the chess metaphor, although (as demonstrated above) there is skill in the sonic command – the coupling of "themselves / vestments" is particularly subtle. "Deep Blue's Downfall", a poem predicated on a programming error in the machine that beat Gary Kasparov wherein it imagined a queen that wasn't there, similarly filters the modern experience through hyper-tense accretions of neologisms, in a manner not entirely dissimilar to sections of Kevin Nolan's *Loving Little Orlick*:

A gedanken madonna troubles his analysis.
The hum of circuitry's no proof against
the arias of the phantom queen

who reclines in the boudoirs
of the motherboard or glides
from chamber to bower powered
by sexy multiprocessors.

There is some excellent aural work here, as before, and the use of the phrase "gedanken madonna", harking back to the *gedankenexperiment* popularised by Ernst Mach, is a particularly apt cross-fertilisation, bringing in connotations from turn-of-the-century physics, religion, previously discussed Marianist heresies and Arthur Koestler's *The Ghost in the Machine*. Yet ultimately the poetic response seems a little artificial, perhaps even superficial – more of an

²¹ Meaning a situation where you are compelled to move, but any move you make will make things worse for you.

²² Staunton and Morph are probably (truncated in one case) references to the chess players Staunton and Morphy.

POETRY AT THE GAMES

agglomeration of moments than a coherent explanatory narrative. Anti-thematically, the poems that come across as the most successfully executed are the two which inject an element of autobiography: "Handling the Chess Pieces" and "My Mother's Chess", both revolving around parental relations. "My Mother's Chess" covers well-covered ground but does so in an unusually matter-of-fact way, allowing enough distance for the anti-maternal poem to work. Solway criticises his "indulgent parent", whom he characterises as "quite as confusing / as confused", "play[ing] a curious game", and alleges that her "incapacity to reprimand" makes for "dubious chess", ending with the memorable couplet:

I might have wished it otherwise:
better chess; less lenient.

One of the things sometimes offered as a central difference between these two activities is the nature of the neat, abstract world of the game, as distinct from the natural messiness of life that poetry is somehow more innately capable of working with. The game is close to "essential creativity, utterly divorced from experience of or engagement with life, as in poetry it by definition cannot be" (Waterman, 1981, p12). However, this would appear to depend more on your definition of poetry than anything else: there are plenty of examples of abstract poetry not (seemingly) particularly connected to anything in the real world. Consider for example William S. Burroughs' well-known work "Pistol Poem No. 2", a quote from which I reproduce below:

Who Controls The Control Men Controls Men Control Who The Control Who The Men
Controls Who Controls The Men Control Controls Men Control The Who Control Who The
Controls Men

If we admit this (and other famous examples) to the canon of poetry, however reluctantly, then it seems that many a messy, obsessional, confusing game of chess played between exhausted participants must also qualify, in some way, as being inspired by, related to, formed by, life too.

Another element advanced by Waterman as drawing a bright line between poetry and chess is the competitive factor. Waterman again: "True poets are uninterested in the concept of a 'winning' poem, but glad of any real poems they can write." (*op. cit.*, p.16). Leaving aside the "no true Scotsman" appearance to this argument, this seems to me an unrealistically simple representation of the world, and writers' reactions to it. Is this sentence to suggest that a poet has never been happy at winning a competition? Or that they should not have been, had they actually been so? Or that they should never have entered in the first place? The complex forces of identity and ego which drive us all can certainly produce fine poets who are not particularly exercised by entering competitions, but awards and prizes and memberships are inarguably part of life for that vanishingly small coterie of people who attempt to make some kind of living from poetry. To attempt to ignore this in order to characterise poetry as somehow inherently humbler before human experience seems misguided: "The egotism of writers, which certainly exists, is less stark and more diffused; and mixed with a humbling sense of the complex intractability of life itself," says Waterman. It seems clear that humility and/or ego are properties of the individual, not the art, and that any

statements about the universal applicability of poetry to a given situation should be treated with caution, since poetry clearly represents whatever we wish to make with it – as does chess.

Waterman also suggests that “[u]nlike [...] the poet who can redraft endlessly, the chess player has to commit himself irrevocably to a single over-the-board move among the many he will have considered”, which also fails as a clear distinction. While competitive players may end up with only one move recorded in the proceedings for a particular competition, almost their first move upon returning home is to take to their chess columns and defend their particular line of over-the-board reasoning, publishing line after line of potential counter-attack in whatever medium they can occupy. They also often repeat a particular line in consecutive games, seeking to probe out its weaknesses over the board, in much the way that a poet might refine a poem by progressive public readings. It seems inappropriate to use words like irreversible and irrevocable in such a fluid environment.

On the whole, the sets of poets and players have not greatly overlapped in membership. There are a few who are notable in one field, but not particularly in the other: for example, the Russian WGM²³ Alexandra Kosteniuk, ex-woman’s world chess champion, who rather endearingly places her English teenage poetry on her website for your consideration²⁴ and a handful of other examples (e.g. Aleister Crowley in (Kaczynski, 2010), Beckett as discussed), but the demands of top-flight activity in each field would appear to exclude much possibility of overlap. However, on a personal level, poets and players are perceived as quite similar by Waterman: “At chess tournaments, the talk among players and spectators [...] all reminds me strongly of literary discussions among writers and critics: familiar, obsessive, only the terms different” (Waterman, 1981, p13), and this author admits to parallel experiences. It is not clear, however, that such a parallel applies exclusively to poetry and chess, since many niche hobbies have practitioners who are broadly similar in outlook. Those inclined to find motivation in “exceptionally taxing work not accredited as such by society generally” (*op. cit.*) are probably also inclined to be more interested in the activity rather than any validation that might be contingent on the surrounding social context.

Waterman then goes to some lengths to undermine his own argument that chess is essentially divorced from reality by enumerating a list of players who also, unsurprisingly, happened to be talented at something else in the real world other than chess: “Philidor [...] was [...] a composer of note [...] Staunton [...] was a prominent Shakespearean scholar [...] Lasker [...] contributed to mathematics [...] [and] Reuben Fine had to abandon chess for [psychology]”, never mind Duchamp²⁵ or others noted for achievement in other fields.

²³ Womens Grand Master, as per Grand Master, except awarded at a lower skill level.

²⁴ See <<http://www.kosteniuk.com/en/albums/poems.php>>.

²⁵ While I accept that Duchamp’s work dealt with people in a dehumanising or abstract way, I do not accept that nothing else did – or that chess should “take the blame” for this dehumanising impulse in the way that Waterman seems to

POETRY AT THE GAMES

Waterman then enumerates the following players whose positive contribution to society (or indeed their actions generally) might be more questionable: Paul Morphy, “the original pride and sorrow of chess”, proto-world-champion who went insane; Wilhelm Steinitz, “ended his days [...] convinced he could move chess pieces by impulses from the brain and defeat God with the odds of pawn and move; Akiba Rubenstein, “paranoiac to a point [where he thought] players and officials were intent on poisoning him”; Alexander Alekhine, alcoholic, Nazi sympathiser, “a monster of selfishness and crassness”; Bobby Fischer, hyper-focused, anti-semitic Jew. He then asks the question, “How did characters so weird play such powerfully lucid chess?”

There is a kind of occidentalism in this treatment of chess which seems in ignorance of the spectrum of humanity displayed in both poet and player. Take, for example, Chesterton’s dictat that “Poets do not go mad, but chess-players do” (Chesterton, 2009), used by Waterman in his introduction to lever a discussion about the psychological instability of chess world champions into an assertion that an excess of rationality must surely lead to madness. This is not supported by the facts. Even just a cursory examination of the number of poets who have committed suicide while the balance of their mind was disturbed would lead you to the conclusion that it is not a matter of the flavour of skill (either supposedly rational or mystical) but rather the presence of a significant quantity of skill of either kind which is dangerous. Leaving aside the pseudo-insightful nature of Chesterton’s remark, it is difficult to be objective about the impact of madness on the game, and on poetic literature in general.

Waterman’s introduction was written within a decade of the messy disintegration of the championship reign of Bobby Fischer, whose unfortunately public problems helped to form and then calcify a certain impression of top-flight chess in much the same way that the American poets of the 50s and 60s helped to contribute to a perception of the literary creative as being inherently unstable. At least in the chess world, events since then have contributed to a grand ordinariness rather than a messy drama; the current and most likely future world champion candidates (at time of writing, Vishwanathan Anand and Magnus Carlsen) have displayed no particular signs of insanity and seem likely to continue in that robust mental health that high-level chess currently seems to require. Similarly for poetry, where although there are a number of high-profile cases of mental illness, some at the very heart of the highest levels of practice, there is no particular evidence that it is the practice itself which is responsible for the problem, as opposed to the people who end up being attracted to it for one reason or another. The situation is not helped by shallow Freudian psychological assessments²⁶ proposing to explain the attraction of chess in terms of the dominant behaviour of the queen, ignoring the fact that this interpretation can have had

argue.

²⁶ Such as that given by Freud’s protégé Ernest Jones in 1930: “It is plain that the unconscious motive activating [chess] players is not the mere love of pugnacity characteristic of all competitive games, but the grimmer one of father murder” – (See Shenk, 2006, p147).

validity only after the end of the 1500s, by which stage chess had already undergone most of its important growth. A final compelling parallel between the two activities is the characterisation of what the act of creation means, and how it is executed. Let us turn to ex-world chess champion Capablanca:²⁷

The general conception, the highest quality in a chess master, is seen to advantage in the examples given below, where the plans are seen to be accurately carried out.

Capablanca, one of the most thoroughly elegant of chess masters – he represented his home country, Cuba, as an ambassador for many years – clearly regards the conception, the *idea* behind the creative act as being the primary thing. The execution of it is also important, but only to the extent to that the plan might be accurately carried out. This sounds eerily similar to a quote of Eliot's:²⁸ "poetic originality is largely an original way of assembling [...] disparate and unlikely material to make a new whole". It is clear that having a plan (a new whole) and executing on the plan (assembling disparate and unlikely material) is how these two stalwarts of their respective professions conceive of the creative act.

To those who do not believe that the creative act in these two spheres can be compared, since poetry is somehow less limited than chess, and poems cannot be placed as categorically as games can, I would remark that the number of different games of chess that can be played is literally astronomical – in fact, it is more than the number of atoms in the universe. There may well be as many poems, but if both possibility-spaces are effectively infinite, it becomes more useful to talk about other structural features when comparing them. Finally, the Borges's library of Babel might be an instructive way to begin thinking about how poems could be categorised; a way which increases the parallels between game playing and poem composition, since, as Waterman says, any chess player making a blunder might be "haunted by neglected alternatives", such as might lurk in the pages of that library.

Waterman also argues that chess "inexorably subordinates beauty to the primary practical purpose of winning". Accepting for a moment that this is true, it does ignore one vital component of the practice of chess as an art, and indeed one of the earliest ones – the art of chess problem composition. Problem composition is known to most newspaper readers: the chess section invariably prints a single board position with a statement like "White to play and win in three moves". The board position presents the reader with a puzzle to be solved, much like a crossword. Whereas over-the-board play usually results in certain kinds of recognisable positions, composed problems do not suffer from the unfortunate necessity of having to be reachable in practical play – a composer is given free rein to place pieces on a board essentially arbitrarily, and entirely define the scope of the creation in a way which is not possible for the tournament player. Furthermore, where the over-the-board

²⁷ Who, as far as we know, never suffered from mental illness or much in the way of self-doubt at all.

²⁸ Agreeing with Lowes on Coleridge in *The Frontiers of Criticism*, 1956.

POETRY AT THE GAMES

player always has in mind the opponent, and has their plans disrupted or aided by that person, the problem composer has in mind the *reader*, rather than a player. The job of the reader of the problem is to tease through the possibilities of the text and reflect on them, but always with an eye to unlocking the puzzle it presents. Puzzle and art are intertwined here, but with no surrounding competitive tension.

The parallels seem so inescapable that it is no surprise that Nabokov published in 1969 a work entitled *Problems and Poems*, which linked 53 poems with 18 chess problems that Nabokov himself had composed. Although he obviously tied these artworks in different media together with the title, he made the parallels even more explicit:

(P)roblems are the poetry of chess. They demand from the composer the same virtues that characterize all worthwhile art: originality, invention, harmony, conciseness, complexity, and splendid insincerity.

Returning to the question of whether the creation of beauty is the broadest impulse of art, it is instructive to return to Fischer, the irascible sum of his contradictions, who also happened to be one of the greatest players the world has ever seen. A man capable of great gentleness and great destructive impulses – although in the main they affected him, not other people – he died in Iceland, the scene of his last great triumph on the world stage. One of his friends, Magnús Skúlason, relates in (Brady 2011) the story of one of his final stays in hospital prior to his discharge and death, where he complained about his legs experiencing severe pain. His friend massaged his feet and heard Bobby mutter the phrase “Nothing soothes so much as the human touch”²⁹ – a phrase which illustrates why Lowell might have had so much success in plundering Fischer’s utterances for poetry, for as well as the internal rhymes of “much”, “touch” and “noth”, the sentence is also classic ten-syllable iambic pentameter with an inversion, concluding with, in the old terminology, a masculine ending. Fischer died of kidney failure within seven weeks of that utterance – in a poetic example of professional determinism, at 64 squares old.

²⁹ *Op. cit.* p. 326.

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**RANT IN HELSINKI:
AN AMERICAN-FINNISH JEREMIAD**

Writing in 1978, Sacvan Bercovich explained the American jeremiad as:

a mode of public exhortation that originated in the European pulpit, was transformed in both form and content by the New England Puritans, persisted through the eighteenth century, and helped sustain a national dream through two hundred years of turbulence and change. The American jeremiad was a ritual designed to join social criticism to spiritual renewal, public to private identity, the shifting 'signs of the times' to certain traditional metaphors, themes and symbols. (xi)

Jewish writers and intellectuals in the first half of the twentieth century used the jeremiad in regard to the American myth as: a basic espousal of the myth as an ideal and vision of America; an antimyth, which constitutes an attack on the culture because of the failure to live up to the myth; or an ideological disavowal and psychological rejection of the myth of America. Counting myself among their number at this date and place, I am here today to preach another jeremiad, articulate my grief over the moral failure of the United States to live up to the "heavenly mission", from settlement to sports, entertainment to education, and how this has resonated negatively across the Atlantic.

In *Letters from and American Farmer*, Crèvecoeur states his belief in the "Precious soil ... by what singular custom of law is it that thou wast made to constitute the riches of a freeholder? What should we American farmers be without the distinct possession of that soil? ... It feeds, it clothes us, from it we draw even a great exuberancy, our best meat, our richest drink, the very honey of our bees comes from this privileged spot. ... on it is founded our rank, our freedom, our power as citizens, our importance as inhabitants of such a district" (24-25). Here I want to emphasize his use of specific words: Crèvecoeur is conscious of the fact, as we too must be, that the latter five concepts are based on the first, possession. While none of us here are farmers, Crèvecoeur's ideas certainly have carried over in the succeeding two-plus centuries in the dreams of working people, and academics alike, as we consider our own privilege, rank, freedom, power and importance.

POETRY AT THE GAMES

Among the dreams of the immigrant working class in the 19th and 20th centuries was homeownership. David Roediger, in *Working Toward Whiteness*, refers to the “ardent ambition on the part of Irish, Italian and Slavic immigrants to own homes” and notes that in 1939 Chicago about twice as many of the city’s foreign-born owned homes than the native-born; “nearly 50 percent of Lithuanians and Poles and about 40 percent of Italians lived in owner-occupied homes” (158). Citing Olivier Zunz on immigrants in Detroit, Roediger agrees that the “immigrant did not so much ‘buy into’ the American Dream of homeownership [and its accompanying whiteness] as help create it” (159). A major reason for this was their European landlessness and the wish to avoid paying rent, the insecurity and threat of eviction, being at the mercy of absentee landlords. Similar fears are often voiced by renters in Finland today, where the landlord “may need the flat for a relative.” The inner cities they inhabited were characterized by a lack of space, cramped conditions, little or no landscaping; in *Jews Without Money* Mike Gold articulates the joy of the protagonist’s Lower East Side mother on a picnic in New York’s Bronx Park, where she can finally remove her shoes as well as breathe fresh air. Achieving the Crevecoeurian dream of land in the early 20th century was greatly assisted by the car and plentiful amounts of land in outlying areas, which became the suburbs. This shift to the open spaces of the suburbs, however, was a privilege of the middle class; monetary reasons and the location of jobs still for the most part precluded working class migration. Thus a small one or two-family home in what they imagined to be an ethnically homogeneous area, though, ironically as Roediger writes, it may have been a district comprised of many ethnic groups, was what they had to settle for. In later years, after having proudly built their communities, these working-class ethnics “whitened” and were recruited in the struggle against the incursion of African Americans and other non-whites; the neighborhoods they defended, however, were still perceived as ethnic rather than white.

Owning a home could be described according to the title of George Lipsitz’s 1998 work as making [a] *Possessive Investment in Whiteness*. Ownership was greatly facilitated in the period following World War II the Federal government’s provision of VA and FHA loans to returning servicemen; they were restricted to whites. These loans were channeled toward new housing developments in suburban areas, venues accommodating many who were displaced by urban renewal and/or slum clearance projects, and more importantly were “redlined” to preclude the sale of properties to blacks, and in some cases Jews. Urban renewal was essential to attract investment — a prime example from my youth was the erection of the Twin Towers on Manhattan’s Lower West Side, an area of warehouses off the Hudson River — or cultural spaces like Lincoln Center, farther uptown, since they took precedence over housing for the working class. Numerous ethnic neighborhoods were gutted by highway construction to produce the “yellow-brick roads” that led to the wide, open spaces. Lipsitz cites figures: “From 1960 to 1977, 4 million whites moved out of central cities, while the number of whites living in the suburbs increased by 22 million;

during the same years, the inner-city black population grew by 6 million, but the number of blacks living in the suburbs increased by only 500,000” (7). Furthermore, cities with large non-white populations received few if any FHA loans.

An excellent example of the new white suburbs was Levittown, the first of them built on Long Island in 1947. Moving to the suburbs was not a completely problem-free process and seriously changed the sense of community experienced by ethnic Americans who had recently whitened. An excellent view of this from the Jewish American perspective is provided by Karen Brodtkin in her *How the Jews Became White Folks*. Brodtkin writes that political identities among Jewish Americans, and I would suspect in other communities as well, “were forged in residentially and occupationally ghettoized communities” (5). Her family’s move to Long Island was based on the desire for a house and garden, where the kids could have privacy and bedrooms of their own — instead of sharing, as I remember. Suburban living altered support systems, which became workmate and/or friend rather than family-oriented. Despite the mobility offered by the car, contacts lessened with family that remained in the city, more often maintained by phone.

Among the initial changes was “learn[ing] the ways of whiteness,” (10) which she defines in terms of the storybook her parents bought her: *The Happy Family*, truly reminiscent of the “Dick and Jane” first-reader series used in the schools and as the opening page of Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*. The objective was to become “normal”, like the “‘blond people,’ a species for whom life naturally came easily, who inherited happiness as a birthright” (10). This new life could also be learned from popular magazines, in Brodtkin’s case *Seventeen*. Whitening meant divesting oneself of ethnic qualities, for example, “Jewish assertiveness” was to be exchanged for “feminine submissiveness,” American feminine, as Maxine Hong Kingston calls it in *The Woman Warrior*. Suburban whiteness also demanded that women adopt a domesticity, “institutionalized motherhood,” which provided them with a freedom from working while at the same time taking away any “serious work for an adult to do in the house except to entertain ... small children” (15). It took them out of the job market as well, which may not have been an openly stated aim, and away from places such as Brooklyn.

Brooklyn is one of the boroughs of New York left behind with the rush to the suburbs. It had and still has a unique culture and language, Brooklynese. Waddayamean, ya neva hoird uv it? Population-wise, it is still the largest borough, about 2.5 million. Population-wise, it is still the largest borough, about 2.5 million. Wen da City a Noo Yawk wuz incorporated in 1898, Brookelynn wuz da fort’ lagest city in da US. Wikipedia may not be a serious academic source, but it lists famous people from New York, and in sub-categories: Staten Island – 265; Queens – 648; the Bronx – 748; Manhattan – 897 BUT Brooklyn – 2366! I won’t bore you with names. When Hollywood made films about World War II, to shore up morale and demonstrate national unity, they always

POETRY AT THE GAMES

portrayed the ethnic and demographic diversity of US fighting forces; the New Yorker was always from Brooklyn, and what were they fighting for? Mom's apple pie, da goil nex tor and da Brookelyn Dodgis. On the other hand, in the American Revolution the Battle of Brooklyn is historically significant; George Washington was victorious in losing the battle by staging a successful retreat. Sort of fits the character of the place as coming up second-best.

Brookelyn's nickname wen I wuz a kid was da boro a choiches, 'n wit' da daivoisity of da popyalashin, dere wuz no shortich. Da Finns wuz in Sunset Pak, Scandinavians in Bay Ritch, Jews in Wilyamsboig, Brownsvil' and Boro Pak, Poles in Greenpernt, Italians in Bensonhoist and Red Hook, Irish in Vinega' Hill 'n Pak Slope, the money wuz down da Heights. Wen da poo lef' da northeasten aireas, da blacks and da Porta Rikins replaced 'em in Brownsvil', Wilyamsboig, Bed-Stai and Bushwick.

In litracha, Betty Smit' had a tree growin' dere. Walt Whitman crosst Brookelyn ferry. Wilyam Stairin's Sophie made a cherce 'n moved dere. Boinard Malamud took a schlemiel from San Francisca 'n toined 'im inta n'assistant, a mensch. Arta Milla viewed da waderfront from the Britch and Focus-ed on da bigitry of a more residenchel white area. The Brooklyn Bridge is the most famous of its landmarks, among those still standing that is; the greatest engineering achievement of its day, and beyond. It connected the periphery with the center, and Brooklyn was certainly considered the periphery. In *A Walker in the City*, Alfred Kazin wrote of standing out in Highland Park, staring at the lights of Manhattan and dreaming of escaping and becoming cosmopolitan. Equally far from the bridge, on the Atlantic shore was the greatest beach resort in history, Coney Island. It had great amusement parks: Steeplechase Park, now the site of a minor league ball park, and Dreamland and Luna Park, the greatest of them all, gone to housing. My family lived there for 50 years. Remember the song "Under the Boardwalk", what went on there? The Boardwalk is still there but there's no sex, drinking, or "misusing" other substances: when the beach was restored they put in so much sand that there are no steps to descend to the beach anymore. Pretty much all that remains of the past is Nathan's Famous, the birthplace of "da Coney Island hotdog."

We hear of green spaces and the world knows Central Park; other cities have taken and translated its name, even Joensuu, where I work. Brooklyn has Prospect Park, with its band shell, zoo, lake and boathouse, and just plain open space. I used to live near the park, in Park Slope, back in the late 1960s, when it was still an Irish working-class neighborhood, before gentrification. Now it's the home of famous Jewish authors like Paul Auster and Jonathan Safran Foer. A couple of hundred meters away are some more landmarks, by the arch at Grand Army Plaza is the Brooklyn Public Library; a couple of blocks further along Eastern Parkway, "Allrightnik's Row", a haven for poor Jews who mainly made it making rags in sweatshops, is the Brooklyn Museum.

Walk along the park away from the plaza and you'll find the Botanical Gardens and beyond that, where Flatbush Avenue meets Empire Boulevard stands a series of apartment houses on a spot defiled, where a community has been lost.

On that spot stood a ball park, Ebbets Field. Small, intimate, alive, it was home to Brooklyn's baseball team, the Dodgers. They were the only team of the 16 in the major leagues back then that represented only a section of a city. The cheap seats, the bleachers, behind the center field wall, cost 75 cents. The sun beat down cruelly. It was what you got for the price. You may have been a long way from the action on the field, but there were things going on in the bleachers. People who were total strangers became the closest of comrades, suffering through the Dodgers' ignominious years of being also-rans, and finally their greatest and only triumph. There were regulars like Hilda Chester, with her cowbells and large signs stating, "Hilda is here". She'd often drop the manager suggestions on what the Dodgers had to do to win the game. There was the band, the Dodger Sym-phony, who often appropriately played off-key music in the stands, and paraded around the field before games. Abe Stark, a clothier on Brownsville's Pitkin Avenue and politician, later Brooklyn Borough President, had a sign under the right field scoreboard exclaiming "Hit this sign win a suit." The big ad on the scoreboard was for Schaefer's, the local brewery that sponsored radio and TV broadcasts. The "h" in Schaefer would light up if the official scorer ruled that a player reached base on a hit; an "e" if it was an error. Imagine, "lit up", no exploding, electronic boards like today, and the numbers were changed manually; there was a guy walking around out there actually hanging them.

The Brooklyn management took a chance and broke the color line in 1947, when they brought up Jackie Robinson, from their Montreal farm team, to become the first black player in the major leagues; In the 1950s the Dodgers' star pitcher, Don Newcombe, and catcher, Roy Campanella, were black. After years of emulating Washington's strategic retreat in the Revolution, coming up short of victory, and forced to utter their mournful cry of "Wait til next year," the horizon was bright. In 1955, Da Bums finally triumphed in the World Series, beat their arch rivals, the Yankees. The downtrodden overcame the elite, the center succumbed to the periphery. There was more civic pride and Brooklynites no longer had to, could no longer be made to, feel inferior, Other. I lived in the Bronx then, 20 minutes from Yankee Stadium, and when we won I shouted insults at the Yankee fans below, felt liberated. Liberation came two years later when we moved to Brooklyn. That was the final year in the saga of the Brooklyn Dodgers. In 1960, tragedy struck and the faithful were devastated. The owner, Walter O'Malley, wrested the team from the bosom of the borough and packed them off to LA at the end of the 1957 season. Shock! Rage! "A coise on ya, O'Malley, ya sonofabitch!" Writing in The New York Times in March 2003, Michael Shapiro noted that Brooklynites "famously placed him in their own triumvirate of evil, along with Hitler and Stalin." In fact, there's a joke: "If

Hitler, Stalin, and O'Malley wuz walking tord ya 'n ya only had two bullets in ya gun, who would ya shoot? O'Malley — twice." It was greed on his part, the desire for a bigger park with all the modern conveniences; Ebbets seated less than 30 000, and he wanted parking. "Wat da hell wuz wrong wit' da subway", we asked. Granted Ebbets was deteriorating. O'Malley wanted to build a new domed stadium at Flatbush and Atlantic Avenues, a couple of miles away, on the site of a fetid meat market. Shapiro and Zack O'Malley Greenburg, writing in *Forbes* in 2009, claim that "New York blamed the wrong villain for killing the Brooklyn Dodgers." Both say the culprit was Robert Moses, one of New York's leading power-brokers for more than 30 years. Who cares, dey wuz bot' bastids! Moses left his mark on the city — and the state — through the construction of numerous bridges and parkways. (He also espoused the doctrine of eminent domain to construct Kinzua Dam on Seneca land, as Buffy Ste. Marie sang in "Now That the Buffalo's Gone.") These projects clearly favored the car at the expense of public transport and the expressways led to the clearance of inner city areas I mentioned earlier and move to the suburbs His obituary in *The New York Times* on 30 July 1981 notes that "community protests occurred over the route for his Cross Bronx Expressway, which required the demolition of at least 1,500 apartments in a one-mile stretch alone." O'Malley needed Moses's support to condemn (again through eminent domain) the meat market and permit him to obtain the land for his new "Dodger Dome," but Moses balked. He wanted the new stadium built out in Flushing, on the venue of the 1939 World's Fair. Jesus, how could we have the Brooklyn Dodgers in Queens? But he got his way and O'Malley took the Dodgers west. According to Shapiro, Brooklyn lost its identity — and 428,000 people, or 16% of its population, between 1950 and 1980. The ethnic communities that supported the Dodgers had left the borough and attendance had declined. Baseball's westward expansion left New York without any National League teams, until 1962, when the Mets were established to compensate the city for loss of the Dodgers and Giants. It is important that the Mets sought to create a link with the teams lost by acquiring players like Gil Hodges, Duke Snider and Roger Craig from the Dodgers' 1955 championship team and the great Willie Mays from the Giants. While I was writing this, *The New York Times* reported the Duke's death on 27 February 2011; he was the brightest star in the 1950s Brooklyn sky and, according to the obituary, when the Mets honored him at the Polo Grounds on 12 September 1963, he told the crowd, "I look up into the stands, and it looks like Ebbets Field ... The Mets are wonderful, but you can't take the Dodger out of Brooklyn." All that's left now from those days are some of the pitchers: Craig, Newcombe, Carl Erskine, or Oisk in the Brooklyn vernacular, the rookie from Coney Island, Sandy Koufax, who achieved greatness out in LA. Moses's new ball park, Shea Stadium, was built in Flushing and was home to the Mets until 2009, when it was replaced by Citi Field. Many say that with its rotunda, homage to Jackie Robinson and memorabilia, it's meant to psychologically replace Ebbets Field. That's something it can never do.

POST III

What do we make of the following: Boston-Milwaukee-Atlanta and Philadelphia-Kansas City-Oakland?

The first concerns the transfer of the Boston Braves. Their initial move was to Milwaukee in 1953, when they brought baseball back to the city after an absence of more than 50 years. After the move the team was successful; they were pennant contenders throughout the decade and even won the World Series. They remained in Milwaukee for 13 years and then headed off to warmer and greener pastures, Atlanta, and thus opened the South to the major leagues. Philadelphia-Kansas City-Oakland also reflects a baseball migration. The Philadelphia Athletics, part of the American League since 1901, pulled up stakes after 54 years and trekked off to Kansas City. The A's had been the city's second team, and since the Phillies had won the National League pennant in 1950, who was going to miss the A's? 13 seems to be a common denominator in these franchise shifts; the A's didn't stay long in KC either, and have been based in Oakland ever since.

The Fifties were in fact the halcyon days of franchise shifts, first, as owners sought to improve their profits by getting out of town, and then baseball itself seeing the value of bringing the sport to new venues; a decade later it was the turn of expansion, and the 16 teams of my youth now number 30. In 1954 the old St Louis Browns packed off to Baltimore to become the Orioles. Owner Bill Veeck, who had long turned to gimmicks like hiring a midget as a player and had attempted to move the team to Los Angeles in 1952, sold Sportsman's Park to the Busch family of Budweiser fame, who owned the very popular and contending Cardinals. The Browns were a dead issue in St Louis and few mourned their loss.

LA finally did get its team when O'Malley took the Dodgers out of Brooklyn. He could only do this when the Giants left Manhattan's Polo Grounds for San Francisco. The owners of the other franchises had, in the case of the Browns, said no to a single team on the West Coast because of travel costs, but with two teams in California it was a different story. Eastern teams first played in LA and then headed north or vice versa. In 1961, another founding member of the American League, the Washington Senators, deserted the nation's capital after 60 seasons to become the Minnesota Twins. The team had become perennial losers and the Senators were noted for being 'first in war, first in peace, and last in the American League.' However, could DC be without a ballclub? If this were the case, where would the President throw out the ceremonial first ball every year? After a year the new Washington Senators, an expansion team, arrived. They lasted all of ten years; they're now the Texas Rangers. It took until 2005 to bring a franchise back to Washington; then it wasn't a question of migrants, but from across the Canadian border, as the Expos bade au revoir to Montreal.

This same sort of wandering has occurred in other professional sports, especially in basketball, but looking back to my youth in New York, the

POETRY AT THE GAMES

NBA in its early days, unlike baseball, was certainly not big money. It was basically a Midwest operation, with teams like the Syracuse Nationals and Rochester Royals, in upstate New York, and teams sponsored by local companies, evidence Zollner's Fort Wayne Pistons and the Indianapolis Jets, previously the Indianapolis Kautskys. How long could they survive in markets as small as these? How many of you actually know where these places are, or care? There was also a team in Minneapolis. Did you ever think about where the name LA Lakers comes from; where are the lakes out there, where's the water? It's strange, though, after more than 50 years large numbers of people still know and remember the Brooklyn Dodgers and can even reel off the names of the players on the 1955 championship team, but how many care about those other departed franchises, or can even bother to yawn. There must be a lot of people from Brooklyn, or who remember Brooklyn, and still have a functioning memory.

While we're on the subject of teams and names, how about these: Shibe Park, Connie Mack Stadium, Forbes Field, Three Rivers Stadium, Crosley Field, Riverfront Stadium. Stadia used to be named after their owners, geographic locations, or to commemorate and honor famous people. Shibe in Philadelphia was re-christened to honor Connie Mack, who was baseball's grand old man there for 50 years. When the Phils needed a new park in 1971, it was named Veteran's Stadium. They moved to a new facility in 2004, Citizen's Bank Park. Forbes Field was in Pittsburgh, it was named after a general. It was replaced by Three Rivers Stadium, named for the Allegheny, Monongahela and the Ohio Rivers, where the city was established and developed. The new park has some obnoxious corporate name, PNC Park. Crosley Field in Cincinnati, with its incline in left field, was named after the owner of the Reds. It gave way to Riverfront Stadium on the Ohio River, then after about 30 years the Great American Ball Park. Sounds like the Philip Roth novel, but the name comes from the Great American Insurance Group. It could be worse ... like those wonderful people who helped launch the economic crisis of 2008 ... AIG.

Naming rights, corporate egotism, that's what things are all about today. The first rights were apparently sold in 1970-71 to the Schaefer brewery (the same one that sponsored the Dodgers), when the New England (nee Boston) Patriots football team sold the rights to their new stadium in Foxborough, Massachusetts. It's now called Gillette Stadium; in between it was Sullivan Stadium (after the Pats' owners). We now have such beauts as San Francisco's new ATT, formerly Pacific Bell, Park, replacing Monster Park and 3Com Park, which was originally Candlestick Park (after the city's windy Candlestick Point), and the National Car Rental Arena in Sunrise, Florida. At first I thought National was used in the sense of the football or hockey league. The list just goes on, so sell it to the highest bidder. There are, however, some ballparks and arenas where the names seem to be eternal, etched in stone: Fenway Park in Boston, Chicago's Wrigley Field, the new Yankee Stadium, Madison Square Garden. There's just too much history. Or is

there? I was a hockey fan as a kid; the Toronto Maple Leafs now play at the Air Canada Centre, not their old home at Maple Leaf Gardens, and the Montreal Canadiens now play at Bell Centre (it once was named for the Molson brewery), not the Montreal Forum! When hockey expanded to Los Angeles, Jack Kent Cooke, the owner of the Kings, named the arena "The Forum" in homage to the shrine in Montreal. God, is nothing sacred? Obviously not.

The practice has resonated to Europe; there's Hartwall Areena in Helsinki and Elysee Arena, now Turkuhalli, in Turku. Can you imagine Manchester United at Barclay's Stadium rather than Old Trafford or Liverpool calling Anfield Ryanair Road? It's bad enough that my lads, Arsenal, play at Emirates' Stadium in London, no longer at Highbury. And let's consider the virulent local opposition in Manchester and Liverpool to the teams being purchased or at least sought by American owners with no knowledge of or interest in football, just profit.

Sports are now sports entertainment, and in addition to US ownership American sports have been exported. The NFL has played exhibition games in Europe, was behind the German American Football League, and there was a time when American football was on the rise here. Finnish teams used to regularly win the European championship. The NBA sends teams to play abroad and this year Barcelona beat the Yanks. The league has imported large numbers of foreign players, European and others alike, unlike the NFL where the foreigners once were "soccer-style" placekickers. More of a draw in colder climes is hockey, the NHL, where for the past few years their teams have opened the season in places like Helsinki, Stockholm and Prague. The games are always SRO. Admittedly, the number of European players and stars is high; Finland provides the best goaltenders; players even come from Norway. These US sports are so widely followed that scores and standings appear daily on Finnish text-TV and the largest newspapers.

OK, let's say we're just following the fortunes of our boys across the pond; nothing to get upset about. But the Finnish Hockey League, and the Swedes too I've been told, has copied the hype at American arenas. The player introductions are similar; the lights go down and there's fireworks, smoke and spotlights as they skate onto the ice. And then the national anthem is played, and even sung by a pop vocalist. That's Americanization for you. I don't know about Sweden, but in Finland, it's rarely heard, less so now that our athletes don't win very many gold medals at the Olympics or various world championships. Otherwise, I hear it on Independence Day, December 6th, or on the 24th of the month, at 12 noon, when the old tradition of Christmas Peace is declared annually in Turku. That's basically it. And our flag is displayed only on designated holidays and occasions. Important days in Finland, not every day and everywhere, as in the US, where the "Star-spangled Banner" sounds and the crowd has to stand before every ball game. I'm not patriotic, no one's nationalist, but there has to be some meaning in Finland, some content, rather than just empty form like at the hockey

matches. By the way, we now seem to have an identity problem: at international competitions we're Finland (in English, not Swedish), not Suomi.

It's not only sports, but local holidays and traditions being pushed aside by the imported ones. The traditional Finnish Santa Claus wasn't the guy in the red suit and beard pushing Coke, but an ageing geezer with his old winter coat turned inside out. It's thoroughly embarrassing to have the national airline bill itself as the "Official Airline of Santa Claus," or a boat company plying the Helsinki-Tallinn route "Santa's Official Scow." Whatever happened to those environmentally friendly reindeer? So many of our Christmas foods are marked made in "Santa Claus Land." Growing up in Brooklyn I remember the cry of "Let's put the Christ back in Xmas," though it definitely didn't matter to Jews like me. It's the same on this side of the pond. What about the nonsense that came with Peanuts, Charlie Brown, the Great Pumpkin and Halloween? The Finnish religious observance, All Hallow's Day, however UNobserved it goes, will be lost to younger generations. And *Ystävänäpäivä* in Finnish, *Alla Hjärtans Dagen* in Swedish, that's Valentine's Day, has brought in its wake crass American commercialism in creating a colossal consumption of chocolate, flowers and other sundry gifts. It's a good thing Finnish Independence Day is in December; it would be awfully tough to adapt July 4th block parties and barbecues to the tundra. In all seriousness, the change in our celebrations and traditions is bringing about a massive change in the way we think, our educational values, and education is this jeremiad's final call.

Let me now say make some positive pronouncements about trans-Atlantic resonance. In 1973 the Finnish government instituted a major reform of the educational system and introduced the comprehensive school. As in the UK, there was an equivalent of the eleven-plus exam which channelled pupils. The Finnish grammar school had tuition fees and clearly discriminated against the poor; there was a marked distinction between the working class and their betters. Comprehensive school leveled the field, providing free education, books and a lunch for all. When I taught there, I was told by people who faulted the new system that it was imported from the GDR, and as a socialist institution it was questionable. When I started teaching an American Studies course, I told my students that this in fact was untrue, that the structure of six years of "lower stage", with a single teacher handling all subjects, followed by three years of "upper stage", with specialized teachers, was exactly what I remembered from New York: elementary school and junior high school, 6 + 3. Then came three years of high school (academic, commercial or vocational), basically mirroring the situation in Finland. New York schools were free and so were books; since there's no such thing as a free lunch in the US, only the truly needy got one. When students graduated high school, most went on to a branch of the City University, which like the universities in Finland was also free. In both institutions students only paid a student activity fee. So my memories are of a very harmonious resonance. There was also a certain disharmony in

the late Sixties and early Seventies on American campuses which also echoed positively on this side of the pond; there was a questioning of society and the university as well. My views of the present resonation are, however, far from harmonious.

Universities here aren't universities anymore; they're corporate entities, like they are in the US. When New York City verged on bankruptcy in 1975, it took a cue from the State. SUNY had tuition, and the tradition which began with the founding of City College in 1847 died; traditional open admission for city residents went the same way in 1999, when it was restricted to the community colleges. The quality tuition-free education which was available to all had provided opportunities to the children of the poor regardless of ethnic background, race or gender. This has also been the case in Finland since the 1973 reform, especially in regard to class. We still have no tuition but this is no longer a certainty. My company, the University of Eastern Finland (UEF), like other Finnish institutions, has announced a tuition policy for non-EU degree students beginning in 2015. Marketed for Chinese and Indian students, the anticipated annual fee will be €7-12000. We already charge EU students arriving as free movers €1750 per semester. This circumvents the EU proclamation of no charges to Erasmus exchange students since free movers, though they are of course EU citizens and subject to no tuition, are also extra, above and beyond the numbers cited in the bilateral contacts that the institutions enter into. Question: as there is less money available to pay for education, how longer will it take for tuition fees to be extended to locals, once the precedent has been set? And we all know how glaring the fees are in places like the UK, especially after the Tory government tripled them. UK Deputy PM Nick Clegg is quoted in the *Guardian* of 16 March saying "I cannot think of anything more absurd than a university saying, to prove that they can offer a good education, they can whack up the price to £9,000. They are not Harrods."

In the past, outside of New York and a few other places in the States, students have always paid for a college education. Education is a privilege, right? We value things more when they are earned. So the average middle-class American is up to his/her ears in hock paying for the privilege; it's a necessary investment in their child's future. All this justifies the high costs. Are you ready for the resonance? How many Finns would be able to pay the €7-12000 Asians anticipated for Asians? Today most students avoid taking loans like the plague. Students in Finland also need to graduate in a shorter period of time. Call me nostalgic, but I remember starting university teaching, when our students weren't forced to take an exam immediately when the course ended; they could wait until they fully processed the material. OK, it may not have been economical for the system, but they did learn and probably retained the information long past the exam. Today Finnish students are given a study grant for 55 months, which sounds wonderful until we realize that if unemployed, they'd receive 50 percent more, so this just cosmeticizes the employment figures. The reason for accelerating the

POETRY AT THE GAMES

education process is to get them into the job market earlier so they can start paying taxes, for the pensions of those of us nearing retirement. Problem: where do they find jobs with unemployment for the 15-25 age group in Finland and in many other countries running around 30 percent — and when governments want to increase the retirement age to keep us from collecting our pensions? Go figure it out!

Way back in the 1960s many of us were appalled by the concept of the education factory articulated by Clark Kerr, then Chancellor of the University of California system. The job of the university was to provide intelligent trained bodies to fill the places the society had set, to satisfy the need for teachers, technicians, doctors, lawyers. This has been the case in Finland since higher education was extended to the working class. And since the state foots the bill for this training which greatly benefits society, no one really complained. Besides, it it's free.

Is this still the case? Regardless of their denials, our education corporations don't really seem to be concerned with quality as much as quantity. Budgets are based on the number of degrees conferred, from the MA to the PhD level. There is a BA in Finland, as in the rest of the EU, but there's not much that can be done with it other than wipe one's rear end. Students are numbers, exactly what we objected to in the Sixties, and perhaps we might refer to them as FTEs, as was and perhaps still is the case in the US or UK: full-time equivalents. To better their opportunities to efficiently complete their studies our corporations provide students with "personalized", individually tailored student guidance, which totally fails since there are too many of them and too few counselors, who are already overworked. Moreover, the businesses are interested in reducing all unnecessary costs, especially paper, so our supposedly computer-literate students are forced to find everything on-line. I asked mine if they like this or would prefer an actual sheet of paper at the beginning of each academic year telling them which courses to do. They opted for the latter, which this isn't surprising considering that navigating the UEF website is like flying by the seat of your pants. Incomprehensible in Finnish, impossible in English, and at an institution where the academic rector boasts that in ten years time the language of instruction will be English. Uhh, just who is the university supposed to serve? As we say in the vernacular, "oy vey."

As we all know, what makes the system so unworkable, especially after the Finnish university reform enacted on January 1, 2010, is that we are no longer anything but corporate employees shouldering a heightened workload which is more bureaucratic and less academic: forms, chains of command, where form is more important than content. Need I remind you of the hours put into completing the course description forms required by the EU as part of the Baloney Process? We used to have a perfectly good words — aims, objectives, results — but corporate parlance demands outcomes, in this case, "learning outcomes". We used to describe the goals of our courses in terms of what "students should have learned"; now, according to Bologna, we have to say

“successful students will have learned.” Basically all that work to change the modal verb. I suppose all we really need is an MBA, preferably from Harvard or Wharton. Corporations like our educational institutions, governments and the EU demand standardization, and all we need read is the bottom line.

I work in the field of American Studies. We're a dying breed. I got an email last winter from Rich Horwitz, former president of the Mid-American American Studies Association. His PhD is from the University of Pennsylvania, and Penn had a superb American Civilization curriculum. I'll briefly quote him:

Penn “phased out” the American Civilization Program quite a few years ago. It's now an “individual graduate group” (with no faculty, staff, office, budget, or classes of its own), i.e., an administrative wet dream. The main perpetrator was a very prominent historian (of the Founding Fathers, no less) who never much appreciated the broader transdisciplinary mission of AS. In my opinion, most of the AS programs have been or in the process of being converted into holding bureaus for whatever is the latest affronted group that can be placated with an “identity” in the org chart ... or flat-out eliminated. [Its] lingering function is a finishing school for transnational plunderers ... with cultural critics tolerated only so long as they are a cost-free diversion (as in “some of my best friends are...” or a variant to binge drinking in the frat house, something to hazily remember when you're networking with other lawyers ten years later.)

The Humanities is suffering a similar demise. What can you do with a degree in that area? The Winter 2010 MLA Newsletter reported a decline in the number of teaching positions advertised in its Job Information List and continued to bemoan the situation at American universities in foreign languages, with Rosemary Feal specifically citing the elimination of “major, minor and graduate programs in French, Italian, Russian, and the classics (the German program was already cut), along with theater” at SUNY Albany and that the university “plans astoundingly draconian measures: no languages except Spanish will be taught beyond the early semesters, and ten tenure-line faculty will be let go.” I saw a comment on the internet saying these professors were officially being “deactivated”. CUNY is pretty much the same and a friend at Cal State Fullerton wrote saying that at a meeting on the university's future a “presenter discussed philosophy as basically a frivolous field. Be honest, why would Americans need Italian, Russian and German? Those people are all our friends now and speak English. The French don't but they aren't very friendly. What more philosophy could Americans need? Tim Pawlenty, a GOP presidential hopeless in 2012 even proposed the following to Jon Stewart on The Daily Show:

Do you really think in 20 years somebody's going to put on their backpack drive a half hour to the University of Minnesota from the suburbs, haul their keester across campus and listen to some boring person drone on about Spanish 101 or Econ 101? . . . Is there another way to deliver the service other than a one size fits all monopoly provided that says show up at nine o'clock on Wednesday morning for Econ 101, can't I just pull that down on my iPhone or iPad whenever the heck I feel like it from wherever I feel like, and instead of paying thousands of dollars can I pay 199 for iCollege instead of 99 cents for iTunes, you know? (tim-pawlentys-college).

POETRY AT THE GAMES

Such things resonate in Finland, and I'm sure elsewhere as well. Our universities are now in essence private institutions and more subject to corporate accountability than ever before. The Ministry of Education has encouraged them to solicit for outside funding by offering a 250 percent return on anything procured between January of last year and the end of June. Securing such funding even extends to the personal level. In the March 4, 2011 *Guardian*, Stefan Collini writes that in Britain "being able to raise such outside money, from whatever source, is now being written into job advertisements as a requirement of the post." Yrjö Laakonen is a Finnish businessman who owns the controlling interest in the main newspaper in Joensuu, where I work, in the new indoor shopping mall downtown and is one of the largest car dealers in the country, along with being a major university benefactor. He was interviewed in a major Finnish magazine last October, and proclaimed "that the great majority [of students] should be trained for the right fields." The article states that 'the right fields' do not in his opinion extend, for example, to philosophy and researcher training, and should be eliminated." Two weeks after the interview was made the UEF "announced that it had decided that six majors in the Department of Law would be cut as of August 1, 2011, and included philosophy and philosophy of law." To paraphrase the old comment on Nixon, "would you buy a used university from this man?" A news item on the Finnish Broadcasting website on November 23, 2010 reported a decision by the University of Helsinki that the number of majors offered by the Faculty of Humanities would be reduced from about 60 to 20 "study orientations". The same report states that the University of Vaasa merged the Faculty of Humanities with Administrative Sciences and Tampere "buried the entire H-word when faculties were eliminated and subjects sprinkled among new units."

Since we will soon be beholden to corporate generosity, what will our benefactors ask in return? Academic solicitation now forbids the ear-marking of donations. In a TV report a Vaasa administrator announced that while this precluded the university from directly using donations in a specific way, it didn't stop it from listening. The Laakonen interview ends with an ominous thought: [After the current round ends in June] corporate donations can be ear-marked, for example, for endowed chairs." Eliminating the frivolity of researcher training and the humanities and the advent of ear-marking leads to an even more ominous thought: a good-bye to academic freedom, already in jeopardy and at the mercy of our own education corporations, if the real, serious corporations start dictating what areas of research are not frivolous.

Why should we get upset? The world is dynamic, things have to change. Slum clearance after the Second World War brought massive changes in and opened a rush to the suburbs which devastated American inner cities. Brooklyn has changed, reinvented, reconstructed, especially since people can't afford to live in "the City". The tide has turned. Alfred Kazin wouldn't have to stare yearningly at the lights of Manhattan, planning his escape. All those run-down ethnic areas in close proximity to it have been renewed. Brooklyn Heights is no longer the only posh area.

Everything from Park Slope north has been gentrified and trendy: Carroll Gardens, Cobble Hill, Boerum Hill, Fulton Ferry, DUMBO (Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass), Greenpoint and Williamsburg. In Werner Sollors's terms, you can now be a Brooklynite by consent.

The corporate executives, our rectors and deans, who govern the universities, and the corporate benefactors, the ringmasters they serve, are probably right. Why spend all that cash training students for obsolete fields — languages, philosophy, music, art, theater, American Studies, even civilization in general — just to think and question? Besides, most of the jobs today's education provides are for limited periods and/or part-time. And since society is so dynamic, what they study now won't be very useful in 5-10 years' time, and they'll have to be retrained or passed over by the next generation. Lifelong learning — that's what the EU now calls its exchange programs, and the onus is on you. Students need to make their choices wisely, as like they do in the US; after all, they pay for the privilege there. Me, I'm lucky, I'm 63, and if the state doesn't raise the retirement age, I can sail off into the sunset in a year, if I so choose. Who know what may resonate after that, on either side of the Atlantic.

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REVIEWS

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ACTING THE MAGGOT

Paul Muldoon. *Maggot*. Faber. 120pp. £ 14.99

"[T]here's a lot of clowning in these poems. A lot of acting the maggot, as we describe acting the buffoon. The clown face is a death mask, I suppose" Muldoon said in an interview about his eleventh book of poetry *Maggot* which came out last year. Indeed, his new collection hovers between the surrealistic zaniness of 'The Side Project' and the macabre imagery of decay and death of 'The Humors of Hakone'. This eclecticism is precisely at the core of the polysemy of the term "maggot". Although it refers to a larva "found in decaying organic matter", a "maggot" is also according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* an eccentric idea as well as a piece of music. One should also be aware of a more obsolete meaning of "maggot" that is "a whimsical person". Indeed, Muldoon offers a rich play of witticisms throughout the collection, yet, he also shares with his reader more private anxieties such as in the brilliant poem 'Balls' which recalls the fear of having testicular cancer:

Then Vasselli happened on this teeny-weeny
third ball. Even though it was every bit as big
as one of those *bocconcini*
he assured me I shouldn't give a fig

about this sudden outgrowth
on my otherwise even keel.

Cancer has indeed been a constant presence in Muldoon's poetry and *Maggot* is no exception. In 'A Hare at Aldergrove' we are told that 'melanoma has relaunched its campaign / in a friend I once dated', which evokes the poem 'Incantata' dedicated to Mary Farl Powers (*The Annals of Chile* 1994). One is also reminded of the elegy to his sister Maureen who also died of cancer. Indeed, the "thick scent of death" of 'Turkey Buzzards' collected in *Horse Latitudes* (2006) looms large in *Maggot*. The image of the turkey buzzard which "can spot / a deer carcass / a mile away, smelling the rot" conjures up that of the maggots associated with putrefaction.

POETRY AT THE GAMES

This new collection also illustrates Muldoon's interest in forensic entomology as in 'The Humors of Hakone' in which the speaker analyses the stomach contents of the corpse of a young woman as well as those of "a poem cadaver". Decomposition and decay are also the leitmotifs of 'Moryson's Fancy', which draws on a 17th century tale of three children flaying and devouring the entrails of their mother and which recalls an earlier poem 'The More a Man Has The More a Man Wants' (*Quoof* 1983), in which the fugitive Gallogly "get[s] right under the skin / the spluttering heart / and collapsed lung, / of the horse in *Guernica*". We could argue that throughout this collection there is the "cryptocurrent" (as Muldoon would have it) of 'A Carcass' ('Une charogne') written by the nineteenth century French poet Charles Baudelaire, describing an army of maggots crawling on a rotting corpse which becomes both erotic and horrendous. Indeed, rot and the erotic are constantly intertwined in the squalid description of the maggot-ridden female womb of 'A Carcass' and in that of the body of the Japanese girl in *Maggot*. Muldoon revels in eviscerating, *flaying* the words, therefore reflecting a raw and fleshless reality:

Too late to determine how long the girl I'd also glimpsed at the hot spring
had been beleaguered by pupae.
By day four the skin would have peeled from her thigh like a fine-mesh stocking.

This poem finds its visual echo in the photograph by Chris Jordan which features on the cover of the Faber edition and represents the decomposing remains of an albatross chick whose lacerated stomach is laden with litter, plastic debris, red, white and orange bottle caps. Similarly, in *When the Pie was Opened*, a collection in which some of the poems of *Maggot* previously featured, the drawings of Lanfranco Quadrio evoke images of "a partly eaten bird of paradise, a damaged and perhaps gnawed human body with entrails and bones suggested" (Alistair Elliot). In early 2010, the poem chosen for the opening page of Muldoon's official website was the translation of another poem by Baudelaire collected in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, the sonnet 'L'albatros'. As an epigraph to the poem, Muldoon quoted a piece of news from the BBC stating that "about one-third of all albatross chicks die on Midway, many as the result of being mistakenly fed plastic by their parents... Many albatrosses are found to have swallowed disposable cigarette lighters — which look remarkably similar to their staple food of squid." Muldoon told me shortly before the publication of *Maggot* that he wanted to translate Baudelaire's poem by way of honouring the plight of these birds.

The last multipart poem in the collection, 'Wayside Shrines', which was previously collected in a beautiful eponymous collection illustrated by paintings and pencil drawings by Keith Wilson, commemorates fateful car accidents and concludes with a vision of the car crash of a prom queen and her journey to the Greek abode of the dead: 'the sudden failure of a brake drum / extended her lease on Elysium.' 'The Sod Farm' similarly focuses on the consequences of a car accident:

Her gauze-wrapped arms
now taking in unending variations

POST III

and surprises: temples, grottoes,
waterfalls, ruins, leafy glades

with sculpture, and such features
as would set off the imagination
on journeys in time as well as space.

This passage not only calls to mind the “valleys, peaks, undulations, crevasses” of Francis Ponge’s prose poem ‘Bread’ (‘Le pain’), it is also endowed with similar surreal and ethereal tones.

Indeed, the whole collection “set[s] off the imagination / on journeys in time as well as space”. ‘The Side Project’ is a carny poem which owes much to the visual arts and embodies a cabinet of curiosities in which the jarring juxtapositions and seemingly nonsensical writings evoke Dadaist artworks or pop art collages such as those of Richard Hamilton and in particular his 1956 piece *Just what is it that makes today’s homes so different, so appealing?* In this rather long poem, Muldoon buoyantly jumbles freaks of all sorts with references to the American civil war, the 1846 Papal Conclave and the strains of Brahms’ 1869 Hungarian Dances. In this poem as well as in ‘Plan B’ or ‘Lines for the Centenary of the Birth of Samuel Beckett’, to name but a few, repetitions of words and themes are the threads that hold together this fanciful and cacophonous poetic composition. Strains of Baudelairean synaesthesia may also be heard in some poems such as in ‘François Boucher: Arion on the Dolphin’ which is poised between poetry, music and painting, and offers a symphony of the senses: “The sky’s pinks and pewters / resound in the brainpan / of a bloodied Triton still grasping his horn. As Adam Newey brilliantly puts it in his review for *The Guardian*, *Maggot* is like “an intellectual fairground ride”, and we hope that this roller coaster ride continues to bewilder us.

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*ON LITERATURE AND SCIENCE. ESSAYS, REFLECTIONS,
PROVOCATIONS,*
ED. PHILIP COLEMAN, DUBLIN: FOUR COURTS PRESS, 2007

Arguably, contemporary science has left us all behind. That is to say: poets, philosophers, moralists and theologians have all failed miserably even to begin addressing the significance of what scientists are now establishing – that (*via* evolutionary biology, for example) the human being can legitimately be understood as one of so many ‘carbon-based information processing systems’; that *everything* (from sub-atomic particles to sunsets to sapience) can be explained in the monistic terms of a systematic capturing of negentropic energy; that, in not much more than a trillion years time, long after *homo sapiens* has ceased to exist, all of the protons and atoms that made up the universe itself will also have ceased to exist, leaving nothing but an ever-expanding empty blackness; and so on...

The humanities, it seems, have tried desperately, in the face of all of this, to maintain some kind of special status for ‘man’ as a trans-natural entity, ultimately immune from the strongest implications of science. Nonetheless, so many of these attempts – theological assertion and vague invocation of the ‘mysterious’; dubious conflation of science’s institutional setting and the veracity of its claims; the constant but uncritical application of the supposedly damning term ‘reductive’; phenomenological attempts to render scientific procedure as merely a regional, ontic, affair (pressuposing a more primordial and pre-theoretical immersion); ranting depictions of science as the desacralizing antithesis of the mythopoeic imagination; etc. – look increasingly weak and merely dogmatic. The challenge of contemporary science remains, not just intact, but ever more forceful.

To be sure, much of the above two paragraphs is hyperbole (which, hopefully, got at least someone’s attention). Hyperbolic or not, though, these assertions

help establish important points which can orientate an approach to this rich and stimulating volume. For one thing, and allowing that such a varied collection (of 13 essays and six poems) is unlikely to have any kind of univocal attitude, the contributions are characterized by a general (and surprising) lack of hostility towards science and, instead, a genuine quest for commonality and even complementarity; there are no kneejerk reactions about 'the irreducibility of the imagination', and no incantations of 'scientism' (so often a *deus ex machina* for the humanities, to be invoked when all else fails). For another, the way that – as just indicated, above – science problematizes in the profoundest way the notion of 'humanity', never mind the humanities, is addressed regularly (although, as we shall address again, below, never quite as fully and explicitly as it might have been).

In terms of the first of these two points, Iggy Mc Govern and Randolph Healy, for example, are both at pains to stress the possibility of a descriptive continuity between poetry and science; "science and poetry are not, after all, so different; or, if so, only a little!", the former will conclude – a phrase that could summarize the ethos of so much of the volume, overall. Meanwhile, in one of the most interesting moves made in the entire book, Peter Middleton draws on the contemporary American philosopher Robert Brandom (himself a figure whose approach – indebted to Hegel as well as Sellars – challenges any partisan entrenchment) to depict meaning as the product of a network of inference, rather than direct representation; in turn, the kaleidoscopic density of, for example, J.H.Prynne can be construed (without any sense of apology or inferiority) as a legitimate 'language of inquiry'.

Other essays present more typical 'cultural' readings – rather than cross-disciplinary *rapprochement* – in which scientific context serves to deepen literary insight. Amanda Piesse, for example, examines the trope of anatomy and its manifold manifestation in sixteenth-century literature: as she demonstrates, convincingly, increased exposure of what was previously "hidden in our bodies' fabrica" (as one Caspar Barlaeus put it) meant ever-greater literary concern with a supposed 'quintessence' of humanity that would be more than a sum total of skin, bone and sinew. Benjamin Keatinge suggests a mutually beneficial, perhaps even dialectical, relationship between surrealism and psychiatry. Andrew Power reads *Hamlet* in terms of various medical theories – not the psychiatric and psychoanalytical discourse of today, but contemporaneous theories (regarding 'humours', for example, and their necessary balance) that may well be reflected in the text itself. Kate Hebblethwaite reveals an unsuspected yet telling series of links between the public spectacle of a hippopotamus in Victorian London (and the ensuing 'hippomania'), the wider acceptance of evolution, colonialist ideology and *The Water Babies*. And John Scattergood's contribution – one of the strongest in the volume – presents a masterful genealogy of mechanized time and exposition of an attendant horological anxiety manifest throughout renaissance and early modern writing.

Meanwhile, science fiction is present (as one might expect), but never overwhelming (as one might fear): the editor and contributors have ensured that any treatment of SF is intelligently fresh and unexpected. Darryl Jones,

POETRY AT THE GAMES

for example, reads Wells, Huxley *et al* in terms of imperial backlash and dystopian fears of miscegenation and decay. And, if the defining characteristic of science fiction is a necessary conjunction of fear and technology, then, for Helen Conrad-O'Briain, the 'magyk natureel' of Chaucer's 'The Franklin's Tale', no less, can legitimately and fruitfully be taken as SF *avant la lettre*.

To return, though, to the above-mentioned point about science, and the ever-more problematic status of 'humanity'. The question certainly spreads itself across the collection: Hebblethwaite's essay is largely an exploration of how "God-like no longer,... nineteenth-century man stood revealed in all his beastliness"; Stephen Matterson bases his survey on how the orang-utan murderer of the Rue Morgue indicates what Edgar Allen Poe himself took to be "something altogether irreconcilable with our common notions of human action"; Philip Coleman's survey of classic American short fiction is concerned, ultimately, with how, for Poe, Hawthorne, Wallace and Saunders, "developments in science challenge our sense of who we are"; Darryl Jones ends his essay (appropriately) on the significance of the 'last man'; and Randolph Healy at least addresses the possibility of a monism that would render artificial any division between 'nature' and 'culture'.

Nonetheless, and as already indicated, there is no direct and sustained treatment of or engagement with the most awesome challenges that science seems to present to literature – regarding, for example, our assumptions about the significance and status of thought and expression, about the 'lived experience' to which we try to give expression, about the 'reduction' of poetic utterance to carbon-based information processing, and so on. For sure, there are indications and adumbrations here; if anything, the best treatment of the sheer *materiality* of our linguistic tics and twitches comes *via* the poetic contributions of Kit Fryatt, Dylan Harris and Allen Fisher. However, in terms of the essays themselves, this lack of any full-frontal, systematic, confrontation with the most profound questions that science now asks (of literature, the humanities, *humanity*...) is, ultimately, more an indication of what we may be avoiding, rather than what this collection has achieved.

pum

Some youth academies worry about winning, we worry about education.

You see a kid who lifts his head up, who plays the pass first time,
pum,
and you think,
'Yep, he'll do.' Bring him in, coach him.
Our model was imposed by [Johan] Cruyff;
it's an Ajax model.
It's all about *rondos*
[piggy in the middle].

Rondo, rondo, rondo.
Every.
Single.
Day.

It's the best exercise there is.
You learn responsibility
and not
to lose the ball.

If you lose the ball, you go in the middle.

Pum-pum-pum-pum,

always one touch. If you go in the middle,
it's humiliating,

the rest applaud and laugh at you.

When you arrive at Barça the first thing they teach you is:

think.

Think, think, think.

POETRY AT THE GAMES

Quickly.

[Xavi starts doing the actions, looking around himself.]

Lift your head up, move, see, think. Look before you get the ball. If you're getting this pass, look to see if that guy is free.

Pum.

First time. Look at [Sergio] Busquets – the best midfielder there is playing one-touch. He doesn't need more. He controls, looks and passes in one touch. Some need two or three and, given how fast the game is,

that's too slow.

Alves, one touch.

Iniesta, one touch.

Messi, one touch.

Piqué, one touch.

Busi [Busquets], me ... seven or eight players with one touch.

Fast.

In fact, [the youth coach] Charly [Rexach] always used to say: *a mig toc*.

Half a touch.

The Guardian Friday 11 February 2011



BEAULIEU 9: "3"

CHRIS MURRAY

THE BLOODAXE BOOK OF CONTEMPORARY INDIAN POETS, EDITED BY JEET THAYIL.

Jeet Thayil scaffolds this volume of Contemporary Indian Poets writing in English around a triumvirate of three writers writing in the post-independence period. He takes as his starting point the work of the poet Nissim Ezekiel and from there creates a volume which he does not claim to be canonical, but rather an “almost” definitive selection of contemporary Indian poets writing in the English language. Here there is no need for translators, or indeed discussion, on the absentee poets who are briefly alluded to in Thayil's prefatory note: “The selection misses certain poets because either their copyright holders would not part with the necessary permissions or because their conditions of use were unacceptable.” This intriguing note is soon forgotten as the reader learns that the current volume has grown from 'Give the Sea Change and It Shall Change' published in *Fulcrum Number 4* (2005). This volume's title is taken from Lawrence Bantelman's *Movements*, and some of its poetry is included by Thayil:

Give the sea change and it shall change and not change
Give the sea shift and it shall shift and not shift;
Although I have smelled Spring's conversation
Yet I have seen the bare arms of the continent
Hairy with waves, and the teeth-marks of Geology. (“Movements”)

Thayil's editorial construction is, as he states at the outset, a *vertical* rather than a chronological construction. Here he juxtaposes poets of Indian heritage who have never lived in India with poets who live and work in India, and who have experienced the shatter of language which emanated from the introduction of new poetic forms into the classical tradition. The effect of the vertical construction is a beautifully achieved book with a pleasing rhythm rudely bisected at midpoint by the Essay, “2004 : Ezekiel , Moraes, Kolatkar” penned by Bruce King. Here there is no brief explanation, allusion to, or hints at the issue of classicism versus modernism in Indian Poetry. What begins as homage to three dead poets becomes a lacerating essay on traditional Indian classicism peppered with barely concealed disdain for the intellectual movement.

King's essay is not heralded in Thayil's prefatory note, and whilst it somewhat reflects Thayil's editorial concerns, it gives a vague precarity to the sleepy and gentle construction of the book as a whole: it copper-fastens the triumvirate construction set down by Thayil and calls the reader's attention to the absence and lack of both vernacular poets and translators. It is an unexpected bonus then, for the reader to be handed such a vigorous essay at the midpoint. There is more said however, about the

POST III

shatter of language and experience of western culture in Rukmini Bhaya Nair's minimalistic approach to her poetry in "Convent" than in King's entire essay ,

Glides Mary , mother of god
Pure as plaster , and as unaware
From her perch in the scented air
She sees small faces
Giggling , and the fair
Nuns from Ireland, kneeling
And she wonders about prayer
The pity of it, the point... ' ("Convent ")

Women writers are well represented in this volume of contemporary Indian poets writing in English. Monica Ferrell creates with artistic precision upon a mythological canvas, as well as reflecting more intimate scenes upon smaller screens or canvasses. Her minute investigation of characters from a 16th Century Breton Lace in "The Lace World" is incredibly beautiful:

How eerie it all is, as if linked by synapses;
a face stutters out of a cloud of lace,
a tiny decorative lion dances in a frieze,
a woman , needy arms outstretched , holds on

to thread bulwarks against some unseen flood
while her body dissolves into netting , the knots
widen and widen until the limn of her
is finished, she melted to loops of distance ... and isn't. ("The Lace World")

Imtiaz Dharkar writes of Purdha and of desire in a confident woman's voice. It is what had been absent from the great era of classical Indian love poetry, when woman was an object of desire, a canvas upon which an ideal of beauty was projected. Here she speaks about objectification in a pared down but wonderfully astute manner:

The Guardians of our need
patrol the streets, fired
with pure passion,
eager to find the flesh
unsealed , frantic
to mete out justice,

Oh delicious,
exquisite pleasure, to punish
the object of our desire. ("Object ")

To contrast this poem with the wonderful volumes of Indian love poetry, wherein woman is a bounty of endless metaphor for pregnancy, grace, fruitfulness and desire creates quite a jolt . Here indeed is a wonderful voice which in anthological terms may have been largely experienced by women readers as wholly absent from collections in the earlier pre-independence era. There is, however, an absence in women poets from this volume which would

POETRY AT THE GAMES

detract from the publisher's desire to make it a canonical text. In both Thayil's and King's notes, there are only brief allusions to the richness of Indian women's voices, both men seem too intent on creating from the triumvirate of writers who wrestled with new forms and modernisation, as well as celebrating the art of those recently deceased writers who dominate the vertical structuring of the book.

There are some outstanding discoveries; Arvind Krishna Methrotra's poetic output veers from Beat to the sublimely lyrical:

My journey has been this anchor,
The off-white cliff a sail,
Fowl and dragons play near the shores
my sea-wrecked ancestors left.
I call out to the raven, 'my harem, my black rose,
The clock's slave, keeper of the no-mans-land between us.'
And the raven, a tear hung from his massive pupil,
Covers my long hair with petals. "Genealogy"

Interestingly the male poets of Indian diaspora and intellectualism wrestled greatly with form and to a larger extent than is evident in the women poets' voices, whose limpid and minimalist output is evident throughout this volume. Of the triumvirate mentioned in Thayil and King's essays, Dom Moraes is outstanding in his evocative expression. His physical alienation through his final illness is beautifully wrought in "After the Operation":

Death will be an interruption of my days, of
all matters pertinent to me, and the private
intimacies I have that cannot be taken away.
It will interrupt my talks with my dead father,
moribund friends, and bent, witchlike trees;
and most of all interrupt what I have with her
who lives and saves me from my lost countries.

But whose feet are these that crush new leaves
On the lawn outside the mansion I once imagined
I inhabited, with the cadaverous Butler Craxton?
He feeds me blood, and grieves for me each day
In his own way. But the feet? Whose are they?
The curtains rustle with the presence behind.
Are they feet, or the hooves of a hideous God? ("After the Operation")

The poet maps the internal landscape, often venturing where we do not wish to go for fear of facing unpalatable truths. King alludes to this dying year (2004) in his homage-essay at the midpoint of this volume, when he asserts that both Kolatkar and Moraes knew of their dying and had set about mapping the experience and in bringing their final collections to fruition. Amit Chaudhuri writes of Nissim Ezekiel in similar terms of homage to the father of Indian modernism:

This man in a room full of papers

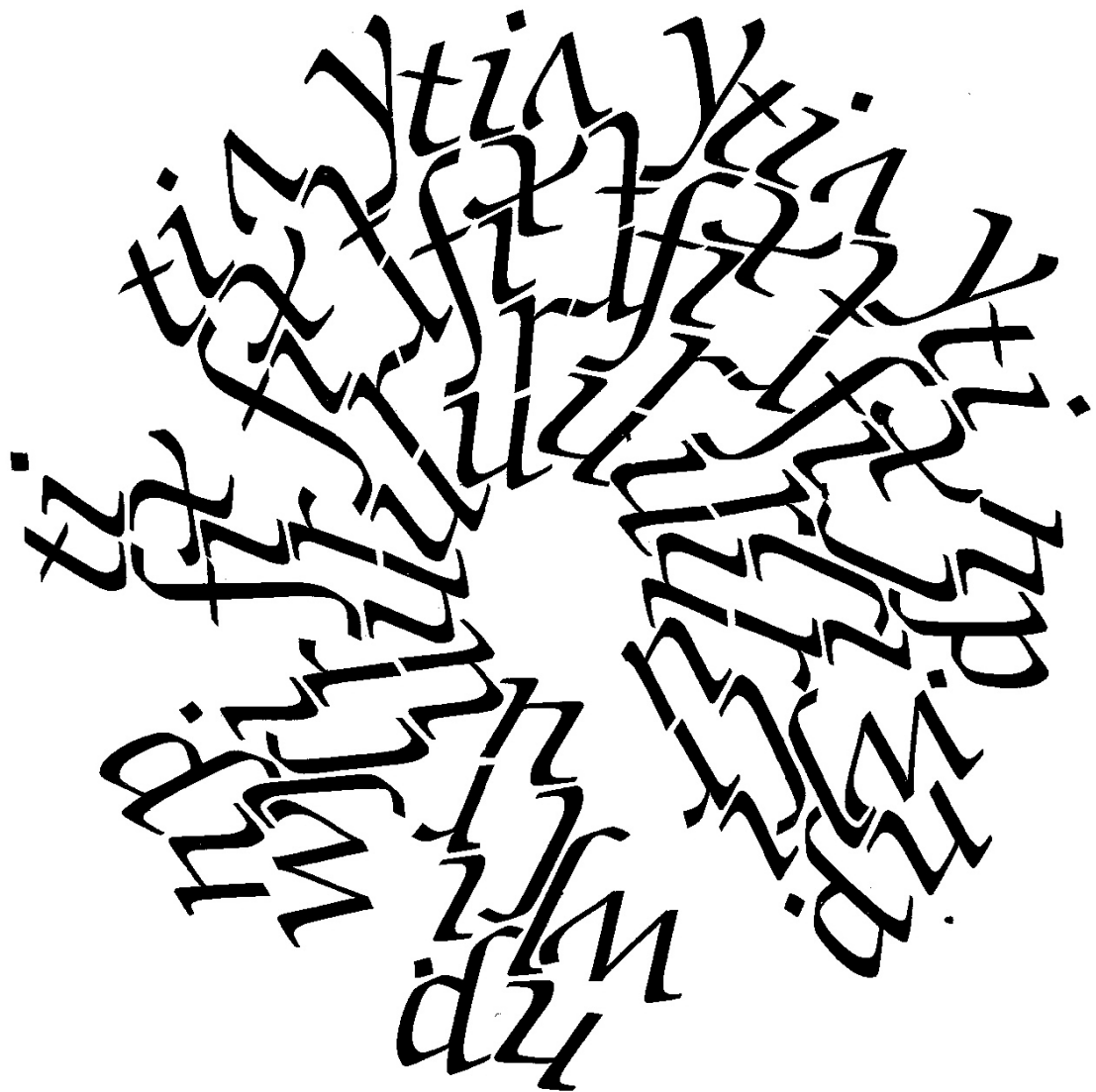
POST III

In the Theosophy building
still young at fifty-five
the centre of his small universe,
told me that my poems were 'derived.'
I was seventeen.
I listened only to the precision
of his Bombay accent, juxtaposed
in my mind with the syllables of his name. "Nissim Ezekiel"

This is what poetry is about, the shatter of language, the unbearable tension in words and their inalienable private meanings. Thayil succeeds in bringing these languages and images outward to the general reader very successfully, but I will leave the final words to Dom Moraes, whose poetry in many ways dominates the volume:

If you look for me, I am not here.
My writings will tell you where I am.
Tingribirdi, they point out my life like
Lines drawn in the map of my palm.

The Bloodaxe Book of Contemporary Indian Poets is a surprising and interesting read, both in terms of its construction and its selection. Certain issues such as a lack of poetry in the vernacular language and the suitability of translators are alluded to, but what is achieved within the reader is a desire to read more on the subject and to look at those poets whose absence is at least noted. Any book that achieves a sensitive approach to the language issue, whilst not wholly closing the door on debate is to be applauded. This reader's qualms about the placing of the King essay were not justified in the end; it proved an inspired editorial choice, a provocation to read much more Indian poetry of this post- Independence era.



BEAULIEU 10: "84"

Inbred

ARKLOW (GB) b. 1889	BEND OR (GB) ch. 1877	DONCASTER (GB) ch. 1870	STOCKWELL (GB) ch. 1849	THE BARON (IRE) ch. 1842
			MARIGOLD (GB) ch. 1860	POCAHONTAS (GB) b. 1837
				TEDDINGTON (GB) ch. 1848
		ROUGE ROSE (GB) ch. 1865	THORMANBY (GB) ch. 1857	RATAN MARE (GB) b. 1852
				WINDHOUND (GB) br. 1847
			ELLEN HORNE (GB) br. 1844	ALICE HAWTHORN (GB) b. 1838
	LILY AGNES (GB) b. 1871	MACARONI (GB) b. 1860	SWEETMEAT (GB) dkb/br. 1842	REDSHANK (GB) b. 1833
			JOCOSE (GB) b. 1843	DELHI (GB) blk. 1838
				GLADIATOR (GB) ch. 1833
			THE CURE (GB) b. 1841	LOLLYPOP (GB) blk. 1836
			MISS AGNES (GB) br. 1850	PANTALOOM (GB) ch. 1824
				BANTER (GB) br. 1826
POLLY AGNES (GB) br. 1865			PHYSICIAN (GB) b. 1829	
			MORSEL (GB) b. 1836	
			BIRDCATCHER (IRE) ch. 1833	
			AGNES (GB) br. 1844	
			VOLTAIRE (GB) br. 1826	
			MARTHA LYNN (GB) br. 1837	
ANGELICA (GB) b. 1879	GALOPIN (GB) br. 1872	VEDETTE (GB) br. 1854	BIRDCATCHER (IRE) ch. 1833	
			NAN DARRELL (GB) gr. 1844	
		FLYING DUCHESS (GB) b. 1853	BAY MIDDLETON (GB) b. 1833	
			BARBELLE (GB) b. 1836	
			VOLTAIRE (GB) br. 1826	
			JUNIPER MARE (GB) br. 1817	
	ST. ANGELA (GB) b. 1865	KING TOM (GB) b. 1851	HARKAWAY (IRE) ch. 1834	ECONOMIST (GB) b. 1825
			POCAHONTAS (GB) b. 1837	FANNY DAWSON (IRE) ch. 1823
				GLENCOE (GB) ch. 1831
		ADELINE (GB) b. 1851	ION (GB) b. 1835	MARPESSA (GB) b. 1830
				CAIN (GB) b. 1822
				MARGARET (GB) br. 1831
		LITTLE FAIRY (GB) ch. 1841	HORNSEA (GB) ch. 1832	
			LACERTA (GB) b. 1816	

POETRY AT THE GAMES

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Derek Beaulieu is from Canada. His visual poems are created using dry transfer lettering (often referred to by the generic trade name Letraset.) recently published his "Prose of the Trans-Canada", a "prodigious" tribute to Blaise Cendrars's *Prose of the Trans-Siberian* (1913). Beaulieu also writes conceptual fiction. His latest publication in that field is *How To Write* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2010). He co-edited the anthology *Shift & Switch: new Canadian poetry* (2005) with Angela Rawlings and Jason Christie and has been active in small publishing since founding housepress in 1997, and no press in 2005. He blogs at <http://derekbeaulieu.wordpress.com/>

Roy Goldblatt has lived and taught in Finland since the 1970s.

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Christodoulos Makris' collection *Spitting Out the Mother Tongue* came out from Wurm Press in September. Wurm also published his chapbook *Round the Clock*, in 2009. For more, go to <http://yesbutisitpoetry.blogspot.com>.

Niall Murphy works for Google and is a graduate of the Poetry Studies MA at The Irish Centre for Poetry Studies at Mater Dei.

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In June it rains.
Summer tag.
They make my eyes bleed.

—their coach writes free *haiku*