

Revisiting Babel: Sport and Poetry

By

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Acknowledgments

The idea of the university as a civilised and civilising community is not dead. Many preside, relaxed and comfortable, over the degeneration of the university into a mere monastery of the market. Some, more faithful to the past, and more conscious of the future, know and do better. My two supervisors, Professor Terry Roberts and Professor Emeritus John McLaren, exemplify a care, both expansive and deep, that exceeds the institution and its practices, and accepts the person. Simple acknowledgment is poor reward for the riches of such care.

**Abstract Of Doctoral Dissertation: “Revisiting Babel:
Sport And Poetry”**

This work is a hermeneutic of sport as if it were poetry. The inspiration for the dissertation is to be found in a reading of the myth of the tower of Babel (*Book of Genesis: 11,1-9*). It is an extended and multi-pieced argument exploring an analogy between the truly strong sport performer and the strong poet. It pays attention to the strong sport performer, like the strong poet, as a maker of novel meaning. The mode of approach is a semiotic one: sport and poetry are brought together under the umbrella of semiotic through the resources of ordinary language supplemented by three specialised kinds of language - sport as a language, mythology as a language, and poetry as a language. Mythology as a language is a main meeting point for sport and poetry. While tensioned between Gadamer and Rorty, its principal pre-understanding is the principle which is their very considerable common ground: being which can be understood is language.

This work, as a hermeneutic of sport as poetry, grapples with the question of how to understand and interpret the cultural and social capital of sport. While the capital in and of sport cannot be quantified, it can and ought to be wrought discursively in the face of many current reductive readings. The argument turns largely upon matters of structure in both ordinary language, and the three auxiliary kinds of language. Thus, the description of sport in poetry is not the issue.

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REVISITING BABEL: SPORT AND POETRY

Chapter One

Introduction

The complexities of language and problems of translation of sport as poetry do not preclude a simple statement of the argument and summary description of the basic contents of the thesis. This work, which is a hermeneutic of sport as if it were a language of poetry, is an essay in the re-description of sport focused upon matters of structure. Truly strong poets are makers of meaning. The key question is how the truly strong sport performer may fittingly be said to change the language of his sport, and thus its meaning and value. The work is an extended and spiralling argument exploring an analogy between the truly strong sport performer and the strong poet as enacting meaning. The argument turns and twists, returning to certain fundamentals, but at a different point and from a changed perspective. Throughout, it pays attention to the strong sport performer, like the strong poet, as a maker of novel meaning. The mode of approach is a semiotic one: sport and poetry are brought together under the umbrella of semiotic through the resources of ordinary language, supplemented by three specialised kinds of language - sport as a language, mythology as a language, and poetry as a language. Mythology as a language is a main meeting point for sport and poetry. While tensioned between Gadamer and Rorty, the principal pre-understanding of this dissertation is the principle which is their very considerable common ground: being that can be understood is language.

This work is a hermeneutic of sport as if it were poetry. This chapter has two purposes which, although related, it is pertinent to distinguish. The chapter serves to do

more than simply introduce the dissertation through a synoptic viewpoint of its contents. It canvasses in a comprehensive, if preliminary, way all the substantial issues of the dissertation, as well as indicating its basic contents in a general fashion. The thinking here in this departure from normal practice has to do with the subject matter. The semiotic mode of approach of this work centres upon conceptions of language, and language can readily become a nebulous affair if and when everything is reduced to language. This is a pitfall which it is important to avoid through early attention to the interpretation of sport, mythology, and poetry, as three kinds of language.¹ The emphasis in this dissertation upon matters of structure as well as function requires a lengthier opening chapter than is standard practice.

It remains to indicate how the key concepts attending sport and poetry as kinds of creative language are to be substantiated and related in the extended argument of the work in the subsequent chapters. Mimesis is the key concept in chapter two; the anxiety of influence achieved in the writing of strong poetry in chapter three; sport as metaphor in chapter four; sport as myth in chapter five; and sport as a making of fresh meaning (*poiesis*) in the concluding chapter, chapter six. All five central concepts relate in complex and fundamental ways not only to ordinary language in general, but particularly to notions of language as a kind of doing, as a kind of action. All key concepts function so as to enliven language in various ways. And in enlivening language, enlivening existence. The damage done by the unthinking to elemental words cannot preclude the possibility of their redemption, and the possibility of resistance in practice to simply more of the same. The concepts of experience and experiment, for example, have been changed and exchanged, engaged, as it were, in an ongoing wrestle, over the past

centuries. The existentialist will privilege experience, the positivist experiment. More nuanced negotiations between the two will be left to others. Words, like bodies, have long served as things to think with and as weapons of war; language, like sport, has long been and still remains, the site of agon.² Such notions of performative action become principal points of connection between sport and poetry and work towards enabling sport to be written and read as if it were poetry.

The Point Of View

The point of view of this work of sport as if it were poetry entails an understanding of language as constitutive and creative. All language is, to a greater or lesser degree, performative, pro-creative. Language is not understood here as a neutral medium between knower and known. Nor is prosaic or poetic description about this or that sport the matter in hand. Present concern is with sport as a language, and especially with sport as a poetic kind of language. That is, the concept of language itself is made ambiguous in a quite explicit sense (ordinary general language and particular cultural code), while the prevailing concern is not restricted to function, but expanded to structure and context. Strong poets are makers, but what of strong sport performers? Can a productive analogy be drawn between those truly strong sport performers who thrill and innovate, with strong poets who make things new in myth and figurative language?

While the world of sport and the world of poetry each enjoys a relative autonomy, both, as realms of meaning and value, can be approached as a species of semiotic, a system of signs, a realm of expression. The mode of analysis is semiotic.

This, in itself, is not novel: many, with the interest and the talent, have made just such an approach to numerous matters - to dance, to disease, to photography, to anthropology (Foster, 1986; Sontag, 1983, 1979; Levi-Strauss, 1985). Roland Barthes, a past master of the mode, picks up on Aristotle's contention that rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic, and thus part of philosophy, and, in one phase of his career, exploits it (Barthes, 1988; Culler, 1983). Paul Ricoeur, interpreting Aristotle for modernity, examines how metaphor is inserted to different ends, in both rhetoric and poetry (Ricoeur, 1996). Richard Rorty makes metaphor central in his account of historical change (Rorty, 1980, 1995). Language remains as the most important, as well as the most complex, system or structure of signs.

As a work seeking to understand and interpret sport as poetry, the work is concerned specifically with both ordinary language and with three peculiar kinds of language: sport as a language, poetry as a language, and mythology as a language. As such, it explores a new structuration of sport as a body of meaningful signs. Specifically, it relates two cultural institutions and practices not normally associated, the one popular and expanding, the other long-lived but comparatively marginal in post-industrial western culture. Most significantly, both exhibit the spirit of play; both, that is, are ludic practices, one conducted in words, the other in patterns of human movement; both in rapt attention and a spirit of care. This instinct for strong play finds different expression in sport and poetry, but both are a test and a testing, a matter of seriousness and agon, a formation of elemental forces in conflict. Both the practice of sport and of poetry, at their best, move and delight. They are deeply and inclusively human, a testimony to and a constitution of, life in its plenitude. This is not to say that

either practice is simply a realm of sweetness and light. The truth in each instance is far from it. Yet why anyone should denigrate or hate either practice is something of a mystery. Both practices, indeed, are exacting in their demands upon care, attention, and discipline. Those rare and precious moments of inspiration and revelation in sport and poetry are, alike, hard won. Strong sport performers and strong poets are more than competent; both excel, but at a cost.

Sport and poetry are alike in this fundamental respect that they both enact their own meanings and values; they do things, the former with bodies, the latter with words.³ Sport dramatises that which is most real in bodily contest, while poetry symbolises it in words. The strong player changes patterns of play, the strong poet changes inherited models. In both there is a sense of elemental forces in conflict. In both effect is related to cause, and cause to human volition and desire. The lure in determinism to accept life as too difficult and to give up, is resisted and met in combat. Both social practices, that is, can, as stated at the outset, profitably be brought under the umbrella of semiotic as different systems of signs which share a potency of enactment as different kinds of language. Poetry as memorable verbal utterance is one kind of language, one cultural code, one system of signs; sport is another as a structure of patterned human movements, and in that likewise (similar and different) as a realm of meaning and value. That is, not only poetry, but sport as well, can be interpreted as description of a different and peculiar kind, description which forsakes structuration of signs mediating in a relatively neutral way with realities deemed quite beyond themselves. Sport and poetry constitute in potent manner their own worlds, which is neither to say that there are no realities beyond themselves, nor to deny that each world is constructed in certain

material conditions which impact upon their own construction. The world of sport, like the world of poetry, enjoys a relative autonomy. Poetry must face the impact of a multiplicity of other media more modern and less exacting; sport must face the intrusions and temptations of a commercial culture driven by the bottom line of profit (Cashmore, 1996, pp.173-211; Morgan, 1994). Both sport and poetry must live with accelerating change, growing uncertainty, increasing complexity. Both practices stand threatened, but very differently, in an age where meaning is threatened and a sense of the contingent and the absurd loom large.

Some fundamentals beyond those already stated remain relatively unchanged. The literary critic Harold Bloom developed the concept of strong poets, who remake the work of their predecessors. Strong poets have their implied readers, including, Bloom argues, the society of dead poetic precursors (Bloom, 1997). Strong poets, in Bloom's theory of poetry, suffer the anxiety of influence, but emerge as quite other than anonymous splendours because of their monumental volition and desire for poetic immortality. Truly strong sport performers, on the other hand, also do not merely play repetitively before passive spectators. They play to and for and with them, as well as for themselves, their coaches, their families, their community, their nation, their sport. In their manner or style of play they do not merely repeat what others have done before them. Their radical re-interpretation in their potent play of their chosen practice makes for that which is new. Often they are acutely aware of the achievements, the records, of their strong predecessors, an awareness that may become both a burden and a spur to redoubled effort and greater achievement themselves (Patmore, 1986).⁴ The love of their chosen sporting practice, the desire to excel as strong sport performers, involves

them in creation rather than re-production. They are involved in a network of extended relations, the professional somewhat differently to the amateur player. In the patterns of bodily action characteristic of sport there is a dramatisation of the most real, the most primeval - in a few words, a play and an agon. But whether amateur or professional, the truly strong player dramatises the most real by changing the habitual patterns of play hitherto prevailing in the practice. In poetry, on the other hand, there is a symbolisation in and through language of the most real. Strong poets make their revelations by changing the model of their strong precursor. Bloom, as will be made clear in chapter three, stresses in his theory of poetry how even strong poets are struck by a sense of their own belatedness, and must struggle strenuously in their agonistic play in and with words to vanquish their mighty predecessors and prove other than that which skeletons dream about (Bloom,1997,1975). After Dante and Shakespeare, poets swim upstream. The strong sport performer and the strong poet alike, rise up from the ruck of the average and everyday. They are elite, and unashamedly so; they are proponents of excellence.⁵ Access to practice and meaning is not thereby denied the less gifted majority: it does not take genius to appreciate what it took genius to create.

The challenge, then, is not to subjugate the realities of the world of poetry to the world of sport, or vice versa, but to make an understanding and interpretation of the world of sport in terms of the world of poetry. An especial accent in this work is made of comparable creations in the world of sport as in the world of poetry. In their different but related ways the metaphoric critic Harold Bloom, and the pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty, make much of the notion of the strong poet. Strong poets are makers rather than finders. This work seeks in an extended and multi-pieced argument to make

much of the analogy between strong sport performers as makers and strong poets as makers. This is not an empty exercise, but rather a striving to go to the root of fundamental matters. The sixth and concluding chapter explores possible instantiations of the argument in the strong play of William Tatem Tilden II in the world of tennis, and Don Bradman in the world of cricket. Both these strong players are iconic. That is, they are recognisable representations of supreme excellence in their chosen sports. Do these men incarnate in their play the rich and elastic notion of the strong poet developed by Richard Rorty? Do they re-shape the worlds of tennis and cricket? And if they do, is it profitable to separate out their play on the sporting stage from the narrative of the life lived?⁶ Ought one seek to separate the strong player in the person from his or her other worlds? How might, how ought, one construct a fitting narrative for such strong sport performers (Rorty, 1996, pp.110-138; Booth, 1988)? Strong sport performers, like strong poets, do not strut the stage as a consequence of happy or unhappy accidents and nothing else. Time and chance encompass them, but they must seize their time, and reach where even they fail to grasp (Fingleton, 1947; Deford, 1977; Smyth, 1974; Larkin, 1984; Spender, 1991).

The perspective adopted is the Gadamerian one, shared by Rorty: being that can be understood is language (Rorty, 2000, pp.23-25).⁷ This is no denial of manifold realities beyond language, but informed acknowledgement that human understanding is made in and through the kinds of language opened out to us. This understanding of language continues the longstanding struggle within philosophy between existence and essence instituted by Plato, reconstituted by Aristotle, and agonised over by the philosophical giants of the middle ages (Gilson, 1950, p.410; Copleston, 1955, pp.70-

106). This conflict has greatly involved understandings of the relation between not only thought and language, but also the interpretation of experience and language (Vygotsky, 1989). It leads Ricoeur, a modern hermeneutist, in his study of the rule of metaphor, to important and relevant conclusions on the creation of meaning in language. Ricoeur's study, situated between Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and his *Poetics*, is something of a touchstone for this work, a mediation between Gadamer and Rorty in vital respects (Ricoeur, 1996).

In the present instance of exploration of a hermeneutic of sport as if it were poetry, within the compass of ordinary language, sport, myth, and poetry are treated as peculiar kinds of language, relatively distinct structurations of meaningful signs. In such interpretation of sport as poetry, one adopts, as it were, a dual citizenship, in the actual world and in possible worlds, worlds unknown. The world known is muddle and compromise, heartache and a thousand natural shocks, change and uncertainty, fear and anxiety, the crush of contingency and agonising meaninglessness; the worlds glimpsed are those where beauty becomes truth, and truth beauty,⁸ where justice becomes pragmatism, and pragmatism justice. Strong poets know that such unworldly abstractions are not entities amenable to direct description.⁹ In the poetic world of the Bible, where paradise is regained and the agonistic and the performative forsaken, unlikely images are created in a world where the lion lies down with the lamb, where the weapons of war are beaten down into ploughshares.¹⁰ Implicitly this is to raise the perpetual question of the practical relevance of the impossible ideal in an imperfect world populated by imperfect persons. Sometimes the law is something worse than an

ass, society less than sane, culture needlessly impoverished. A sad and sorry scheme of things need not be a prison.

In his apologia for pictorial art, his attack upon the split between sense and thought, and reflection on the relations of pictures, symbols, and signs, Rudolf Arnheim makes much the same argument that Blake had made for both art and poetry in his contest with John Locke:

In an ideal civilization, no object is perceived and no action performed without an open-ended vista of analogues, which point to the most abstract guiding principles; and, inversely, when pure, generic shapes are handled, there reverberates in human reasoning the experience of particular existence, which gives substance to thought (Arnheim, 1970, p.152).

Arnheim's basic argument can be made with force in the world of sport with its different and kinetic languages. The gifted clown, as Ryle rightly understood, seizes the golden moment, but his tumbling and gesturing are, in their timing and execution, pregnant with meaning (Ryle, 1969, p.33).

Human finitude is one kind of limitation, evil quite another. The perpetual temptations to think overly well of oneself and too ill of the other do not go away. Mere awareness of their presence does not annul them. There are tensions here, tensions which philosophy and literature have made their own (Porter, 1974). Macbeth knows that he is not just ambitious and married to a driven woman, just as Hamlet discerns much of his own inner conflicts and is moved to reflect upon them in ways that make them universal. There is a similar and closely related tension also between the ongoing struggle to make those discriminations which sustain and deepen human culture, and the fall into a blind and bigoted self-righteousness. But as Kant reminded us, we are conscripts not volunteers in the ethical realm. Such conscription, however, still allows

us a considerable freedom as to which company we join and strive to further. While not personally of the company of either strong poets or strong performers of sport, it is still possible to attend to them, to understand and interpret them, and so join their company (Booth, 1988). It would be impertinent, to say the least, to prescribe that all ought to be of each company. There is no reason, however, not to make just such a recommendation, because both can hold us in their spell and greatly profit us in their intensities.

The fundamental hope immanent in the work is that sport, which currently is sold short by rampant commercial considerations, will profit long-term by just such re-description as poetry. One is not condemned to terminal wistfulness or impotent rage because a commercial culture tends to reduce practices and persons to commodities, or because Nike pays Tiger Woods a fortune and outworkers a pittance. Such obscenities are not to be passed over lightly, but they are not the whole narrative of sport. Perhaps not only narrative, but myth and metanarrative (not in the linguist's sense but Lyotard's rejected sense) can still find an honoured place in understanding and interpreting sport, but not to the exclusion of the thick description common to narrative.¹¹ Woods is a magnificent golfer, destined perhaps to put Watson, Nicklaus, Palmer, Player, Hogan, Snead, Saraczen, Locke, and company in the shades, rather as Shakespeare came to eclipse his strong precursors and render anxious all who followed. Nothing is got for nothing (another theme of Bloom's) in sport as in poetry. Both practices raise the perpetual question, What rage for what order? The splendid futilities of sport have long had cultural currency and require perpetual revaluation in changed times.¹² The romance and the chivalry of sport may be obscured at present, but they are not dead.¹³

If, one day, it becomes as natural to talk of sport as poetry as it presently is to talk of sport as science, or sport as business, or sport as politics, a blow will have been struck for something of the glory of sport, its ecstasies and its agonies.

The cultural and social capital of sport cannot be quantified, but it can and ought to be interpreted, and with both eyes open. It is not simply that the wish is father to the thought. Rather there is some recognition that the perpetual flux of experience, far from precluding the constitution of potent, contemporaneous meaning, actually invites it in, so to speak. Nowhere is this truer than in myth and poetry, those challenging worlds where time yet becomes for strong poets and other recalcitrant metaphysicians, the image of eternity.¹⁴ This is to raise the question, not just of meaning, but also of mystery in philosophy (Foster, 1957).¹⁵ It is also to recognise the presence and importance in human experience of plurality, ambiguity, and ambivalence, realities with which strong poets wrestle, and strong sport performers must resolve sooner or later, or suffer the consequences (Empson, 1970; Orlick, 1980).¹⁶

In the interpretation of the variegated patterns of bodily movement which form much of the cultural and social capital of sport, it is possible, although with some trepidation, to distinguish related problems: first and foremost, the problem of translating the signs which form sport into other meaningful signs; second, the problem of personal knowledge in individual responses to these signs; third, the classificatory description of signs (Gombrich, 1987, p.243; Polanyi, 1973).

The Starting Point

The inspiration for this work is the Hebrew myth of the tower of Babel (*Genesis* 11: 1-9). One revisits the myth, conscious that others have made it their inspiration also.¹⁷ The Yahwist's myth of those ambitious builders, keen to make a name for themselves by building a tower up to heaven, but forced by the jealous Yahweh back into the babble of uncomprehending voices, is a fitting place to start.¹⁸ The Babel myth, a myth of quest and fall, introduces the question of language, of what it means to break the air with significant sound, or inscribe the page with meaningful marks. It suggests that the social bond be conceived as both plurality and agon. It leads to the Gadamerian perspective adopted in the work, a perspective shared in large measure by Rorty: being that can be understood is language, and language is as much the preserve of poets as of philosophers. Language, the myth suggests, is better understood as heterogeneous in its functioning than homogeneous (Stout, 1998). Language, especially where concerned with reasons of the heart, is not a matter of logic, but of logics (Rorty, A., 1996; Barthes, 1988; Niebuhr a, 1960). Description in all its plenitude stands in need of being itself described because it is important to recognise a plurality in both writing and reading, and a plurality of cultural codes or ways of signifying. Philosopher, theologian, poet, critic, linguist, anthropologist, each will have his interest and viewpoint; no one need be excluded (Goodman, 1978; Niebuhr, R.H., 1960; Eliot, 1959; Bloom, 1995; Jakobson, 1987; Levi-Strauss, 1985). Function cannot be treated adequately in isolation, but requires attention to structure (Jakobson, 1987, pp.62-94). Structure does not preclude the possibility of plurality and ambiguity (Empson, 1970; Tracy, 1988).

The starting point for such an understanding of the riches of sport, as already indicated, is in a redemptive reading of the potent Biblical myth of the tower of Babel (*Genesis*: 11, 1-9).¹⁹ Myth, in its excess and contradiction, challenges us to make fitting response.²⁰ The Babel myth is read as one of quest and fall, but happy fall; a joyous acceptance of foregoing the ambition to hold all things together, whole and steadily, in favour of the relativities of existence, partial and plural perspectives always subject to question and critique. Constraints of some kinds there must always be, but mind-manacled uniformity never. The fall from the God's-eye perspective, the fall into many languages, is, at the same time, the possibility of progress. That this entails struggle and strife (inherent characteristics of sport and poetry) is not to be denied. There is virtue latent in struggle, in strife. Even such a seemingly simple thing as listening well is a hard but good thing, a necessary and fundamental constituting and regulating process in conversation and in relating to others. The same truth applies, if differently, in the realm of the specular. The unpalatable truth, made patent by deconstructionists, that in language there is both disclosure and concealment is a much harder thing to wrestle with. There are the stringent demands of an agon which must be met in both sport and poetry. In short, Babel is read as potent and seminal, a hymn to plurality, a happy fall into the multifarious and bracing realities of human culture and society in democracy which although often sham and hollow, is greatly to be preferred to tyranny and terror. It is not to be read as a wholesale sanctification of the status quo, but as radical criticism from disparate perspectives unified in language and conscious of consequences.

Babel read as a hymn to plurality is a rejection of any universal Esperanto. Univocity is rejected vehemently. One can love one's native tongue, especially its poets, and yet know that even a smattering of a foreign language offers insights otherwise unobtainable. Homer and J, Dante and Chaucer, Cervantes and Shakespeare, do count still in many a considered scheme of things because of their power to clarify, unify, integrate²¹. Likewise, one can recognise that the actual conditions of life become alive in the most diverse signifying practices. Where and how does one pitch the point which separates experience from the signs which form and communicate it? How raw is raw experience? Is experience irreducible, or otherwise? Are poverty and torture more or less real when they remain undescribed? Do the kinds of courage so conspicuous in sport stand in need of a theory of courage to make their meanings more fully meaningful? Is there an essential quality to courage, or is it always determined by context? Does the very word, hinting as it does in its etymology, the functioning of heart and mind together, evoke an ample anthropology which evades reductive dualisms? And what of the beautiful and the sublime? If they can no longer be conceived as discrete entities, as objects under direct description, what are the consequences for language (Graham, 1961; Bevan, 1962; Carritt, 1962; Alexander, 1968; Gibson, 1972; Read, 1957,1967, 1971)?²²

Pictorial art and music, architecture and dance, to take but four cultural codes as examples, make their meanings most differently; their syntax is different, and they communicate in the absence of words. Nevertheless, an expert in all, able to find and fit the best words discursively in proper order, could compare as well as contrast so as to show relations of structure and meaning. This dissertation explores discursively

possible relations between two further cultural codes, sport and poetry, themselves understood, along with mythology, as different kinds of language. Sport is a popular as well as a potent realm of meaning and value; poetry endures, even in late-capitalist culture, as another potent realm of meaning and value. Both cultural practices grant us understandings hard to come by through other means. The present task is the discursive one of selecting and combining the fitting words which interpret sport as poetry, a task informed by the belief that each practice has much to lend to the fuller association and appreciation of the other. Sport, brought under the umbrella of semiotic as three kinds of language (poetry, mythology, sport), has its expansive lexicon and its flexible syntax. Its lexicon and its syntax, however, are not those of ordinary language (Arnheim, 1970; Gombrich, 1977, 1987, pp.240-249). It is well to recognise at the outset that there are knotty problems in this regard (Roberts, 1976).²³

Richly and ironically figured in the Babel myth (*Genesis* 11: 1-9) are unsettling notions that are glimpsed in all the half-light of myth as it struggles with the contradictions of life²⁴: the desire to make a name for oneself, the dream to flee the madding crowd, all its strife and all its babble, the desire to mount up and behold all things whole and steadily; the shock of realisation that wide awake, both eyes open, perpetual re-entry into the actualities and relativities of culture and society is a shared and inescapable responsibility.²⁵ Further, and continuing the movement from behaviour to thought and language, there exist different yet complementary ways of talking about things, perspectives, ideals and illusions, difficult to achieve, more encompassing and insightful than commonly available (Passmore, 1945; McCarthy, 1995; Stout, 1988).²⁶ Such rapt attention and such uncommon achievement demand both play and work, both

imagination and a certain ambition to formulate a cultural vision. Art, poetry included, with its unity of meaning and symbolic form, and its capacity to clarify and integrate, stands out in this regard (Hepburn, 1957, pp.138-144; Murdoch, 1992, p.8). Poetry is a peculiar language, a knowing play upon myth, metaphor, and metonymy, in the selection of the best words in the most fitting order. Language, that prime and pervasive condition of civilised life, exhibits both structure and manifold function; latent in language are the conditions of both identity and community. Poetry, verbal utterance so formed as to become memorable, retains, even in conditions of post-industrialism, its contested place in the variegated world of art; strong poetry, with its potency to communicate even in the absence of full understanding, is language at its best in the creation of other worlds. In short, Babel is read as re-entry from the rarified realm of the transcendental to language and history, culture and society. More specifically, the mysterious matter of language itself is rendered problematic even as it is recognised as ubiquitous; language becomes the site of both revelation and concealment. At the centre of this problematic in post-industrial western culture is the ambiguous status of metaphor, the polysemous quality of myth. Philosophy itself divides upon such matters.²⁷ Such divisions have a history.²⁸

Myth And Metaphor In The Text Of Philosophy

Many, of course, make little or no sense of such non-sense as exists in myth and poetry.²⁹ Even a literate and gifted man in C.P. Snow, physicist and novelist, accords myth scant attention in his analysis of culture (Snow, 1960; 1964).³⁰ Brilliant philosophers such as Ayer dismiss myth along with their elimination of metaphysics

from philosophy (Ayer, 1971, 1956). Bertrand Russell's attitude is more complex, changeable, and ambivalent.³¹ Wittgenstein, like Plato, has the courage to change. The strangulated mysticism of the *Tractatus* gives way to a more relaxed and yet more expansive understanding of the possibilities of linguistic propositions in posthumous texts. Myth, in a culture given over not only to writing its meanings, but to the fabrication of fact to substantiate hypothesis also, is readily superannuated. Science is not vitally concerned with reconciling antinomies of human experience (psychology possibly excepted), but in extending the limits of explanation of the physical world. Its language, for all its versions, is essentially one of prediction and control.

In his Rede Lecture of 1959, Snow postulated two cultures cheek by jowl but in mutual uneasy suspicion and ignorance, a scientific culture and a literary culture (Snow, 1959, pp.1-21).³² The question remains whether such a schema of the categories of cultural intelligibility was ever an illuminating or productive one. Plato and Kant cut culture at different joints to Snow. Plato, a metaphoric critic as well as an ironist, makes his myths according to need and purpose (Elias, 1984). Sense can be made in an interpretation and application to sport, of the worlds of mythology and poetry, including the non-sense of the myth of the tower of Babel. In revisiting Babel, one envisions the boon latent in plurality of description, the potency in the human capacity for re-description, sport as poetry.³³ This is an integration, not of distinct literary and scientific cultures, but of popular and literary as one culture sporting a plurality of languages, a diversity of cultural codes (Thompson, 1964).

Something of the same doubt concerning Snow's neat dichotomy hovers over quite different schemas commonly taken as proper and natural with regard to sport.

Sport, as patterns of bodily movement, lends itself readily and properly to the kinds of plotting perfected by the skilled bio-mechanist. An understanding of the science of sport is not to be sneezed at, but embraced. Gratitude is the fitting response to those tales of demystification told by the bio-mechanist in his explanations of such limited phenomena as the production of topspin in the execution of tennis shots, or the path tracked by the javelin in field sports. Sport as a cultural and social practice is not limited, however, to such description. Description and re-description are ongoing challenges whether one has a commitment as practitioner or as informed spectator, and re-description as a poetic kind of language exceeds the austerities of science. They exceed Snow's analysis of a dual culture, with humanists as natural and fettered Luddites. Science, too, may be understood, as it is by Cassirer, as a cultural phenomenon, as a symbolic form, as a cultural code, as a language. Rorty goes much further, and spells out in a radical way an end to the epistemic wars through a pragmatism where language goes all the way down and cultured conversation never ends. Gadamer's central interest is in providing an apologia for the social sciences or humanities, especially philosophy. In all such enquiry runs the uncertain rustle of language, language in its structure, language in its manifold functions - especially those of cultivating identity and solidarity (McLaren, 1990). Yet the plurality of cultural codes or languages has profited by being gathered up, compared and contrasted, through semiotics. Lacan, re-writing Freud, makes further sense than Freud alone; Levi-Strauss extends the thrust of structuralism to anthropology in his re-writing of that social science. Both Lacan and Levi-Strauss are indebted to the great structuralists such as Saussure and Jakobson, and to Freud (like Marx, a structuralist of sorts). Language is

the clue in both Lacan and Levi-Strauss, and one kind of introduction to those seemingly inescapable metaphors, spatial and sexual, of depth and penetration. A plurality of languages jostle and jar in post-industrial society, and one must learn to live as best one can with difficulties of translation and encounter with the incommensurable. While much remains to be understood, it seems, concerning both mind and language, few would deny that the new paradigms of both have contributed to our understanding (Pinker, 1994, 1998; Lyotard, 1984).

Language contemporaneously, after more than a century of the most intense philosophical study, has been found to be impure yet central, now regulative, now constitutive, now deconstructive (McCarthy, 1995; Tracy, pp. 47-65); history relative yet of pressing importance (Tracy, 1987, pp.66-81). Both language and history, in all the complexities of their processes, in all the uncertainties of their plurality and ambiguity, remain precious in their relative adequacies. Language, found to be the site of both revelation and concealment - or, if one prefers, difference and deferral - remains as the fundamental condition of our lives, touching every aspect and level of consciousness. It is, reading out further from the Babel myth, not only unnecessary to seek to gather all human concerns up univocally, but foolish. Human understanding is constituted in the languages open to us, and that collage of languages does not shun the sensual or the sensuous, the ambiguous or the ambivalent. Structure, poetic structure particularly, does not preclude levels of ambiguity, but exists in uncertain tension with them (Empson, 1970; Eagleton, 1996).³⁴ Eros, in all its varieties, in all its creations, however impurely, bridges matter and form (Marcuse, 1987).³⁵ Poetry is one such work, one such play upon the human stage, in its imaginative wholeness, its unity of

form. Poets know how strenuous and risk-ridden is the play in words (Eliot, 1959, *Burnt Norton*, v, p.19). Sport, more and more both play and work, may be well understood semiotically as quite another species of signifying signs. Sport, in short, can be interpreted as itself a kind of language, or network of languages, metaphorically speaking (Roberts, 1976). All languages not only exist in time and space: time and space also exist in them (Niebuhr, R.H., 1960; Tillich, 1964, pp. 30-39, 53-75). History, forever suspect, is evaded at our peril, because within the time and space of history all our understanding is determined (Popper, 1966; Toynbee, 1961; Tracy, 1988).

No one need be accorded the last word, but some must be accorded more attention than others, including great philosophers and strong poets. A sane society is open and plural, but a blind tolerance is as senseless and self-destructive as an utter relativism. However, there is, as Plato, most eminently, has taught us in ironic dialogue and enlightening myth, always more to be said (Gadamer, 1986, pp.184-193.)³⁶ There are, as Aristotle and Kant have taught us in their different ways, forms of logic which are regulative rather than constitutive (McCarthy, 1995, pp.1-7, 11-34). There is, as Derrida argues, in re-marking upon a fragment from J. L. Austin, with a rigor and a subtlety uncommon in his critics, text as a field of contesting forces and different orders of reality (Derrida, 1982, pp.307-330).³⁷ There are, as the poets and artists insist, fleeting visions of the sublime, vistas of beauty, moments pregnant with the future. Even the horror and futility of war can teach us not only more about ourselves, but better about ourselves, if we do not seek to evade it as text, as writing and reading.³⁸ In language and in history reside real options for human responses to testing challenges.

Talking things over has always involved words, not just as medicine, but as weapons, the conflict of agonistic languages.

Ricouer, in his work on the rule of metaphor, and in the course of making Aristotle contemporary through an examination of the place of metaphor in both the *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* puts a fundamental of language in question, but for rhetorical effect:

Is there not, in Hans-Georg Gadamer's terms, a "metaphoric" at work at the origin of logical thought, at the root of all classification?...The idea of an initial metaphorical impulse destroys these oppositions between proper and figurative, ordinary and strange, order and transgression. It suggests the idea that order itself proceeds from the metaphorical constitution of semantic fields, which themselves give rise to genus and species (Ricouer, 1996, p.335).

Bloom writes similarly if metaphorically when he says that meaning gets started, not in the arduous labor of linguistic analysis and conceptual clarification, but in excess, an overflow of originality (Bloom, 1991, p.12).

The place of metaphor in philosophy has occasioned much debate and less agreement. Derrida, insistent on the open-ended quality of all language, rhetorically writes in his re-marking of a philosophical fragment, a typical ploy,

is there metaphor in the text of philosophy? in what form? to what extent? is it essential? accidental? etc. Our certainty soon vanishes: metaphor seems to involve the usage of philosophical language in its entirety, nothing less than the usage of so-called natural language *in* philosophical discourse, that is, the usage of natural language *as* philosophical language (Derrida, 1982, p.209).

Metaphor, not only for Bloom, but for a structuralist such as Jakobson, and for philosophers like Derrida, Gadamer, and Ricouer as well, is much more than cosmetic or ornamental. In the instances above the rhetoric is not empty, but serves not only to illustrate but to explain what is most fundamental about language, namely, that language

is a living thing resistant to closure, but not without structure. A degree of paradox is involved here; a fall into some form of determinism perpetual temptation and hazard. A rough analogy can be made with the human body, which has a uncertain unity made of many parts.³⁹ Jakobson understands metaphor, along with metonymy, as the twin poles of language (Jakobson, 1980). Bloom understands myth as intrinsic to that particular kind of language known as poetry (Bloom, 1997). Both prose and poetry, although differently coded, are latent with possibility, able in propitious circumstances and in the right hands, to scale the heights and plumb the depths, of human experience (James, 1960; Jakobson, 1996).

Questions of usage and abuse in language have long centred around metaphor and myth: Aristotle condemning Plato's Forms as an empty flight of metaphorical fancy in his *Metaphysics* (Aristotle, 1956, pp.75-77, **1.9, 991**), but justifying both myth and metaphor in his *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*; Aquinas rejecting as improper the employment of metaphor in theology (Aquinas, 1954, p. 46, **I, 1, Art.9**); Hobbes denouncing imagination as decaying sense and metaphor as improper and inconstant language (Hobbes, 1953, pp.3-41); Locke reducing knowledge to ideas born of either experience or reflection which is largely the working of memory, and truth to logical relations which are far removed from the sensuous immediacies and actualities of lived existence (Ayer and Winch, 1965, pp. 31-160); Ayer relegating poetry to a realm beyond that of truth or falsehood (Ayer, 1971, p. 59)... Words are weapons, not least in philosophy and poetry, but they are uncertain weapons.⁴⁰ And yet, for now, the final word is given to that ringing endorsement of metaphor made by Aristotle long ago:

It is a great thing, indeed, to make a proper use of these poetical forms, as also of compounds and strange words. But the greatest thing by far is to be

a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars (Aristotle, 1971, 1459).

Myth And Identity

Sport is still one cultural formation, one social practice, making for the sense of national identity, even in an era of globalisation (Holt, Mangan, Lanfranchi, 1996). The myth of combat so salient in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the myth of the hero so prominent in poetry since the *Iliad* and the *Song of Roland*, have long figured in sport. Young Croatians have waved their flag and shouted their encouragement over the past decade or more for the brilliant but unpredictable Goran Ivanovic in a time of ethnic conflagration. The French gloried in the antics, the elan, the triumphs, the longevity, of Jean Borotra, the Bounding Basque (Faure, 1996). The Germans idolised their young heavyweight boxing champion Max Schmeling in the years after the ignominy of defeat in World War I and the humiliation of the Versailles Treaty (Gehrmann, 1996). The Australians cheered The Boy from Bowral in years of Depression, and kept on cheering when The Don did not brightly fade after his retirement from Test cricket in 1948, exalting him in death at the end of his long innings. Each nation has its strong players, its pantheon of the great, its national heroes (Whittington, 1976). Often enough, as in the case of Bradman, they do not fade, brightly or otherwise, but length of years adds lustre to their name.

While a self may not amount to much in the ordinary scheme of things, sport constitutes personal as well as national identity in the case of truly strong players. The private and the public, the personal and the political, tend to fusion in sport. The

wearing of black armbands in protest at the state of their nation by the two Zimbabweans, the black fast bowler Henry Olonga, and the white batsman and former captain Andy Flower, in the 2003 World Cup cricket tournament, gave dramatic current expression in what has become a tradition of political dissent on the sporting field.⁴¹ It is not left just to feminists to maintain that the personal can and often does become the political. In the long and bitter campaign against apartheid in South Africa, protest was joined on and off the sporting field, and in many a foreign land. Those who took the stand that sport ought not be sullied by politics, were contested by those who understood that the divorce can never be absolute. A self who can look on manifest institutionalised injustice with equanimity deserves minimal respect but maximum understanding. The difficulty is in holding the two together in some kind of tolerable tension through empathy born of an appreciation of structural and historical considerations. It is easy for the apathetic and the mindless to be tolerant.

Sport and war are two institutions which loom large in the short history of white settlement in Australia, forging vital parts of those central meanings of identity and community still essential to a nation in global times.⁴² Politicians of a certain stripe are especially apt to celebrate the rout at Anzac Cove, Gallipoli, in 1915 during World War I as the true birth of the nation, more important than that day in January 1788 when Captain Philip hove into Botany Bay with his ill-assorted fleet. Strong sport performers such as Steve Waugh, the hugely successful Australian Test captain, as steely a competitor as they come, has the inscription *To the Anzacs and their spirit, which lives on*, in one of his several diaries of the game (Waugh, 2001). Many young men, some under-age (as young as fourteen), flocked to join in what seemed at the time a glorious

adventure. Many responded resolutely or romantically; some responded believing that they heard the call of duty, even the call of God, King, and Empire. Joining the resonant emerging national myths of the bush, and the sun, sea, surf, and sand, has been the myth of mateship. Fundamentally, the first myth has been written in stoicism, the second in hedonism, the third a discordant mix of sentiment and sentimentality. The lustre of glory has far exceeded the futility, the folly, the waste, for many minds both sincere and hypocritical. Simpson and his donkey have assumed iconic status in the years since that sniper's bullet ended Simpson's service to wounded comrades. Growing numbers attend the dawn services on Remembrance Day throughout the nation in tribute to or curiosity about all those dead or maimed in the wars in which Australia has participated. Anzac Day is not merely for remembrance, for meeting up with mates, but for drinking oneself legless.⁴³ Vietnam reft patriots asunder, and now the war in Iraq, exporting freedom through destruction and extermination, threatens to do the same.

But it is sport which, for better or for poorer, is the perpetual obsession for many Australians day in and day out. It is sport which, at least in part, has helped us escape our well documented cultural cringe.⁴⁴ It is sport, as much as war, which has forged bonds of community across the nation. Over many decades, major sports such as cricket, football, tennis, horseracing, netball, have been multiplied many times over by less traditional and widespread sporting pursuits in the Australian obsession with sport. When dream becomes obsession, when sport becomes bread and circus, the glory of sport may degenerate into mere titillation. The charge that sport is superficial and war profound is a curious one, but it is not necessarily one made in bad faith (Carroll, 1998, p.41). Whether sport builds character is debatable, but that sport tests character much

less so.⁴⁵ The wider question in Australia bears on sport and war as factors sustaining the remnants of a radical nationalism in an era of globalisation.

The general understanding of sport as a civilised form of war links these two institutions in a basic way (Carroll, 1998, pp.30-33). The association of sport with war at the language pole of metaphor is far from unknown (Jansen and Sabo, 1994). Sport, so much more than mere game, issues from a spirit of play, and remains an issue of joy and disappointment, not of life and death in the literal sense. Nevertheless, it is questionable whether either practice has received the sustained critical attention in Australia both merit. Perhaps some wars can be justified, while playing games competitively remains essentially its own justification even if a livelihood is earned in the process. Both institutions, one would venture, have had a conservative, an arresting influence in Australian history.⁴⁶ A sensitive and intelligent capacity to embrace both change and difference are not our hallmarks as a nation. The idealism following upon World War I and World War II lost its currency, the League of Nations proving short-lived, the United Nations never quite able to function unitedly to further human rights or shared global ends as fundamental as health and education. The hollowness in the actual practice of the amateur ideal in sport that was part of the British legacy could be spotted and denounced in others abroad but rarely at home. Professional sport remains ill understood, enmeshed as it is in wider material conditions conducive to radical change and the destruction of cherished habits and traditions. Shibboleths cluster around both sport and war which, when questioned, tend to raise hackles and end civilised conversation. Neanderthal men with no fervent interest in human plenitude, and no informed interest in myth and metaphor, are prominent in both institutions.

Philistinism runs rife in both practices, realms of meaning and value which tend towards a demeaning populism and a lack of care towards shrinking daisies. But sport in Australia, as in other nations, in its passion and overflow of meaning, partakes of its myths shared and particular, and these are not all loss. The Boy from Bowral, the recently deceased Sir Donald Bradman (“The Don”), and the long deceased racehorse, Phar Lap, stuffed and exhibited in a museum, enjoy iconic status along with Simpson and his donkey. Paradoxically, sport is widely accepted tacitly as a realm of meaning and value, while at the same time there is minimal awareness of sport as a structure of significant signs, that is, as a language. It is a debilitating paradox, and therein lies much of the motivation for this work, a work of re-description employing resources of language at a time change challenges and confounds many who love sport, but, it must be generally confessed, not always well. Of more concern are the false friends of sport, its prostitutes and its pimps, and those who, multi-skilled, are both at one and the same time. The question is how to make moral indignation effective. Could it be that the long answer is in re-description? Sport not as a product but as a making of meaning?

Sport and poetry alike exist in the realm of the agonistic and performative. Agon and performance are core parts of the make-up of both practices. Homer bears his variegated testimony as strong poet to the cultural importance of sport for ancient Greeks in *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. One teacher of the old school gives his succinct summary:

That sport in the days of Homeric heroes was noble there is no doubt. The funeral games of Patroclus and the Phaeacian games held in honour of Odysseus on his way home to Ithaca were heroic in concept and practice (McIntosh, 1963, p.14).

Plato, more artfully, even in old age and disenchantment, has his Athenian say (quoting Homer along the way) to his company words which ring through time,

It is the current fancy that our serious work should be done for the sake of our play; thus it is held that war is serious work which ought to be well discharged for the sake of peace. But the truth is that in war we do not find, and we never shall find, either any real play or any real education worth the name, and *these* are the things I count supremely serious for such creatures as ourselves. Hence it is peace in which each of us should spend most of his life and spend it best. What, then, is our right course? We should pass our lives in the playing of games - *certain* games....win Heaven's favour for it, and so live out their lives as what they really are, puppets in the main, though with some touch of reality about them, too (Plato, 1960, pp.187-188., 803, 804).

Plato passes from the first person plural to the impersonality of the third. Speaking in the first person here is a testimony to that understanding of experience as a limited and qualified form of knowledge shared, in part, by Kant in his transformation of philosophy more than two millennia after Plato (Kant, 1978). Speaking in the third person is that radical departure from finitude to something approaching the similitude of omniscience, in all its ambition and pathos. It is, taken to its logical extreme, the departure from the relative and partial certitudes of existence, to the quicksands of essence. But the Athenian himself is only one voice of three; he competes with a Cretan and a Lacedaemonian. To speak from within the world of sport today is to be of a catholic company.

Wisely, knowingly, the classical Greeks staged poetic contest and sporting contest together at Olympus as complementary parts of a common celebration. Olympism, for all its corruptions, retains something of the universal in its historical appeal, and the appeal is so much more than spatial. Could it be that the ancient Greeks understood that it is life itself, in all its equivocalness, which sport and poetry, in their

different yet intensified ways, communicate and celebrate? If this ancient practice remains an object lesson in communication, why is it that we have sundered what they understood belonged together? Is our antithetical practice a progression or a regression? Are deeds and words so far apart, after all? Are not doing it well and saying it well in mutual and reciprocal relations? The Australian propensity for dry understatement often denegates into an habitual incapacity for articulation of matters of the heart put under threat by those who understand the pursuit, attainment, and retention, of power and status and money, and little else. And yet it is remarkable that when someone happens upon the scene who can articulate in language what is commonly felt in the heart, how full and generous the popular response can be.⁴⁷ Australians attest a love of sport in numerous ways, but they are hardly adept in articulating that love. The habitual chant at different sporting events of “Aussie, Aussie, Aussie, Oi, oi, oi” betrays how empty, how banal, the response can be when an Australian, or Australia, plays a foreign foe on the sporting field. Australia sports its ockers, its self-styled The Fanatics, England its Barmy Army, and both with little shame and much revelry.

The Strong Poet And The Strong Player

The animating desire of this work is an agonistic re-writing and re-reading of sport as if it were poetry, in the very present face of many reductive writings and readings.⁴⁸ Strong poets do not find their meaning in some fancied correspondence with inert givens. Rather they are makers of meaning (Speirs, 1964). Reproductive fancy is not to be confused with poetic imagination (Coleridge, 1965). Poetry concerns itself not only with the joy and delight in living, but with human life in its pain and suffering,

its inevitable progression toward death. It bodies forth, in the enactment of meaning, the image of man and of woman, and as such, is metaphysical, albeit in a strained sense:

Poetry deals with man at a metaphysical level - but with man's metaphysical status reflected in his actual state, localized in his actual physical surroundings, embodied in his sensuous and spiritual reactions to his world. It strikes to the meaning and not the detail of man's life. The complex of signs which we find in any really fine poem is a symbol of man's metaphysical state presented through whatever in fact is most real to him as a suffering and diurnal being (Buckley, 1957, p.1).⁴⁹

Symbolising in and through language what is most real is the business of poetry; dramatising through bodily contest what is most real is the business of sport. Both practices are elemental. While poetry and sport are different cultural formations, different social practices, both strike to the meaning and not the detail of human life. Each practice testifies in its own way that the game of life is difficult and testing. In the serious play of bodies, as of words, what a man or a woman can become is sensed and given meaningful form (Weiss, 1979). Sport, like poetry, is pregnant with possibility, and patently so in the performances of the strongest of the strong. Bloom, in his theory of poetry, stresses that the strong poem is the achieved anxiety of influence. Nothing is got for nothing in the world of poetry, as in other worlds - especially, one must add, the world of sport. The strong poet is a maker, but at a cost. Milton, for example, heroic vitalist, a sect of one, must ruin the sacred truths of fable and old song and, in the process, disconcert those who would hew to those truths still taken as sacred (Bloom, 1991).⁵⁰

This work seeks to develop an analogy between the strong poet and the truly strong sport performer in an extended argument where the prime focus is upon the strong performer of sport, the one who, in his practice, makes things new. Sport throws

up many strong performers, and one must be highly selective. Tennis, in the person of William Tatem Tilden II, and cricket in the person of Sir Donald Bradman, are the ones chosen for closest attention. The basic reasons for this selection are personal and, much more fundamentally, that each is strong, and, in his strength, patently and palpably discontinuous within the inherited tradition of their sport. The glory of sport is differently exemplified in these two (although both are solitary men), as indeed it is in many others who qualify as strong sport performers. Tilden, a sexual dissident, a loner yet truly charismatic, exhibits a care, a thoughtfulness about tennis, truly remarkable. At his end, he is a forlorn figure, but still adventuring. Bradman bursts upon the scene of cricket in the days of Depression and so dominates with his prodigious scoring that Bodyline is set by the English to test and curb him. In the long wash-up, this radical practitioner becomes in the end conservative administrator. But at the going down of his sun he is commonly lauded to the skies, a veritable demi-god in the nation of his birth. The key question in this dissertation is the question of whether truly strong sport performers may fittingly be said to change the language of their sporting practice. Does Tilden change tennis as a language? Does Bradman change cricket as a language? Does each, in his way, like strong poets, make things new?

The literary critic, Harold Bloom, and, following on from him, the pragmatist philosopher, Richard Rorty, make much of the concept, albeit elastic, of the strong poet. One takes one's lead from them, but not uncritically. Bloom writes a theory of poetry where the anxiety of influence is inseparable from literary history written as a history of discontinuities of re-writing. Rorty essays an intellectual historiography subversive of traditional philosophy, where contingency prevails and select individuals luck out and

are thrown up and cast in determining roles. Bloom's concern is aesthetic and settles on the creative uses of language to fable the otherwise ineffable. Rorty has twin concerns, the prior and public concern with liberal democracy, and the subsequent and private concern with self-creation and self-perfection. He thinks that language goes all the way down, properly bland in politics, properly potent in those who succour us in our solitude and longings for private perfection. His strong poets are not restricted to the literary, but are reckoned in terms of historical influence. As such, they include philosophers, especially writerly philosophers both poetic (Nietzsche and Heidegger) and prosaic (Dewey and James). This work, also following on from Bloom, and particularly from his strong re-reading that strong poets ruin the sacred truths of hallowed tradition, has an especial concern with those great anonymous originals, the strong poets, the Hebrew Yahwist or J writer, and the Greek Homer.

For both J and Homer, anonymous yet multi-voiced, despite antithetical visions of life, the really real has a gritty edge. Neither has time nor place for rose-colored glasses or misty horizons, the Kodachrome view of the world. Homer sings moving if discordant songs of gods and men in conflict, songs of fate and destiny, heroes and character. J tells tall tales, rich in irony, of a God who is neither silent nor absent, let alone dead; and of men not wholly admirable. Myth and legend are the stuff of their strong poetry. J's select myth of the tower of Babel finds those ambitious builders bent on making a name for themselves denied the dream of philosophy, the prospect of seeing things whole and steadily, the false hope of the transcendent view, and forced back down into the madding crowd's ignoble strife where even being understood is, in its immediacy and its pain, the only opening to meaning. While that point of re-entry

into human affairs is a painful one, it proves not a point of closure, and in quite different senses: the conversations of humankind are not stilled as humans find the means of translating the clash of languages, values, perspectives, so as to afford themselves at least a measure of universality in their understandings. Greek thought and language is other than Hebrew thought and language.⁵¹ The legacy of western culture is in both, and especially in their shifting relations.

The poetic measure of both J and Homer, raises that creative envy in the strong who come after: J finds Job, Homer finds Plato; all four find their place in western culture. Both J and Homer figure in Bloom's extended canon of those who are so strong as to ruin the sacred truths of revered tradition. They provide a ready analogy with those strong performers of sport such as Tilden and Bradman, performers who figure mightily in the record books, the select few who brook no opposition, and have few genuine competitors during their day in the sun.

Auerbach, a critic of an earlier and different school to Bloom, fingers an important distinction between J and Homer: J writes vertically, Homer horizontally. Yahweh appears from nowhere, from beyond, entailing obedience upon subjects, everyone and everything "fraught with background" and utterly mysterious, demanding interpretation. The Old Testament is a universal history, both prescriptive and mythological. Homer, on the other hand, lays all out in an even light, everything and everyone foregrounded in its easy turn, open to analysis episode after episode but resistant to interpretation (Auerbach, 1974, pp. 3-23). The key concept of interpretation for Auerbach is that of literary style embodying cultural vision. Mimesis, as a revelation of a reality beyond the verbal formulation of it, possesses various realisms, some

transcendent in mode and pressing the tyranny of shoulds (principally Biblical texts such as J, E, D, P, S),⁵² and some immanent and aristocratic and agonistic (principally Homer). Auerbach, like Bloom, does not scruple to treat each alike as to its peculiar literary merits. But Auerbach is no gnostic theologian, Bloom no committed humanist. Auerbach understands Greek and Hebrew as twin sources of western culture; Bloom follows Nietzsche and understands them as disparate and unequal sources, although he treats them both with high seriousness in his characteristically sophisticated manner.

Sport in post-industrial capitalism has its own agonies, and its own agonistic languages, but it has not lost all sublimity.⁵³ Scruffy kids contesting with a battered soccer ball on vacant lots can and do still dream that they are Ronaldo or Zidane. There is a joy that remains in such innocent experience, the child the father to the man and not to be outgrown. Sport in tradition and ethos and etiquette, sport in its quest to excel, is more than business, even though it has become that in many respects. Sometimes the strong players of sport are greater than they themselves realise, immersed, as they are in the contest and the culture, persistent questions of contract and image. Sometimes it is the vocation of others to introduce the wider context of history, culture, and society, the analysis of operative material conditions. Here, however, the work focuses upon the matter of language, of sport understood as a language, a complex structure of signs.⁵⁴ The key and recurring question, implicit or explicit, throughout this work is, How do the truly strong performers of sport change the language of their chosen sporting practice? Put differently, What possible proportionality exists between, say, a Tilden or a Bradman, and a Dante or a Milton? Inevitably this involves the question of language.

The language of sport is performed and understood kinetically: sport is a language with signs but without words.

Language that is written is also read; language that is spoken is also heard. In both instances there will be an understanding that is also an interpretation. Writing and reading are well-nigh as problematic and challenging as language itself (Williams, 1991, 1963, 1977; McLaren, 1996; LaCapra, 2000, pp.21-72). There are different ways to write, and different ways to read.⁵⁵ Empathy is precious, but carries you only so far. Dialogue is essential, but may degenerate into something resembling a mutual exchange of ignorance. Questions of structure cannot be forever ignored, however close history presses, and structure is particularly important in poetry, which gravitates to parallelism and equivalence (Jakobson, 1996; Ricouer, 1996).

Poetry is a special kind of language resistant to paraphrase because it makes demands upon language way beyond mere selection and combination of words. The syntax of strong poetry is a multiple syntax, in something the same way that the syntax of great pictorial art is a multiple syntax. It is not simply that poetry is created of various elements - words, images, rhythm, metre, rhyme, etcetera. Rather such disparate elements are made to work concurrently and cumulatively at different levels. Poetry is not description of objects, but enactment of meaning.⁵⁶ Poetry, very properly, also makes demands upon its hearers or readers. Instant gratification may have to be postponed for the deeper pleasures of the text. The sublime and the beautiful, even the in-between, are not easily constructed in words. Reification and frontal assault on such abstractions, does not yield poetry.

Sport as science, along with technology as its handmaiden, shows off its profits daily.⁵⁷ This dissertation, however, essays sport as language other than that of prediction and control. Sport as poetry involves a certain inevitable loss of certitude because it essays the uncertain realm of passionate play and unyielding contest between persons of flesh and blood. The realm of sport, like the realm of poetry, is one of the possible or even the probable. The challenge in the present work is to make the profit exceed the loss. Philosophy and history, myth and poetry, have their parts to play in the making, as well as the finding, of meaning. There are times and occasions when the mundane prose of the world ought to cede place to its poetry.⁵⁸ Saying things well has its place, in poetry and in philosophy. Where Plato and Aristotle had accorded diverging places to rhetoric in its relations with philosophy, Derrida derives rhetoric from philosophy (Derrida, 1982, p. 209).⁵⁹ Roland Barthes provides a taxonomy of rhetoric, going back to a philosophical time when rhetoric and poetry were together, not separate as they still commonly stand today (Barthes, 1988, pp.11-94; Read, 1957).⁶⁰ Most salient of all in present remembrance is the practice of the ancient Greeks in their agonistic understanding of the play of the world. Greek attitudes, nursed in a vastly different social fabric, can profit us still. It is salutary to remember that a Homer could arise in a Dark Age (Kitto, 1958, pp.44-64). His conception of the hero in an heroic age, greatly as it moved Plato, can move moderns of very different persuasions - gnostic, Thomist, vitalist (Bloom, 1991; MacIntyre, 1998; Nietzsche, 1986). It is instructive still in the secular city to ponder how, in their tragic drama and their comedy, the strong poets of the Greek golden age, grasped serious and abiding concerns, the clash of incommensurables along with the apprehension of a universal law (Kitto, 1964). In

situating sport and poetry together in their festivals, and around Olympus the home of the gods, they did better, perhaps, than even they knew. But running them close are those God-sated medieval men and women, high and low, persons of flesh and blood who also found ways to play even in hard and violent times (Huizinga, 1965).⁶¹ But truly strong sport performers also know and exemplify the awe-full nature of saying things supremely well in their game-playing. Often enough they startle even themselves, however strong their self-belief.⁶² And lead us on inexorably to attend to those cultural and social matters which exceed the austerities of science (Gratzer, 1989; Holt, Mangan, Lanfranchi, 1996).

Under The Net Of Language

Language is our common, our inescapable condition. Language precedes us, sustains us, exceeds us. As an ocean into which we fall, as a net under which we stand, language seems to be constituted as a system or structure in a basic if ambiguous sense:

What, then, is the central thesis of structuralism? To put it first in its most general form, it is this: that every language is a unique relational structure, or system, and that the units which we identify, or postulate as theoretical constructs, in analysing the sentence of a particular language (sounds, words, meanings, etc.) derive both their essence and their existence from their relationships with other units in the same language-system. We cannot first identify the units and then, at a subsequent stage of the analysis, enquire what combinatorial or other relations hold between them: we simultaneously identify both the units and their interrelations. Linguistic units are but points in a system, or network, of relations; they are the terminals of these relations, and they have no prior and independent existence (Lyons, 1977, vol. 1, pp.231-232).

Structuralists of various hues have pointed to a linear arrangement in language where the different elements at a given level combine successively to form a coherent

meaning. This they commonly label the syntagmatic axis of structure. The paradigmatic axis, on the other hand, is tied to the process of selection and substitution, and the notion of depth.⁶³ The syntagmatic axis relates more directly to metonymy, the figure of association, the relations of whole and part, subject and object; the paradigmatic axis relates more directly to metaphor and, latently, semantic profit in the re-formation of logical space. While attention must be accorded to both axes in any consideration of the structuration of language, the especial concern of sport as if it were poetry is with the figurative in general and metaphor in particular. The strong poet makes things new, principally through myth and metaphor, or, principally in times past, the expanded simile which is allegory (Speirs, 1964, pp.25-27).⁶⁴

Language In Philosophy

Gadamer provides some of the main directions for the course of this work. Of all he learned from Heidegger, the importance of the actual life-world is central. He does not, like Schliermacher, dissolve present into past, or, with Dilthey, merge past into present, but maintains a creative tension between the two through an understanding of the traditions of rhetoric, Aristotelian praxis, and Platonic dialogue:

Wherever the attempt is made to philosophize, the remembrance of being happens in this (Heideggerian) way. But nonetheless it seems to me that there is no history of being. Remembrance has no history. There is a growing forgetfulness, but in the same manner there is no such thing as a growing remembrance. Remembrance is always what comes to one....(remembrance) is a memory of a prior questioning, a memory of a lost question. But then any question that is posed as a question is no longer a remembrance. As the remembrance of what was once asked, it is the now-asked. This is the manner in which questioning raises the historicity of our thinking and knowing. Philosophy has no history. The first person to write a history of philosophy that really was a history was also the last: Hegel. In

him history raised itself to the present of absolute mind (Gadamer, 1986, p.187).

Gadamer's stance is aptly captured in the slogan that being which can be understood is language (Gadamer, 1989; Rorty, 2000, pp.23-25). In the context of his discussion of overcoming the epistemological problem as revealed in the work of Husserl and overcome in the work of Heidegger, Gadamer gives partial but more philosophical expression to a concept of understanding that owes not a little to Hegel, much to Heidegger, and nothing to questions of methodology:

Understanding is not a resigned ideal of human experience adopted in the old age of the spirit, as with Dilthey; nor is it, as with Husserl, a last methodological ideal of philosophy in contrast to the naivete of unreflecting life; it is, on the contrary, the *original form of the realization of Dasein*, which is being-in-the-world. Before any differentiation of understanding into the various directions of pragmatic or theoretical interest, understanding is Dasein's mode of being, insofar as it is potentiality-for-being and "possibility" (Gadamer, 1989, p.259).

Rorty writes in quite other idiom, but nevertheless subscribes to the essential thought here, a conception of understanding that leads them both to the question of language. This puts Rorty at odds with that strain in pragmatism, evident in Dewey and Pierce, insistent upon method in philosophy, if more in theory than actual practice.

In his own progression from the rich experience of many and varied philosophical apprenticeships to that of the hermeneutic circle and the fusion of horizons past and present, and in the suggestion, worked out variously by the likes of philosophers such as Derrida and Ricoeur, that there is a metaphoric at work in all creation of meaning, Gadamer is a lodestar for this work (Gadamer, 1989, p.75). His insistence on the importance of the aesthetic experience and the ubiquitous quality of language in constructing our ever-changing understanding of the world, are touchstones

throughout the dissertation. Gadamer champions a comprehensive intelligence and not a discrete method in the pursuit of understanding. With Kant, but differently, things-in-themselves are beyond his ken. Interpretation is not to be avoided, but itself interpreted and understood, not in some infinite regression, but in the play of language situated between the horizons of past and present.⁶⁵ Philosophy is its reflective practice. Perhaps this is a one-sided take on philosophy, and there are other ways of going on in philosophy which are also productive - but it is not a poor one.

Cassirer's phenomenology of culture, his conception of symbolic worlds, is also important, and in creative tension with the more agnostic but nevertheless similar understanding of Nelson Goodman. Each philosopher is to be accorded credit and gratitude, but without entailing diminution of personal responsibility. The same must be said of Richard Rorty, liberal and pragmatist, whose residual theology lies in the notion that language goes all the way down, impacting directly on the nerve ends, making the neurons fly (Rorty, 1980, 1996; Robbins, 1992). C.S. Peirce gave emphatic expression to this principle early on in the formation of the pragmatist tradition:

There is no element whatever of man's consciousness that has not something corresponding to it in the word; and the reason is obvious. It is that the word or sign that man uses *is* the man himself. For, as the fact that every thought is a sign, taken in conjunction with the fact that life is a train of thought, proves that man is a sign; so, that every thought is an *external* sign, proves that man is an external sign. That is to say, the man and the external sign are identical, in the same sense in which the words *homo* and *man* are identical. Thus my language is the sum total of myself; for the man is the thought (Peirce, 1985, p.2).

Vygotsky, writing out of a quite different tradition, one loosely allied with the Russian Formalists such as Jakobson and with a shared love of literature, expresses the same basic thought as he concludes his great work in simile added to simile.

Consciousness is reflected in a word as the sun in a drop of water. A word relates to consciousness as a living cell relates to a whole organism, as an atom relates to the universe. A word is a microcosm of human consciousness (Vygotsky, 1989, p. 256).

One ought not lie straight-jacketed, stiff and helpless, in the toils of Platonism, German idealism, rigorous irrationalism, Rortyism or Derrideanism. Poetry, at the very least, teaches just this in its exaction of informed yet open-ended interpretation if experience is to be shared and expanded. One incurs debts gratefully (if not always graciously) without forfeiting the responsibility to find one's own voice, to stand on one's own turf, to declare that here I stand. It is possible to be eclectic without being either endlessly and hopelessly confused or unimaginative. Philosophers, like poets, cannot be reduced to the quintessential. Yet it remains important to strive to comprehend diverse viewpoints, but without forfeiting the responsibility to indicate where one stands. That few sing beyond the order of the sea, that few stand alone seemingly immune to the sands of time like some Egyptian pyramid, must be conceded, and not unhappily. This work may be said to be tensioned principally between Gadamer and Rorty. The debt to Ricoeur, especially in the matter of metaphor, is great. Bloom's challenging theory of poetry, a theory of influence which leads to the question of history, is itself influential in this work. Auerbach's theory of literature as authorial style embodying cultural vision, while at odds with that of Bloom, is, nevertheless, too important to ignore. The differences between these doughty intellectuals are immense. It is what they share as to the understanding of language, viewed in relation to sport as a poetic kind of language, which principally concerns this work.⁶⁶

Philosophy, like poetry, like literature generally, is a matter of words selected and combined for a particular purpose in the most fitting fashion possible.

Nevertheless, they are different cultural practices although they share the primary processes of selection and combination. Each raises from its own perspective the question of language.

The Question Of Language

This particular apologia for sport attends primarily to matters of language, employs a network of languages in the hope of fighting off both foe and false friend. These languages work after the fashion of frameworks, metaphorical fictions in service to ethical and aesthetic ends resistant to sheer quantification and open to hope for something better than more of the same. The extraordinary reach of ordinary language is supplemented with the resources of three more specialised languages: a language of mythology, a language of poetry, and a language of sport. Each can be taken as a system of signs, a particular cultural code. Free and frank admission must be made that these languages are constituted largely in their functioning, and this functioning has no determinate limits. The presence of structure in a language is conservative only to a receding point. Language in all its reaches, precedes and exceeds us; language, nevertheless, remains resistant to closure. Language is something into which we fall, something which we may conceive as a net over or under us.⁶⁷ Inextricably and unfailingly, it is social, and with consequences for the self and her world. It is language which ultimately constitutes the social bond (Lyotard, 1984) and our very humanity (Rorty, 1996). Language for the aware, for the informed, becomes constitutive as well as regulative, descriptive as well as deconstructive, according to interest and purpose. The varied play of these languages requires endless distinctions, discriminations, re-

valuations, by different critics and readers at different times and places. In philosophy, for example, denotation for a Russell, or even a Goodman, is a stable concept; for a Michael Polanyi or a Rorty, it is a work of art, laden with tacit knowledge and experiential flux. The reciprocal processes of writing and reading are dynamic and complex. The original author of a strong work will be read and re-read in a perpetual process of re-evaluation. A conversation with a classic text is different from a conversation with the friend seated opposite; questions are differently put and answers differently received. In all the languages taken up, as distinct from individual works or writers, lurk levels of ambiguity, but each reveals at least a measure of structuration in its particular functioning. Meaning and value must be made and re-made, but not in a vacuum, not out of nothing. Language, itself forever open to better understanding and interpretation, nevertheless has its material properties of construction, and its material conditions of actual usage.

First, however, in order to lend a measure of substance and credence to these three languages, a little attention must be paid to structuration in ordinary language beyond the early statement on the matter. Language structure provides the pre-condition for meaning and for creativity in actual usage. Structure and function exist in complex reciprocal tensions which no hermeneutic can ignore. Selective use is made of Ferdinand de Saussure, Noam Chomsky, and Roman Jakobson to exemplify and illustrate conceptions of structuration in language.⁶⁸ Then an outline is provided of the three specialised languages, before sketching them in their relations pertinent to this thesis of sport as if it were poetry. Myth, hardly separable from both ordinary language and poetic language, is also critical to cultural consideration of sport. The magic of the

mythical image is consonant with the magic of the poetic word.⁶⁹ Lurking in the background is the vexed and momentous matter of mimesis, of how language, truth, and reality are to be represented and related in sport as poetry. These are, of course, monumental asks where one's reach must exceed one's grasp. No one theory of either language or mimesis holds undisputed sway either abroad or at home in this dissertation, and only some of the many major issues can be canvassed in the present context. Gadamer stresses the reach of language in the work of understanding and interpretation; Rorty stresses the contingency of language as it goes all the way down (Gadamer, 1989; Rorty, 1995). Both agree that there is a making in language necessary to human understanding, a hermeneutic circle which includes, not excludes, the gamut of human experience.

Language Frameworks

This work is a hermeneutic of sport as if it were poetry, with the stress upon the making rather than the finding of meaning and value. That is, it is an essay which ties an understanding of sport to its interpretation as a language, and not any language, but a poetic kind of language. Strong poetry is resonating in its images, memorable in its rhythms, remarkable in its narratives, and novel in its creation. Strong sport performance is a matter, not of words, but of kinesis. Nevertheless, the signs of sport are amenable to translation, as are many other cultural codes, as a kind of language. Thus, the work explores relations between these two disparate realms of meaning and value through a treatment of the bodily patterns of movement made and seen in sport, as a peculiar language, as a special and discrete form of writing and reading. Such patterns

are neither disembodied nor anonymous. Strong sport performers, like strong poets, all have faces. This specialised and poetic language is situated within that of which Derrida argues there is no outside: the generality of text.⁷⁰ Text, writing, and reading, might seem, on the face of things, poor general description of what occurs in playing and viewing competitive games. The challenge is to make that interpretation such an illuminating and productive one as to promote a recognition of the poetic realities of sport. Empty flights of fancy will benefit no one. The response is in terms of language, explored in three versions (poetry, mythology, sport) through its structure or form, and in its active historical instantiation and development. Language, far from reified, is understood as now constitutive, now regulative, now descriptive, now deconstructive. Our experiences and our languages are curiously mixed. Even pain is subject to being named, located, explained, resolved. Experience has its various and shifting conditions of possibility, and does seem to exist at various levels, while language has its hierarchies and numerous functions. This exploration, then, focuses upon the figurative in language, upon metaphor and metonym, in the endless quest to make living experience meaningful and productive. Where there is rich meaning there is the prospect of identity and community.

This work does not seek to privilege or subordinate one realm of meaning and value to the other, but to relate them in a productive fashion through analysis of structure and selective historical re-construction, and in a concern with cultural and social consequences. It is structure which provides the principal condition for creativity in actual usage; language which communicates devoid of structure is unthinkable.⁷¹ The best actual use of language clarifies and unifies existence in its harmony of form and

content, but it remains to be heard and to be read. Sport, for all its separateness, does similarly at its best. Strong poets and strong players of sport may form rich experience both communicable and transforming. And if the joy they surprise us with is rarely unalloyed with baser metals, it rests with those who love them still to sift and sort and evaluate.

Creativity enjoys a special place in sport: a Jordan, an Ali, a Lenglen, a Tilden, a Kutz, a Spitz, a Bradman, a Woods (one could go on and on), exemplify gifts of excellence, of creation, and even of beauty; they make of their chosen sport something significantly new and do not leave it as they first found it. Bradman, for instance, could read the play of the opposing bowler earlier and better than those who would be his peers, and offended those purists who thought cross-batted shots anathema. He taught in deed and text those who followed him, whether competitor or spectator, that playing with the leading elbow high and the bat straight, was not always best if the aim was to make runs quickly and win matches. Ian Chappell and Ricky Ponting are but two Australians of later generations to learn the lesson well. The laws relating to the ring, the court, the track, the pool, the oval, are somehow transcended; customary patterns of human movement find fresh expression in such strong performers of sport. If they are found to be heroic or iconic, then that does not require death to the critical faculties. There is always a life lived, at and away from the drama of competition. Much is revealed in the stress of competition, as much is hidden in the other worlds inhabited. Bradman is not universally admired as a man or even as a cricket administrator. Some of his fiercest critics include men who played with him (Fingleton, 1947).⁷² Periodically, criticism of his role as the dominant administrator within the Australian

Cricket Board at a time when cricketers relied upon other paid employment, resurfaces. Whether the criticisms are the issue of malicious envy rather than commonsense or critical acumen becomes very much the question. But the treasure, the glory, if that is what it is judged to be (no personal doubt exists on this score), comes, as it must, in earthen vessels. As Harold Bloom, one among many, makes clear, it is possible to be both hero and victim.⁷³ Nothing is got for nothing in sport, as in other forms of life. Struggle is not to be avoided, but embraced when and where deemed necessary. It is possible to be both doughty competitor and social creature. Test and contest exceed the short-lived and testing experience on the pitch, track, court, ring. A Billy Jean Moffitt-King, an Arthur Ashe, an Ali, to name but three, could articulate ways in which this is true because they reflected upon the social as well as the personal in the practice, and could frame fitting words to articulate their concerns. In this they were atypical. Sport, like language, like all social institutions, has its historical conditions. They are not always pretty.⁷⁴ They are never to be shunned.⁷⁵ Thick description of a Dickens or a Balzac, a Dante or a Shakespeare, a Joyce or a Hemingway, brings them to life. In sport as in art, the pleasure experienced is often of a paradoxical kind, mixed as it so often is with shock, horror, pain, pity, disappointment, anger, relief, envy, joy.

No single simple narrative could account for how this might be so; only a radical, critical pluralism would satisfy any but the simple-minded. Perhaps, for all our woes, post-modernity holds out the hope of human plenitude as never before. Strong poets, who make in their poetry, out of a creative envy, out of the anxiety of influence, of strong predecessors, matter for creation, are eminently suited for such a role.⁷⁶ Even those blessed with only a modicum of talent occasionally perform in a novel, even

exciting, fashion (the experience of being truly in form, whatever the level of one's skills, is one of the delights of sport). Strong poets, whether of the word or of sport, do more. They belong together at a fundamental level because both body forth creative form in radical ways. A Lenglen who, while still performing within the rules, has learned to defy convention, to leap and smash the ball away is still a wonder when re-born, as it were, as a lesser star in another place and time and race in an Althea Gibson; a Maureen Connolly who casts a long shadow on a Chris Evert is cause for wonder of a different but comparable kind.⁷⁷ Sometimes, a lesser star, a Nancy Wynne Bolton, for instance, is precursor for a greater, a Margaret Smith Court, whose achievements swamp those of her talented predecessor. The anxiety of influence and the question of style can and do merge, as Bloom reminds us. This is not to say that all strong sport performers contest under the anxiety of influence: some are mightily aware of records and strong predecessors; others are mightily indifferent.

Perhaps it is worth underlining at this introductory stage that language is a material action with performative dimensions which can be eventful⁷⁸: speech is a matter of breaking the air with sound through the exercise of bodily parts, especially the vocal chords; writing is a matter of making marks with and through the hands and fingers. Any dualism based on the assumptions that language is pure mentalese, and sport mere physical movement, and nothing more, is simple-minded, to say the least. Language has its material conditions, and sport its peculiar knowledge. Nevertheless, there are less naive dualisms which remain latent sources of embarrassment for those who love both sport and poetry. The continued cultural impress of such dualisms make even more important a fresh articulation of the uses of sport which avoids reductionism

of any kind and gives credit where credit is due. Whether this ends in one kind of monism or dualism is not of the first moment. The very notion of sentiment, of feeling which has deep roots, suggests the possibility of warm thoughts and structured feelings. The root notion of courage evokes a dualism overcome in an energy both spirited and corporeal. Questions of anthropology intrude incessantly upon questions of sport and language. A Levi-Strauss provides one sophisticated example of how practices may cross-fertilise one another. One take upon reality may subjugate another without expunging it from the understanding or the record. Traditional dualities such as Nature and Culture have constantly to be re-formulated in their complex, uncertain, and shifting relations. No God's-eye view can be said to enjoy any kind of monopoly.

The main motivation for the work springs from the desire to articulate afresh in a time of accelerating change the cultural and social capital which often goes unrecognised and unrealised in sport. Such capital cannot be quantified, but it can be interpreted. Popular culture is not necessarily impoverished culture. Sport says much in its narratives, its rituals, its myths, its laws (all, despite sweet Suits,⁷⁹ inexact parts and parcels of less than architectonic structure), on the score of both identity and community. Like much art, sport bridges and informs both the personal and the public; like art, it can be an image of virtue. Like poetry, it is a realm of illusion; a world of creative, informed fictions which help make us who we become and bind us even to those we might otherwise ignore. To say that sport and poetry are fictitious worlds is not to denigrate them in the least, but to recognise a shared artfulness, a transformation and enrichment of experience. They are constructed worlds, worlds of sublimation and repression, triumph and disaster, victory and loss, whatever their origins and

mainsprings. How one assesses their cultural capital and social purposes can be furthered by informed consideration of how they make their meanings in late-capitalist culture. Structure has historical instantiation, but sport ought not rely upon hagiography or positivist understandings of what constitutes evidence. There is, despite all their corruptions and ruthlessness, a basic honesty to both worlds, one because there is scrutiny, and two, because, in the end, there is nowhere to hide from the critical test of having to perform. The performance principle finds its unique incarnations in sport and poetry, but not merely as the production of commodity. Artful play rather than mechanical reproduction often becomes the order in both worlds. Sport reduced to work would no longer excite, captivate, command. Sport in utter captivity to the money men would be rejected ultimately as an empty and corrupted thing. Sport as a mechanical language of endless repetition would, in truth, be a bore, not a joy, a prison, not a flight of freedom (Brohm, 1989).

Sport as if it were poetry employs a paradigm of language as structure in the three versions of poetry, mythology, and sport. That is, each of these cultural practices is taken as a kind of language.⁸⁰ The best exhibition of these monumental cultural practices is in their structure, because structure is the best clue to their creativity. No flight from history, no subscription to determinism, linguistic or otherwise, need be presumed by this attention to structure. Head and hand, tongue and toe, more than happy accidents, have been long and hard won. A hermeneutic of sport as if it were poetry is, in the same breath, an essay of hope. The argument, then, turns upon related conceptions of language within the discursive reach of ordinary language.

These related conceptions of language as structure are construed within those metaphorical fictions, frameworks. Signifying practices as immense and complex as those of poetry, mythology, and sport, need to be delimited one way or another, to be made comprehensible, to be made manageable within the severe limits of the present work. While all are brought under the expansive rubric of semiotics, further delimitation of another sort is a necessity. One frames these worlds of poetry, mythology, and sport, in their bare bones, aware of a certain relative autonomy in each, an integration and organisation peculiar to each, but conscious, too, of relations actual and possible. However, this can only be accomplished after first exhibiting, in a rudimentary way, language itself as structure. Ordinary language has extraordinary range; poetic language strives to fable the ineffable, to make audible and visible and visceral worlds unknown and selves hitherto dormant. Poetry, like sport, is a primordial source of world and self where, in the spirit of play, there is both a making and a finding.

Plato and Rorty (an odd couple) are two philosophers constantly in mind; Homer and J (another odd couple) are two strong poets constantly in mind. If one focuses primarily on only the first-named of each pairing briefly, salient attributes relevant to the argument come to attention. Plato informs his criticisms of other worlds, including the world of poetry (including the world of Homer), not simply in dialogue after dialogue, myth after myth, but also metaphor after metaphor. He is, as a philosopher, not simply a spinner of essences, but also a metaphoric critic (Booth, 1988, p.357). His metaphoric criticisms are weapons, not only against rivals, but in his subterranean war with another master of figurative language, a master of metonym, Homer (Auerbach, 1974). Plato's

Socrates does not reject the metaphor of shepherd and his sheep employed by Thrasymachus to indicate the master-servant relationship between ruler and ruled, but teases out its implications and limitations before locating better metaphor for the same purpose (Booth, 1986, pp.352-362).⁸¹ Such a ploy is repeated time after time and made central to Plato's practice of philosophy. Booth, an estimable critic, goes so far as to write:

To me the greatest of all metaphoric critics is Plato. Both in his largest views and in the minutest details of each dialogue, he questions our temptation to see the world (and our place in it) *under* any one reductive metaphor (Booth, 1986, p.357).

Metaphor, like myth, can prove potent for good or ill in a society and a life (Booth, 1988, pp.292-373; Lakoff and Johnson, 1981; Sontag, 1983). Contemporaneously, the pragmatist Richard Rorty resorts to Shakespeare's *Measure For Measure* (Act II, Scene 3), takes the metaphor of mind as glassy essence, and makes it crucial in his challenging and subversive philosophical text, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*.⁸² Metaphor and myth have an importance which stretches way beyond even poetry and philosophy.

Homer, master of epic poetry, works more at that other pole of language, metonym, to construct his heroic world. Where, in fresh metaphor, meaning spills over in violation of established categories, in metonym meaning is extended in processes of association and amplification. Plato and Homer figure human nature and destiny differently, while both deal in illusions, creative fictions. They live, as is commonly said, in different worlds. Homer is unconcerned with the common man, the man of bronze; his world is an aristocratic one populated principally with lusty heroes, gods and

demi-gods, given to virtue and vice. The gods dabble in human affairs somewhat capriciously; they can be bribed. In this world, a world fitted for heroes, courage is the virtue, but it is the courage of extremes and not the courage of a golden mean between foolhardiness and wisdom. J is in love with improbable stories (Yahweh puddling in the mud to make man, for instance) in his witty, endlessly ironic way. Plato's world is not so easily summarised. Irony abounds here: it is Homer the poet who has a firm grasp of his objects of concern, who lays out everything in clear view (Auerbach, 1974, pp.4-23); it is Plato the philosopher who equivocates and leaves much unsaid, who indicates that there is always more to be said (Gadamer, 1986, pp.184-186), and who creates his own myths, his own poetry, at moments of dialectical impasse and in fits of inspiration (Elias, 1984). Plato, once excluded from practical affairs, is still a player on the wider stage. They also serve who only sit and write and talk. Plato contested Homeric description, poetic accounts of epic struggle, but he did so in fabricated dialogue and myth-making.

How is it that Greek attitudes can be formed so differently by two men of comparable genius? Is it purely a matter of contingency, of time and chance? Have both things to say which grasp beyond the grip of contingency itself? Certainly it is not passive reflection but active concern which breathes in their works. Ancient sources provide fresh reason to ponder anew on the reach, the resources, the agonistics, of language. One way to summarise the difference between Homer and Plato is to put it in terms of language: Homer takes the road of metonym, the road which relates whole and part, object and subject, in a process of careful, considered, inspired extrapolation, often in extended simile; Plato takes the road of metaphor, the road which imaginatively re-

shapes, re-figures, logical space, radically. It is little wonder that a primitive Christianity seeking to speak to its cultured despisers found his metaphors and myths so appealing and took them early on board in its theology (Schliermacher, 1958; Fox, 1957; Kelly, 1960, 1961; Hatch, 1957). The cultural and social consequences, whether for better or for worse, have been endless, a source of fascination and concern for more than the likes of Nietzsche and Rorty.

Language As Structure

Ordinary language is the largest, the most encompassing, of our frameworks, and is considered first and foremost in terms of structure.⁸³ Language remains the quintessential symbol system, the one which, in some senses, if experience left completely undescribed verbally is a sort of *non sequitur*, encompasses all other semiotic forms.⁸⁴ Few can fable the ineffable; no one, given the live option, remains mute and dumb. The basic reason for the continuing supremacy of the word stems from the fundamental human need to interpret experience, one's own and, even more challengingly, and often alarmingly, that of others (as Plato was made anxious by Homer, was moved in creative envy, for one sort of example). A purely private language is an oxymoron; the diversity of forms of life are led to a unity of sorts in the ubiquitous word in its selection and combination. All forms of life must eventually find their language game if experience is to become more fully meaningful, communicable, shared, extended, deepened. Fabling the ineffable may be reserved to strong poets; saying what one means and meaning what one says, is a common duty, and not only to others but to self.⁸⁵ A healthy culture and a sane society require, in the most

fundamental sense, the pugnacious word, the pleasant word, the shared word, the fitting word, the inspired word. Those who debase the common language by failing to strive to say what they mean, or by hypocritically not meaning what they say, do us all a great disservice (Mellor, 1990).⁸⁶ What is it which makes that collage of language games which characterise modern democracy possible? The short and simple answer is structure: language expressing meaning exhibits grammar, while the nonsensical is agrammatical.

Ferdinand de Saussure conceived of language fundamentally as based upon a system of differences, an extended series of analogies pitched at different levels of language: *langue* and *parole*, signifier and signified, synchrony and diachrony.⁸⁷ He attributed priority to language over actual speech as an objective structure in his analysis of the linguistic sign. Boldly essaying what language is, Saussure asserts,

Language, on the contrary (to human speech, *langage*), is a self-contained whole and a principle of classification. As soon as we give language first place among the facts of speech, we introduce a natural order into a mass that lends itself to no other classification (Saussure, 1985, p.29).

Langue is the whole of a language as system or structure marked by certain definable internal relations which define it as object and render it subject to scientific analysis.

Parole is language, not in its formal properties, but in its actual usage, in historical time and geographical space.⁸⁸ *Parole* is the formal properties of language realised in particular instantiations. In short, *langue* is social, *parole* is individual. The linguistic sign includes both signifier and signified. The Saussurean analysis of the internal relations of language at the level of the individual word separates signifier and signified, the sound or visual image (phoneme or morpheme) from the meaningful concept. In this relation of signifier and signified, the relation between the two is

arbitrary, but not the meaning.⁸⁹ Such meaning as concepts possess is constituted by the internal relations of the sign in the system based on a binary logic of similarity and difference: “tree”, “three”, “thee” exhibit phonetic similarity and difference one to the other; Alice is not the only one who has needed to differentiate between “pig” and “fig”(Carroll, n.d., chap.6), but structuralist as well as mathematician is useful in this regard. Nevertheless, Saussure’s basic slogan, “In the linguistic system, there are only differences”, can be read with varying and conflicting emphases (Tracy, 1987, pp.54-58). Further, in his resolute attempt to de-mystify language as a delimited structure, there is the question of whether this analysis of internal relations of similarity and difference could ever be brought to some resolution, some conclusion (Derrida, 1990, pp.154-168).

Within Saussurean language structure, dialogue involves a perpetual pattern of projection, the active phase, and reception, the passive phase, from the one who speaks to the other who hears, and then a reversal as the other responds (Saussure, 1985, pp.31-34). The concept in its psychological impetus and physiological materialisation is becoming increasingly open to study. Perhaps one day the activation of speech and the mainsprings of emotion will be subject to imaging and blow-ups in much the same way as other bodily functions are now subject to different kinds of imaging and analysis. This, as Polanyi understood, does not reduce man, much less woman, to some sort of machine, because it can never explain the principle of understanding. This is itself, one kind of creative move made possible in its refined fashion by inspired hypothesis, hard graft, and technological progress (Polanyi, 1973, pp.69-131).⁹⁰

Actual speech, however, is an embarrassment to Saussure in that it is not a given, and thus not amenable to scientific analysis.⁹¹ This is a point at which the giants of linguistics part company. Chomsky extols creativity in language; Saussure disregards it; Jakobson analyses it remorselessly. Chomsky thinks that we humans are wired for verbal sound (Chomsky, 1990; Harman, 1982; Pinker, 1994; Wardhaugh, 1994, pp.20-26; Lyons, 1975). Whereas Huizinga thinks that there is a play instinct fundamental to all culture, Chomsky thinks that there is a language instinct (Dennett, 1994; Pinker, 1994; Harman, 1974). His fundamental distinction is between competence and performance (Lyons, 1977, vol. 1, p.29). The deep structures of language are innate, and so basic language competence is a matter of biology.⁹² Language competence grows in the human infant much as other parts of the body grow and develop as the genetic code unfolds in favourable environmental conditions. Language performance is another matter: the fact that language structure is built-in provides the basic condition for creativity, for novelty of usage, in actual language performance, but in actual usage it is always a possibility that the rules of syntax, the deep structures of language, are given wrong application. Some allowance, in his view, must be made for grey areas: it is not always possible to determine whether a particular combination of words is grammatical or ungrammatical. The structure allows for virtually no limits, but there is the constant risk of transgression, a fall into the demonstrably ungrammatical. The agrammatical is like hen's teeth (Harman, 1974).⁹³

The signifier for Saussure is the sound image/graphic image in all its material properties (Saussure, 1985, pp.31-34). The signified is not the thing stood for or matter of reference, as in traditional philosophy of language with its straitened concept of

denotation, but the concept or meaning embodied in the structure of the sign.⁹⁴

Structure plays a conservative, arresting role in language. While language is something one falls into, meaning is something which is made through language rather than found outside it.

Roman Jakobson has extended and deepened the structural analysis of his great predecessor. He is concerned with language in its intricate hierarchies and multiple functions. His analysis of language is one in which poetics is an integral and focal part (Jakobson, 1996, pp.62-94, 121-179). The basic features of his sophisticated model are the primary axes or modes of selection and combination, and the twin poles of metaphor and metonymy (Jakobson, 1980, pp.72-76). Jakobson provides his own pithy and preliminary summary of the two-fold character of language as selection and substitution, and combination and contexture:

Speech implies a *selection* of certain linguistic entities and their *combination* into linguistic units of a higher degree of complexity....in the optimal degree of information the speaker and the listener have at their disposal more or less the same 'filing cabinet of *prefabricated* representations':... (Jakobson, 1980, p.72)

Selection implies substitution; combination implies contexture (Jakobson, 1980, p.74).

Combination reveals both concatenation, that is, temporal sequence, and concurrence, that is, spatial simultaneity. Saussure, for all his genius, recognised only temporal sequence. He "succumbed to the traditional belief in the linear character of language 'qui exclut la possibilite de prononcer deux elements a la fois' (which excludes the possibility of pronouncing two elements at the same time)" (Jakobson, 1980, pp.74-75).

Jakobson builds on Saussure to examine how the structure of language produces meaning.

Metaphor and metonymy are the twin poles of language, with metaphor tied to the mode of selection or substitution (opposite sides of the same coin), and metonymy tied to the mode of combination or contexture (likewise, twin faces of the same thing). Each person exhibits a discernible predilection for one or other of these paths, these ways of going on, in language. If young Mary is challenged to associate the word “cats” and responds with the word “dogs” she is on one path; if young Mark is similarly challenged with the word “dogs” and responds with the word “bark” he is on the other. Mary has taken the road of selection and substitution that leads to metaphor; Mark, on the other hand, has taken the way of combination and contiguity that leads to metonym. Metaphor is born in a process of condensation; metonym in one of association. Whether Mary goes on to be a poet, and Mark goes on to be a philosopher or a scientist, is another matter, but not entirely. Importantly, metaphor, far from being merely ornamental or emptily rhetorical, is tied to meaning, particularly poetic meaning, which gravitates to equivalences, to parallelisms, in its various elements including, most obviously, line structure (Jakobson, 1996, pp.62-94). Metaphor creates fresh meaning; it affords new, re-shaped logical space. Metonym focuses on the relations of whole and part, part and whole; it relates subject and object through a process of logical expansion of the attributes or characteristics or qualities of the object. Shakespeare, a particular individual in the Elizabethan age, is also, as a metonym, a corpus of poetic work which has left its impress upon cultures throughout the world for centuries.

Furthermore, linguistic predilection to one pole or the other has wider significances. The line between metaphor and metonym, both figurative forms of

language, can be a subtle one in actual practice. Homer's heroic epic is a matter of metonym predominantly, but poetry generally adheres more to the pole of metaphor:

In poetry there are various motives which determine the choice between these alternants. The primacy of the metaphoric process in the literary schools of romanticism and symbolism has been repeatedly acknowledged, but it is still insufficiently realized that it is the predominance of metonymy which underlies and actually predetermines the so-called 'realistic' trend, which belongs to an intermediary stage between the decline of romanticism and the rise of symbolism and is opposed to both (Jakobson, 1980, pp.91-92).

Jakobson does not stop there but extends the consequences of the polar divide between metaphor and metonymy from art to life:

The bipolar structure of language (or other semiotic systems) and, in aphasia, the fixation on one of these poles....must be confronted with the predominance of the same pole in certain styles, personal habits, current fashions, etc....The dichotomy discussed here appears to be of primal significance and consequence for all verbal behavior and for human behavior in general (Jakobson, 1980, p.93).

One can note in passing that a sport such as cricket, an intricately structured sport where whole and part are evidently associated throughout, tends to the pole of metonym. Once that is said, it must be immediately and heavily qualified. Metaphor rather than metonym clings to the batsman who stands alone in his duel, not only with the bowler but in opposition to wicketkeeper and fieldsmen - even his batting partner if he is notorious for making bad calls as to whether to run or not after the ball is struck or misfielded. In cricketing parlance, the batsman wields his blade, butchers the bowling, hammers the ball to the boundary, protects his castle, and so on. When the bowler who is most likely to take a wicket when taking wickets is imperative if victory is to be achieved, is the object of description, he is commonly referred to as "the go-to bowler", a description clearly in the realm of metonym. When he is referred to as "the strike

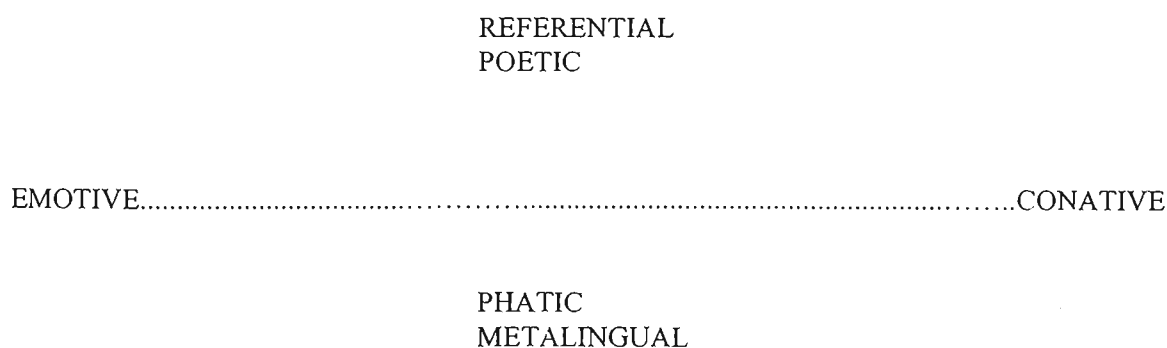
bowler” (as he often is in reference to his proven capacity to take wickets regularly), is this metaphor or metonym? When he is described in terms of his regular ability to take scalps, metaphor seems the linguistic pole of description. Metaphor is certainly not precluded by the structure of cricket: the bowler who cannot bat and goes in at number eleven, the tail of the batting team, is the rabbit, the bunny, in common estimate and terminology. He is the butt of both witticisms and opposing fast bowlers’ bouncers - a veritable patsy destined for an uncomfortable if short stay at the wicket. Nevertheless, cricket as a sport with extended parts, tends to the metonymic. Australian rules football, on the other hand, would seem to tend to the pole of metaphor in its condensed, if often anarchic, action. The player with a good spring and acute timing, taking the spectacular high mark by using another player as a platform, can seem like a bird in flight or a ballet star who has learned to defy gravity. The visual thinking stimulated by such aesthetic moments spawns not only hyperbole but images that cluster at the pole of metaphor. The enormous literature generated by cricket tends to endless associations; the relatively restricted literature generated by football is given to personifications like “Tiger” (the aggressive, much-travelled Brent Crosswell), “The Flying Doormat” (Carlton’s long-serving, bald-headed, head-banded, phlegmatic Bruce Doull) or “The Grey Ghost” (Richmond’s hard man, Jimmy Jess, notorious or famous - depending on your point of view - for seemingly coming from nowhere and knocking out star opposition forwards).⁹⁵ One ought not be overly categoric in distinguishing sports in this matter⁹⁶, but such discriminations are in order because they are illuminating to no small degree. Some sports are relatively simple and condensed, some are more complex and extended. Does this encourage different sorts of description? More pertinently and importantly,

are various sports structured, figuratively speaking, along the lines of metaphor and metonym? And further, how do strong performers of sport, change the figuration, the language, of their chosen sport?

Where Saussure had posited language as a system of differences with four factors (“in language somebody says something to someone about something”), Jakobson, in an analysis which is as neat in appearance as it is complex in its functioning, posits six: addresser and addressee, in a relationship constituted by code and contact from the axis of selection, context and message from the axis of combination (Jakobson, 1996, p.66):



Matching these six factors are six functions: the addresser is primarily linked to the emotive function, the addressee to the conative; the context to the referential function; the code to the metalingual function; the contact to the phatic function; and the message to the poetic function.



That is, while the metalingual function is opposed to the poetic function, the poetic function is tied directly to the message factor:

The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination. Equivalence is promoted to the constitutive device of the sequence. In poetry one syllable is equalized with any other syllable of the same sequence; word stress is assumed to equal word stress, as unstress equals unstress; prosodic long is matched with long, and short with short; word boundary equals word boundary, no boundary equals no boundary; syntactic pause equals syntactic pause, no pause equals no pause. Syllables are converted into units of measure, and so are morae or stresses (Jakobson, 1996, p.71).

Such parallelism as a grammatical feature of poetry as a language, may be exemplified, without the levels of ambiguity which often accompany and complicate it, in a Biblical example spoken by the Preacher and drawn from the late Old Testament book, *Ecclesiastes* (9: 11, A.V. re-arranged slightly in poetic sequence of image, in parallel lines, to illustrate Jakobson's sense more clearly).

I returned, and saw under the sun,
 That the race is not to the swift,
 Nor the battle to the strong,
 Neither yet bread to the wise,
 Nor yet riches to men of understanding,
 Nor yet favor to men of skill;
 But time and chance happeneth to them all.

This emphatic, sad song to the power of contingency marries metaphor and metonym in a subtle unspoken dialectic of recurring order (the sun) and random fate in its five figures: race is in the realm of metaphor, bread and riches are in the realm of metonym, battle and favor are indeterminate. It is principally such structuration which makes this little piece of poetry so powerful, so moving, so memorable: a few words of sinewy Hebrew cast in the idiom of Greek thought and translated into Elizabethan English, are not easily forgotten by those given to reflection upon the relations of talent, character, and fate. The vast reach of contingency is compacted, condensed, in fewer than fifty words which pile up five diverse, pregnant images, one after the other.

Characteristically Greek thought about human destiny has been twice translated, first into Hebrew, then into Elizabethan English. One wishes, whatever the literal transgressions, that all translations were half as good (Buber and Rosenzweig, 1994; Robertson, 1959).⁹⁷

The potency of the poetry, simple but vivid in its thought, is created in the complex patterning of the verbal code. The verbal code provides the very possibility for the poetic message even as it stands in dialectic tension with it: consensus on the actual words selected is a necessary but far from sufficient condition for the poetic meaning enacted in the rapid succession of images in the short lines. The context of the verse, broadly speaking, is one of the brevity, unfairness, and vanity, of human life. The theme of contingency is summarised in the noun phrase “time and chance”; the message is constituted in the multiple syntax and imagery. In particular, the final text given above reveals that phatic function of the poetic language, and that concentration upon the poet’s message, to those who would attend openly to the words and strive to hear and understand. The five figures constitute part of an emotional appeal to enjoy the limited goods of life on offer in the face of prevailing injustice, rather than any kind of explanation or argument concerning the meaning and value of life. The dominant functions of language exemplified in the oscillation between metaphor and metonym are the poetic and phatic functions. The speaker dares to address his hearers in sad song rather than diatribe or prescription, explanation or argument, and in so doing virtually dissolves the customary antinomy prevailing in most mundane prose between metaphor and metonym. He trusts in the felicity of his utterance to strike home to his hearers.

Where Jakobson makes this more a matter of science, here it is understood more as a matter of art (Jakobson, 1980, 1996).⁹⁸

Such an analysis as Jakobson's does not relate poetry as parasitic upon ordinary language, as Austin, Ayer, and others have thought, but more in the manner of an inversion, a knowing deviation from the prosaic norm. Poetry is differently coded to prose, even though the poet, too, selects and combines words in the available code: poetry is tied essentially to the poetic message and the phatic function of language. Poetry can go where prose cannot tread without risk of implosion, because poetry does not run with the same rules as prose with its basic linear ordering of subject, verb, object and its dominant intention of clarity and ready comprehension.⁹⁹ In its different levels of structure, its multiple syntax, poetry can grapple with plurality, ambiguity, ambivalence, and seek to hold contraries together in tension because the verbal code is more complex and more personal, and less focused upon the referential function.¹⁰⁰ How poets work this out in actual practice is what separates poets from strong poets, and critics into the good, the bad, and the indifferent. It also bears upon what T.S. Eliot said about poetry communicating before it is (fully) understood, and the greater difficulty he professed in writing truly fine prose than memorable poetry (Eliot, 1934, p. 238).¹⁰¹

Perhaps some kind of case could be made for philosophy as a distinct language structure.¹⁰² While that is not the path taken here, where ordinary language is judged sufficient to the present task, a digression is in order for purposes of further clarifying that task which, most emphatically, is not simply one of poetic descriptions of sport and sports, or mere enumeration of elements common to both. Traditionally, both poetry

and philosophy have had their concern with universals, but they have conceived of them differently. Was philosophy not, for many centuries, the study of essences in their superordination and subordination? Does it not have an ongoing pre-occupation with concepts, with ideas, with abstraction and generality? What then of philosophy as a language? Is philosophy as a signifying practice to be understood as characterised by its logical grammar?¹⁰³ Are philosophical concepts creatures of identity?¹⁰⁴ Must one be perpetually on guard against confusion of categories? If Plato can mix his myths and Shakespeare his metaphors, what consequences for lesser talents? If poetry is inherently ambiguous, a knowing violation of the normative linguistic code, does philosophy stake its claim as a cultural, or even transcultural, practice by championing the contrary virtues of clarity and truth? And if this is so, how then does this sit with all philosophy of sport, given that sport, notoriously, is such an emotional affair and, today, in thrall to commercial interests interested in profits not virtue, least of all the virtue of truthfulness?¹⁰⁵ Emotions, like motives and intentions, are often difficult of dissection; the relative autonomy of sport, its situation in post-industrial capitalism, complicates any analysis worthy of the name.¹⁰⁶

It is important in the context of the present work to remember how, principally in the persons of Plato and Aristotle, philosophy brought things out from under the sway of mythos and placed it under the sway of logos. Long and painful processes of disassociation from mythology and poetry were involved. Aristotle could condemn Plato's Forms and participation in them as a flight of idle metaphorical fancy (Ricouer, 1996, p.357), mark mastery of making metaphor a sign of genius (Ricouer, 1996, p.335, *De Poetica* 1459), and make the plot of narrative (*mythos*, *muthos*) central to his theory

of strong poetry (Ricouer, 1996, pp.347-355)! In any event, Homer and Hesiod were not easily displaced; the great Greek dramatists continued to re-write the classical myths and exercise basic cultural functions. Fortunately, practice has not always followed principle.¹⁰⁷

If, as is the case here, one takes the structuralists seriously but as heuristic fiction, there are certain consequences, and they tend in the direction of hermeneutics, although they are not to be identified with it.¹⁰⁸ Ricouer understands this tie better than most, especially as Jakobson's structural analysis bears upon his study of metaphor as the making of meaning related to mimesis and expressing existence as alive (Ricouer, 1996, pp.329-355). This is more than a convenience; it is a blessing with little disguise for present purposes of reading sport as if it were poetry. One might underline, again, that philosophers tend to the metonymic path of language, the relations of whole and part, the one and the many, subject and object; poets, on the on the other hand, gravitate decidedly to the path of metaphor, the path where meaning is created even as it is transgressed.¹⁰⁹ Immediately one writes that, of course, one remembers, whatever Bergson might declare to the contrary, that the big-picture metaphysicians are conceived in metaphor, grow up in metaphor, and die in metaphor. More pertinently still, narrative of the soul such as Dante's, written as allegory, becomes metaphor in the reading (Eliot, 1934, pp.237-277.; Bloom, 1991, pp.38-50). And Chaucer's allegorical tales, are richly understood and interpreted as expanded simile (Speirs, 1964).

Gadamer, champion of philosophy as hermeneutics, has articulated philosophy as a language where various other considerations than just logic, simplicity, and clarity prevail. In his explanation of its genesis he stresses the importance of the historical

sciences, the experience of art, and the alienation inherent in the self-satisfied bourgeois forms of consciousness which,

misunderstands how much we ourselves are immersed in the game and are the stake in this game. So from the perspective of the concept of *play* I tried to overcome the illusions of self-consciousness and the prejudices of Consciousness-Idealism. Play is never a mere object but rather has an existence for the one who plays along, even if only as a spectator (Gadamer, 1986, p.178).

The pragmatics of victory and the flux of existence come to the fore in the competitive contest. As long as nerve holds, there is this or that possibility to be explored, exploited, seized. One is addressed in so many ways and at so many levels by a classic text or an historical event. Is the process not similar in playing games competitively, or in spectating with full attention? Are not strenuous demands made upon a whole range of resources, and debts incurred which can never be re-paid? There are times in sport, as in life generally, where time and space, cause and effect, merge and stand still, occasions of lived experience which resonate as long as life and memory last.

While one's historical situation and the models one adopts are important in an understanding of the human condition in all its antinomies, all interpretation for Gadamer "is rooted in a fundamental linguisticity or language-relatedness" (Gadamer, 1986, p.179). Any structure inherent in philosophy as a distinct kind of language is a very flexible and accommodating structure as, indeed, are all natural language structures. The middle of existence, in Gadamer's understanding, requires for its understanding "effective historical consciousness' that is more being than being conscious." Both language bearing the impress of the common touch, and a vibrant historical consciousness, in concert, can create understanding and community. Philosophy as a

kind of language is never found, but always in the making. Explaining the origin of this very un-Kantian hermeneutics, he writes,

....the common language is never a fixed given. Between speaking beings it is a language-at-play, one that must first warm itself up so that understanding can begin, especially at the point where different points of view seem irreconcilably opposed (Gadamer, 1986, p.180).¹¹⁰

Polanyi, in his reconciliation between the personal quality of individual experience and the public status of accepted knowledge, offers a re-interpretation of language in broad agreement with the views of Gadamer (Polanyi, 1973, pp.104-117). There will always be, he argues, a crucial degree of slippage in language where the individual is prepared to put herself at risk of saying something new and different. Personal articulation of private experience has its consequences in language, meaning, knowledge, and selfhood:

The distinction between assimilation of experience by a fixed interpretative framework and the adaptation of such a framework to comprise the lessons of a new experience, gains a new and more precise meaning when the framework in question is articulate. The first represents the ideal of using language impersonally, according to strict rules; the second relies on a personal intervention of the speaker, for changing the rules of language to fit new occasions. The first is a routine performance, the second is a heuristic act....the first is strictly reversible, while the second is essential irreversible. For to modify our idiom is to modify the frame of reference within which we shall henceforth interpret our experience; it is to modify ourselves (Polanyi, 1973, p.105).

In this work, there is the striving to articulate fresh frameworks for sport, different kinds of language in which to understand and interpret sport. The dominant idiom is the idiom of metaphor, but the idiom of metaphor, as Ricouer explains in his exposition of Aristotle, must itself resort to metaphor (metaphor drawn from the realm of movement) in something the same manner that Aristotle himself does (Ricouer, 1996, pp.330-333). Further, in the sporting experience, both as competitor and spectator, there is always the

shifting combination of the old and the new. There is repetition, but it is never exact; there is the new, and it is mostly unpredictable.

Gadamer acknowledges, beyond the influence of Heidegger as teacher and friend, a debt to the tradition of rhetoric, the praxis of Aristotle, and, most of all, the “unique company” provided by the dialogues of Plato. One must be alive “to the philosophical relevance of Plato’s poetic imagination” by first learning “to read Plato’s writings as mimicry.” Only the weak reader attends to the metaphysics and ignores its subversion from within (Gadamer, 1986, pp.184-185).¹¹¹ Thus the concept of understanding, so important in Kant’s vocabulary, is tied to interpretation in and through both history and language. It is an understanding which partakes of, participates in, the play of the world; it is part of dramatic action. Language itself is understood as incorporating time and space, cause and effect, cultural epistemes or prejudices (pre-judgments, pre-understandings), and not just as functioning in time and space. One must work in one’s interpretations toward a fusion of horizons: not only, Gadamer hints in fits and starts, time past come alive in time present, but also time present made pregnant with the future. One consequence is a degree of slippage, both within language and between conversation partners. History, including the history of language, is once more taken seriously. So, too, is the work of art, which, interpreted sensibly and sensitively by the informed critic, can never be viewed as dead and done for. Art is for the existential understanding: it bears upon the present and includes perennial questions of philosophy, including some veering to the ethical - for example, those very different questions of moral philosophy, How ought I live my life? How ought one live? The first question introduces the possibility of moral relativity, the matter of individual existence,

even of limits to philosophy's contribution to the study of ethics. (Graham, 1961; Williams, 1985) The second takes us back to that hectoring, badgering, wonderful ferret, the Socrates of Plato's dialogues, with his essentialist questions and Plato's endless irony. And, of course, there is the troubling figure of Nietzsche, a figure post-modernity is still striving to come to terms with, to assimilate coherently and productively.¹¹²

Richard Rorty, not a structuralist, construes philosophy, in empathy with Derrida, very much a post-structuralist, as just another form of writing:

....philosophy started off as a confused combination of the love of wisdom and the love of argument....The philosophers' own scholastic little definitions of "philosophy" are merely polemical devices - intended to exclude from the field of honor those whose pedigrees are unfamiliar. We can pick out "the philosophers" in the contemporary intellectual world only by noting who is commenting on a certain sequence of historical figures. All that "philosophy" as a name for a sector of culture means is "talk about Plato, Augustine, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Frege, Russell delimited, as is any literary genre, not by form or matter, but by tradition - a family romance involving, e.g., Father Parmenides, honest old Uncle Kant, and bad brother Derrida (Rorty, 1996, pp.91-93).

It is useful to compare this with both Auerbach's understanding that J writes vertically and Homer horizontally, and with Bloom's theory of poetry as a kind of family romance.¹¹³

Rorty agrees with Gadamer that philosophy as a kind of writing is one freed from the bind of essences and given over to the contingencies of history (Rorty, 1995, 1996, pp.90-159, 1998, pp. 247-350).¹¹⁴ Thorough-going nominalist, he goes much further in rejecting language as instrumental, as representing reality in any relation of correspondence. Words are tools, but in relations to one another, not in some kind of correspondence to reality.¹¹⁵ Reality is forever up for grabs; its constitution depends

upon the language game at work. The power of re-description, fundamentally a metaphorical process, is our supreme potency. Re-description is Rorty's forte. It is his basic method for subverting philosophy as a discipline which escapes the clutches of contingency and tracks Truth. Only a person who understands the philosophical tradition from within, and who writes elegantly and plausibly, could attempt such a task of subversion with any prospect of success. Occasionally Rorty chooses to argue a case rather than to re-describe philosophical mentors such as Dewey, Heidegger, and Davidson for particular purposes, and betrays his own apprenticeship in the school of analysis with its pre-suppositions, vocabulary, and ways of going about things - too often, peripheral little things. The mature Rorty does not lack nerve.

In the opening words to the preface of the text which signals his departure from the ranks of the relatively orthodox in philosophy of language and of mind, he begins to trace his intellectual evolution at the hands of able teachers. His philosophical turn is tied inextricably to the contingency of language:

Almost as soon as I began to study philosophy, I was impressed by the way in which philosophical problems appeared, disappeared, or changed shape, as a result of new assumptions or vocabularies (Rorty, 1980, p.xiii).

Changed assumptions and fresh vocabularies are at the core of Rorty's mature understanding of language. Language is important, not because it tracks Truth, but because it helps us to cope, with other people, including with the words of others. Language goes all the way down: nothing is outside its compass. Language is crucially important and not least because metaphor makes it open-ended. The power of re-description, not the God's-eye perspective, is the critical issue for intellectual historiography. Intellectual progress, while a tissue of contingencies, is a deep matter

for the understanding; unlike telling the truth in advertising or politics, philosophers especially ought to dispense with the traditional philosophical distinction between appearance and reality (Rorty, 2000, 1998). Rorty quotes the subtle, sentimental Derrida approvingly and then writes in commentary a passage which has incurred considerable philosophical wrath from the likes of Bernard Williams:

Derrida regards the need to overcome “the book”....as justifying his use of any text to interpret any other text....Derrida does not want to comprehend Hegel’s books; he wants to play with Hegel. He doesn’t want to write a book about the nature of language; he wants to play with the texts which other people have thought they were writing about language (Rorty, 1996, p.96).

Philosophy, then, for Rorty, is just one more form of writing, one bent on abstraction and generality only when one is determined to be conventional and systematic; one which the suitably equipped, interested, and talented can pick up or leave alone. While philosophy must attend upon history, it is ill-formed to change the world in most of its guises. The thin, ubiquitous words which hold philosophical discourse together must be constantly supplemented with thick description. Rorty wants his art spicy, his politics bland, and, in the case of Derrida, his philosophy sexy and sentimental.¹¹⁶ In the person of a Derrida or a Heidegger or a Hegel philosophy may change the odd individual, but in his private personage not his public. Marx, as a philosopher of the public sphere, should have stuck rigorously to his economic analyses and omitted the mythology. Rorty supplements his subversion of traditional philosophical practice with a basic conflict within the self between the person aspiring to private perfection and the citizen functioning within liberal democracy to achieve possible social ends.¹¹⁷

Rorty takes Dewey as his principal philosophical mentor. Dewey sought the reconstruction of philosophy through considered, radical, reflection upon the daily

detail. Philosophy had to be taken out from the groves of academe and applied in the streets and the schools (Dewey, 1957, pp.210-213).¹¹⁸ Philosophy and democracy belong together (Dewey, 1929). The classroom is their early and fitting meeting place (Dewey, 1956). Ought learning in a democracy be more a matter of doing, of practice? Can there be teaching where there is little or no learning? How many cheers for compulsory mis-education? Rorty, however, makes democracy prior to philosophy (Rorty, 1991a, pp.175-196). The best the multitudes can hope for is to be cheerily ethnocentric, accept that they are programmed with the words of the tribe (language, like community, is a matter of contingency), and scratch their toe-holds a little higher where they may.¹¹⁹ Only strong poets, freed through metaphor from the shackles of convention, possess the wings to fly free (Rorty, 1995). The value, if not the meaning, of what may loosely be called the aesthetic experience, is shared by Rorty, Dewey, and Gadamer.

Rortyan philosophy takes a decidedly literary turn, in its essentials. Democracy is not only prior to philosophy, but personification of philosophy's traditional concerns (Truth, for example) ought to be understood as empty, outdated, rhetorical ploy, even by philosophical plods. "God" as the unknowable and the irrelevant is empty obeisance to the obsolescent - a bit like a republican bending forward just a little upon introduction to the Queen.¹²⁰ Rorty, in his intellectual and historicist way, wants to understand how this came out of that, an admirable but daunting ambition. Here he has a special place for strong poets, and strong poets, in his elastic sense, are into forms of writing, myth and metaphor.¹²¹ Thus Rorty can take Gadamerian hermeneutics assuredly in his stride to philosophical fame and opprobrium (he identifies with Stuart Hampshire and metaphorically labels his own subversive, ground-clearing role as philosophical under-

laborer), his championing of edifying philosophy where the conversations never cease and the big-picture philosophical players are ripe for deconstruction (Rorty, 1980; Rorty, 1998, Part III). Very understandably, Derrida delights him, and he defends him stoutly but not uncritically, for all their differences in temperament, approach, and style (Rorty, 1996, pp.90-109, 1996b, pp.13-18).

Poetry As Structure

One is especially concerned with poetry as a peculiar and potent kind of language, and here the commonsense understanding of the distinction between prose and poetry clearly will not do. A preliminary distinction can usefully be made by returning to the ancient Greeks and drawing upon the study of the rule of metaphor made by Ricouer in his exposition of the place of metaphor in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*. In these two classic philosophical works of Aristotle, Ricouer makes clear that metaphor has a duality of function and intention, but all the while possessing the same fundamental structure. This basic structure of metaphor is not to be limited to name or noun. Now in this classical schema of language, rhetoric seeks to persuade; poetry works to purge the emotions of pity and fear:

Aristotle defines it [rhetoric] as the art of inventing or finding proofs. Now poetry does not seek to prove anything at all: its project is mimetic; its aim...is to compose an essential representation of human actions; its appropriate method is to speak the truth by means of fiction, fable, and tragic *muthos*. The triad of *poiesis-mimesis-katharsis*, which cannot possibly be confused with the triad *rhetoric-proof-persuasion*, characterizes the world of poetry in an exclusive manner....

This duality of function and of intention is more radical than any distinction between poetry and prose; it constitutes the ultimate justification of this distinction (Ricouer, 1996, p.327).¹²²

Ideation is but one of the functions of poetry. Classical strong poetry was mimetic, and constructed or constituted, according to Aristotle, “an essential representation of human actions.” This is consistent enough with the views of contemporary poets and critics that, in a real if elusive sense, poetry is metaphysical, concerned with the image of man and woman, a play in words of concrete universals.¹²³ Poetry is concerned with cognition, but not in the manner or mode of discursiveness. Human emotion of the most varied and particular kind is a central concern. Shakespeare may not like Macbeth or his wife, but he displays in plot and poetry, in the variety yet integration of images, the insight and empathy to get, so to speak, inside their skins and make us feel the horror of their evil. The imagery of the play is the insight, the feeling, the thought. His understanding, like that of Plato, extends far beyond mere liking or disliking. Connotation enables poetry to work in a process of condensation, displacement, and association denied denotation. Concrete universals are pretty select concepts, even more mysterious and problematic than their philosophical brothers and sisters.¹²⁴ The beautiful and the sublime, joy and despair, resist neat conceptualisation.¹²⁵ Emotion is so varied, so mixed, and often, in common parlance, so imprecise. Objective correlatives for subjective particularities are the poet at work and play in what T.S. Eliot deemed a desirable state of associated sensibility.

Poetry works upon us in ways we can sometimes barely fathom, but fathom them in some measure we must if we accept the pre-supposition that language is for some kind of maturity (Eliot, 1959; Holbrook, 1967; Goldberg, 1993; Thomson, 1978; Booth, 1988).¹²⁶ Some continue to resent such analysis, rather as some turn their backs upon post-match analysis of victory or defeat, as if reflection might mar their joy or deepen

their sorrow. Poetry as structure is more than the accumulation of discrete elements. Strong poetry exemplifies a peculiar wholeness, a unity born of holding contraries in creative tension, which is part of its authority. Mere formal adherence to rules of metre or rhythm will not suffice in a strong poem. It is analysis not easily exhausted, as Jakobson supremely illustrates as he delves into the intricacies of multiple syntax, especially in the recondite area of phonology. One must be content with a few fundamentals, before reverting to Bloom, who is concerned with a theory of poetry which encapsulates remembrance, myth, and literary history.

One expects of the poet some flight of the mind in which is unveiled in words, spoken or written, “some crystal of intensity” (to tear Virginia Woolf’s phrase from the context of her *Lighthouse*), some mountain of sublimity. Roman Jakobson’s difficult answer in terms of inverted structure has as its principal consequence that the syntax of poetry is multi-dimensional: the elements of poetry exhibit their own structure which, in their complex relations, make poetry another thing to prose.

Valery employs an analogy between walking and dancing to distinguish prose and poetry. Walking is commonly a utilitarian activity, while dancing constitutes its principle in its own pleasure. He fingers a unity which is often of a complex and peculiar kind when he declares poetry to be essentially a hesitation between sense and sound, a language within a language, a peculiar language which is subject to phonetics, semantics, syntax, logic, rhetoric, philology, metrics, prosody, etymology, etcetera, but is magically more than a mere sum of its parts (Valery, 1971, pp.914-926).

Once again, further perfunctory explanation of some of the essential disparate elements which find their unity in a poem is required. Rhythm is a key element in the

integrity of poetry as a kind of language. Prose has its rhythms, but they are, for the most part, irregular. Poetry, on the contrary, exhibits a certain flow which is sustained without becoming mechanical. In the lines from *Ecclesiastes* already quoted, usually printed as prose, the rhythm is simple, emphatic, cumulative, and brought to a stop in consonance with the sobering conclusion. This rhythm itself becomes a function of syntax as it parallels and reinforces the rapid succession of the five disparate images which give body to the notion of human life as a brief interlude under the sway of time and chance. The regular rhythm of the first line fits the wider cosmic rise, fall, and return of the sun; the emphatic rhythm of the concluding line gives weight to the pessimistic conclusion. The rhythm helps substantiate the process of the thought, the contrast between the constancy of the sun and the fickleness and finality of fate. The mounting cadence is brought to closure in the concluding severe seventh line which winds down in measured manner in implied prescription of resignation as the path of wisdom. The thought is Greek, but the parallelisms distinctively Hebrew. So-called Christian culture borrows, incorporates, both, albeit uneasily and fitfully.

Metre, intimately tied to rhythm, but not the same thing, is another syntactical element in poetry. Metre is the accent or stress, and the relative unstress, in the words of a poem. In the example chosen above, every line but the second begins with an accent, and every line except the fifth ends with an accent. The seventh and concluding line nearly replicates that of the first in its stress and, fitting the pattern of thought, begins emphatically but eases into its end with only two accented syllables separated by four unaccented in its final four words. The metre elsewhere, especially in the body of images, is fairly constant. The metre, like the rhythm, is tied to the working out of the

doleful sentiment. Psalm 1 affords a useful contrast in rhythm and metre, as in its ethos and theology. The Hebrew poets thought rarely, if at all, that the best thing was never to have been born. Jeremiah and Job sink low indeed, but is their hope ever extinguished? The Preacher of *Ecclesiastes* hovers uneasily between the polar opposites of hope and despair.

Rhyme is a further fundamental of poetry as a kind of language, and constitutes a different syntax and another kind of parallelism. It works against that hesitation between sound and sense which characterises much strong poetry. It constitutes a parallelism of a different kind to that of lines with a certain length and measurable stress.

Bloom works on poetry as structure at a deeper level, the level of poetic influence, the level of dream and desire - a level, perhaps, where the unconscious is indeed structured like a language. In his theory of poetry, strong poets attain their triumph through the anxiety of influence achieved within the poem: “the strong poem is the achieved anxiety” (Bloom, 1997, p. xxiii). The achieved anxiety is the fulfilment of the poetic desire in fitting form. While the syntactical elements of poetry are readily subject to the sort of description given above, at the deeper level poets, typically, re-write myth. Bloom adopts as the only proper stance toward such poetic process his own technical quasi-mythical terms, *clinamen*, *tessera*, *kenosis*, *daemonization*, *askesis*, *apophrades*. The strong critic himself is required to be a master of myth and metaphor. One can summarise his bold theory as basically mimetic, agonistic in the extreme, a praxis where theory informs literary criticism, and the stress is upon the subtle yet strong poetic re-writing of myth.¹²⁷ His stance is that of art-for-art’s sake. Like Rorty,

he wants to preserve the private world of art from the public world of politics and all its messy entanglements and compromises. Strong poetry, for him, is essentially, as sport is for others, its own justification. Like narrative in post-modernity for Lyotard, it does what it does (Lyotard, 1993, p. 23).

Mythology As Structure¹²⁸

Mythology has deep and expansive roots, and is intimately tied to those cultural sectors relevant to this work - language, poetry, philosophy, and sport. Some strong poets (William Blake, for example) are mythological poets through and through, and clearly so. Some strong poets (William Wordsworth, for instance, taking Nature as a kind of book) are mythological poets, but less evidently so.¹²⁹ One trumpets Human Imagination; the other sings songs of pantheism. One, a city-dweller, extols Culture (even in his Songs of Innocence), the other Nature. Neither is in danger of excluding subjectivity, of reducing thou to it. Mythology brings things together in magical fusion. Commonly, yet in uncommon ways, it defies dualisms such as those of culture and nature, subjective and objective, part and whole. Nevertheless, contradiction rather than harmony is the prevailing tenour. However one divides up culture, mythology is there to be found, whether taken as an abomination or as a sublimity.

Mythology preceded philosophy, but philosophy has failed to kill it off (Frankfort *et al*, 1959).¹³⁰ Woman and man live neither by bread nor logic alone. Toulmin explains how, when Zeus and Wotan and Atlas have long since vanished from the scene, mythology remains contemporary, even in science. The Running-Down-Universe, The Hotting-Up-Universe, The Ever-Expanding Universe, Evolution, are a

less interesting lot, but every bit as mythological (Toulmin, 1957, pp.11-81). Toynbee explains how mythology is fundamental, not only to religion with its ritual and dogma, but to the study and writing of history (Toynbee, 1956, 1961). Stripped of the myth of challenge and response his monumental study of history would fold like a house of cards. Cassirer, much closer to structuralism than Toynbee, accords myth the status of one of the three principal pillars of his phenomenology of culture: language, myth, and science are the three great symbolic forms of his supreme philosophical work (Cassirer, 1975, 1974, 1973). While Cassirer is a structuralist in a broad sense, Levi-Strauss is one in a more strict sense. He takes up and applies the linguistic theory of Roman Jakobson, in particular, to anthropology and the concept of mind.¹³¹ His speculations produce myth as structure reconciling the oppositions of Nature with Culture, Heaven with Hell, God with Man, etcetera (Levi-Strauss, 1985; Leach, 1970).¹³²

Myth, in its many different sizes and shapes, commonly proceeds in the form of a narrative, often a quite basic and simple narrative. The Babel myth, for example, tells of ambitious builders, keen to make a name for themselves, who set about building a tower up to heaven. Yahweh, that jealous God who dwells in the heavens and made man in his own image, arrests their work in progress, forces them back down into the madding crowd where they can no longer speak intelligibly to one another. This destiny is utterly at odds with the one to which they aspired; counterfactual to their common avowed intent. Such a fate cannot be spelt out in mathematical equations. This myth of quest and fall mediates between heaven and earth, reconciles the claims of transcendence and immanence, however uneasily. Accomodating rather than resolving antinomies and cultural contradictions, as well as plumbing the depths of desire and

dream, are fundamental functions of myth. Myth is a language of Sympathy of the Whole; fundamentally a language of solidarity despite its contradictions and ambiguities and ambivalences. It would appear to be at odds with a thorough-going nominalism (Copjec, 1994).

The narrative in myth, then, is a version of cosmic myth (life as fall, salvation, quest, conquest, combat, etc.226), and plainly metaphorical, not at the level of word, or phrase, or sentence, but as a limited whole, as a world. There is a truth here, one which a writer of like genius such as Kafka can exploit at another time and another place, but it is the partial truth which is the preserve of all mythic narratives with any structural substance. J's world, like Kafka's, both shocks and gratifies. It is not the world known to the solitary and unformed reader, yet it can and does illuminate that world. Narrative in myth is inherently metaphorical at the structural level. The rule of metaphor finds a natural home in the mythic tale well told.¹³³

Mythology as a kind of language comes into its own in poetry. Strong poets take fundamental myths and re-work them: Homer takes ancient myths of quest and conquest, Dante and Milton take Biblical myths of fall and salvation. Homer re-writes metonymically, Dante allegorically, Milton metaphorically. Strong critics take fundamental myths and give them fresh work, new applications. Both strong poet and strong critic, like Plato, make metaphor on the grand scale and in the fitting context, the matter of their life's work. Certain images in such reweavings haunt the mind: that deconstructed tower in J, that unreachable castle in Kafka, that underground cave in Plato - three strong poets, in the broad sense, who have figured the furniture in countless millions of minds. The conceptual content of such images is open to discussion; the

potency of the images has been long established. Nevertheless, there remain those, long after Aquinas and Hobbes and Locke, who consider myth/metaphor a disease of language. And there remain long after those like Blake, who contest the disputed ground, not of dead dogma, but of resonant image.

Bloom, a strong critic, is also a re-writer of myth and a dealer in metaphor. His theory of poetry is, in essence, a re-writing of myth. If one takes his six revisionary ratios of the anxiety of influence in turn, his catholic taste in myth is evident in the selection of technical terms explicating his theory of poetry: *clinamen* is wrested from Lucretius, *tessera* from the ancient mystery cults, *kenosis* from the New Testament, *daemonization* from Neo-Platonism, *askesis* from the pre-Socratics, *apophrades* from Athenian mythology (Bloom, 1997).

Myths, astonishing in their variety, are, in the strong poetry of western literature, drawn largely from two main sources, Hebrew and Greek. The Bible, in a strictly limited sense, unites them: for the most part, the Old Testament is written in classical Hebrew, the New Testament in common Greek. Catholic Dante, Protestant Milton, are drawn to the Biblical myths of sin and salvation, fall and redemption, out of which they create their finest poetry. Further back, the author of the Fourth Gospel, hearing the cadences of the Priestly Writer (P) in his hymn to Yahweh's creative *davar*, begins mythologically also with his own hymn to the eternal *Logos*. Sublime all, one can read them in a shared admiration, oftentimes with a little help from their friends - linguists, historians, philosophers, scholars, critics. Reading the depths of the poetical desire of such authors is a mite more difficult, and assessing their relative authority more matter than for a single lifetime. The making of meaning resists closure.¹³⁴

Mythology is a kind of language, a language which relates opposites, heaven and earth, gods and men, men and women, men and animals. When Bloom, in his theory of poetry, takes *kenosis* as the third of his revisionary ratios, he adds religion of a distinctly gnostic flavour to an already rich literary mix. The Muse comes in many shapes and sizes, but notions of inspiration and revelation are tied to both literature and religion (Robinson, 1962). One expects, almost demands, of the strong poet an informed and original vision denied lesser mortals. One would not return to Shakespeare again and again if all one received in return was the equivalent of the journalistic hack in the daily tabloid. One falls into language in different ways and at different levels. Mythology is the level of the unconscious somehow laid bare, made visible (Ferguson, 1996). There is, as there is in the lure of dreams, more than a little magic in it. Lacan, re-writing Freud, assures or disconcerts us with the news that the unconscious is structured like a language. It is, whether reassuring or disconcerting, an exciting notion, one to wrestle with in the context of rich experience (Copjec, 1994. pp. 50-63).

Sport As Structure¹³⁵

How can sport be interpreted as a kind of language, and not any kind of language, but as a kind of poetry?¹³⁶ And if it can, then what kind of language can be structured so as to communicate the passion and the excess of meaning in sport? What kind of exposition is open to sport as a kind of ritual or dramatic consummation of poetry? Is a language of love, in any one of its many versions, at all applicable to sport?¹³⁷ Is there not a care, a dedication, a commitment, implicit in all elite sport? Or must sport as a structuration of language be tied to the centrality of victory and defeat,

triumph and loss - in a word, to agon? Why does mythology so attend upon sport (more so than upon science)?¹³⁸ What system of notation could possibly have even a semblance of plausibility in ordering sport in all its chaos? Can one only maintain the notion at a macro level in terms of basic structure? Finally, and crucially, following up on the structuralism of Jakobson, Are the axes of selection and combination, the twin poles of metaphor and metonym, up to the demands implicit in sport as a making of meaning after the manner of poetry? Do strong sport performers so select and combine from the prefabricated possibilities in their arsenal as to be analogous to strong poets? Is a classical cover drive, say by a Dexter or a Lara, in any sense a microcosm of consciousness as a word may be so understood? Or a high mark by a Jesaulenko or a Knights?¹³⁹ Do truly strong sport performers, to adapt Polanyi's language, modify the prevailing idiom of their sport, and thus change both the practice and themselves? An attempt is made in the sixth and concluding chapter to explore, albeit briefly, this last question. Here, the answer is restricted to some fundamentals of ordinary language. That is, understanding and interpreting sport as one kind of language, strong sport performers are presented in the relatively restricted terms of prose, not the higher reaches of poetry. How, then, do strong sport performers write their more mundane meanings in the processes of selection and substitution, combination and contiguity? How, in general and prosaic terms, do the patterns of bodily action in sport signify? The notion of sport as structure, of sport as possessing its own syntax, can be furthered by looking at a single sport, namely tennis. The description proffered is not that of certain necessary and sufficient conditions, but of particular actualities as read by an informed eye.

Tennis is not alone in being a lovely game, a game of punctuated motion, a sport in the nature of a duel in its lively blending of attack and defense, and not unique in being challenged by radical change which includes its growing globalisation.¹⁴⁰ It is easy enough to give simple, straight-forward descriptions of the writing and the reading of sporting technique, descriptions which disguise the pains and the care it took to perfect them, and the material conditions out of which they arose.¹⁴¹ Description may remain exclusively in the domain of a levelled-down, truncated perception - the kind of thing that Blake railed against, often with Locke in mind. In tennis, for example, attention may be restricted to aspects of stroke-production. In such narrowed perception the racquet becomes almost an extension of the hitting arm, and the means of exerting hitting mass on the moving ball either to initiate a point or to respond to the opponent's stroke. The racquet describes an array of movements, circular here, inverted ellipse there, and so on - the service motion is well described as basically a throwing motion, with the non-hitting arm placing the ball above the head in the hitting arc of the racquet head. It may extend to two prior requirements, two other ingredients in the hitting mix: the ball must be watched with supreme care, and one must ensure being within hitting range. In short, then, in terms of such description, a tennis player writes her game of tennis with her eyes, her legs, and her arms (the poor relation, the non-hitting arm in tennis, is of vital importance in all aspects of the game, not just the service).

Once such description escapes the chains of anonymity and impersonality the context of description starts to change. The doors of perception are no longer just ajar. Strong sport performers may select and combine from the code of their particular sport much as lesser competitors do, but they do so with uncommon effect. Donald Budge,

who had defective vision, still knew how to watch the ball, to calculate the intricacies of its flight. He also knew not only how to move to the ball, but how to use his legs to hit that famous backhand. Even knowledgeable commentators who talk about staying down to the ball in hitting the backhand, ought to watch tape of Budge in this regard. Rosewall also knew how to move to the ball on those trim, hairy little legs, and how to hit that slightly underspun backhand with utter precision time after time after time, but how differently to Budge! Champions both, certain elements of the stroke were held in common (utter concentration on the ball, easy efficiency of movement to the ball, maintenance of balance in the execution of the stroke), but the writing of the same stroke was still very different - as different as Sophocles from Shakespeare.¹⁴² Delimit the vision to the legs only, and one sees a speed and efficiency which is impressive in the case of a Steffie Graf, and a grace which can be fittingly described as a kind of lyricism in the case of Bjorn Borg. Watch Borg's legs only as he competes on the soft clay courts of Europe in those long rallies, and one sees, as they rightly say, poetry in motion: without the on-court agility and speed of a cat Borg would have been unable to get into the hitting position and hit those heavily top-spun piercing drives, so hard for volleyers to deal with effectively. Agassi's legs look ungainly, but allied with his eye-hand coordination, his ability to take the ball early, the consequences are even more lethal for his opponents. He does what Connors did in returning serve, but better still. What is left out in such descriptions is what is central, not just to tennis but to many sports, namely, the element of duel, the mix of attack and defense, the quest for supremacy, the ability to seize the moment of opportunity, the question of style, the primary and necessary narcissism of rival excellences, of two players employing their

weapons and their wiles to subdue the other. Luck has little to do with winning or losing in tennis. But who knows of the sweat and the tears behind the glory of victory in strong poets of sport? And how does one account for the novelty of the game-playing of these truly strong players?

One could continue in this vein of simple and limited description for ever and a day, but the fundamental point is clear: within the limits of a certain structure, a certain syntax, the strong poets of sport select and combine from the prefabricated possibilities of the various strokes employed in the game, in their own wonderful way, to craft a unique and winning game. Judgment is added to skill. Shot selection and placement are added to technique. Strong sport performers inevitably form an identifiable style.¹⁴³

Many answers have been given to the question of how meaning gets started. Some believe, even in the absence of evidence, that language must have originated in one fell swoop. Bloom, as the third chapter reveals, resorts to a metaphor of overflow (Bloom, 1991, p.12). Metaphor has often been employed to provide explanation of language as a source of meaning. Language itself, basically mimetic (there is, to use the now literalised metaphor, a certain symbol standing for something else), is not simply a neutral or mirror reflection of reality, but itself constitutes various kinds of reality. If enough has not been said already to suggest the impurity of the linguistic sign, along with its relative adequacies, then one need only recall the ironism of the Plato of *Cratylus*.¹⁴⁴ Certainly one can deal with the environment other than in and through language: one can hug trees, swoon at the moon, sigh at the stars. One can engage in baby talk, howl in uneasy unison with the family dog, and thereby establish a measure of communication and contact. That there are limits attending such forms of

communication, almost goes without saying. Certainly one can deal with others without words, but not day in and day out. And equally certainly, there are ways of communicating which do not require words at all, or, like the novel, use words fictitiously, or like poetry, use words figuratively (Mellor, 1990). That is, there are cultural codes, kinds of language, which signify differently.

Roberts, taking his lead from Nelson Goodman, indicates how sport, like art, can be said to have its languages, symbol systems akin to the lexicon, syntax, and semantics of language (Roberts, 1976). Goodman sought to bring art under the umbrella of semiotics and thereby justify art as a serious, meaningful, valuable cultural concern (Goodman, 1968). The symbol system which he worked out, his system of notation, to achieve this end can, by metaphorical transference of meaning, be called languages of art. At the core of representation in art, for Goodman, is denotation, not imitation. Art is both cognitive and emotive, an association of sensibility in which discrete categories are united, rather as Jakobson argues that parallelisms are an inherent characteristic of poetry, a language which ties its multiple syntax to the message. Copy theories of art are ruthlessly demolished by Goodman. The creativity and value of art are greatly enhanced in Goodman's reading of art's structure. In sum, pictorial art for Goodman, like verbal art for Jakobson, exemplifies syntactic density; time and space are in their forms. Structure becomes a writing, a speaking; language becomes literature; grammar becomes art, in pictorial and verbal art, differently but to similar ends. Art, like poetry, operates with multiple syntax.

In his argument that sport, like art, may be said, metaphorically speaking, to possess its languages, Roberts also stays with sport at a structural level. That is, sport,

like art, is a system of symbols. Much that is implicit, in an embryonic sense, in his doctoral dissertation, is later developed in various scholarly articles, more under the influence of Rorty than Goodman. In his *The Making And Re-making Of Sport Actions* (Roberts, 1993), for example, Roberts demonstrates that the visual thinking required to make sense of dense sport action ideally requires an informed eye, and necessitates a plurality and ambiguity of response. The analogy with what is required of the hearer or reader of a strong poem, and questions of plurality and ambiguity, is obvious, but must be postponed to later chapters. Structure, in sport as in poetry, does not preclude questions of plurality and ambiguity, depth and creation, relevance and commitment, but exists in tension with them latent with possibility.

Synoptic Relations

The broad lines of the work are now clear. The inspiration for the dissertation is to be found in a reading of the myth of the tower of Babel (*Book of Genesis: 11,1-9*). The strategy or protocol of reading is basically one of redemption (LaCapra, 2000, pp. 53-64). This work is a hermeneutic of sport as if it were a poetic kind of language; an essay in the re-description of sport focused upon matters of structure whilst seeking to understand and interpret the cultural and social capital of sport. The key question is how the truly strong sport performer may fittingly be said to change the language of his sport, and thus its meaning and value. The dissertation attends to sport in the three overlapping moments of writing, reading, and as a mimesis of social praxis.

This thesis, then, of sport as if it were poetry, situates both practices as a species of semiotic; sport, like poetry, is a system of significant signs which enacts meaning and

value. Structure, far from necessitating meaning as fixed, final, closed, resists closure if understood as an heuristic fiction, not dead dogma or austere science. Mythology, which is to be considered as a principal point of connection between sport and poetry, likewise is here understood semiotically, that is, as a kind of language. Typically, a myth is tied to the actions of ritual, and combines image and narrative. Ordinary language, which encompasses all three particular languages, is understood as a structure with a history. Language is a living thing and resistant to closure. Time and space can find expression in and through language because of this ultimate open-endedness. Neither the ideality of its signs nor the clarity of its logic reveal the especial importance of language: its signs are necessarily impure, and its logics many and varied (Pinker, 1994, 1998). More important still are the primary processes of selection and combination, and the perpetual oscillation between metaphor and metonymy. Strong poets best exemplify these processes and oscillation. Equivalence remains a constitutive factor in poetry.

Summary

This chapter has established, in outline, an argument for an understanding and interpretation of sport as a poetic kind of language. Its prime pre-supposition is that shared by Gadamer and Rorty: being that can be understood is language. Language exists in time and space, but, as a living thing, time and space also exist in language. Meaning and value are constituted in the perilous marriage of essence and existence. The main corollaries of this ruling episteme that being that can be understood is language, are that language is creative of meaning, and that this performative function is made possible by accommodating structure. Structure, far from precluding creation,

makes it possible. Basic language competence and the higher reaches of performance are ultimately inseparable.

The great structuralists (Saussure, Chomsky, Jakobson) have been utilised selectively in order to give substance to the centrality of language in the dissertation. Indeed, the mode of analysis centres upon notions of structure in language, both ordinary language, and more specialised cultural code. Under the net of ordinary language, three more specialised languages have been sketched: sport as a language; mythology as a language; poetry as a language. Myth becomes a bridge between the seeming abyss separating sport and poetry.

Ricouer's extensive studies in the rule of metaphor, especially his interpretation of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*, are utilised in this broad context. Ricouer is utilised to link the motifs of the dissertation within the broadly semiotic mode of analysis: mimesis in chapter two, anxiety of influence in chapter three, metaphor in chapter four, myth in chapter five, and poiesis in chapter six. Aristotle as interpreted by Ricouer, is supplemented where appropriate with literary theory and historical excursion.

The prime initial impetus of the dissertation of sport as if it were poetry, is the Babel myth read redemptively as a happy fall into the relativities of language and history, culture and society. Sport is best read as a precious part of culture proper. Such a reading provides hope in testing times, and wards off both foe and false friend.

Chapter Two

Gebauer And The World of Sport

Introduction

This second chapter seeks to provide some determinate form, if only tentatively and in outline, to the world of sport, so as to see it more perspicaciously in its relation to the world of poetry. This outline makes much of the concept of mimesis as a kind of making, and it does so by way of historical and literary excursus. Sport and poetry both may be said to exist as relatively autonomous worlds. The next chapter seeks to delineate the world of poetry so as to provide a literary framework of sorts for this work. It does so by taking up Bloom's supermimetic theory of poetry as the anxiety of influence, a kind of creative envy. In neither case is this form made an essence of necessary and sufficient conditions. The course of this chapter is that of two related stages: the first is a selective critique of Gebauer's articulation of sport as a mimetic means of making a world (Gebauer, 1995 b); the second seeks to salvage what is latently most valuable in Gebauer through an alternate process of historical retrieval and reconstruction. Recourse is made to both prototypical medieval sport and to medieval allegorical poetry as expressions of the feudal order of chivalry and courtly love. Gebauer's representation of sport as a way of world-making and a mimesis of social praxis merits critique in the present context of re-evaluating the cultural and social capital in and of sport through an involved semiotic mode of analysis. Sport, like literature, is, from one perspective, an institution, and from another, a practice - that is, it is one precious part of culture and society. A social practice needs the protection and cultural space an institution affords. The popularity of sport ought not disguise the fact

that it, too, has its standards and its rules. A systematic violation of the principle of fair play, for example, would have as a consequence, the degradation of sport, in something the same way that systematic untruthfulness would destroy the value in and of conversation. Gebauer is important in this work in both a positive and a negative sense. This critique of his understanding of sport aims to both clarify the sense and substance of key concepts in the context of sport, and expose certain limitations in Gebauer's understanding and application of them. Of particular concern is Gebauer's notion that sport cannot be considered as a kind of language. The more general criticism is that his is one more reductive understanding of sport.

Whether one accepts the thrust of structuralism or not, there remains a fundamental sense in which there is a standing of one thing for something else in the signs of language. The substitution of phoneme or grapheme in bundles, for thing, is complex not simple. The contrast of phoneme to phoneme (stop versus continuant, for example), word to word, phrase to phrase, and so on, is not to be confused with reference of word to thing. Language, in sum, is no mere technical thing working mechanically to preordained ends indifferent to human concerns. The conservative influence of structure does not prevent language functioning in an open-ended fashion. Verbal usage, for nominalist and non-nominalist alike, ought not be understood as any catholic kind of neutral or passive reflection of how things are or proceed. The concepts in which we think may, at the extremes, be constitutive and essentialist, or regulative and existential. It is in these senses that sport can be understood as a language, as a symbolic way of making a world.

Mimesis has been a cornerstone of aesthetic theory, including poetry especially, since Plato and Aristotle. Mimesis as used by Plato was something of an umbrella term, while Aristotle severely limited its scope, but developed a more precise and detailed understanding (Ricouer, 1996, p.349). Of critical importance in Aristotle's understanding is the tie between mimesis and metaphor in strong poetry (Ricouer, 1996, pp.347-355).¹⁴⁵ Mimesis has been taken to be both regulative and substantive in poetry (*poesis*).¹⁴⁶ If it can be demonstrated that the concept of mimesis also has a legitimacy in the making of the world of sport, but in a sense other than that understood by Gebauer, then a significant connection between sport and poetry will have been established.

Gebauer And The World Of Sport

Gebauer, in his theory of sport, makes mimesis and world-making his central concerns, but rejects sport as existing in any relation of either mutuality or reciprocity with language (Gebauer, 1995, p.103). If sport gives us a mimetically made world, as Gebauer contends, is this world then opaque or revelatory, inside or outside, of language? In Gebauer's understanding, sport is patterned movement, a matter of behaviors; a showing, not a language. While the patterns of movement are described as saturated with experience and mimetic in character, they remain, despite the importance attached to gesture, largely in the realm of the ineffable (Gebauer, 1995, p.103). Such symbolism as occurs is largely incidental to movement and gesture. Sport is a kind of showing, not a kind of cultural code or language (Gebauer, 1995, p.104). Gebauer seeks

in his application of mimesis to sport to salvage mimesis as a concept, as well as widen its usefulness to include sport.

Gebauer seeks to bring together and present as a unity two ideas, sport as a way of making a world, and sport as a mimesis of social praxis. Other fundamentals of his world of sport are performance, agon, cooperation, remembrance, certitude, individuation, and community. Importantly, he understands that social praxis provides the common root of sport, ritual, and theatre (Gebauer, 1995, pp.102-103). In other words, he links sport, ritual, and theatre, as forms of performance with a common origin in society. Just as importantly, he rejects the concept of sport as a language, in an aside, out-of-hand, on the grounds of the impurity of the signs in sport, an impurity inherent in sport as a mimesis of social praxis (Gebauer, 1995, p.103). The vexed but long-lived concept of mimesis is the matter most at issue. Why embrace sport as one kind of mimesis while repudiating it as any kind of language? Are the signs in and of sport so impure, so obscure, as to fall outside all and every semiotic? What is meant, for example, by the colloquialism, regularly made, that, at a critical stage of a sporting contest, that so-and-so, made a statement in and through his strong play?

The strategy, then, is to open up the question of the finding and the making of the world of sport through a process, not so much of a strong mis-reading of Gebauer Bloomian-style, as of possible and tentative alternative readings which veer between essentialism and existentialism.¹⁴⁷ One clear consistent determinate reading of Gebauer either way is hardly possible. Then, and only then, can what is estimable in Gebauer's theory of sport be turned to other ends by historical retrieval and reconstruction.

Gebauer's thesis of sport as a mimetic making of a world is relevant to a hermeneutic of sport as poetry because mimesis of one kind or another has been judged as central to poetry as verbal utterance elevated in its beauty and truth to the realm of art. Aristotle set the tenor of theorising about poetry in western culture when he wrote that the project of poetry is mimetic, and its aim to compose an essential representation of human actions (Ricouer, 1996, p.327). Vincent Buckley's theorising, cited in chapter one, is an extension of this basic classical understanding. Poetry, Buckley argued, strikes to the meaning rather than the detail of human life; poetry is a peculiar kind of metaphysics grounded in the sensual and sensuous.

Gebauer makes mimesis crucial to the making of the world of sport. He understands, in sum, that sport is both a mimesis of the actual given material world, and a mimesis of the prototypical social relationships of co-operation and agon: the patterns of movement in sport re-establish the reality of the physical world, even as they confirm the basic two-fold minimal relations of community and agon (Gebauer, 1995, pp.103-104).¹⁴⁸ However, he does not stop there, but complicates his theory of sport by seeking to employ Goodman's amimetic understanding of the making of worlds. Further difficulties in his exposition of sport as a mimetic making of twin worlds may be delayed a little.

There is a problem inherent in the concept of mimesis because of its very elasticity, a problem recognised by Gebauer elsewhere in an extended historical treatment of the term, but where it slides almost in becoming all things to all men (Gebauer, 1995a).¹⁴⁹ Plainly Gebauer and Aristotle employ the concept of mimesis differently, but where do the differences lie? The obvious and basic difference is that

one places mimesis in its sporting workings outside that quintessential symbol system we designate language, and the other places mimesis critically within those mighty works of strong poets, the likes of Sophocles, Euripides, Aeschylus, and Aristophanes.¹⁵⁰ This has further ramifications, as Paul Ricoeur, for one, makes clear: mimesis in classical poetry is tied to a making (Ricoeur, 1996, p.350); mimesis and poiesis exist in a reciprocity of constituting relations (Ricoeur, 1996, p.351); myth, plot, fable (*muthos*), is fundamental in both mimesis and poiesis (Ricoeur, 1996, pp.348-355).

Mimesis leads, almost inevitably, to those cultural and social contexts omitted when the writings and readings of sport are attempted in direct fashion and restricted to the literal and routine. Many insist on the utter autonomy of sport as a practice, insulating it from the contaminations of the political, economic, aesthetic, even ethical. In mimesis there does seem to be something of a blend of the practical and action-oriented, and the cognitive and ideal. But, then, what kind of ideal lacks all practical relevance? It has been a strength of pragmatism that it has striven to look at thought and practice in their consequences. How, then, might sport be conceptualised as mimesis in a fashion both plausible and productive?

Sport As Mimesis

Gebauer seeks to conjoin two matters in his address, that of sport as a kind of mimesis of social praxis, and that of sport as a version of making a world (Gebauer, 1995, p. 102). His world of sport is a mimetically made world. Sport, like ritual and theatre, he argues, citing Nelson Goodman, is one principal way of making a world.¹⁵¹ There is an unresolved tension here between the matter of mimesis and the matter of

making a world.¹⁵² This tension surfaces at various points in Gebauer's address, and nowhere more explicitly than when he roundly declares, "Sport is a form of repetition (Gebauer, 1995, p.104)."¹⁵³ If sport is, indeed, a form of repetition, then what is it which is repeated, and what meaning is attached to such repetition? What is taken as given, and what made? Gebauer's answer to the question of what is given, broadly, is patterns of bodily movement; and to what is made, both certitude concerning the actuality of the physical world and the existence of the prototypical and related social relations of co-operation and agon (Gebauer, 1995, p.104). Virtually nothing is said explicitly concerning the relations between self and world, and the matter of self-understanding is dealt with in convoluted fashion, ending in the eminently sensible statement that "the body believes what it plays" (Gebauer, 1995, p. 105). This statement is vitiated by the vacuous nature of the belief involved. Citing Bourdieu as the relevant authority does nothing to clarify matters. Now all this raises the issue of whether the world of sport is truly made rather than merely found, or the reverse. Less explicit, but even more central, is the complex and related question of mimesis itself, especially whether one conceives of mimesis, in the context of reflecting upon sport, as derivative and conservative, or innovative and transforming.

This is also the issue in considering poetry as, like sport, a form of mimesis. How might, given their seeming differences, a basic connection be established between sport and poetry given an acceptance that poetry is a mimetic art? Both, it can be argued, are indeed mimetically made worlds characterised by the performance principle. Gebauer's contention that sport is a mimesis of social praxis can be made useful to a thesis of sport as if it were poetry through literary and historical excursus

The classical understanding in daring modern dress of poetry as a mimetic art will be revisited at some length in the third chapter, but a word on relations between mimesis and language is in order. Both concepts, it seems, are double-edged, precariously tensioned between essence and existence, fiction and reality, given and made. When, in mimesis, there is mime of a reality beyond itself, one is more in the essentialist realm; when, in mimesis, the mime produces a reality of its own, something distinctively new and original, one is more in the existentialist realm. The first of these concepts of mimesis emphasises static structure and logical form; the latter emphasises enactment of meaning in all its plurality, ambiguity, and ambivalence - in a phrase, with uncertain existence. Now language, especially poetry, seems similarly double-faced, sometimes geared toward essence and maintenance of intellectual balance, sometimes toward creation, an overflow of meaning in the throb of life. More will be said on this score in the next chapter on Bloom and the world of poetry.

Sport As World-Making

Gebauer, interpreting sport as a mimesis of social praxis, employs Nelson Goodman in the further interests of contending that sport is a way of making a world (Gebauer, 1995, pp. 102-103). The basic question that must be asked in the present context is whether Gebauer hijacks Goodman to ends irreconcilable with Goodman's own understanding of his work. The problem, in a nutshell, is that Goodman's own basic stance is amimetic: the austere symbol systems with which he is concerned situate denotation, understood in quite a conventional sense, at the heart of representation independent of resemblance (Goodman, 1968, p.5, 1978, 1983).¹⁵⁴

Goodman's own description of his position in the matter of the making of worlds is that of "a radical relativism under rigorous restraints, that eventuates in something akin to irrationalism" (Goodman, 1978, p. x). At the outset of his work on worldmaking he aligns his quest for understanding the workings of symbol systems and the making of worlds, with the prior works of cultural phenomenology of Ernst Cassirer, and gives further self-description: "my own skeptical, analytic, constructionalist orientation" (Goodman, 1978, p.1). He clearly understands his philosophical work as continuous with that of Cassirer's cultural phenomenology (Goodman, 1978, p.1), and consistent with Rorty's contention that the only worlds humans understand are nurtured in and through language (Goodman, 1978, p.4; Rorty, 1996, pp.3-18). Goodman stresses that the frames of reference employed in description are not, strictly speaking, part of the description itself, but nevertheless play a critical role in determining the construction of the particular actual description (Goodman, 1978, pp. 2-7). Put differently, the eye is never innocent; the world is never given. The eye may be an informed, an educated one, or it may be otherwise; our worlds may be cheap and thin, or rich and deep. What is made is always a re-making, and never out of nothing.

This making and performance occurred in both the poetry and the tournaments—the sporting contests—of the middle ages. As will be made clearer later on in this chapter, Huizinga describes chivalry and courtly love in historical terms that may plausibly be construed as a theatrical and ritualistic mimesis of feudal order; C.S. Lewis provides an account of the medieval allegory of love voiced by its greatest poets that may plausibly be understood as a literary mimesis of the cultural and social core of feudal order. In each instance, to put the matter simply, there is the understanding of a

prior world order and its re-presentation in a simulacrum of noble deeds and a simulacrum of memorable words woven into instructive story. In each instance there is much more than a simple one-to-one representationalism because art enters into the construction. Gebauer, on the other hand, posits two given and minimalist worlds which “hark back to social praxis, especially to ways of dealing with the environment and others” (Gebauer, 1995, p.103). These worlds, antecedent to their making in the world of sport, are the material world and the social world, worlds which, in their remembrance, are brought to the surface and little more than simply confirmed in their re-presentation:

In sport, the actor does not advance from empirical experience to an intellectual level, that of abstraction; instead, he takes in something that already exists and changes its form. There is a way to go from social praxis to sport; two other ways lead to either theater or ritual. All three are media of remembering. Theater is a remembering of *how* something looks (a person or an action); ritual of how and under which circumstances one should commit certain acts; sport, of how human beings behave toward the environment (both the material and the personal) (Gebauer, 1995, p.103).

If this were fitting description of the world of sport then it would be grim news for those who value sport culturally. Goodman, like Rorty, consistently, as we shall see, rebuts *The Myth of the Given*. So, too, do both Huizinga and C.S. Lewis out of their different interests and perspectives. Sport, rather curiously, is interpreted by Gebauer, as a mimesis uniting two disparate worlds, the natural and the human.¹⁵⁵ Again, no bridges between the two are intimated or even envisaged.

Is there one world, or are there many?¹⁵⁶ Gebauer does well to underscore that sport, like theatre, like ritual, forms a relatively autonomous and discrete world (which means, of course, at the same time, a relative dependence) - an obvious enough point,

but still of fundamental importance (Fotheringham, 1992; Geertz, 1973). Art, too, verbal and non-verbal, deals in and with and through limited wholes far less extensive than theatre and ritual, whether it be a single poem or the collected poems of a poet or a movement, one painting or the whole corpus of a great master. One begins to get a handle on things generally through significant individual bits and pieces which are intensely experienced and stick in the memory and provoke reflection. It is fortunate indeed that it does not take genius to appreciate what it took genius to create. The artist, in her creation of these limited wholes, both clarifies and unifies. Art in general, and poetry in particular, bespeak a language of reconciliation, often a reconciliation born of a peculiar resolution of elemental conflict. Medieval and Renaissance artists are often at work uniting in their work, church and state, heaven and earth, providence and contingency, God and man, man and woman.

In her last great philosophical effort, a lovely and rounded work on ethics, a re-writing of her Gifford Lectures of 1982, Iris Murdoch considers the place of those limited wholes in the context of a consideration of the purposes of art (Murdoch, 1992). She points out the human proclivity for making worlds, limited wholes, despite wholesale ignorance and truncated awareness. She writes out of a critical love of Plato, a Plato understood as regulative rather than substantive; she writes as an artist, a novelist and poet, also.

The idea of a self-contained or limited whole is a fundamental instinctive concept. We see parts of things, we intuit whole things. We seem to know a great deal on the basis of very little. Oblivious of philosophical problems and paucity of evidence we grasp ourselves as unities, continuous bodies and continuous minds. We assume the continuity of space and time. This intuitive extension of our claim to knowledge has inspired the reflections of many philosophers....The urge to prove that where we intuit unity there

really is unity is a deep emotional motive to philosophy, to art, to thinking itself. Intellect is naturally one-making (Murdoch, 1992, p.1).

While instinct and intuition are complex bed-fellows, Murdoch's meaning is plain enough, and applicable to broader contexts as she is well aware. The muddle of the world requires clarification even if it sometimes comes in the welter of emotions and at the cost of simplification and fictions - one of the great arguments for art. Tolstoy argues that the infection, as he puts it, of emotion, is essential to art (Tolstoy, 1969, p.121). T.S. Eliot thinks that undisciplined squads of human emotion must find fitting objective correlatives which render them communicable and accessible to being weeded out, worked over, harnessed to proper and higher ends (Eliot, 1934, pp.18-22, pp.145-146). Tolstoy, one imagines, would have been livelier company than Eliot - which is not to say necessarily better company.

Even the recent history of science gives us worlds in conflict: the-running-down universe, the hotting-up-universe, the ever-expanding-universe, the black-hole universe, etcetera. Worlds, it seems, proliferate: the world of the mind, the world of the body, the world of poetry, the world of sport, the world of philosophy, the world of myth, the world of theatre, the world of music, the world of art, the world of science, the world of ethics, the world of politics, the world of commerce, the world of lovers, the post-colonial world, The Third World, The First World, *ad infinitum*. Worlds are a puzzle, even, perhaps, a mystery, to which the mind is given but before which the mind is active, excited, creative. Instinct and intuition demand form; left alone they tend to wither and die. Where Kant, writing about mind ahistorically and pure logic in general, had written, "Thoughts without content are void; intuitions (perceptions) without

conceptions, blind” (Kant, 1978, p.62), Goodman, intent on the eradication of the notion of the innocent eye, advances to the verges of reason as historically, culturally, and verbally instantiated:

Talk of unstructured content or an unconceptualized given or a substratum without properties is self-defeating; for the talk imposes structure, conceptualizes, ascribes properties. Although conception without perception is merely *empty*, perception without conception is *blind* (totally inoperative). Predicates, pictures, other labels, schemata, survive want of application, but content vanishes without form. We can have words without a world but no world without words or other symbols (Goodman, 1978, p. 6).

Access to the generation of worlds is through description, including re-description, the making of new worlds out of old, but even description itself requires description because it has its peculiar frames of reference, can take many and varied forms, and be operative at many levels. Blake, whose descriptions take in a world in a grain of sand, describes very differently to his *bete noire*, John Locke. The best description is much more than explanation and tautology; often it is where metaphor enters in to shed light on previously dark places. Apt metaphor, Aristotle declared, is the special preserve of genius (Ricouer, 1996, p.335).

If the world of sport is not created out of nothing, then what are its principal elements? How is mimesis to be figured in the making of this world? What is to be taken as the simulacrum? How is mimesis related to world-making? Do the events of the sporting contest speak, in some sense, in any sense, for themselves? Is experience itself a mode a knowledge? Is there tacit knowledge in sport? Are there, in the world of sport, languages of silence fabling the ineffable? Do competitors, especially at crucial points, make statements of a precious and distinctive kind when they rise from the ruck

to perform some extraordinary feat?¹⁵⁷ Is a network of conceptions fitting summary description in such moments, such instances (freedom, grace, beauty, truth, courage, conviction, confidence...)? Or are we more reliant upon literary art, fundamental tropes such as allegory or myth? How is the eye to be informed best as to what is actually occurring in a match? Or do all representations tend to get out of hand and defy the single authoritative interpretation?¹⁵⁸ What sense does it make to posit animal reactions against human intentions in the contest? Is mere reaction, not human response, the upshot of the competitor simply bent upon winning? Or is there always, at the very least, a fund of tacit knowledge in all elite performance? How does one assess better and worse interpretation of the sporting contest? What part does language play in both interpretation of the event and the creation of the world of sport? How far down does language go in the construction of such worlds as those of sport and theatre? Is it plausible to speak of poesis at work in the construction of the world of sport? What is to be understood as real in this world and what spurious? Such are some of the crude, large-scale, questions which pile up endlessly when one seeks to pursue Gebauer's notion of sport as a way of making a world.

If the nature of poetry is to be discerned in its complex history, a history of the agonies and anxieties of influence, spelt out in six subtle ratios (the subject of the succeeding chapter), what of the world of sport? Gebauer says specifically, that sport, unlike art, makes no new unknown possible world (Gebauer, 1995, p.104). It is worth quoting him fully on this point both because it makes clear the mechanical way in which mimesis is understood in the worldmaking process, and because it is at the heart of what

is a reductive reading of sport, whatever may be said to the contrary in other parts of the address:

This world, which sport retrieves from the memory and causes to surface, begins as resistance, support, acceleration, deceleration, as rhythms of movement. Sport is a form of repetition. It articulates these experiences once again. It adds no new dimensions to the gestures drawn from the memory. It recombines but, unlike art, constructs no new possible world. It does not possess the pretense that Plato condemned in art. Nor does it pretend to produce another world that takes the place of the real one. By remaking the world of experience and representing the typical or prototypical of the world of praxis, it shows the practical interpretation of the world. Showing (in Wittgenstein's sense) is a special form of interpreting. In this regard, sport is an *interpretation of interpretation* (Gebauer, 1995, p.104).

Such a regress of interpretation throws some doubt on certitude in sport, on what one knows, on the primordial quality of the sporting experience - its sweat, blood, adrenalin, pain, exhaustion, fear, relief, disappointment, anxiety, repression, love, exhilaration, camaraderie, etcetera. Gebauer has his own answer on this score, an answer which will emerge, in comparison and contrast with other understandings, later. One must underline here, however, that the world-making of sport which Gebauer posits is essentially and fundamentally re-productive: a form of repetition, a re-presenting of the world of social praxis within the confines of the bounded time and space of the sporting contest. Form is changed, but neither radically nor significantly.

Now both sport and poetry, as we shall see, can be understood and appreciated as forming their own rich relatively autonomous worlds, and mimetically and creatively at that. Gebauer, on the other hand, far from understanding mimesis as figuring in the construction of its own discrete world, reduces its function to that of mediating a pre-existing twin reality already, in some sense, out there awaiting the entrance and

participation of the competitor: a physical world mediated basically through sensation; a social world constituted by minimalist relations of cooperation and agon. Gebauer, despite his attack upon Mead (Gebauer, 1995, p. 103), neither esteems the senses, nor gives depth to a latent concept of community - what he vaguely calls "the extension of the individual". Many social practices exhibit a far-flung network of human relations. Whether they exemplify community or solidarity is another matter. It is this constricted view of mimesis which allows him, if implausibly, to dispense with sport as a language, to posit a world beyond verbal constitution of any sort. He does this on the grounds of the ideality of verbal signs, a notion which is tossed off incidentally and left unexplained. There is no suggestion of the impurities of reason or language. There is no obvious acceptance of the multiplicity of cultural codes making up contemporary western culture, each with its own structure and history, as forms of semiotic in their own right. Sport is allied with ritual and theatre as a kind of showing.

Sport, signally, according to Gebauer, is a principled extension of the individual human being in a network of social relations reduced to a stark minimum of agon and cooperation, and is best understood as a *medium* into which one enters when one has already learned to play games (Gebauer, 1995, p.102). Comparability rather than similarity is the operative principle in the competitive game-playing situation (Gebauer, 1995, p.105). The requisite knowledge is practical and sensuous and others in the contest retain their concrete physical presence:

One cannot abstract the staging of games from the side of performance. Just as the others do not merge with concepts, the patterns of action, the prototypes, are not pure forms. They are not realizations of ideal signs (hence, sport cannot be regarded as a language). The patterns of movement in sport are saturated with experience; they have mimetic character (Gebauer, 1995, p.103).

The twin certitudes existing in sport, born of sense and sensation rather than sensibility, are the reality of the external world, and the prototypical social relations of agon and cooperation (Gebauer, 1995, p.104). Sport exhibits in its tournaments its own dramatic version of the one and the many, the one remaining winner and the many eliminated losers.¹⁵⁹ The peculiar logic of sport arises from its enactment of fundamental dual meanings in bounded time and space through the regulated use of the body. Its great certainties, like those of ritual and drama, are prior to the certainty of the individual and others, and have a visceral quality. Patterns of culture different to ours will have social praxis interpreted in ways foreign to us, where sport is primarily the performance of *community* and every contestant represents all others. Sport exemplifies that which is common to self and others: “With the anthropology of the unique or superhuman, sport loses its memory” (Gebauer, 1995, p.106). The mimesis of social praxis remembered in sport belongs to all, is both simple and deep, and is a source of liberation.

Gebauer’s stipulated sources for his particular understanding of sport as a way of worldmaking are the philosophers Nelson Goodman, Pierre Bourdieu, Wittgenstein, and, negatively, G.H. Mead. Wittgenstein does not figure in his bibliography, so one does not know for sure whether he is referring to early or late Wittgenstein in his reference to the Wittgensteinian notion of showing as a form of interpretation (one suspects the former). Goodman is used for his views on worldmaking, views which he himself understood as amimetic, - “a radical relativism under rigorous restraints, that eventuates in something akin to irrealism” (Goodman, 1978, p. x). Bourdieu’s contribution is limited to that practical sense (*sens pratique*) associated with bodily

action, a circumscribed and elusive kind of sensuous knowledge that is mimetic and merges theory and practice (Gebauer, 1995, p.105). Mead is given short and sharp shrift, castigated as a trickster for omitting “the level of material actions” in an intellectualist reconstruction of actual bodily action which violates “the way athletes see their game” (Gebauer, 1995, p.103).

Goodman’s basic stance is amimetic in any sense of copying or imitating (Goodman, 1968,1978). He regards mimesis as important principally in a negative sense: in the world of art, representation has denotation at its centre, with imitation and copying an irrelevance and distraction as far as a proper analysis of creative work in modernity is concerned (Goodman, 1968, pp.3-43.). Goodman makes a radical distinction between representation and copying consistent with Gombrich’s understanding of the importance of cultural frames and the informed eye (Goodman, 1968, pp.7-10, 1978, pp.130-133.) Goodman makes his appeal to a notion of rightness of fit. In his view existing worlds, what is taken as given, cognitively as well as aesthetically, provide the makings of new worlds through the overlapping processes of composition and decomposition, weighting, ordering, deletion and supplementation, and deformation (Goodman, 1978, pp. 7-17). Many an interesting and illuminating comparison and contrast is provided by matching his account of the making of worlds, with Bloom’s account of the making of strong canonical poetry. For example, despite Bloom’s basic mimeticism, and Goodman’s basic amimeticism, Goodman’s last way of worldmaking, deformation, parallels Bloom’s first and possibly most important form of poetic remembrance, misprisioning or swerving from the strong predecessor, quite closely. Both have the gift of analysis, but they exemplify the gift very differently. Both

have the gift of imagination, but display it variously and in contrasting contexts. If one goes on to compare and contrast Goodman with Gebauer on this same issue of worldmaking, then one can instructively match the former's understanding of ordering and reordering with the latter's recombining: creative irrationalism versus reproductive, wooden-minded, ultra-realism.

Bourdieu, interested in cultural questions including education, has written specifically about sport (Bourdieu, 1994, pp. 339-356). How, he asks rhetorically, can one be a sports fan? His world of sport is one of supply and social demand.¹⁶⁰ Sport, as he understands it, has developed its own peculiar logics in particular historical times and concrete social contexts, from popular or vulgar folk games at times of celebration. Its most notable locus has been the nineteenth century bourgeois public boarding school for the upwardly mobile.¹⁶¹ The world of sport has been increasingly characterised by the associated processes of autonomisation and rationalisation. His description is a materialist one where the relative autonomy of sport is woven out of the interdependent logics of production and demand, and part of a political philosophy of sport:

The constitution of a field of sports practices is linked to the development of a philosophy of sport which is necessarily a *political* philosophy of sport. The theory of amateurism is in fact one dimension of an aristocratic philosophy of sport as a disinterested practice, a finality without an end, analogous to artistic practice.... (Bourdieu, 1994, p.343).¹⁶²

Bourdieu's intricate sociological analyses are Marxist with an Hegelian twist, a basic paradigm of materialist forces of production and demand, with "the cunning of reason" thrown in as an explanation for how structures reproduce themselves the way they do with a minimum of critical reflection. Consumers, those who proceed in expectation of the satisfaction of wants, far from always getting what they really need,

are themselves consumed, conned because they know no better consciousness than common consciousness and lack scientific instruction. Bourdieu's analyses, which focus upon class, ideology, and various forms of capital, material and symbolic, are bounded by an expansive but pessimistic political philosophy. Sport, one of several social practices which he deals with explicitly, is understood as one constructed social practice amidst many others, and is contextualised within the broad reaches of a political philosophy which effects a reconciliation of sorts between Althusser and Hegel mediated by Marx: Althusser's speculative science of history as ideology, Hegel's attempt to reconcile antinomies via "the cunning of reason", Marx's "critique of domination and theory of ideologies" (Raynaud, 1994, p.64). Like that other French sophisticate, Sartre, Bourdieu has a bleak vision of ordinary human existence and destiny. The mass of people become puppets pulled by invisible strings. To pull your own strings the help of a wise and advanced Party is necessary for the deluded majority. The practical sense inherent in mimesis postulated by Gebauer is illusion, false consciousness, not common property and rich experience.

Wittgenstein, like Plato, is more than a mite inconsistent and, or, ambiguous, but he is earnest not ironic (Harrison, 1979, pp. 209-226, 233-258; Russell, 1971). The strangulated yet ordered mysticism of his *Tractatus*, excluding both ethics and aesthetics, gives way to the fertile but vague notions of language games and forms of life. *Tractatus* Wittgenstein, still influenced by Bertrand Russell's theory of descriptions, had a straitened understanding of language and left much to the realm of silence; later Wittgenstein advanced slogans such as "Don't ask for the meaning, ask for the use," and "Every kind of statement has its own kind of logic," and ventured boldly

into aesthetics where previously he had refused to tread (Wittgenstein, 1967). Mead is given low marks for an intellectualist reconstruction of the generalised other, while in fact, Gebauer asserts, others in the contest always retain their particular and sensuous presence.

Putting Wittgenstein and Mead aside, one is hard put reaching agreement between two intellectuals so far apart in their interests and ways of thinking as Goodman and Bourdieu. It is rather like trying to marry a goat with a sheep: geeps are uncommon news. Goodman owes nothing to Marx, and his basic stance is amimetic as mimesis is generally and broadly understood. The principal question, of course, is whether Gebauer is able to utilise them to construct a productive understanding. Eclecticism can be a virtue as well as a vice. Sport stands in dire need of informed dilettantes beholden to no particular interest group or sect, and able to provide a plurality of perspectives which may well be incommensurable. Does Gebauer create a productive synthesis of his stipulated sources? Does he even understand his sources all that well? Is he a Bloomian strong mis-reader without even knowing it? Does his description of sport as a version of worldmaking born in the remembrance of long obscured social praxis resonate with common experience of what one knows when one plays competitive games? How does he understand the technical term “praxis”? How does he understand the relations between theory and practice in sport? What does he make of the density of action which characterises numerous sports, especially team sports such as football? Does his account even begin to explain the attraction to, and what many believe to be the glory of, sport?

Some of his actual description of sport is a description of behaviors, under the rubric of “the regulated use of the body”: realistic enough description of hand movements, for example, which have physical not emotive reference. The body in sport that believes what it plays, but where the play is outside any kind of language, has a limited and impoverished belief system (Gebauer, 1995, p.105). When a strong sport performer plays at the peak of his powers, plays with courage, conviction, and confidence, the overflow of belief is not difficult for the informed to read. Even the production of the prototypical social relations obtaining in sport, those of agon and cooperation, are stripped of content, construed abstractly in stark almost spatial terms of against and toward, within the context of the contest. The signs obtaining in sport, for Gebauer, are of a peculiarly denuded kind. Such translation of these signs as Gebauer provides offer neither light nor warmth: external physical objects and a contentless community not worthy of the name. Perhaps it is here that one finds the clue to Gebauer’s rejection of sport as a language: a remembrance of things past so impoverished, a language so confined, would be a poor, poor thing compared with even the ordinary language one uses day-by-day, let alone the best which has been thought and written. Sport, too, has its inspiration and revelation.

Gebauer’s intuition that sport is a form of worldmaking is an important insight. The world of sport is discrete enough and deep enough to reward attention. The world of sport is precious enough to repay critique, to marry theory and practice. Like art, it may become an image of virtue. The lack in Gebauer’s critique is in how mimesis figures in the making of that world. The memory of social praxis recovered in sport is so tied to the body as to be untranslatable into language, and so fixed in form as to be

incapable of anything other than the reproduction, in a new context, of the prior world of external things and minimal social relations. Such worldmaking is a bleak prospect, fit more for robots than humans. It truly is a world well lost.

Gebauer's world of sport and Bloom's world of poetry exhibit common elements. Principal points of quite specific connection between the two different worlds of sport and poetry include mimesis, play, agon, and remembrance. Mimesis, the core point of connection, may be understood as postulating, not a static and external reality which is imitated mechanically, but rather degrees of givenness in which both plot and metaphor figure so potently as to create something fundamentally new and different. Fictions of this order can appear so necessary as to be beyond the lie, as when Freud discovered the Oedipus complex made in poetic language in Sophocles and rediscovered in *Hamlet*. Aristotle gives expression to this process of becoming, this creative aspect of being, this essential representation of human actions, in his theory of strong poetry, where plot is the cornerstone holding disparate elements together in unity, and the trinity *poiesis-mimesis-katharsis* functions in concert. The function of tragic drama is related by Aristotle to its structure, just as the function of rhetoric (the counterpart of dialectic and thus part of philosophy) is related to its similar but different structure (*rhetoric-proof-persuasion*). The practice of poetry, and of literature generally, finds the light of day in a work, an *ergon*, a bounded whole, an energised manifestation of the play of the world, whether that play be comic or tragic, epic or mundane. Play is mediated into structure; structure is mediated into play. Familiarise, for example, oneself with Aristotle's concept of poetic form, and one is better placed to appreciate classical Greek drama. If plot (*muthos*) is indeed the hub of strong classical tragic

poetry, this helps determine the relationships of the other elements: characters (*ethe*), diction (*lexis*), thought (*dianoia*), spectacle (*opsis*), and melody (*melopoia*). Aristotle's *a priori* theory of tragic poetry has its legitimacy for his time and place: Shakespeare could not be held to it, for example. And one must consider the force of Ryle's injunction that by-and-large theory is the step-child of practice (Ryle, 1968, pp.28-32). It is the medium, brought to articulated form, in all its structural complexity which matters most, not the subjectivity of author or actor (Eliot, 1934, pp.16-21). Ricouer develops the notion of classical strong poetry, and metaphor in particular, as the equivocalness of being (Ricouer, 1996, pp.355-68).

More generally and fundamentally, play provides a necessary condition for the understanding of human existence revealed in both sport and poetry.¹⁶³ Gadamer insists that the sense of playing is the primordial one, and upon the "...*primacy of play over the consciousness of the player...*" (Gadamer, 1989, p.104). Play has its own dynamics, and the consequence of dissolving the distinction between belief and pretence:

Play has a special relation to what is serious....The player himself knows that play is only play and that it exists in a world determined by the seriousness of purposes. But he does not know this in such a way that, as a player, he actually *intends* this relation to seriousness. Play fulfills its purpose only if the player loses himself in play. Seriousness is not merely something that calls us away from play; rather, seriousness in playing is necessary to make the play wholly play. Someone who does not take the game seriously is a spoilsport. The mode of being of play does not allow the player to behave toward play as if toward an object. The player knows very well what play is, and that what he is doing is "only a game"; but he does not know what exactly he "knows" in knowing that (Gadamer, 1989, p.102).

This understanding is a salutary and necessary correction to the views expressed by Gebauer. Elsewhere, in an explanation of the motives for his hermeneutics, Gadamer

expresses himself more summarily and directly on this score of the excess of being over consciousness in the existential understanding of play, an understanding vital in the experience of art and the study of the social sciences: "Play is never a mere object but rather has an existence for the one who plays along, even if only as a spectator" (Gadamer, 1986, p.178).

For the most part, one is immersed, not distanced, as a genuine devotee, in both sport and poetry. That both sport and poetry can communicate before being well understood does not preclude reflection and criticism. On the contrary, in these realms where transparently all is not sweetness and light, it requires it. One does not read a play by Sophocles or Shakespeare the way one reads a recipe; one does not play a championship final the way one plays with a puppy. There are necessary tensions here. In the state of play, pure being predominates; awareness is more of a peripheral thing for the player - it is the flight and spin of the ball that matters in a battle for supremacy on the tennis court, and this does not preclude the possibilities of peripheral vision with all its ramifications. Eliot goes so far as to speak of the need for the artist to transmute emotion and personality, and of poetry communicating with the listener before it is properly understood. He uses the image of a chemical reaction to suggest the indivisibility of the poetic process (Eliot, 1934, pp.17-21.).

Gebauer's second truly valuable insight, is that the worlds of sport, theatre, and ritual, are akin. In his practice, he weakens this claim on two related fronts. First, his descriptions of these worlds (given above) are unhappy ones, not least because of their wooden-mindedness. One would never guess that, in what are virtual definitions of the three practices, resides the power to engage and proclaim commitment, transform lives,

enact meaning, purpose, value. Sport, for example, tethers and torments the will, stretches and strains it to breaking point, teases with feelings of futility in the distress of competition. Yielding to such siren calls spells the end for the sporting competitor. One can believe that the actual winning counts not a bagatelle; one cannot believe that anything less than supreme dedication to the process of winning suffices. Not everyone, of course, does separate the two: many believe that winning, whatever it takes, fair means or foul, is the only thing that matters. Gebauer himself comes close to this position: “Only the winner counts, not the many losers” (Gebauer, 1995, p. 104).

Second, the degree to which sport itself is ritualistic and dramatic is given a grossly reductive rendering after the initial observations as to their common derivations in social praxis, the prototypical patterns of movement in sport, and the theatrical staging of sport. The truth is that the ritualistic and the dramatic not only permeate sport but help it enact potent meaning and value. How they do this merits attention. Was the famous goose-step of the great Australian rugby union player, David Campesi, in the supreme effort to make those final yards and score a try, purely in the interests of efficiency, or something also in the nature of a statement as to the Pandora’s bag of tricks open to him in closing in on his goal? Was he playing mind games with his opponents? The worlds of ritual and of theatre blend and merge into the world of sport; a trinity of concerns becomes one and indivisible. Ritual and drama, too, are able to be translated as required into language. The signs of ritual and drama are rich signs, expressive signs, insightful signs. Ritual is so often a formulation in actions of myth. Drama is so often extended metaphor, the striving to express one thought right through. So are the signs of sport, which are also amenable to translation. Much has changed in

most major sports, yet much remains. Something as simple as the football being held aloft by one of the central umpires after all seven umpires (three field, two boundary, two goal) have marched in formation onto the oval, and the answering siren from the timekeepers, is portentous, a kind of fore-play. The high upraising of both arms on the sounding of the final siren by the central umpire closest to the action, is another significant enduring sign: the unity of the dense and varied action of the preceding two and a half hours is completed; the tensions of the contest are relaxed. One is left to rejoice in victory, or lament in defeat. Ritual and theatre are constitutive parts of sport's revelatory power, its compulsions and inspirations, its gloom and its glory. The signs of sport are not so much articles of faith, and certainly not a system of dogma, but they are life-affirming and life-enhancing. The pulse surges, the juices run; one is alive in the vital presence of enacted meanings.

Ritual is intimately related, not only to theatre, but to myth, as myth is to language and history.¹⁶⁴ In all three forms of representation (ritual, myth, language) there is a standing for something other, if not something prior. That something other, of course, need not be a material object or thing. The metaphor of standing for can be explicated most variously, but while denotation is the most basic function, physiognomic percepts and feeling-qualities cry out for attention in all three practices because they take us to the heart of the problematic question of value. They are part of the bedrock of poetic practice, of utterance which becomes art. Cassirer applauds Dewey here in his dissolution of the positivist position:

Empirically things are poignant, tragic, beautiful, humorous, settled, disturbed, comfortable, annoying, barren, harsh, consoling, splendid, fearful; are such immediately and in their own right and behalf....These traits stand

in themselves on precisely the same level as colors, sounds, qualities of contact, taste and smell (cited Cassirer, 1947, p.78).

Ritual formulates such physignomic features of life and violates the canons of play in that the sequence of actions precludes the unexpected: the sequence of communication and percept is stipulated in advance of the performance; ritual truly is repetition, unlike sport where the truly strong surprise and surprise in their powers of improvisation and innovation. Ritual, most explicitly, is tied to notions of community born of some revelatory moment of ultimate concern; ritual plumbs the drama of human nature and human destiny in a formulaic way and may descend into magic and rank superstition. Ritual demands belief, and may enact finitude and power. Can I, for example, remain in the community of the faithful if I doubt that this bread and this wine do not metamorphose into the very blood and body of Christ? What those within the flock understand as an act of faith necessary to salvation, those without dismiss as errant superstition. The existence of half-way houses does not obviate the practical necessity of judgment on the matter, or the abilities of humans to hold at the one time radically inconsistent beliefs. Moreover, one can dissimulate, resort to pretence whether in action or in word. Sham agreements, one can rationalise, are the way of the world - the abyss that separates the Machiavellian in politics from the Aristotelian, and the awareness that runs through the Socratic dialogues that, while uninformed opinion is at odds with informed judgment, there is no point of final closure, that there is always more that may be said whatever the republic, whatever the laws.

The performance of the religious rite is understood to a given body of believers to mediate between heaven and earth in such a way as to reconcile the divine and

human, and to strengthen and unify those on earth. The sense of the numinous, the idea of the transcendently holy, are not necessary, however, to the broader sense of ceremony or ritual. Those signal moments in a human life, birth, marriage, death, are aptly deemed rites of passage in the very ways in which they are marked ceremonially. Such moments are those of re-presencing within a sense of the whole; perhaps they hint at least of the eternal whether one conceives of time as linear or cyclical, pregnant with the future or ultimately absurd, two cities or one and only heaven. What is presented belongs to the one, the unique individual, at the heart of the human drama. The constant myth in marriage is that of finding one's other half. But does the rite not also belong to the many who participate in various ways? And in death and its rites come strange and awful meetings. The natural aversion to cheeks grown cold and eyes now sightless is unutterable bottomless futile longing to reclaim the dead and be as before. If there is pain on the lips, one wants a rite that will charm that away also and reinstate happier times. Sometimes especially the arguments of philosophers and theologians for the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body can seem an eternity away.

Ritual is the performance of community much in the way that Gebauer asserts sport is the performance of community. The one and the many find their relationship, if only momentarily. But sport is constituted, in part, by and through its rituals. In Australia, particularly Victoria, and most particularly Melbourne, rules football cuts across the great divides of money, suburb, class, gender, religion, ethnicity, age, and proves still a most inclusive sport, despite the corporate carpetbaggers.¹⁶⁵ Even more than Melbourne's notoriously fickle weather, it is a shared topic of conversation. Football tipping crosses boardrooms and factory floors. Sport in all its glory (and that

includes its rituals) has the power to bring people together, as well as to separate into warring camps. Few sports lack their rituals, which are part of their power to compel devotion. Competitors especially, often feel compelled to invent their own personal and trivial rituals, and thus make of ritual something other than the performance of community. Who can forget that artful competitor, Art Larsen, meticulously avoiding standing on the lines of the tennis court as he made his way from battle station to battle station? Who can plumb the welter of emotions present as the competitor prepares for battle? Fear, in one form or other, is not the only factor. There are anxieties of influence here, too, most clearly when the young strive to emulate and outstrip their parents or mentors. Preparation for competition can be like preparation for battle. Some retreat early to the quiet of church and prayer; some play stirring rock music in favoured company, and loudly. Similarly, relief after the contest, if victory is won, has various accompaniments. Some seek the home hearth, some the favourite nightclub in the company of friends. Here, too, the private and the public can interweave.

Drama, with similar roots in religion and festival, foregrounds both mimesis and play, enactments of the play of the world. The experience of art compels participation and interpretation. And in play, also, whether spontaneous or formally constrained by rules, one is not external to the action; one's being is at stake in the playing; here, too, and more explicitly, an understanding of human existence enters in to the actions, gestures, spoken words. Life can be conceived as a tragedy or a comedy. In sport, as in a dramatic performance, the playing requires the spectator to complete the action. One is truly a spoilsport if one refuses to take the sporting contest seriously, because the contest is made into something insignificant, a mere entertainment, a superficial

spectacle, a happening, even a non-event.¹⁶⁶ One can not rightly be disinterested in attending the theatre, in treating the drama as a mere curiosity piece. One has a stake in the play, even if it is pitched at the level of the absurd as in a Beckett play. It is the comedy, the pathos, the tragedy, of the play of the world which one attends ultimately in the theatre. Paying due attention is even more difficult than listening well, but is a necessary ingredient in recognitions of self and others. If the performance of the particular play does not mediate something of the play of the world, something is seriously amiss. The stage is no longer a world but a mere curiosity shop. Gebauer does well to associate sport, ritual, and theatre.

In his representation of sport as a way of making a world, Gebauer has something to say about ritual and theatre, but little to say about play. Instead he talks about the regulated use of the body, the movements of the hand, as means of retrieving from the memory the reality of the world! Only jejune philosophers at loose ends need reassurance on this point. Gebauer puts to one side not only the individual player's perspective on sport, in favour of a perspective of sport as a medium for the playing of competitive games, but the import of play as well. While this attention on the structural aspect of sport is well and good for present purposes of reading sport as if it were poetry, his mechanical and superficial manner of attending to the matters of mimesis and performance leaves a glaring lacunae which one must contrast explicitly if summarily with more insightful accounts, before further considering the question of mimesis. Play, central to sport and poetry, has expansive importance. The psychological approach of Gregory Bateson allied with the historical approach of Johan

Huizinga seem appropriate for present purposes, especially so given Bloom's broadly similar approach to his theory of poetry (Bateson, 1965, 1967; Huizinga, 1985, 1988).

Bateson's theory of play and fantasy is important because it makes good sense of a wide range of behaviors, and is, broadly speaking, consonant with those understandings of poetry which take seriously ideas of levels of communication and common experiences of ambiguity, ambivalence, and plurality. Bateson's theory systematises fundamental aspects of Huizinga's historical account of chivalry in the waning middle ages, and C.S. Lewis' understanding of the trope of allegory in medieval literature. Unlike Gebauer, he is able to translate behaviors as communication full of meaning. Two descriptions of the same phenomena are invariably better than one, provided both are informed, he argues. He uses the image of the two eyes to give binocular vision to good effect. While he is given to different versions of the world rather than different worlds, his sense is similar to that of Goodman. Further, he stresses the relevance and importance of context or frame to making sense of things, to the construction of meaning and to learning. This, too, is consonant with the notion of text as a process of expansion and relation. As far as a language is concerned, this involves unravelling what he calls paradoxes of communication, and attention to those structural matters which escape the untutored eye - metamessages, metacommunication. This is broadly consonant with Chomsky's notions of deep structure, and even more so with Jakobson's analyses of the factors and functions of language. Once one starts to talk about frameworks one has clearly moved from the literal to the metaphorical. Simple notions about frozen concepts and ideal signs no longer have unquestioned application or great merit.

A careful analysis of play, Bateson argues, demonstrates some of the many paradoxes of communication actual and latent in the learning environment (Bateson, 1985, pp.131-144; 1988, pp.133-150). Complex realities can belie surface appearances. Multiple relationships demand more strenuous engagement than single. One must distinguish between map and territory, threat and histrionics. Play is the matrix of creativity. His theory of play and fantasy is cumulative and sophisticated, and makes sense of behaviors which would otherwise bewilder. One can include the behaviors of poets and sporting competitors in that reckoning.

Bateson accepts from the classic structuralists the insight that language often proceeds past the point of simple denotation (“The cat is on the mat”) to the metalinguistic (“The word ‘cat’ has no fur and cannot scratch”) and the metacommunicative (“My telling you where to find the cat was friendly”, “This is play”). The examples are his (Bateson, 1985, p.133).

Examine the statement “This is play” and a paradox of a peculiar type emerges, “a negative statement containing an implicit negative metastatement”.

Expanded, the statement “This is play” looks something like this: “These actions in which we now engage do not denote what those actions *for which they stand* would denote” (Bateson, 1985, p.133).

Examine the metaphor of standing for and one understands that it is usually a virtual synonym for denotes: “cheese” stands for cheese. What is the result? Two degrees of abstraction regarded synonymously in defiance of the logician’s ideal:

“These actions, in which we now engage, do not denote what would be denoted by those actions which these actions denote.” The playful nip denotes the bite, but it does not denote what would be denoted by the bite (Bateson, 1985, p.133).

One is familiar with the experience of playing with the family pet. Animals as different as cat and dog can seize one in play and, because of the bonds of mutual trust and affection, press their fangs to the point of puncturing the skin but without actually doing it - both parties understand that to go that further step would spoil the fun and end the game. Perhaps even invite retribution of some sort.

In contrast to early empiricist notions, such as those of Locke, of language as inner mentalesse, and action as outer, Bateson adopts from the semantics of Alfred Korzybski the figure of map-territory relation between language and what it denotes,

....a message, of whatever kind, does not consist of those objects which it denotes ("The word 'cat' cannot scratch us). Rather, language bears to the objects which it denotes a relationship comparable to that which a map bears to a territory. Denotative communication as it occurs at the human level is only possible *after* the evolution of a complex set of metalinguistic (but not verbalized) rules....

Play is a phenomenon in which the actions of "play" are related to, or denote, other actions of "not play." We therefore meet in play with an instance of signals standing for other events, and it appears, therefore, that the evolution of play may have been an important step in the evolution of communication (Bateson, 1985, p.134).

One could attempt usefully to relate the thrust of Bateson's theory of play and fantasy to Goodman's understanding of the symbolic formation of worlds. Bateson's theory relates more transparently and readily to the pomp and circumstance of the medieval jousting tournament in all its plurality, ambiguity, and ambivalence. It is also worth remembering all the time the much more recent attempts by the likes of Coubertin and Avery Brundage to revive basically aristocratic ideals in sport - *chevalerie* in a foreign but understandable word; the language of amateurism in a phrase.

Indeed it is helpful at this very point to step back a little both metaphorically and historically, and consider through historical and literary examples, first sport as mimesis

of social praxis, and then sport as the making of a world. Historical and literary illustration can further exploration of the creative possibilities in sport as both a mimesis of social praxis and a language, possibilities not admitted in Gebauer's theory of sport as a form of worldmaking. More broadly, a basic cultural and social connection between sport and poetry as signifying acts can be made. While Greek practice celebrated both sport and poetry at Mount Olympus in classical times, one turns closer to home for historical instantiation and insight. Homeric epic and Miltonic epic have different subjects, but common basic form (Lewis, 1943). Long after Homer, and centuries before Milton, epic is partially and slowly replaced by romance, not simply as a literary form, but in religious as in secular thought and practice (Southern, 1962, pp.227-267; Strayer, pp.57-60, pp.148-151).¹⁶⁷

Feudal Order, Sport, And Poetry

Feudal order in western Europe before the revolution wrought by the rise of the bourgeoisie (Gibbs, 1953), was seen as a divinely ordained order where what to render to Caesar and what to render to God was in perpetual dispute (Strayer, 1965, pp.95-100). The divinity which hedges kings had yet to be defined and established . The tournament was already in process of becoming something of a substitute for war and a sublimation of eroticism (Strayer, 1965, pp.152-153).

Feudal order is such that church and state strive for pre-eminence in crude and cruel ways, and the common man remains largely in the bonds not only of fiefdom, but anonymity (Huizinga, 1965; Strayer, 1965; Gibbs, 1953; Southern, 1962). Roughly, the church is concerned with the higher and eternal supernatural order, the state with the

lower and ephemeral existential or political order (Dawson, 1960).¹⁶⁸ The latter is an order far removed from post-industrial liberal democracy, but what of its broad cultural consequences? Slowly, epic gave way to romance, the *Song of Roland* to the *Romance of the Rose* (Southern, 1963). Feudal civilisation, in its maturity, had a treasured if ambiguous place for the combined orders of chivalry and courtly love, and it celebrated them in ritual and poetry (Strayer, 1965, pp.148-151, Dawson, 1960, pp.140-160). In these orders life and letters achieved their own peculiar reconciliations. On the one side, chivalry and courtly love found ritualistic and dramatic expression in the medieval jousting tournament, and beyond it, ultimately, in recognisable forms of modern sport (Guttmann, 1996). On the other side, chivalry and courtly love, departing by degrees from overt action and sublimating or subverting erotic desires, found expression in various rituals of love, and from thence to poetry. Johan Huizinga gives a vivid historical account of waning medieval life in all its devotion and excess (Huizinga, 1965). C.S. Lewis describes a moment of transformation of western cultural sensibility under the aspect of the allegory of love spun by poets (Lewis, 1975). His literary study in medieval tradition does not, like Huizinga's historical chronicle, use medieval verse as so much rich material for sweeping yet detailed historical reconstruction. Rather, he investigates one important medieval cultural tradition in the literary trope of allegory, a trope where the verbal sign (particularly as combined in the literal narrative) separates in a pronounced manner from its meaning: monumental personified abstractions like Dame Leisure, Sweet Speech, Courtesy, and Amor running their interwoven courses, do not take modern fancy as such, but are themselves slowly transformed as expressions of the working of mind in verbal utterance (Lewis, 1975). Allegory is intimately related to

that other trope, irony, saying one thing while meaning quite another. It is pertinent that this trope is very much in vogue among contemporary critics, both literary and philosophical - Paul de Man, Harold Bloom, Richard Rorty, Derrida, to name but a few.¹⁶⁹ Irony is a trope treasured by some as foundational, the trope of tropes; by others, condemned as inevitably reactive (Tracy, 1988, pp.59-60). Plausibly, Gadamer reads Plato as a kind of ironist (Gadamer, 1986, pp.184-185), while just as plausibly Bloom does likewise with the J writer (Bloom, 1991, pp.3-12).

Huizinga, importantly, writes his work as consequence of the quest for seeing Flemish medieval art with a more informed eye. Lewis, perhaps, is already in pursuit of becoming not only a literary historian and critic of the first rank, but a theologian of a prophetic cast in a decadent age.¹⁷⁰ Both Huizinga and Lewis, in their different ways, are concerned with the complex nexus between life and art, with action-oriented expression, with ritual and drama, with love and poetry, with culture and faith, in an age and a culture where Christian orthodoxy, from a position of great power, spoke ambiguously and ambivalently about such things. Where Plato, with beguiling simplicity and utter irony (he had, after all, seen the forces of law and order in the state, judicially murder his teacher, Socrates), had posited the state as a mimesis of the “noble and perfect life”, feudal order represented in all its ambiguity and ambivalence the discordant ideals of Church and aristocracy, the eternal city of Augustine and the earthly realms of the savage, passionate, powerful, and ambitious (Huizinga, 1965; Strayer, 1965, pp.99-100).¹⁷¹

One turns to salient features of waning medieval history as described by Johan Huizinga, and medieval literature as described by C.S. Lewis. What will be traced on

the one side will be a broad line of development from feudal order, including the order of chivalry, to the jousting tournament, and from there to sport; and on the other, the rituals of love celebrated in the middle ages and their ultimate expression in poetry. Enough will be said to indicate that the historical and cultural conjunction of sport and poetry is more than merely contingent and fantastical.¹⁷² Both ancient Greece and medieval Christendom (those who acted under the auspices of earthly honour rather than heavenly glory) understood that they belong together.¹⁷³

Huizinga writes of the violent tenor of waning medieval life passing almost imperceptibly into the Renaissance. These were times when experience drew clearer outlines, when ritualised forms of expression constituted lay culture (Huizinga, 1965, pp.9-29). A widespread melancholy gripped the age of the waning middle ages in Europe (Huizinga, 1965, pp.30-53, pp.134-146). The lure of the ideal life found few in a divinely ordained and static culture who strove for amelioration of the common lot. Some sought for the ideal in prayer and fasting, mortification of the body, retreat and resignation from the world where the choice was between God and mammon, church and state. The main game in the pursuit of the sublime in this violent and aristocratic age came in the play of fantasy, “suave fancies of spiritual love” (Huizinga, 1965, p.192), a quixotic blend of illusion and delusion, the erotically toned dream of chivalry and courtesy where knights were virtuous and all men equal, but only in theory spun out in the top of men’s heads and firmly resisted in their hearts:

The dream of past perfection ennobles life and its forms, fills them with beauty and fashions them anew as forms of art. Life is regulated like a noble game. Only a small aristocratic group can come up to the standard of this artistic game. To imitate the hero and the sage is not everybody’s business. Without leisure or wealth one does not succeed in giving life an epic or idyllic colour (Huizinga, 1965, p.38).

Art and fashion were closely aligned culturally in feudal order, “and fashion leaves no monuments behind” (Huizinga, 1965, p.52). In the prevailing almost liturgical ordering of a static society, life in its various moments - birth, marriage, death, diplomacy, war, friendship, entertaining - was precisely ordered. “All forms of etiquette are elaborated so as to constitute a noble game” (Huizinga, 1965, p.41). “All relations, all dignities, all actions, all sentiments, had found their style” (Huizinga, 1965, p.53). But how, one might insist, were chivalry and courtly love born and mixed? Huizinga provides the clue in the pregnant concluding sentence of his chapter on medieval pessimism and the ideal of the sublime life, a sentence which presages chivalry and courtly love in their widening circles of influence:

Still, the richest flower of beautiful forms was reserved for three other elements of life - courage, honour, and love (Huizinga, 1965, p.53).

The modern exercise of the historical imagination on the Middle Ages, Huizinga writes, is commonly not on the important economic and political developments (Powicke, 1942; Tawney, 1964), but on Chivalry (Huizinga, 1965, p.54) with its riven ethic, its “strange mixture of conscience and of egotism.”

The conception of chivalry as a sublime form of secular life might be defined as an aesthetic ideal assuming the appearance of an ethical ideal. Heroic fancy and romantic sentiment form its basis. But medieval thought did not permit ideal forms of noble life, independent of religion. For this reason piety and virtue have to be the essence of a knight’s life. Chivalry, however, will always fall short of this ethical function. Its earthly origin draws it down. For the source of the chivalrous idea is pride aspiring to beauty, and formalized pride gives rise to a conception of honour, which is the pole of noble life (Huizinga, 1965, p.67).

“The life of a knight is an imitation” Huizinga writes further on (Huizinga, 1965, p.69), but it is based on a fundamental falsity, remembrance of what never was except in feverish and pious minds. Sometimes its practitioners owned up and turned in other directions, acknowledging in retreat and resignation and redirection the hollowness of the dream. Huizinga summarises thus:

The ideal of chivalry tallies with the spirit of a primitive age, susceptible of gross delusion and little accessible to the corrections of experience. Sooner or later intellectual progress demands a revision of this ideal. It does not disappear, however, it only sheds its too fantastic tendencies (Huizinga, 1965, p.125).

This is not to deny the dream of heroism and of love all civilizing value:

originally, it seems, the tournament had been a free-for-all with terrible casualties, but the form evolved and diversified (Guttman, 1996, pp.38-49).¹⁷⁴ Both the play instinct (Huizinga, 1955) and the language instinct (Pinker, 1994) press to find their forms and uses at various moments of historical and social development. Epic poetry was a fitting form to extol lords and knights who often combined political influence with warlike practice (Strayer, 1965, pp. 57-60, pp. 148-151). Eventually economic and political times, and cultural tastes, changed (Tawney, 1964; Lewis, 1975; Southern, 1962). Popular poetical works such as *Romance Of The Rose* found their readers and exercised their subversions of dogma. Dreams of heroism and love remained dreams, but even day-dreams can, as Freud explained, in time find form and constitute their own virtue (Freud, 1964, pp.667-674). All that glitters may not be golden, but strong poets can create wonders from the basest of materials.¹⁷⁵ The aureate style of courtly love could only arise within an aristocracy born to rule lesser breeds, with might if and when necessary. Its relative and lyrical emancipation from the unfettered violence of

medieval warfare is remarkable. In an evasion of the reality principle ideality and illusion become curiously mingled in the period under review when fancy runs riot:

....the thought of all those who lived in the circles of court or castle was impregnated with the idea of chivalry. Their whole system of ideas was permeated by the fiction that chivalry ruled the world. This conception even tends to invade the transcendental domain. The primordial feat of arms of the archangel Michael is glorified by Jean Molinet as ‘the first deed of knighthood and chivalrous prowess that was ever achieved’. From the archangel ‘terrestrial knighthood and human chivalry’ take their origin, and in so far are but an imitation of the host of the angels around God’s throne (Huizinga, 1965, p. 65).

It can be difficult for many a stolid modern realist in the grip of binary logic to understand the issues which arise from the desire of bestowing form, of fleshing out life both beautiful and sublime, of creating “a framework for a living passion” (Huizinga, 1965, p.79). Huizinga’s understanding is deep and detailed. Erotic love, almost taboo for the Church (C.S. Lewis explains its theological difficulties in the matter sympathetically), had its multifarious consequences. “The Church was openly hostile to tournaments” (Huizinga, 1965, p. 80). Denied dramatic expression, eros finds representation, not only in poetry, but in noble sports:

Literature did not suffice for the almost insatiable needs of the romantic imagination of the age....There was, however, another form of representation, namely, noble sports, tourneys and jousts. Sportive struggles always and everywhere contain a strong dramatic element and an erotic element. In the medieval tournament these two elements had so much got the upper hand, that its character of a contest of force and courage had been almost obliterated by its romantic purport. With its bizarre accoutrements and pompous staging, its poetical illusion and pathos, it filled the place of the drama of a later age (Huizinga, 1965, p. 77).¹⁷⁶

These noble sports were a mimesis of aristocratic social praxis, of the knight errant, but they were much more than just this. They were theatre, and ritual, and

romance, in one; the enacted poetry of time and space, fond memory and quivering repression:

The warlike sports of the Middle Ages differ from Greek and modern athletics by being far less simple and natural. Pride, honour, love, and art give additional stimulus to the competition itself...The realities of court life or a military career offered too little opportunity for the fine make-belief of heroism and love, which filled the soul. So they had to be acted. The staging of the tournament, therefore, had to be that of romance; that is to say, the imaginary world of Arthur, where the fancy of a fairy-tale was enhanced by the sentimentality of courtly love (Huizinga, 1965, p.81).¹⁷⁷

The idyllic vision of life enacted in the medieval tournament is obscured in the multifarious degradations of contemporary sport, but it is not dead, as romance and chivalry are not dead whatever some feminists might wish to the contrary. Both sport and poetry enact the whole gamut of sentiment, and they do it in the most multifarious ways. There is pathos in the early death of a Lenglen or a Maureen Connolly, in a middle-aged Ali trembling his way through life whilst engaged in the pretence that he is still the greatest, in the imprisonment and ostracism suffered by a William Tatem Tilden II, not only torn by his sexuality, but uncertain of his true vocation between the theatre and the novel, where he was a dismal failure, and tennis where he ranks with the strongest of the strong. Their short-lived but unshabby glory is its pre-condition. In each such instantiation of the strong poet in sport there is more, much more, and that more includes both a song of self and the return of a kind of romance.¹⁷⁸ One need not, like medievalists, imagine them as so many angels gathered with the archangel Michael round the throne of God in order to assess their greatness. The courage to be is never more palpably exemplified than in the strong sport performer being tested to his or her

limits - a Laver, for example, finding that something extra and different which turns the tables and ends the contest triumphant just at the moment when defeat seems certain.

Huizinga's description of the waning middle ages is not limited to just chivalry and courtly love. He captures the spirit of the historical times as sympathetically and fittingly in his way as Etienne Gilson captures the spirit of medieval philosophy in his (Gilson, 1950).¹⁷⁹ Huizinga accords space for description of a ghoulish veneration of relics¹⁸⁰ and a piety depleted in concrete and fantastic images, and linked more than tenuously and indirectly to the dominant tradition of thought in both theology and philosophy:

In the Middle Ages the symbolist attitude was much more in evidence than the causal or the genetic attitude....it is indissolubly linked up with the conception of the world which was called Realism in the Middle Ages, and which modern philosophy prefers to call, though less correctly, Platonic Idealism (Huizinga, 1965, pp.197-198).

Realism and Idealism have constituted perennial philosophical problems.¹⁸¹ Medieval realism drew its inspiration from sources other than Plato. While Aquinas rubbed the vocabulary of Aristotle up against that of Augustine, who was indebted to Plato, Augustine remained very much a literary man with catholic literary influences of the classical world. Medieval realism, at its core, relied upon metonym rather than metaphor, worked its laborious way from the things of sense up the stairway to the heavenly paradise where angels might practise in concert their dancing upon pinheads.

In addition to medieval realism are two further modes of thought, symbolism and allegory or personification. Huizinga explains the medieval procession of the modes, under the influence of Plato interpreted as a rank essentialist, thus,

All realism, in the medieval sense, leads to anthropomorphism. Having attributed a real existence to an idea, the mind wants to see this idea alive, and can only effect this by personifying it. In this way allegory is born. It is not the same thing as symbolism. Symbolism expresses a mysterious connexion between two ideas, allegory gives a visible form to the conception of such a connexion. Symbolism is a very profound function of the mind, allegory is a superficial one. It aids symbolic thought to express itself, but endangers it at the same time by substituting a figure for a living idea. The force of the symbol is easily lost in the allegory (Huizinga, 1965, p.197).

Plato, interpreted as holding that only the Forms could be objects of knowledge, could readily enough give way in popular fancy to the kind of reification present in the personifications of poetic allegory. Aristotle, cooler in temperament but more hospitable to reasons of the heart, when added for good measure, could make for a heady mix in both philosophy and poetry.¹⁸² Aquinas and Duns Scotus are not the only medieval philosophers still read today, nor Dante and Chaucer the only poets.

And what of the other line of development leading from chivalry and courtly love through various rituals of love to modern poetry? C.S. Lewis is sympathetic both to the waning Middle Ages and to the prevailing literary trope of allegory which he understands as fundamental in thought and language. He stresses, rightly, that the trope of allegory is not merely iconic figure, but narrative structure also. While he agrees with Huizinga that there exists a chasm between symbolism and allegory, he interprets that chasm differently (Lewis, 1975, p. 45), and makes a contrary estimate of the trope of allegory:

Allegory, in some sense, belongs not to medieval man but to man, or even to mind, in general. It is of the very nature of thought and language to represent what is immaterial in picturable terms. What is good or happy has always been high like the heavens and bright like the sun. Evil and misery were deep and dark from the first. Pain is black in Homer, and goodness is a middle point for Alfred no less than for Aristotle. To ask how these

married pairs of sensibles and insensibles first came together would be great folly; the real question is how they ever came apart, and to answer that question is beyond the province of the mere historian. Our task is less ambitious. We have to inquire how something always latent in human speech becomes, in addition, explicit in the structure of whole poems; and how poems of that kind come to enjoy an unusual popularity in the Middle Ages (Lewis, 1975, p.44).¹⁸³

He casts his expert eye over and through its leading poets: Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, Chretien de Troyes, Chaucer, Gower, Thomas Usk, Spenser.... The idyllic vision of life in an otherwise dark time, the dogmas and rituals, and especially the cultural development of the kind of romantic love expressed, often ironically, in its poetry, move him to industry and measured eloquence. He traces the vexed origins and uncertain quality of modern romantic love back to the Troubadours, lusty French poets of the eleventh century:

...an unmistakable continuity connects the Provencal love song with the love poetry of the later Middle Ages, and thence, through Petrarch and many others, with that of the present day....it seems to us natural that love should be the commonest theme of serious imaginative literature: but a glance at classical antiquity or at the Dark Ages at once show us that what we took for 'nature' is really a special state of affairs, which will probably have an end, and which certainly had a beginning in eleventh-century Provence (Lewis, 1975, p. 3).

Furthermore, he goes on to insist upon the novelty and the power of this romantic love as of revolutionary historical import:

French poets, in the eleventh century, discovered or invented, or were the first to express, that romantic species of passion which English poets were still writing about in the nineteenth. They effected a change which has left no corner of our ethics, our imagination, or our daily life untouched, and they erected impassable barriers between us and the classical past or the Oriental present. Compared with this revolution the Renaissance is a mere ripple on the surface of literature (Lewis, 1975, p. 4).¹⁸⁴

Understanding its cultural origins constitutes a challenge to the imagination of moderns accustomed to romanticism in all its efflorescences, a challenge to respond to past historical worlds bereft of its consolations, comforts, and charms, not to mention its challenges:

There can be no mistake about the novelty of romantic love: our only difficulty is to imagine in all its bareness the mental world that existed before its coming... (Lewis, 1975, p. 4).

The rituals of love celebrated, like the love itself, were of a distinctive kind centred about four dominant characteristics, Humility, Courtesy, Adultery, and the Religion of Love (Lewis, 1975, p.2).¹⁸⁵ The static, hierarchical structure of feudal society helps explain the Humility and Courtesy. Adultery and the Religion of Love are not so easily explained. The Christian dogma of the Fall and Original Sin (its counterpart, Original Righteousness, faded then, as now, from the scene) and the associated ambiguous status of erotic desire in Christian theology and history, are a large part of the explanation of the intricate, convoluted rituals of Adultery and the Religion of Love. Love, impossible within the bonds of marriage conceived as a formal and terminable contract born of duty and necessity, had to find rarer space:

The love which is to be the source of all that is beautiful in life and manners must be the reward freely given by the lady, and only our superiors can reward. But a wife is not a superior. As the wife of another, above all as the wife of a great lord, she may be queen of beauty and of love, the distributor of favours, the inspiration of all knightly virtues...but as your own wife, for whom you have bargained with her father, she sinks at once from lady into mere woman, whose duty is to obey you....where marriage does not depend upon the free will of the married, any theory which takes love for a noble form of experience must be a theory of adultery (Lewis, 1975, pp.36-37).¹⁸⁶

The rituals of the Religion of Love, however closely they parallel those of the Church, also expose the fraught relations between sex and religion (Lewis, 1975, pp.37-43).¹⁸⁷ The love mythology treads “the borderland between allegory and mythology” (Lewis, 1975, p. 39).¹⁸⁸ Sex has always made church and state scratch where it itches - all those Madonnas in religious art utterly bereft of character tell their own sorry tale even to the innocent and relatively uninformed eye.¹⁸⁹

The rituals, like the tournament, with which they were so closely aligned, assumed the status of art. Life had become an especial kind of noble game, even for the dispossessed knight errant denied home and hearth by the laws of primogeniture.¹⁹⁰ Only poets, with Ovid as their ironic source of inspiration, could hope to hold such contraries together. The revolutionary sentiment of romantic love in feudal society found its form and content in the allegory of love, “the subjectivism of an objective age” (Lewis, 1975, p.30), where,

The figure of Love personified himself is almost equally connected with the subject of the ‘love-religion’ and with that of allegory....The idea of Love as an avenging god, coming to trouble the peace of those who have hitherto scorned his power, belongs also to the Latin tradition, but it is more serious for Chretien than for Ovid. The repentance of those who had been fancy free, and their self-surrender to a new deity, are touched with a quasi-religious emotion....no final distinction is possible between the erotic religion, the erotic allegory, and the erotic mythology (Lewis, 1975, pp.31-32).

C.S. Lewis’s study in medieval tradition ends with Spenser, about whom he is positively lyrical in his praise. He does not fail to link him with those more familiar and much later developments in romanticism, to the likes of Keats and Shelley, and to assess his importance in the history of sentiment:

What the romantics learned from him was something different from allegory; but perhaps he could not have taught it unless he had been an allegorist. In the history of sentiment he is the greatest among the founders of that romantic conception of marriage which is the basis of all our love literature from Shakespeare to Meredith (Lewis, 1975, p.360).

Auerbach, concerned with mimesis as the representation of reality in western literature, works with the key concepts of reality, realism, and style (Auerbach, 1974). One of his great gifts is the ability to dissect narrative structure deftly. In those separate studies of his (“Roland Against Ganelon” and “The Knight Sets Forth”) bearing on chivalry and courtly love, he, too, stresses the fictitiousness, the unreality, of the ideal. In concert with Huizinga and Lewis, he credits his authors with awareness of illusion, illusion which becomes transparent yet memorable and moving in a strong poet such as Cervantes. Powers of creation in and through language have to be added to awareness and intelligence: the illusion, the ideal, the myth, needs the breath of life in language. Cervantes’ noble Don clearly has no social function except in his feverish brain, while his earthy companion Sancho Panza and his lovely Dulcinea serve the literary function of accentuating in their contrasting characters the quixotic character of his romantic and chivalrous quest. There is pathos in the comedy as there is sadness in Strauss waltzes. Genius has a way of combining contraries. Cervantes is a man for all seasons, but especially when caught in the lunacy of war. His noble Don, a figure of comic disportment and display, is much more than a man born too late. He truly remains for us as a man of flesh and blood who will never die (Unamuno, 1990).¹⁹¹

Perhaps enough has been said, first, to indicate that the notion of sport, like poetry, as a mimesis of social praxis has historical substance, and may possibly be made regulative to a greater or lesser degree in interpretations of contemporary sport in a

different and commercial culture; and, second, that the association of sport with poetry is neither quaint nor quirky. Noteworthy in the prototypical relations of sport and poetry in the Middle Ages is the iconic status of figures like Arthur, Lancelot, Gawain, and Guinevere. Their adventures are of the heart rather than the head. Their attributes of love, courage, honour, nobility (not to mention frailties with which, perhaps, one can more readily identify), remain part and parcel of what draws persons today, not to chivalry and courtly love, but to sport with its broader questions of production and demand, identity and community. Sport as imbued with quasi-religious emotion is a more problematic matter, but not one to dwell upon here.

Summary

This chapter has critiqued Gebauer's interpretation of sport as constituting a mimetically made world, supplemented with historical reconstruction suggesting a very different interpretation of sport as mimetic world-making. This supplementation was undertaken with two things principally in mind: with a view to illustrating how sport, like language, can be well understood as a system of signs comprising both peculiar lexicon and identifiable structure; and to a tracing of twin cultural developments in medieval Europe when a form of life (feudal order) sported related language games (jousting tournament and allegorical love poetry). Sport, like dance, like cinema, like photography, is a species of semiotic. The signs of sport mean something; they are a form of expression. Like, say, royal tennis, the medieval tournament, reveals, in outline, the aristocratic origins and erotic hues of many contemporary sports. C.S. Lewis' classic complementary study of the medieval tradition of allegorical poetry helped fill

out the picture of the celebration of rituals of love in a society where romance must, perforce, be extra-marital. The medieval allegory of love flowered more fully in the poetry of the romantic poets of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Confirmation of the relation of sport and poetry at a fundamental level ought to come as no great surprise to anyone. One can almost imagine that Huizinga and Lewis are talking of Wittgenstein's forms of life and collage of language games. A brief examination of Gebauer's contention that sport is one way of making a world met with agreement in broad principle but disagreement with his understanding and specific application of Goodman.

The next chapter turns to the world of poetry, and specifically to the supermimetic theory of poetry developed by Harold Bloom: strong poets make strong poetry in an achieved anxiety of influence. Mimesis, myth, and metaphor constitute this making of the poetic world in Bloom's challenging theory.

Chapter Three

Bloom And The World Of Poetry

Introduction

The previous chapter sought to demonstrate a fundamental connection between sport and poetry as species of semiotic by tracing twin developments in feudal order from medieval chivalry and courtly love: on the one side, before the technologies of the longbow and artillery, the medieval tournament in all its pride and panoply, and from thence, all those aristocratic forms of sport embraced in the language of amateurism¹⁹²; on the other side, poetic celebrations of prototypical romantic rituals of love woven in allegory long before the advent of modern Romanticism, celebrations of a new and novel kind which find progressive and continued issue, most potently in Dante and Shakespeare, and from thenceforth poetically in lyric, ode, elegy, and lament. It was suggested that the feudal ordering of life in medieval Europe displayed two related language games: the pomp and circumstance of the aristocratic jousting tournament, and the ambiguity of the poetic allegory of love. Love, in some of its many tangled varieties, was their common denominator. Eros and Thanatos consort endlessly in strong poetry, as they do in other forms such as music and pictorial art. Love and death are the very substance, say, of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Poetry, like sport, is not merely a realm of meaning and value, but, latently at least, a realm beyond the pleasure principle (itself not to be denigrated simply as suspect or worthless) of freedom and plenitude. Strong poets use words to construct new worlds, employ words within the material world. This chapter considers how they construct their worlds in comparison and contrast with the understandings of the world

of sport developed in chapter two. Is the world of Homer similar to the world of J? Or the world of Shakespeare to that of Dante? Or the world of Blake to that of Milton? How do strong poets figure their worlds? Do they simply luck out as Rorty suggests sometimes? Or are they engaged in basically the same kind of mimetic re-makings as those traced in chapter two with reference to the world of sport?

Making the connection between sport and poetry in the preceding chapter had, as its philosophical starting point, Gebauer's contention that the world of sport is a mimetically made world (Gebauer, 1995). The idea that this particular and bounded world is a mimesis of social praxis connected sport with that traditional cornerstone of poetry as verbal art, mimesis. Aristotle, in his theory of strong poetry, made *muthos* the central element, and had the triumvirate *mimesis-metaphor-catharsis* as its essential vocabulary of the dramatic action (Ricouer, 1996, p.327).¹⁹³ Gebauer's contention that the world of sport issued from the re-making of prior worlds (the material and social worlds) saw a separating out of ideas Gebauer joined, namely, the matter of mimesis, and the matter of world-making.¹⁹⁴ These were deliberately taken separately in preliminary attempts to salvage both concepts, of mimesis and of creation or poiesis, as they relate to sport. Doubt was cast that this mimesis, as conceived by Gebauer, constituted much of a re-making at all, and it was suggested that his understanding of sport was essentially reductive. Further criticism was made of Gebauer's handling and application of Goodman's theory of world-making, a theory which was judged as essentially amimetic.

If sport is to be read as if it were poetry, then those lines of enquiry broached in the previous chapter need to be taken progressively further. Tracing historical and

literary connections between sport and poetry in ancient Greece and medieval Europe is suggestive and helpful, but clearly it does not suffice as a translation of one world into the other. Specifically, those fundamentals of language, signifier and signified, those primary processes of language, selection and combination, and those poles of language, metaphor and metonymy, need to be exemplified and illustrated further in the contexts of the worlds of sport and poetry. Metaphor and myth, so closely intertwined at one level, are disparate in shape at another: metaphor functions basically at the lexical level in a process of condensation, while myth is more a matter of narrative structure and iconic image, and a combining of opposed poles (heaven and hell, nature and culture, God and man, etc.), often with a mediating third term (heaven-earth-hell). Metonymy, as figurative language of another kind, involving the relations of whole and part, part and whole, in a process of association, is also useful in bringing the principal objects of the thesis more distinctly into focus. Both the condensation of meaning characteristic of metaphor, and the expansion or association of meaning characteristic of metonymy, have their place in the making of meaning. In this chapter poetry takes centre stage; in the succeeding chapters sport is increasingly the prime focus.

In the previous chapter it proved possible to link sport and poetry as different species of semiotic quite intimately by tracing the shared origin of tournament and love allegory in the medieval order of chivalry and courtly love. Sport and poetry shared a common time and space in feudal order; a common time and space found expression in the system of significant signs of medieval tournament and allegory of love. Eros, a language of courtly love, ambiguous and ambivalent, was their common origin and possession. Their further developments historically were little more than suggested, and

much remained unsaid about Eros as a kind of language. Plato, it will be remembered, had to find space for not one, but two kinds of eros, a lower carnal eros, and a higher spiritual eros (Plato, 1952);¹⁹⁵ Freud refused to deny a place for a primary narcissism in the formation of human identity (Marcuse, 1987). Christianity, uncertain about the body and suspicious of pleasure, has sidelined eros in favour of agape (Nygren, 1957).¹⁹⁶ All such influences (and there are many others) lead to a general point made explicit by C.S. Lewis, namely, that, not only are there slow and uneven changes in literary form, but changes in human sense and sensibility itself (Lewis, 1975, pp.1-43). The two, of course, are related. The subjectivism of an objective age, as Lewis puts it, expressed in epic and allegory, gives way to romance, first in the songs of the Troubadours, and eventually in the romanticism of the likes of Keats and Shelley (Southern, 1962 ; Reed, 1984).

The present challenge is undertaken from quite a different perspective, but it works to advance the same argument. If sport might plausibly and productively be written and read as if it were poetry, a pro-active making rather than a re-active finding, then it becomes necessary to advance further shared properties of the two cultural practices as kinds of language. Hence, poetry as a cultural and social practice is the central object of attention in this chapter. What is it which unites strong sport players and strong poets? Is it the performance principle? Is it a common intensity and care? Is it the centrality of agon? Is it the enactment of notions of identity and community? How do the different kinds of language (sport, myth, poetry) relate in sport as poetry? How is sport written and read as myth? How is poetry written and read as myth, metaphor, metonym? Harold Bloom, of course, has his concerns only with the latter

question. Perforce one must be brief about complex matters even although attention is focussed upon just the last question. The other questions merit attention later in the work: chapter four deals with sport and metaphor; chapter five with sport and myth; chapter six with sport and poetry.

If one desires to read sport as poetry, then it becomes important to delineate how both worlds are understood. Some steps have been taken with regard to the world of sport, first in the notion of the enactment of meaning through bodily movement read as a species of semiotic, and, second, in an acceptance of Gebauer's basic principle that that world is a mimetically made world with intimate links to ritual and theatre. It was the understanding and application of mimesis, not so much the principle itself, which were questioned in chapter two. What of the world of poetry? Here again, it is inadequate to characterise that world simply through neat definition or an enumeration of its various elements. What is required is a theory of poetry. Bloom's theory of poetry, whatever it may lack in the wider scheme of things, whether at the level of literary theory, or as literary criticism, or in historical contextualisation, is the most fitting for present purposes.¹⁹⁷ There is no pretence that his is the final or only word worth consideration, but his theory of strong poetry as conceived in and out of creative envy is applicable to sport, as well as being broadly and creatively mimetic itself. His strong poets all have human faces. While they are subject to the anxiety of influence, strong poets are creatures of volition and desire. They are strenuous in their steps to poetic immortality. Bloom's explicit focus in his theory upon myth and metaphor serves as further recommendation. When it is expanded through selective use of his actual criticism of various strong poets, including those great anonymous originals, J and Homer, it

becomes even more valuable for a writing and reading of sport as poetry. J and Homer qualify as enacting meaning, not merely engaging in simple, straightforward, literal description of identifiable objects - that is, they are strong poets. J functions more at the pole of myth and metaphor; Homer more at the pole of metonym. J writes vertically; Homer writes horizontally. J is an ironist; Homer is a realist. J embraces mystery; Homer focuses on externals. Both make things new in their strength and overflow of meaning; both, like their strongest critics, embody cultural vision.

Bloom And Strong Poetry

This third chapter deals with Bloom's theory of poetry. The prime purpose of the chapter is to develop further what was broached in the opening chapter concerning poetry as a kind of language. The myth of the tower of Babel, it has been suggested, sounded the knell in the contemporary world of attempts to gather up all concerns univocally. We are confined to ways to talking about things, but that is challenge rather than confinement. The challenge is the making of fitting description whatever our concerns. The welter of rich and disparate experience demands a variety of languages. The plurality of cultural and social goods is constituted and served best by different languages. The language of poetry grapples best, it was asserted, with plurality, ambiguity, and ambivalence, fundamental realities of life past and contemporary.

In a work which seeks the writing and the reading of sport as if it were poetry, it clearly is important to clarify and fill out how poetry is understood as a distinctive and precious kind of language. When that has been done then it will enable a better comparison to be made of those two worlds of meaning and value, the world of sport

and the world of poetry, which might appear to many as so far removed from one another. And not just comparison, either, but a translation of one world in terms of the other. Implicit in this work, in such comparison and translation of sport as poetry, is the understanding that the present moment requires plausible re-descriptions of sport as more and other than commercial product or surface spectacle. Sport, poetry, and myth, it will be recalled, have all been brought under the umbrella of semiotic as kinds of language. Attention has been on structure, rather than merely function.

Bloom's world of poetry, and of literature generally, is like sport in that it comes about through a ceaseless process of internecine conflict, a world in which in order to make one's way one and prove one's strength, far from being kind and generous, one is murderous and incestuous. Far from flattery, the strong poet annihilates his predecessors after picking their bones. The world of poetry (in a useful text which bears that very name) constructed by Clive Sansom has sixty bodies of resources ranging across the art and functions of poetry and dealing with divided judgment on everything from the place of poetry to the universal and particular in poetry (Sansom, 1959). His variegated world of poetry is a far cry from that of Bloom, as far as the world of Aristotle is from that of the Marquis de Sade, nearly. But, basically, both worlds of poetry are made worlds.

Bloom in his theory resorts to a bold re-writing of myth in his complex argument, explanation, and illustration, of poiesis. He presents his theory of strong poetry in Oedipal terms (Bloom, 1997).¹⁹⁸ Strong poets are driven not simply by psychic necessity but by poetic desire for eternal life, as poets, to kill off their strong predecessors. Bloom accepts the common critical pre-understanding that true poets are

makers of meaning; they do not report, they create. Just as all of Plato's philosophy may be said to issue from his distinctive moral vision, so every truly strong poet has to win through in his words to a materialisation of an original vision. Strong poets, on his reading, experience their own particular agon, the anxiety of influence, in answering the triple question concerning their strong predecessors, Less than? Equal to? More? (Bloom, 1991, p.5)

Bloom's poetic theory of tortuous family relationships is a very sophisticated one.¹⁹⁹ The crucial point relevant to this dissertation in the Bloomian theory is that strong poets only win through to poetic immortality by a costly overcoming of their strong precursors. Strong poets overcome strong predecessors by re-writing them so potently as to subdue them.²⁰⁰ The anxiety of influence achieved in their strong poetry is, in part, the overcoming of the fear of godhood. Bloom fills out the overarching Oedipus myth of murder and incest with six revisionary ratios also drawn from mythological sources and refashioned and applied to Bloom's purpose (Bloom, 1997). Bloom's theory of strong poetry as a kind of creative envy involves a tortuous struggle with the past. Every strong poet, sensitive to life's transience, endures a life-cycle of shifting relations with strong poetic predecessors. If he is to win through to poetic immortality, then he must wrestle long and hard with those strong predecessors he wishes to surpass. These strong precursors must be overcome in a series of stages or partial triumphs in a costly struggle to overcome the past. Strong poets swim against the prevailing tide; lesser talents sink with barely a trace.

Bloom's esoteric vocabulary describing these six stages in the life-cycle of the strong poet, can profitably be re-cast simply and briefly in the light of present very

different purposes. *Clinamen*, the initial stage, is essentially a correction of prior paradigmatic poet(s). *Tessera* is essentially the basic anxiety to be newly achieved in poetry matched against the strong precursor(s). *Kenosis* is essentially an emptying out process, a forfeiture of claims by the poet himself and a denial of divinity to his strong precursor(s). *Daemonization* is the overcoming of the past achieved through an opening to power and a repression of reading. *Askesis* is essentially a self-purgation leading to solitude. *Apophrades* is essentially the final fraught culmination of the previous five (possibly more) stages, a dying and re-birthing as a painful prelude to the winning through to poetic immortality. It is the final vindication of poetic strength in the face of death.

These stages, these six revisionary ratios, as Bloom calls them, are then exemplified by instances of actual literary criticism where Bloom's metaphorical stance in relation to strong poetry becomes evident. Bloom, like Plato, is a metaphoric critic. Where Bloom substantiates his sophisticated theory with many and matching quotations from strong poets, here a broader brush is applied. Bloom draws parallel after parallel between poets and poetry; the present work seeks explorations of relations between sport and poetry as kinds of language, with myth as language occupying something of a bridging function.

Myth is not only virtually inseparable from language as such, but fundamental to both sport and poetry. Bloom provides the basic literary framework for the present more broadly cultural reading of sport as poetry. Bloom, as a self-confessed modern gnostic, has little interest in the material basis of poetic forms, and this detracts from his theory and his criticism.²⁰¹ Literature, he says, in some kind of defence of his own

aesthetic stance, has never received the seriousness it merits (Bloom, 1997, pp.85-86). He is not the first, and he will not be the last, to argue that case, albeit from different perspective and in different vein.

Now this fear of godhood, which must be overcome, perhaps more simply phrased, could read as final manifesto of strong poet and strong sports player. In this final phase of vocation, the culmination of heroic endeavour, the anxiety of influence and style may merge, become one and indistinguishable.²⁰² Muhammed Ali, one can speculate, but not wildly, did not desire to be another Joe Louis, another Black Bomber.²⁰³ Certainly he was ill content to be just another Joe Frazier, great a fighter as Frazier undoubtedly was. For all his ravings and boastings, his was a wider, deeper awareness of his craft and his world and a resolution to impose himself upon that world and not be imposed upon. His was the exuberance and spontaneity in his craft that is a kind of beauty. Shorn of his strength at his craft, his dissidences, religious, political, and sexual, would have counted for little; his crude poetic parodies for even less.²⁰⁴ Seeing him trembling his way in triumphant cavalcade round the inner perimeter of the Melbourne Cricket Ground on grand final football day a few years back was to be flooded with remembrances of a hero and his troubled times.²⁰⁵ Such ritual homage to Ali emphasised a strong poet of sport who, far from fallen, had ascended higher and higher despite present illness and past controversy. Similarly, seeing Ali light the Olympic flame, spoke volumes if one had first learned to read a little of the man and his trials.²⁰⁶ In such pregnant moments, separating the person, the sportsman, and the celebrity, is a challenge. When and where is the image and its perception the reality? It does not require great historical imagination to convert Ali the revered hero into Cassius

Clay the despised traitor. Times change, and with them politics domestic and international. It is not condescension to recognise that public opinion is often a fickle thing, or cynicism to recognise that sometimes politicians, like lawyers, will declare black white and white black, if and when it serves their purposes.²⁰⁷ The strong player, like the strong poet, is still very much a child of his times.

The fear of godhood is also pragmatically a fear of sporting strength. Fear, and its more pervasive twin, anxiety, is rarely far from the desire to prove strong in sporting contest. Self-belief can never eliminate the presence of those endless contingencies which permeate sport. Risk of injury, ignorance of possible pitfalls, loss of form, problems of selection, skulduggery of rivals and enemies, difficulties in the intense relationships with coaches and training partners, such and like concerns press from every quarter. And there is the gnawing inevitability of the rise of a person as yet unheralded, more hugely talented, whose rise will coincide with one's own fall.²⁰⁸ A handful of summers or winters is commonly all that the sporting champion can look forward to, and this, as much as anything else, is what makes sport a scene of pathos. Anxiety of influence is a condition of life in sport and poetry for those who would prove truly strong; such influence in sport is pregnant with both the past and the future.²⁰⁹

How, it must be considered, did this final stage of *apophrades*, of death and rebirthing, get started? The poet who would prove strong must first swerve from or misprision the strong precursor he would exceed in a process of correction (Bloom, 1997, pp.19-45). The parallel here with the strong sport performer can readily be drawn: the perfection of sporting skills, even for the hugely talented, is long and unrelenting. First one must master the basic skills, and only then fashion a game that is

so potent as to be both superior and unique. The joy in the exercise of skill is often tempered by the frustration and pain involved. In the world of sport, there are incessant demands made upon the body. One lesson among many is learning to live with pain, including the pain of defeat. Test and contest in the world of sport is constantly more and other than simply loving struggle.

In the world of poetry presented by Bloom, the unwelcome presence of the predecessor invites an ironic rejection “for really strong poets can read only themselves” (Bloom, 1997, p.19).²¹⁰ When one bent of proving strong falls under the net of language of someone else already deemed strong, the process of extrication and release is tortuous. It is not exactly like one imagines the relations between Socrates and Plato, one of demanding master and dutiful pupil, or even that, in turn, between Plato and Aristotle, with their marked degrees of religious experience, one hot and the other cold, and their contrary practice, evaluation, and uses of rhetoric and myth. Getting out from under a good teacher is a sight more difficult than from a bad.²¹¹ One can speculate that even Aristotle felt a little something die in him at his partings from his great master. Whether poets are more or less ambitious than philosophers is a rather futile question. Did Aristotle hear Plato so as to understand or to re-make? It beggars belief both that he did not know him well enough to know his strength, and that he did not know himself well enough to know his own and different strength and the need for dissociation. Bloom’s concern is not with the competent but with the great. He distinguishes further between those with the genius to create, with its attendant risks, and those who strive simply to understand original creation in art with its delayed pleasures:

....criticism teaches not a language of criticism....but a language in which poetry already is written, the language of influence, of the dialectic that

governs the relations between poets *as poets*. The poet *in every reader* does not experience the same disjunction from what he reads that the critic in every reader necessarily feels. What gives pleasure to the critic in a reader may give anxiety to the poet in him, an anxiety we have learned, as readers, to neglect, to our own loss and peril. This anxiety, this mode of melancholy, is the anxiety of influence.... (Bloom, 1997, p.25).

There is ready further application in such a distinction to sport, where the fate of the many who love sport is never to be feted themselves. The mode of melancholy may degenerate into self-pity.²¹² Nevertheless, there is the compensation, and the anxiety, not to mention the joy, of the critic who works to understand what only the few can create.

But to return to poetry and Bloom's theory, his theory of poetry as the anxiety of influence, a potent creative envy, gathers up those matters which relate sport and poetry as kinds of language - principally, myth, metaphor and metonymy, influence and remembrance, agon and repression, anxiety and pleasure, poiesis and fall.²¹³ Two fundamental things may be said of Bloom's theory of strong poetry: poetic creation is not out of nothing, but out of a sublimation, a repression and an aggression, a reaction formation (Bloom, 1997, pp.77-87); poetic creation is a costly, caring process in which the hero is often also the victim (Bloom, 1997, pp.117-120). Bloom is, once again, like Plato, a metaphoric critic; unlike Plato, his aesthetic largely determines his perspective, and his fundamental trope is that of influence not irony. He takes the trope of influence from Sonnet 87 of Shakespeare, and reads it as metaphor for strong poets in two initial senses: cosmic determination of fate and character, and inspiration (Bloom, 1997, pp.xi-xii). In characteristic vein, he later extends his reading of the sonnet substantially, and advances a third sense:

Palpably and profoundly an erotic poem, Sonnet 87 (not by design) also can be read as an allegory of any writer's (or person's) relation to tradition,

particularly as embodied in a figure taken as one's own forerunner. The speaker of Sonnet 87 is aware that he had been made an offer that he could not refuse, which is a dark insight into the nature of authentic tradition (Bloom, 1997, p. xiii).

Was Ali aware early in his career of being made an offer that he could not refuse?²¹⁴ Or Bradman, following Ponsford?²¹⁵ Their shared and uncommon insight into the nature of authentic tradition, not necessarily dark, leads to the speculation that in both instances the answer may have been in the affirmative. Both strong players eclipsed strong predecessors, and not without cost.

Art, including poetry, especially poetry, surprises constantly, upsetting any and all of the settled mental furniture. This is the experience of the reader in things made new. Not necessarily a new heaven and a new earth, but who can be the same after living with a Hamlet or a Lear? The meaning of art is found in many kinds of loving and many a thoroughly surprising revelation of loss (Read, 1967, 1971). Myth and metaphor violate any and all purities of refined conceptual formation; hallowed wisdom and the crust of convention do not thrive unexamined in their startling presence; one sees accustomed things in new strange ways; offers are freely made which cannot be refused. Even poets observe themselves squirm and twist, discomfited and anxious sometimes before the force of their fellows, with whom they are in various kinds of contest. Bloom prefaces his *Ruin The Sacred Truths: Poetry and Belief from the Bible to the Present* by alluding historically to this phenomenon with this quotation from Andrew Marvell's "On Paradise Lost"

the Argument_
 Held me a while misdoubting his Intent,
 That he would ruin (for I saw him strong)
 The sacred Truths to Fable and Old Song

(Bloom, 1991).

But is it primarily the poem as object, as limited whole, or the action of the subject, the presence of Milton, the Miltonic enactment of The Fall, his re-speaking of the hallowed Word of God, his androgynous God brooding like a dove, which disturbs Marvell and inspires Bloom?²¹⁶ Are there more worldly considerations in Marvell's mind? Is the threatening dissolution of the sacred truths into fable and old song pinned helpless on the page or alive and circling in one's head? Is the threat to Truth without or within? Is it self or world which, predominantly, is under threat? Objects, inert things, can be dissected and analysed, evaluated and re-evaluated, re-packaged and re-presented; persons, especially persons like Milton, flesh and blood and ego, are not so amenable to such treatment and must be taken carefully and consequentially. In the serious play of strong poetry, one faces again the salutary reminder that one is never a mere object in the game, but immersed in it whether player or reader: it is not just Marvell's craft that Milton places in jeopardy but his very self, perhaps both private person and public official; the threatening Argument, the Miltonic poem, is both external and internal, a monumental challenge to both poetic craft and personal belief, even public status. There is a sense in which everything can be made to relate to individual consciousness, and personal consciousness is a very variable thing (Murdoch, 1992). Yet aesthetic objects, including poems, remain before us, obdurate, stolid, resistant to dissolution, yet at the same time so quick with life as to be sometimes even threatening. Whatever else imagination may accomplish, it cannot make a cloudy day sunny, but the very clouds may make matter for the poetics of space and shape, of fire

and light, for an artist like Turner and a poet like Shakespeare (Bachelard, 1990, 1994; Murdoch, 1992).²¹⁷

Bloom takes up the challenge inherent in such a critical tensioning between subjective action and objective work, and exploits the creative tension between such poles. The spontaneous intuition of the poet is nothing without the long and sometimes tedious slog that transforms intuition into memorable utterance (Frye, 1990, pp.5-7). While Bloom always plays his cards craftily, he knows how to play them differently. In another raid upon the infinite resources of language, he prefaces his introduction to his theory of poetry with lines (here prefaced and back-ended with further lines from the long and testing poem) from Wallace Stevens' extraordinary "An Ordinary Evening In New Haven".

This endlessly elaborating poem
 Displays the theory of poetry,
 As the life of poetry. A more severe,

More harassing master would extemporize
 Subtler, more urgent proof that the theory
 Of poetry is the theory of life,

As it is, in the intricate evasions of as,
 In things seen and unseen, created from nothingness,
 The heavens, the hells, the worlds, the longed-for
 lands.

(Section xxviii, ll. 10-19, p.486)

Not everyone makes such convergences and divergences between either theory and practice, or theory and life. The identification of the theory of poetry with the theory of life would come as news to most, although living life as art has become almost a fashionable topic in some circles. And few feel the need to live life in endless evasions

of as if when the crude voyeurism of the box is there at a push of a button. Poetry, and not just the poetry of the Romantics, exists in the realm of as if, of the possible, the desirable, the beautiful, and the good. However, even though a poet may place himself on the electronic net, the time has passed when most poets entertain expectation of influence wide and deep. Poets are about as culturally marginalised as philosophers. Nietzsche may have read the world as text, literature as life, life as literature, but a certain chaos in the soul rather than the extemporaneous was what he sought and found (Nehemas, 1985). Nietzsche, as critic, however, underestimated the necessity for the poet of discontinuities (Bloom, 1977, p.79).

A poet and a critic as strong as T.S. Eliot preserves his distance between literature and life by drawing a distinction between belief and poetic assent, bemoans like many others past and present that he lives and works in a time of cultural decline, observes out loud that poetry is a mug's game, marries them as publisher rather than as either poet or critic. His investment in culture is conservative and backward-looking, as is his religious faith. But he is not afraid to nail his colors to the mast: Anglo-Catholic in religion, classicist in art, conservative in politics (Eliot, 1934). Would he have been less tortured if he had been born five hundred years earlier? If he had been born five hundred years earlier than he actually was, would he have understand the middle ages as well as he understood modernity?

Bloom's theory of poetry, subtle as it is, is also catholic: as one has witnessed briefly, it encompasses more than textual relations between poets and between poems; it retains the author with his distinctive face and peculiar authority, his monumental striving and passionate dream. In one kind of summary of his orientation as critic

distancing himself from critics such as Derrida whom he admires, one that seeks to avoid both the perils of over-spiritualisation and excessive de-spiritualisation, he writes:

My own experience as a reader is that poets differentiate themselves into strength by troping or turning from the presence of other poets. Greatness results from a refusal to separate origins from aims. The father is met in combat, and fought to at least a stand-off, if not quite to a separate peace. The burden for representation thus becomes supermimetic rather than antimimetic, which means that interpretation too must assume the experiential sorrows of a supermimesis. I hope, by urging a more antithetical criticism, one that constantly sets poet against poet, to persuade the reader that he too must take on his share of the poet's own agon, so that the reader also may make of his own belatedness a strength rather than an affliction (Bloom, 1975, p.80).

Wallace Stevens, obsessed by a many-splendored nature, strove to de-familiarise those splendors, to re-form them, cast them in a different light, and thus dissolve the traditional dualism of art imitating nature. His rage for order in life tensioned the poles of an austere yet still romantic sensibility, and lived sensuousness, in a peculiar way. Who knows whether he found in nature what he never found in marriage? The prime pre-occupation for him was that hoary chestnut, the relations between nature and art, the bloom and buzz of things, and aesthetic form. The challenge is perennial, the response manifold. Bloom, like his subjects, like his precursors (Freud along with Nietzsche), is a master of strong verbal utterance, of life and work *as if*. Bloom's theory of life is that of an aesthete, and he is radical in his understandings of poetic strength as a kind of Freudian family romance (underplayed in the revised version of his theory of poetry).²¹⁸ In his own voice, he, too, proclaims the validity of the great tradition, the importance of what is fondly and wildly deemed the common pursuit. He has no wish to play the secular cleric in a time of cultural decline; creative and confident apologist for strong poetry, allied with a strong whiff of gnosticism, is sufficient for his day. He grasps in

depth and detail that this tradition, too, is riven by internal divisions, fault-lines, crises. In theory and narrative he presents his own rich rage for order in the world of poetry, a humanism other and greater and more encompassing than that of the English tradition:

....we are wrong to have founded a humanism directly upon literature itself, and the phrase "human letters" is an oxymoron. A humanism might still be founded upon a completer *study of literature* than we have yet achieved, but never upon literature itself, or any idealized mirroring of its implicit categories. The strong imagination comes to its painful birth through savagery and misrepresentation. The only humane virtue we can hope to teach through a more advanced study of literature than we have now is the social virtue of detachment from one's own imagination, recognizing always that such detachment made absolute destroys any individual imagination (Bloom, 1997, pp.85-86).

These are chastening words. For all his undeniable strength, for all of his sobering appreciation that the makings of a strong critic as of a strong poet, come at a considerable cost, there comes that sneaking feeling that Bloom, like Milton, is a company of one, destined to be an isolate, strong on personal identity, weak in solidarity with lesser mortals. Is his one of those recurring dilemmas where right and wrong are unclear and the choice between greater and lesser goods, or greater and lesser evils? Unlike Milton, Bloom knows his influence, despite his teaching, despite the fact his books sell well, will be circumscribed. Nevertheless, he is, like his subjects, subject to his own anxiety of influence, contentious for his cause, and strong.

His sophisticated theory of poetry as the anxiety of influence accents the machinations of the individual psyche in the toils of proving strong although initially little more evidently than profoundly ambitious - Milton, for example, as heroic vitalist, more thorough-going monist than Hegel, a sublime sect of one. That is not to suggest that Bloom is incapable of close or comprehensive reading; far from it - he excels in

both. Rather it is a matter for him as strong critic of tracing the impresses within the particular work as outgoings of another remarkable human being in his overcomings of his forerunners. Poetry, strong poetry especially, is personal: "Poems are written by men, and not anonymous Splendors." (Bloom, 1997, p.43) His theory gives priority to the person rather than the product, yet without denying the possible impact of extra-textual events. Or better, to the person, the artist within the work, in relations with other artists within other works. In an era when the author in sophisticated circles is somewhat out of favour, Bloom is unashamed apologist for the presence of the strong poet within strong poetry - and for himself as strong critic in his radical re-reading of poetry. While Marvell, no poor weak poet, can write about paradise lost, only Milton himself in all his pride and suffering and personal sublimity can deliver the actual goods. If Satan gets the best lines, perhaps that is no mere accident of fate. Milton plays centre-stage, Marvell a bit-player in the wings, of those cultural upheavals, "Renaissance" and "Reformation".

One follows him in this vein of thinking in the broad conception of the thesis (sport as poetry), the cross-overs between these two distinct yet fundamentally related practices - a shared intensity, passion, pathos, commitment, beauty, truth, cost. One follows him, too, in the more immediate sense of cultural influence. While it is from the Greeks that we have our philosophy (Homer and Hesiod, the classical dramatists, fulfilled broadly philosophical functions even though they were strong poets), it is from the Hebrews (starting with J) and their divergent heirs that, for the greater part, we have our poetry (Bloom, 1991, pp.3-24). Bloom expresses this seminal truth with

characteristic pungency, the wit, the radical irony, of the J writer of early *Genesis* and beyond reverberating in the background:

British and American poetry, at least since Milton, has been a severely displaced Protestantism....Poetry whose hidden subject is the anxiety of influence is naturally of a Protestant temper, for the Protestant God always seems to isolate His children in the terrible double bind of two great injunctions: "Be like Me" and "Do not presume to be too like Me." (Bloom, 1991, p.152).

The philosopher Scheler, for a time, overcame his piety, this fear of godhead, trespassed in pride against pride, and plunged phenomenologically where few dared or cared to tread (Scheler, 1960). Milton probably provides the closest poetic analogue. For *apophrades* to count as a positive, not a negative, influence in the kingdom of poetry, the fear must be met and overcome at the creative end within a closing body of work. Bloom posits a pragmatism that has its aesthetic consequences. Richard Rorty argues to the same end, but from within the company of philosophers rather than poets (Mouffe, 1996; Rorty, 1996). Their respective enquiries converge in a broader conception of the strong poet as the one who makes things new in an overflow of fresh meaning. It is the application of the notion of the strong poet to sport that is the concern of this work: the strong player trespasses, treads where others, for whatever reasons, have failed to tread, to plunge, to risk. Did Bradman re-write the record books simply because he saw the ball come out of the bowler's hand earlier than those who came before and after him? Did Tilden re-write the sport of tennis because he insisted, in the face of early failure, of playing his own sweet game, of thinking one thought and one pattern of performance right through to the bitter and lonely end?

Bloom provides a useful summary of his theory and the rationale for what follows, namely, something of an historical survey of strong poets in the western canon, this theory of poetry scantily displayed as its life history. It is here that one touches, hears, and sees, the evidences of mimesis in poetic craft at its most sublime (Bloom, 1991, pp.86-87). Shakespeare may swallow Marlowe, but Marlowe rests, as it were, in his bowels, unexpurgated:

Poetic history...is held to be indistinguishable from poetic influence, since strong poets make that history by misreading one another, so as to clear imaginative space for themselves (Bloom, 1997, p.5).²¹⁹

One cannot know whether the Yahwist, the J writer, heard those skeletons rattling in the closet, or simply and earlier in his life heard that “echo of God’s laughter” about which Milan Kundera is so eloquent (Rorty, 1995, frontispage). What one does know, in Bloom’s words, “is the irony of J’s Hebraic sublime, in which absolutely incommensurate realities collide and cannot be resolved (Bloom, 1991, p.4).” There is that double injunction from God to Adam: be like me because you are made in my image; do not dare to be too much like me, do not forget the distance between creator and creature” (Bloom, 1991, pp.10-12). One also knows his myth of the tower of Babel, and its metamorphoses, principally in the work of Kafka. One learns first-hand little-by-little about those clearings, those imaginative spaces. And those more than imaginative spaces, those abysses, such as that between J’s tales and the works of Plato. While they share in their myth-making and radical irony, a sense of the mystery at the heart of the world, an ultimate trust despite disaster, they have a different rage for a different ordering. Does Cain chill one’s blood the way that Thrasymachus does? Is the Biblical myth of fratricide more or less terrible than the Greek mimesis of the political thug?

The world of words of strong poets such as J and Homer, the world of poetry, has structure or form, and history: words exist in time and space, but time and space exist in words as well. The peculiar practice of poetry resides in its history; its history contains its theory. This world of poetry which strong poets populate with personages of great pathos and awe-full tragedy, is seen, not quite under the aspect of eternity, but in considerable historical perspective and under the aegis of Bloom's take upon literary strength or sublimity. For Bloom, the author has never died, or even become faceless, while poetic history is one and the same as poetic influence. There is a poetics of space; there is a poetics of time; the two relate. The cavalcade of strong poets here follows Bloom's canon in a necessarily truncated way, and instances his theory of literary strength or sublimity the Yahwist or J writer, Homer, Dante, Milton. Other strong poets, in the elastic Rortyan sense of those who make things new, like Blake and Cervantes, must find occasional and narrow space.

J and Homer are there at the fount of things poetical, not just as representatives of Hebrew and Greek modes of thought: all the others look back in order to be able to look forward in their own unique strength. J is uncanny, bizarre, a teller of such tall tales as to compel a reductive revisionism, and not just on the part of the Biblical redactors. Homer's genre is narrative poetry, specifically, epic poetry; and his main theme is the role of the hero in heroic society where one's gods fight alongside in concert, where character is fate, and fate character. Different in their values and perspectives, both concern themselves with existence rather than with being, but that concrete universal of theirs in their work, Man, is quite differently understood and created, theologically and poetically. Bloom, bypassing the implications of much of his

own acute criticism, lands himself in something of a contradiction. He over-stresses the cultural chasm between Hebrew and Greek, and its principal consequences for later interpretation in such rhetoric as this:

Frequently we forget one reason why the Hebrew Bible is so difficult for us: our only way of thinking comes to us from the ancient Greeks, and not from the Hebrews. No scholar has been able to work through a persuasive comparison of Greek thinking and Hebrew psychologizing, if only because the two modes themselves seem irreconcilable. Attempts to explain this opposition on a linguistic basis have failed, as reductiveness must fail when two such antithetical visions of life are contrasted (Bloom, 1991, p.27):²²⁰

Antithetical visions of life do not, of course, preclude Bloom's own antithetical theory of poetry and criticism. His interests, his resources, his debts, are to both Greek and Hebrew.

Bloom traces his theory of poetry back through Shelley and Longinus to the great classical Greek dramatists and, more recently, to Homer and the great similarly anonymous writers of the Bible, principally the Yahwist or J writer (Bloom, 1991, pp.3-35). Kafka is a key figure in his literary canon (Bloom, 1991, pp.166-197; 1995). He is a catholic critic of both Hebrew and Greek, while his agonistics of language, it will be recalled, is a strictly literary one:

....my true subject as critic, has been what traditionally was called the sublime....the mode of literary agon, the struggle on the part of every person to answer the triple question concerning the contending forces of past and present: more? equal to? or less than? (Bloom, 1991, p.5)²²¹

Poets must perform, must enact meaning in their lines, must prove strong, must resonate, if they are to endure, if they are not to fall silent, lost in the mists of time. They face the contending forces of past and present and answer the triple question with an emphatic affirmative: More! J and Homer are the individual talents at the head of

their respective Hebrew and Greek traditions, both of which have nourished Western culture beyond belief and procreated agonistically the books and school of the ages. In both, the movement from aurality to text has an uncertain history. What is sure, and what Bloom underscores, are their respective strengths and the performative anxiety that ensues as a consequence of that strength. Only at the end, only in that final phase of *apophrades*, can the strong poet, deeply troubled for all his strength, possibly come through and experience at the last those comforting intimations of immortality. Bloom essays at length his own Western canon, centred upon Shakespeare, begun with Dante and Chaucer, twenty-six writers who remain in contention, not for a laurel wreath, but to be read by the company of the discerning as makers of meaning, meaning written and read long after the anxiety-ridden labors of Plato anxious and envious in the wake of Homer, and Job in the wake of J (Bloom, 1995).

One suspects in Bloom, not only a desire to be reckoned strong himself, but a debt to predecessors such as T.S. Eliot which goes largely unacknowledged. On the other hand, Bloom and Richard Rorty are fulsome in their mutual praise, a matter which is noteworthy because Rorty's notion of the strong poet, the one who makes things new, a notion with a later importance, emanates from Bloom's understanding that strong poets are creatures of obsession who overcome the past in a process of creative envy (Rorty, 1995). The excess may be one of either intensity or quantity, the former in the case of J, the latter in the case of Homer. One must stress even at this early stage the gulf between the prime purposes of these two provocative intellects: Bloom pursues an art-for-art's sake agenda in his criticism which remains ensconced within the Republic of Letters; Rorty, working within the broad traditions of both liberalism and

pragmatism, works to demarcate the private from the public so as to protect the select few bent upon the pursuit of private perfection, yet neutralise the vocabulary of political discourse in such a way as to ward off the damage to democracy inflicted by zealots and fundamentalists whether their stripes be religious, economic, or political. Rorty wants his art spicy and his politics bland. Bloom gives not a fig whether the president is brain dead or paranoid, provided there is room and recognition for genius.

One turns to Bloom's exposition of the J writer as our first strong poet, our first instance of one who has made things new and forced us within the horizons of his radical irony. Irony, Bloom reminds us in the context of his literary tilting with Paul de Man, "in its prime sense of allegory, saying one thing while suggesting another, is the epistemological trope-of-tropes" (Bloom, 1997, preface, xix). Some, not content with the allegory of the poets, dally with the allegory of the theologians. In his study of medieval literary tradition, and in the context of contrasting allegory with symbolism, C.S. Lewis pushes the point about allegory a little harder, and substantially further (Lewis, 1975). Perhaps he is not ashamed to be reckoned within the ranks of the literary clerisy in pushing thus, perhaps with more than a touch of mock modesty, the reach of the analogical imagination.

J casts his spell on those who come after, most notably, perhaps, Kafka, another radical ironist (Bloom, 1991, pp.166-197). J's "vitalising fictions" are seen most clearly in his representations of Yahweh himself, and the first man, Adam, but it is his power to tell tales that creates and sustains his authority despite the fiction of Mosaic authorship and the fact of other anonymous authors:

The primal author J, more ancient than his great rival, the hypothesis Homer, constitutes a difference that has made an overwhelming difference,

overdetermining all of us - Jew, Christian, Muslim, and secularist. J told stories, so did Homer. One cannot award the palm for narrative strength to one over the other. All any of us can say is that Genesis and Exodus, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, establish literary strength or the sublime, and then we estimate Dante and Chaucer, Cervantes and Shakespeare, Tolstoy and Proust, against that standard of achievement (Bloom, 1991, p. 3).²²²

Bloom writes exuberantly and provocatively, unafraid to confound sanctified wisdom or to coin neologism. One such is 'facticity', a term already rich in its unsteady history, which is used to further indicate J's potency, and which he explains as "the state of being caught up in a factuality or contingency which is an inescapable and unalterable context", "a condition of enclosure that J's force has imposed upon us" (Bloom, 1991, p.7). And not only upon us, either. The great pictorial artists of the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and the Baroque fall under his sway also.

Bloom cites Shakespeare and Freud as two further instances of such an "imprisoning facticity". After Freud, it proves impossible to escape from his vocabulary for describing psychic life, even though he does so under the distinct rubrics of topology, economy, dynamism, structure. After Shakespeare, one cannot shake his impress of personhood, especially the capacity of human willing and the movement of personality change: Hamlet, for example, torn by conflicting desires, reflects upon, is caught up in, the pungent play of his own speech and is re-worked by it. J, however, like Homer, is at the fount of the Western literary canon. One cannot imagine that great tradition without the Bible to look to and learn from and lean upon. Shakespeare, Bloom reminds us, swallowed Marlowe; he did not swallow the Bible (Bloom, 1997, preface). Such acknowledgement must temper Bloom's remarks elsewhere about the predominance of Greek thought and attitudes upon western culture.

The magnitude, the scope, of J's ironism, which includes playful representations of Yahweh puddling in the red clay to make Man once he has breathed into him the breath of life, raises, for Bloom, the eternally "unresolvable aesthetic issue of poetry and belief" (Bloom, 1991, p. 4). The authority of the author, the strong poet, begins and ends in wonder at the power of the poetic process - poetry and philosophy have, at their source, wonder, at least, in common:

I myself do not believe that secularization is itself a literary process. The scandal is the stubborn resistance of imaginative literature to the categories of sacred and secular. If you wish, you can insist that all high literature is secular, or, should you desire it so, that all strong poetry is sacred. What I find incoherent is the judgment that some authentic literary art is more sacred or more secular than some other. Poetry and belief wander about, together and apart, in a cosmological emptiness marked by the limits of truth and of meaning. (Bloom, 1991, p. 4)

Bloom subsumes ethics within aesthetics. *Tractatus* Wittgenstein marks the limits of language by relegating both ethics and aesthetics, which can only be shown, to the realm of silence. T.S. Eliot side-steps, fudges the issue somewhat, by contrasting poetic assent with intellectual assent. Bloom, who figures Jeremiah as like to J, and Job as consciously overcoming his awful and awesome precursor, Jeremiah, further explains his position:

Poetry and belief, as I understand them, are antithetical modes of knowledge, but they share the peculiarity of taking place *between* truth and meaning, while being somewhat alienated both from truth and from meaning. Meaning gets started only by or from an excess, an overflow or emanation, that we call originality. Without that excess even poetry, let alone belief, is merely a mode of repetition, no matter in how much finer a tone. (Bloom, 1991, p.12)

It is this originality, but that of the strong player, which will provide the substance of the final chapter on sport as poetry.

He also counsels in this wooden-minded, dollar-deadened age, a salutary reminder especially important to those who hold their love of poetry in a certain tension with their love of sport:

....almost all of it (great poetry) necessarily tells lies, fictions essential to literary art. Authentic, high literature relies upon troping, a turning away not only from the literal but from prior tropes. Like criticism, which is either part of literature or nothing at all, great writing is always at work strongly (or weakly) misreading previous writing. Any stance that anyone takes up towards a metaphorical work will itself be metaphorical. (Bloom, 1997, preface, p. xix)

It is pertinent to recall how Kafka treats the myth of the tower of Babel in his own work. One does not wish to beg the question as to what is metaphorical and what is not (Bevan, 1962), simply to suggest that a literal reading of Kafka's novels and stories, including those which take the Babel myth as seminal, would be foolish and unproductive. Further, it is not as though Kafka writes in hope, but there is something stoic and far from unloving in his despair. The ancient stoics, however, were mostly without his humour. Kafka can make one laugh and cry in the same instant. Bloom's judgment is just: Kafka is a radical ironist, and irony is, at least, among the most fundamental of tropes, of figures, of twists and turns, in fabling the otherwise ineffable. The collision of incommensurable realities are within his compass, in large part, because irony is, as with J, his fundamental trope. Irony, of course, is but one trope, one figure among many: language is internally tensioned; it registers as a field of force with an intrinsic agonistics of different figurations. Between the poles of metaphor and metonymy there is an ample register of figurative language. Sometimes metaphor itself is live and kicking, sometimes safely literalised and dead as a dodo, and oftentimes somewhere in-between.

One turns to Bloom's exposition of that other great seminal figure in Western culture, the hypothesis Homer, The Old Man Homer whom Plato fought to extirpate from his privileged position in classical Greek culture. Plato, the one who would expel poets from his ideal Republic, the one who creates his own magical myths, exhibits signs of the anxiety of influence: Homer stands silent in the shades of so much that Plato writes. First, however, one turns to that archetype of the strong poet, the one who makes things new, Homer himself. Conflict, war, agon itself, the hero in heroic society, is his aristocratic yet elemental theme. Like a true poet, he knows that conflict is within as well as without,²²³ as when Odysseus consults that vital organ of feeling, that mediating part of himself, neither quite corporeal nor purely spiritual, his *thumos*, in the press of the battle, deserted and surrounded on all sides by the eager Trojans:

Now Odysseus the spear-famed was left alone, nor did any of the Argives stay beside him, since fear had taken all of them. And troubled, he spoke then to his own great-hearted spirit: 'Ah me, what will become of me? It will be a great evil if I run, fearing their multitude, yet deadlier if I am caught alone; and Kronos' son drove to flight the rest of the Danaans. Yet still, why does the heart within me debate on these things? Since I know that it is the cowards who walk out of the fighting, but if one is to win honour in battle, he must by all means stand his ground strongly, whether he be struck or strike down another.' (*Iliad*, Book 11, ll.401-410, trans. Lattimore).

Odysseus knows what the hero, the god in him, demands, that victory over existence resides in listening to his *thumos* and quelling his fears. He heeds his most vital part, his *thumos*. His fear is the stain of dishonour, the stain utterly at odds with his role in heroic society. Survival as a coward is hardly an option for such a man. It is not that he has no time to rethink life and death. Consultation with that organ of feeling, his own great heart, his sure yet wild *thumos*, suffices. Homer sings the song of his agony

simply and sensuously, which is fitting indeed. Bloom's interest, first and foremost, is not in cultural dependencies or the ethics of action, but the Homeric poetics and its ramifications for the reader who will forego cheap pleasure and pursue the subtleties of literary text:

...the excitement of reading the *Iliad* is poetically greatly enhanced by the independent if unruly force of the *thymos*, since that force makes Homeric emotions more primal than naive, more imaginative than reductive. Such a force can be measured only in its quantity, rather than its intensity....character indeed may be fate, yet character, itself a form of knowledge, cannot be distinguished from another character or other knowledge by rival intensities, but only by mere quantity....Victory is the highest good in the *Iliad*, and this has over-determined the nature of Western poetry ever since....A man moved by his *thymos*, desperate always to win the contest of existence, inevitably defines the poetic hero for us (Bloom, 1991, pp.32-33).

Bloom follows Nietzsche in tracing the desperation to win the contest of existence back to the Greeks and Homer, and this in contrast to the Hebrews where familial loyalties took pride of place.²²⁴ Whereas honor of one's mother and father is prescribed in the Torah, Homer enjoins the agony of contest, and bestows the legacy of the hero and the heroic society. Bloom notes "Nietzsche's strong sense of the hostility of the contest, and the role played by jealousy or creative envy" (Bloom, 1991, p. 28) in Nietzsche's (1986, pp. 32-36) account of the Greek genius:

...the Greeks, the most humane men of ancient times, have a trait of cruelty, a tigerish lust to annihilate....Why did the whole Greek world exult over the combat scenes of the *Iliad*?....The greater and more sublime a Greek is, the brighter the flame of ambition that flares out of him, consuming everybody who runs on the same course. Aristotle once made a list of such hostile contests in the grand manner; the most striking of the examples is that even a dead man can still spur a live one to consuming jealousy. That is how Aristotle describes the relationship of Xenophanes of Colophon to Homer. We do not understand the full strength of Xenophanes' attack on the national hero of poetry, unless - as again later with Plato - we see that at its root lay an overwhelming craving to assume the place of the overthrown

poet and to inherit his fame. Every great Hellene hands on the torch of the contest; every great virtue kindles a new greatness. (*Homer's Contest*)²²⁵

How delicious it is that those who first instructed us as to the perils and pains of democracy should, at the same time, have revealed the depths of the desire to triumph over all! All histories, perhaps, have their ironies, bitter and sweet. Nevertheless, while no doubt it can prove useful to distinguish between the co-operative and the competitive virtues, democracy itself remains the scene of conflicts, as do all traditions. Perhaps Heraclitus was more right than even he knew. While sport is transparently the site of the agonistic, poetry, too, proceeds, if Bloom is right, with each strong poet asserting himself in contest with those who proved strong before him, and again, if Bloom, is correct, in the instance of Shakespeare most conspicuously, over-determining those who follow. Poets' performativity is measured, too, in the long course of cultural history: the strong make their way into the Western canon, loom large behind would-be reader's shoulder waiting their chance to impress, while the merely talented slip into the silence of obscurity.

Dante, on Bloom's acute reckoning, enables us, empowers us in just the way he makes things new. He takes, for example, that most powerful of all symbols, the symbolism of light, and invests it with fresh force, charged currency. Light as symbol is there to be appropriated in new ways after Dante. Light is always there in a literal sense. Dante creates out of the old a new metaphysics of light but faintly echoed when one says to another that he sees what she means. Dante the poet may be said, in a shorthand sort of way, to make both Berkeley the philosopher and Goethe, another poet, possible. When Dylan Thomas writes movingly about the dying of the light the trope reverberates

anew. Like Jung, perhaps, but ever more powerfully, “Dante is the author of a personal gnosis, his very own myth of Beatrice (Bloom, 1991, p.39, p.50).” Dante is, however, no laughing-stock. Like Shakespeare, his poetic stocks take a little time to mature, but they have never really depreciated. Just as Lenglen or Tilden, in historical perspective, stand in the very first rank of strong poets of the world of tennis, so Dante in the world of poetry. What makes this strong poet, this heir of the angelic Aquinas, this (in Bloom’s estimation) “Virgil’s daemonic son”? What constitutes his personal gnosis? What does he select from the codes within his ken? How does he combine these various fundamental elements? Why and how does he continue to reverberate, to mold, to inform, and to foster interpretations as contrary as those of Bloom and T.S. Eliot?

Dante, the third of our exemplars drawn from the world of strong poets, is a medieval man, but, like Aquinas, timeless. On Bloom’s interpretation, Dante subverts the great Scholastic. If he had been less than a strong poet, the Church would have made no bones about convicting him of heresy, and his destiny might have been grisly not glorious. Aquinas provides much of both code and context for Dante’s divine world, his narcissistic song of self, but he is a resource, not a guide. Aquinas distilled his own philosophical and theological worlds largely by rubbing together the disparate vocabularies of Aristotle and Augustine and formulating a theology of divine revelation, and a natural theology or philosophy. Dante, on the other hand, not only has other debts, poetic rather than philosophical, principally to Virgil, but other interests and pretensions:

Doubtless poetic form and theological significance are inseparable and pragmatically unified in Dante, but they are not and cannot be one and the same entity. Dante’s theology and his politics did fuse, but belief and poetry cannot (Bloom, 1991, p.39).

Bloom's judgments are characteristically bold and important; they are also questionable, even within the framework of his own theory and criticism. *Ruin The Sacred Truths* stretches across the shifting and unstable relations of poetry and belief. When the strong poet creates his worlds, his poems, his plays, in a fundamental acceptance of life as if, is he being shiftfully evasive or truthful according to his lights (Murdoch, 1992, pp.146-147)?²²⁶ The fact that he can bring to form what lesser mortals cannot, is no occasion for any kind of belittlement, including belittlement of belief. The fact that Plato or Shakespeare's own views cannot always be precisely determined does not absolve the reader from making his or her own interpretation of the text. Bloom's own personal gnosis may be sufficient unto himself; it is unlikely to satisfy the common man, not even those who do not run hot for certainties. Shakespeare's original capacities to make uncertain noises is what makes him still a living contemporary presence. Re-marking on his marks is not an idle pursuit where truth and truthfulness do not enter in. It is not a necessary consequence of reading Shakespeare that we become or remain staunch monarchists, or end our days our talents recognised and merits bestowed. The brilliance, the acuteness, of much of Bloom's own criticism could be used against him on this score. There is, in the reading of literature, some ethic at work, even if be an ethic of repression, a denial of reading (Booth, 1988; LaCapra, 2000, pp.30-34). What authority particular interpretive communities exercise over us is a different, but related question (Fish, 1980).

Boldly, insistent on his mode of literary agon, Bloom places both Dante and Shakespeare nevertheless as great originals. Bloom, writing still of Dante, endorses the remark of Singleton that ‘the fiction of the *Divine Comedy* is that it is not a fiction:

That joins the issue: that his poem is not a fiction is Dante’s agon with all previous fictions....Dante is the author of a personal gnosis. Through Beatrice alone, the race of man excels all that is under the moon, all that is earthly (Bloom, 1991, p. 39).

Bloom writes of this personal gnosis in utterly other than pejorative terms: it is one and same as Dante’s poetic strength, with the myth, the trope of Beatrice, at the centre of Dante’s craft, and remembering the crucial mode of cognition. Dante’s personal gnosis, in Bloom’s interpretation, is so mighty, so compelling, so vaulting in its ambition, as to exceed even the “Pauline interpretive categories of the letter and the spirit”. Dante does not argue in realistic vein and with infinitive care and subtlety from earth to heaven, as Aquinas does in his philosophy, but gives us his own figurations as fresh facticities:

When Dante says farewell to Virgil, he takes leave not of Reason but of the pathos of a certain natural light. Dante abandons Virgil not to seek grace but to find his own image of voice. In the oldest and most authentic allegory of the poets, Virgil represents poetic fatherhood, the scene of instruction that Dante must transcend if he is to complete his journey to Beatrice....Since her advent follows Dante’s poetic maturation, or the vanishing of Virgil the precursor, Beatrice is a poetic allegory of the Muse, whose function is to help the poet remember. Remembering is, in poetry, always the major mode of cognition, so Beatrice is Dante’s power of invention, the essence of his art. Already the highest of the Muses, Beatrice is also far above them because she has the status of a heretical myth, a saint canonized by Dante, or even an angel created by him (Bloom, 1991, p. 45).

Bloom pairs Dante's figuration of Beatrice with that of Odysseus/Ulysses in canto 26 of the *Inferno* so as to make manifest Dante's strangeness and his anxiety, for all his poetic license and strength:

Ulysses and Dante are in a dialectical relationship because Dante fears the deep identity between himself as poet (not as pilgrim) and Ulysses as transgressive voyager. This fear may not be fully conscious, yet Dante must on some level experience it, because he portrays Ulysses as being moved by pride, and no more prideful poet than Dante has ever existed.... (Bloom, 1995, p.85).

Dante, on Bloom's strong reading or mis-reading, presents a signal example of poetic strength. On this reading, Dante is the prototypically, preternaturally strong poet, but that does not preclude him in the least from crises of identity. One man may fissure at many seams, play many roles. The poet in him, the theologian in him, the political activist in him, the lover in him, are one yet many.²²⁷ Pain and peril attend those who dare to be strong. Nothing is got for nothing, insists Bloom. Dante the poet is not there to be assimilated to Dante the man, anymore than Lenglen the queen of the tennis court is there to be reduced to Lenglen the hysteric, or Tilden the king of the court is there to be reduced to Tilden the convicted paedophile. Of Dante the man, one must not assume that a talent so singular consist of nothing but sweetness and light. How could a poet so consumed with picturing the horrors of hell be all sweetness and light! Bloom is hardly equivocal in his judgment of the man or poet, and the relation of both identity and difference prevailing between the two:

Dante was a ruthless visionary, passionately ambitious and desperately willful, whose poem triumphantly expresses his own unique personality. The *Comedy* is not an allegory of the theologians, but an immense trope of pathos or power, the power of the singular individual who was Dante (Bloom, 1991, p.46).

While Dante is the wilful prophet of a Catholic *respublica* that never was except as a lively ideal in fervent imaginations, Bloom's Milton is an heroic vitalist denying any separation between spirit and matter, grace and nature. His monism is a passion rather than a metaphysic. He is, in short, like Dante, a heretic in his poetic strength. In both, poetry triumphs even as orthodox belief suffers. To be truly strong is to deny the past, to forge a radical revision. All strong poets, whether Dante or Milton or Blake, must ruin the sacred truths of fable and old song, precisely because the essential condition for poetic strength is that the new song, one's own, always must be a song of one's self. Narcissism is not to be avoided.²²⁸

Milton is a fighter; Milton's Satan is a fighter, too. Bloom contextualises Satan as antagonist within the hermeneutic suggested by Neil Forsyth, namely, the combat myth: "*Paradise Lost* is the last and greatest stand of that myth"(Bloom, 1991, p.98). Milton not only selects from a different linguistic code to Dante; he combines the elements of that array of preconceived possibilities in other ways and to other ends. The fit is different. He walks to the beat of a different drum. It is always so with strong poets. They create their own authority, imprint their own imprimatur, constitute in the very strength and overflow of their own character a poem. Certainly Milton walks in another time and another place, evades the shadow of Shakespeare mightily but not that of Spenser, even though he moves in the realm of myth rather than allegory. That, in itself, is insufficient to explain the abyss between his strong poetry and that of Dante. Neat descriptions of one as Catholic, medieval, preternatural; the other as Protestant, Renaissance, humanist, do little more than hint at the difference between these two strong poets. They move powerfully in distinct orbits, in literature and in life. Dante

looks at God, while Milton commands him (rather as many do more feebly when they pray in public). Love makes both their worlds go round, but one loves from afar, while the other marries in haste and repents in feverish leisure. One makes dalliance with a formal massive structure of faith, only to subvert it more readily from within; the other takes the Word of God and sounds it in his own distinct tones. Both exemplify the means, the might, to make things anew. Alike, out of the turmoil of tumultuous lives, they metamorphose their pain and joy to ring their distinctive poetical tropes. Together they speak in different tongues to all who will hear for all one can know of eternity. Both fall not only into but upon the sea of language and wrest from its ebb and flow fresh currents for subsequent generations to swim in.

Enough has been said to indicate that the quest to find voice, to prove strong, to vanquish one's predecessors, is a costly one. Nothing poetic is got for nothing; the palm of victory is costly. The strong poet creates, not out of nothing, but out of a deep and labyrinthine remembrance of poets past, whether acknowledged or unacknowledged. The process is mimetic in a potent, creative sense. The echo of voices long stilled returns in new and often immediately unrecognised strain. There are findings, but, more importantly, there are also makings, or re-makings. The singer and his song are now one, now different; the one and the many now merge, now separate. Did Shakespeare end his life a bourgeois at peace with the world and himself, or did he rage, impotent, at the dying of his light?

The quest of the poet who would prove strong has its ready parallel in sport for the analogical imagination. It is not that the strong poet and the strong poet of sport know the same things in their respective crafts, but their songs are songs of self wrung

from test and contest. Both show the courage to be; the faith necessary in strong being (Tillich, 1952, 1958). The poet takes speech (*langue*) in all its complex structure and, as well, reverberations of the actual poems (*parole*) of strong flesh-and-blood predecessors. He engages in a mimesis that merges origins with ends; a mimesis that is both process and representation; his is an enactment of meaning within the range of selection from and combination of, the pre-fabricated materials, the lexicon of the language, open to him. He quests to sing his memorable song of self; he strives to exemplify the courage to be, to transmute his sullen craft of poetry, his breaking of the air with sound, so memorably as to turn the babble of empty noise into art, ephemeral noise into work so memorable as to confer upon him a kind of immortality, an artistic life everlasting. Often, very like the ambitious builders of Babel, he labors in unpropitious circumstances and under the anxiety of influence so as to make a name for himself. No guarantees of triumph attend this act of extended faith, which raises questions about its ethical status. Is this just another difference which makes not a zilch of difference? In this form, at least, the question is too silly to contemplate. The rage for order of strong poets will not be denied as long as they remain strong poets. Nor do strong poets doubt their value as long as they retain their strength. When the Muse deserts them or they go mad is another story.

The pursuit of structure, of essential form in both sport and poetry might seem will-o'-the-wisp stuff. What one knows, if, indeed, one knows anything at all, are pre-eminently particular instances in time and space, practices in perpetual flux despite the power of tradition. As reader, one inducts rather than projects. Yet it is possible to describe certain fundamentals of the two practices in terms of lexicon and syntax, the

distinction between *langue* and *parole*, the axis of selection projected upon the axis of combination with meaning made both plural and uncertain. It is possible to see and know when the stray strong performer of sport heaves on centre stage and magically makes things new. Of course this is possible only if the eye is informed from long discipline yet open and fresh in its vision, if visual thinking orders and weights, re-makes the scene and its players in historical context in a way both informed and imaginative (Arnheim, 1970; Gombrich, 1977, 1987).

It is time in the course of this dissertation to turn back from the world of poetry to the world of sport. Here, that means, still taking the myth of the tower of Babel as inspiration, to turn from one kind of language to another and different kind of language, a different unity, and a different structure. Mimesis connects myth and metaphor. Poetry uses both myth and metaphor in its mimesis. Metaphor, operative most conspicuously at the level of the word, the noun, is transgressive, a re-formation of logical space rather than a category error. Metaphor is the focus, as it relates to the understanding and interpretation of sport, of the following chapter.

Summary

This chapter has utilised Bloom's theory of poetry as the achieved anxiety of influence, not only to provide some determinate form to the world of poetry, but, even more importantly, to suggest a literary framework for a possible translation of sport as if it were poetry. Bloom's theory of poetry is particularly apt for present purposes. His world of poetry is a mimetically made world also. Influence, Bloom declares and illustrates at length in his criticism, is never-ending. Strong poets re-write the cosmic

myths of their strong predecessors in metaphor in an achieved anxiety of influence. Further, particularly at their end, they face the fear of godhood, which is also the fear that they will prove only what skeletons dream about, and achieve sufficient intimations of their own immortality in a final stage of novel creation. Bloom's theory makes of strong poetry a strenuous and costly agon in achieving victory over strong predecessors. Learning from Nietzsche, he understands that victory has overdetermined the course of poetry in the western world. Bloom's theory, in turn, is the basis for Richard Rorty's more comprehensive and elastic conception of the strong poet as the one who makes things new.²²⁹ The following chapters of the dissertation develop further the central argument of a basic analogy between the truly strong sport performer and the strong poet, before instantiating the argument in the concluding chapter.

Chapter Four

Roberts And Languages Of Sport

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to return specifically to the matter of sport as a particular kind of language. The principal purpose of the introduction to this chapter is to expand a little more on the matter of metaphor in the context of a possible philosophy of sport as poetry, sport as a making rather than a finding of meaning. In his doctoral dissertation a generation ago, *Languages Of Sport* (1976), Roberts argued that sport, like art, has its languages, metaphorically speaking. He asks the question, implicitly rather than explicitly, Is there a metaphoricity operative in sport as in poetry? And if there is, how does it work? Roberts' prime interest, of course, is in sport as language, albeit in a strained sense. This same fundamental interest is here enquired into further and differently. It stimulates a host of questions, not all of which are on the identical level of signification, and few of which are open to an answer within the constraints of this work. There are those which pertain directly to language as a system of signifying, and to sport, likewise, as a different structure of signs or cultural code. What is the status of metaphor as an element within, or, better, a pole of, language? Are the means sure and clear for distinguishing the literal from the metaphoric? Is metaphor legitimate or illegitimate language? If metaphor is legitimate language, how is it possible to discriminate between rich metaphor and poor?²³⁰ Is metaphor itself all of one piece? How does one determine the literality of the literal now that the logic of verificationism has itself been put in question. Is the injunction to look and see what is going on in sport not itself dependent upon how the eye is informed? Is the observer, the spectator, in

sport, very much a participant also? Is the informed spectator present at a contest always to some degree in a state of avowal or disavowal? Is knowledge always knowledge of the known, and dependent to some degree on the particularity of previous experience? Can there be a view from nowhere? How critical is the interest and purpose brought to inquiry? Is there an appropriate time and place for each of the many long-lasting theories of truth as they relate to sport? Or no fitting place for any such theory? Is it true that in the heat of battle there are times when the competitor simply tries to cope? And other times when there is a mimesis that is much more than mere imitation of some strong predecessor? What are the prospects for any metaphysic of sport in post-industrial society? Does sport constitute one kind of answer to the perennial problem in metaphysical philosophy of the one and the many? Is a thorough-going nominalism the only possible safe haven for those with a philosophical and poetic interest in language, coupled with a love of sport? Are we always under the net of a language, its assumptions and its vocabularies? If sport does indeed have its forms of life and its language games, can one say with any assurance that these veer one way or the other between the poles of metaphor and metonymy? If practices as different as sport and pictorial art can be gathered up in language, metaphoric or otherwise, is it possible that language does go all the way down, figuring even our dreams and desires? Is, as Lacan re-writing Freud maintains, the unconscious structured like a language? Is there, as Derrida argues, coining the currency of his terms, no outside-text? If context and contingency alike have consequences for interpretation, how do we even begin to separate them out? What are the multifarious manifestations of language, and what its latencies and limits? How can the energy, freedom, play, passion, of sport find

translation into utterance become art? More particularly, how can, say, sweat and tears, fear and anxiety, disappointment and joy, signify in sport? Sweat and tears are objects, there to be seen, smelt, touched, tasted. Fear has its object or objects. Anxiety is more difficult to determine, even though its presence can be detected. Disappointment and joy take us to the heart of the phenomenology of feeling. Are they items in the lexicon of sport? And if they are, do they stand in both a syntagmatic and paradigmatic relation to other items in the lexicon? Do they lack the ideality of words in a language? Are such things not insignificant? And much else of a similar texture which excites the multitudes and starts them off screaming and swearing? Can there be a language without words? And, finally, what are the uses of sport if it may legitimately be said to have its languages, poetic or otherwise? Is sport, as some maintain of literature, a kind of therapy? Or does it have other uses? Is sport a monumental metaphor for life? Sweat and tears, agony and ecstasy, loss and victory, find their places more readily and properly, some would say, in the figurative language of literature than in the conceptual language of philosophy.²³¹

Philosophy, for the most part, has found it difficult to deal at all fittingly with emotion, especially intense emotion, and strong sport is a passionate affair because you cannot play well without conviction that the play is meaningful and victory worth the struggle.²³² The extension of philosophy to sweat and tears, to the visceral, of what can be dismissed or repressed as epiphenomena, has been less than universal; and it has remained as little more than a sideshow as far as sport in its institutionalisation and practice. The managers of sport present when philosophers discuss sport rarely even know what is going on, and, for the most part, even if they did, they would not give a

toss.²³³ Clarity of a kind can more easily reside in static essence than messy existence with its pluralities, ambiguities, ambivalences. And yet immediately one writes that one remembers both Plato and Aristotle with their common interest in emotion and their very divergent responses to its presence. One remembers also Gadamer's insistence that the key to understanding Plato was to read him as mime, to appreciate "the philosophical relevance of Plato's poetic imagination" (Gadamer, 1996, p.184).

Gadamer states:

The dialogues provide unique company....Certainly it is none other than Plato, with his doctrine of ideas, his dialectic of ideas, his mathematization of physics, and his intellectualization of what we would call ethics, who laid the foundation for the metaphysical conceptualization of our tradition. But simultaneously he limited all his pronouncements by means of mimicry.... (Gadamer, 1996, p.184)²³⁴

The mime in his mimicry, even the supreme philosophical mime, is deeply concerned with life-situations, including the fragility of goodness, and evil which is more than ignorance. Mimicry, along with metaphor and myth, strikes attitudes to life, discriminates in its artistry.²³⁵ Plato, unlike some of his disciples, is not emotionally impoverished whatever his suspicions about emotions such as pity. Neither is his star pupil, the much cooler Aristotle. Aristotle, especially in his *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*, strives to move beyond folk wisdom on the emotions. Metaphor, as Ricouer shows, is inserted into these two different but related kinds of language with their peculiar purposes (Ricouer, 1996). Classical Greek strong poetry is an essential representation of human actions, an enactment of universals, replete with awe and sublimity. Words, well chosen and aptly combined, are, in rhetoric, both necessary warfare and philosophy:

Rhetoric is the counterpart of Dialectic. Both alike are concerned with such things as come, more or less, within the general ken of all men and belong to no definite science. Accordingly all men make use, more or less, of both; for to a certain extent all men attempt to discuss statements and to maintain them, to defend themselves and to attack others (Aristotle, 1971, 1354a).

Poetry is justified by Aristotle in the same sane frame of mind as also in the realm of the probable, as is rhetoric, and superior in its kind to history in its writing because, similarly to philosophy, poetry is concerned with universals:

...the poet's function is to describe, not the thing that has happened, but a kind of thing that might happen, i.e. what is possible as being probable or necessary. The distinction between historian and poet is not in the one writing prose and other verse....It consists really in this, that the one describes the thing that has been, and the other a kind of thing that might be. Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars (Aristotle, 1971, 1451).

Literature has made of such excess of meaning its cakes and its ale, and not in narrative alone, but in hero and anti-hero, metaphor and myth, sign and symbol.²³⁶

Literary art runs with every conceivable trope in its quest for clarification and integration of human experience. Homer writes of a world fit for, and fitted to, gods and heroes. J writes of a world where incommensurable realities clash, where man is made of mud mingling spring water and dust, and God takes his evening stroll in a garden. Homer, for all his pantheon of gods, strikes the notes of immanence; J, for all his blinding irony, strikes the notes of transcendence. The unity that a language brings to sport would seem to tend more fittingly to the literary than the philosophical.²³⁷

Sport as a particular kind of language, a poetic kind of language, has an obvious concern with the figurative in general, and metaphor and myth especially. It will be recalled that in poetry, in Jakobson's sophisticated linguistic theory, there is the

construction of a multiple syntax issuing in equivalence and parallelism. The poetic function does not simply distinguish the axis of combination and contiguity from the axis of selection and substitution, the syntagmatic from the paradigmatic. In poetry there is a further movement. Jakobson understands the projection of the base of equivalence, similarity and dissimilarity, synonymy and antonymy, inherent in selection, into the axis of combination, as characterising poetry:

The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination. Equivalence is promoted to the constitutive device of the sequence....in metalanguage the sequence is used to build an equation, whereas in poetry the equation is used to build a sequence (Jakobson, 1996, p.71).

The net effect in poetry is multiple syntax, and emphases upon the intimately related phatic function and the message. Poetry bespeaks both warmth and light. A mere intellectualism does not suffice for poetry to fulfill its ends. It needs to be cerebral, but it needs to speak the reasons of the heart. T.S. Eliot, a publisher by trade, and an important poet and an important critic, insisted that it must enact an association, not a dissociation, of sensibility. It is not necessary to share Eliot's creed to endorse this fundamental aesthetic and ethical stance. Larkin, a librarian open and brave enough to put his lively opinions in print in prose and poetry, and a different poet and critic and man (obsessed, not by tradition and talent, but sex, jazz, and death²³⁸ - probably in that order), put the essential idea of making contact with the reader in head and heart succinctly:

I should hate anybody to read my work because he's been told to and told what to think about it. I really want to hit them, I want readers to feel yes, I've never thought of it that way, but that's how it is (Larkin, 1984, p.56).

Poetry, in Ricoeur's sophisticated contemporary exposition of Aristotle's poetics, is language come fully alive thanks supremely to mimesis, metaphor, and myth. "Lively expression is that which expresses existence as alive" (Ricoeur, 1996, p.355). The principal function of the strong poetry of the classical Greeks, in Aristotle's theory of poetry, was as an emotional purgative in the representation of the essential or universal in elevated human action. Aesthetic pleasure became the paradoxical upshot of painful theatrical experience. In Greek theatre, as in all theatre truly worthy of the name, the audience became part of the overall structure and functioning of the language. Metaphor, in Aristotle's theory of rhetoric and poetry, was the common element of connection between poetry and rhetoric, and through rhetoric, to philosophy.²³⁹ The double insertion of like-structured metaphor in rhetoric and poetry did not disguise a duality of function and intention. Functionally, metaphor, in rhetoric, operates "where the dangerous power of eloquence and the logic of probability meet" (Ricoeur, 1996, p.326). In poetry, however, metaphor "purges the feelings of pity and fear" (Ricoeur, 1996, p.327). At the level of intention, rhetoric employed metaphor as a means of persuasion in the world of politics, while poetry employed it as a means of catharsis in the world of tragedy. Within the conventions of Greek theatre, and the potency of playwrights of genius, metaphor quickened language structure into essential truth:

Now poetry does not seek to prove anything at all: its project is mimetic; its aim ...is to compose an essential representation of human actions; its appropriate method is to speak the truth by means of fiction, fable, and tragic *muthos*. The triad of *poesis-mimesis-katharsis*, which cannot possibly be confused with the triad *rhetoric-proof-persuasion*, characterises the world of poetry in an exclusive manner (Ricoeur, 1996, p.327).

Aristotle proceeds with the same definition of metaphor in poetry and rhetoric understood as part of philosophy, but understands a duality of function and intention. Language organized according to parts of diction is the means by which metaphor is inserted in poetry and rhetoric.

In his complex and extended definition of metaphor, Ricouer posits four features, characteristics which set the course for the understanding of metaphor for centuries:

The first characteristic is that metaphor is something that happens to the noun...in connecting metaphor to noun or word and not to discourse Aristotle establishes the orientation of the history of metaphor vis-a-vis poetics and rhetoric for several centuries....It will, however, carry a high price: it becomes impossible to recognize a certain homogenous functioning that (as Roman Jakobson will show) ignores the difference between word and discourse and operates at all the strategic levels of language - words, sentences, discourse, texts, styles (Ricouer, 1996, p.329).²⁴⁰

The second feature of this expansive definition of metaphor in poetic intention and function is that it is essentially concerned with a process of reflexive meaning in a movement from established usage to a fresh usage. The third feature consists in a complex deviation of meaning as a name is transposed. It is, however, the fourth feature which most merits attention for present purposes. In this fourth feature of metaphor there is revealed an unstable balance between logical loss and semantic gain: metaphor reveals an internal tension in meaning between a conservative preservation of meaning in the first three features, and a radical new typology founded in analogical resemblance and proportion. Ricouer ventures three interpretative hypotheses about metaphor: it is categorical transgression; it is creative of meaning; it is, in a sense, foundational. Are

such interpretative hypotheses about metaphor applicable to sport as poetry, sport as the making of novel meaning rather than the finding of tired old truths?

Poetry, as we have seen, in Bloom's sophisticated theory, is an incestuous, tortuous, and violent re-writing of myth in metaphor, where select winners are, at the final post, eternal grinners (Bloom, 1997). Admittance within the portals of the poetic immortals does not come cheap. Nothing is got for nothing, Bloom, taking from Emerson, repeatedly reminds his readers. The reader must postpone instant gratification. Aesthetic pleasure bountifully realised is delayed pleasure; fore-pleasures are not consummations. The strong poet passes through more severe trials if he is to prove truly strong and not become something skeletons dream about.

Strong poets may or may not be the unacknowledged legislators of the world, but in all four theories above (Aristotle, Bloom, Jakobson, Ricouer), as in many others, poetry cuts deep.²⁴¹ The language of strong poetry operates at various levels. And what of sport, is sport superficial or deep? Surface spectacle, or strong poetry? Mere morality play for the multitude, as Barthes, in his witty way maintains (Barthes, 1989, pp.18-30), or something more? If sport as language were simply combination and contiguity, could it escape being merely surface spectacle? If sport, like poetry, aspires to be strong and deep, must it not communicate in and through those equivalences and parallelisms which operate more in a skewed process of selection and substitution, and at the pole of metaphor and myth? Put simplistically and technically, is sport syntagmatic or paradigmatic? Or can it be both at one and the same time? Put less technically, can sport at its best be a lively, creative language which expresses existence

as alive?²⁴² Put more technically, in terms which stem from Aristotle's theory of poetry, does sport, like poetry, have its concerns also with concrete universals?

Cumulatively, from a variety of perspectives, the idea of sport as a peculiar language has been broached. This chapter moves directly to the question of sport as possessing its languages by considering Roberts' original position developed in his doctoral dissertation of a generation ago, *Languages Of Sport*. This present consideration of language and its fundamentals, while still focused upon similar key concerns such as expression and representation, involves considerable recontextualisation - it is not so much an attempt to pour new wine into old bottles, as to introduce new varieties. The focus, then, remains on language games and forms of life, but viewed from a different place and in a different light.

To recapitulate a little and briefly, to this point there has been a representation of ordinary language as a system of differential relations open to creative instantiation, especially by strong poets in their metaphoric re-writing of myth. Furthermore, three kinds of language within this expansive structure have been sketched, namely poetry as a kind of language, mythology as a kind of language, and sport as a kind of language. While there has been no pretence of definitive determination of these quasi-totalities, or of what language is in its essentials, the fundamental importance of the primary processes of selection and combination, and the perpetual oscillation in actual language usage between the poles of metaphor and metonymy have been underlined. Language, it was maintained, like sport, has structure, a system of relations of difference. Further again, the agonistic quality of strong poetry exhibited in Bloom's theory of poetry has been stressed. Overt or covert, strong poetry is an arena where in selection and

combination words are weapons, a scene of violence, a violence in words. The strong poet, come late, always faces the triple question which ripples in his work: Am I equal to my strong precursor(s)? Am I less than my strong precursor(s)? Am I more than my strong precursor(s)? Victory, Bloom says, has overdetermined the nature and course of strong poetry in western culture (Bloom, 1991, p.33). Strong poets, in such circumstances, cannot be all sweetness and light. It is in their work itself that they suffer the anxiety of influence; engage in the strenuous business of re-writing myth; enact meaning in language pitched predominantly at the pole of metaphor, but perpetually oscillating between the pole of metaphor and the pole of metonymy. Sport as a mimesis of social praxis, and sport as a way of making a world, have been accepted in principle. Fitting thick description needs to be made in supplementation of slender, complex, and malleable terms such as social praxis and world-making. The drama and the ritual of the medieval tournament have been underlined, although their implications for contemporary sport as poetry have been suggested in outline rather than explored and articulated in detail. An aristocratic appreciation of sport as a strictly limited good, it was suggested, is tied to the now fast fading language of amateurism.

This chapter returns, then, to the critical matter of sport as a kind of language, but via a different route. To this end of sport as language, there is a selective retrieval and critique of particular aspects of the doctoral thesis a generation ago of Terrence John Roberts, *Languages of Sport*.²⁴³ Just as his groundbreaking advance in thinking about sport is indebted to Nelson Goodman, so this thesis is indebted to him. Paradoxically, this indebtedness is repaid in something of a swerving from, or misprisioning of, his insights, his own strong re-writing and, more especially, re-reading

of sport. The essence of this misprisioning turns around the relations of sport as language, and especially the vexed question of sport as metaphor.²⁴⁴ In like fashion to Bloom's understanding that strong poets lay violent hands upon their strong predecessors, one seizes roughly upon Roberts, conscious, not only of his changes of mind and advances, but in a present deconstructive turning away from basic tenets of classic linguistic analysis with its high confidence in the crystal-clear determination of the concept. The logic of verificationism (the meaning of the message is the method of its verification), the construction of positive proof, these are not the concerns for those who seek to understand further sport as metaphor and myth, sport as if it were poetry, sport as a fresh making of meaning.

Both structuralist and poet, in their different ways, press toward the understanding that there is no single comprehensive logic in language, and that language has many functions beyond an austere ideation conceived from nowhere in particular and everywhere in general. While it is important for the scientist to verify his findings within the paradigm accepted, science is still a hermeneutic practice in which the interpreter figures. Truth without, like truth within, still requires someone to interpret it, a fitting form of description, a language in which to interpret it. None of the multifarious functions of language falls utterly outside the performative.²⁴⁵ All language, that is, exhibits a degree of the performative in its heterogeneity and slippage. Plurality, ambiguity, and ambivalence, always in contention where actual human experience is taken seriously, exceed any logic of verification. Probability and possibility are not to be excluded. Where reasons of the heart are concerned, reach will always exceed grasp, even for a Dante or a Shakespeare. More will be apprehended

than can be enacted in language, but that is not to deny either the relative adequacy (it must be said in humility) of the knowledge communicated by the likes of Dante and Shakespeare, or possible worlds as yet undelineated.²⁴⁶ The physiognomic aspects of life exceed the empirical and quantifiable: it takes a Shakespeare to show us the difference between the make-believe romance of Romeo and Rosamund, and the real thing between Romeo and Juliet. The great actor can show how pregnant a gesture or even a silence may be. A language of silence may sound oxymoronic, but the great composers make it sound otherwise. Where would Mozart and Beethoven be were it not for their hesitations between sound and sense? The poet, in short, seeks to impress in his performance in words selected and combined. His syntax is multiple; his concerns deep and recurring. Anxiety, for example, is the most pervasive of sentiments; influence never-ending. Realism itself in literature may wear many faces in its representation of reality, hopefully all human and sensitive to consequences beyond victory or defeat. Homer is not senseless in his figuring of Achilles, the New Testament writers are not senseless in their figurations, say, of Peter. Of course Achilles and Peter are worlds apart, the one super-human and the other all too human, but what is made of such writing must be left with the reader, and the critics over his shoulder. Readers, like writers, must be responsible for their own accounts. In life, no one runs quite the same race or faces precisely the same judgments. Auerbach, a uniquely responsible reader, has distinguished a number of such realisms in his classic critical text: Homeric realism, Old Testament realism, New Testament realism,... (Auerbach, 1974, pp. 3-23). Roberts, like Goodman, is an irrealist under rigorous restraints, and it is to such irrealism that one turns.²⁴⁷

Roberts And Languages Of Sport

First, however, it is necessary, for present purposes, to describe in somewhat cursory and even impressionistic fashion, certain fundamentals of Roberts' treatment of sport as semiotic: motivation, method, argument, conclusions.²⁴⁸ An attempt is made in what follows to mark the course of fundamentals of *Languages Of Sport*, to interpret the sense of those fundamentals and, inevitably, to re-mark them somewhat. Roberts' basic motivation springs from his pre-understanding that sport is akin to art and deserving of the same sort of serious consideration as part and parcel of culture proper.²⁴⁹ A simplistic and invidious distinction between classical culture and popular culture cannot, within his assumptions and vocabulary, be sustained. Music can be something of a test case here: music ought to be discriminated on the criteria of necessary standards of goodness and badness rather than genre. Wine might provide another and different test case - all snobbery on the subject aside, does it make sense to talk of an educated palate? And so one could go on. Sport is not necessarily the province of philistines or louts, any more than poetry is there to be handed down from on high by the cultured to the uncultured (or, at the risk of cluttering the argument, theology from the godly to the ungodly). Like art, sport can be the object of cognition to the informed eye that is intent, not so much on uncovering the hidden truth, but rather on making sense of what is presented through attention and care. Attention to how symbol systems function, if and when given careful application to sport, will be amply repaid in deeper and more pleasurable understanding of sport. The care of the spectator ought to match the care of the competitor. While careful not to claim that sport is art, Roberts' underlying motive

is to press for a reevaluation of sport which places it on the same high plane as art. Sport is to and for the understanding of self and world: sport is intimately bound up with questions of identity and community - or, as Rorty is to frame the issues down the track, private perfection and public solidarity. The meaning and value of life is no more peripheral to sport as a practice and institution than it is to war as a practice and institution. Survival in the sense of continued existence is not on the line very often in sport, as it may be in war, but who one is, how one may rise or fall in the world, is a perpetual question and possibility. The strong sport player especially, is always accompanied by risk, and not just the risk of defeat in battle. He must contend, not only with his foe, but with his own doubts and demons. Sport tests more than talent. It might not test all the virtues, but it does test some, and these some bear upon recurring questions of identity and community.

Roberts' method in his doctoral dissertation rested on a thorough and ingenious adaptation of Nelson Goodman's research into the functioning of symbol systems in pictorial art, but possessed its own originality and, in some respects, is more, not less radical than the work of Goodman in his *Languages Of Art* (Goodman, 1968). The fact that a language such as English has a phonetic-alphabetic system of writing obscures the correspondence that hieroglyphic and ideographic languages have with pictorial art. Making the move, as Roberts does, from the actions perceived in sport to the matter of language, is, in vital respects, a less obvious one, even in retrospect, than the move from art to language made by Goodman. It is commonly said that in language, as in art, things are pictured - the metaphor, safely literalised, has become hackneyed. Furthermore, art, like poetry, has multiple syntax, a complex structure which evades the

uninformed eye, but it is there within its frame, hung on the wall, secured in its own if temporary place. Sport is other in its movement and evanescence, its unpredictable rhythms, its gestures, its ritual and theatre, its anxiety and desire, its fear and hope, its doubt and assertion, its smell and noise. Sensation and emotion are not accidents of sport, mere epiphenomena, but part of its structure. Film, even replay, may bestow a relative permanence, but as present player or spectator there is not only much going on but what is going on is passing before the eyes and dying in the ears, caught on the breeze as this scent or that. Sport may be expressive play, meaningful movement and more, but it is, in its actual play, evanescent, ephemeral, lived experience of limited duration.²⁵⁰ Its patterns of bodily movement, its signs and symbols, do not hang around open to leisurely and repeated inspection and analysis. Time presses hard in most sports²⁵¹; space is forever in expansion and contraction. Media coverage can become some compensation for these inherent obstacles, but it does not replace the thrill and the challenge of actually being there, one little part of the contest, one discrete unit in the variegated mix of elements; time and space elongated or foreshortened, cause and effect ultimately endless and incalculable; meaning up for grabs. Skilled competitor and informed spectator must meet different, stringent, and pressing demands in the pursuit of victory and the making of meaning, the enactment of purpose. Scrutiny at leisure is an option for neither. In short, as in theatre, both competitor and spectator are part of the enactment and part of the language.

Sport, like play in words, is a risk and a test. Often, in both, comes a revelation of more than is comfortable. More is displayed in the writing to the truly informed reader than is often open to the writer. In a deep analysis more may be open to the

reader than to the writer. And the re-assurance experienced in sport of which Gebauer speaks is habitually overtaken at various times by other sentiments such as doubt, futility, anxiety, fear, relief, and aggression. “All of a sudden he lost it” is one revealing colloquialism in sport for the competitor who is no longer in control of his skills, his game, himself.

The fundamental challenge to interpreting sport as language, closely related to what has just been said, can be more directly put in the form of improbable questions: Is there a play instinct in any similar sense to that language instinct analysed by Chomskians? If there is, where, in sports, do we locate signifier and signified? Is the relation between the two as arbitrary and the meaning, relatively and commonly speaking, as definite as in ordinary language? How do those primary processes of selection and combination operate in playing games competitively? What is metaphor and what metonymy in sport? Does sport tap into the unconscious in anything like the way language in general, and poetry in particular, do? Is there any process of transference between the rapt spectator and the strong performer? More colloquially, can actions speak? Do sporting competitors make statements? Can one do things with bodies as with words? Are bodies, like minds, things to think with? Is Ryle right in his radical distinction between knowing that and knowing how, and his contention that intelligent practice is not the step-child of theory, but rather, more often, the other way around (Ryle, 1968, pp.26-60)? Is Rorty’s physicalism a convincing account of the relations between a self and her world, a self and cultural codes or languages (Rorty, 1991, pp.113-125, pp. 78-92)? Extreme examples might, once again, make the seeming incongruity confronted but little explored in the opening chapters, stark. The discursive

nature of most conventional philosophical writing would seem in the order of things to be utterly at odds with the anarchy, the violence, say, of an Australian rules football match. How does Roberts respond to such challenge?

Roberts' initial move beyond the naming of his dissertation as *Languages Of Sport*, is to question the association of sport and language to the point of asserting their utter difference. This considered ploy reads,

Sport is not a language, nor is language essential to it. In fact, the association suggested by the title between sport and language seems at least curious if not altogether improper (Roberts, 1976, p.1).

Is there a real problem here? Are the signifiers and signifieds any more or less determinable in one realm than the other? Are there not comparable processes of selection and substitution, combination and contexture? When signs and symbols combine in the plays of sport, is there not, as in language, both temporal sequence and spatial concurrence? Is there at least the whiff of a suggestion by Roberts that sport exists in the bonds of improper language, rather as philosophers as far apart as Ayer and Austin both thought that poetry was parasitic upon the properly logical uses of language? If, more properly, symbol systems and not languages had figured in the title of his thesis, would there have been the same necessity to introduce the question of metaphoricity at the outset? Why displace symbol systems for languages in the title? The short answer, of course, is to introduce the question of metaphor, which is itself bound up with displacement of conventional or literal meaning through a process of novel condensation and transgression. Despite this, there does seem to be the suggestion that literality is proper, and metaphor improper.²⁵² This, if so, is a complication indeed if there is an assumption that denotation and ideation, as

traditionally understood, are not the limits of language, and the quest is to place sport predominantly at the pole of metaphor. Further, such difficulties are multiplied once the precise limits of denotation and ideation themselves are put in question. Plato's *ideas* are not Locke's *ideas*; Russell's denotation and reference are not those of Rorty. Giving up on language as homogenous and neutral has its many and complex consequences.

This opening cuts to the chase, then, but in oblique fashion, almost itself as a kind of fake, a particular kind of movement common to sport and of which Roberts makes much in chapter three of *Languages Of Sport*. The fake in sport has something of the complexity and quality of mimicry in philosophy (although few competitors are Platos in their practice). The fake in sport is that movement or series of movements calculated to deceive opponents; it is a particular case of double denotation akin to that described by Bateson. In a central sense, then, his thesis of sport, like art, possessing its languages, hinges on propriety and impropriety in language, and a related distinction between literal truth and falsity and metaphorical truth and falsity. Roberts, like Goodman, draws a firm line between the two. Roberts, in sum, is a metaphoric critic, but a somewhat hesitant one. Unlike Gebauer, however, he does situate the understanding and interpretation of sport firmly under the net of language.

And metaphor remains at the core of his imaginative project. Any bashfulness on the score of metaphor disseminating throughout the dissertation largely evaporates in the course of his analysis. The question of the question of the concept is put, basically, in terms of an unproblematic identity, in line with Goodman's own conventionalism (Ricouer, 1996, p.331). Expression, for example, is associated with metaphor; denotation is logically placed as at the core of representation. Roberts works with

Goodman's schema, which is unduly neat and tidy. The plasticity of such concepts is left largely untouched. The problems associated with the schema of making the inner outer, the question of the scene of writing, these are not matters of prime interest. The question of the question of metaphor is answered in terms of the model of Max Black. The question of the question of the literal is left largely implicit. The syncategorematic is admitted to his philosophical discourse cautiously and by degrees. This problem of how language can still go on, and profitably, when it describes no object, is left largely unanswered. Roberts is a metaphoric critic, but under constraints, and somewhat apologetically: "The title (*Languages Of Sport*) is metaphorical" (Roberts, 1976, p.1). Apology gets mixed up with his apologetic for sport, but only as a sub-plot in what is a much more complex narrative. His explanations are succinct, his analyses plausible, his arguments tight, so what, if anything, might be said to be missing?

Roberts, like Goodman, is anti-essentialist and nominalist. In his doctoral dissertation he works within the broad conventions of the analytical tradition of philosophy (as, for the most part, with the fundamental exception of the matter of induction, does the maverick Goodman) but still manages to escape mere nitpicking in a series of imaginative moves. While he takes language as the paradigmatic symbol system, he argues for sport the right to also be understood as meaningful in terms of its signs and symbols. A particular importance is given to the fake in sport, that area where simple and direct denotation is denied in the interests of something more subtle.²⁵³

There is a distinction between the matter-of-fact, routine way most athletes write their sport, and how sport may be read by the devotee (Roberts, 1976, p.37). Roberts adopts for sport the same metaphorical redescription of these symbol systems as languages as

Goodman, works broadly within the same classification of major categories and employs much the same relations between the categories. His prime focus is upon the form rather than content of the symbolism of sport, the absence of the signs or signifiers in sport constituting a stable vocabulary hindering clear explication as to its precise meanings. Implicitly there looms the problem of how there might be a language in the absence of words. Importantly, he makes much of two matters he understands as intimately related, the fake in sport (that moment in the contest where the competitor makes a movement calculated to deceive), and the, as it were, signature signed by the competitor in executing his movements, his plays. Thus, his self-understanding, like Goodman's, is that his original work is one of analysis in the field of epistemology, with implications for aesthetics. His conception of the aesthetic clearly exceeds the realm of sensation. Sport, for him, is a fitting object for visual thinking because of its capacity for representation, exemplification, and expression. In short, sport functions like art.

His argument is premised upon an informed understanding of both Goodman's theory of symbol systems, and sport (especially American football). The argument begins with questions of meaning, both literal and metaphorical, as conveyed and constituted by sign and symbol. The question of the black cloud as a natural sign of imminent rain and as an invented or cultural sign of rain is, very understandably, raised rather than explored (Roberts, 1976, p. 13). Is it that some signs and symbols communicate rather than constitute their meaning, and some constitute rather than communicate it? Does a paradigm constitute itself? Is context always critical in determining meaning, yet itself often cannot be categorically determined? Do some

symbols ever acquire, as it were, a life of their own independent of all context? Is the sign or symbol always but one link in some chain or other, one thread in some network of meaning in some institution or practice for some purpose?

Suzanne Langer, herself heavily influenced by Ernst Cassirer, provides the basic understanding of the functioning of sign and symbol and, as such, a certain anthropological orientation neither romantic nor positivist. Her stance as a semiotician is that of one who understands that mind includes much that reaches beyond thought in the strict sense (Roberts, 1976, p.16). Langer understands signs as tied to action, and consisting of the three elements, the subject, the sign, and the object. Symbols, on the other hand, are tied to thought, and consist of four elements, the subject, the symbol, the conception, and the object (Roberts, 1976, p.31). Sometimes, as in the case of proper names, something can operate as both sign and symbol. Roberts provides hybrid examples drawn from American football which seem to blur Langer's distinction between sign and symbol, and which constitute evidence of human cognition. The understanding in structural linguistics of a basic distinction between reference and referent appear in Langer's own understanding of symbolism.

The vast human storehouse of symbols evokes "a surplus of mental wealth." While Langer is not referring to sport, there is the clear understanding for Roberts that the peculiar economy of signs functioning in sport is itself lavish, not austere. Symbols, not necessarily tied to some or other version of romanticism, introduce the question of reasons of the heart, those kind of reasons which are not always clear and distinct, and cannot always be pursued successfully in the first person singular active indicative mood. Reasons of the heart, to be plausible, require the subtleties of art. Roberts' own

questioning of the adequacy of Langer's distinction between sign and symbol leads on to the suggestion of three broad divisions of symbol: action-symbols, sport-symbols, and life-symbols. The first, action-symbols (Roberts, 1976, p.35),

are those special, already-discussed, hybrid cases of symbols (or signs) which call for action on the part of the athlete, but nonetheless necessitate conceptual thought in order to determine what action is most appropriate.

The second, sport-symbols, are (Roberts, 1976, p.36),

important to participant and spectator alike, and ...can be located on all levels ranging from the less to the more general...This symbol is not only "in" sport but "of" sport. That is to say, the conception and object which constitute its meaning are contained within, or are intrinsic to, or are a part of sport as well.

The third, life-symbols, are (Roberts, 1976, pp.36-37),

also available to athlete and spectator alike....It differs from the "sport-symbol" only in that its conceptions and objects (i.e., its meaning) are derived not from sport but from "life" itself. That is, the meanings attached to this type of symbol are external to sport.

These distinctions are more appropriately taken up in the next chapter of this work on sport and myth, and in the sixth and concluding chapter on the strong sport performer as analogous to the strong poet. At this point it is sufficient simply to underline the tension that seems to exist between the plenitude inherent in the signs and symbols of sport, and the understanding of words having fixed association and unequivocal meaning. The mature Wittgenstein's injunction not to ask for the meaning but to examine the usage, is germane here.

Roberts explicates not only Goodman's analysis of the functioning of symbol structure in pictorial art, but, on the basis of visual analysis, provides his own detailed application, most saliently, to America football.²⁵⁴ As already signalled, and again

following the lead of Goodman, language is used metaphorically for symbol system. Thus sport is brought under the broad umbrella of a semiotic made from readings of plays in sport, of human movement in sport. There is an explicit and comprehensive awareness of what seems to come so easily, so naturally, to the skilled competitor; it is intricately structured and long-learned: angles, speeds, depths, mass, etc. are brought magisterially into play by the elite competitor, but not necessarily as a consequence of conscious thought. Sport constitutes its languages, not literally, only metaphorically. Importantly, Roberts not only takes the simple paradigm of language as possessing a vocabulary, syntax, and semantic, but accepts Langer's (and Gebauer's?) understanding that the vocabulary of a language has a basically unequivocal quality about it. Metaphor as understood by a structuralist such as Jakobson, or a philosopher such as Ricoeur, undermine such an understanding. The question of the question as to the ideality, the identity, the fullness of meaning in discrete words is not put. Nor are questions about those logical words (*or, either, and, but, because, if, then, since, neither, nor, nevertheless, however, the, this, that, etc.*), which enable a language to function productively. Such words patently require other words in order to perform their vital and necessary functions. Further, Roberts maintains the line that fundamentals of language can only be attributed to sport in this strained, transgressive, metaphorical sense. He finds that even the displacement of meaning captured in metaphor is insufficient at the semantic level of particular plays, movements, or actions in sport:

On the level of semantics, however, the analogy (between language and sport) clearly breaks down. The basic units of "vocabulary" of sport do not have fixed conventional meanings as do those of language. Nor are the "meanings" of the movement combinations any more fixed. In fact, it may be the case that for the majority of movements, single or combined, most

would be hard-pressed to arrive at any meaning whatsoever, whether completely subjective or conventional (Roberts, 1976, p. 42).

How actual is this problem? Must a language have words, and words with fixed conventional meanings? The question leads inexorably to the ultimate conclusion that a language, whether it be that of art, music, poetry, or sport, can become something other and more than a mere technical and mechanical means of communication. A language can constitute itself: specifically, strong sport performance, like strong poetry, can and does become an enactment of meaning in something of its plurality and ambiguity, something of its absence of complete closure, something of elusive and allusive depth. Strong sport plays, like resonant words, can indeed do things. The hearer of a poem, like the spectator of sport plays (assuming an interest in and an attention to something beyond mere end result), cannot escape the burden and the joy of interpretation. The problem dissipates when examined within the structure of a specific sport.

Cricket, which it has already been suggested is pitched more at the pole of metonymy than metaphor, will do for an example and test case. Cricket is no mere physical contest: like other sports, it has the possibilities and the impurities of a language. What has occurred when, as is the case, a cricket bat is described as a blade, or a shot squarish of the wicket behind point as a cut? Each sport, it seems, must make up its own peculiar vocabulary, and for this to happen both metaphor and metonym come into play. Considered structurally, cricket, like other sports, is constituted by its rules, ethos, etiquette, syntax, and lexicon. Both bowler and batsman make a selection from the lexicon which operates in the playing of this particular competitive game. At a high level of abstraction, cricket is a sport of bat against ball. This is to be understood

in an inclusive sense that is both literal and metaphorical. In cricket, as in many sports, especially ball sports, a dialectic is brought into play - or, more correctly, a series of dialectics. What does one make of the contest of bowler and batsman taken in virtual isolation from the match as a complex whole?²⁵⁵ The bowler seeks to bowl the ball with the primary objective of taking the batsman's wicket in any one of several valid ways. The bowler, that is, could be said to address the batsman as addressee in an agonistic conversation. The bowler need not sledge to be in phatic communication with the batsman at the other end of the pitch. Knowing what he can and cannot do, and what he does best, and knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the batsman facing up to him, he selects from the code of prefabricated possibilities, his repertoire of deliveries, his stock-in-trade, his particular range within the legitimate possibilities open to bowlers. The batsman seeks to play the delivery so as to preserve his wicket (one mistake in this sport may be fatal to his cause) or, if judged in an instant the path of wisdom, stroke the ball bowled to him so as to evade the fieldsmen and score runs.²⁵⁶ He, too, selects from his repertoire within the range of prefabricated possibilities in considered response to the particular delivery he receives. In abstraction, virtually the same primary processes of selection and combination that are operative in the fundamentals of language come into play.²⁵⁷ If it be objected that the lexicons are disparate in range, then, for starters, it might be salutary to consider those contrasting situations in the two practices of time and place. The clock ticks inordinately loud and fast in most sport at those galvanising moments of intense conflict; and, as in most ball sports, there is the particular focus upon the moving ball allied with a more generalised awareness, a peripheral vision of field placement. The revelation of self-belief, skill,

and courage (or their wanting) when a batsman faces a bowler is hardly to be disguised, except to know-nothings.²⁵⁸

A Lindwall bowling to a Hutton (or a Larwood to a Bradman, a Lillee to a Richards, a Holding to a Border, a McGrath to a Lara etcetera) is no more an anonymous splendour playing in an unrecognisable code than Homer or J, Dante or Shakespeare, writing for their readers. The splendour is different, incarnate, but it is shared; human plenitude speaks in and through them all. One simply has to be relatively informed as to the code and the operative mode to recognise their strength. One needs, for instance, to know an inswinger from an outswinger, a seamer on a testing length from a bouncer, a thunderbolt from a ball bowled out of the back of the hand with very much the same action and half the pace. And so on. What is required, in short, is the informed eye. Much more needs to be said upon similar lines, but is it not facile to condemn sport as a form of repetition, an artless world, as Gebauer does, on the grounds of the impurities and limitations of its signs, once one has acquired the capacity for visual thinking in the given context (Arnheim, 1970; Gombrich, 1977, 1987)? And not just visual thinking either, but all the senses alive, and remembrance keen and catholic, as in the interpretation of poetry where the heresy of paraphrase only carries so far. Those carefully cut squares of turf with their contrasting shades of restful green spread the entire length and breadth of the Melbourne Cricket Ground, so far removed from the English village green, can become both metaphor and metonym for the sport of cricket with its seemingly endless condensations, displacements and relations of part and whole.²⁵⁹ Colosseum for football in the winter months, the Melbourne Cricket Ground remains more Taj Mahal in the summer, despite the disappearance, one by one, of old

stands reeking with history for something more modern, more accessible, more functional, spectators closer to the action.²⁶⁰ In an empty abstraction of theory severed from history, a McGrath has exactly the same range of prefabricated possibilities before him as a Lindwall; in practice it is never so, and never will be until the day when clones with identical histories play sport. And even then the context of contest for such clones must differ! Their shared greatness is displayed in different eras, in a different ethos, even different rules and conventions; one is tall and the other short by the standards commonly expected of fast bowlers; one is quiet and imperturbable, the other scowls and abuses. Lindwall would never qualify as a gentleman cricketer in the English sense, but played in the years when it was not yet proper to maintain your family through your skill and dedication in your chosen sport. McGrath is the consummate professional, ever-ready to sledge if he thinks he can get under the batsman's skin and disturb that mix, that shifting tension between concentration and relaxation that marks champions. Yet one of the many attractions for the aficionado in sport lies in the ultimate futility and utter compulsion of comparing champions. Michael Holding ("Whispering Death") running in to bowl had very much the same grace and fluidity (not to mention pace) as that lightning flash of three decades earlier, Ray Lindwall.²⁶¹ Lindwall some years after his retirement denied entry to the ground he had graced, Alan Donald ("White Lightning") breaking down on field in his last Test in Australia, these are not tragedies, but they are not surface spectacle either.²⁶² Ethos is important in sport. So, too, is pathos. Even etiquette has its place of importance, and not just for die-hard lords and ladies with aristocratic pretensions and prejudices.

Does sport possess signifiers with an arbitrary relation to signified but not to meaning? Is syntax being subordinated to semantic here, or semantic to syntax? Or is there a more generalised problem here concerning language? Is the effectiveness and efficiency of sport as language being put in jeopardy here? Roberts then goes on to quote approvingly, sport being in the same category here as music, Langer's dismissal of music as "a language of feeling" on the grounds that the elements of music, not being words, lack reference (Roberts, 1976, pp. 42-50). These assertions of both Roberts and Langer raise important questions about language which have already been touched upon in other contexts, questions which merit brief attention now and further scrutiny in chapters five and six where they are differently contextualised again.

One recognises the force of Langer's argument, but without consenting fully to her conclusion. Does, following Proust, everyone see the same significance behind that same particular little scrap of human face (actual or fictitious) that concerned him in remembrance of things past? Or, again, considering poetry with T.S. Eliot and Valery, how possibly could signifiers have precisely the same signified? Poetry, T.S. Eliot insisted, could communicate without being (fully) understood (Eliot, 1934, p.238). If communication is tied to meaning, then how is meaning tied to writing and reading? Poetry, Valery declared, is a hesitation between the sound and the sense. Why and whence such slippage? Should one not expect that multiple syntax within a specific lexicon constitutes plural meaning? If one listens to an art form such as opera, never once present in its sumptuous houses, ignorant of its forms (even the dialectic between drama and music), denied access to the lyrics sung in a truly foreign tongue, then is one denied all sense, especially in those moments of supreme pathos in the form itself? Can

emotional tones be caught in the combination of musical notation and lyric? Can one talk, with at least a modicum of sense, about musical shades of light and dark, about colours of notes sung and played as sentiments of joy and despair, love and hate? Can there be a poetry at play in such experience, a slippage between sound and sense comparable to that of which Valéry spoke so mightily? Is one not only capable but impelled to be forever translating utterly unintelligible lyrics into a kind of sense in such and like experiences? The fact that the meaning created in such intense moments bears a dubious relationship to the foreign words sung so movingly does not deprive them of all sense. Even in that state of comprehensive ignorance of operatic forms and foreign songs, the hesitations between sound and sense may create their own vibrant life. The feeling so pregnant in opera (even to an outsider who has never actually been to a single opera) may still come to realised form, fitting form, meaningful form in such experience of synesthesia. Such limited understanding and interpretation does not, of course, match that of the informed critic with knowledge of code and context. The principal point here, however, is that the arbitrary relation between signifier and signified, as always, does not preclude rich meaning. There is in such and similar experiences of a primordial kind, including those in sport, a precious world of meaning and value created. Perhaps it is difficult to define the vocabulary of sports in a structural way all would accept, but are there necessarily devastating consequences? Further problematising of what is a considerable problem for Roberts presses for attention, principally, put as a question, or series of questions. Can there be language, even metaphorical language, where there is no lexicon? Words without language? Language without words? Eliot understood that metaphor and allegory could be distinguished by the prime importance in allegory of

clear visual images (Eliot, 1934, pp. 240-252). Metaphor may not reside in a discrete word (it may function as phrase, clause, sentence, paragraph, chapter, book, corpus of work, and even beyond), but is it possible without any word, all vocabulary? Put simplistically, if the rules of a given sport constitute one kind of syntax, what might make up its vocabulary? Or can one accept happily the notion of a language without words? The simple answer is that one can and must. Sport is text, in something like Derrida's sense, but not words.

Thus, despite the novelty, the imagination, the radical departure by Roberts from the ranks of naive realists of sport, his philosophy of language in the doctoral dissertation remains both simple and traditional. Further, just as there is a tinge of paradox in a structuralist theory of language founded, structured, upon differential relations, so there is a tinge of paradox in an acceptance of a system of analysis which offers such a fraught and tremulous embrace of metaphor. It will be left to Rorty (a critical later influence in his thinking on sport) much later in life to introduce linguistic notions such as that of reference as a matter of art; and to Derrida that meaning is never fully present as the endless chain of signifiers jostle and displace one another in a play that never ends, that is endlessly open, and must be accepted as relatively adequate only.²⁶³ If philosophy today is to be found at the margins, a matter of traces, disseminations, and supplementations, what of sport? How does one begin to assess the meaning and importance in sport of the plethora of visual images?

Goodman, rightly insistent that description itself rests in need of description, has relatively little, compared with either Black or Rorty, to contribute to theory of metaphor. Instead, he, although nominalist, is a conventionalist in his philosophy of

language. His interests are removed from questions of the place of metaphor in philosophy, of language as constitutive, as enactment, let alone that language is forever the site of slippage and displacement. Like Ayer, he writes elegantly within his schema and lexicon; like Ayer, he constructs and buttresses his argument as only logicians can.

Other radicals of very different philosophical stripes, such as J.L. Austin and Jacques Derrida, were also to disturb the already muddy waters of philosophy of language. Austin has this at least in common with Ayer, namely, that poetry is parasitic upon the essentially ideational function of ordinary language. Derrida radicalises the basic insights of his structural predecessors in a heady mix of wit and argument, elusion and allusion, difference and deferral.

Summary of the most far-reaching conclusion of Roberts' thesis occurs at the very end of his thesis where, after listing as symptoms of the aesthetic in sport, syntactic density, semantic density, relative repleteness and exempflication, there is this hymn to sport:

....an adequate understanding and appreciation of much of the meaning, value and significance of sport demands an approach much the same as is demanded by any and all of painting, music, literature, language, religion, philosophy and even science. The ultimate import is that by such an argument sport is associated with and is of the same significance as the most meaningful and laudable enterprises of man (Roberts, 1976, p.215).

Roberts' conclusion has already been very much the starting line for the present dissertation. It remains, from present vantage points, to investigate further and differently, matters of sport as language, and especially sport as poetry. In the process, some recapitulation is in order, but only if it helps to advance the argument attending the creative collision of the worlds of sport and poetry, of sport as if it were poetry. Implicit in the argument is the understanding that just as description stands in need of

description, and that usually necessitates the long way round in serious concerns, just so does interpretation stand in need of interpretation. This need not end in some infinite regress to some fancied origin, or black hole of nothingness. The important concerns in both description and interpretation are the absence of closure and the acceptance of plurality as possible virtue. In the most fitting description and the most sustainable interpretation, some vision of human possibility, even plenitude, may be created. Spirit need not be conceived as truth, beauty, and goodness, wrapped up in the cocoon of eternity: it may be conceived otherwise as energy and freedom, creation of the new.

Sport As Text

Is it helpful, or even credible, to posit as meaningful a world of sport which remains beyond translation into that symbol system of symbol systems, ordinary language, or one of its many subsidiary kinds of language? More simply and pertinently, how might sport, as a distinctive cultural practice, be conceptualised as itself a language? If it remains possible for ordinary language as structure to become transformed into potent literature, then what is required for sport as structure to become an enactment of novel and potent meaning (Jakobson, 1996; Roberts, 1976)? Is language to be conceived as a finite totality, a determinate structure of differential relations? What are the limits of language? If there are limits do they include either myth or silence? What of the dream to make of language pure logic, or the infinite Idea? What place in language for the muddle of the world or the messiness of emotion? Is lack in articulation a necessary consequence of intensity in experience? Must language always exhibit slippage and displacement? Is language pure or impure? A

field of disparate forces? Is strong poetry, conspicuously, as Bloom argues, a site of enacted violence upon strong poets dead and past?

A related line of tendentious questions can be applied to sport. Why does Suits make of sport a grammar of necessary and sufficient conditions yet with utopian possibilities? Why does Novak seek to present sport as a natural theology replete with self-congratulations on the American way of life (Novak, 1988)? Why does Bourdieu explain sport as little more than the re-production of the material conditions of the prevailing culture and society, a sterile product of a suspect political philosophy (Bourdieu, 1994)? Why does Brohm, in similar vein, make his attack on what he sees as an ahistorical mysticism in contemporary sport, a mysticism which cripples and deforms (Brohm, 1989). Why does a feminist such as Mariah Burton Nelson argue that sexism is alive but unwell in the American culture of sports (Nelson, 1994)? Why does Christopher Lasch situate the degradation of sport within a culture of Narcissism (Lasch, 1979)?²⁶⁴ Historians and feminists aside, is it possible that even philosophers nurture their cherished dogmas, tend them like tender seedlings? Is such practice valid and acceptable practice for responsible intellectuals? Gebauer, it will be remembered, denied the possibility of sport as being or having a language, or languages, on the grounds of the ideality of linguistic signs and the sensuous and practical nature of the performative patterns of bodily movement in sport:

One cannot abstract the staging of games from the side of performance. Just as the others do not merge with concepts, the patterns of action, the prototypes, are not pure forms. They are not realizations of ideal signs (hence, sport cannot be regarded as a language) (Gebauer, 1995, p.102).

This joins the issue, in one aspect, of the nature of language, but it obscures the many ways in which language itself is both performative and agonistic. Are the discrete signs of language possessed of an ideality denied the discrete signs of sport? Or is this to misunderstand the matter in an improperly posed question? In each instance, how does one conceive of the nature and functioning of the signs in question - those of language and of sport? Is it always a matter of selection and substitution, and combination and contexture? Further, if, as Gebauer argues, sport makes a world by a process of mimesis, does this open the door wide to an understanding of sport as a language, and particularly to a poetic language, where meaning has to be wrested from the realm of the inarticulate and pre-conscious in the writing and the reading? Is the primitive instinct of play linked to the language instinct, the instinct which most clearly and definitively constitutes our shared humanity?

Derridean text has no beginning and no end. What it does have is the free play of the signifier. Derrida's line that there is nothing outside the text, or no outside-text (*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*) has served both to stimulate some and mislead others. Derrida exercises the right of both philosophers and poets to use common terms in uncommon senses: text is one such term, writing another. In return for such strategic licence he demands careful reading. That may prove damnably difficult, but ought not be too much to demand of the critic intent upon formulating his own understanding of key terms that ought not be taken uncritically as fixed and final givens. Perhaps it is more immediately clear that writing is not a given when it is realised that it can only be considered in terms of its own operation. If writing is, at the very least, self-reflexive,

what of text as Derrida conceives of it? And how is the Derridean understanding productive in the context of this work?

One of the remarkable things about Derrida is the importance he attaches to the concept of experience. He is not the only philosopher to have done so (Kant did in one way, William James in quite another), of course, but it is worth remarking upon to those who think that he thinks that Shylock, after all, did not bleed as Gentiles do.

One clue to this insistence upon the importance of experience and reflection upon it, that is, to text, and to writing, occurs in his essay "*Genesis and Structure*" and *Phenomenology* (Derrida, 1990, pp.154-168). In the context of writing about Husserl's attack upon Dilthey's historicism, Derrida (1990, p.160) writes:

The Idea of truth, that is the Idea of philosophy or of science, is an infinite Idea, an Idea in the Kantian sense. Every totality, every finite structure is inadequate to it. Now the Idea or the project which animates and unifies every *determined* historical structure, every *Weltanschauung*, is *finite*: on the basis of the structural description of a *vision of the world* one can account for everything except the infinite opening to truth, that is, philosophy. Moreover, it is always something like an *opening* which will frustrate the structuralist project. What I can never understand, in a structure, is that by means of which it is not closed.

Philosophy caught up in such antinomy must move to the margins, and contest apartheid in South Africa, or fascist politicians in Australia or America, as best it can. But nothing remains outside the text, the infinite opening to truth in which such things are contested, whether they are written by Mandela in gaol or Derrida himself on visitation to Australia.²⁶⁵ Derrida resists all transcendental signifieds, including any God who is Alpha and Omega. Language structure itself may be understood less as empirical induction and more as an heuristic fiction, and no less useful for all that if not taken too seriously, too puritanically, too literally. Structuralism manages language and

makes sense of it as a system of differential relations in the pretence that it is a closed system: admit *parole*, actual usage, and things become more complex and responsibilities more urgent. Text embraces and informs each and every human experience breaking into day. Old words (along with dead poets and past great philosophers) must find new meanings; new words will communicate and help constitute fresh experience. Text, then, as Derrida understands and uses the term, is that incessant making of meaning which eventually breaks down every structure of differential relations, however strong, however natural, however unchallenged, however longlasting. Meaning makes openings in the most solid structures.²⁶⁶

Sport, too, in this understanding of text, is unavoidably textual; like poetry, it is text of a special and meaningful kind constituted in play.²⁶⁷ Meaning has its material conditions as well as its free play, its resistance to closure. Human experience is not homogenous. Plurality, ambiguity, ambivalence, are recognisable phenomena in sport as in politics, religion, and sex. Derrida is interested in their textuality rather than their phenomenology. Once again it is easy enough to make a simple if crude transition to the particular space of sport employing this general Derridean understanding of text.²⁶⁸ Sport, as amateurism, constituted one realm of experience, of habits, practices, and skills - one kind of text; sport, as professionalism, quite another.²⁶⁹ The openings in amateur sport gradually and unevenly made by professional sport were mostly fiercely and bitterly resisted, but they did not hold the day. The language of amateurism in elite sport is now largely obsolescent. Sport as text in this comprehensive Derridean sense has changed, rather as politics as text in the same broad sense has changed with the advent of such factors as globalism and feminism. There still remains the ongoing need

to declare that it is this, and not that, I believe; that it is here, and not there, I stand; that it is now, and not then, that I will act.

Derrida is in good company in such a line of thinking about meaning and its ample conditions. Wordsworth could and did read and write, write and read, nature as an open book for as long as the Muse held him in her spell. His *Preludes* do not make for easy reading either, but they, too, reward attention. Nietzsche read the world as text, made us more self-aware of language live and language dead, and challenged a culture he contested and condemned as in decline. Wallace Stevens could re-textualise relations between art and nature, nature and art; unsettle fixed ideas of one as imitation of the other.

Strong philosophers such as Ricoeur and Derrida, and strong poets generally, are not plagued by the onset of metaphor. They set out to inquire into its conditions and its functions. Roberts, in his later work, influenced by Rorty rather than by Goodman, is much more hospitable to sport as metaphor (Roberts, 1995).²⁷⁰

The next chapter inquires into sport as if it were myth, a symbolic form which characteristically integrates narrative and image. If sport can be taken heuristically as a kind of language, and mythology also, how might the former be translated into the latter? These two cultural codes exhibit different interpretative schemas, but even on cursory inspection have much in common. Cassirer, an embryonic structuralist in his cultural phenomenology, understands myth as a principal symbolic form (Cassirer, 1955, vol. 2). Levi-Strauss, impressed by the work of the structuralists, makes his application of their work to the study of the primitive mind as revealed in myth. Bloom, a bolder critic than most, is typical in understanding that metaphor and myth belong

together in the study of literature (Bloom, 1997). Booth, a different kind of metaphoric critic to Bloom, examines how truncated any critical theory must be which divorces ethics from aesthetics (Booth, 1988).

The endlessly open play of signifiers in any interpretative schema must face the question of how language is inserted into it. Ricouer shows in his exposition of Aristotle how inexorably but differently language (*lexis*) makes its bed in classical rhetoric and poetics (Ricouer, 1996, pp. 340-355). In these crafts, the former the counterpart of philosophy, the latter more philosophical than history, though their end is different (persuasion as against catharsis), the making of a truthful reality is a mimesis which involves metaphor and myth (Ricouer, 1996). The key question for this work in the following chapter is, How can sport as a kind of poetic language be understood in relation to mythology as a different kind of language? Because the legacy of positivism remains so strong in western culture, some time is first devoted to outlining realms where myth is understood and interpreted in other senses than the prevailing pejorative ones.²⁷¹

Summary

This chapter has returned to the groundbreaking and ingenious adaptation by Roberts to sport of Goodman's understanding and interpretation of pictorial art as a kind of semiotic. Just as Goodman drew art within the semiotic web, so, too, does Roberts sport: sport, Roberts argued, possesses its languages rather as art possesses its. That is, sport can be articulated as a realm of meaning and value within culture proper. Sport is

not a cultural alleyway, but a highway; sport is not merely popular, sport is a realm of precious meaning.

The critique of Roberts' doctoral dissertation *Languages Of Sport* has been selective, and focused upon metaphor. Roberts, however hesitantly and apologetically, is a metaphoric critic also. He is one of a goodly company, not just Plato and Bloom. Embryonic in *Languages Of Sport* is the later more radical critic of sport as a cultural and social practice where there is a making of meaning rather than a finding. Metaphor is a means by which structures of cultural codes are made resistant to closure and kept open with the possibility of new meaning. That intensity of experience and surplus of meaning which characterise both sport and poetry has as its consequence very wide limits of language indeed.

Chapter Five

Cassirer, Sport, and Myth: Sport's Dreaming

Introduction

This fifth chapter completes the fundamental argument of the dissertation: the truly strong sport performer is analogous to the strong poet, principally because, like the strong poet, he re-writes strong predecessors in his sporting practice. This basic paradigm requires a consideration not only of metaphor, but of myth. The completion involves two related movements, one structural and the other typological. These two movements find their consummation in the sixth and concluding chapter which moves beyond structure and typology to particular instantiation. The sixth chapter, in making an application of the argument, in showing something of how the strong sport performer re-writes his sporting practice, provides something of a test case of the whole argument in this dissertation for sport as if it were poetry.

The argument has been conducted in semiotic mode, and centred upon conceptions of language as constitutive rather than language merely acting as a neutral intermediative mechanism. Sport, like poetry, enacts its meanings and values. The matters of mimesis and metaphor have been accorded paramount significance in the argument. This structural kind of analysis has extended to critical theory and historical reconstruction. It remains to complete the argument in this chapter, and instantiate the argument through recourse to two examples in the next and concluding chapter.

In the sixth and concluding chapter, three significant related issues pertaining to the truly strong player are distinguished and examined in turn. The first is concerned with writing, that is, the way in which the strong player re-writes his chosen sport in his

innovative play. Predominantly, this first concern is a matter of both theory and practice, conception and technique. Whether practice is the natural child of theory, or rather, as Ryle suggests, theory the step-child of intelligent practice, is a secondary and moot point (Ryle, 1968, p.27). The second matter is that of the reading of sport. It is a consequence of the mutuality and reciprocity existing between writing and reading: strong play, like strong poetry, requires strong reading for its completion as a practice. Just as the drama needs its audience, so the sporting contest needs its spectators. In both instances, sense and sensibility must inform the play for it to be complete. The third issue is the more general and cultural question of sport as a mimesis of social praxis in its strong figurations. Sport, in its relative autonomy as a social practice, bears the impress of wider social and political factors and facts. These three matters, taken together, bear directly on the argument that the truly strong sport performer changes the meaning and value of his or her particular sporting practice. Together they illustrate, from their different perspectives, a little of how this is done, and what are some basic consequences.

First, however, the paradigm of the strong sport performer as analogous to the strong poet needs to be made complete. That is the principal substance of this fifth chapter, now the theory of sport as poetry has been built up step by step in the preceding four chapters. The first movement of this fifth chapter is essentially structural, and especially so in providing a foundation for the two major exemplifications of sport as if it were poetry provided in chapter six. The second and related movement is concerned with archetypes of the strong sport performer. This, in its turn, presages the movement in chapter six to the particular instantiation from the general typology or archetype of

the strong sport performer. The first movement in this fifth chapter is structural in both an expansive sense (hence the perceived need to indicate the cultural importance of myth), and in a linguistic sense. As to the former, mythology is foundational in the sense that it permeates and underpins sport much as it does other social institutions and practices such as war, literature, history, anthropology, art, and religion. Myth is also foundational in the related sense that it expresses in its own way an essential representation of divine or human action in worlds of shared concern. Hermes is, essentially, the messenger. Daphne is, essentially, the bringer of the dawn. Atlanta is, essentially, the athlete. Zeus is, essentially, the father of men. Babel is, essentially, the challenge of language and languages in culture and society. Myth in its language-relatedness is here restricted largely to that perpetual oscillation in actual language usage between the twin poles of metonymy and metaphor understood by Jakobson and literary theorists and critics alike. Metonymy and metaphor, in turn, can be related, although not in any direct and simple fashion, to epic and romance: Homeric epic is fashioned more in a spirit of a fully externalised realism and at the pole of metonym (although with extended similes); the love songs of the Troubadours and their long and variegated line of successors are born in a conscious transcendence of reason and at the pole of metaphor. The figure of Odysseus/Ulysses instantiates both epic and romance in one.²⁷²

Now because sport, not poetry, is the prior concern in this work, there will be an exploratory striving to present something of sport as epic and sport as romance in the concluding section of this chapter.²⁷³ Sport's dreaming, sport's mythic dimensions, include and figure epic and romance. The lure of such dreams are worlds removed from the literalism of Gebauer's theory of sport as a way of making a world; sport as a

recovery of the reality of the physical world, sport as a recovery of minimal social relations of cooperation and agon.

Bloom's theory of poetry has been utilised to provide something of a literary framework to this dissertation of sport as poetry. As already explained, his theory is essentially a re-writing of six myths drawn from different cultural quarters and unified in a literary narrative of the strong poet's agon with his strong precursors. Myth provides, in raw form, the foundations of his theory of poetry as the anxiety of influence. Bloom's theory of poetry is exemplified in his actual criticism of poets and their poetry. The theory of poetry as the achieved anxiety of influence becomes, in effect, a critical literary history.

Aristotle also knew what he was about in making myth (*muthos*) central in his theory of strong poetry, a theory of a different time and place to that of Bloom, but with a shared interest in myth and metaphor. Aristotle's theory of poetry, too, especially as interpreted by Ricouer, rests upon myth and metaphor (Ricouer, 1996). Often myth is metaphor on the grand scale (Booth, 1988). Sometimes allegory metamorphoses into myth. Although allegory and myth are quite different literary modes, Dante's allegory of the human soul, in the reading, can be readily and profitably read as "one vast metaphor" (Eliot, 1934, pp. 237-277). In Dante, profundity of thought is made complicit with simplicity of means, through the creation of the clear visual images of the prototypically strong allegorist.

Myth, whether naturalistic or psychological or even psycholinguistic, is far from being necessarily mystification or santification or a confession of ignorance - it is more than gossip grown old. Myth is foundational, and its concerns have universality. The

myth of the hero (Neumann, 1973, pp.129-191), for example, is clearly represented in the pantheon of strong sport performers, along with other representations such as the saviour, the devil, the destroyer, and the creator. The combat myth, subplot of the myth of fall, in Milton's epic *Paradise Lost*, clearly has its place in sport. Satan excels in his invincibility of will, his steadfastness of purpose. The myth of fall, re-written from the more strictly theological and metaphysical plane to that of hierarchy, fame, status, and influence, has its own place also. Zeus, Oedipus, Narcissus, Echo, Prometheus, Dionysus, Odysseus, Atlanta, etc. are not overly difficult to recognise behind the sweat, the pain, the fear, the anxiety, the tears, the pride, the joy, the relief, so evident in sport.²⁷⁴ Some will do so more in the mode of imagination than explanation; some in reverse. Some, that is, will read the myth strongly, misprision or swerve in their own metaphoric take upon it. Bloom argues that that is just what any critic worth reading will do. Further, in their wanton excess, such mythical figures exemplify the ambiguous status of contemporary sport, its degradation and its glory - in a word, its poetry. In all its mystifications, mythology nevertheless seizes upon the quintessence of life, albeit equivocally. Myth, in short, is part-and-parcel, not just of the experience of sport, but of the less than simple, less than linear, structure of sport. Suits did well to use Aesop's fable, with its iconic Ant and Grasshopper, in his discourse on game-playing and the meanings of life (Suits, 1990). Myth well merits understanding of its own structure, a structure which combines narrative and image.²⁷⁵ While more paradigmatic than syntagmatic, myth is not exclusively so.

The first movement of this chapter, then, in a sweeping survey of the cultural importance of myth, is in the nature of an under-pinning to, a foundation for, the

exemplifications of sport as poetry in the sixth and concluding chapter. But, in addition, the emphasis upon the archetype as also, in a sense, foundational, in this fifth chapter, is bound up with the movement from the general typology to the particular instantiation of the strong poet of sport in the sixth chapter. There, two truly strong sport performers are analysed in terms of writing, reading, and mimesis.

The argument completed in this fifth chapter of sport as a poetic kind of language moves beyond allegory to myth. Sport as a cultural and social practice might benefit more than it commonly knows, if it utilised mythology more intelligently, more critically. Sport has its neurotics, but it also has its heroes. Oedipus, Narcissus, Prometheus, Odysseus, and company, cannot be restricted to classical Greek epic and drama as essential representations of human actions. Such figures cannot be imprisoned, for the analogical imagination, in classical times. Tilden is more than a little a modern-day Narcissus;²⁷⁶ Bradman is more than a little a twentieth century Oedipus,²⁷⁷ slaying archetypal father-figures such as the venerable W.G. Grace. While he was put out by Larwood and bodyline bowling, perhaps there is a sense in which English cricket has never recovered pride of place in world cricket post-Bradman, although Ashes series wins and losses since the tumult of 1932 have been evenly poised.²⁷⁸ When Bradman first burst upon the scene it was a time of economic depression and low national morale. More than most, he gave many Australians something to cheer about: Bradman came initially as if a saviour - a guise which has always been present in some degree or other in the truly strong sport performer.²⁷⁹ His mythic dimensions both expanded and changed, despite losing prime years to World War II, rather as Ali did in very different historical circumstances in the early 1970s.

Lenglen, perhaps, is a combination of both Narcissus and Oedipus.²⁸⁰ These two related movements, one structural, the other archetypal, and leading to the consummation of the argument in chapter six in a further movement from general to particular, when taken together, provide their own framework for knitting together the explorations of the previous chapters.

The knots in the thread of this work to this point can be recapitulated in summary fashion. Chapter one brought sport under the umbrella of semiotic, and specifically under the net of language. Ordinary language as a structure of differential relations yet resistant to closure, particularly at the pole of metaphor, was determined as the key to the work. Metaphor, as an overflow of meaning, incurs a certain sense of logical loss and reaps an uncertain fund of semantic gain; it is a destabilising factor within language, until safely literalised by time, chance, and the more mundane. Within ordinary language, three supplementary species of language were distinguished in outline: sport as a language, mythology as a language, poetry as a language. Chapter two, in critiquing an address by Gebauer almost a decade ago, seized upon two main matters, the traditional concept of mimesis, and sport as a way of making a world. A preliminary attempt was made to show that what was embryonic in Gebauer's address could be developed in a more explicit and potentially productive manner by an acceptance, not a rejection, of sport as a language. Examination of that fundamental feature of feudal culture and society, namely, courtly love, was traced in both its sporting and poetic developments. Ancient Greece could have been utilised for much the same purpose in similar fashion. Chapter three pursued the motif, not merely of an association of sport with poetry at a fundamental level of enactment of meaning, but of

mythology and poetry, as related kinds of language. Given that sport and myth meld and mesh, it was important to a hermeneutic of sport as poetry, to provide some exposition of how the common mythical factor functioned in the structure of poetry. While the insertion of myth and metaphor in language are not precisely one and the same, myth, in short, is often metaphor in-the-round. It was suggested that not only is there a metaphoricity operative in ordinary language, but very specifically and potently in the three cultural and social practices of sport, mythology, and poetry. An examination of Bloom's theory of poetry as the anxiety of influence revealed that truly strong poets re-write myth in metaphor and thus make it new: strong poets achieve in their play with words that overflow of meaning which sets the seal on them as great and true originals. Critics, in their necessary and perpetual re-valuations of these great originals in later and different circumstances, must pursue a similar course and become metaphoric critics. Among the truly strong, this is a time-honored practice: Plato is Homer's metaphoric critic; Job is J's metaphoric critic in his brief epic of faith and destiny. Critics must determine whether there is a progression or a regression. Chapter four went back to the doctoral dissertation of Roberts a generation ago, a thesis where the seminal notion of sport as language was first propounded. Much was made of the uncertain status of metaphor in the microcosm of that work, and the macrocosm of philosophy as a practice from Plato to Derrida.

The reasons for this focus on metaphor and myth in their relations to sport remain to be articulated more fully in the fifth and sixth chapters. If it is indeed the case that sport and myth meld and mesh, and that both practices can profitably be understood

and interpreted as a system of signs, then the nature of their relations must be spelt out a little, and illustrated where deemed fittest.

Sport as myth, the focus of this fifth chapter, is something of a half-way house to sport as poetry, but it is more than that because myth and metaphor are the very heart and soul of poetry. Bloom takes them up and relates them in one way; Ricoeur, interpreting Aristotle, in another. The question for this work then becomes one of the place of myth and metaphor in an interpretation of sport as poetry. Is there a valid sense in which sport functions in a like fashion to poetry? This question spills over into the more specific question of how truly strong sport performers change the language of the sporting practice they inherit. Precisely what constitutes the lexicon of this language is a matter for discussion, discussion which may end in agreement to disagree, or in an overt and fully-fledged acceptance of sport as a language without words. The many and various sports do not have dictionaries, but perhaps they may be said to exhibit a core vocabulary in their gestures and patterns of play, rather as politics may be said to have its vocabulary, and not necessarily a vocabulary of essences (Weldon, 1955; Connolly, 1993). One need not necessarily subscribe to the illusion of real essences for this purpose (Suits, 1990). Van Gogh did not see the world or himself as Rembrandt saw his world and himself, but in both it is vital existence rather than static essence that is revealed.

Those traditions so important to sport, like literature, exhibit continuities and discontinuities. A sense of tradition, Eliot has reminded us, can only be won through hard work (Eliot, 1934, p.14). The initial turn, however, is not to history but to sport and myth in their broad structural relations. If both sport and myth can be seen as

cultural codes, as kinds of language structured paradigmatically and syntagmatically, then what are some of the ways that become possible to interpret sport as myth? Or, more briefly, what application of myth as structure can be made to sport? Is myth foundational in sport in any like manner as it is in poetry, history, anthropology, science, etc.?²⁸¹ That is the matter of this chapter. The application to sport of poetry as structure, poetry as a kind of language where myth is re-written and things made new, that is, the move from general to particular, is the topic of the next and concluding chapter.

Cassirer and Levi-Strauss between them provide the key understandings of myth not merely as universal but as necessary to cultural understanding.²⁸² Cassirer, in his greatest work, *The Philosophy Of Symbolic Forms*, understands language, myth, and science to be the supreme trinity of cultural forms, each with a relative autonomy, but only properly appreciated in contrast and comparison with the other two. In his last works Cassirer extended the range of symbolic forms to history, politics, and art. Levi-Strauss understands the mythology of primitive peoples to furnish the essential clues to the nature of mind itself: he argues that Man has long thought as he now does, but now in changed circumstances. He presents myth rather as the structuralists presented language, namely, as a well-defined system of differential relations between binary opposites, usually with a mediating third term. In both Cassirer and Levi-Strauss there is the understanding of myth in anything but a pejorative sense. Myth is a principal and universal mode of ordering or shaping human experience so as to make it meaningful and productive for both Cassirer and Levi-Strauss. Myths re-told, like rituals re-enacted, retain a like quality of performance present when an orchestra plays a musical

score or actors stage a written play. The teller in his telling approximates to the conductor of the orchestra or the director of the play. Similarly, it is possible, even desirable, that the poetry of, say, T.S. Eliot be read differently to the manner in which Eliot reads his own poetry, although it would be foolish not to give attention to Eliot's own readings where these are available.

In the work of such thinkers as Cassirer and Levi-Strauss an informed understanding of myth proceeds past a piece-meal reading of disparate elements of myth, or even an interpretation of this myth or that. Only when myth is understood a little in its structural take upon human experience will the bewildering assortment of elements have place and meaning. And only then will it prove possible to make application of myth to sport at the structural level, not simply at the level of signs. Attention to the structure of myth, like attention to linguistic or poetic structure, need not enforce closure in interpretation, but rather quite the contrary. The application of myth to sport merely as iconic sign is the beginning of wisdom, not its realisation. Myth, like mimesis, is not copy, a simple re-production of representation. The hero in sport is neither excrescence nor soul - more in the nature of a clue to wider structural questions of identity and community in the world. Such paradigmatic questions as identity and community are often presented in terms of rival traditions, traditions tied not only to a particular historical narrative but also to a certain mythology. A passing attempt will be made later in the chapter to illustrate in outline some dimensions of this well-nigh universal process. Understanding myth even in a cursory way in some of its key cultural relations provides clues, even exemplification of a sort, to myth as structure in a culture (Cassirer, 1947, pp.72-108; Kitto, 1958, pp.19-20, 194-204).

The return to myth is also the return to the initial impetus to this work, the Biblical myth of the tower of Babel. Simplistically over-stated, Greek attitudes furnish our western philosophy, Hebrew attitudes furnish our western poetry. The initial reading of the Babel myth as a happy fall into culture, a release from the siren calls of absolutism in all its guises, a rejection of an utter other-worldliness, a pithy little hymn to pluralism in language, can now be supplemented with a brief description of its structure. The structure of the myth resides in the polarities of God (Yahweh) and Man (Adam), of heaven and earth, transcendence and immanence, nature and culture, ineffability and communication. Myth in one of its aspects is the endless and uneven struggle to reconcile such opposites. Levi-Strauss summarises the function of myth as “a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction”.²⁸³ Time, even more than space, with its beginnings and endings in the holisms of the imagination, provides in its polarities the stuff of myth (Neumann, 1973). Some are hard to get the mind around. Often antinomy or paradox remain when the contradictions, while recognised, are not resolved. The ten earlier chapters of *Genesis* with its different sources combined by anonymous redactors over the long years, provide the textual prelude to Babel. How the myth is to be contextualised and interpreted will be the site of continued disputation (Buber and Rosenzweig, 1994; Bultmann, 1961; MacIntyre, 1957, pp.175-179). Nevertheless, the Biblical Paradise, heaven on earth, in the earlier narratives, could hardly be said to be a cultural site. Nature reigned supreme - even clothes superfluous. Evil was unknown - innocence not experience, ignorance not knowledge, prevailed. The Tree of Knowledge taboo. The myths which constitute the bulk of the introductory chapters of the Bible, including the Babel myth, are redolent with the polar oppositions

of God/Nature and Culture/History. The rest of the Bible could be said to be a reconstruction of Nature as History, one long textual struggle with the notion contrary to Nature of how a transcendent God may be said to act within history, including bringing it to an end apocalyptically.²⁸⁴ Theology strives to relate the natural and supernatural on the assumption that the latter does indeed have some object or state of being to be conceptualised (Oman, 1931; Tillich, 1952, 1964, 1958). Edmund Leach, an anthropologist in his own right, puts the matter polemically in his exposition of Levi-Strauss, when he writes,

The Christian New Testament purports to be history from one point of view and myth from another, and he is a rash man who seeks to draw a sharp line between the two (1970, p.55).²⁸⁵

The first chapter of this work brought sport under the net of semiotic. It did this in two stages which involved different approaches to language as structure: setting out a basic analysis of structuration in ordinary language as a system of differential relations; presenting sport, myth, and poetry, in turn, as fundamental cultural codes or kinds of language. The first approach provided some understanding of the essential pre-condition for discursiveness. The second approach dwelt upon the three ways germane to the dissertation of language as constitutive, and considered them briefly in their relations. The second chapter critiqued Gebauer's understanding that sport is a mimetic making of a relatively discrete world that remains outside of that system of signifying signs named language. The substance of this critique lay in acceptance of the principle of mimesis as a potent cultural force, but a rejection of the particular application of mimesis to sport given by Gebauer. The third chapter examined Harold Bloom's theory of poetry as the anxiety of influence, that potent upsurge of creative envy wherein strong poets re-write

their strong precursors in metaphor. Bloom's theory was understood as mimetic in a sense quite other than that presented by Gebauer. The fourth chapter took up Roberts' challenge a generation ago in his doctoral dissertation to understand sport, like art, as possessing its languages, metaphorically speaking. Metaphor was moved in a quite explicit and sustained way to centre stage in this understanding and interpretation of sport as an important social practice in the cultural mix. This understanding of Roberts was, and indeed still is, of sport as a language, or network of languages. The matter of metaphor was further examined as it relates to the understanding and interpretation of sport.

To this point, then, exploration has been made of the fundamentals of sport as poetry, the principal elements in the equation, building blocks in a spiralling argument, but without any concerted attempt as yet to relate those fundamentals in a discursive manner to sustain an interpretation of sport as if it were poetry - that is, a making of meaning rather than a finding. Instead there has been a delineation of those fundamentals as kinds of language, each with its own structure, operative within the expansive margins of ordinary language. Structure, as an heuristic fiction, was deemed the prime pre-condition for creativity of meaning. Creativity was explained, not as out of nothing, but always as a re-working, a re-marking, a re-making. This process in poetry, as in sport, is an agon: it is the scene of struggle and strife, self-assertion and violence; it is also the site of ludic play where words and bodies, discrete movements and sustained patterns of play, are things to think with. Whether there is a metaphysical dimension to sport as there is in some sense to poetry, is not the critical issue. The matter of meaning is the critical issue. How does meaning get started? How is meaning

structured? Must it always be construed, as it was construed by Locke, and contested by Blake, as some kind of mentalese (Ayer and Winch, 1965; Frye, 1990)? Can there be sense and sensibility in talk of a syntax and a semantic of the body? Does metaphor always lurk unbidden in language? And myth in poetry? Centrally, can sport function in like fashion to poetry?

The manifold functions of language are operative within an expansive structure with metaphor and metonymy as its poles, and selection and combination as its basic processes in perpetual oscillation between those poles. Metaphor is that figure which consists in a knowing deviation of meaning; metonym is the contrasting figure which relates elements at a given level in a much more linear manner. Metaphor is novel and paradigmatic; metonym is historical and syntagmatic. Each of the key practices of the thesis, excluding philosophy (sport, myth, poetry), was taken as a language with its own peculiar yet permeable structure. Strong poets, for instance, change the myths with which they work: The Fall is differently written in Dante and Milton; one takes allegorical form, the other epic. The preconception binding the various cultural forms of sport, myth, and poetry as particular kinds of language was the Gadamerian one that being which can be understood is language - or, in Rorty-speak, language goes all the way down. Babel was taken, imagistically, for starters, as trope for kinds of language nascent within language, not so-called natural languages in discord.

Now poetry is very much a matter of metaphor, and metaphor, while clearly a matter of words, is given greater functional scope when essentially understood within language in all its parts and at all its levels, as discourse (Ricouer, 1996). Metaphor thus understood at the structural level is quite other than metaphor understood as simply a

movement in meaning of the noun from the habitual to the deviant. "Man is a wolf" does not exhaust the possibilities of metaphor in language. A young and recently widowed woman coming upon, say, the Old Testament book of *Ruth*, might be struck by the potency of the text as a whole for her as metaphor - she might conceivably see her future course in life more clearly or quite differently, perhaps as a test of loyalty and fidelity in the face of personal disaster. Literature can and does enact meaning in such ways, ways which excite hope and transform life. Poetic meaning enacted metaphorically in the narrative and images of myth opens out to those ultimate concerns with which philosophy and theology have traditionally wrestled. The influence of myth in poetry, philosophy, and theology, has been long and variously contested. Historically, philosophy has sought to extricate itself as a practice from the sway of myth by turning from the uncertain ciphers of super-naturalism to naturalism proper - that is, to those realities discernible in time and space, and procedures which marshal evidence of some sort and are open to inspection and criticism. Some philosophers, thinking that philosophy of science is philosophy enough, have eschewed traditional problems and aped the methods of the sciences to some degree or other. Ultimate questions have either been dismissed as non-sensical, or beyond human knowledge (Russell, 1978). Nature and Culture are forever having their limits drawn and re-drawn, and their relations conceived and re-conceived, in all human inquiry. This has its consequences in the variable understanding of myth and language. If each is understood primarily as constitutive of its objects, a shaping of primordial experience, rather than a representation of a reality quite beyond that shaping, then each must be taken yet more seriously and with due attention to structure and function.

Cassirer and Levi-Strauss share the understanding that myth has form and structure, but they do not agree in all aspects as to what constitutes that structure. Their fundamental point of agreement is that behind, in, under, through, the manifest nonsense, is latent sense.²⁸⁶ Zeus does not actually have had to metamorphose into a bull for the nefarious purpose of ravishing Europa, for the myth to make meaning. Where the mythological motif fits, and how this tall tale is to be interpreted, are other questions. A great artist will make a certain sense of it in his multiple syntax within a particular tradition of his craft. Levi-Strauss, on the other hand, will place it as the first of eleven elements in the massive Oedipus myth, and interpret it within his schema of binary logic (Leach, 1970, pp. 62-65).

Myth, most informed contemporary scholars now agree, is tied to ritual, and thus, in the perpetual miming of certain gestures, to action and, ultimately, to drama. The great classical dramatists, like their poetic Biblical counterparts, Job and Job, honed in on primordial experience and communicated it in unique ways open to scrutiny, and subject to re-reading and re-writing. Myth, and metaphor, as understood in Bloom's theory of poetry, are seminal in poetry. All four matters treated hitherto in separate and successive chapters, although fundamental, are preliminary, in a sense, to the main thesis in mind in this work, sport as if it were poetry, that is, as enactment of meaning in a fundamental and original manner.

This chapter will seek to relate the disparate elements treated hitherto in a mounting argument to make this thesis of sport as poetry plausible and potentially productive. The next and concluding chapter will seek to move from the general to the particular by providing instantiation of the truly strong sport performer as analogous to

the strong poet. The interpretation of sport as if it were poetry makes of it much more than a matter of perpetual repetition in somewhat altered form (Gebauer, 1995, p.104). Sport thus understood might contribute, as Suits contributed despite his essentialist understanding, more to ultimate questions bearing on the meaning and value of life (Suits, 1990; Baier, 1957).²⁸⁷ The patent futility of sport is palpable with purpose. The tautology that the meaning of life is life itself is similarly barren to the conception of history as just one damn thing after another (Sellar and Yeatman, 1949; Tracy, 1988). Implicit in all this are the shifting and sometimes contradictory relations of belief and understanding. Some make belief of some sort the pre-condition for understanding; some make the metaphor of understanding dominant and primary, making honest doubt preferable to dishonest belief. Some think there are only logical puzzles, while others think there is mystery at the heart of things (Rorty, 1991, p. 66). Old themes stand in perpetual need of fresh perspective and treatment. Time and chance do not stand still under the sun. Suits needed Aesop rather than Weber to teach him that life lived in a spirit of play, serious and consuming play, will track different paths to life lived according to an unremitting work ethic. Asceticism will have a different place and meaning in both broad conceptions of meaning and purpose. The option, of course, is not either/or (Berdyayev, 1946).

The matter of this fifth chapter is sport and myth. It is the highway to sport as poetry now that the frameworks have been established. What principally remains to be done is to show the consequences of sport as a language, and then examine and clarify a little the complex relationships between sport, myth, and poetry. If all are brought under the umbrella of semiotic and understood as different systems of signs, as kinds of

language, then how does one figure the relations between them? How does one go about establishing the balance between the metaphoric and metonymic poles in each? Or the relations between each as a language or cultural code? Is myth, specifically, as suspect as common-sense deems it? Is myth reducible to the peculiar conditions of human psychology? Is myth the dream-world of the unconscious constituted in image and narrative? Does not the presence in myth of the omnipotence of thought and of desire place it in the realm of neurosis? Once again, a certain brevity in dealing with complex issues, is unavoidable. Sport, too, for all its structuration, as a scene of writing and reading, resists closure of any kind. Centrally, does sport as myth, sport as poetry, enact in its own particular ways that rage for fitting and illuminating order which characterises supreme artists whatever the particular material conditions of their existence?

Perhaps an unavoidable irony attends yet another attempt to re-mythologize sport, and that in an age of deconstruction, demythologisation.²⁸⁸ Yet myth grows up in and around all matters of fundamental human concern - religion, politics, war, sex, science, art, even sport. For some still, in any final analysis, these are concerns of faith, hope, and love, however much these have become empty words severed from the concerns of the heart, words uttered unfelt from the top of the head, words sanctifying an unjust status quo.²⁸⁹ Yet many retain at least some semblance of the romance felt in all passionate pursuits as more than a faint memory. Cassirer, culturally informed, is categoric about the fundamental importance of myth in human understanding, and makes but a relatively slight point of departure from the earlier understanding of Vico:

Anyone aiming at a comprehensive system of human culture has, of necessity, turned back to myth. In this sense, Giambattista Vico, founder of

the modern philosophy of language, also founded a completely new philosophy of mythology. For Vico the true unity of human culture is represented in the triad of language, art, and myth. But this idea of Vico achieved full systematic definition and clarity only with the foundation of cultural science by the philosophy of romanticism. Here, as in other spheres, romantic poetry and philosophy opened up roads to each other... (Cassirer, 1974, vol. 2, p.3).

Particular myths come into being, and slip quietly away, but mythology remains as a mode of symbolic formation because myth is concerned in its images and narrative, in its combination of logical opposites, with timeless realities, the fundamentals of existence - language, poetry, play, work, life and death, identity and community, religion, sex, and politics. Some classic myths, including the myth of Babel, go on demanding attention and re-interpretation. They make the interpretation of interpretation an ongoing issue which no vibrant culture can set aside without deleterious effects. The thick description making up many myths lends itself very readily to attention to the more sobering, the darker sides of existence. Folk tale and fairy tale likewise are often grisly in their details. Myth cannot be reduced to the sugar-coated lie or old wives' tales and relegated to past times of ignorance and superstition. It is too constant a cultural possession for that blanket reductive understanding.

Myth, like language generally, and poetry particularly, like sport itself, necessitates a measure of structural analysis and understanding. Myth, like language, poetry, and sport, has form or structure. This, rather than resisting interpretation, invites it. Like language, it cannot be well understood simply in particular instantiations, apart from all considerations of structure or function. Nevertheless, it is far removed from the logic of the superordination and subordination of concepts; more concerned with muddled existence with its heartache and thousand natural shocks than static essence.

Furthermore, myth is intimately related to each of the fundamentals previously examined. Preliminary attention to such fundamental relations may clarify matters a little. Myth is woven into the warp and woof of ordinary language. Myth is part and parcel of all strong poetry at some level or other. Myth becomes potent in sport in the creation of identity and community, most patently, perhaps, in its heroes, its iconic figures. There is drama, greatly unexplored, in such lives. Suzanne Lenglen is much more than an hysteric; William Tatum Tilden II much more than a sexual deviant; Donald George Bradman much more than a solitary run-making machine. Such salient characteristics ought not obscure their stature as amongst the truly strong performers of sport. They, and their peers, were and are more than mere entertainers or copy for the tabloids. Myth enters into both the making and the writing of history, both the historical experience and historical thought.²⁹⁰ In short, a little of the sweeping cultural importance of myth must be indicated before moving on to myth as structure, its great import to sport, ultimately sport as myth. How is it possible to conceive of sport as a kind of language in relation to myth as a kind of language? Where do they merge and part? While fortunately the hey-day of positivism is behind us, unfortunately its legacy lives on. Contemporary common-sense usage of the term *myth* is invariably pejorative, myth being simplistically equated with falsehood and fantastical illusion. Myth is neither a confession of blissful ignorance nor a matter of wilful deceit, but of vital importance to all cultural, historical, and poetic understanding. Anthropologists as far apart as Malinowski and Levi-Strauss have helped develop ways of understanding how this is so (Malinowski, 1948). Some philosophers and many poets and critics have also furthered this understanding. Ernst Cassirer stands tall among such philosophers,

especially in his speculative understanding of myth as a relatively independent mode of spiritual formation. Myth, he argues, has its own necessity and reality, and must be taken with high seriousness if culture is to be taken seriously and understood in its farther reaches. In this he is at one with the poets, most clearly so in instances like Homer and J, Dante and Milton, Blake and Yeats. In such poets, Parnassus and Jerusalem find a sweet accord.

Perhaps Goering would have felt no necessity to reach for the smelling salts when talk of culture was broached if Ernst Cassirer had formed part of his conversational circle. Cassirer, inspired by Kant, writes as his master-work a phenomenology of culture with language, myth, and science, as its three great worlds within world. His tri-partite structure of cultural symbolic forms is richly detailed, speculative, and powerfully suggestive. Death cut short his endeavours to work his phenomenology out more fully, but not before a catholic essay on man and another notable essay on political philosophy. His legacy lives on, and not only in versions of a critical idealism. Cultural transmission is a worthy but limited goal; cultural refurbishment is a perpetual need where the past must serve the present and future. Cassirer's work, for all its faults and limitations, serves such a purpose. One of the uses of poetry is to sensitise us to better and worse usage of words, and not just of words but of those endless discriminations on which culture depends. In short, the supremacy of quality over quantity.

One of the virtues of Cassirer's phenomenology of culture is to make us more aware of myth alive and dead, myth aboriginal in and foreign to western culture. Language and myth he understands as twin faces of the same coin, "two different shoots

from the same root.” (Cassirer, 1947, p.109). This is not far removed from Vico’s trinity of cultural concerns - language, art, and myth. Myth, however, Cassirer understands as founded in ritual and religion, not merely in a consciousness of powers arising within the self, and is enacted in an integration of dramatic narrative and living image. Philosophy frees itself from its toils, but not without cost (Frankfort *et al*, 1959). Philosophy may exclude metaphysics and survive, but metaphysics, in the broad sense, must be operative at some level in myth and poetry (Frye, 1990; Ricouer, 1996).²⁹¹ The Australian poet and critic, Vincent Buckley, gives cautious and considered expression to this view in the context of a developing Australian culture in his lead essay to a critical text on Australian poetry (Buckley, 1957, pp.1-27).

It is important that myth be rescued from the prevailing commonsense pejorative usage of the term, and its cultural importance be explained: sport, myth, poetry are the trinity of cultural codes or languages making up the semiotic mode of approach to sport explored in this work. Accordingly, myth must first be examined in its structure a little more fully than in chapter one, where ordinary language was dealt with at some length in its structure. Only then will it prove possible to explain a little of the foundational importance of myth for culture by brief treatment of certain key relations of myth which illustrate its catholic cultural importance, before turning to the key issue of the chapter, sport as myth.

Cassirer serves as a touchstone for this survey, and is supplemented by other sources and perspectives than those of a critical idealism. Such eclecticism cannot evade the issue of whether myth ultimately dissolves into this or that naturalism, this or that psychologism. The view espoused is in broad agreement with the understanding of

Cassirer, enlivened by the sophisticated speculations of Levi-Strauss. It may be said to be precariously, critically, poised in a peculiar trust, a trust which Kierkegaard, for one, gave poignant and potent expression.

Myth As Structure

Myth, like language, is a symbolic form (Cassirer, 1974, 1975). That is, just as language may be analysed as a system or structure of differential relations, so, too, can myth. However, a more informed appreciation of myth in culture becomes possible only if the abstractions of structure are supplemented with a survey of myth in its relations with other cultural forms. Myth is important in other social practices than poetry. Accordingly, this section is followed by further sections dealing with myth and culture generally, myth and history, myth and science, myth and philosophy, myth and language, and myth and poetry. Only after illustrating the cultural embeddedness of myth, albeit in cursory fashion, does the chapter turn to the critical issue of sport as myth.

Cassirer locates the ultimate formation of myth as structure in that feeling of the qualitative unity of life described in the phrase taken from Stoicism, "Sympathy of the whole". Time, in mythical thought, for example, has its phases, which are often identified with the natural succession of the seasons, but is understood as essentially cyclical and seamless. It is in such paradoxes of mythical logic that hallowed distinctions such as that between Nature and Culture are challenged in a radical way. This coalescence of opposites is utterly at odds with the processes of causal inference

and causal effect. The pervasiveness and potency of this feeling of the unity of all life exhibits a peculiar dialectic in which opposites magically coalesce:

Thus myth expresses all natural reality in the language of human, social reality and expresses all human, social reality in the language of nature. Here no reduction of the one factor to the other is possible; it is rather the two together, in complete correlation, that determine the peculiar structure and complexion of the mythical consciousness. Hence it is hardly less one-sided to “explain” mythology in purely sociological terms than to explain it in purely naturalistic terms (Cassirer, 1955, vol. 2 , p.192).

Levi-Strauss, believing that anthropology as a social science would benefit by following the lead of linguistics, gives an exposition of myth as formal structure largely reliant upon earlier analyses of language as structure (Levi-Strauss, 1985, pp.110-111). In this, he is considerably more schematic and controversial than even Cassirer. Cassirer posits three stages in the upward march to the laws of science. The first stage is that akin to that of the infant living life spontaneously and openly through her feelings, namely physiognomic experience. The second stage is that of the sensory consciousness with its numerous capacities to discriminate size, shape, color etcetera. The third stage is that of forming hypothesis, marshalling evidence, extracting fitting generalisation, and framing a scientific law. Myth is a symbolic form, a system with its own peculiar categories of thought.

Levi-Strauss follows another path, the linguistic path plotted by de Saussure and refined by Jakobson, a path that posits language as a structuration in such binary terms as signifier and signified, denotation and connotation, metaphor and metonymy, paradigmatic axis and syntagmatic axis. He explicitly acknowledges and adopts from the programmatic statement of the structural linguist N. Troubetzkoy, four main principles relevant to anthropology as a social science, a science which must include

myth and its structure: the importance of the unconscious infrastructure of linguistic phenomena; analysis of the relations between terms rather than terms as independent entities; conceptualisation of the system or structure shown in analysis of detail; and finally, stress upon the discovery of general laws (Levi-Strauss, 1985, p.112). Myth is another and different cultural code structured in the unconscious and needing to be cracked (a distinction between interpretation and deciphering might be relevant here). His interest in the unconscious, in the abyss of the psyche, leads him on to enquiry into not only psychoanalysis, but, very naturally, to mythology in its perpetual struggle with antinomies. Mythical categories such as totemism represent things to think with in the business of living. This category, in turn, is tied to exogamy and the taboo on incest. Mind understood as trans-cultural is no more invited guest than that natural instinct named language posited by Chomskeans; mind is an ever-present and permanent possession whose depths are disclosed in myth and art. The dreamworld of myth must be understood in its latent rather than its manifest content. Sometimes etymology can provide clues in tracking the meaning of myth in its constitution of primordial human experience, rather as tracing the associations of images and words in a poem can reveal otherwise hidden meanings. Levi-Strauss is unafraid of speculation in a difficult and contested arena. Levi-Strauss understands myth, too, in its structure, as a system of differential relations exhibiting a binary logic tempered by mediating terms. Earth mediates between heaven and hell (variously named as Hades, Gehenna, Sheol etcetera). Levi-Strauss exhibits this primitive logic in the proportions of extended analogy. The full narrative of the Oedipus myth, for instance, is divided into eleven elements forming a syntagmatic chain.²⁹² These eleven elements fall into four categories: the first three

are of the nature of incest, which is a gross over-valuation of kinship; the next three elements are, conversely, an under-valuation of kinship, leading to fratricide and parricide; the following two are accounts of the destruction of anomalous monsters by men; and, again conversely, the final three refer to men who are, to some degree, themselves anomalous monsters. This gives us, in a logic of relative proportions, the equation: I/II :: III/IV (Leach, 1970, p.65). Some will condemn this as hair-splitting; others will praise as insightful and illuminating. It is another argument hard to settle.²⁹³ Poets such as Blake and Yeats take up more than the motifs of myth: they work at their own reconciliations of logical opposites within their own poetry and art.

Thus, even a cursory look at myth reveals that, like language, it can profitably be taken in its structure. The structure, in turn, exhibits a peculiar logic, but a logic nevertheless. The fundamental elements of thought such as time and space, cause and effect, volition and desire, manifest a particular ordering out of a particular interest and for a particular purpose. This peculiar logic becomes a little clearer if and when myth is seen in its relations to other important patterns of culture, and it is to some of these that one turns. Myth may provide an uncertain, an ambiguous and ambivalent foundation, but what seems certain is that myth is both universal and foundational.

Myth And Culture

The culture of the indigenous peoples of Australia is vastly different from Hebrew or Greek culture, making less of history and more of myth. Their history could be said to be in their mythology. The Dreaming makes palpable the lure of dreams for primitive peoples accommodating themselves to a demanding continent with distinctive

flora and fauna. The rigors of existence mean that much of their play is patent in myths narrating strange metamorphoses of man and bird and beast.

The human fascination with origins, not just ends, not just process, is universal and enduring.²⁹⁴ Mythical explanation is according to the principle of purpose, and thus merges origin and end; it is not the isolating abstraction of a particular condition, specific causes and specific effects, as in science (Cassirer, 1955, vol. 2, pp.29-59). Aetiology of the otherwise hidden and mysterious is a significant factor in myth, not least in the mythology of the Dreaming which characterises and unifies the culture of the scattered aboriginal tribes who have roamed Australia for an estimated fifty thousand years. The core of their belief centres in stories of the Dreaming, stories which are pictured in their art, and danced in their corroboree, stories which arrest the passage of time and metamorphose Nature into Culture. While these myths are variegated, they form an animistic belief-system of totem and taboo poorly understood by the general populace ever since the days of initial white settlement two centuries ago. Nevertheless, traces of degrees of influence may be discerned even in the motifs adopted by many of the sixteen Australian Rules football clubs which form the Australian Football League: kangaroo, eagle, hawk, crow, magpie, swan, cat, lion, tiger, bulldog, etcetera. The animal world remains as much more than a matter of fascination. A world without animals would be as forlorn as a world without books or a world without sport. It is, however, the relations between animals, as part of Nature, in its relations with Culture, as distinctly the province of humankind, which concern Levi-Strauss and Cassirer. Myth, for them both, is one supreme clue to mind, to the nature of man and woman. Myth strews ambiguous and ambivalent clues to very real limits. As in Bloom's theory

of poetry, the new, the novel, the very real acts of creation, are never out of nothing. They proceed from an indistinct template; material conditions which are present and operative within and without but cannot be plumbed with exactitude and certitude. Myth, like poetry, fables the otherwise ineffable in a combination of both form and inspiration.

Australian indigenous culture is pervaded by the lure of dreams, a fabling of the otherwise ineffable. Human instincts find varied cultural expression. The Dreaming is constructed around the land and its flora and fauna, the matters of subsistence and meaning. Mythological metamorphoses of the most visible natural phenomena are played out in the ritual of corroboree, rock art, and tales around campfire and under birth-tree. Rites of passage are tied to the intimate presence of natural phenomena and the need to procure the basic necessities of life such as food, water, and sex. Young initiates need to learn to track and to hunt, to weave and to dig, to hear and to heed the ancient lore. The prevailing ethos is far removed from that of aspirations to glory and individual excellence. And a different logic to that built upon a separation of subject and object prevails. Huizinga, writing of the elements of mythopoiesis, describes the core of this different (some would say primitive) belief-system:

....anthropology and comparative religion tell us that personification of gods and spirits in beast-form is one of the most important elements in archaic religious life. Theriomorphic imagination is at the bottom of the whole complex of totemism. The two halves of a tribe not only call themselves, they actually *are*, kangaroos or tortoises (Huizinga, 1967, p.141).

Sport, in a derivative Australian society and an ongoing cultural cringe, has reflected a blank indifference, a total incomprehension, of aboriginal culture. Sport has indeed constituted an obstacle race for the indigenous peoples of Australia (Tatz, 1996).

Exclusion rather than inclusion has proved the norm in sporting institutions not conspicuous for their radicalism. Only recently has the Australian Football League set about addressing the blatant racism which has been a blight for so long. Sexism and class, while probably not as prevalent as in Britain, which conspicuously has left its sporting legacy to Australia, are not absent (Rigg, 1969; Burke, 2001; Symons, 2004).²⁹⁵ Poverty has long been a hallmark of aboriginal communities caught between disparate cultures, one old and one relatively new. Football and boxing have probably been the sports within Australia where aboriginals have had relatively ready access and conspicuous success. Yvonne Goolagong Cawley lucked out in her virtual adoption by a successful tennis coach. Aboriginals are conspicuous by their absence at the lawn tennis clubs which dot the long course of the Murray River. Cathy Freeman experienced similar good fortune to Yvonne Goolagong as a talented track athlete. Cultural acceptance by a white culture not notable for coping with difference has been added to the already rich mix of dream and desire constituted in the Dreaming. The Dreaming may be compared and contrasted with the Hebrew myths of creation and quest, fall and salvation, exodus and return, and the Greek myths centred round Olympus and the gods. Both Hebrew and Greek have a sense of history, of change over time, absent in indigenous culture. The mythology of the Dreaming served as a cultural substitute for this very different western sense of history.²⁹⁶

The Dreaming functions in this work as metaphor for those non-aboriginals in Australia who came early to a love of sport in all the innocence and ignorance of youth, a time when sport in all its unsullied glory was unspoiled by any reality principles, any understanding of either material conditions or original sin.²⁹⁷ The Dreaming is illusion,

but the illusion of art (Gombrich, 1977; Baglin & Mullins, 1971).²⁹⁸ The innocent eye of the child, ignorant of language and history, open to fresh experience, keen to question and learn, joyful in mastery and exercise of even a modicum of skill, also has its claims to consideration. Songs of innocence come to maturity as songs of experience, if the eye is both truly open and informed (Blake, 1969).²⁹⁹ With each new season comes not only hope renewed for greater glory, but that re-presencing of the past so vital to humane understanding and life itself. It may come simply - in the scent of lawn tennis courts freshly mown, in the thud of boot on leather football, the sweet crack of willow at the sweet spot against hard leather cricket ball. There is magic in such scent, such sounds. It may come dramatically in the sudden blossoming of a precocious talent. It may come subtly, in the sadness and the sweetness of remembrance of precious things and precious persons long past.

Two, possibly three, myths have exercised over-determining influence since the white settlement of Australia in 1788.³⁰⁰ If the myths tend to run into one another and merge, they still generate the images that make Australia a country apart (Jones, 1962; Goodman and Johnston, 1966).³⁰¹ In a large, mostly dry, flat, and arid continent, the myth of the bush, the myth of the sea, and the myth of mateship (largely derivative of the myth of the bush) have predominated. The first is, basically, a myth of stoicism in the face of adversity. The myth of the bush has elements of the Fall: there is a more than subliminal perception of a descent from the comforts of western civilisation and the truths of orthodoxy to a southern continent without both faith and law, populated by savages. The second myth of sea and surf, sun and sand, is a myth of hedonism, of life set free, if only for a time, from care and work. Perhaps it is tinged at the margins of

consciousness with the adventures of the explorers who sailed beyond the horizon and chartered for the first time the shores of a continent old yet new. The myth of the sea is resonant with classical myths of the Lotus-Eaters and of Circe. The third, the myth of mateship, is born of the tyrannies of distance and difficulty in coping with a strange and demanding land. The Australian experiences of wars and sport intensify and amplify its life. The myth of mateship brings to mind the mateship of the companions of Odysseus. The first and third myths separate man from nature; the second identifies them at the risk, the possible cost, of death, whether physical or spiritual. All three are in contrast to the myth of the Dreaming.

Sport, in part, still a sublimation of aggression, is one of the last bastions of mateship in a culture fast given over to a predatory individualism and a controlling bottom line. Whether sport, with its myths, capitulates completely to market imperatives and myths is still to be determined.³⁰² Whether these myths are in process of being overtaken by newer and less beguiling ones is still unknown. New forms of social Darwinism seem to hover on the near horizon. The invisible hand of the market, the catholic beneficence of trickle-down effects, these and their like are extolled almost daily by those whose interest is in sanctifying the status quo with its patent injustices. Politics, more than even Machiavelli knew, has become a mean and nasty business where even those who practise it do so in a reductive rhetoric.³⁰³ His fox has become more of a wolf, metaphorically speaking.³⁰⁴ That admission makes politics none the less necessary; the possibility of politics no less precious.

Australian mythology has a place in other and wider contexts and conflicts. Some of that early stream of white settlers sought to establish a New Britannica on that

strange and foreign shore, be part of the Empire upon which the sun never set, participate in that onward and upward march of progress (McQueen, 1970). Scottish Lowlanders, Welsh miners, Irish Catholics, had other ideas because they lived by very different myths and metaphors. More recently, Australia has experienced its own melting pot as peoples from the corners of the globe have settled here. Their myths and metaphors are yet to be widely felt, explored, and taken up or left to die. More immediate influences, such as those of food and drink, have already made their mark.³⁰⁵

Culture is a many-splendored thing, but it would be less splendid if somehow it were divested of myth. Indeed, it is impossible to think very long or profitably about culture without coming face to face with myth and the substantial questions that myth raises.³⁰⁶ Myth, like poetry, demands critical theory and insightful reading practices, negatively, because it can generate obscurantism and rationalisation, positively, because it is fundamental to cultural awareness (Meland, pp.80-97).

Myth And History

It is not improper that the relations of myth and history remain a site of agon. It is a hopeful sign that Toynbee (not a structuralist) had second thoughts about the validity and usefulness of the myth of withdrawal and return in his great work, and the courage to reconsider (Toynbee, 1961). Myth, like language and history, will always be a site of contest, of use and abuse. No exit exists in a healthy culture for the catholic critic whether her response be to myth and history, or something as different as sport and poetry. Dismissal of those with critical acumen as the chattering class is especially

suspect, and not only as itself bankrupt criticism. Those who live on the unacknowledged labors of others are very prone to silencing their critics.

Myth, so often and clearly identifiable with ritual, tradition, and conservatism, nevertheless remains a creative force in history, as elsewhere.³⁰⁷ Paradox of an unhelpful kind ensues when myth is roughly conceived as concerned with timeless universals, and history is conceived equally roughly with change over time. Such simplicities are less than illuminating in making sense of the relations between myth and history. Reflection on both makes meaning vital and contemporaneous. The past, as some say, is never dead; it is not even past, especially for cultural critics (Eliot, 1934, pp.14-17). There is a courage to remember, as there is a courage to forget - which is not to say that courage is merely a matter of contingency and context. Cassirer boldly aligns himself here with Schelling, both philosopher of mythology and prophet of romanticism:

In the relation between myth and history myth proves to be the primary, history the secondary and derived, factor. It is not by its history that the mythology of a nation is determined but, conversely, its history is determined by its mythology - or rather, the mythology of a people does not *determine* but *is* its fate, its destiny as decreed from the very beginning. The whole history of the Hindus, Greeks, etc. was implicit in their gods....No one who understands what its mythology means to a people, what inner power it possesses over that people and what reality is manifested therein, will say that mythology, any more than language, was invented by individuals (Cassirer, 1955, vol. 2, pp.5-6).

Toynbee, similarly, although far from structuralism, replying to his critics after completion of his study of history, is not far apart from what many might judge as also an extreme view. Myth, he declares, is indispensable to the study and the writing of history because it is the inner life of human beings, their capacity for inner speech,

which is of paramount importance. This view accords with a phenomenology which posits an anthropology of relatively constant universals in human nature.³⁰⁸ Is there, for instance, in the recorded history of the past five thousand years, an aggression and self-assertion within humankind prone to exceed sociality and solidarity? Is ego in the individual destined inevitably to end in egotism within the group? Is it often possible and productive to distinguish healthy self-affirmation from unhealthy self-assertion (Fromm, 1963, 1973; Horney, 1970, 1964; Roazen, 1970)? Such a line of normative questioning raises yet again that great binarism of Nature and Culture, and how they are to be conceived and related. Toynbee professes himself one not only with Vico, but with what he understands was Plato's understanding of myth as a means for exploring Reality beyond the range of strict rationality, but without lapsing inevitably into sentimentality and superstition (Milton, like Plato, had very definite views on numerous matters, but neither was exactly a fool or a knave).³⁰⁹ In reply to the question put by his critic W. den Boer, "Why should the rhythm of civilizations correspond with the fluctuation in Man's inner life as seen by mythical speculation?" he writes in a language which recalls the broadly similar justification of allegory made by C.S. Lewis:

The reason is that civilizations are nothing but relations between individual persons. They are therefore effects and expressions of the workings of human nature, since human nature is to be found in human beings and nowhere else. What is distinctively human about a human being is his inner life. And the invisible world of the psyche can be explored and expressed only in the symbolic terms that we call myth when we use the word 'myth' in Plato's sense. As for mythical speculation, this is the necessary beginning, but only the beginning, of the work of exploration. Mythical models are heuristic instruments for probing psychological phenomena (Toynbee, 1961, vol. XII, p. 252):³¹⁰

Mythical models are not typically, clear, colourless, and new. In a text surveying the writing of Australian history 1890-1939, what we are presented with, in effect, are the myths and metaphors controlling the writings of ten Australian historians (Macintyre and Thomas, 1995). It is, however, in the study of history made by Manning Clarke that myth, essentially a secularised myth of past sin and possible future salvation, most clearly figures (Clarke, 1963-1987, vols. I-VI). Clarke writes within an Australian tradition of radical nationalism receptive to Marx but antagonistic to imperialism. Whether his work is, indeed, a work of epic tragedy, is yet to be determined. What becomes clear enough in the writing of any history is a certain operation and transmission of perspective and value. But there are different ways to read as well as write (LaCapra, 2000, pp. 30-72; Miller, 1991; McLaren, 1990, 1993, 1996).³¹¹ Both writing and reading are perpetual problem and challenge.

Myth stands in perpetual need not only of interpretation, but of re-interpretation and re-contextualisation. Times change and fresh application must be made. The myth of Oedipus signified differently for Sophocles, Shakespeare, Freud, and D.H. Lawrence. How much of the potency of the myth resides in its perpetual recurrence in different versions? All are agreed that the myth is more than wild erratic fancy, and extends far beyond the simply sexual. Each looks upon the myth with the eyes of his especial genius and bestows upon it his own form. *Oedipus Rex* is recognisably a work of the fifth century Greek renaissance, but with deep roots; *Hamlet* belongs to the Renaissance of Europe generally and England particularly, yet indebted to Greece and Rome; *Sons And Lovers* is one novel that will survive the passing of the twentieth century; Freud's post-Enlightenment system of the psyche has the Oedipus complex as one of its central

pillars, part of a metanarrative of a larger freedom open to the bold and brave few rather than the compliant many. Whether or not one takes each as the gleam of a new dawn, while consequential, is removed sufficiently from present concerns to go no further, except to underline again how different are the sensibilities of the four men. Similarly, myth signifies differently for Cassirer, Toynbee, and Levi-Strauss. All, however, despite their separate vocations, are agreed on its fundamental importance for historical and cultural understanding.

Cassirer, in his greatest work, exalts myth, with language and science, as the supreme trinity of symbolic forms (Cassirer, 1975, 1974, 1973). He quotes Milton, rhetorically, to the effect of popular understanding of myth in its subject matter as “a dark illimitable ocean” (Cassirer, 1947, p.73). Cassirer’s own understanding is that myth combines elements of theory and art (Cassirer, 1947, p.75) and must be “recognized as an independent mode of spiritual *formation*” and not a formless chaos (Cassirer, 1974, vol.2, p.xv). Where becoming may be considered the key historical category, feeling is the central mythical one. The sensory consciousness which know itself and the exterior world of things, but indistinctly, gives it its general condition. Its law, so different to that of science which establishes its object in determinate fashion under a controlling paradigm, is the law of metamorphosis (Cassirer, 1947, pp.76-81). Myth, like neurosis, has its own curious logic:

Myth is not a system of dogmatic creeds. It consists much more in actions than in mere images or representations....Even if we should succeed in analyzing myth into ultimate conceptual elements, we could, by such an analytical process, never grasp its vital principle, which is a dynamic not a static one; it is describable only in terms of action (Cassirer, 1947, p. 79).

Myth is driven by the desire to form both the outer world of things and the inner sense of self, and has its own motivation and dialectic:

The first energy by which man places himself as an independent being in opposition to things is that of desire. In desire he no longer simply accepts the world and the reality of things but builds them up for himself. This is man's first and most primitive consciousness of his ability to give form to reality. And since this consciousness permeates all inward as well as outward intuition, all reality seems subject to it. There is no existing thing and no occurrence which must not ultimately submit to the omnipotence of thought and the omnipotence of desire (Cassirer, 1974, p.157).

This ability to give form to reality is also the origin of labour power. Play and work have become poles apart in much of culture, but often play has become work in contemporary sport. Patent contradictions inherent in human finitude coupled with infinite desire abound.³¹² But the most important point here is the phenomenon of feeling, the sense of basic human solidarity. Cassirer summarises in the borrowed phrase, the "Sympathy of the Whole". This has consequences for the experience and the understanding of history, also, which must always have common ground with art in its symbolic formation.

The cultivation of empathy by the gifted historian leads inexorably to some construction of model or paradigm, implicit or explicit, some myth or metaphor which both works to constitute the historical facts and pattern them into a meaningful whole. Toynbee employs the twin myths of Challenge-And- Response, and Withdrawal-And-Return, to mould his mass of materials.³¹³ The most scientific historian cannot help being an artist also - more classical than romantic, however. Cassirer himself inclines more to the romanticism of Schelling than the classicism of von Ranke.

The sense of history is always suspect sense open to revision. The sense of myth, like the sense of poetry, is determined even more by initial prejudices or

epistemes. One does not read within a certain protocol or strategy as in history, if the materials are not to become a chaotic and incoherent mess (LaCapra, 2000).

Determinate limits are hardly in question when latent sense must be wrested from manifest nonsense.

Myth And Science

Many notable philosophers of science have made expositions of how myth insinuates itself even into the austerities of science. In the beginnings and in the developments of scientific thought myth variously makes its ubiquitous presence felt. Cassirer, for one, places the stirrings of science in an apprehension of mysterious powers. In common with philosophers of art such as Gombrich, he rejects the notion of the innocent eye bereft of a rich and particular experience of life's fundamentals. After quoting Hegel at some length on the importance of the sensory consciousness to science, Cassirer goes a stage further and writes,

....the actual point of departure for science, the immediacy from which it starts, lies not so much in the sensory sphere as in the sphere of mythical intuition. What is called the sensory consciousness, the content of the "world of perception" - which is further subdivided into distinct spheres of perception, into the sensory elements of color, tone, etc. - this is itself a product of abstraction, a theoretical elaboration of the "given." Before self-consciousness rises to this abstraction, it lives in the world of the mythical consciousness, a world of demons and gods. If then, in accordance with Hegel's demand, science is to provide the natural consciousness with a ladder leading to itself, it must first set this ladder a step lower. Our insight into the development of science - taken in the ideal, not temporal sense - is complete only if it shows how science arose in and worked itself out of the sphere of mythical immediacy and explains the direction and law of this movement (Cassirer, 1974, vol. 2, p.xvi).

More recently, Stephen Toulmin has shown how science, not content to rest in explanation of the world in terms of law, often goes on to picture the world more-or-less unwittingly in terms of myth which provides justification of a kind which may be more or less pernicious.³¹⁴ He proceeds from the point that motives and attitudes are mostly mixed, and lead very readily to a confusion of categories and functions. Many terms lead double-lives. In myth, primitive science may slip into theology, a cultural code where the separation of myth from history is forever suspect:

Zeus was not only the thunder-maker, he was also the Father of Men; and as such he played a very different role. For mere disinterested curiosity over unexplained phenomena would never have led people to talk of a 'divine father', whether in Heaven or on Olympus: that has never been a purely scientific conception (Toulmin, 1957, p.15).³¹⁵

When explanation of limited phenomena in terms of law is re-described on the grand scale as Evolution, The Hotting-Up Universe, The Ever-Expanding Universe, etc., scientists have deserted science for scientific mythology in metaphors more mecanomorphic than anthropomorphic. Toulmin distinguishes between a universal law, which still is formulated within a particular context, and the universe itself which, by definition, has nothing outside of itself but still invites, however surreptitiously, description as yet another whole. The Second Law of Thermodynamics prevails within a lagged system conspicuously absent in the case of the universe. It is a definition operative at the level of description of phenomena. Scientists are no more immune to the disease of stepping unwittingly from employing usefully one paradigm to quite another outside their competence, than poets or philosophers. Put simply, it is easy for anyone to be gulled by words:

By itself, the fact that a law is a universal one implies nothing about the universe-as-a-whole. The fact that the law of gravitational attraction held universally would never be taken as implying that 'the universe' must be attracting something, any more than the discovery that tooth-cleaning was a universal practice would imply that 'the universe' must clean its teeth. A statement which 'holds universally' is one thing, a statement about 'the universe' is another, and a step from one to the other will always require justification (Toulmin, 1957, p.35).

Toulmin, writing as a philosopher of science, recognises the importance in understanding of assumptions flaunted or suppressed, and of the vocabulary in use at a given time. The structure of a language gives it a relative stability, but because language is a living thing it does not preserve it from all change or enforce closure of interpretation. Cultural and social factors must come into play. The increasing sophistication of chemical and physical categories in science has its consequences in language: fire, for example, can no longer retain either its classical mythical status as a fundamental element in nature, or its early place in modern science, because it is no longer classified as a substance.³¹⁶ The particular prevailing assumptions and degrees of abstraction,

....may be expected to belong to the conceptual scaffolding of a scientific theory, and the necessities and impossibilities they state will be (so to speak) built into the theory. The phenomena being what they are, we have, no doubt, built up the theories we have for very good reasons. But to say, for instance, 'Processes cannot be weighed, substances can', is not to state these reasons: it is to presuppose them (Toulmin, 1957, p.41).

Many gifted scientists, seized by vaulting ambition, in moving beyond their relatively narrow job description, become sloppy philosophers, inept theologians, poor poets, jejune critics.³¹⁷ Scientists, Toulmin concludes, are not priests - nor prophets, one could add (Toulmin, 1957, pp.77-81).³¹⁸

More recently still, the physicist Paul Davies has undertaken, in a curious amalgam of sophisticated science and pop theology, to essay forth at length on the mind of God (Davies, 1992). Quite understandably, his views of worlds are poles apart from those of Goodman and Rorty. Irreverently described, his text is a meditation on the words with which he prefaces his work, the words in which Stephen Hawking concludes *A Brief History Of Time*:

If we find the answer to that (why it is that we and the universe exist), it would be the ultimate triumph of human reason - for then we would truly know the mind of God (Davies, 1992).

Davies' God does not play dice with the creation, but he is not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Natural theologies, fluffy or otherwise, need not be reliant upon history or culture when the whole panoply of nature is open to them. Science as a realm of necessity or contingency, as a language of prediction and control, can, it must be said further, be more precisely and surely determined than either myth or history. Its models, its paradigms, however, are not immutable: they are always open to supercession by other ones more relatively adequate to the evidence employed.

Myth And Philosophy

Plato may be taken as representative of the ambiguous status of myth in philosophy generally and metaphysics especially. Is Plato himself an essentialist or an ironist (Weldon, 1953; Gadamer, 1989, 1996)? And does metaphysics, along with myth and metaphor, have no future in philosophy (Ayer, 1971; Russell, 1962; Graham, 1961; Ramsey, 1961)? Cassirer posits the principle or pattern, the *arche*, as the principal means through which philosophy extricated itself from myth, even as allegorical

interpretation of myth was employed by the Sophists particularly to retain for it at least a measure of intellectual respectability. Irony rather than allegory characterises Plato's stance in the matter of myth on Cassirer's reading of him:

Plato maintained an attitude of ironical superiority toward the interpretation of myths attempted by the Sophists....His philosophical manner of "rescuing" myth, which at the same time meant its philosophical annulment, was to view it as a form and stage of knowledge itself - a form necessarily pertaining to a specific realm of objects, of which it is the adequate expression. Thus for Plato, too, myth harbors a certain conceptual content: it is the conceptual language in which alone the world of becoming can be expressed. What never is but always becomes, what does not, like the structures of logical and mathematical knowledge, remain identically determinate but from moment to moment manifests itself as something different, can be given only a mythical representation....Thus understood, it could become a truly creative and formative force in the development of Plato's philosophy. This profound view, to be sure, was not always sustained in the subsequent course of Greek thought (Cassirer, 1974, vol. 2, pp.2-3).

Elias presses this broad line of thought considerably further, although not in a direction which nullifies myth in philosophy. His view is both different to that of Cassirer and more central still to this work, focussed as it is on sport as a kind of poetic language (Elias, 1984). He argues three points on the basis of Plato's own writings: the indispensability of poetry; the importance of poetry to conviction given the impossibility of proof in the matter of axiomatic starting-points; and, most relevantly, that Plato's myths are indeed his poetry. Elias understands Plato's use of myth as more than mere necessity, reluctantly or diffidently adopted by Plato in philosophical extremity (Elias, 1984, pp.1-18). Rather, Plato's myths are a justification of poetry in both a weak and a strong sense.³¹⁹ First, in the weak sense, myths are a necessary concession to human frailty and finitude (Elias, 1984, pp.221-229). Second, in the strong sense, myths can combine both an internal consistency and an external correspondence to experience

which, given the indemonstrability of first premises, is the best even the true philosopher can hope for (Elias, 1984, pp. 230-238). The multiplicity of Plato's myths converge upon the One who is and must remain in the language of silence (Elias, 1984, p. 235).³²⁰

A latter-day philosopher, Paul Weiss, who is both metaphysician and ground-breaker in the philosophy of sport, argues not only the legitimacy of sport as a fit concern for philosophy, but also for sport as one solution to the perennial philosophical problem of the one and the many (Weiss, 1979, 1981).

Myth And Language

Cassirer is not alone in his insistence that separating myth from language is a perilous enterprise (Cassirer, 1975, 1974, 1973). Wittgenstein reconsidered radically the austere limits of language described in the *Tractatus* (Black, 1970; Harrison, 1979).³²¹ Derrida accepts joyfully the play of myth and metaphor in language (Derrida, 1982, 1990). Such ways of going on in philosophy have a long and honoured tradition. Plato, the prototypical philosopher, set the ball rolling as to the inseparability of myth and language. Plato writes his middle period dialogue, *Cratylus*, when oral culture is waning, and written culture is waxing. His long and ironic disport on the manner of signs signifying betrays the influence of mythology, even as it signals the advent of philosophy as a cultural force freed, but not in its entirety, from mythology. Plato's irony is as intimately related to the potency of his poetic imagination as the irony of J is to his very different imagination. In both sense and nonsense weave and feint according to intent. His combination of dialogue with dialectic signals the further advent of *logos*,

a term not fully freed from the mythological, but tied even more clearly than *arche* to language.³²² It is against this background of a fresh symbolic formation that Cassirer writes of the general relations between myth and language:

This same dialectic of bondage and liberation, which the human spirit experiences with its own self-made image worlds, is still more evident when we compare myth with the other spheres of symbolic expression. For language there is at first no sharp dividing line between the word and its signification, between the content of the representation and the content of the mere sign: the two merge immediately with each other....But as language develops, the differentiation becomes sharper and more conscious. At first the world of language, like that of myth in which it seems as it were embedded, preserves a complete equivalence of word and thing, of “signifier” and “signified.” It grows away from this equivalence as its independent spiritual form, the characteristic force of the logos comes to the fore (Cassirer, 1974, vol. 2, p. 25).³²³

The primitive belief in the efficacy of ritual, of mythical action, is tied to belief in the magic of words, especially the magic of names. Names are more even than the skin of person or god:

This inability of mythical thinking to apprehend pure ideal signification, is strikingly revealed by its relation to language. Myth and language are inseparable and mutually condition each other. Word and name magic are, like image magic, an integral part of the magical world view. But in all this the basic presupposition is that the word and name do not merely have a function of describing or portraying but contain within them the object and its real powers....Name and personality merge (Cassirer, 1974, vol. 2, pp.40-41).

Pure ideal signification itself, one must add, is an ideal never realised in ordinary language because the excess of meaning in every pre-fabricated possibility is ineradicable and beyond our grasp. Words do, indeed, break in our hands and slip free from our lips (Eliot, 1959b). The work already done in a language into which we fall is impossible to calculate precisely (Vygotsky, 1989; Wallace-Crabbe, 1990). Poets

intuitively know this and exploit that which confounds and silences and makes fools and philistines of lesser mortals. Language as *poiesis* is a making or shaping, but never completely in the grasp of the poet who makes or shapes, not even if he be Dante or Shakespeare (Empson, pp. 234-256).

Myth And Poetry

Auden's lament that readers of his took his words as a kind of magic highlights not only the possible potency of poetry, its capacity to do things in words to and for people, but the kinds of multiple connections traced in outline hitherto. Myth is universal, and a force throughout culture, including sport. The philosophical tradition which maintains that being which can be understood is language, must, of necessity include myth as the twin shoot of language. Language, strung (according to Jakobson) between the poles of metaphor and metonymy, perpetually oscillates in actual usage. Myth patently and palpably becomes metonymy in a poet such as Homer, and metaphor in a poet such as Blake, but not as a static condition impermeable to other influence. Bloom provides his testimony that nowhere is this tie between myth and metaphor more intimate, religion possibly excepted, than in poetry. As critic, he uses myth to formulate six critical moments in his theory of poetry as the anxiety of influence. As metaphoric critic, he, in his application of myth to poetic theory and history (these being virtually inseparable) must re-write each myth to a greater or lesser extent, rather as Kafka re-writes the Babel myth in *The Castle*, a novel about a surveyor who can never find his bearings in a terrifying world (Kafka, 1957). The close relations of metaphor to myth may be best exemplified in a modern interpretation of a classical philosopher, that of Ricouer remarking on Aristotle (Ricouer, 1996).

Ricouer's hermeneutical studies in the rule of metaphor are those of an ontologist, not a gnostic. As such, they are far from being in full accord with those of Bloom, which is not to deny merit to either. Their relative merits as hermeneutists is not, however, the issue here, where the present limited aim is to make clearer the intimacy of myth and metaphor with the practice of poetry. Ricouer situates one particular study of metaphor in its connections to both rhetoric and poetry or Greek drama. Even rhetoric, he points out, historically has its roots in the dramatic and violent, and its tie to philosophy in the logic of probability.³²⁴ Nevertheless, poetry is a different practice to rhetoric: its intent is not to persuade but, in the Aristotelian theory, to purge the emotions of pity and fear. Poetry as a potent kind of therapy is far removed from poetry as the anxiety of influence, but Ricouer, like Bloom, makes myth and metaphor central in his interpretation of Aristotelian theory. Metaphor, however, in this theory, characterises both rhetoric and poetry but functions to different effect because it is situated differently language-wise. Ricouer works with the definition of metaphor given in the *Poetics*:

Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy (Ricouer, 1996, p. 328, **1457b**).

This expansive definition of metaphor betrays its own internal tensions as Ricouer goes on to explain at length and in detail. The principal point about metaphor, however, is clear enough in that it consists in a transposition, a substitution, a displacement, and ultimately, a condensation of meaning.³²⁵ Aristotle locates metaphor at the level of words, specifically the noun; Jakobson understands metaphor as a pervasive feature of

language structure, albeit distinguishable from metonymy which is more clearly recognisable contextually and historically.

The expression of language (*lexis*) in which metaphor is situated in the *Poetics* is not modes of speech (the mood of indicating or declaring, or the mood of the imperative or command, for examples), but parts of speech or diction, and specifically the name or noun. Ricouer notes, however, that in order to describe metaphor, Aristotle resorts to metaphor (*epiphora*);³²⁶ metaphor is described in terms of movement from an established logical order to a new, and destabilising order. Logical loss is met by semantic gain. Situating metaphor henceforth at the limited structural level of the noun or name has reductive consequences for subsequent understanding of the figurative in language generally. Henceforth a refinement in the taxonomy of metaphor is achieved at the expense of the understanding of a metaphoric operative at the more comprehensive level of discourse generally. Gadamer's understanding that meaning is metaphoric in its genesis is taken up suggestively by Ricouer in his commentary upon the thrust of Aristotle's description of metaphor:

This notion of *epiphora* enlightens at the same time as it puzzles us. It tells us that, far from designating just one figure of speech among others such as synecdoche and metonymy...for Aristotle the word *metaphor* applies to every transposition of terms. Indeed, its analysis paves the way for a global reflection concening the figure as such (Ricouer, 1996, p.329).

Language games now, in their theory and in their practice, as in the time of Abelard and Aquinas, Plato and Aristotle, Homer and J, are the scene of contest.³²⁷ Words, like bodies, are weapons; a province of use and abuse of others and self; things to think with. But the play of the world is present in them both. Or better, and differently, the play of

the world is made in that shared experience which is meaning, that words and bodies make possible.

Myth (*muthos*) is the key element, the controlling part, of six in Aristotle's theory of poetry or tragic drama, poetic *lexis*: *muthos* (myth, fable, plot), *ethe* (characters), *lexis* (diction, language), *dianoia* (thought), *opsis* (spectacle), and *melopaira* (*melody*). The poem (*Oedipus Rex*, for example) is at a level beyond ordinary language or *lexis*, sparking those remarkable words of Aristotle which have echoed in version after version from those devoted to poetry down the centuries:

The distinction between historian and poet is not in the one writing prose and the other verse....it consists really in this, that the one describes the thing that has been, and the other a kind of thing that might be. Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars (Aristotle, 1971, *De Poetica*, 1451b).

From Homer and J, to Yeats and Eliot, poetry is born in and of myth. Minor yet significant modern Australian poets such as Judith Wright and A.D. Hope reveal the endless influence of myth, especially Greek and Hebrew myth, in poem after poem, collection after collection, and in this they are quite typical.

Sport As Myth

So far in this chapter there has been both an attempt to chart something of the cultural potency of myth, and an attempt to delineate possible outlines of myth as structure in the cultural mix. In order to lend credence to myth as structure, myth has been examined briefly in certain crucial cultural relations. This has been preparatory to a sketching of sport as myth. Initially, myth was presaged as being both necessary and

universal, as it relates to sport. Both sport and myth have been taken as different kinds of language. It remains to inquire into how sport as a kind of language may be seen in relation to myth as a kind of language, now that something of the ubiquitous presence and catholic importance of myth in culture has been established. While the iconic figure of the hero (or, as he or she is quaintly called today, the role-model) is the most salient and recognisable, sport as myth must move beyond the iconic sign to include the construction in narrative. Narrative in classical and Biblical myth is of cosmic dimensions. The myth of the Fall, of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, for example, is not a tale of one man and one woman. Adam and Eve are archetypal. The Hebrew language plays on and with the ambiguity of the names. One recalls the ironism of the Plato of *Cratylus*.

If myth is essential to cultural understanding in the broad, how is it essential to an understanding of sport specifically? What are the myths that are re-written and re-read in sport? Are they of the nature of concrete universals, or culturally specific? Is there an approximation in contemporary sport to either epic or romance drawn from mythology? Is there an Achilles or a Roland, a King Arthur or a Lancelot, to be seen in modern sport? What does one make of the Tom Brown of Rugby fame, the nineteenth century myth of muscular Christianity? Or ought one take more cognisance of the asocial or socially dysfunctional in the ranks of strong sport performers? What credence is to be given to Christopher Lasch in situating the degradation of sport (and work) in a culture of Narcissism? Does cricket bespeak England, and baseball America, in a unique sense? Or are they the same myth differently expressed? Where and how is sport as a kind of language pitched predominantly at either the metonymical or metaphorical

pole? Is an intricately structured sport such as cricket, as previously suggested, more at the pole of metonym? Is a sport such as tennis, with its less leisurely pace and more incessant motion of both player and ball, more at the pole of metaphor? Is sport ever truly epic? Is there a certain romance in all striving to open up sport to the uninitiated, and especially to the young? Trekking off to some far-flung bush town to take a sporting clinic, without hope in the heart that a richer world is in the offing, must prove a futile, even cynical, exercise whatever the remuneration.

Epic, despite endless controversies over its theoretical status as a literary genre, offers a convenient point of entry to sport as myth. Historically, the epic form has often taken established myth for its motif or theme; epic narrates elevated or noble actions; epic has its hero or heroes. Milton, for example, takes the myth of Fall, and re-writes it as diffuse or extended epic (Lewis, 1943). While Milton's God may be aesthetic (Bloom, 1991, p. 93), theological (McLaren, s.n.), and ethical mistake (Empson, 1961), Satan is incorruptible in his will and galvanises the subsidiary myth of combat in plot and living speech (Bloom, 1991, pp. 98-113). Homeric epic and Miltonic epic are agon, conflict, combat, at the level of sublimity.

Michael Novak makes the ready association between Homeric hero and strong sport performer in the title to the opening essay of his best-known book, *The Joy Of Sports*. George Frederick Blanda, of mature years and in a rare flow of form for the Oakland Raiders, moves Novak to characteristic eloquence in his own personal quest for sporting faith, like the religious faith of Anselm nearly a millenium ago, seeking understanding:

Athletic achievement, like the achievements of the heroes and gods of Greece, is the momentary achievement of perfect form....A great play is a

revelation. The curtains of ordinary life part, and perfection flashes for an instant before the eye (Novak, 1988, p.5).

This justification of football is similar in basic respects to the individualism of Weiss's aristocratic apologetic for sport as the striving by the young for a bodily kind of excellence (Weiss, 1979). Football, Novak confesses, "is my moral equivalent of war" (Novak, 1988, p. xv). Sport "is, somehow, a religion" (Novak, 1988, p. xi). "Sports belong in the category of religion" (Novak, 1988, p.33). Sports possess sacred space and sacred time (Novak, 1988, pp. 122-131). Novak's panegyric is marked by private fervour and public quiescence. His virtual profession of acerbic love (Novak, 1988, frontispiece) cohabits within the same breast with a marked political self-satisfaction. His program for reform of sport promises much in its initial imaginative play of Jacobin against Burkean, but dissolves into a shotgun spray of suggestions little better than random (Novak, 1988, pp.315-338). He hits the target in his fifth suggestion related to the power latent in words used to describe actual sports actions, but without overt and adequate recognition of sport itself as a cultural code, a social condition, a structuration of signs (Novak, 1988, p.328). This relates to Novak's own implicit understanding of ordinary language as primarily instrumental not constitutive, a relatively neutral technical medium, something standing between knower and known. The acute observations of the most skilled sport journalist fall far short of sport fittingly conceived in its competitive game-playing as if it were epic, romance, drama, ritual, myth, poetry. It is not that Novak fails to understand these as elements in the mix of sport. The failure is in the understanding of sport as enactment of epic, romance, etc. Banda, movingly described but essentially from without, is never any kind of living approximation to the

wrath of Achilles or the questing of Odysseus. The association of Banda the doer of sublime deeds with the Homeric hero is left mostly in the title to the piece. The writing tells more about Novak than it does of Homer and epic, or of sport as Homeric epic. This would not necessarily be a bad thing if the implied intention of the piece as stated in the title had also been more fully realised. Moreover, his love for multiple teams is somewhat indiscriminate, generous to the point of promiscuity. A devotion to just one team in the good times and the bad may be difficult to justify, but it is hard not to admire.

A more sober and insightful assessment of sport in its fundamentals, as myth, makes the tie, not to religion (more accurately, religiosity of a felt but sentimental and idiosyncratic kind), but to past nationalism and the prospect of a rekindled, reborn Europe in the foreseeable future (Holt, Mangan, and Lanfranchi, 1996). An impressive collection of essays grouped under the title of “European Heroes: Myth, Identity, Sport” dispenses with the niceties of personal faith in favour of wider historical concerns. A disparate bevy of strong sport performers in Europe’s past century become virtual iconic signs, harbingers for the Europe that might yet be once the national state has managed to sink its outstanding inessential differences with its neighbours. In his person, Jean Borotra, the Bounding Basque, for example (Holt, Mangan, and Lanfranchi, 1988, pp.86-100), incarnates the tortuous twists and turns of French history in the twentieth century, makes visible, as it were, how ‘national myth can weigh heavily on private tradition and experience’ (Holt and Mangan, in Holt, Mangan, and Lanfranchi, 1988, p.1).

In its long and arduous playing-out in pursuit and climb, the Tour de France has been a recurring epic with constant and conflictual motifs. This monumental sporting event has, for a century, thrown up the most iconic of heroes, and against a natural background replete with the remnants of millenia of history. The mere spectacle on television grips the imagination. The essay by Stefano Pivato on Bartali makes for that kind of remembrance extolled by Gadamer and Bloom in their different ways, that fusion of horizons making for rich experience (Holt, Mangan, and Lanfranchi, 1988, pp.128-138). The Bartali myth feeds into what is probably, given Lance Armstrong's recent amazing winning record after recovery from testicular cancer, an American myth of the Tour de France in the making. Barthes is less light-minded in his appreciation of the epic quality of the Tour than in his evaluation of the world of wrestling as modern morality play in a post-modern world of second order meanings (Barthes, 1982).

A little has already been said in chapter two in explanation of the slow decay of epic and the rise of romance to supplant it, first in the songs of the Troubadours and the allegory of love, later in Elizabethan tragedy and comedy, in lyric and elegy. The later flowering of Romanticism at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth was both complex cause and complex effect of a continued change in human sensibility and a related change in language usage (Lewis, 1975; Reed, 1984).³²⁸ Huizinga is not alone in documenting a change in popular religious sensibility under the influence, in part, of the likes of Benedict, Anselm, and Bernard (Southern, 1962). The clash of theological giants in Bonaventure and Aquinas (united in the struggle against secular masters), is more than a matter of temperamental differences, more than a clash of rival Franciscan and Dominican institutions and traditions, more than mysticism

versus realism. It is, critically, a question of language and thought, of metaphor and metonym: Bonaventure could not have written the *Summa*, nor Aquinas the *Itinerarium* (Aquinas, 1954; Bonaventure, 1957; Baillie, 1959, pp.166-177; 1962, pp.112-119; Vignaux, 1959, pp.91-145). Accept his initial prejudices and vocabulary, then Aquinas, like Kant, is a great clarifier. Bonaventure, on the other hand, faces the problem of all mystics who strive to inscribe their understandings, the fall into contradiction and nonsense. The difference between the two, in short, is a difference in language, the difference between a metonymical and a metaphorical way of going on in words.

Jakobson's enquiries into language, it will be recalled, led him to the conclusion that a predilection to the path of metonym or metaphor did not stop there but extended to aphasia, verbal art, and the life lived itself (Jakobson, 1980, p.93). Classical epic made much of the extended simile, as well as synecdoche and metonym, and for good reason. The means were fitting for the purpose: not a justification of the ways to God to man, but a description of how heroes behave in an heroic society. The fiction and the ethic are inseparable (Booth, 1988; MacIntyre, 1988). It is not incumbent upon the reader to embrace the ethic, only to understand and interpret it, and there is more than one clear simple strategy to that end (LaCapra, 2000, pp.21-72; Fish, 1980; Miller, 1991; Bloom, 1975, 1991, 1995, 1997; Tracy, 1988). A summary application of this broad principle in a spirit of playful irony is made in the concluding chapter with reference to Tilden and Bradman as supremely strong sport performers. While it is not possible to dwell on sport as epic and sport as romance, both figures were epic in their sporting achievements; both men had something of a personal romance with their respective sport.

In chapter two twin developments were traced from the feudal order of chivalry and courtly love: on the one hand, the medieval jousting tournament; on the other, the literary allegory of love. The epic *Song of Roland*, commemorating the heroic resistance of a noble knight gives way to the magic of Camelot, the Arthurian romance of the Round Table, Guinevere and Lancelot. Romance succeeds epic, but not in any tidy succession. C.S. Lewis, of all people, made much of the revolution in sense and sensibility wrought by the medieval rise of romanticism in the allegory of love. Huizinga took great pains to document and illustrate how out of the same feudal order the jousting tournament became ritual and romance, drama and poetry, in one. Sport has evolved as a cultural and social practice since the passing of feudal order and the growth of a global economy, but not even the presence of mechanical mercenaries at Grand Slam tennis tournaments can obscure the romance of such events. Beyond the surface glitz, the synthetic glamour, the eventual emergence of the champion after a fortnight's play, possesses its own drama and meaning. Duds and quitters do not win Grand Slam titles.³²⁹

It is only at the structural level, however, that sport as myth comes truly into its own. Roland Barthes, who contended that anything can come to serve as myth (as much that is metonymical can readily become metaphor), and thus generate second-order meanings, provides a handy yet suspect example in his essay, *The World Of Wrestling*. Barthes, in his witty way, is more than content to be light-minded about the sport of professional wrestling. It is not the contest but the spectacle that captivates him. Barthes tilts urbanely at sport as a matter of high seriousness, at sport as deep. He is a literary man with powers of articulation engaged in his own project of demystification.

In textual processes of a distinctive reading and writing of mundane things commonly taken unthinkingly at face value, he sets out to make the contemporary world intelligible. He is ill content to leave things as others mostly find them. His revelations must discomfort some, perhaps even as they amuse. His humour is not created in evasions. Put quite simply, the signifiers in Barthes' world of wrestling are not markedly different from those contests to the death described by Homer; the signifieds, however, are utterly other. The move in meaning is not that widespread one of epic to romance which characterised the later middle ages (Southern, 1962, pp.227-267). Barthes pictures a world of surface spectacle which is, at the same time, a kind of morality play, an encounter of Good with Evil where Good must win out for the spectacle to entertain and, perhaps, reassure.³³⁰ Acceptance in small or large measure of living in an unjust world is not always for everyone an easy thing. Experience of personal injustice is one thing; awareness of institutionalised injustice (Steve Biko as yet one more victim of a system) another. Barthes' art is to revel light-mindedly in professional wrestling as surface spectacle. He is as removed from Borrow's high seriousness, as Borrow is from Sillitoe's moral indignation.

When John Howard, the present Australian prime minister, describes himself as a cricket tragic, and lauds the late Sir Donald Bradman as Australia's greatest son, he is on other ground from Barthes.³³¹ While the sport of cricket has changed with the advent of professionalism, something of the particular glory of the game still lingers in its shades. For many, Bradman exemplified that glory. The fact that he averaged nearly one hundred runs per Test innings did not harm his cause, but batting records and mythic stature are of a separate order. Sporting records are open to evaluation and re-

evaluation, but, in a certain sense, they are not open to dispute. Who will, can read. The myth of “The Don” is another matter. “The Boy from Bowral” is part of the larger myth of the bush. Prophets may no longer hail from the desert, but sporting champions still hail from the bush, and Bradman remains the most iconic figure in Australian sport. Even the English have come to the reckoning that, fundamentally, deep down, he is truly one of their and cricket’s own - much as we never think of Simpson as in any sense a whinging Pommie bastard. Bradman is now like Phar Lap, an eternal goer - to use the vernacular. Phar Lap, of course, is stuffed and still looking magnificent; permanently on show. Bradman, while now cast in bronze, is not reliant upon such monument.³³² Even the name is numinous, as Ned Kelly’s name is numinous, but in quite a different manner. “As game as Ned Kelly” has passed into our language, while “As great as Don Bradman” probably never shall.

Sport as imbued with mythical significance is close to, but not equivalent with, sport structurally as a kind of poetic language. It is to sport structurally as language making fresh meaning that this work concludes. How do truly strong players change the language, and hence the meaning, of their chosen sport? In the following and final chapter an answer to this central question of the dissertation is made in terms of what can be called, in summary, the writing, reading, and mimesis of sport. The sixth chapter seeks to consummate the argument of the whole work through a consideration of two examples of truly strong players, William Tatem Tilden II and Sir Donald Bradman. Tilden’s status as tennis icon is on a par with Bradman’s as cricket icon.³³³ It is to these two instantiations of the analogy of the strong sport performer with the strong poet of sport that this work turns and concludes.

Summary

This chapter has considered sport as myth, but only after surveying something of the cultural importance of myth, myth in its cultural relations. Critically, myth is intertwined with ordinary language, and virtually inseparable from strong poetry. Two key aspects of myth were stressed in this survey, the foundational and the typological, because an adequate cultural and social appreciation of sport requires that both aspects receive attention. As to the former, the structural importance of myth in culture and society was accompanied by a recognition that the structure of myth itself could not be ignored. Myth, as a creative symbolic formation, also has its fundamentals. Further, myth as a potent cultural force, is tied to the understanding and interpretation of strong poetry. Poetry itself as a kind of language is inexplicable apart from an understanding of myth and metaphor. As to the latter archetypal aspect, the strong sport performer is most readily understood and interpreted as analogous to the strong poet in the iconic sign or symbol. It is not that other kinds of sign or symbol are not at work, but that the icon most clearly establishes a translation of sport as poetry, and advances the argument of the dissertation as a whole.

Cassirer and Levi-Strauss furnished much of the substance of the chapter.

Cassirer illustrates in his cultural phenomenology not only how myth permeates and underpins different cultural forms, but also how interrelated those cultural forms are.

Levi-Strauss adopts for anthropological study key advances made by the great structuralists in analysing language. His focus in understanding the human mind is upon

the unconscious, upon relations between key concepts, and upon structural laws. Such understandings are far from being public intellectual property.

Too little has been done to make the application of such and related work (Bloom's, for just one further example), to sport. Instead, reductive understandings and interpretations of sport, overt and covert, abound, largely unrebuted. Some demeanings are promoted by persons one would expect to know better. The cultural and social capital of sport cannot afford to go unarticulated. Sport is more than a business, an industry. Lovers of sport know this in their heart of hearts, but such an intuition is not an articulation. More is said concerning the novelty and significance of this apologia for sport as related kinds of language at the beginning and, more especially, end of the sixth and final chapter.

Chapter Six

Of Rorty, Poetics, And Strong Players

Introduction

The purpose of this concluding chapter is one of further and final clarification, integration, and consummation through example, of the fundamental argument of the dissertation. The first four chapters engaged, in a novel fashion, in a step-by-step building of relevant theory extending to literary theory and historical excursion. Chapter five brought the theory of sport as if it were poetry to conclusion, but without actually describing in concrete detail how the strong sport performer, like the strong poet, makes fresh meaning and value. Instead, the chapter dealt with sport as a precious cultural phenomenon at the level of dreams. Sport, as a kind of language, includes sport as drama and ritual, epic and romance.

The argument thus far has centred upon an analogy between the strong player and the strong poet as one who makes things new. Just as the strong poet makes things new in a metaphorical re-writing of old myth, often employing fresh means (as Milton, for example, employed extended blocks of blank verse instead of rhymed couplets), so, it has been argued, the truly strong player is similarly engaged in refurbishing his craft, in re-writing its language, and thus changing its meaning and value. He does not do this in a vacuum or out of nothing: his making is, inevitably, a re-making, and at a particular time and place, and under certain conditions. How much is taken as given, what must be made, is not easily determined.³³⁴ What becomes clear is that sport is not simply a form of repetition. The experience of the strong sport performer, especially in competitive game-playing, involves change and experiment. Only with the adaptation of the body to

renewed and different stresses, the perpetual honing of and addition to skills, the seizing hold of variegated contingencies and necessities with nerve and verve and wresting them to the desired end, does excellence become within reach. Nothing is got for nothing, in sport as in poetry.

In this process of radical re-writing it is profitable to distinguish intimately related moments or levels. First, at the level of the individual strong player, there is the matter of what the strong player makes new in his chosen sporting practice, how he re-writes his strong predecessors in the sport. This moment is the one of innovation in the vocabulary and syntax of the sport, the selection and combination of the elements of play. This aspect centres upon structural and technical innovation in how the game is played, and extends to strategic and tactical concerns. Second, there is the response, immediate and longer-term, at both the individual and social level, to the new sporting phenomenon of the truly strong sport performer. That is, how he or she in their play is understood and interpreted; how he or she is read and re-read. The re-writing made by the strong sport performer is limited to his years of actual strong play, but the re-reading of that play is ongoing and manifold.³³⁵ Muhammed Ali, in a very real sense, is a re-writing of such strong predecessors in heavyweight boxing as Joe Louis. While they have much in common as black American heavyweight boxers, there is also much that is different in their craft and their persons. However, Cassius Clay metamorphosed into the greater glory of Muhammed Ali is an even more complex cultural and social phenomenon. Olympic champion Clay re-written as Ali the supremely strong sport performer who floated like a butterfly and stung like a bee, underlines the reciprocities between writings and readings. Clay re-written as Ali is not simply a re-writing of the

sport of boxing in one body and one career: the transformation clearly involves re-readings in related worlds of race, religion, and politics.³³⁶ At a pinch, one can imagine Cassius Clay in his demise ending his days as Joe Louis did - as a public meeter and greeter at the doors of a sporting and entertainment centre. But can one imagine Ali doing that? Sport re-written radically is also sport re-read; as in the world of strong poetry, the writing and the reading are mutual and reciprocal. Third, and intimately related to the foregoing, there is the broader cultural question of how the particular sport is mimetically re-made as a social and political praxis in the wider context of things (Sandercock and Turner, 1982; Cashmore, 1996). The relative autonomy of sport is exposed as just that: a social practice which cannot escape the thrust of affairs beyond its keep and ken. Contemporary sport demands the input of business and media, science and technology, lawyers and managers, health and fitness professionals, academics and students, clerics and critics, writers and poets, and, most of all, in certain fundamental respects, its audience, its spectators. The vital essence of sport as competitive game-playing necessarily extends to the existential realm. The fall into sport has much the same thrownness of the fall into language, the phenomenology of being-there in the life-situation. And that requires ordinary language and specialised kinds of language. The ready availability of performance-enhancing drugs, and the sometimes sinister influence of bookmakers with fortunes to win and lose, are now part of the phenomenology of sport, also two conspicuous factors in contemporary sport as a mimesis of social practice. What is to be made of them, how they are to be understood and interpreted, necessarily involves language.

Deep influences operate in sport as the play of bodies in test and contest. Play, it will be remembered, has been understood as that state of being which is even more than consciousness (Gadamer, 1989, 1996). Play is always conducted within a particular cultural and social milieu. While strong sport performers all have faces, none being an anonymous splendour, attention in this matter of making sense of sport must include continued recognition of, and brief attention to, basic structural concerns. Bourdieu, it will be remembered, insisted that amateurism in sport could only be conceptualised adequately when contextualised within a political and educational philosophy (Bourdieu, 1994, pp.342-345). Morgan, accepting contemporary professionalism in sport, but viewing sport as a social practice whose internal goods are threatened increasingly by the widening incursions of the market, proposes a strategy of empowering its practitioners so as to prevent sport becoming just another industry, a mere market product in a commercial world (Morgan, 1994).³³⁷ Gebauer, arguing in abstract and general terms that sport is a mimesis of social praxis in a radically different two-fold sense, also argues that sport is the making of a world both simple and deep (Gebauer, 1995).³³⁸

No strict linear progression attends these three moments or levels, although it is the novelty and the strength of the strong player's practice which commonly first commands stunned and rapt public attention. Often enough the novelty of this re-writing has been long in the making. Sometimes it is the product of inspired individual coaching and, or, learning. Sometimes it is a tradition within the sport brought to a height of excellence over an extended period of time in a more collegiate ethos, and enhanced by science and technology.³³⁹ Sometimes it is the product of time and chance.

Sometimes it is a combination of all three factors (Powers, 1978; Hogan, 1967; Budge, 1957; Kramer, 1977; Hoad, 1958; Laver and Collins, 1975; Evert-Lloyd, 1983; Whittington, 1976).³⁴⁰

It is convenient and helpful to distinguish these three levels although they spill over into one another at every turn, and deal with them in the order of the writing, the reading, and the mimesis of social praxis in strong sport. However, before doing just that, as it is Rorty's conception of the strong poet in cultural change which provides the basic paradigm for the analogy between strong player and strong poet, some attention is given to that conception.³⁴¹ And before considering Rorty's strong poet, there is some succinct necessary recapitulation in order to contextualise with clarity this final phase of the whole argument and its analogy between the strong sport performer and the strong poet.

Recapitulation

This analogy between sport and poetry has been conducted in semiotic mode: sport, mythology, and poetry, have all been taken as peculiar yet related cultural codes, three different kinds of language, under the rubric of ordinary language. Basic structural considerations governing these different languages have been described, in concert with an account of ordinary language as a system of signs. Structure, understood as heuristic fiction rather than strict science, far from foreclosing on the possibility of creativity in language, has been understood as its basic pre-condition. Strong players of sport, like strong poets, are makers of new meaning and value within a discernible structure and a particular history. The co-incidence of sport and poetry, while not logically necessary,

in the strictest sense, is historically explicable. The history of the ancient Greeks and medieval Christendom furnish more than sufficient evidence to establish a vital link. Ongoing attention to basic structural matters is one way of approaching what seems to some an unlikely alliance.

The simplest and best way to clarify and integrate the extended argument of the previous chapters is through instantiation or exemplification of the basic analogy between strong player and strong poet, taking in order, issues of writing, reading, and mimesis. Such instantiation is, in part, a movement from general typology to particular example, following upon the broader and more exhaustive structural importance of mythology in its relations to sport and culture canvassed in chapter five.

The argument so far, concentrating upon kinds of language, and matters of structure, has striven to make much of mimesis, myth, and metaphor in their relevance to sport as a kind of language, a peculiar cultural code. Sport as a language, mythology as a language, and poetry as a language, were discussed, both separately and in their relations, not just in the purities of ahistorical abstraction, but in something of their tangled historical embeddedness. Here, mimesis, understood not as mere imitation but as itself a formative and creative process, became particularly important in the theory and the working out of the basic analogy between strong player and strong poet. Because mimesis, seen in relations with myth and metaphor specifically, can be seen in its formative effects in both sport and poetry, there is agreement at a fundamental level with Gebauer that sport is a mimesis of social praxis, and intimately tied to both ritual and drama. Likewise, there is agreement with Bloom that poetry can be well understood and interpreted as a supermimetic kind of practice, that “influence-anxieties are

embedded in the agonistic basis of all imaginative literature” (Bloom, 1997, p.xxiv). Particular usage of the concept of mimesis was made in chapter two in relation to sport, and in chapter three in relation to poetry, drawing upon both theory and cultural and literary history. Disagreement with Gebauer occurred with his application of mimesis to sport as a way of making a world as not much of a making at all, and his rejection of sport, like language, as constitutive in any making or re-making of truth and reality. Sport, like poetry, does things with its materials; sport, like poetry, enacts its own meanings and values. While far from the whole of this enactment of meaning, such process can be understood most palpably at the level of the iconic sign - that is, that process of signification where there is a clearly discernible similarity between the signifier and that which is signified, an image bearing its meaning in and through degrees of likeness (Peirce, 1985). The movement here, then, is from the general typology of the strong player to the particular instantiation, in an historical context, of the three matters of the re-writing of sport, the re-reading of sport, and the mimesis of social praxis in sport.

The Strong Poet

Rorty’s conception of the strong poet is influenced by Bloom (Rorty, 1995, pp.23-43). Among the many potent influences common to both Rorty and Bloom, are Nietzsche and Freud (Rorty, 1995, pp.25-43; Bloom, 1991, pp.145-166;1997, pp.8-10). Common to Nietzsche and Freud is a recognition of contingency operative in a shared culture and an individual life. Nietzsche, protagonist for a certain chaos in the soul as a pre-condition of creativity, recognised the contingency and the reach of language, of

how language, truth, and reality live one another's life and die one another's death. He asks the question Pilate (surely no philosopher?) asked long before him, and answers himself in that purple flood of words that wash over the mind still, and express something of his vitalism and perspectivalism:

What, then, is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms - in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power; coin which have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins (Nietzsche, 1986, pp.46-47).

While both Nietzsche and Bloom recognise the contingency and reach of language, neither gives up on the fundamental importance, especially for the strong poet, of volition and desire, of man as maker, as overcomer in and through language (Nietzsche, 1986, pp.32-39; Nehamas, 1985; Bloom, 1997).³⁴² Of course they express it differently, but the shared underlying thought is that what man makes, man can know, if only as a suffering and diurnal being. This thought is the thought thought right through to the end by man as overcomer, man as pro-creator, man as strong poet.³⁴³

In chapter three explanation was given of strong poetry as a site of violence in words, poetry as an exacting process of metaphoric re-writing born in and of creative envy. Strong poets, in Bloom's understanding and interpretation, are overdetermined, in the tradition of Homeric epic, by considerations of victory over their strong predecessors. They live with and under the twin and paradoxical imperatives of the Hebrew divinity who says in the same creative breath, Be like me, Do not be too like me! This, to put the matter mildly, is a difficult and troubled situation; these are

strenuous demands. Little wonder that poets, notoriously, sink or swim, suicide or go mad. The pragmatics of powerful speech, of memorable utterance, are costly and consequential. And they have everything to do with remembrance and a catholic sense of tradition in all its complexities and divisions - especially the subversion of tradition from within, which is as good a place to introduce Rorty and his understanding of the strong poet as one can hit upon.³⁴⁴

Rorty re-contextualises and radicalises the already radical understanding of Bloom in this matter of the strong poet. This, only in retrospect, occasions no great surprise, because the pragmatist philosopher becomes also something of an expert in comparative literatures. After long years laboring in the philosophical wilderness, in the deserts of analysis, he is galvanised, much more through literature than philosophy, into a life of activism and subversion. His is a modern tale of old-fashioned conversion. He, along with minnows and whales, is subject to influence - poets as different in stature and kind as Larkin and Shakespeare (Rorty, 1995, pp.23-43, 1980). And novelists as different as Orwell and Proust (Rorty, 1995).

The strong poet, in Rorty's conception of him, need not necessarily be a poet, provided he makes things new. Poets do make things new; they are makers through figurative language, especially metaphor. Rorty expands the conception to include philosophers and scientists, historians and critics, novelists and psychologists - anyone indeed, whose re-descriptions, whose metaphors, whose non-canonical illusions, are taken up over time and come into cultural effect. Proust, he assures us, will one day become as obligatory, as inescapable, as factitious (in Bloom's vocabulary), as Freud (Rorty, 1995, p.39, note17). Strong poets, such as Chaucer, make their poetry, not

simply from an experience of the world, including the literary world, but out of a language at the crossroads, a language in ferment from foreign influence (Speirs, 1964). Proust makes his strong poetry in remembrance of things past, in part, from a long apprenticeship in bowing and scraping, a process of ingratiating himself into high and, or, influential society (Proust, 1983). His ambition, however undifferentiated when young, is palpable, but his peculiar sensibility, his monumental intelligence, are not handicaps in the eventual practice of his profession as novelist, certainly. He is so strong in his craft as to be, like Dante, a prototypical figure in the world of letters; an ironist before it became fashionable, tinged with eroticism at much more than the edges (Rorty, 1995, pp.96-108; Bloom, 1995, pp.395-412).

Rorty's conception of the strong poet as the one who makes things new can be taken in the broad and applied to strong sport performers. His stress upon their contingency in contradistinction to Bloom can be tempered by a recognition of volition and desire, and without succumbing either to any simple-minded recourse to great-man and great-woman theories of history, or to the reduction of the reality and impress of the external world upon personal lives. Truly strong sport performers, like strong poets, evade any single reading. Further, they invite something in the reading of the same kind of metaphoric criticism as strong poets. Such criticism, contextualising Tilden in sporting paradise lost, and Bradman in sporting paradise regained, forms a substantial part of the second section on the re-reading of strong sport performers. These matters of the re-writing and re-reading of sport, in their turn, are closely related to the third matter, that of sport as a mimesis of social praxis. Australian tennis has a treasured place in its sporting culture, but it does not rival the truly national importance of cricket in the

culture (Johnson, 1985; Pollard, 1963, 1980; Clark, vol. VI, 1987).³⁴⁵ Cricket in Australia has something of the same national significance as baseball in America, where tennis is a relatively minor sport, despite Dwight Davis and the Davis Cup, and a long and distinguished history. Cricket, originally a conservative and very English sport, bespeaks the colonial connection of Australia to imperial power since the First Fleet entered Botany Bay in 1788. The British legacy to Australia included much more than the long and convoluted traditions of parliamentary democracy and the rule of law. A vital part of that legacy pertained to the institutions and practices of sport in Britain (Harris, 1975; McIntosh, 1963; Goodman & Johnston, 1966; Johnson, 1985; Clark, vol. VI, 1987). Cricket in a post-colonial world has become a very different sporting practice. The sun has set on more than the British Empire. Cricketers in nations such as Australia and India have played their roles in changing the nature of the practice.

This chapter, then, seeks to bring the argument to resolution through attention to three concerns: how the strong sport performer re-writes his sporting practice; the ways, including metaphoric and ironic ways, in which he may be read, especially by that interpretative community to which he is bound in time and space through resonance and empathy; and the mimesis of social praxis by the truly strong sport performer, in which theory and practice, signs and actions, merge and meld.³⁴⁶

The Advent Of The Strong Player Re-Writing Sport

Sport, along with mythology and poetry, has been taken in semiotic mode as a cultural code, as a kind of language. How then do the truly strong sport performers, the champions of champions, write their sport? Can they plausibly be said to re-write their

sport in a way akin to that of the strong poet, under the anxiety of influence, re-writing his strong predecessors? In what ways are the meanings and values of their sport changed in and through, not only the re-writing, but the re-reading of sport? What mimesis of social praxis is present and possible in such re-writings and re-readings?

William Tatem Tilden II and Sir Donald Bradman are the two exemplifications of the strong player chosen from the many worthy sporting champions who have made things new in the world of sport, and sometimes beyond. With the passage of the decades, each has come to seem, for their respective interpretive communities, canonical and obligatory in the select lists of the truly strong players, coin whose currency has not become defaced. But their strength was neither calculable nor predictable at the time of their advent. Only in the wisdom of hindsight is Tilden discontinuous rather than continuous with the genteel traditions of the game he inherited, the sport which nourished him, the sport to which he devoted his life, albeit ambivalently. As a homosexual, he, like many others before and since, pays a high price for his sexual deviance (Dollimore, 1992). Bradman, too, is discontinuous rather than continuous with strong predecessors such as Grace and Trumper, Woodfull and Ponsford (Fingleton, 1947; Robinson, 1976). He, although a country boy and deeply conservative, is of the new school who face the challenge of change in a potent and unique way in a nation feeling its way in hard times. Cricket is both means and end; its goods are both internal and external; influence and affluence come together for Bradman.³⁴⁷ Much as he valued the traditions of the game in which he excelled, strongly as he resisted the calls of players to make the sport a profession, Bradman himself profited from his fame, and not simply as a journalist (Fingleton, 1947). Construed as an Oedipus slaying his forebears,

he does so knowingly and wilfully, and rejoices, flamboyantly on field, discreetly off field, in the process.

Both Tilden and Bradman are so strong as to re-write the way their respective sports are played. Their imposing records are only a part of their strength as strong players.³⁴⁸ Each so selects and combines in radical and innovative manner from the range of hitherto prefabricated possibilities, as to serve as metaphor for strong poet of sport. Each is strong, but not so strong as to escape the impress of their time and space. Just as it is impossible to conceive of strong poets such as Dante and Milton torn from their respective contexts of the heart of medieval Christendom and English civil strife at the dying of the divine right of kings, so one must remember America in an era of growing individualism and isolationism (Morison and Commager, 1962; Hofstadter, 1955), and Australia in a time of depression and unsure of its identity (Clark, 1980, vol. VI, 1987; McQueen, 1970, 1997).

If Tilden and Bradman are to be understood and interpreted fittingly and robustly, then more is required than contextualisation and re-contextualisation. Each develops a distinctive style of play. Each promotes what may loosely be called a philosophy of the sport they so elevate. Each, for all his strength, is no divine anonymous splendour, but comes with recognisable human face.³⁴⁹ Interpreting all that registers in each face is a monumental and ever-shifting challenge (Wallace-Crabbe, 1990; Spender, 1991; LaCapra, 2000). Each person wears the burden and spur of very different histories, and, for all his supreme sporting strength, lives in worlds within world. Both their sporting worlds are dominated by the language of amateurism, and limited to relatively few nations, although Tilden seeks to break the confines of

amateurism as an entrepreneur in the nascent professional game. Both men strive for more than sporting greatness. Tilden seeks satisfaction and success in aesthetic worlds, and fails dismally. Bradman is lionised socially, and accrues material capital in the world of commerce. He, unlike Tilden, dies in favour and style.

What has actually happened in our past is important. What is made of that past is also important. Event cannot be divorced from meaning. While history does tend to be written by the triumphant, those who write the past possess a power to determine the future. How that past is to be understood and interpreted from our particular individual perspective is important also, and not just for the present but for the future. Plato's image of time as the image of eternity makes a sliver of a mighty imagination relevant in philosophy and poetry (Weiss, 1979; Warnock, 1994; Wright, 1994). Gadamer's key concept of a necessary fusion of horizons for understanding and interpretation in the social sciences has a genealogy extending right back to Plato (Gadamer, 1989, 1996).

First, then, there is the question of technical innovation and structural change, of how the play is changed, of how the sport is re-written. Preliminary remarks were made in chapter one about the grammar that makes a game in the overall context of structure in sport and language. It was suggested that the informed eye at the sporting contest reads in a manner akin to the competent critic of poetry or pictorial art. There was the further related suggestion that sport, like poetry, can possess a multiple syntax - that there is a multiple syntax of test and contest, rhythm and rhyme, metre and stress, sound and scent. These remarks have been added to in systematic fashion in following chapters in fashioning the basic argument of sport as if it were poetry. Truly strong sport performers craft more than an identifiable style of play: they may be said to add to

that ensemble of prefabricated possibilities that constitute the code of their respective sport. Very few re-make at that fundamental level. Tennis post-Tilden, cricket post-Bradman, are different competitive games, not that each wreaks a revolution single-handedly in utter isolation from his fellows, his time and place, his culture and society. But both become supremely strong.

One clue to Tilden's eventual emergence as supremely strong player was his decision, at age twenty six, to take a winter away from further immediate competition in 1919 to re-model a backhand inadequate to withstand the pummeling of the likes of William ("Little Bill") Johnston's ferocious forehand. Tilden understood he would never grasp where he desired to reach unless he perfected his backhand groundstroke and thus make his game whole. During that arduous re-making of his most deficient stroke, he developed the skill to hit his backhand drive with topspin as well as slice, and with that, the ability to attack as well as defend on that wing. Tilden understood as no one before in all its consequences, that in order to get the ball over the net and down into court, on the backhand groundstroke as on the forehand, one had to hit up the back of the ball - not ferociously as is the manner today with stiff, light, graphite racquets, but sufficiently with hand-crafted wooden laminate racquets shaped on a mould, in order to wrest control of the rally (Tilden, 1955).³⁵⁰

Tilden possessed that self-knowledge so characteristic of strong sport performers, and that infinite capacity for taking pains that some maintain is the preserve of genius.³⁵¹ Big Bill, under the anxiety of negative influence, became Little Bill's master when he became capable of more than keeping the ball in play on the backhand side. Tilden became able to fight fire with fire, and to open up the court by first hitting

to his opponent's strength and forcing him to expose his weaker side. Volleyers as expert as Vincent Richards and Jean Borotra rarely worried Tilden after that long winter of re-making, because Tilden had developed the skill to make the backhand passing shot under the pressure of the volleyer's attack. His re-making of his backhand groundstroke did not simply add to his arsenal of weapons: it became paradigmatic for the champions who succeeded him: they payed him that sincerest form of flattery, imitation.

The understanding that the backhand groundstroke need not be restricted to defence and hit with underspin or slice, is now a shared one. Tilden set the pattern for future thinking about tennis as a sport in its particular structure of the combination of attack and defence. Few could match Borotra in the excellence of his net attack, but it was Tilden who showed most clearly and impressively the importance of the groundstrokes in attack and defence. Cochet, for one, learned the lesson well; Perry, the greatest of English players, with his running forehand and net attack, and Kramer, with his forehand fade and all-round game, were two others. Budge, clearly one of the all-time greats, was peculiar for his time in making the backhand drive his most punishing as well as his most reliable stroke. Kramer, in his text *How To Play your Best Tennis All The Time*, made the fundamental points that you cannot fire the shots if you do not have the weapons, but that victory is decided more by the number of errors made than the number of winners (Kramer, 1977). Budge demonstrated that it was possible to build a game predominantly upon an attacking service and an offensive backhand, provided the rest of your game was more than competent. In more recent times, Manuel Santana showed that it was possible to further extend the possibilities on the backhand side by mastering the offensive topspun backhand lob. More recently still, Eliot

Telscher has shown how competitive a player may be at the top level despite a modest arsenal of weapons, provided the backhand groundstroke is outstanding. In all such developments, Tilden was the strongest of strong precursors - like Dante, prototypically strong.

A second early and closely related clue, but more general, to this strong player in his re-writing (a re-writing both metaphorical and literal) occurred in a moment of yet another impending defeat in the presence of a younger friend. One pregnant clue to his re-writing of tennis as a sport lies in his angry retort to this younger friend, Frank Deacon, in his ignorance, seeking to comfort and to help him in the ominous signs of yet another impending defeat before his game matured and his eventual greatness was realised:

Tilden stopped dead, and with what became a characteristic gesture, he swirled to face the boy, placing his hands on his hips and glaring at him. "Deacon," he snapped, "I'll play my own sweet game." (Deford, 1977, p.19)

Tilden would have been comfortable in contemporary tennis because his own sweet game was built around not only an impressive service, but groundstrokes on both sides which few have surpassed. Budge's backhand may have been slightly superior, perhaps even his service; Segura's double-handed forehand may have been better. Tilden, however, made his groundstrokes supremely capable of offense and defence, and the basis of his game (Tilden, 1955). With the greater arsenal of shots came a supreme confidence in his conception of strategy and tactics. Fundamental to his thinking about becoming a strong player was that a game had to be built, and that such making took time and care, and ought not be rushed. Tilden gave great thought to the other side of the equation, the need to study the game of rivals, and develop the means to deconstruct

their game, maximize his own strengths and expose their weaknesses, and thus assure victory. Early, Shakespeare had to surpass Marlowe; Tilden had to overcome the popular and greatly successful Johnston. Tilden did not rush to become truly strong, but, like the strong poet, he knew that his time would come if talent and nerve held, and come it did. His impressive doubles record is testament that he knew how to volley, even if his preference in singles was to play mostly from the backcourt and manoeuvre his opponent into an impossible position before going for the kill. Few were to give near so great devotion to the strategy and the tactics of the sport of tennis as Tilden in his sad, lonely, triumphant sixty years.

Backhand re-made, Tilden advanced from promising also-ran to Wimbledon champion in 1920 and 1921. Unwilling to return across the Atlantic after 1921 to continue his supremacy, he contented himself with six successive United States singles championships (1920-25), numerous lesser victories, and thirteen successive Davis Cup Challenge Round singles triumphs. And all this despite having to have a goodly part of a finger on his hitting hand removed in 1922, necessitating a successful change in grip. In 1930 at the age of 37 he won Wimbledon for a third time, before turning professional in the following year. At the time of his death in 1953 he was still competitive, at least for a set, with all but the very cream of the sport. His re-writing of his own game joined with his re-writing, in text and play, of the sport of tennis. His final text, *Tennis A To Z*, published just three years before his death, was his last testament to the sport, a summation of his long and lonely road to tennis immortality. The book, especially in the sub-text of its closing pages, sings the song of a strong player confident that he would not be something that only skeletons think about.

Tennis was no longer the genteel sport in the 1920s that it had been in the last years of the nineteenth century. Before the catastrophe of that war to end all wars, World War I, able and doughty champions had come and gone, but never a Tilden. His blending of attack and defence became paradigmatic for the great players who succeeded him - Vines, Perry, Riggs, Segura, Budge, Kramer. Even where their games were more explosive, they were less subtle. Tilden could not be replicated. The Four Musketeers (Borotra, Cochet, Lacoste, Brugnon) who ended his domination of the sport were less indebted, but the older Tilden, there to be vanquished if and when possible in many a mighty contest, must have been an influence, especially for such a thinker as Cochet and such competitors as Borotra and Lacoste.³⁵²

Norman Brookes had the same steel in his soul as a competitor, but neither his charisma nor his range and strength of strokeplay. Borotra had the charisma, and something of the same belief in his own attacking play, but not the same comprehensive skill to attack or defend as circumstances warranted. Budge undoubtedly achieved greatness, an almost complete excellence. Perhaps his lack of egotism, or the outbreak of World War II and American participation in that war after 7 December 1941, prevented him scaling the absolute heights, cementing his sustained domination upon the sport as Tilden did. Kramer also had the complete game, the same supreme self-belief as Tilden, the same gift of communication, but he never held the tennis stage the way Tilden did. His defection to the ranks of professionalism, relegating him, along with his fellow professionals to a veritable side-show of the sport, was also a factor in appreciating his strength.³⁵³ Kramer's development of professional tennis after World War II and before tennis became open in 1968, would hardly have been possible without

the earlier work of Tilden as entrepreneur in the early and haphazard days of tennis professionalism.

For thirty years and more before his death at the age of sixty, Tilden, with racquet and with pen, had written and re-written the art and history of tennis. Tilden was fascinated by the spin of the ball, engrossed by the strategy and tactics of tennis as duel for ultimate supremacy. While with Tilden on tennis there was always the sense that there was more to be written (*The Art Of Tennis*, written in 1920 was his first book, *Tennis A To Z*, published in 1950, his last), a lofty ambition allied with a certain ambivalence in personal disposition, led him to try his hand further afield as playwright and novelist, film actor and director, realms where for him and competent critics less would have been more. His creativity and (some have said) intellectualism, had their limits (Robertson, 1974, p.129; Deford, 1977). But theory and practice of a lovely game sweetly played were united in his person. If he had but one theory as to how tennis ought to be played, if some of his ideas are now revealed as quaint and outdated (five sets morning and afternoon, plus a little skipping, practically looked after fitness for tennis), if he loved to play with his opponent as a cat with a mouse, if his ethic had all the simplicity of a western movie, no matter! Tennis, for him, was a shifting balance between attack and defence.³⁵⁴ He understood as no one before him the importance of the spin of the ball.

Tilden grasped where others reached in his understanding and interpretation of the sport of tennis as consisting in the successful striving to break down the opponent's game. That intent could only be fully realised within Tilden's interpretation of tennis if one had genuine insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the opponent. This Tilden

possessed in great measure because he made himself both supreme practitioner and an informed student of the game. If, clever, skilled, and resolute in his play as he undoubtedly was, his truth was of a relatively simple and fundamental kind, this is no great concession. Tilden had his own appreciation of the integrity of the contest, and although a showman, he did not wish to see this vitiated. Radical evil in sport is not so much the patent mayhem and violence which sometimes intrudes (not to be condoned), but when and where the contest is constrained, vitiated, even perverted, by extrinsic considerations - that is, where, as in Barthes' world of wrestling, there is spectacle, but no genuine contest.³⁵⁵ The inexistence of level playing fields (Tilden, along with the majority of contemporary tennis competitors, came of a well-to-do family with the right genetic stock) need not prevent honest contest. Tilden possessed in his person and his play the personal knowledge that there is virtue in the strife as there is glory in the conquering: he continued to contest manfully with the likes of Vines and Budge as he had always done, long after he was past his best, in order to put on a worthwhile show for those who had paid good money to see a worthy contest. And did not Achilles and Hector, similarly intent upon victory, nevertheless know the same basic truth, that the virtue is in the strife rather than in the end? Perhaps, after all, the accent upon victory is, in part at least, a necessary concession to human weakness, rather than the seal upon genuine strength. There is food for thought in the fact that there is still scholarly dispute about who wrote Shakespeare, and that both J and Homer are anonymous although their splendour, like that of Shakespeare, is manifest.

And what of Bradman, unique in his run-scoring ability and unique in his stance (Fingleton, 1947, p.27)? Bradman learned the rudiments of cricket in a country town,

first with the meagre equipment of stump, golf ball, and water-tank stand, and then by demanding an endless supply of bowled balls from devoted parents - mother during the day, father after work in the evenings. Unlike Tilden, he was no dogmatic purist; like Tilden, he added to the repertoire of prefabricated possibilities understood to compose the possibilities inherent in the game. Tilden thought that there was one holistic way to play tennis; Bradman learned the fundamentals in virtual isolation and came to know what worked for him.

Bradman, with his peculiar gifts and remorseless application, set the pattern for overturning English ideas of stroke purity. It is not that no one hooked or pulled before Bradman, but that no one had so exploited the range of cross-batted shots previously. Bradman did not simply amass huge run totals - he scored quickly, hitting hard or deftly as he judged it expedient. The pragmatics of massive run-scoring in minimal time was achieved by a range of strokes which offended the purists who preached high leading elbow and bat vertical. Bradman not only adopted a unique stance, but also picked the bat up out toward second slip. He pulled and hooked, cut and glanced, often with the bat far from vertical in its downwards sweep in the classical manner (Fingleton, 1947; Robinson, 1976). Tilden had impressive physique; Bradman had a keen eye and quick feet. Both loved the contest, and gloried in demonstrating, so that all could see, that they alone exercised utter pre-eminence in their craft.

Like Tilden, Bradman took pains to perfect his unorthodox game. Once at the crease, he was remorseless in his application to making runs. In his genius, he offended the purists by demonstrating how effective and efficient cross-batted cricket strokes could be: he cut and pulled whenever he saw fit, and he saw fit often. He registers as a

fresh phenomenon, the like of which cricket had never seen before, and has not seen since. The more private aspect of this new sporting phenomenon is seen in Bradman's devotion to amassing huge scores. Lesser batsman were content with a hundred runs; Bradman was ill content with two hundred, even three. Bradman re-wrote the record books, and the art of batsmanship, and he did so in a unique manner.

Bradman has no rivals as the supremely strong batsman. Many, including critics and some of those who played with and for him, rate him almost without peer as a captain (Robinson, 1976). But what of Bradman as hero of sporting paradise regained? Bodyline threatened the sport of cricket, not only in its institutions and practice, but as the epitome of fair play.³⁵⁶ Seventy years on, and after the recent revelations of corruptions in the game, the topic will not die. Bodyline also came as threat to the man who has become the best known of all Australian sport performers, the late Sir Donald Bradman. The very name Bodyline, linked to the sports journalists Hugh Buggy and Jack Worrall, came about in that process of condensation common in metaphor and newspaper headline.³⁵⁷: Fast bowlers set about bowling in a conscious and sustained way, not at the stumps, but on the line of the body and at a length and pace designed to limit run-scoring, and intimidate, even injure, and with the fieldsmen packed on the leg side, most in close, usually two set back in a second line of defence. In the early 1930s, Bodyline was radically new in the sport of cricket in an era which knew little of effective protection for the chest and nothing of protection for the head other than with the bat. While Bodyline was the means by which the English Test team attained the immediate ends of curbing Bradman and ensuring victory in the Test series, it brought Test cricket into disrepute and put relations between England and Australia under

strain.³⁵⁸ The Australian Board of Control was to fire off a cable to their English counterparts in protest against the Bodyline strategy. Both the Australian Board and the Marylebone Cricket Club would soon retreat, in their different ways, from their respective positions as the threat to the game and friendly relations became clear.

Bradman blazed on to the cricket scene at the end of the 1920s like a shooting star. He amassed such a series of huge scores in both first-class and Test cricket, scores unequalled before, even by another Australian batsman, Ponsford, as to eclipse all who had gone before. Fingleton, who as a Test opener, was often there at the other end when Bradman was batting, and a successful journalist and writer on cricket, was in a privileged position to assess this strongest of strong cricket performers. In his book *Cricket Crisis*, not written in indecent haste, and remarkable for judgments which have largely stood the test of time, Fingleton explains the advent of Bodyline as a calculated plot by the English cricket administrators in concert with their Test players, to halt Bradman in his tracks. Though a journalist, Fingleton fittingly describes not simply a crisis in the game, but a drama. Dramas have their plot and their cast. Plots are constructed - they are much more than incident piled upon incident.³⁵⁹ A cast is a list of characters. If the plot is to come alive so as to issue in the suspension of disbelief, then the characters have to have character in order to put flesh on the bones of the plot. Fingleton, without being sensationalist, is up to the task. He leaves us in little doubt as to the centrality of Bradman in the creation of the drama of Bodyline:

The leading figure of the whole cast, however, was Bradman. He was the problem child of cricket, for never in the history of the game had an individual so completely captured records, attention and publicity. There had been W.G. Grace and Trumper, but not even these, all things considered, matched Bradman's personality. He towered above his fellows; he dominated the stage so much that at one period it almost seemed that the

game of cricket was subservient to the individual Bradman. Hence, to put it, Bodyline! (Fingleton, 1947, p.14)

A little later in his account of the cricket crisis caused by Bodyline he states his view more directly and in predictable and somewhat stilted metaphor:

Bodyline was conceived for Bradman, born and carefully nurtured for him, and, when one reflects on the seasons preceding 1932-33, it might be agreed that not even a Bradman had the divine right to pre-suppose that he could indulge himself in gargantuan feasts of runs and not pay the penalty of something like bodyline indigestion (Fingleton, 1947, p.22).

Deny it as he might with the passage of several years, Bradman, in Fingleton's view, set out in deliberate fashion at the start of his career to re-write the record books:

I recall his reply in London, in 1938, when Hutton had broken his Test record of 334 and I asked Bradman whether he might, some day, set out on the task of beating Hutton.

“One does not go seeking records,” was Bradman's reply. “They simply just happen.” (Fingleton, 1947, p.22)

A clear case of the anxiety of influence if ever there was one! Ponsford had run up a succession of mammoth totals in the years preceding the coming of Bradman, only to see Bradman top everything he had done, including a 452 not out in 406 minutes with 49 fours, in a state game against Queensland (Fingleton, 1947, p.124).

Truly strong sport performers such as Tilden and Bradman re-write not just the record books, but the competitive game-playing of their chosen sport. Unrivalled in their own day, they exercise an ongoing influence. Sometimes they excite a negative, a destructive envy, but sometimes their influence bears the hallmarks of the creative anxiety of influence.³⁶⁰ The strong sport performer, like the strong poet, is not simply born in a seminal remembrance of things past, but is also pregnant with the future.

Plurality And Ambiguity In Reader-Response To Strong Performers

A classic text, a strong poem, a critical event, will ultimately and inevitably evoke a plurality of readings and re-readings, some weak and some strong (Tracy, 1988; LaCapra, 2000; Empson, 1970; Bloom, 1975, 1991, 1995, 1997; Fish, 1980; Barthes, 1988; Miller, 1991, pp.133-171). In the world of poetry, Marvell reads Milton in *On Paradise Lost* as strong but deconstructing “The sacred Truths to Fable and Old Song.” Blake, too, reads Milton as strong, but he does not go so much go through Milton as around him, confident enough in his own unique strength as not to challenge Milton directly head on. Blake makes his reading of Milton; he also makes his reading of himself and senses and appreciates the power of his own imagination, his own mind. Even in poverty he is not adverse to educating wealthy, ignorant, patrons. His reading and his creation are twin faces of the same coin. He makes his own sweet way, heretical evangelical with a social conscience. Like Tilden, unlike Bradman, he bucks the dominant system at point after point in social mores, in philosophy and theology, in prose and poetry and pictorial art. Like both Tilden and Bradman in their sporting crafts, the only system he cares to espouse is his own because, like them, he knows he is strong (Blake, 1969; Frye, 1990).

Sport, too, has its makings and re-makings, its readings and re-readings, its figurations (Roberts, 1993, 1995, 1997). The legalist, the pharisee, may read Tilden as a pervert and criminal; the philistine or the bourgeois may read him as a loser. Deford reads him as a tragic figure (Deford, 1977).³⁶¹ Other readings are not only possible, but possibly better. The positing of necessary standards, the advancement of hypothetical judgments, is here supplanted by that more metaphoric kind of criticism made by

Bloom, and that vein of ironism championed by Rorty, as peculiarly suited to the times: Tilden is made protagonist of sporting paradise lost, Bradman protagonist of sporting paradise regained. Realists may rage, but there is purpose to such criticism.³⁶²

In sport nothing succeeds like success, and success is usually easy to gauge in certain fundamental respects. Victory and loss are rarely open to dispute when approached in realistic vein and conceived in literal terms: there is victory; there is defeat; there is the fairly honorable draw. The Homeric hero is one kind of realist: he knows what is demanded of him in his elevated social role in the contest; he knows how he must respond to such challenge; he knows he is a part of a whole, and that his role carries certain responsibilities; metonym is the fitting, the natural idiom of enactment (MacIntyre, 1992, pp.121-130, 1988, pp.12-29; Auerbach, 1974, pp.3-23). The contemporary sporting hero may be, often is, another kind of realist: he knows which side his bread is buttered on, and that while most publicity is good publicity, controversy and criticism will most likely affect his earning capacity adversely in the long run.³⁶³ Public spin and personal image predominate and combine in a commercial culture. Image is everything; perception is reality in the common mind (Boorstin, 1963; Lasch, 1979).³⁶⁴ Bourdieu, disenchanted but no cynic, attempts in his sophisticated manner to be matter-of-fact about the modern world, and about the reproduction of the status quo. The order of things is constituted in a subterranean process, a perverted logic in which there is a complex causal relation between production and demand in the various social classes (Bourdieu, 1994). As in Orwell's *1984*, people get what they want, and want what they get, but only because they are deceived, only because they know no better than paltry commonsense.

Metaphoric criticism might well take a different path, and make quite different judgments, not just about strong sport performers as possible heroes or villains, but about sport more generally as a social practice (Roberts, 1976, 1993, 1995, 1997). It is just this less-travelled metaphoric path that is taken here in a somewhat ironic reading of Tilden as protagonist in sporting paradise lost, and Bradman as protagonist in sporting paradise regained.³⁶⁵ These two truly strong and individualistic sport performers invite multifarious readings at different levels. Immanent in many of these manifold readings are those perpetual questions relating to fundamental concerns of identity and community. Tilden appears to have had little doubt as to his identity as tennis player, and much as to his person and his community. There is pathos, unresolved conflict, in the life and play of Tilden, whose personal motto challenged one biographer to his own deconstruction and reconstruction of the legendary Big Bill Tilden: “Truth, though the heavens fall” (Deford, 1977, p.9).³⁶⁶ The truth and the beauty in his play, his strength, in a word, convince almost everyone who sees him in his prime. Why was that not enough for him? Bradman seems to have known early that he was destined for cricket greatness. He carves out greatness as batsman and captain, achieves social status and business success. He hobnobs with royalty. Pathos is much less evident in the case of Bradman, where the adulation has never ceased and the honours have flowed and flowed. Critics like Roebuck who make invidious comparisons with some other cricket greats, and reduce him to just a supremely great cricketer, and nothing else, are very much in the minority (Maxwell, 2001, pp.71-82).

Judgments there must be, but they can never be final and absolute. There is always more to be known, and never from the same place. The French react to this

salutary truth idiomatically, declaring that to understand all is to forgive all.³⁶⁷

Accordingly, here, in a spirit of some irony (playful rather than reactive), the Miltonic myths of paradise lost and paradise regained are employed in regard to two truly strong sport performers, William Tatem Tilden II and Sir Donald Bradman. Try as one might to separate the player and his play, it is inordinately difficult at some points. At one level, the more distinctly societal level, Tilden errs and founders, finds himself behind bars, liberty lost, and bereft of adulation and friends. Bradman, on the other hand, climbs higher and higher, and prospers in the process. Yet, at another level, the more strictly sporting level, Tilden shows a prescience Bradman sorely lacks in the matter of where sport in modernity is headed. Far from backing the kingdom of amateurism and all its courtiers, he departs from amateur ranks, makes and loses money as a tennis entrepreneur. He thinks he spots prospective champions, the sons he never could have, takes them in hand and tutors them fondly, until their limitations are transparent even to him (Deford, 1977). Near his end, he still thinks he sees the champion to succeed him in his young protege, Arthur Anderson (Tilden, 1955, p.191).³⁶⁸

Is a brief yet nuanced metaphoric re-reading of Tilden the supreme tennis practitioner possible? How persuasive is Tilden as the unlikely hero of sporting paradise lost? There are other readings of Tilden (notably Deford's paradoxical reading as tragic yet triumphant victim), but this reading remains to be written at fitting length. By the time he died ingloriously and alone in 1953 at the age of sixty, bags already packed for yet another tournament on the following day, failing to keep a dinner appointment with a few of the friends he had left (the parents of his last young tennis protege, Arthur Anderson, the end of a long string), Tilden's time in the sun was long

gone. Dominant and charismatic in life, Tilden was forlorn, destitute, and virtually deserted in death (Deford, 1977, pp.275-276).³⁶⁹ Budge could look at the older man in what Budge considered his moral depravity and recoil in disgust, but nevertheless continue to appreciate his particular sporting genius and place him first as a tennis player (Deford, 1977, p.224). Fred Perry, winner of three successive Wimbledon championships in the 1930s and the greatest of British tennis players, agreed wholeheartedly as to his tennis genius:

My personal opinion is, when you start talking about great players, you talk of Tilden. And then, about two weeks later, you start talking about the others (Smyth, 1974, p.86).

The generations keen to talk about Tilden have faded from view, but, as one biographer records, his own was made to acknowledge his tennis greatness:

He was the proudest of men and the saddest, pitifully alone and shy, but never so happy as when he brought his armful of rackets into the limelight or walked into a crowded room and contentiously took it over. George Lott, a Davis Cup colleague and a man who actively disliked Tilden was nonetheless mesmerized by him: “When he came into the room it was like a bolt of electricity hit the place. Immediately, there was a feeling of awe, as though you were in the presence of royalty. You knew you were in contact with greatness, even if only remotely. The atmosphere became charged, and there was almost a sensation of lightness when he left. You felt completely dominated and breathed a sigh of relief for not having ventured an opinion of any sort.” (Deford, 1977, pp.19-20)

In an admirable encyclopaedic text on the game edited by Max Robertson, with Jack Kramer as advisory editor, published in 1974, a distinguished panel of judges had a split vote between Suzanne Lenglen and Helen Wills Moody as to the greatest woman player ever. No one seriously challenged Tilden for top spot among all players (Robertson, 1974, pp.166-175).³⁷⁰ In this estimation of Tilden as the supremely strong performer of tennis, Budge was not alone: Tilden has long been an almost unanimous

selection as the all-time greatest male player. Gonzales and Rosewall might rival him for longevity, but their considerable achievements pale alongside his. It is not just that Tilden wins his third Wimbledon title aged thirty seven, after turning his back upon the Championships for several years; it is not just a string of six successive United States Championships at the peak of his powers after World War I; it is not just an incredible record in Davis Cup in both singles and doubles; it is not just that he remained competitive, for a set at least, with the very best well into middle age. Tilden was, as is said in the modern jargon, the total package. The question is how he achieved this status, how he wrote himself into the annals of truly strong players, and what meaning and value is understood in his monumental strength as a tennis player. Tilden became not just the strongest of strong players after years of striving, but a thinker about the sport of tennis. His last book, *Tennis A to Z*, still reads well despite a virtual revolution in the sport with changes in racquet technology and the improvements in court surfaces. What would he think of forehands hit with western grip, open stance, and a multi-segmented swing, backhands hit off the back foot or even in mid-air, services produced with pronounced knee-bend and bodily uplift, with a sweeping loop of the racquet head behind the back? No doubt renewed speculation as to the greatest players of all time will arise in the twentieth first century as the feats of Borg, Connors, McEnroe, Sampras, Navratilova, Graf, and the Williams sisters, and company, are reckoned with. Great champions face the challenge of change and fashion a winning style of play. Others must commit, if their play is to be appreciated fittingly and fully, to the demands of understanding and interpretation. What is re-written must be re-read. Connors is not to be confused with McEnroe, anymore than Blake is to be confused with Milton. In

sport as in poetry there exist competing excellences. Tilden, strongest of the strong in the world of tennis, descends not only into poverty, but into gaol.

Records in sport generally, runs made and recorded by scorers especially, are there in all their literality, but there is no self-evident truth about how they are to be understood and interpreted. Intention and circumstance are too important to ignore. Fingleton states his viewpoint about Bradman, “more interested in runs than art,” at his early zenith emphatically:

He loved the crash of the ball against the boundary fence; he delighted in seeing the figures revolve against his name on the scoreboard; he loved to murder bowlers and make the opposing skipper look foolish. There were, as I have written, no deft passes or pretty glides, but every bowler, every fieldsman, every spectator in Bradman’s heyday sensed he was not using a bat so much as an axe dripping with the bowler’s blood and agony. He knew no pity; he was remorseless (Fingleton, 1947, p.73).

If Fingleton truly grasped the essence of Bradman the batsman, free, in his play, from all cultural cringe, then it is not to be wondered at that the Englishmen were determined to bring him down, come hell or high water (Fingleton, 1947).

Bradman was the leading figure, but he was not the only figure in the drama of Bodyline. On the Australian side of the Bodyline conflict, William Maldon Woodfull, the Australian captain stood out. Bill Woodfull was to suffer the barrage of bouncers and, except for one signal and short speech, to turn his and his team’s other cheek. Arraigned on the English side were a bevy of English gentlemen, Public School, Oxford and Cambridge: Sir Pelham Warner, influential administrator, team manager and selector, Rugby and Oxford: team captain and strategist, Douglas Jardine, Winchester and Oxford: the Nawab of Pataudi, Oxford, and so on:

These formed a most representative band of English Public School and Varsity men. Their shoulders, doubtlessly, had often been smitten by the hand of the school captain as he told them to "Play up, play up and play the game." Moreover, they were of the traditional English type whose first lesson in life taught them that to do anything mean, ignoble or even doubtful was "not cricket, sir!" Such a term fashioned their way of life, it moulded their code of ethics (Fingleton, 1947, p.18).

How complicit each of these was with the key strategist and executioner of the plan, the English captain, Douglas Jardine, is impossible to tell. Very possibly the Nawab of Pataudi's non-selection in the Fourth Test of the tour of Australia may be taken as evidence that he was not in full agreement with his captain. Harold Larwood, son of a Yorkshire miner, and express bowler, was of a different ilk to his privileged team-mates, but there was no doubting his commitment to captain and country, and little doubt as to his dislike of Bradman for what he perceived as Bradman's arrogance (Fingleton, 1947, p.93) and deficient courage (Fingleton, 1947, p.64). Bodyline succeeded or failed largely on the pace and accuracy of his assault on the Australian players, and not just the leading batsmen. They were left battered and bruised, some, at least, quaking and relieved to find their stay at the crease a short one.

The consternation caused by Woodfull's simple and direct rebuke to the co-managers of the English team as he lay on the massage table, ribs badly bruised, when Warner and Palairret, entered the Australian dressing-room to offer condolences, have rung down the decades in the world of cricket lore not just for their forcefulness in the situation, but because of their ramifications for the sport and relations between England and Australia:

"There are two teams out there on the oval," said Woodfull, motioning to the doorway. "One is playing cricket, the other is not. This game is too

good to be spoilt. It is time some people got out of it.” (Fingleton, 1947, p.18).³⁷¹

Fingleton’s interpretation of this rebuke by the Australian captain to the most influential figure in English cricket is testimony to the historical place of cricket in the culture and society of both England and Australia:

Woodful had thus snubbed Warner in no uncertain manner. His accusation against the Englishman of not playing cricket was followed by his tribute to a great game which, in its charm and tradition, transcends mere victory and glorification of the individual. It would be irksome for a player of international standing to be read this first lesson in the ethics of the game, but particularly was it irksome for cricketers who were Englishmen, descendants of those who devised the game and of those who preserved its traditions down through the years (Fingleton, 1947, p.18).

It was, however, more than that: it was an important clue to the supreme standing already of the individual Bradman by 1932 in the great game of cricket. The singular genius of Bradman could bring together the many others in the nation in patriotic fervor, much as it was his influence many years later that was such a factor in mending the rift between the cricket establishment and the Packer forces (Maxwell, 2001, pp.82-83).³⁷²

In Australian public opinion it was one thing to be imposed upon politically and financially by the Mother Country, quite another to see the finest cricketers in the land, Bradman and Woodfull especially, brought down by the dubious means of Bodyline. Cultural cringe had its limits, and it was in sport supremely that those limits were tested and overcome in this realm of cultural life in Australia.³⁷³ The city of churches came close to a riot during the Second Test in Adelaide in the 1932-33 series.

Fingleton judges that the seeds of the Bodyline controversy as a strategem to bring Bradman down were sown two years prior:

There was no necessity to go as far as the M.C.C. team did under Jardine. If the Englishmen resented the manner in which Bradman dominated the game, they had their answer to him in legitimate bumpers. The Englishmen made a very important discovery during the Fifth Test at Kennington Oval in 1930, and they could have exploited that in 1932 without going to extremes. There was no need to bowl bumpers with vicious intent and rub the salt in with a closely packed leg-field (Fingleton, 1947, p.15).

Such language is written in the code of euphemism: the clear implication, made doubly clear later in the book in invidious comparison with McCabe, is that Bradman squibbed bouncers, giving his good health a greater priority than making runs. Few who have faced a genuinely fast bowler will judge him overly harshly, but they will compare him to his detriment with the likes of McCabe who, accepting the inevitable blows to the body, coped better with sticky wickets and bouncers.³⁷⁴

The immediate upshot of Bodyline for Bradman was a reduction almost by half in his average per innings to a mere fifty six - an average most Test cricketers dream about, and very few attain. But by the time of his retirement from Test cricket in 1948 he needed just four runs to make his average come out at the neat hundred. He was bowled by a relatively undistinguished leg-spinner, Eric Hollies, for a duck. The years since have added to his lustre. At the end of long life the Australian Prime Minister, John Howard, declared him Australia's greatest son. Many do not quarrel with this public estimate. Privately, others, including team-mates, have joined with open dissenters such as Fingleton, Bill O'Reilly ("Tiger," the greatest of all Australian leg spinners until Shane Warne came on the cricket scene), and the Chappells in different forms of dissent with his demi-god status. O'Reilly, nothing if not critical and noted for his animus against Bradman, explained his public silence regarding Bradman in

characteristic language in a conversation with well-known Australian cricket commentator and journalist, Jim Maxwell:

Son, you've got to understand, history does not look favourably upon those who piss on monuments (Maxwell, 2001, p.81).

Others, Fingleton included, have acknowledged the player and denigrated the man; some, such as the Chappells (brothers but very different in life as in cricket) have questioned his wisdom as a cricket administrator. Days after Bradman's death, Peter Roebuck separated out the man from his influence thus:

Well, I don't know why everyone's getting so carried away. He was a great cricketer but that's all he was. He wasn't like Learie Constantine or Sir Frank Worrell. These were great men who had a serious impact on society. All Bradman was was a great cricketer. That was it (Maxwell, 2001, p.78).

Such ripples have hardly registered with the public, who continue to esteem Bradman as a demi-god, and imagine themselves as backyard Bradmans in popular song and social cricket. Is there not, in defiance of the law of contradiction, room in such matters for plural and discrepant judgments?

In a curious incident at the supreme temple of sport in Australia, the Melbourne Cricket Ground, in 1947 in his Testimonial Match, before the final Test tour of England, the question of due reverence may have come into play. Bradman, batting at ninety seven not out, rather uncharacteristically hoiked the ball in the air down to long-on. McCool, an expert fieldsman (although usually in slips), placed himself perfectly under the ball, only for it spill through his hands and run the few remaining metres to the boundary. Did McCool drop the catch deliberately to give Bradman his Testimonial and one hundred and thirty second first-class century? If the spill was deliberate, a kind of

pious fraud, then is that honesty in the contest that sport demands, somehow lost and the game demeaned?

The following year, 1948, Bradman captained The Invincibles in a final Test tour of the Home Country and sealed his sporting fame by taking his team through without a single loss. Most came home to swear by him; a few continued to swear at him - usually in private. That The Don was set to fade, however brightly, was mere wishful thinking. The making of a myth had hardly yet begun. The years since have seen the metamorphosis into a virtual sporting divinity. Some, like Prime Minister Howard, say more: Australia's Greatest Son.

The less private, the more public aspect, is seen in the shared adoption of Bradman and what he came to mean in public estimation. Bodyline not only tested the rules of cricket, but ethos and etiquette as well. Post World War II fast bowlers would experience no heart-burnings at bowling to intimidate, even to injure. Sledging would become almost standard practice. Bradman, a stickler for traditional decorum, was adept at harnessing spectacular success on the field to personal advantage off it, and at a time when a fledgling Australian democracy could not (the few radical nationalists aside) conceive of itself outside the bonds of Empire and Mother Country (Fingleton, 1947).³⁷⁵

The strong sport performer re-writes his craft, but the re-writing is also a re-reading of those prefabricated possibilities posited by structuralists as constituting that quite other symbolic form, language. Tilden was ill content to be merely another Wilding or Brookes. Bradman could not be reconciled to repeating the feats of a W.G. Grace or Victor Trumper. Even acquaintance rather than knowledge confirms their

variegated subjectivities, both as players and persons. Both Tilden and Bradman were creatures of volition and desire, strong to grasp where they reached in contravention of established norms of play.

Gebauer damns sport in his reading of it when he understands it as a form of repetition (Gebauer, 1995, p.104). Gebauer re-reads sport weakly when he, in continued reductionist mode, asserts, “With the anthropology of the unique or superhuman, sport loses its memory” (Gebauer, 1995, p.106). Tilden was unique in his play. Bradman, too, was unique in his. Such truly strong sport performers serve and refresh memory, not obliterate it. Memory is essential to, but not to be confused with, matters of judgment.

Strong Sport Performance As Mimesis Of Social Praxis

Third, there is the matter of sport as a mimesis of social praxis. Something has already been said more generally on this score, especially in chapter two, with its critique of Gebauer, and in the tracing of the dual developments of prototypical aristocratic sport (the medieval jousting tournament) and the allegory of love, from feudal order and courtly love. However loud the insistence of critics such as Bloom that the meaning of a poem is another poem, poetry, as a social practice, is permeated by wider social praxis. Broadly understood, praxis, like mimesis, combines theory and practice, meaning and action, signified and signifier. The Victorian poets, for example, grapple with the consequences of Darwin’s researches and hypotheses, including the emergence of Darwinism as a revolutionary current of thought. They enact in their poetry the consequences, the meanings, of the dominant issue of their day. Further

afield culturally, the lofty tower of philosophy would never be so secure again as Kant had seemingly made it, the sea of faith never so full as Arnold imagined it to have once been (Rowse, 1976, p.105). What, then, of sport as a mimesis of social praxis?

There are different sporting legacies from Olympus and from the European middle ages, as well as from other times and other places, some veering toward amateurism and some toward professionalism. The British legacy to contemporary Australian sport encompasses both a language of amateurism now obsolescent, and a language of professionalism in the ascendant but unsure of its identity (Harris, 1975; Morgan, 1992, 1994). Tennis and cricket conspicuously, are not only genteel and conservative sports in their origins: they are amateur sports in the best and worst usages of the word. At the same time as one realises that they exemplify a kind of caring, one also recognises that they are conducted within a nexus of power relations less than conducive to each person flowering fully through shared and equal entitlements. Such sports in their institutionalisation and practice exist in time and space, but time and space also exist in them. That sports such as tennis and cricket have not remained amateur pastimes is a matter of regret to some, and rejoicing to others. Bitter battles were fought in the confused transition from amateurism to professionalism in both sports. Lenglen and Tilden were there after the era of tennis as a pastime, but before serious world-wide engagement of tennis as a professional pursuit generally accessible across the barriers of class, gender, and race.³⁷⁶ Bradman in cricket, like Hopman in tennis, resisted professionalism in Australian cricket as the most influential administrator in the land. It took a Packer to ruin the amateur show and revamp the traditional and conservative sport more in the commercial ethos and image of the times.

Australians, for the most part, have generally remained oblivious, deafeningly silent as to the choices denied their black brothers and sisters in cultural and social matters, including sport (Tatz, 1996). Despite notable recent advances, women remain something of outsiders in the world of sport in Australian society. Of course the reasons for this sorry state of affairs involves much more than issues of discrimination, but notions of equality have carried only so far in the constitution of the social bond. Bitter resistance to equal entitlement is not uncommon, and not restricted to sport. More often than not, such inequity is voiced in respectable slogans which disguise the rancour and injustice, and highlight the importance for democracy of structural analysis allied with thick description. Race, class, and gender, cast long and uncertain shadows in the sporting legacy enjoyed in nominally democratic nations (McIntosh, 1963; Nelson, 1994; Sandercock and Turner, 1982; Burke, 2001; Symons, 2004).

Both Bourdieu and Gebauer deal with sport as a mimesis of social praxis in explicit terms, but they conceptualise the mimetic relations of sport and social praxis from very different vantage points and with very different pre-suppositions. Unsurprisingly, they make of sport itself a very different social practice (Bourdieu, 1994; Gebauer, 1995). Lasch contextualises sport and its degradation within a prevailing culture of Narcissism, but it is Narcissism in its cultural manifestations as related to Freudianism, which is the dominant object of his interest and attention (Lasch, 1979). In the chapter ostensibly on sport his grasp is somewhat tenuous and distant. He does not speak of that which he knows and loves. He is more at home in other fields such as education and literature, where the analysis is not so pre-shaped by, so conformed to, his thesis of an American culture of Narcissism. Prejudices, ruling

epistemes, there must be, but not necessarily vile or vulgar ones - nor, it must be added, feeble ones. Morgan, more richly informed and more severely intellectual, much more conversant with and focused upon sport as his object of study, situates his critique and reconstruction of sport as a social practice, within dominant and conflicting currents of western thought (Morgan, 1994).

Chapter two of this work remarked more upon Gebauer's understanding of sport as a mimesis of social praxis than upon sport as the making of a world. Both principle and ulterior motive were present in such emphasis: Gebauer's understanding of the fundamental importance and relevance of mimesis was judged sounder in the broad, than his understanding of Goodman's views on world-making; mimesis was to have a basic importance throughout this work, and nowhere more clearly than in chapter three on Bloom's supermimetic theory of poetry. Now is the time and place to return to Gebauer, and sport as a mimesis of social praxis.

It will be recalled that in chapter two dealing with sport as a mimetically made world, twin developments from the institutions of feudal order and courtly love were traced in medieval culture for the basic purpose of drawing a vital connection between sport and poetry. One development was of a literary kind, namely, the poetic tradition of the allegory of love. C.S. Lewis judges this movement from epic to romance a time of momentous cultural transformation of human sensibility. W.P. Ker concurs (Ker, 1958). Southern traces the broad contours of the wide historical landscape in this re-shaping, this emergence of romance out of epic (Southern, 1962, pp.227-267). Christopher Dawson, for all his theological pre-occupations, is in broad agreement. He understands the barbarity of feudal structure as containing its own cure - the civilising

influences, not only of the Christian religion, but also of Islam (Dawson, 1960, pp.140-160). The other development was of this broader historical kind, namely, the evolution out of raw and violent beginnings, of the ritualistic and dramatic staging of the jousting tournament. Vivid expression of the notion that combat need not end in disfigurement or death was made in the medieval tournament once it had evolved from its barbaric beginnings. Later it would become a commonplace that sport is a civilised substitute for war, a sublimation where death is a rarity, and violence is hedged by generally accepted rules (Carroll, 1998). Implicit in both these developments of feudal chivalric order, despite their differences, is a shared eroticism, love as a cultural code, love as a potent kind of language. Degrees of eroticism, repression and sublimation, questions of power, authority, symbolism, complicate the issue, but they do not hide it from view. Further, the fact that one takes, first musical and then textual form, and the other ritualistic and dramatic show, ought not obscure the relations between medieval allegory of love and prototypical jousting tournament. Love song and love poem, and acting as lady's champion, are transformations of the same basic life experience: love in this variety or in that finds figurative expression, fresh form; a form of life finds its language games. That the figurations differ and defer is of importance, but tracing them back to their sources is one sort of illumination, tracking their future course as far as one is able another. Origins possess their own fascination and importance; consequences have theirs also. In both genesis and outcome may be discerned some measure of that mimesis of social praxis concerning Gebauer in his address on sport as a mimetic means of making a world. But mimesis may also be discerned as a creative factor in language and myth. Aristotle, it will be further recalled, connected mimesis with metaphor and

cartharsis in his theory of strong poetry. Mimesis, it would seem, figures prominently in both sport and poetry, and at a fundamental level. Further, it would appear to apply most especially to those who are the strongest of the strong sport performers, the immortals of sport.

Gebauer, arguing that sport is more the performance of community than of agon, asserts, “With the anthropology of the unique or superhuman, sport loses its memory” (Gebauer, 1995, p.106). This is, as already indicated, highly questionable. Currently, Ian Thorpe in the world of swimming, and Tiger Woods in the world of golf, are entralling the crowds worldwide who flock to see them compete, much as Tilden and Bradman in their eras captivated and compelled their generations. Spectators hope to witness yet another personal best time, yet another world record, as they perch above the pool. Spectators who trudge in the steps of Tiger Woods, hope to witness, yet another impossible recovery shot, yet another iron to within a metre or two of the pin, yet another major tournament win. The memory of sport is partially inscribed in its records, which is part of the complex of reasons as to why records matter. Records are not the whole of sport, but they are an important part because they, like film and photograph, perpetual trophies and memorial boards, even memorabilia of different kinds, help inscribe its past. Many who watched Bradman walk out to play his last Test innings at Headingley in 1948 knew that he had to make a mere four runs to make his a Test batting average of one hundred. It is history that he made a duck. It is also history that no one, not Lara, not Tendulkar, have even approached making such an average in Test cricket. Thorpe and Woods, it would seem, are already well-advance in re-writing the record books of their respective sports. Few care whether either is clever or good; many

care, and care passionately, whether they will go on to further deeds which are almost superhuman. In their persons, they are making the practice of swimming and of golf new through their own processes of selection and combination, their constant making of new records, their mimetic re-making of their chosen sports. It is silly to say otherwise, whatever the fragility of fame. And their example could be multiplied many times over in the pantheon of strong players crowding the long years and pressing their claims to sporting immortality.

Bourdieu has a broadly structuralist take upon sport, for the most part in the traditions of French Marxism (Bourdieu, 1994). He understands all social practices, including sport, to be a complex mimesis of social praxis, and in the French instance, tied to class fractions and cultural difference. He conceives of sport in materialist terms of production and supply, but not in crude terms of base and superstructure. He refines the notion of class, and extends the conception of capital to include its symbolic dimensions. Alienation and the irrationality of social norms are main threads running through his work. Despite the peculiarly French flavour of his analyses, there is much that is relevant to the present project of working out an analogy of the strong sport performer with the strong poet, and here, of the strong sport performer himself in his relations with social and political actualities. His notions of the irrationality of normal consciousness, and of symbolic capital, within the structures of production and demand, are particularly noteworthy and relevant in pursuit of the present theme of sport as a mimesis of social praxis. The excess of meaning produced in the passionate pursuit of victory can readily degenerate into blatant violation of civilised norms.³⁷⁷ Such overt expressions, however, are different from the Hegelian notions of the cunning of reason

(the real is the rational, the rational is the real) with which Bourdieu tempers his more distinctly Marxist analyses. As to clues to the very real presence of symbolic capital in sport, often it is evident even in the flush of triumph: competitors are sometimes so chuffed as to be virtually incoherent, but something of what has been achieved is patent in their screams, their faces, their eyes, nevertheless.³⁷⁸ Often there is a palpable wider significance, meanings which extend beyond that pursuit of private perfection which is so much a hallmark of elite sport. The symbolism in and of sport breaks the bounds of the private and particular. No private language, no language of silence, is adequate to its demands, because it partakes of shared cultural and social concerns. Sport as a language without words exceeds even the expressive language of gesture, the communitarian language of ritual. Those deep connections in sport with ritual and drama, and between symbolism and belief, those fundamental concerns with identity and community, come to the fore and must find the peculiar language games enacted in the unique and almost superhuman achievements of such as Tilden and Bradman (Bevan, 1962; Pickstop, 1998; Roberts, 1995, 1997).³⁷⁹

Tilden was individualism incarnate in a time of growing American isolationism, and a new permissiveness which had a place for flappers, jazz, and the Charleston, but did not include homosexuality or non-whites as political and social equals (Morison and Commager, vol. 2, 1962). Pragmatism and individualism were curiously allied in the opening decades of the twentieth century: Dewey's injunction to seek for meaning in the daily detail co-existed cosily enough in practice with a resurgent social Darwinism (Dewey, 1957; Hofstadter, 1955). That other America than the home of the free and the brave, the one where the weak and the marginalised go to the wall, is rarely put on

public show.³⁸⁰ The slow erosion in utter confidence in an unbridled capitalism, and the social impact of the structural reforms of Roosevelt's New Deal, were yet to materialise. The New Deal itself was to prove more of an aberration than the beginning of a new era. In all this Tilden was both symbol and victim. He did not sleep with the enemy (it seems he never slept with anybody) as Borotra did in his collaboration with the Vichy regime in France, but triumphed and suffered greatly, mostly in haughty isolation (Smyth, 1974; Deford, 1977). Whether or not he spent time dreaming of faded glory, Tilden remains the stuff of sporting paradise lost, mightily downfallen but strong in desire and will to his lonely end.

Bradman is a vastly different tale to that of Tilden figured as either pathetic or tragic hero of sporting paradise lost. His story is centred in a different time and place, a time of British imperial and financial power. Australia in the 1930s is an insecure fledgling democracy far-removed from the corridors of hegemonic power and influence, and desperate in Depression. But Australia is already beginning to make its mark in sport, especially in cricket and tennis. Professionalism in cricket had been tried and found somewhat wanting as a live commercial option for all long before Tilden and others after him (most notably, Kramer) promoted the sport of tennis professionally. Bradman, who spanned in his career as player and administrator and national icon, the growth of professional cricket in Australia to acceptance and viability, strode the cricket stage and found little anomalous in English amateurs and professionals carrying the ground from different changing rooms and even through different gates.³⁸¹ Earlier the Victorian evangelical could trumpet the virtue in muscular Christianity, yet remain blind

to the deficiencies in the English class system as they relate to sport and education more generally (Holt, Mangan, Lanfranchi, 1996, p. 28).

The teacher and critic A.A. Phillips made famous our infamous cultural cringe in a notable essay. An era still under the spell of Anglophiles found few anomalies in an educational curriculum that failed to recognise and accept an Australian literature. But in sport things were different: we had Bradman, and Bradman, like Menzies, had the British to look up to! The common people did not all share in such deference, and particularly not in the world of sport. The Don Bradman extolled in popular song and in the newspapers was more than mighty good: like Phar Lap, like Les Darcy, and all such exalted company, Australians were jingoistic enough to think them the very best in all the whole wide world.

Conclusion

Sport, poetry, and philosophy are precious cultural and social practices, however popular the first, however marginalised the second and third. Sport, the prime concern of the dissertation, is a protest, witting or unwitting, against a specious dualism of mind and body. Sport is also an implicit acceptance of the dynamic as against the static in life, a passionate embrace of lived existence. Poetry is a like and related protest against the folly and the pain and the destruction inherent in un-lived life. Philosophy is still not only a protest against the limitations of commonsense, but has become increasingly in certain quarters an agonised acceptance of the complex reciprocities between essence and existence. Greatly as these three cultural and social practices differ, yet they belong together at a fundamental level. All three practices strike to the meaning and value,

rather than the detail, of human life. Each, of course, differs in approach and process and outcome. Discourse about sport as if it were poetry has inevitably involved relations between all three practices. A semiotic mode of analysis has led to all three practices being understood and interpreted as a kind of writing, sport and poetry self-consciously, philosophy much more incidentally. The ancient agon between poetry and philosophy has not been without its fruits, but times change and post-industrial society needs their marriage, not their divorce. The hallowed dualism of mind and body, Platonic or Cartesian, has been contested in both poetry and philosophy. Sport, poetry, and philosophy are neither the substance of an eternal triangle, nor an unholy trinity.

At the outset of this thesis there was the assertion that the cultural and social capital of sport cannot be quantified, but that it can be articulated. A justification of that assertion has required a novel and extended argument issuing in a fundamental re-description of sport. The argument has spiralled around the matter of language, both ordinary language and particular kinds of language. Raids have been made on a wide range of disparate resources for particular purposes. Eclecticism without confusion, sentiment without sentimentality, have been guiding ideals in a striving to indicate what an important cultural and social practice sport remains despite its increasingly commercial ethos.

The mode of analysis has been semiotic, and focused upon sport as a kind of language, mythology as a kind of language, and poetry as a kind of language. The conception of the great structuralists (Ferdinand de Saussure, Noam Chomsky, Roman Jakobson) that ordinary language is constituted by its internal system of relations, has been extended to these three particular kinds of language, interpreted as heuristic fiction,

understood in their relations, and supplemented with the resources of historical and literary theory and criticism. Throughout there has been a striving to make much of the analogy between the strong sport performer and the strong poet as makers rather than finders of meaning and value. The counterpoint to the focus upon structure in language has been the actualities of existence as they are constituted and communicated in and through language. Language, that is, both ordinary language, and language in the three cultural codes of sport, mythology, and poetry, has been understood as constituting reality rather than simply mediating it. The present articulation has been principally in terms of the relativities of language, both ordinary language and particular kinds of language. An emphasis on structural considerations has been tempered by a stress upon the open-endedness, the creativity latent in language, especially in the presence of human volition and desire. Strong sport performers, like strong poets, are creators; both are made pregnant with the future only in a re-writing of things past. Such re-writings are always fraught with peril. More is at risk often than the pain of being misunderstood. Reading is implicit in writing, and is no more a given than writing is a given. Social praxis embraces both writing and reading practices, and ultimately necessitates attention beyond them to external material conditions, the impress of the world. Social praxis not only presages within culture the constructions of ritual, theatre, and sport: mimesis, fundamental in all three cultural practices, whether geared toward essence or existence, highlights the problem of how language, truth, and reality correspond and cohere. And leads us on to whether one plumps for more of the same, or risks, where judged desirable, swimming against the tide.

We need to learn to live with plurality, ambiguity, and ambivalence where needs be. And is there anywhere presently that need is more evident than in the world of sport? Not only has the glory of sport been sullied afresh; play has become work. The Grasshopper has become mere Ant. The money-men, the men without chests, have taken over - or threaten to do so. Making those considered distinctions upon which a culture depends for its vitality, and a society for its health, are more important than ever. Mere transmission of meanings and values has never preserved a culture. Re-makings have always been the need of the day. The re-making of sport as poetry is a particular contribution to a more universal end.

Make a fully paid-up subscription to the illusion of real essences (understand Plato as a Platonist), and then it can be categorically stated that sport is not poetry, and poetry is not sport. Make a contrary and more profitable decision in the light of personal experience and knowledge, a pragmatic or empirical and cultural decision, to explore an understanding and interpretation of sport as if it were poetry (understand the two social practices in their relations), and then there are vistas to hitherto untravelled worlds. A shape to that visceral experience of the excess of meaning and value in sport begins to form around the very notion of a making. The relation between the strong sport performer as a maker of the most real in and through her body, and the strong poet as likewise a maker of the most real in and through his words, is seen less darkly: they possess in common the means and the might to an enactment of meaning and value. Both strong sport performer and strong poet are precious makers in their practice of things new; both do not create fresh meaning and value out of nothing, but out of the

labour and the love expended in past practice. Both engage in test and contest. Both make for the creation of identity and community.

The road to that plenitude of meaning apprehended in sporting practice taken here is the way of a semiotic attending to structure and function in three cultural codes, three kinds of language: sport as a language, mythology as a language, and poetry as a language. While it has not been a road previously taken, perhaps the stumbling steps presently taken may be followed by surer feet, not so much marching to the beat of a different drum, as dancing with a similar delight in those reasons of the heart that characterise sport as greatly as any other vital and vibrant cultural and social practice. Time and chance may become harbingers, not of despair, but of hope.

Appendix To Bloom's Theory Of Poetry

In an original and sophisticated (even esoteric) re-writing of myth, Bloom posits strong poets passing through a succession of poetic phases in order to win through to their own poetic immortality. He describes six such stages in the life-cycle of the strong poet, but suggests there may well be more (Bloom, 1997, p. 11). In his theory of strong poetry as the anxiety of influence, the potency of the strong poet is achieved triumphantly in the poetry itself. That is, strong poetry, supremely, is a performance, an enactment of vital meaning in the overcoming of select strong predecessors.

Bloom's account of these six revisionary ratios have an importance in their own right if his theory is to be understood in any detail. The first, *clinamen*, is a misprisioning or swerving from the strong precursor:

Clinamen, which is poetic misreading or misprision proper; I take the word from Lucretius, where it means a "swerve" of the atoms so as to make change possible in the universe. A poet swerves away from his precursor, by so reading his precursor's poem as to execute a *clinamen* in relation to it. This appears as a corrective movement in his own poem, which implies that the precursor poem went accurately up to a certain point, but then should have swerved, precisely in the direction that the new poem moves (Bloom, 1997, p.14).

The second,

Tessera, which is completion and antithesis; I take the word not from mosaic-making, where it is still use, but from the ancient mystery cults, where it meant a token of recognition, the fragment say of a small pot which with the other fragments would re-constitute the vessel. A poet antithetically "completes" his precursor, by so reading the parent-poem as to retain its terms but to mean them in another sense, as though the precursor has failed to go far enough (Bloom, 1997, p. 14).

Third,

Kenosis, which is a breaking-device similar to the defense mechanisms our psyches employ against repetition compulsions; *kenosis* then is movement towards discontinuity with the precursor. I take the word from St. Paul,

where it means the humbling or emptying-out of Jesus by himself, when he accepts reduction from divine to human status. The later poet, apparently emptying himself of his own afflatus, his imaginative godhood, seems to humble himself as though he were ceasing to be a poet, but this ebbing is so performed in relation to a precursor's poem-of-ebbing that the precursor is emptied out also, and so the later poem of deflation is not as absolute as it seems (Bloom, 1997, pp. 14f.).

Fourth,

Daemonization, or a movement towards a personalized Counter-Sublime, in reaction to the precursor's Sublime; I take the term from general Neo-Platonic usage, where an intermediary being, neither divine nor human, enters into the adept to aid him. The later poet opens himself to what he believes to be a power in the parent-poem that does not belong to the parent proper, but to a range of being just beyond the precursor. He does this, in his poem, by so stationing its relation to the parent-poem as to generalize away the uniqueness of the earlier work (Bloom, 1997, p. 15).

Fifth,

Askesis, or a movement of self-purgation which intends the attainment of a state of solitude; I take the term, general as its is, particularly from the practice of pre-Socratic shamans like Empedocles. The later poet does not, as in *kenosis*, undergo a revisionary movement of emptying, but of curtailing; he yields up part of his own human and imaginative endowment, so as to separate himself from others, including the precursor, and he does this in his poem by so stationing it in regard to the parent poem as to make that poem undergo an *askesis* too; the precursor's endowment is also truncated (Bloom, 1997, p. 15).

Sixth,

Apothrades, or the return of the dead; I take the word from the Athenian dismal or unlucky days upon which the dead returned to reinhabit the houses in which they had lived. The later poet, in his own final phase, already burndended by an imaginative solitude that is almost a solipsism, holds his own poem so open again to the precursor's work that at first we might believe the wheel has come full circle, and that we are back in the later poet's flooded apprenticeship, before his strength began to assert itself in the revisionary ratios. But the poem is now *held* open to the precursor, where once it *was* open, and the uncanny effect is that the new poem's achievement makes it seem to us, not as though the precursor were writing it, but as though the later poet himself had written the precursor's characteristic work (Bloom, 1997, pp. 15f.).

In an age of deconstruction Bloom proclaims the author (along with his strong critic) with both his human face and his peculiar authority (Eagleton, 1996, pp. 159f.). His strong poets are heroes, but they are not saints.³⁸² They enact meaning, not only at personal cost of challenge and response, but at the expense of those they would reduce in stature, if not expunge from the poetic records. Meaning, in Bloom's theory of poetry, is inter-textual and intra-textual, rather than extra-textual. Value is centred upon the fierce and internecine struggle to achieve lasting aesthetic pre-eminence, a kind of divinity. It is for this reason that the last of Bloom's revisionary ratios, *apophrades*, is the most important in exploration of a proportionality between strong poet and strong sport performer. Both strong poet and strong sport performer are more than pregnant with the future: eternity is in their veins.

Bloom's is a mimesis of a peculiar kind; a rejection of mimesis in the traditional poetic sense of pointing pre-eminently to a transcendental reality outside of and beyond the text.³⁸³ Eagleton overstates just a trifle when he declares that, for Bloom, the meaning of a poem is another poem (Bloom himself occasionally says as much), but he summarises expertly the essential thrust of Bloom's theory (Eagleton, 1996, p. 159).

The final stage of the strong poet's life-cycle, *apophrades*, reveals most pungently and poignantly the plight of the poet who would prove truly strong, and not something only "skeletons think about" (Bloom, 1997, pp. 139ff.). *Apophrades*, the return of the dead, is the last of his six revisionary ratios, the ultimate proportionality, the final phase of the strong poet desperately anxious to prove his potency and achieve priority at the expense of strong precursors. *Apophrades*, adapted from ancient Athenian cultural practice concerning those recently deceased and returning folomly to haunt their former habitations, is that last and radical holding open of the strong poet to his strong predecessor

Apophrades completes the late stage of poetic creation introduced by the purgation and solipsism set in train by *askesis*. It institutes the final incorporation of the old in the new in the face of death, a time when even strong poets are peculiarly vulnerable, for the return of the dead can be life or death to the poet coming late and looking to bequeath a last and lasting testament. The contest with the strong dead is not merely perilous; it cannot be evaded, and there can be only one winner, one who assumes the unfamiliar form of a “Gnostic double” (Bloom, 1997, p. 147), neither fallen precursor nor unfulfilled latecomer. The return of the strong dead in strong poems is tissued with the uncanny. Just as women sometimes report the exact same cast of their dead father’s eye in their newborn child, dead poets find their own strange rebirths. More fully still than in dealing with previous ratios, Bloom illustrates his argument by skilful use of extracts from poets new and old in comparison and contrast. One must stick with the outlines of the theory before turning to something of a potted history of its progress in actual poetic creation:

The *Apophrades*...come to the strongest poets....For all of them achieve a style that captures and oddly retains priority over their precursors, so that the tyranny of time almost is overturned, and one can believe, for startled moments, that they are being *imitated by their ancestors* (Bloom, 1997, p. 141).

It is not the pure in heart, or the meek and the mild who, in the merciless struggle for priority, realise this completed “individuation of misprision” and inherit their own brave new poetic world:

The mystery of poetic style, the exuberance that is beauty in every strong poet, is akin to the mature ego’s delight in his own individuality, which reduces to the mystery of narcissism. This narcissism is what Freud terms primary and normal, “the libidinal complement to the egoism of the instinct

of self-preservation.” The strong poet’s love of his poetry, *as itself*, must exclude the reality of all other poetry, except for what cannot be excluded, the initial identification with the poetry of the precursor (Bloom, 1997, pp.146f).

The stark alternatives of oblivion or immortality confront the poet who would prove truly strong. To prove strong, he must emerge from this initial identification. Bloom observes and estimates those who sink, relatively speaking, under this looming immense black cloud and those who fly free.³⁸⁴ Most clearly, it is the elegy which illustrates this revelation:

The great pastoral elegies, indeed all major elegies for poets, do not express grief but center upon their composers’ own creative anxieties...the largest irony of the revisionary ratio of *apophrades* is that the later poets, confronting the imminence of death, work to subvert the immortality of their predecessors, as though any one poet’s afterlife could be metaphorically prolonged at the expense of another’s (Bloom, 1997, p. 151).³⁸⁵

Bloom posits a pragmatism which has aesthetic consequences for the strong poet come near to his end and intent even under the burden of his final anxiety of influence, upon immortality:

The fear of godhood is pragmatically a fear of poetic strength, for what the ephebe enters upon, when he begins his life cycle as a poet, is in every sense a process of divination...what the strong poet truly knows is only that *he* is going to happen next, that he is going to write a poem in which his radiance will be manifest. When a poet beholds his end, however, he needs some more rugged evidence that his past poems are not what skeletons think about, and he searches for evidences of election that will fulfill his precursors’ prophecies by fundamentally re-creating those prophecies in his own unmistakable idiom. This is the curious magic of the positive *apophrades* (Bloom, 1997, p. 152).

This final phase of the strong poet requires further explanation beyond the centrality of contest with the mighty dead and the uncertainty of future immortality for

self. If the strong poet sets out to establish his potency by first swerving from or misprising his strong precursor (*clinamen*), it is only at the end, with the return of the dead (*apophrades*) that his destiny is dashed or fulfilled. Not all will extend ready sympathy to even the strongest poet who is intent upon assuming the role of the eternal poet. Even a minor prophet takes a lot upon himself. Any attempt to say the final word about anything by a catholic process of incorporation of the old in forming the radically new will invite more than mere suspicion. Poets are like philosophers in that they are ill-equipped to deal in finalities. They are more inclined to deal in reasons of the shifting heart, but then were not Aristotle and Pascal and Scheler, to name but three philosophers, ready to do just that when they judged that the occasion warranted? Plato was wise in his selection of the form of dialogue and his ironic manner of going on, to indicate that there is always more to be said, and that it is no crime to change one's mind. Plato in his final phases, like say, Shakespeare and Mozart in theirs, is disturbingly strong.

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Endnotes

¹ These kinds of languages could equally well be described as cultural codes. That is, they are ways of signifying marked by a discernible structure and an explorative history. The sport of football exists in a variety of versions, a number of codes - soccer, gridiron (American football), rugby union, rugby league, Gaelic football, Australian rules football, etc. While retaining possession of the ball, regaining possession of the ball when possession is lost, gaining territory with the ball in order to get within scoring range, passing the ball efficiently and effectively to a team-mate, scoring as often and quickly as possible, etc., are all important in each of the different codes, they are different sports. That is, they are differently coded.

² Lyotard makes much of the agonistics of language as a mark of knowledge in post-modernity, as he does of the passing of the great or metanarrative. His is hardly a new discovery, but he does recontextualise the matter of agon within postindustrial society in a stimulating way (Lyotard, 1993).

³ Speech action theory, associated most notably with the work of J.L. Austin, constitutes a philosophical sport from the notion of poetic action or enactment of meaning (Austin, 1965).

⁴ Probably the most ubiquitous topic in sport is that of pressure, pressure from without and within. This may inspire or cripple.

⁵ Life is too short for bad art to merit much attention (art which is bad, like poetry which is bad, hardly merits the name), while competition between even average sport players can instruct and entertain. Nevertheless, the best in both worlds will occupy the present work predominantly.

⁶ Is, say, the Jewishness of a Bergson or a Freud, an irrelevancy in evaluating their work?

⁷ Hans-Gorg Gadamer and Richard Rorty are very different philosophers, but the latter has embraced the hermeneutic turn of the former whole-heartedly. Gadamer has been hugely influenced by his teacher, friend, and colleague, Heidegger, and "the philosophical relevance of Plato's poetic imagination (Gadamer, 1996, p.184)."

⁸ While the immediate allusion is to Keats and his *Ode On A Grecian Urn*, the wider reference is to the division between the public and the private, and especially how one conceives the relations between the two.

⁹ Not only poets, but poets especially. Plato, in his theory of justice in the *Republic*, takes many a swerve and curve, adopts, for the particular purpose, many a metaphor and myth. Iris Murdoch, in her last long lovely look at ethics, *A Metaphysic Of Morals*, takes us on a fascinating roller coaster tour in philosophy.

¹⁰ These are Biblical images given a selective take - in Bloom's language, a misprisioning. In a lecture at Victoria University on September 1992, William Morgan set about the search for a fitting moral image of sport through a conceptual analysis of the languages of amateurism and professionalism. This work, in a different take on much the same basic problem, reverses the process and considers the three languages of sport, myth, and poetry in some of their relations. As the paradigmatic is given at least equal weight with the syntagmatic, such images will abound.

¹¹ Lyotard, while championing the rebirth of narrative as a mode of knowledge in post-modernity, denies the continued relevance of the grand or metanarrative, especially those of the speculative unity of all knowledge (specifically philosophical) and the progress in liberty (specifically political) (Lyotard, 1993).

¹² Contests to the death, wrestling bouts which ended in one or other of the contestants drowning the other, might seem to represent a dubious glory. The ancient Greeks, like their gods, took their sport seriously.

¹³ After a remarkable quarter-final match in the 2003 Australian men's tennis championships which went to 21-19 in the fifth set and lasted five hours, the victor, the young American Andy Roddick, paid just tribute to his thirty one year-old Moroccan opponent Younes El Ayanoui, and spoke sincerely about being humbled by victory. It was one of those precious moments in sport after one of the finest contests in the history of the championships.

¹⁴ One gifted Australian poet, Judith Wright, borrows the image from Plato in naming one of her books of poetry, *The Moving Image*.

¹⁵ Such motifs as meaning, creation, imagination, consciousness, introspection, will, are prone to reification. Blake and Coleridge, for two different examples, both avoid such reification while still pressing the claims for imagination as a vehicle for truth, or even a kind of truth itself. Ryle, in his philosophical exposition of a non-reductive behaviourism, takes quite a different tack. All three aid the conversation about imagination mightily.

¹⁶ A strong critic in Empson, has argued the case for necessary levels of ambiguity in poetry. Too little attention has been paid to plurality, ambiguity, and ambivalence, in sport.

¹⁷ Kafka, in *The Castle*, and Jeffrey Stout, in *Ethics After Babel*, are but two.

¹⁸ The experience of plurality, ambiguity, and ambivalence is a motif of this work.

¹⁹ The consensus of scholarly judgment attributes the myth to the Yahwist or J writer. R.H.Pfieffer argues for a southern source in Edom, which he labels S (Pfieffer, 1953, p. 160).

²⁰ Malinowski challenges the explanatory function of myth (Malinowski, 1948). An attempt is made in chapter five on sport and myth to rebut the common contemporary pejorative dismissal of myth.

²¹ Gadamer's talk of a fusion of horizons, and Foucault's of epistemes, are relevant here and will be discussed at a later stage. Further, it is pertinent that scholars as far apart as Alasdair MacIntyre and Harold Bloom can make the mighty dead live in challenging and fundamental ways.

²² Occasionally one is struck by the beautiful, the sublime, in sport, but without any such captions. Editorial interference, often of a raucous and uninformed kind, through the screen or microphone at the event is becoming an increasing irritation.

²³ That this is still eminently true with regard to ordinary language is beyond dispute.

²⁴ How differently and laboriously Kant proceeds to unearth and situate his antinomies in his monumental first critique (Kant, 1978)!

²⁵ This is the essential burden of Plato's myth of the cave, also.

²⁶ More will be said about this particular myth and mythology in general, especially mythology as a language and the figurative in language, throughout this work. Myth, poetry, and philosophy, all make their tilts at common-sense.

²⁷ The recent attempt to forestall the awarding of an honorary doctorate by Cambridge University to Derrida, is an instance of such division.

²⁸ Aristotle contests the validity of Plato's Forms and, thereby, Plato's approach to the moral and logical problems that they sought to explore (Cornford, 1973). Aquinas, like many a philosopher since, has fundamental objections to metaphor as a path to, or way of, knowledge (Aquinas, 1954).

²⁹ Ayer, for instance, makes the grudging concession that poetry has an emotive meaning.

³⁰ Snow writes about the worlds he knows best, those groves of academe and corridors of power. Each is not devoid of its own mythology.

³¹ Russell's autobiography and personal letters reveal the personal and professional impact made by the young Wittgenstein (Russell, 1971, 1992). At the time of the writing of *An Inquiry Into Meaning And Truth* Russell has returned to much of his earlier disposition to expel the mystical and the mythological from his philosophy (Russell, 1962, pp.322-323). Nevertheless, this book concludes, in line with a carefully articulated adherence to a broadly correspondence theory of truth, that a measure of metaphysics is required by those who take language and its syntax seriously. Some have been unkind enough to tie Russell's changes of mind in some loose correlation with his sexual somersaults, but his letters, particularly, reveal depths and breadths of affection that would be difficult to feign. The Oxford philosopher M.B.Foster strives to find a place for mystery in philosophy in an argument that takes into account both the Hebrew and the Greek sources of western culture (Foster, 1957).

³² Snow's Rede Lecture had the virtue, beyond the ease of his prose style, of generating discussion. Four years on he took a second look at the issue in the light of that discussion, and focused more explicitly upon the divide in the world between rich and poor. Myth makes its appearance as the polar opposite of fact (Snow, 1964, p. 84).

³³ The assumption is made, but not in the absence of empirical evidence, that sport is ripe for such re-description. Nothing, it may confidently be asserted, will superannate Bernard Suits's elegant, witty, incisive essentialist reading of sport, most notably in *The Grasshopper: Games, Life And Utopia*, but sport as politics would be another fertile ground for further similar enquiry and re-description. William Morgan's tough-minded, high-level philosophical analysis of sport, along with argument for the re-construction of sport, is also very much a work of political philosophy. Various French critics of sport have been quick to denounce sport as play degraded into work (Bourdieu, 1994; Brohm, 1989). Christopher Lasch situates the degradation of sport within a culture of narcissism. Sport as erotica has not gone un-described: Allen Guttmann's *The Erotic In Sports* provides an historical survey (Guttmann, 1996). Sociological descriptions of sport, macroscopic and microscopic, abound. Some, like the Australian John Carroll's, *Ego And Soul: The Modern West In Search of Meaning*, are pervaded by a political quietism and vacuous religiosity not atypical of such works (Carroll, 1998). Relations between belief and understanding are skirted rather than scoured. Very properly he quotes Homer in his chapter on sport; somewhat improperly, we gain precious little of the sort of insight provided by a critic such as Auerbach. It is almost as though the language itself stands in no need of attention. Perhaps a similar criticism is not altogether out of place in this work, where structure rather than function is the order of

the day. Homer, of course, is only open to the great majority of us in translation - another complication.

³⁴ Empson, for example, interprets the levels of ambiguity in poetry, while Jakobson demonstrates the transformations of grammar into literature. No easy reconciliation between two such monumental intellects is possible.

³⁵ Plato, devoted to an inspirational mother, and the apostle Paul, fearful of investing women with authority, could indeed be compared and contrasted in this matter of love (Seltman, 1957).

³⁶ Gadamer, not Popper, is the better guide here. First, Gadamer insists, one must learn to read Plato as mime (Gadamer, 1986, pp.184-185).

³⁷ Here, as throughout this work, metaphor and myth loom large.

³⁸ Is it possible to even begin to calculate how many are its victims who go to their early graves unsung and even unwept?

³⁹ Philosophy has long divided on the precise nature of this uncertain unity. Philosophy of sport, a newcomer to the playing field, has tended to some version of holism. Paul Weiss, a groundbreaker in the field, is a notable exception (Weiss, 1979).

⁴⁰ Aquinas, with characteristic clarity, and as a child of his age, examines whether metaphor has a place in sacred doctrine (Aquinas, 1954, pp. 46-48).

⁴¹ It is a sad fact that Zimbabwe has become bereft of most of its most gifted cricketers because of current political circumstances.

⁴² Alasdair MacIntyre is one philosopher who has thrown light upon the relation between institution and social practice, especially in works such as *After Virtue* and *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* Fortunately, his work has been taken up by those given to philosophy of sport. Unfortunately, MacIntyre's approach through the careful and informed construction of narrative has been disembowelled by those so intent upon abstraction and generality as to ignore his narratives. MacIntyre reveals an attention to how language constructs truth and reality almost totally overlooked by philosophers of sport. The preconception governing this glaring omission is that language is merely a neutral medium between knower and known rather than the constitutive factor in truth and reality.

⁴³ Persons with gramophone minds reacted predictively to Alan Hopgood's play *The One Day Of The Year* upon its release and staging more than a generation ago.

⁴⁴ The teacher and critic, A.A.Phillips, first articulated this cultural cringe (as close to a self-evident truth as exists in Australian history) in his article D.H.Lawrence, in his novel, *Kangaroo*, made a different but related analysis of an emptiness at the heart of things in Australian culture. Sport gives the lie, in a partial sense, to such indictments.

⁴⁵ Important virtues such as courage and perseverance are necessary, if not sufficient qualities, for anyone hoping to compete well in skilled company.

⁴⁶ This may seem in conflict with the earlier evaluation that sport has helped Australians overcome their cultural cringe. National sports such as cricket and tennis, even rules football and swimming, have often been administered by a different, a more august, social class to those who constitute the bulk of competitors.

⁴⁷ In recent times a conservative Australian High Court judge who had provided comfort in his tenure to the well-heeled, recognised upon his ascent to the Governor-Generalship, that the dispossessed indigenous peoples of Australia, too, were people with legitimate land claims. He struck a popular chord. He was not given a second term

as Governor-General by the incumbent government. His replacement, once a champion of the poor, has been a disaster as well as a non-entity.

⁴⁸ Even as sophisticated a man as Roland Barthes, gives what is a suspect reading of sport in his praise of the world of professional wrestling as surface spectacle, specious morality play. If this world merits praise on this ground, what judgment is implicit for all those other sports with a quite contrary logic and different style? The danger done to cricket by manipulative bookmakers and greedy players seems incontrovertible. Not to strive to do one's best (and that must include preparation) is at odds with the logic of sport which the Greeks bequeathed (carried to its logical conclusion it was, no doubt, violent and brutal).

⁴⁹ Alvarez, writing in praise of the poetry of Sylvia Plath, contests the traditional view of poetry as mimetic, arguing that poetry in present times needs to be hard-edged, as he takes Plath's poetry to be.

⁵⁰ C.S. Lewis, of course, does not share Bloom's reading of Milton the poet or Milton the man.

⁵¹ How far apart, how irreconcilable they are is a matter of contention. Bloom thinks they are indeed irreconcilable. Auerbach thinks they are different, but complementary. The Oxford philosopher, Michael Foster, taking the topic of mystery as his focus, has worked out a reconciliation of sorts within the tradition of linguistic analysis so important around the middle of last century.

⁵² Wellhausen's working out of the Graf hypothesis has led to an increasing acceptance of the Old Testament, especially the first eight books, as composed of separate strands, brought together by later redactors. So-called German Higher Criticism had its recondite influence upon nineteenth century literary criticism.

⁵³ Paul Weiss, yet another to be grateful to and for, writes with aristocratic condescension of sport as a limited good fitted to the young in his ground-breaking work, *Philosophic Inquiry Into Sport*.

⁵⁴ While the focus is upon language constantly, there is, inevitably, trespass upon many another turf. Matters relating, for examples, to ethics and political philosophy, come into consideration, however inchoately. Sport, as if it were politics, would be one prime arena of further inquiry following on from this work. One high level, in one sense, work upon these lines, is Morgan's *Leftist Theories Of Sport: A Critique And Reconstruction*. His abstract philosophical text could profitably be supplemented with thicker, more microscopic inquiry concerned with basically similar issues.

⁵⁵ The sixth and concluding chapter returns to the question of writing and reading in seeking to instantiate the strong sport performer as one who, like the strong poet, seeks to change the language of his practice.

⁵⁶ An extended comparison and contrast between, say, Russell and Empson, is out of the question. But it would be instructive. Russell, as philosopher, can develop a hierarchy of languages culminating in a purely logical language. Empson, as critic, explores the complexities of even single words as they jostle for pride of place. Of course, he does not stop there. Russell's analysis ends not in some hermeneutic circle but in fundamentals of human psychology and physiology; Empson's has no such parameters.

⁵⁷ One of the reasons why sport today is superior in certain respects to sport fifty years ago is that our understanding of the body is greater. Specific fitness for a given sport has improved with the application of soundly based conditioning regimes and more

appropriate diet. Athletes now are fitter, faster, stronger, and, generally, more highly skilled. People who deny this are deluded.

⁵⁸ Many occasions spring to mind. One was when the horse-thief, bank-robber, and cop-killer, Ned Kelly was arraigned before his accusers, and spoke his mind to such effect that some, at least, of his words are widely remembered, while his accusers, most generally, are not. A second example was Venetti, a third Lincoln, especially but not only at Gettysburg. That such remembrances do not come in strict order of time is an index of that mythical indifference to the contemporaneous of meaning to those given to the consolations and inspirations of reflection.

⁵⁹ Plato, it will be recalled, as with eros, had two rhetorics, a good and a bad. Aristotle redeems rhetoric as part of philosophy by placing it in the realm of the logic of probability. Derrida, characteristically, radicalises both such stances in a mixture of wit and sentiment.

⁶⁰ Critics such as Barthes, in his manner, and Auerbach in his, display their very great talents in the matter of construction of narrative. This matter is of ongoing importance in this work, and especially in the concluding chapters (five and six).

⁶¹ What estimate to make of medieval culture is not easily come by once that little knowledge which is a dangerous thing is exceeded, however incrementally. A Huizinga gives us its pomp and circumstance, its colour and cruelty. A Christopher Dawson gives us its faith rather than its credulity. Others are less sympathetic, less generous. It does seem to have been remarkable in its philosophy.

⁶² John Newcombe, speaking many years later at a national coaches' conference about his remarkable win over Connors in the final of the 1974 Australian singles championship, described the experience as almost an out-of-body one.

⁶³ Such language, hard to avoid, is part-and-parcel of all those phallogocentric metaphors Derrida delights to deconstruct. His is a penetrating mind.

⁶⁴ Jakobson's analysis of structure in language is the one accorded greatest credence in this dissertation. He analyses the primary processes, or axes, of selection and substitution, and combination and contexture, and the opposed poles of metaphor and metonymy. Confusion with what has been written above in a simplistic identification of metaphor with the paradigmatic axis and metonymy with the syntagmatic is to be avoided: it is a matter of relations, with metaphor relating more to condensation and metonymy to association. More on this matter follows

⁶⁵ Rorty judges this horizon metaphor Gadamer's central philosophical category (Rorty, 2000, p. 25).

⁶⁶ Gadamer's work owes not a little to Bultmann and the Bible. Theology, too, plays an important part in his hermeneutics.

⁶⁷ Iris Murdoch's first novel, *Under The Net*, reveals the philosopher in the novelist very clearly.

⁶⁸ Such moves are preliminary, not final. Derrida is one who radicalises such conceptions of structure in ways basically consonant with what strong poets have always done.

⁶⁹ Auden bemoaned that readers read him as magic text. Might he not have been secretly pleased?

⁷⁰ The specialised and positive sense in which Derrida conceives text is employed in chapter four. Nietzsche, it will be remembered, read the world as text; Wordsworth read

nature as book open and expansive to the blessed and informed (in that order), with one consequence a religion of gratitude.

⁷¹ Sometimes a mood, an emotion, a witticism, can be the determining factor in structure, and make at least some sense of what threatens to degenerate into nonsense.

⁷² One of the side-benefits of Bloom's theory of poetry is to make us think again and further about such things as envy, anxiety, and influence. Envy may be creative, not just destructive; anxiety usually indicates some desire or other, however subterranean; influence is never-ending.

⁷³ This apposite not only to poetry, but to sport. Furthermore, it provides a possible point of contact between those two divided streams of western culture, the Greek and the Hebrew.

⁷⁴ One can speculate whether Abelard, for instance, suffered castration simply because of his love for Heloise, and not also for the sharpness of his tongue.

⁷⁵ One of the hopeful signs with the advent of professionalism has been increased scrutiny of these material conditions. Bourdieu, for instance, must come as something of a revelation to many.

⁷⁶ This work employs principally and critically the theory of poetry developed by that sophisticated critic, Harold Bloom, whose comprehensive re-writing of poetic theory in terms of the Oedipus myth makes poetry both more and less than a pretty affair. Bloom insists that the only proper stance for the critic to take to the metaphorical works of poets, must itself be metaphorical. One tries to work out the implications of such a stance for sport in this thesis. First, of course, one must believe that sport itself is charged with metaphor. Possibly neither the theory of poetry nor the theory of sport provides the theory of life. Nevertheless, there is the pre-supposition here that the relations of both with life are more than merely contingent. Perhaps one can concede with Bloom that poets are bent more on rallying what remains, strong performers of sport more on what may be. Bloom stresses the difficulties which face those who come after the likes of J, Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton.

⁷⁷ The obstacles in each instance were, of course, quite different - one predominantly social and moral, the other, racial, political, and social. Few indigenous persons get the opportunity or encouragement in Australia, even today, to play tennis seriously. When an Yvonne Goolagong Cawley emerges as a considerable tennis talent, or a Kathy Freeman as a track champion, they are lionised, feted as darlings - even as intellectuals. It is difficult not to identify reaction formation in the process. Others simply call it shame or guilt. The moral majority scoff and deem it good old-fashioned Aussie fair play and further evidence of our tolerance and acceptance.

⁷⁸ Paul Robeson, one evening in the Melbourne Town Hall in 1960, talking of his slave father between songs, held the well-heeled audience spell-bound in his hands, through his rich, passionate voice. The songs were powerful, but perhaps the speech outdid them. One can compare such influence with both that of poets and of strong poets of sport - an Ali, for instance. If one insists upon such questions as, Is such power real or imagined? the question is foolishly put. The influence is realised in the imagination.

⁷⁹ Has anyone argued the essentialist case of sport as possessing necessary and sufficient conditions half as well as Bernard Suits? There is no doubting that Suits has the informed eye, but what of those of like competence but differently informed?

⁸⁰ Making language critical to an understanding of a cultural practice is, in itself, nothing new. Nelson Goodman has made the notion of languages of art familiar. Sylvia Lavin has demonstrated how further back Quatremere de Quincy interpreted architecture as a form of language rather than an imitation of nature. Dancing, it is commonly understood, has to be written and read. Gadamer, Derrida, and Rorty, in their different ways, make language central to philosophy.

⁸¹ Jesus employed the same metaphor according to the Gospel writers, but with radically different connotations to Thrasymachus.

⁸² Bloom and Rorty form something of a mutual admiration society. Rorty makes Bloom's notion of the strong poet crucial to his understanding of philosophy as both just another form of writing, and as a sort of intellectual historiography.

⁸³ If insufficient stress is accorded the constitutive function of language in this section, there will be attention to this function throughout the work. Language is much more than weakly and indeterminatively definitive of society and person.

⁸⁴ Some, of course, continue to dispute the supremacy of verbal language. Arnheim, for instance, in an erudite way, and intent upon a fitting estimation of the creative visual thinking at the heart of pictorial art, places verbal language firmly in a subsidiary and supporting role (Arnheim, 1970, especially chap. 13).

⁸⁵ Those who think that collective dream and desire (in a word, myth) speak through us unawares, will regard this as simple-minded moralism. Consciousness, like language, is a contested domain.

⁸⁶ Poll-driven politicians, conspicuously, are serial offenders in this matter, but they are not alone.

⁸⁷ Roland Barthes, who went through his own structuralist phase, thought analogy the fundamental tendency of Saussure's structuralism.

⁸⁸ Jakobson makes the judgment that Saussure had a much firmer grasp of temporal sequence than spatial concurrence in language.

⁸⁹ Sheer iconicity is not the mark or measure of language. Plato played with the thought before dismissing it in *Cratylus*.

⁹⁰ Various kinds of determinism rely upon what is seemingly a similar ploy.

⁹¹ Importantly, philosophers such as Habermas, and not just literary critics, seek to exhibit the structure of *parole*.

⁹² Here there is a point of obvious comparison with Freud and the theory of instincts pitched at the ontogenetic and phylogentic levels.

⁹³ Somewhat like Norman Mailer in his wilder moments, perhaps.

⁹⁴ Russell and Goodman, poles apart as philosophers, share, to a marked degree, a conventionalism in the matter of denotation. Saussure's position links up to a significant degree with questions of meaning taken up in the literary criticism of I.A. Richards.

⁹⁵ While cricket has generated a huge literature, perhaps the balance between cricket and football in Australia is being redressed: in recent years more and more books on football have come on to the market.

⁹⁶ A batsman in cricket who makes no runs is described as making "a duck" (clearly metaphoric); when he comes to bat in the second innings of a match he is described as being "on a pair", which seems rather more metonymic than metaphoric.

⁹⁷ Actually the network of cultural and linguistic influence is probably even more widespread than suggested above: oriental, particularly Egyptian, thought has been ascribed by various commentators, while Aramaic has also been detected at work in the eventual late Hebrew text.

⁹⁸ An attempt is made in the final chapter to instantiate the argument of the strong sport performer as proportional to the strong poet. In that attempt there is a brief return to considerations of phatic and message functions in sport.

⁹⁹ Masters of prose such as Swift and Edmund Burke do not adhere to simple linear order and are adept at making their meanings in complex metaphor and metonym. Jakobson himself makes the difference between prose and poetry relative not absolute (Jakobson, 1996, p.69). Derrida, in his practice as much as in his theory, further bridges the divide.

¹⁰⁰ When Shakespeare, in *Julius Caesar*, has Antony beseech his hearers after the assassination of Caesar, to lend him their ears, there is this concentration in the rhetoric that follows upon the phatic function of language and the message. Antony's sustained play upon the word "honorable" commands his audience to attend closely if they are to catch his drift and support him in a critical time. Antony's speech itself borders upon pure poetry within the context of the whole Shakespearean tragedy in its oscillation between the explicit interrogative and implicit imperative moods.

¹⁰¹ Interestingly, Eliot wrote a thesis on Hegel, but failed to submit. One is hard put to it to determine whether Eliot excelled the more in his poetry or his prose.

¹⁰² Various philosophers (Locke, Russell, Ayer, etc.) have, in fact, made such attempts.

¹⁰³ The most ambitious, the brashest, the most elegant attempt at such a reduction, perhaps, was that of the young phenomenalist Alfred Jules Ayer in *Language, Truth and Logic*.

¹⁰⁴ Empson, a literary man, denied them any such status. Deleuze and Guattari likewise.

¹⁰⁵ Plato flirted with a tri-partite anthropology with a spirited part mediating between the other two. Romantics, such as Schiller, did likewise but in a more concerted way, thus opening up possibilities for warm thoughts and structured feelings - roughly, T.S. Eliot's association of sensibility.

¹⁰⁶ One of the principal strengths of Morgan's theory of sport is in how it relates sport to certain movements within philosophy; one of the weaknesses of H.A.Harris's social history of sport in Britain is its blinkered view of what sport 'is'. Harris sorely needs someone like Morgan or Bourdieu or Roberts to re-educate him. Nietzsche, from quite another perspective, took the line that a thing is the sum of its effects.

¹⁰⁷ Any narrative on this motif would be a long and intricate one. The question of whether Plato's myths are not only his poetry, but an integral part of his philosophy, would have to constitute one theme. The centrality of *muthos* to Aristotle's theory of strong poetry would have to be another. More is said on this matter, especially in the concluding chapter.

¹⁰⁸ This is a complex matter and more must be made of it at a later stage.

¹⁰⁹ This is a simple and not universal rule. Ayer does not write like Ryle, his teacher: Ayer is elegant yet prosaic, Ryle lucid yet lively; Nietzsche, well, Nietzsche does not write like anyone except Nietzsche, which is part of the reason he compels reading and re-readings. Even when Ayer writes of the sports he loves, cricket and soccer, he cannot

let his hair down, his passion is strangulated, but one is in little doubt as to his drift, his meaning.

¹¹⁰ It might be apposite here to allude to those two other languages, those of silence and music.

¹¹¹ In such stress on the importance of the particular reader's response, Gadamer has something in common with Bloom.

¹¹² More than competent philosophers such as Kaufmann and Nehemas make a compelling case for Nietzsche to be numbered in the pantheon of great philosophers - strong poets, in Rorty's elastic sense of the term, for those who make important things new and thus change the course of culture (Kaufmann, 1960; Nehemas, 1985).

¹¹³ Bloom's theory of poetry is dealt with in chapter three of this work.

¹¹⁴ They are far apart on many other fundamental points, especially on the uses of philosophy as a form of writing.

¹¹⁵ The contrast with another important twentieth century philosopher, Bertrand Russell, is stark. Russell ends his *An Inquiry Into Meaning And Truth* thus: "...complete metaphysical agnosticism is not compatible with the maintenance of linguistic propositions....For my part, I believe that, partly by means of the study of syntax, we can arrive at considerable knowledge concerning the structure of the world (Russell, 1962, p. 328).

¹¹⁶ Different versions of English diverge upon the matter of sentimentality. One capitulates here, because of the textual references, to the American version which casually replaces "sentiment" with "sentimentality". D.H.Lawrence, for one, considered sentiment a virtue and sentimentality a vice, and in this many literary critics interested in the ethics of literature, have followed him.

¹¹⁷ In his *Philosophy And The Mirror Of Nature* Rorty divides philosophers along two distinct lines, the normal and the revolutionary, the systematic and the edifying.

¹¹⁸ One is in a recurring bind at this point: Rorty understands Dewey better than I, yet one thinks that certain of Dewey's texts (for example, *Democracy And Education*) are conveniently bypassed.

¹¹⁹ This is tendentious and more than a trifle unfair, but only to indicate future lines of critique in the concluding chapter.

¹²⁰ Many regard theology not simply as an irrelevant language game, but as a fraudulent one. Even a cursory look at the literature reveals how variegated a game it is (James, 1960; MacIntyre, 1957; Baillie, 1959, 1962; Diamond and Litzenburg Jr., 1975).

¹²¹ One takes up the function of metaphor in cultural change specifically in chapter six, but it is a motif which threads through the entire thesis.

¹²² The basic reference, of course, is to Greek tragedy. Bloom provides the essential matter for theory of poetry, but Ricoeur is important in later chapters for his detailed study of metaphor.

¹²³ One movement, of course, in the long history of poetry, is called just that: *The Metaphysicals*.

¹²⁴ This is not to say that no sense can be made of them or their brothers and sisters. It is a cause for reflection of a kind that "cow" covers all the Daisys, Annabelles, Kayelenas, and their countless unnamed cousins, that ever have been, that are, and evermore shall be. Whether such reflection takes you anywhere important is another question.

¹²⁵ The beautiful and the sublime in all their concreteness and sensuousness are, after all, favourite motifs for poets to wrestle with in their poetry.

¹²⁶ One of the more worthwhile writers on the teaching of English in schools, David Holbrook, named one of his texts *English For Maturity*.

¹²⁷ Bloom's theory of poetry and its broad relation with sport is articulated in chapter three.

¹²⁸ Another more formalised perspective on myth is given in chapter five.

¹²⁹ Nietzsche, that most writerly of philosophers, took the world as text. Nehemas explores this stance.

¹³⁰ Not for want of trying, especially in the young Ayer's logical positivism with its principle of verification.

¹³¹ Jakobson and Levi-Strauss co-author a reading of Baudelaire's "Les Chats" (Jakobson, 1996, pp. 180-197).

¹³² Both Cassirer and Levi-Strauss have their place in chapter five on sport and myth.

¹³³ Paul Ricoeur has given new currency to insights articulated long ago by Aristotle in his *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*.

¹³⁴ Judges, more conservative on the whole than literary critics, often divide in their interpretation of their legal texts.

¹³⁵ No disrespect is intended to all those who have devoted their talents to essentialist questions of the relations of play, game, and sport. The absence of references to such work is not a mark of ignorance of such literature, but because of a radical difference of approach.

¹³⁶ Roberts has already given application of the Rortyan root notion of the strong poet as the one who makes things new to sport, in his 1995 presidential address to philosophers of sport (Roberts, 1995). The present challenge is not that of sport in endless evasions of *as if*, but of sport as a language, sport as a poetic kind of language.

¹³⁷ Plato, it will be remembered, had to add to the already rich Greek language of love, with a second *eros*.

¹³⁸ A recent issue of *The International Journal Of The History Of Sport* (Volume 13, Number 1, March 1996) devoted to sport and myth did little more than hint at the depth and breadth of sport as if it were myth. The critical point in this essay is not the endless association of the two, but of sport as one important facet of mythological process. How and why is it that contemporary strong poets of sport continue on in public estimation as demi-gods? Why is a Bradman, or a Les Darcy, or a Phar Lap, revered?

¹³⁹ In resorting to particular images drawn here from cricket and Australian rules football, there are, of course, the actual patterns of bodily action performed by the sporting competitors, and the remembrance of them by those who thrilled to their execution at the given time and place.

¹⁴⁰ There are, it goes without saying, two tennis games, singles and doubles (Talbert and Old, 1957). They are as different as chalk and cheese even today when both games are characterised by power rather than finesse. What is a fine shot in one form of the game is frequently a poor shot in the other. Singles and double require a different kitbag of skills. Lycett, Lott, Brugnon, Bromwich, Woodward, Woodbridge are but a few of the many who excelled at doubles as they never did in singles. The reverse is also quite often the case. A McEnroe who proves outstanding in both forms of the game is relatively rare in the professional era. The disparity in prize money these days has as a

consequence that many of the top male singles players compete irregularly in doubles and never perfect the peculiar skills of doubles. Unless made clear otherwise, singles is the game in mind in the text. There is a distinct possibility that both J and Homer are composite authors, at least to an indeterminate point. Strong poets unpack their discrete egos, but as Bloom and other critics reveal, they have their debts to others.

¹⁴¹ It is also possible to have poetry written about strong sport performers but this, too, is not the substance of a dissertation of sport as if it were poetry.

¹⁴² Could either have imagined in their playing days backhands hit from an open stance and the weight on the back leg as the ball is struck - even both legs off the ground?

¹⁴³ Attention is focused in chapter six on Tilden and Bradman as exemplars of strong performers. A little more is said there about those structural considerations fundamental to this dissertation.

¹⁴⁴ Plato, pitching nature against convention, pre-figures many of the issues which were to plague philosophy of language, including the enigmatic quality of the basic characters of the Greek language.

¹⁴⁵ Kitto's argument that there is but a tenuous connection between Aristotle's theory and classical Greek tragedy, especially Greek religious drama is, in concert with Ricoeur, rejected as extreme (Kitto, 1964, pp.231-245).

¹⁴⁶ Something of the divergences and convergences, especially as between Plato, Aristotle, and Kant, relevant to the thesis of sport as poetry, will emerge in the course of the work.

¹⁴⁷ Bloom's argument that strong misreading has a role in the making and the reading of poetry is canvassed in the third chapter.

¹⁴⁸ A basic structural analysis of human relationship would seem to include the three general movements of toward, against, and away from (Horney, 1970, 1964).

¹⁴⁹ Concepts may be constitutive (as Plato is often interpreted) or regulative (in a Kantian sort of way, for instance).

¹⁵⁰ Perhaps the key issue here is the question of experience, of how one understands those quintessential conditions of life - love and hate, hope and despair, the courage to be and paralysing anxiety.... Is experience, as Kant suggested in his first *Critique*, itself a mode of knowledge? Another way to formulate the issue is to ask with Rorty and others whether language goes all the way down and to answer in the affirmative.

¹⁵¹ This world, he insists repeatedly, is a process and a product, a representing and a representation, of mimesis, and mimesis is a central concern of this chapter.

¹⁵² This is the procedure, with like effect, also in his historical study of mimesis co-authored with Christopher Wulf, *Mimesis: Culture-Art-Society*.

¹⁵³ Freud, it will be remembered, thought that the narrative of a life was commonly a narrative of repetitions (Freud, 1971).

¹⁵⁴ Perhaps at a more basic level still, Goodman has challenged the logic of induction as traditionally understood. *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast* set out to unsettle how we seize upon some characteristics of an object to the exclusion of others in generalisations about sets or classes of things (Goodman, 1983).

¹⁵⁵ One is not tied to asserting that the natural world is the work of the Creator and the social world the work of human pro-creators, of course. A certain irony attends Gebauer's return to a basic distinction, however, between a natural order which is given and a human order which is constructed. Plato, it will be remembered, played off ideas

of nature and ideas of convention in his discussion of language in *Cratylus*. Gebauer, it appears, judges language as ultimately dispensable in the understanding of both worlds.

¹⁵⁶ Revealingly, Stephen Spender, in a slice of autobiography covering the years 1928-1939, entitles the work, *World Within World* (Spender, 1991). Self and world(s) are correlative. His writing strategy “a framework of objective events through which I could knock the holes of my subjective experiences.” His various worlds are those of love, poetry, politics, literature, childhood, travel, and ethics - a rich enough assortment to satisfy most mortals, and begin to disturb those insistent on a monochrome version of “telling it like it is”. The genre of autobiography can be analysed into a number of quite disparate levels, five strata “related to one another in terms of loss, repression, selection and expansion” (Chris Wallace-Crabbe, 1990): an actual life, present memory, required memory, manuscript, editing and publishing .

¹⁵⁷ The informed eye treasures such moments, but the meaning and value of the world of sport is not reliant upon them alone.

¹⁵⁸ Critics of very different hues maintain just such a attitude. Stanley Fish, for example, in *Is there a text in this class?* shifts the hermeneutic burden to disparate interpretive communities. Gerald Graff, in *Professing Literature*, examines the very different presuppositions and allegiances which have governed the tertiary teaching of literature in the U.S.A. throughout its history. His primary focus is on the relationship between institutional orderings and actual practice. Like love, the teaching of literature has been a many-splendored thing. Traditions, however strenuously maintained, he concludes, cannot exclude theory. Sport, unfortunately, has no such comparable body of critical theory.

¹⁵⁹ The relations of the one and the many is a traditional philosophical problem for metaphysicians. Paul Weiss articulates a different exposition of the problem in the context of sport to that suggested by Gebauer (Weiss, 1981, pp. 7-14)

¹⁶⁰ It is necessary to ask whether or not both Goodman and Bourdieu have been commandeered by Gebauer without adequate recognition or acknowledgment that their positions are wildly at odds with that volunteered by Gebauer himself.

¹⁶¹ This matter is taken up in a quite different context in the concluding section of chapter five.

¹⁶² Harris, in a sweeping survey of the origins and development of sport in Britain, incidentally but not accidentally, strives to justify the language of amateurism in sport (Harris, 1975).

¹⁶³ David Malouf, in his 1998 Boyer Lectures, writes of a spirit of play as fundamental in the constitution of Australian identity (Malouf, 1998).

¹⁶⁴ In a recent (1998) work of theology, *After Writing: On The Liturgical Consummation Of Philosophy*, Catherine Pickstock argues for the supreme importance of ritual in life, including intellectual life (Pickstock, 1998). A.G.Hebert's *Liturgy And Society* is at one and the same time both more strictly theological and less doctrinaire (Hebert, 1961).

¹⁶⁵ Traditionally, the football club beyond the metropolis, like the general store and the pub, has been one of the hubs of the community.

¹⁶⁶ It is distressing to witness spectators leave before a contest is concluded simply because they have become convinced that their team is destined for loss. What would

such persons think if their team looked at the scoreboard, came to the same conclusion, and walked off the ground before time had expired?

¹⁶⁷ There is a very understandable blurring of categories here as elsewhere in literary matters. Homer's *Odyssey* is an epic work, while Odysseus is a romantic figure who will not settle for tomorrow being just like today, or today just like yesterday. Likewise, there is no cast-iron necessity for epic to be pitched at the pole of metonym, or romance at the pole of metaphor. Milton's re-writing of the myth of Fall in epic form is not exactly devoid of metaphor! Nevertheless, there is a tendency for epic, with its historical overtones, to tend to those processes of association which find form in metonym; and for romance with its thirst for the fresh and new to tend to those processes of condensation which find form in metaphor.

¹⁶⁸ Much medieval and Renaissance art makes precisely this the fundamental structure of the work.

¹⁶⁹ Reinhold Niebuhr's *The Irony Of American History* is but one indication that the theme of irony has an extended life indeed (Niebuhr, 1952).

¹⁷⁰ *The Allegory of Love: a study in medieval tradition*, was first published in 1936, long before Lewis got into popular theology and the sometimes unlovely debates centred around J.A.T. Robinson's popularisation of streams in modern theology, *Honest To God*.

¹⁷¹ Etienne Gilson, in his twenty Gifford Lectures of 1930-31, published as *The Spirit Of Medieval Philosophy*, gives, from an orthodox Roman Catholic perspective, a comprehensive historical account of the philosophical thought of the period. Very naturally and properly, his history has much of an informed kind to say about the relations of philosophy and theology.

¹⁷² It is not requested that this work be read as covert natural theology.

¹⁷³ It is more than simply interesting to note how important sporting contests now are prefaced (and occasionally ended) by ceremony that sometimes rises above mere spectacle and becomes art in its own right.

¹⁷⁴ Greek and Roman sport, similarly, was sometimes to the death, in strangulation and drowning.

¹⁷⁵ One could add to the list poets distinguished but less than strong in Bloom's sense: *Jock* is an acute study by Cliff Hanna of how the Australian poet Shaw Neilson metamorphoses his sad and raw experiences into poetry which some will go on reading for some goodly time (Hanna, 1999).

¹⁷⁶ Guttman traces a broad evolutionary development of the medieval tournament in his historical account, *The Erotic In Sports*. Marcuse, forty years earlier, in *Eros And Civilisation: a philosophical inquiry into Freud*, examines, first, the rule of the reality principle, and then beyond the reality principle. The second section of his book introduces eros in some of its mythological guises, and is relevant to chapter five of this thesis on sport and myth. Chapter three of this work presents Bloom's theory of poetry in largely mythological terms, six revisionary ratios encapsulated in technical language drawn from myth.

¹⁷⁷ In a musical comedy like *Showboat* with its gritty overtones, or the political Camelot centred around the younger Kennedys in all its undoings, romance of a kind will not be denied. Art and life, it seems, can never finally and completely part; eros can never be utterly neutered.

¹⁷⁸ A select breed of bio-mechanist can make the spin of the ball almost the matter of art. Tilden did, without any of the scientific understanding, make it both matter of art and practice. Further, and more important, is that power of remembrance so potent in poetry. Bloom (chapter three) makes remembrance the major mode of cognition in the making of strong poetry.

¹⁷⁹ Gilson denies himself the status of philosopher, asserting a clear distinction between history and philosophy. Despite a broadly shared perspective and tradition, Alasdair McIntyre asserts a role for narrative in philosophy which Gilson rejects out of hand. Gilson, of course, wrote many philosophical texts, most on medieval philosophy.

¹⁸⁰ A veneration which included the decapitation, boiling, and preservation of the corpse of Thomas Aquinas by his fellow monks of Fossanuova. Maritain's account, on the other hand, has Aquinas whole, holy, and sweet-smelling even a fortnight after his death. How often the wish is father to the thought!

¹⁸¹ Of course it has been a bone of contention for literary critics and their creative subjects also. Auerbach, for instance, analyses an assortment of literary realists and realisms.

¹⁸² Dante, supremely, on Bloom's reading, gives us such a mix. Chapter three of the thesis is devoted to Bloom and the world of poetry, including the world of Dante. Aquinas, of course, is not medieval philosophy. Bonaventure, for example, more a Platonist, less an Aristotelian, goes on in philosophy quite differently to his strong and fiercely contested contemporary.

¹⁸³ Narrative has returned in force to contemporary philosophy in figures as varied as Lyotard, Ricouer, and MacIntyre.

¹⁸⁴ This has been questioned by later critics. Stephen Knight, for example, argues for a much stronger economic and cultural basis for the cults. Knight points also to such factors as the absence of household heads on war duties and frequency of wandering, and landless younger sons. The ideology provided some protection for otherwise defenceless chatelaines (Knight, 1983).

¹⁸⁵ Lewis's own values are barely disguised. While he gives neither a theory of marriage nor of desire, perhaps the seed of both his views and of this feudalisation of love can be found in the words of instruction delivered by the apostle Paul to the faithful in Corinth, "it is better to marry than to burn" (*1 Corinthians 7:9b*).

¹⁸⁶ Henry VIII, later in time, found substance for the reasons of his heart, in the writings and arguments of meddlesome priests, priests he was happy enough to kill when their arguments did not coincide with his desires.

¹⁸⁷ Biblical hermeneutics have long been tested when dealing with overtly erotic poetry such as makes up much of the Old Testament *Song Of Songs*.

¹⁸⁸ Huizinga, differently motivated and situated, very understandably gives a different explanation of the cultural ethos from that of Lewis.

¹⁸⁹ The contemporary Madonna, the material girl, makes her own tilt at times past. How knowingly is difficult to assess.

¹⁹⁰ Eric Berne, in *Games People Play*, a personal revamping of Freud, gives a different kind of contemporary version.

¹⁹¹ McLaren suggests that the figure of Cervantes can be seen as a metaphor for the caricature of chivalry erected by the Spanish kings on the basis of American wealth (McLaren, 1993).

¹⁹² The modern Olympics was not alone in its devotion to the essentially aristocratic ideal of amateurism: a genteel sport, such as tennis, only escaped the net of this ideal fitfully and bitterly. Cricket, a conservative sport, did not start in this web and, outside England, did not long remain within it. A history of cricket in England would stand quite apart from a history of cricket in Australia, for all our cultural cringes.

¹⁹³ Its elements, on the other hand, were, centrally, *muthos* or plot,

¹⁹⁴ This is not to deny that mimesis can make worlds, but to emphasise, as Goodman does, that world-making can proceed otherwise.

¹⁹⁵ This is all the more remarkable considering that the Greek language sports a rich diversity of terms for love.

¹⁹⁶ The reading of the apostle Paul's hymn to love (I Corinthians 13) at church wedding ceremonies has an almost grim irony about it: Paul was no apologist for marriage - better to marry than to burn damns with the faintest of praise.

¹⁹⁷ Recently, in the wake of a swag of honours conferred on Bloom, Epstein has written a debunking essay on Bloom damning his credentials as a literary critic (Epstein, 2002, pp. 42-45). It is to be questioned whether Epstein makes the right sort of criticisms, or, indeed, has anything like the same grasp of relevant materials. Bloom is one of those critics who can be read with both pleasure and profit. While he can be somewhat esoteric, possibly even a trifle self-indulgent and a show-off, the arguments central in his theory to this work are sustained and formidable. Envy is as likely to issue in destruction as creation. Bloom's corpus of work has little to fear from the Epsteins of this world. Fischer makes more informed criticisms, but he does not demolish Bloom (Fischer, 1985)

¹⁹⁸ Sophocles and Shakespeare make memorable tragedies, Freud a pillar of his system, from the motif.

¹⁹⁹ A fuller account of Bloom's theory, with its esoteric vocabulary, is reserved to an appendix.

²⁰⁰ Lesser talents who fail to overcome strong predecessors are legion. Bloom points to Wilde's *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* (an almost great poem in Yeats's eyes) as an embarrassing failure to overcome Coleridge's *The Rime Of The Ancient Mariner* (Bloom, 1997, pp. 5f.).

²⁰¹ A strength of a recent biography by Cliff Hanna lies in how one poetic sensibility was able to transmute the trials and tribulations of an often bleak existence into memorable utterance (Hanna, 1999).

²⁰² This will be illustrated in some detail with reference to a small number of sporting gods and demi-gods in the final chapter on the strong poet of sport. Richard Rorty, indebted to Harold Bloom on the score of the strong poet, is pivotal in the final working out of the thesis.

²⁰³ There is pathos in his affliction with Parkinson's disease. But was there not greater pathos in Joe Louis's reduction to meeter and greeter of all and sundry at the doors of a rich man's casino?

²⁰⁴ Truly great champions suffer the anxiety of influence both with regard to precursors and latecomers, but differently. There is an especial pathos as a great champion, his powers on the wane, faces up to one who would dethrone him. Perhaps Louis found consolation in continued public affection and regard. Ali, it seems, desired a continued presence on a wider stage, and found it.

²⁰⁵ Chauvinism is an ever-present temptation in sport. Nevertheless, Australian rules football Grand Final Day at the Melbourne Cricket Ground has an aura all its own. It is one of the red letter days in Australian sport, held at the great temple to sport in the national sporting capital.

²⁰⁶ Other figures spring to mind, such as the great American baseballer, Johnson, and, of course, Paul Robeson.

²⁰⁷ Did Locke do no more than provide a rationalisation of The Glorious Revolution of 1688? One expects a greater integrity of the philosopher and the poet than of the politician and lawyer. If this is so, why is it so? How great were the pressures upon Hobbes to justify the divine right of kings? Does the *Leviathan* represent fairly and squarely what he thought in his heart of hearts? Did he suffer the anxiety of influence of quite a different kind to that of the strong poet in Bloom's theory of poetry?

²⁰⁸ One of the many fascinations of sport is how sporting champions respond to the threat of their own demise.

²⁰⁹ Tilden Tatem Tilden II and Sir Donald Bradman, the two champions chosen from many as instantiations of the truly strong sport performer in the sixth and concluding chapter, had both a grasp of their sporting practice in its traditions, and an influence on its future.

²¹⁰ It seems to me that this is true of Tilden.

²¹¹ Derrida, in his contest with Foucault, is a prime example, here.

²¹² It is often said in sport that the biggest word is "if".

²¹³ It is not that these are neat dualisms: they indicate main lines of relation in Bloom's theory of poetry.

²¹⁴ It seems that at the end of his career he was made offers of a very material kind which he could and should have refused. It is more than possible that those last four or five fights made him the shambling wreck that he has now become. There is pathos aplenty in sport, but is there tragedy? Ali lives on, and leads a life.

²¹⁵ Ponsford had a stand (now demolished) named after him at the Melbourne Cricket Ground three decades after his glory years, years which have seen him in eclipse after Bradman.

²¹⁶ McLaren, in an essay on the poet as god, deals with the implications of John Milton dramatizing God within his argument of justifying the ways of God to man: God becomes a creature of the poet, and this pro-creative activity of Milton the poet deprives God of the very right to exact total obedience. That is, the dramatic form of the epic lands Milton in logical impossibility (McLaren, s.n.).

²¹⁷ Bachelard has made much of the poetics of both space and fire (Bachelard, 1994, 1990).

²¹⁸ Bloom's self-description, at one point, is that of "addiction to a Romantic and prophetic humanism (Bloom, 1997, p. 59)." In a later text he confesses his uncertainties as to prophecy (Bloom, 1989, p.12). Eagleton rightly brands it a humanism on the extreme edge (Eagleton, 1996, p. 160).

²¹⁹ A certain discomfiture and revision would follow if it were ever discovered that Shakespeare was not the author of the works present attributed to him.

²²⁰ Eric Auerbach, an earlier critic of like strength to Bloom, rejects such a chasm between Hebrew and Greek.

²²¹ Lyotard essays post-modernity as, in large part, a return of narrative forms of knowledge, and the death of those hallowed Enlightenment meta-narratives of the liberation of mankind and the unity of knowledge.

²²² One accepts here the broad results of that form criticism which has sprung, most notably, from the work of Wellhausen in his substantiation of the Graf hypothesis.

²²³ Auerbach's understanding of Homer is that he is concerned with the external life. McLaren identifies this as a moment when the poet discovers a new level of meaning in life beyond that of a naive realism, a level encapsulated in the concluding thought.

²²⁴ Here, too, Bloom passes over what does not fit his case, such things as Jonathan's seeming preference for David to his father, Saul.

²²⁵ The Old Testament, it must be remarked, is replete with manifold tales of savagery and bloodlust.

²²⁶ Iris Murdoch, a true disciple of Plato, explains how general being coexists with my particular being. Like Humpty Dumpty, we are forever falling apart; unlike Humpty Dumpty, we are forever being put together again. Murdoch goes on to explain how it is the vocation of both artist and philosopher, in their different ways, to relate modes of being.

²²⁷ Similarly, one might say, of Tilden or Muhammed Ali.

²²⁸ Christopher Lasch situates the degradation of sport in a culture of Narcissism (Lasch, 1979, pp. 181-219).

²²⁹ More technical aspects of Bloom's theory are given in an appendix to the dissertation. Rorty's conception of the strong poet, and its relevance to the thesis, occur in the concluding chapter.

²³⁰ In a salutary analysis, Sontag shows how unproductive, how insidious, how destructive, the usage of illness as metaphor can become (Sontag, 1983).

²³¹ The terms literature and philosophy themselves constitute a kind of shorthand, because they are question-begging and do not indicate givens. The campaign from within the philosophical community against the awarding by Cambridge University of an honorary doctorate to Derrida serves to illustrate, amongst other things, that philosophy in its institutionalisation and structure, is open not closed. Some, like Rorty, work to make philosophy more, not less, open to foreign influences. Similarly, with literature. Terry Eagleton describes, within the context of the evolution of literary theory, how literature as a broader category developed into a separate and specialised practice. He undertakes his own particular deconstruction of literature, wishing to place it more firmly within culture and society (Eagleton, 1996). Raymond Williams preceded him in this in most of what he wrote. Gerald Graff, in a narrower and more detailed study, writes an institutional history of the teaching of literature within the U.S.A. between 1828 and the modern day. It is a study of movement, a tracing of the rise and fall of different successive schools of literary criticism in certain prominent American academic institutions devoted to the study of literature (Graff, 1987). What makes Suits's essentialist reading of sport all the more remarkable is its wit and rigor in an age when he must perforce swim against the cultural tide (admittedly not in a main channel). What makes the cries of fellow essentialists without his talents all the more tiresome is their parroting of clichés, their gramophone minds.

²³² Significant exceptions are not hard to find, especially with the recovery of rhetoric as legitimate philosophy, and the impress of depth psychology upon philosophy as well as literature (Rorty, a, 1996; Rorty, b, 1991, 1998).

²³³ This ought not be dismissed as cynicism. Sadly, participation in such gatherings is disillusioning. Sometimes, in fact, the offenders are themselves former players and in the ranks of “physical education.”

²³⁴ Gadamer is not alone in such a reading. Elias, in a study of Plato’s myths, argues that in these Plato makes his own defense of poetry (Elias, 1984).

²³⁵ Sometimes one brilliant cartoon in a newspaper or magazine is worth the whole turgid rest, not just as wit, but as journalism.

²³⁶ The novel made such excess of meaning its own. E.M.Forster argues that it came at a price: the sacrifice of refined intelligence to base curiosity - in structural terms, the subjection of plot to story (Forster, 1961). It is unlikely that Aristotle, for one, would have disagreed with him. Classical Greek drama is not soggy with humanity, but stark.

²³⁷ Three of the more significant philosophical descriptions of sport, those of Paul Weiss, Bernard Suits, and William Morgan, could be remarked upon, beyond their shared abstraction and generality, in terms, respectively, of their metaphysics, essentialism, and social theory. Except for a very loose shared construction in narrative, it might prove difficult to associate, say, George Borrow, Alan Sillitoe, and Ernest Hemingway, as literary exponents of sport. Borrow has his religiosity, Sillitoe his socialist ideology, Hemingway his vitalism, but what, first and foremost, might one go on to explain, analyse, and describe? Cross-comparisons between the philosophical and the literary might prove more illuminating. Weiss and Borrow share religious conviction, but of very different ilk; Suits and Hemingway revel in their own distinctive *joie de vivre*; Morgan and Sillitoe are far apart in temperament and style but have much in common ideologically speaking. Sport stands in need of serious comparative studies of the philosophical and the literary, historical and contemporary.

²³⁸ Others have suggested instead failure and weakness (Larkin, 1984, p. 74).

²³⁹ Where Plato understands rhetoric as a threat to philosophy, Aristotle understands it, under certain stringent conditions, as part and as ally.

²⁴⁰ In biography and autobiography, that is, in the writing of a life, strategic levels of the writing may be discerned (Wallace-Crabbe, 1990, pp. vii-xvi).

²⁴¹ Auden, writing *In Memory of W.B. Yeats*, declares that poetry changes nothing. His poetic tribute reads otherwise, as, indeed, does the more general reading of poetry. Readers of poetry, like Bachelard, know it can be life-changing.

²⁴² Embryonic in Petulengro’s challenge to his word-master friend to take on the gloves and see what a sweet thing it is to be alive, is just such a theory (Borrow, *Lavengro*, chap. xxv, pp. 164f.). Music, of course, whether it be jazz, rock, or something else, can and does express existence in its various depths and hues, existence as alive. William James was right when he declared that putting a premium on mere survival was crazy. But Berdyaev was right, too, in his denunciation of the idea that happiness can be organized. So much for the writers of the American Constitution!

²⁴³ Thus there is a double lack of fairness to Roberts: he has not stood still in his thinking and writing about sport, and there is a concentration upon different fundamentals of both sport and language to those canvassed by Roberts - perhaps it would be more accurate to say that there is a different emphasis. He remains of basic

value to this thesis of sport as poetry because he was the first to investigate in a thorough and considered way, sport as a species of language; concentration upon salient features of the original formulation of his position made in his doctoral dissertation may make clearer present points of departure from positivist dogmatism and realist naivete for an understanding of sport as if it were poetry.

²⁴⁴ Here there are incurred debts of a different kind, and not just to literary critics and historians, but to structuralist and post-structuralist.

²⁴⁵ It is one mark of the integrity of J.L. Austin's investigations into language as event that he eventually was the one who undid his own carefully framed distinctions between the constative, locutionary, illocutionary, perlocutionary, and came to an acknowledgment of such a performative quality in all language usage.

²⁴⁶ Bloom emphasises the Herculean task confronting the poet today who would prove truly strong, given that he comes after the likes of J, Homer, Dante, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton. Their worlds are not easily overtaken and superceded.

²⁴⁷ There are, of course, dangers in the usage of such basic and crude terms as realism and irrealism, dangers which may hopefully be circumvented or even partially overcome within this work by its completion. Auerbach works expertly with the concept of distinct levels of style, each of which embodies a distinctive cultural vision; Homer has horizons, the Biblical writers heavens; the former is into immanence despite the presence of the gods, the latter into transcendence. Theologians and philosophers attempt, within their job descriptions, to reconcile the relative claims of both transcendence and immanence. Strong poets of sport differ greatly in style, but all are governed by the pragmatics of winning, which is not to say that winning irrespective of the means is the only importance. Even if Bloom is right in his judgment that victory has overdetermined the course of strong poetry in western culture, there remain differences not only in conceptions of victory but how they are constituted. Properly, this work is insistent upon the crossovers between strong poets and sports champions, especially on the matter of making things new.

²⁴⁸ Roberts' dissertation itself divides differently: roughly, introduction and synopsis (chapter one), issues of sign and symbol (chapter two), canvassing of key issues formative in sport - the fake, sport as expression, notation (chapters three, four, and five), sport as understanding (chapter six). There is a problem, a challenge, in all reading, as in all writing and in all listening, and it bears, in part, on what one brings to the reading. Certainly, even for those who do not subscribe whole-mindedly to reader-response theory, much more is at issue than good faith, honest intent. Reading is no more a given than writing. Some writers, a Nabakov, say, may create the sensation that those words of his printed on the page are almost like butterflies in the experience of reading. Strong poets may leave you gasping or more. When Barthes writes of a delicious erotics of reading, is he wide of the mark? Many might make testament to such an experience of reading. Perhaps it is part of the reason why some seek to ban books, and others to ignore them. The puritan's suspicion of pleasure is still strong in parts of western culture, and not only in the circles of the narrowly religious. Wine as pleasurable experience and not the heady illusion of life, has only gained relatively widespread currency in Australian culture since World War II. Overcoming the fear and the anxiety concerning pleasure is surely not the only factor in the wine boom in Australia, but just as surely it is one factor of importance. One could write similarly of

coffee - it does not ruin digestion or cause impotency! Few still believe that playing sport on Sundays will surely damn you to hell's fires.

²⁴⁹ Where and how one ties the knots in the thread of thought is always a bone of contention when human existence comes into play. Iris Murdoch writes eloquently in her last fine work, *Metaphysics As A Guide To Morals*, on the place of ulterior motives in philosophy. Philosophers, like poets, are not without guile. Is the integrity demanded of a different order in each instance?

²⁵⁰ How limited it may be is given thick description in the likes of Homer's *Iliad*. Hemingway has other limits and expanses. Both, not just the former, would fall within Rorty's understanding of the strong poet. Chapter six is concerned with this provocative and comprehensive concept of the strong poet.

²⁵¹ A sport such as tennis has contests of greatly varying duration - effectively open-ended time-wise. Time does not press hard in golf, but there are conventions governing unduly slow play. Cricket is punctuated by short bursts of intense concentration and activity alternating with longer periods of relative relaxation. Tennis, like most racquet games, is a game of motion; golf and cricket are, relatively, leisurely games.

²⁵² Philosophers themselves, of course, have divided on just this question of metaphor, some to reject, some to embrace.

²⁵³ Bateson's analysis of double denotation in play is relevant here.

²⁵⁴ The phenomena of assorted football codes is one basic clue to the rich construction of all the major sports. Play within one code is very different to play within the others, even between rugby union and rugby league (one, a bastard of a game played by gentlemen, the other, a game of gentlemen played by bastards). The fact that, when things go wrong in performing the skills involved in the practice, a return to basic elements (hard eyes for the ball, for one simplified example) is often the path of wisdom, ought not obscure how richly wrought they are.

²⁵⁵ Test cricket is played, customarily, over five days between two teams of eleven players. In each day's play of approximately six hours actual playing time, a minimum of ninety six-ball overs must be bowled. from alternate ends of the pitch. Each side, in the normal course of events, gets to bat and to bowl twice. The team which bowls the opposing team out twice and makes the greater number of runs, wins. It is an intricately structured and extended contest. Only where there is great disparity in the performances of the two teams is the contest concluded well within the allotted five days. Once upon a time, six-day Tests were played.

²⁵⁶ The context is vastly different in the shortened one day version of the game (usually fifty six-ball overs per side) where making runs, not preserving your wicket, is the order of the day. Much greater risks are taken by the batsman because only one or two batsmen need to make a substantial score for the team to amass a competitive total. Making runs quickly necessitates risk-laden innovation. Bowlers, on the other hand, must bowl more conservatively, maintaining a different tension than is customary in Test matches between restricting the flow of runs and taking wickets.

²⁵⁷ In a simple analysis of structure such as this, only the broad characteristics of the basic processes of selection and combination are taken and given application, whilst the intricacies of time and space, and cause and effect, are overlooked. Of course the context and the contest are much more complex, but such description embraces the fundamental reality in the sport of cricket of bat against ball. A more sophisticated

analysis might include, for a start, those features of the sport which operate in succession, and those which are concurrent. As in all team sports, these are dense indeed. The presence of a wicketkeeper in frequent and secret correspondence with the bowler, and of nine further fieldsmen, strategically placed, complicates the match situation enormously. Many further factors, such as match conditions, intrude. Unfortunately, of recent times, even bookmakers have exerted their furtive presence in on-field events.

²⁵⁸ The other side of the coin in sport occurs with team selection, especially at lower levels, where many are deluded as to their actual ability compared with their peers. It becomes virtually impossible to keep everyone relatively happy and harmonious.

²⁵⁹ More must be said on this point in the following chapter on sport and myth. Much of the meaning and value of sport lies in its creation of personal identity and public solidarity. Here, cricket could be taken as a metonym for the solitary agonist, and as metaphor for community - the citizens in relation to the polis which forms them culturally and socially. Perhaps this is the other way round, but whether or not, it connects with Roberts' earlier distinctions between action symbols, sport symbols, and life symbols.

²⁶⁰ The disappearance one by one of the various suburban football grounds that helped constitute the Victorian Football League is another story. The nationalisation of Australian rules football, and the rise of professional players in every sense, have led to changes which leave many rancorous, bitter, and bewildered. The demise of some teams (South Melbourne and Fitzroy) and the threatened demise of others, upset traditional grass-roots supporters. Within Melbourne, only the multi-purpose Colonial Stadium with its retractable roof, Optus Oval (formerly Princes Park) at Carlton, and the Melbourne Cricket Ground, remain as football venues. Geelong, now almost a suburb of Melbourne, retains its own ground.

²⁶¹ Australian Test Cricket has boasted five of the greatest wicketkeepers to play the game (Don Tallon, Wally Grout, Rodney Marsh, Ian Healy, and, currently, Gilchrist). Ranking them in order of excellence is a fascinating challenge, ultimately undecidable, and fraught with complications. Gilchrist is clearly the best batsman among the five, and clearly not the best wicketkeeper (he is very good, but he cannot compare with Tallon). That ought not stop those who delighted in seeing them play make the effort. Really oldtimers might even throw in another name or two. Historical records, too, have a place that can never be dispensed with if the pursuit of relative truth and utter truthfulness count for anything.

²⁶² Roland Barthes writes brilliantly of the world of professional wrestling as surface spectacle, a theatre of contrasting Moralities of Good and Evil. In such writing professional sport enters the realm of mythology, but at what level, superficialities or depth?

²⁶³ *Experience* and *experiment* could furnish an instructive example of such rustling and wrestling within the structuration of signifiers and signifieds in language over the centuries. But is that not part of what Bloom desires to say on the grand scale in his theory of poetry? Language, and poetry supremely, is a field of force, an energy, not a static work.

²⁶⁴ Questions as to why, of course, are not unambiguous: they may be enquiring variously as to purpose, cause, quality...

²⁶⁵ Derrida received and accepted an invitation to lecture by the Victorian College of the Arts, and proceeded, inevitably, to further mystify the readily gobsmacked.

²⁶⁶ Bloom, it will be recalled, wrote of the particular facility of strong poets to create novel meanings which spill over the established walls, establish fresh facticities, even re-write the existing literary canon.

²⁶⁷ Instructive contrasts can be made here between this broad cultural understanding of sport as text, and those more determinate ones of both Suits and Bourdieu. Suits writes an essentialist version of sport in and around a core vocabulary centred on play, a virtual grammar of sport with necessary and sufficient conditions. Bourdieu writes a materialist version of sport in the time-honoured language of production and supply where consumers get what they want and want what they get.

²⁶⁸ Clearly it invites comparison with the more ontological understanding of Hans- Gorg Gadamer.

²⁶⁹ William Morgan has written of the contemporary difficulty facing sport in its institutions and practices of attaining a fitting, a compelling, moral image, if neither the obsolescent language of amateurism nor the reigning language of professionalism (both conceived, by him, in strict analytic conceptual terms) can alone provide it.

²⁷⁰ If only three essays of his were to be considered, perhaps the happiest selection would be *The Making And Remaking Of Sport Actions* (Roberts, 1993), *Sport And Strong Poetry* (Roberts, 1995), and *“It’s Just Not Cricket: Rorty and Unfamiliar Movements: History of Metaphors in a Sporting Practice* (Roberts, 1997).

²⁷¹ The literality of Popper’s interpretation of Plato’s myths is frightening.

²⁷² Auerbach argues that there is something approximating classical restraint and precision in the uniformly illuminated representation of the Homeric epic. He contrasts Homer’s realism with that of the Old Testament, fraught as it is with mystery (Auerbach, 1974, pp. 3-23).

²⁷³ Grierson’s 1923 essay “Classical And Romantic” claims Plato as the prototypical romantic, a seminal influence not only on subsequent philosophy and theology, but also on subsequent romantic poetry. Epic and romance are far from antithetical terms for Grierson. Homer’s Odysseus, for example, is both epic hero and romantic: “There is no greater romance in certain essential qualities of romance than the *Odyssey* (Grierson, 1962, p. 224).”

²⁷⁴ Many an old hand in the stands, gripped by more than nostalgia for the glories of a more innocent past, would read the passage from amateurism to professionalism as a myth of fall, if only he could.

²⁷⁵ Narrative, as any critic worth his salt understands, is no simple form. Ricouer, for example, employs the metaphors of upstream (the presuppositions of the narrative) and downstream (the reception by the reader) as having critical importance beyond the mainstream issues of the what, whereby, and how of plot shaped into form.

²⁷⁶ William Tatem Tilden (1893-1953) dominated the world of men’s tennis during the 1920s, but continued his love affair with the game to the day he died. Informed judgment ranks him amongst the all-time greats of the sport, even the greatest of all.

²⁷⁷ Bradman (1908-2001) averaged almost one hundred runs per innings in Test cricket, and is generally accepted as the greatest batsman, if not the greatest cricketer (he was a superb fieldsman and adept captain), of all time. There have been greater all-round

talents, such as Garfield Sobers, who could do just about everything in cricket superbly, but never such a run-machine.

²⁷⁸ Australis has won more Test matches than England, but series wins are almost even since the Bodyline series. Often, despite cricket being a team sport, series have been dominated by just one or two players – usually bowlers. An Edrich or a Simpson or a Chappell never determined outcomes the way Bradman did in his prime.

²⁷⁹ Sometimes in team sport, such as football, there comes for the committed supporter a player of such excellence that even in the dark days of constant defeat and loss, he manifests hope in the gloom, gives in the general desolation someone, something, to cheer for and about. Supreme skill, on its own, does not make such players or reveal their quality. Their excellence must be more wide-ranging and include qualities such as courage, judgment, care, commitment, fairness, perseverance, sense of the occasion.

²⁸⁰ Suzanne Lenglen (1899-1938) combined precision with athleticism in her play, and was without peer in women's tennis in the years after World War I. She revolutionised the sport in the excellence and freedom of her play, as surely as Tilden did with both racquet and pen. Where Tilden the homosexual searched in his successive proteges for the son he could never have, Lenglen labored to perfect her game under the tutelage of a most overbearing father. Like Tilden, she turned professional in the early years of tennis professionalism when amateurism alone was respectable and in control of the game - its rules, venues, players, ethos, etiquette. For many years tennis professionals swam against the prevailing tide. Increasingly since open tennis in 1968, all that has changed dramatically.

²⁸¹ Bloom's theory of strong poetry is, very understandably, different to that of Aristotle, but on this particular and very important matter they are in broad agreement.

²⁸² Many other mythological classifiers have their own distinctive credentials and would merit attention if only time and space permitted. Among these are Propp and Joseph Campbell (Propp, 1968; Campbell, 1991).

²⁸³ Even Popper gives qualified assent to the cultural function of myth in human knowledge (Popper, 1972, p. 84). Malinowski's understanding, gained first-hand, asserts the utilitarian functions of myth in society as against the theoretical and explanatory (Malinowski, 1948).

²⁸⁴ Different constructions are, of course, possible: some will interpret the Bible as a drama in five acts with Creation as the first and Apocalypse as the fifth. ²⁸⁴

²⁸⁵ Rudolf Bultmann, not a rash man, made just such a project of demythologisation, in the interests of the present pressing moment of ethical decision, his life's work. Bultmann, a German of the Old World, has more than a little in common with Henry James, an American of the New World, but undeniably cosmopolitan for all that.

²⁸⁶ This, of course, is in basic harmony with Freud's interpretation of dreams as the working of unconscious mind (Ferguson, 1996).

²⁸⁷ Suits, in his essentialist reading of sport, and employing the iconic figures of Ant and Grasshopper of Aesop's fable, has performed an admirable service in this regard by playing off the competing claims of work and game-playing in the good life. While both religious men, Cassirer the philosopher thinks that it is the works of man which reveal his nature and destiny, Huizinga the historian thinks that it is play which is fundamental.

²⁸⁸ Irony itself, of course, has many modes. Sarcasm is not the same as wry self-deprecation. It may, as acute critics have explained, be mostly a matter of contextualisation. Irony may be subordinated, as in C.S. Lewis, to allegory, or superordinated, as in Paul de Man, to trope of tropes. What is indubitable is its crucial importance as both trope in language, and in experience and understanding of life. It may be constitutive in both, as in Kafka, the man whose vocation was to be a writer, even a writer who commissioned his friend Max Brod to burn his books. What a sad irony lies there.

²⁸⁹ Paul Tillich shows how faith may be translated as a matter of concern in both *The Courage To Be* and *Dynamics Of Faith*. Rorty, early engaged in teaching a philosophy of religion course, understands and interprets Tillich and Dewey as saying very much the same thing about God in a common rejection of supernaturalism (Rorty, 1991, pp. 63ff.).

²⁹⁰ Legend, often confused with myth, has the more direct and clear tie to history than myth.

²⁹¹ One truncated summary of the vexed distinction between the two disciplines in structural terms would be to tie philosophy more to the syntagmatic, poetry more to the paradigmatic.

²⁹² The speculative principle of ordering, rather than the actual example, is what is important for understanding myth as structure in the Levi-Strauss account.

²⁹³ This is, of course, a summary of a summary, and does no justice to the sophistication of Levi-Strauss's argument.

²⁹⁴ The varied collection of books which we know as the Bible, a collection which, it could be argued, is still the key text of western culture, has a certain undeniable unity in starting with myths of beginnings and ending with myths of eschatology. The key assumptions here appear to be those of historical time as linear, and God as Alpha and Omega.

²⁹⁵ Recently, an Australian batsman, misjudging a second run on his stroke in a one-day contest, suffered the penalty of being run out narrowly. Returning to the dressing-room, he reportedly exclaimed of his Shri Lankan opponents, "Black cunts!" He was subsequently outed for five matches, again, reportedly, for racist, not sexist, abuse. Such information as became public was second and third hand. It was almost as though public discussion was put under veto by mysterious powers.

²⁹⁶ Hebrew and Greek differ in their sense of history, but the influence of Greek thinking not only upon the Roman, but also upon the development of Christianity, resulted eventually in a considerable assimilation of Greek thinking in philosophy and history (Hatch, 1957).

²⁹⁷ Original sin can be understood quite simply in the sense that we are always conducive to think much too well of ourselves - and, perhaps, too ill of others. Overweening egos are common in sport even at lowly levels; egotism is a prevailing condition almost. Reinhold Niebuhr, among others, makes much more of the myth in his thinking about history and ethics.

²⁹⁸ The Dreaming is, of course, more than just art for the scattered indigenous peoples.

²⁹⁹ William Blake, who had a first-rate mind, remained, like many a poet, something of a child, a curious and precious amalgam of primitive and sophisticate. Dismissal of Blake as a muddled mystic is foolish (Frye, 1990; McLaughlin, 1995, pp. 80-90).

³⁰⁰ These myths, it must be confessed, are not the myths most paradigmatic in the most ambitious attempt yet to write a comprehensive history of Australia, that of Manning Clark. His paradigmatic myth is a secularised myth of past sin and a salvation still to be realised in the future, a myth which retains a strong whiff of Protestantism.

³⁰¹ Professor McLaren has pointed out that, structurally considered, the myth of the tyranny of distance readily becomes the same myth as that of mateship.

³⁰² William Morgan's text formulates just such a strategy to prevent this occurrence.

³⁰³ Some politicians, in the heat of a particular public issue (whether to become a republic or not, for example), even go so far as to declare that politicians are utterly unworthy of public trust.

³⁰⁴ About wolves in the wild there is much to respect, even admire. They are admirably social. At the same time, they are part of nature red in tooth and claw; they are without human culture. Man as wolf is not admirable: the metaphor in its denotation and connotation repels. Man as lion, or as hyena, would function very differently if they were ever to be taken up in everyday language. Man as lion, of course, has a certain currency; the lion as sporting icon is quite widespread - yet, so too, is the wolf as sporting icon!

³⁰⁵ The influx of Italians and Greeks after World War II led eventually to the wide public consumption of foods such as pizza and pasta, and a better appreciation of wine and coffee. Resistance to their introduction, ultimately futile, could take strange forms (Bersten, 1999). More recently, Australian cuisine has benefited from a more widespread pattern of migration, including, particularly, numerous Asian and African countries.

³⁰⁶ C.P. Snow does so in his novels and his cultural criticism, and they are both the poorer for the omission.

³⁰⁷ History, of course, has the dual sense of both actual events and lives lived, and their interpretation in a particular writing and reading of those events. That historical experience bears upon historical thought is evident, but not self-evident. Historical being that can be understood also requires language. Cathedral, stained glass, pictorial art, monument, mime, clowning, etcetera all have their importance as specialised kinds of language. There is something of a dual paradox here concerning myth, it seems. Myth itself has the function often of resolving blatant contradiction without only by equivocation and ambiguity within. Perhaps, as Kant suggested, there are indeed antinomies of reason. The culture of so-called Christendom, not to mention Christian dogma, has struggled long and fitfully to reconcile transcendence with immanence. Jesus of Nazareth does not appear (certainly not in the synoptic gospels, Mark, Matthew, and Luke) to have spent his time holding seminars around the country on the Trinity. It was only when Greek philosophy took hold of Hebrew myth (the Fourth Gospel, like the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes, shows evidence of the influence of Greek philosophy) that ethics became submerged in endless theological refinement. Augustine and Aquinas, to mention only two of the giants, were hardly philosophical innocents or primitives, content to leave the inner life of God to himself. Each, in his own way, sought to grasp where even they were only able to reach without grasping.

³⁰⁸ Ruth Benedict presents a relativist view of primitive cultures, but uses the language of myth and psychoanalysis to describe the various patterns: Apollonian to describe the culture of the Zuni Indians of New Mexico, Dionysian to describe the culture of the

Kwakiutls of Vancouver Island, the languages of schizophrenia and paranoia to describe the culture of the Dobus of Melanesia (Benedict, 1959).

³⁰⁹ In his Gifford Lectures of 1952-53, published as *An Historian's Approach To Religion*, Toynbee takes up key themes of his wider history in the context of religion.

³¹⁰ Myth is sometimes confused with allegory, but they are different modes of thought and language.

³¹¹ Beyond his salutary analysis of the repression or denial of reading, LaCapra describes the processes of synoptic reading, deconstructive reading, redemptive reading, and dialogic reading.

³¹² Strong poetry as varied as that of Homer and J, Dante and Shakespeare, Milton and Blake, Wordsworth and Keats, Yeats and T.S. Eliot, wrestles with multiple contradictions. In them all humankind is poised precariously between the angels and the beasts of the field.

³¹³ The first, more than reminiscent of the Hegelian triad of thesis-antithesis-synthesis, he continued to maintain; the second he came to think more than a trifle forced (Toynbee, 1961, vol. XII, pp. 263-266).

³¹⁴ Rorty makes much of the confusion between explanation and justification in the writings of great and influential philosophers (Rorty, 1980).

³¹⁵ Toulmin goes on and examines the conflicting attitudes of T.H.Huxley and his grandson Julian Huxley regarding science and ethics. Reflection upon nature has always invited variegated responses, while poets display similar divergences. A poet such as Coleridge moves from one pole of response to its extreme, unsure where to find rest or certitude.

³¹⁶ Bachelard gets by this difficulty only because he is informed philosophically and poetically.

³¹⁷ C.P. Snow, with a foot in both the scientific and literary camps, has been subject to the charge of being an inadequate cultural critic (McLaren, 1996; Rorty, 1996, p. xli, p. xlvii).

³¹⁸ Occasionally, as in the case of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, when they do actually combine disparate roles, they sometimes still find themselves suffering the consequences of ecclesiastical authority.

³¹⁹ This understanding and interpretation has much in common with the view that Plato suffered under the anxiety of influence of Homer.

³²⁰ The affinity with the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* here is obvious. Is it oxymoronic to talk of a language of silence?

³²¹ Harrison, in a considered study of different philosophies of language, including those of Wittgenstein, thinks that the theoretical foundations of his mature theory of language changed profoundly (Harrison, 1979, p.257).

³²² Aristotle, it will be recalled, honored rhetoric as the counterpart to dialectic, and as such, part of philosophy..

³²³ This quotation, while it reveals Cassirer's lack of understanding of structuralism even its beginnings (the signified is not the matter of reference but the concept in its verbal materialisation), can be accepted in its generality.

³²⁴ Roland Barthes provides a succinct but comprehensive taxonomy of rhetoric in *The Semiotic Challenge*. Rhetoric, more explicitly than poetry, has a place in philosophy not

only for the Sophists, but for Aristotle and his heirs. Abelard will verbally castrate his castrators.

³²⁵ Bloom's status as a metaphoric critic resides precisely in such deviancy: recall his first ratio of criticism, *clinamen*, as a swerve, a misprision.

³²⁶ A similar employment of metaphor occurs in the wider field of language when the relation of word and thing is described as being the former *standing for* the latter. Similarly, with the bodily metaphor of *understanding*. Such examples could be multiplied almost endlessly. A Derrida can turn them about in a host of wonderful ways.

³²⁷ Lyotard makes this a key theme in his take on knowledge in post-industrial society. Polanyi had recognised the importance of idiom, Popper the necessity of new myths.

³²⁸ McLaren has pointed out, in a personal correspondence, that the later romanticism drew on the earlier but was not continuous with it.

³²⁹ In any sport there are down periods. The period after World War II, and that before the advent of open tennis, were such periods.

³³⁰ The western, as remarked earlier, has something of the same function. Ned Kelly, the most famous of all Australian bushrangers, is a more complex figure. He is more than an actor; he has character.

³³¹ Politicians are often not averse to using sport for political purposes, even while they maintain a strict separation, in theory, between sport and politics.

³³² E.J. Whitten ("Teddie"), the great Footscray footballer, has also been sculptred in bronze, but in more distinctive pose. Whitten brought tears to the eyes in his iron handshake, something Bradman would never have even thought of doing. "Teddie" was a true-blue, dinky-dye Australian character. "The Don" was conscious not only of playing on a wider stage, but of entailed responsibilities. He might have forgotten to keep his hands out of his pockets in the presence of royalty, but he cultivated the traditions of a deeply conservative sport even as he changed the way in which batsmen made runs and captains led their team. Resistance to the money-men has not proven utterly futile in cricket. The out-and-out charlatans and crooks have posed a more overt threat in recent years. Confused and shallow thought on the taking of drugs as a violation of the principle of level playing fields is much in evidence.

³³³ There is a certain consensus in the impossible business of comparing champions of different eras, that Tilden is the greatest male tennis player of all time. In

³³⁴ Previous chapters, especially chapters one and five, have touched upon the degree to which language and mind are uninvited guests in culture and society. The problem becomes particularly acute in mythology and mimesis. How much is the iconic sign a question of copying rather than coping - or the reverse? No pretence is made other than that in talking, for example, of degrees of givenness, one is hedging one's bets somewhat (Blackburn, 2003).

³³⁵ Yet another book on Bodyline seventy years after the event, written by Brett Hutchins, was published in 2002.

³³⁶ This is simplistic summary of a vexed aspect of sport and merits a thesis itself.

³³⁷ Some practitioners (Kafelnikov in tennis, Calcavecchia in golf) accept that sport is work not play, and work to make as much money as they can. Many commentators talk about sport in the same idiom: "a hard day at the office" etcetera.

³³⁸ In his institutional history of the profession of literature within America, Gerald Graff reveals how complex are the relations between professing literature and the wider social, political, educational, ideological, and cultural factors, not least because of the manifold conflicts within the ranks of litterateurs themselves in any demarcated era (Graff, 1989).

³³⁹ Strictly speaking, this is a slight extension of the argument. Sport is often team sport, and sometimes a team of supreme excellence is formed which, on the strength of its triumphs, re-writes patterns of play. Moreover, often a strong performer emerges from the ruck from within a tight-knit group. Herb Elliot, for example, was prepared to submit to the iron and ideosyncratic discipline imposed by Percy Cerutti. Elliot, from within the training group, became strong; lesser talents fell into virtual obscurity. This is another of those aspects of sport which merits much closer attention.

³⁴⁰ Carlton found themselves forty four points down at half time against Collingwood in the 1970 Grand Final. In an agony of indecision as to what to do, Barassi, the Carlton coach finally took off the skilled but slow back pocket player for Carlton, Thornley, and substituted the quick but inexperienced small forward player, Hopkins, and instructed the Carlton team to take risks with handball, even out of the backline. The Carlton players responded to the challenge, Hopkins kicked quick goals, and Carlton erased the substantial deficit and went on to win narrowly but decisively. Barassi, the legendary player, was on the way to becoming Barassi the legendary coach. That moment of decision was long in the making. Barassi grew up in the household of another master coach, Norm Smith. Norm Smith's elder brother, Len, was a great student of the game, and an innovative tactician, especially with regard to getting the ball out of contested situations and into scoring range quickly. Barassi would have been present at many an animated conversation on the subject of the possibilities of handball in scoring more goals more quickly - the burden of the first of Len Smith's ten commandments of football.

³⁴¹ As has been made clear throughout the dissertation, there has been a striving to consider the actualities of strong play and strong poetry in their writings and readings: it is the language of the respective practices of sport and poetry which enacts and communicates their reality. Language cannot somehow be magically divorced from processes of selection and combination, matters of mimesis and myth, metaphor and metonym.

³⁴² Theories of the will and of desire abound, but cannot delay this work, except in recognition of them as a limited kind of counterbalance inherent in and essential to the notion of influence already examined in Bloom's theory of poetry.

³⁴³ Rorty shares the sentiment. He wishes that all God-talk would quietly dwindle into nothingness, that "God" would disappear from urbane conversations.

³⁴⁴ Rorty, amongst other things, is a philosophical subversive from the 1970s onwards.

³⁴⁵ Cricket has generated an enormous literature, in Australia as elsewhere. Thousands of texts, old and new, can be found on the shelves of the library of the Melbourne Cricket Club at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, mecca for cricket and Australian rules football.

³⁴⁶ Each of these three concerns could well be material for separate and expanded treatment. Here they can only be given the briefest attention, but sufficient to complete the argument of the thesis as a whole.

³⁴⁷ Bradman could well be compared with the famous Australian Davis Cup captain, Harry Hopman. Both were vehement in their upholding of the ideals of amateurism; both resisted resolutely the irresistible surge of professionalism within their respective sports. Yet both were not adverse to profiting personally from their sporting fame and position.

³⁴⁸ Tilden wins Wimbledon three times, the last at the age of 37, but surely would have won more if he had participated when at the peak of his powers in the 1920s. During these years (1920-25) he won six successive United States championships. Bradman, averaging almost one hundred with the bat per Test innings, leaves everyone else in his wake.

³⁴⁹ Tilden, as a homosexual, was born too early and courted not merely opprobrium but criminality; Bradman, as a businessman, might well have made millions more if he, too, had been born some decades later.

³⁵⁰ Other considerations, principally footwork and grip, of course, come into play with the progress in science, advances in technology, and the setting free of mind manacles within sport.

³⁵¹ Decades later Gonzales was to do something similar when his supremacy post-Kramer (he had held off the challenge made by Sedgman, Rosewall, Trabert, and company) was threatened by a Hoad who could cut off his crosscourt backhand slice at the net. Gonzales adjusted his grip and learned quite late in his career how to hit his backhand down the line with authority.

³⁵² Brugnon did not threaten seriously as a singles player, but as a supreme exponent of doubles tennis.

³⁵³ Roy Emerson, an Australian player of the 1960s, was retained by a transnational tobacco corporation, and did not turn professional until 1968, the year of open tennis. Emerson amassed twelve Grand Slam singles championships. Would he have been able to compete on even terms with the likes of Laver?

³⁵⁴ Some tennis greats, such as Borotra, are mostly attack; some, especially clay-courtiers, are more defence than attack.

³⁵⁵ Mindless violence, on or off the field, is not to be condoned; sexism and racism in sport, as elsewhere, are abhorrent.

³⁵⁶ Many accounts have been written of Bodyline on both sides of the world. The eventual English participation in its banning after the English Test tour of Australia in 1932-33 may be considered evidence enough that it violated the ethos and etiquette of cricket as a sport then epitomising the distinctively English sense of fair play, a pre-understanding of the game generally shared by Australians.

³⁵⁷ Much earlier in this work (chapter 1, pp.61-63) it was suggested that the intricately structured sport of cricket veered decidedly towards the metonymical. What is written above is no retraction from this view. It is, rather, yet another illustration of how prone metaphor is to shade into metonym, and vice versa. Selection and substitution can often be distinguished from combination and contiguity, but one can readily give way to the other in actual usage, whether in sport as a language or poetry as a language.

³⁵⁸ Lillee and Thompson for Australia in the 1970s, and then successive quartets of express West Indies bowlers, were to intimidate and injure opponents at the batting crease. By then, and increasingly so, as the famous Australian commentator Alan McGilvray was to say, the game had changed, and irrevocably. Thompson was to go

on record as saying, with delight, that he could smell the fear of the batsman facing up to him, and that he loved the sound of the ball bouncing off his forehead.

³⁵⁹ E.M. Forster in his wonderful little book, *Aspects Of The Novel*, gets to the nub of the matter: “The king died and then the queen died” is a story; “The king died and then the queen died of grief” is a plot, he declares (Forster, 1961, pp. 82ff.).

³⁶⁰ This motif, too, could well be issue for another thesis. It would delve deeper into both biography and the wider history of sport than is possible in present circumstances.

³⁶¹ Tragedy is made of sterner stuff. Cronje’s fall from grace, and early death in a plane crash before rehabilitation was at all possible, for example.

³⁶² Milton was famously said to be of Satan’s company without knowing it.

³⁶³ Billie-Jean Moffit-King, and Martina Navratilova, two women with able minds and bodies (both truly strong sport performers and articulate), did not profit materially, on balance, from being lesbian (Moffit-King married, and, professedly, not without some personal benefit). Tiger Woods not only is supremely strong, he looks the goods, despite his colour! Greg Norman, never nearly so strong, also looks the goods, and still manages to make a bundle every year even in his inevitable sporting decline.

³⁶⁴ The tensions and conflicts between appearance and reality go back to Plato, and are an ongoing motif in both philosophy and literature (Porter, 1974).

³⁶⁵ Personal preference here (itself partly a contingent matter of reading when young of an academic bound, pushed off a bridge, and drowned, by police, in the Torrens River), not sexual orientation, is for Tilden and against Bradman, somewhat as Milton is for Satan and against God. Milton’s relations with both are complex, deep, and ambivalent - even, perhaps, in part, yet another re-reading and re-writing of the Oedipus myth.

³⁶⁶ Frank Deford’s admirable biography, *Big Bill Tilden*, is subtitled, *The Triumphs and the Tragedy*. Tragedy is the stuff of an Oedipus or an Antigone, a Hamlet or a Lear, not of a Tilden. Now this constitutes something of an admission concerning the limitations of the thesis of sport as poetry. The fundamental argument can remain relatively unaffected. This is another area where supplementation in the form of another work is required. A Reinhold Niebuhr, who believed in Original Sin, like few other twentieth century intellectuals, also believed in a human state beyond tragedy. Tilden, in some aspects, may be pathetic (Bradman, too?), but he is not tragic because his ruin is neither complete nor irreparable. Casting him as similar to Satan in a paradise lost is homage to a masterful tennis talent. Milton is far from unique in his difficulties in discriminating between the godly and the ungodly (Empson, 1961).

³⁶⁷ Currently some geneticists are declaring that certain persons have a gene which strongly predisposes them to failure in long-term intimate relationship.

³⁶⁸ Decades on, Anderson was to speak respectfully of Tilden and his tutelage, and honestly of his own limited tennis talents.

³⁶⁹ Tilden made a small fortune in his professional years, but died practically penniless.

³⁷⁰ Budge, Laver, and Kramer were the only others to be awarded a first ranking by an extended panel. Tilden years earlier had given the palm of best ever to Budge.

³⁷¹ Other accounts recorded, such as that in Rick Smith’s *Great Days In Test Cricket* (Smith, 2001, pp. 43-51), differ but little, including a certain shared admiration for Jardine. Great controversy surrounded who leaked the dressing-room conversation to the outside world. Warner pointed the finger of guilt at Fingleton, who rebutted the

charge in a personal letter to Warner. Fingleton indicated that Bradman may have been the source of the leak, and Bradman repayed the courtesy.

³⁷² Paul Weiss makes the distinctively metaphysical motif of the one and the many an essential of sport (Weiss, 1980).

³⁷³ In the global village of 2003 things are different: the Japanese can shout themselves hoarse for Ian Thorpe, big feet and all.

³⁷⁴ Bradman himself, viewing the contest from the balcony of the dressing-room, drew his teammates attention to a glorious innings of 187 by McCabe against the English attack, according to Fingleton.

³⁷⁵ When Prime Minister Menzies voiced his melancholy duty of declaring war against Germany in 1939, Great Britain already having done so, he did so as what he conceived as a natural consequence of Australia being part of the Empire on which the sun never set.

³⁷⁶ Tilden made and spent a small fortune as player and promoter, but professional tennis was and remained for decades, a veritable sideshow to the amateur game until 1968.

³⁷⁷ Rampages by soccer hooligans are but one very visible manifestation of this process.

³⁷⁸ Once again it is pertinent to allude to Bernard Suits, who is always elegantly and wittily articulate. His remakings of Aesop's Ant and Grasshopper into icons of the work and play ethics, respectively, are pregnant with meaning (Suits, 1990).

³⁷⁹ The Australian Football League is a national competition, but Melbourne, with ten of the sixteen national teams, remains its heartland. Currently the Western Bulldogs, located in the Melbourne suburb of Footscray, are fighting for their survival, and look likely to go the sad way of South Melbourne and Fitzroy unless supporters in the western suburbs rally in number to their cause and become members. With just one premiership in the previous Victorian Football League way back in 1954, and just one victory (the opening round) in the 2003 season, followed by a long string of successive defeats, they are in dire straits. The Bulldog breed (their icon, their talisman) will go extinct unless their community responds loyally and generously and intelligently.

³⁸⁰ There is that other Australia, of the black, the refugee, the poor, the abused, also.

³⁸¹ Bradman as an administrator of the sport in the 1970s resisted the calls of the best Australian cricketers to usher in an age of open professionalism. Strong sport performers pulled the crowds, but did not share the rewards. There was a general divide between administrator and competitor in most major sports. Paternalism ran riot even in a sport such as swimming, as Dawn Fraser was to discover to her cost. It was left to Australia's richest man to split the game of cricket by offering lucrative contracts to star players the world over. Later, Packer in concert with Murdoch, would split rugby league in a move similarly geared to television and advertising revenue. Packer's earlier intervention became the means for cricketers to make cricket their livelihood rather than their pastime. One-day cricket, after its unlikely birth, became the staple attraction for many and a principal source of revenue both at the gate and through television. Rugby league and soccer in Australia, on the other hand, have been less blessed.

³⁸² No aspect of sport generates more drivel than that of sporting champions as role-models. There are distinctions which can and often ought be drawn between person, player, and celebrity.

³⁸³ Whether Derrida actually said there is nothing outside of the text, and what he might have meant by it if he did indeed say it, need not detain us here. Rather there is the sustained endeavour in the present work to steer between the Scylla of the naive realist and the Charybdis of the linguistic nihilist, and interpret both sport and poetry as peculiar kinds of writing and reading. That is, one insists upon the relative autonomy of both the world of sport and the world of poetry as self-enactments, self-constituteds of meaning and value. Both are contained within Derridean text.

³⁸⁴ He writes disparagingly of “poor old Arnold” where he might have been a little more generous (Rowse, 1976).

³⁸⁵ Tangentially, Verlaine’s barb at Tennyson concerning *In Memoriam* springs to mind: “When he should have been grief-sticken, he was full of reminiscences.”